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Making Sense in Autobiography

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Abstract

This chapter discusses two autobiographies, one genuine and one fictional, with emphasis on the textuality of literature. The analysis does not seek a demarcation line between fact and fiction, but studies two literary texts as sites of sense-making. The aim is to demonstrate that a literary text offers multiple possibilities not only to thematise but also to embody questions of sense-making. Moreover, literary narratives withhold and unsettle the reader's sense-making efforts. In order to make this evident, in this chapter I first analyse textual ordering, like paratexts, beginnings and ends of the autobiographies, then the modes of mediating experience in these texts, and finally, the types of minds presented. While applying some ideas from post-classical, cognitive narratology, I promote a detailed textual analysis as an essential step between theory and interpretation as exercised by classical narratology.

The tympanum is worn thin.

The iris is become transparent.

The sense has overlasted.

Sense itself is transparent.

Speed has caught up with speed.

Earth rounds out earth.

The mind puts the mind by.

Clear spectacle: where is the eye?

Laura Riding, "World's End" from *Love as Love, Death as Death* (1928) [EPIGRAPH]

Autobiography and Sense-Making

Laura Riding's poem, "World's End" is the motto of Robert Graves's autobiography *Good-Bye to All That* (1929; henceforth also referred to as *GB*). I have quoted the first stanza, which talks about senses and sense-making in (at least) two meanings: about the physical conditions and faculties of sense as the ear and the eye, and the rational ability to mean and to share meanings with others (cf. Ashton, 2005, pp. 112–113). What is more, the poem overloads the reader's senses—sense in the first meaning of the word—with phonetic repetition (like "tym" and "thin" and "iris" and "is") and unsettles the sense-making process—sense in the second meaning of the word—by repeating the same words (like "sense," "speed," "earth," and "mind") in different grammatical and semantic functions. This textual foregrounding offers the main starting point to my chapter. In addition to Graves's autobiography, I will analyse his historical novel *I, Claudius*

(1934; henceforth also referred to as *IC*), a fictional autobiography and a historical novel. The autobiographer is the Roman emperor Tiberius Claudius. With the analysis of these two texts, I want to point out that the textuality of literature offers multiple possibilities not only to thematise but also to embody questions of sense-making.

Autobiography has been studied in the two preceding chapters of this volume from different angles. Jens Brockmeier, on one hand, emphasises narrative activity as a means to interact socially, and to construct meanings. Stefan Iversen, on the other hand, studies the reader's efforts to attribute consciousness in interpreting fictional and non-fictional first-person narratives. Iversen defines the two opposing approaches as follows: "while Brockmeier deals with stories as sense-making, . . . I focus on aspects of how we make sense of stories." In this chapter, I want to investigate the text as a site for sense-making. This includes analysing both the narrator, his efforts to make sense of his former experience, and the audience positions offered to the reader in her interpretative task. What kind of narrative and interpretative acts does the text present, and how does the textual arrangement of the whole affect the sense-making processes?

Current narratology, inspired by cognitive studies, often tends to understand narrative "as a basic human strategy for coming to terms with time, process, and change" that "helps people fashion the vicissitudes of personal experience into a more or less coherent life story" (Herman, 2003, pp. 2, 4). What earlier was a sociolinguistic definition of narrative—"a general type of text, a discourse organized around time and consequential events in some 'world' created by the narrator" (Riessman, 1990, p. 79)—has thus also gained ground in literary studies. These definitions rest on analogies drawn between literary narratives and real-life experiential schemata, strongly propounded in Monika Fludernik's *Towards a 'Natural' Narratology* (1996).

For Fludernik, the prototypical case of narrative is the orally transmitted story, and textual and artistic design is regarded only as a variable of conversational parameters. She argues that these natural parameters constitute the basis for the reader's effort to narrativise texts, to make sense of them. However, her central term, narrativisation, refers to Jonathan Culler's notion of naturalisation, which, I believe, carries different kinds of implications for the sense-making processes. Culler's (1975, p. 134) starting point is the fundamental paradox of literature: Its divergence from ordinary communication makes it compelling, and yet this divergence needs to be naturalised in order for the reader to understand the meaning and value of literature. As demonstrated in Iversen's chapter in this volume, the emphatically naturalising tendency in recent narratology has not been fully welcomed by all literary narratologists.

I want to maintain an awareness of this double function of literature between the artistic and the everyday while analysing Graves's literary works. The reader of Riding's poem does not only search for answers to questions, such as what happens to whom in the poem, but also notices the phonetic and rhythmic variation as parts of the artistic whole. Similarly, the reader of an autobiography or a historical novel needs to be aware of the textual, artistic construction of the whole—the "synthetic element" in James Phelan's terms. Phelan's communicative model of narrative lists different audience positions. The reader, who follows the mimetic component, is part of the narrative audience, and takes the world depicted as real. In contrast to that, the authorial audience concentrates on the synthetic elements. Both these positions are, of course, present in any interpretation, but in varying degrees. (Phelan, 1989, pp. 8, 5–6; Phelan, 2005, pp. 18–21; see also Rabinowitz, 1987, p. 21.) Although aware of the referential aspects of the genres of the texts I am analysing in this chapter, my focus is in the textual detail and the ways the narrators and audiences are presented.

The last two lines quoted from Riding's poem express the questions this chapter studies: firstly, how does the mind put the mind by? That is, how do first-person narrators tell about and make sense of their experiences and their social surroundings? Secondly, where is the eye? That is, how is experience presented and mediated in these texts? These two questions will not be dealt with separately but are rather understood to be interdependent. They both help to answer the main question, suggested through homophony in Riding's poem: where is the "I"? How does the narrating "I" present himself and the story? Both narrators are conscious of their role as authorial narrators, and they address their audience directly.

I will start by discussing the possible exceptionality of literary narratives and the reader's role as the interpreter. Next, I will begin the textual analysis by looking at the framing of the two novels by their beginnings, ends and paratexts. Subsequently, I will analyse the modes of representing and mediating experience in the two novels, and then proceed to study what kind of minds the novels contain and thematise. My argument throughout the chapter will partly build on the differences between classical and cognitive theories of narrative, with their emphasis on either textual structures or the reader's sense-making efforts. The next chapter discusses framing understood as structural organisation of narrative and as a cognitive tool. In subsequent chapters the speech category approach (see Palmer, 2004, pp. 9–13, 53–57) will be contrasted first with Fludernikian understanding of narrativising a text, then with the Theory of Mind approach (see Zunshine, 2006, pp. 6–10). While the cognitive aids in understanding how the reader constructs the story-world, the textual helps us to appreciate how literary fiction is able to withhold and unsettle the reader's sense making efforts. Thus, my emphasis is not on the "effortlessness" of attributing consciousness to literary characters (see Zunshine, 2006, p. 13), but rather on the

"joys of reading fictional minds" (Zunshine, 2006, p. 20) and even more on the challenges and pleasures the literary organisation of the text provides for the reader.

Natural and Literal Readings

Maria Mäkelä (2006) has pointed out the referential bias of adopting ideas from cognitive studies of real people into the analysis of literary texts. In a recent article (Mäkelä, 2012), she relates two types of readers outlined in narrative theory: The classical-narratological reader is an imaginary competent reader, who is after the meaning of a given text, whereas the reader characterised in postclassical theories is a more mundane general reader who reaches for the familiar, the coherent, and the likely. Mäkelä argues that both of these approaches, however, face the risk of making the narrative and its reader the other's metonymy. Whereas the characters and the narrators do have a textual presence, the reader is but assumed by the analyst. This is an important observation, and in line with Marie-Laure Ryan's argument that "cognitive narratology remains in spirit strictly speculative" (Ryan, 2010, p. 467). Whereas cognitive narratologists rebuke classical approaches to consciousness representation for relying on categories that are "hopelessly inadequate to the empirical textual evidence" (Fludernik, 1993, p. 315), cognitive theories may be too quick to jump from the text to assuming cognitive parameters. Linguistic categories, even if inadequate to be applied to all cases, provide tools for textual analyses. While Alan Palmer's (2004, pp. 57–75) claim that some approaches to consciousness representation have overestimated, the verbal component in thought may well be true; I still want to stress that undeniably the reader is confronted only with verbal representation—be it verbalized by the narrator, the character, both or neither.

As Brian McHale (1994, pp. 60–65) aptly argues, detailed textual analysis is an essential step between theory and (valid) interpretation. Before "reading" minds of fictional characters with the help of her Theory of Mind (see Zunshine, 2006, pp. 6–10), or narrativising a text with cognitive frames (see Fludernik, 2003, p. 244), the analyst needs to read the text.[1] The somewhat naïve, but utmost important, observation regarding a literary text is this: The reader does not have bodily gestures or verbal lines of a narrator or a character at her disposal but a textual representation of those. This requires the use of linguistically based approach, even though it runs the risk of oversimplifying the literary problems, as noted already by some of the most prominent representatives of it (see Cohn, 1978, p. 11; cf. Palmer, 2004, p. 70). The text literally at hand is the only sign the reader has to interpret the story and the narrative, and this distinguishes literary narratives from conversational on-line narratives.

The exceptionality of literary text brings me back to the difference between the readers constructed by classical and postclassical narratology. The postclassical cognitive approach is partly inspired by the study of exceptional minds in real life, especially persons with autism. It has been discovered that autistic people's ability to infer other minds and speculate on who knows what is impaired. Analogically, they have hard time understanding fiction. This has inspired theorists like Lisa Zunshine (2006) to promote the importance of fictional literature as an ultimate testing ground for the human ability to interact socially. As Zunshine (2006) writes, "the novel feeds the powerful, representation-hungry complex of cognitive adaptations whose very condition of being is a constant social simulation delivered either by direct interactions with other people or by imaginary approximation of such interactions" (p. 10). What I want to emphasise is literature not as an "approximation" of real-life interactions, but a self-conscious thematisation of life and its various aspects. This suggests that the reader of literature, if

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[1] This double meaning of reading has also been pointed out by Iversen in his chapter.

compared to the "reader" of every-day situations, is required not only be non-autistic but to be

paranoid: to search for the big picture behind every textual cue or prompt.[2] Instead of only

looking at the ways the reader navigates in the story-world (see Herman, 2002, 2009), I am

interested in the reader's engagement with the textual and narrative structures of these works.

This kind of literal-minded reading has been articulated and practiced by Henrik Skov Nielsen

(2006) in regard to Bret Easton Ellis's *Glamorama* (1999). Nielsen (2006) concludes, that in

Ellis's novel "[t]he question is not merely *what* the story is about, but, rather, *how* the story is

told" (p. 28, emphasis original). The importance of textual organisation is highlighted already in

the motto of *Good-Bye to All That*, and that is what I want to investigate.

Paratexts, Beginnings and Ends

Gérard Genette (1987/1997, p. 2) calls paratexts—such as titles, generic labels or mottos—

thresholds of interpretation, a boundary between text and off-text. Although he emphasises

paratexts' role in the service of better reception of the text, he warns against taking them at face

value: Paratexts may be deceitful and they may contradict each other (Genette, 1987/1997, pp.

12, 183). In the interpretation of Graves's autobiography and novel mottos, dedications, prefaces

and epilogues are especially interesting.

　　　Good-Bye to All That starts with: "My dedication is an epilogue," which unsettles the

normal function and order of paratexts. In a typical case, dedications are performative in nature:

writing "to so-and-so" is the act of dedication (Genette, 1987/1997, pp. 11–12). The form used

in *Good-Bye to All That,* on the contrary, is highly self-referential: It describes what the

dedication is. Also, the dedication points to another paratext—a paratext located at the opposite

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[2] In his chapter of this volume and in his previous work, Mark Freeman has illustrated the difference between the telling of "big stories" such as autobiographies and telling that goes on contemporaneously, in ongoing experience.

end of the text. The epilogue itself is titled informatively "Dedicatory epilogue to Laura

Riding," and it is written in "you" form, addressed to Laura Riding. It discloses the parting of

Graves from his first wife and getting together with Riding both professionally and personally.

This disclosure is, however, written in an indirect way: The epilogue, firstly, lists what has not

been mentioned in the book and, secondly, speculates where these unmentionable things might

have fit into the narrative.

  If the reader follows the reference from the dedication to the epilogue and reads the latter

before the text itself, she first encounters information on what the autobiography she is about to

read omits. Thus, the epilogue suggests a heightened awareness of the gaps the reader is about to

encounter in the narrative. Alternatively, if the reader proceeded in the order the texts appear in

the book and reads the epilogue last, it leads her to rethink the incidents about which she has just

read. This emphasis on the non-narrated, in either case, casts a shadow of doubt on the

information given in the text itself. Once the reader finds out the narrator left something this

important untold, she wonders what else has been hidden.

  The reason for leaving Riding out of the text itself is given in the epilogue: According to

the narrator, she rather belongs to the present and future rather than to the past. At the beginning

of the autobiography, Graves states three objects for the book: giving good-byes, forgetfulness

and money (*GB*, p. 13). The first two resonate with the epilogue and also with the title (*Good-

Bye to All That*), suggesting a need to leave the past behind and offering writing as a means to

accomplish this. In the concluding chapter, Graves recounts the quick process of writing the

book and expects "another month of final review and I shall have parted with myself for good"

(*GB*, p. 439). Thus, writing the autobiography is a project of making sense of one self, but a

former self, and a one to be left behind. The narrator is very overtly and self-consciously

dissonant from his former self (cf. Cohn, 1978, p. 145). This distance between experiencing and

narrating selves will be discussed in the next section of my chapter.

Quite to the contrary to *Good-Bye to All That*, the title of the fictional autobiography, *I,*

Claudius, suggests forming and creating identity by telling and writing. The novel begins with a

performative enunciation of the self:

I, Tiberius Claudius Drusus Nero Germanicus This-that-and-the-other (for I shall not

trouble you yet with all my titles), who was once, and not so long ago either, known to

my friends and relatives and associates as 'Claudius the Idiot', or 'That Claudius', or

'Claudius the Stammerer', or 'Clau-Clau-Claudius', or at best 'Poor Uncle Claudius', am

now about to write this strange history of my life; starting from my earliest childhood and

continuing year by year until I reach the fateful point of change where, some eight years

ago, at the age of fifty-one, I suddenly found myself caught in what I may call the

'golden predicament' from which I have never since become disentangled. (*IC*, p. 9.)

This declaration highlights the importance of naming (names, titles and epithets) and forming

narratives (a history) in order to create and communicate a life story. For the reader, Claudius

the narrator promises to give a full account of his life from the beginning to an important turning

point in the near past. At the same time, he teases the reader by hinting at, but not disclosing, all

his titles and the nature of "the fateful point of change."

The withholding of information does, however, only apply to this level of narrative

communication, where Claudius is the teller of his life story. The full title of the novel is *I,*

Claudius. From the Autobiography of Tiberius Claudius Emperor of the Romans Born 10 B.C.

murdered and deified A.D. 54. This gives the reader not only the information about the "golden

predicament" but also provides the frame of the narrative. The novel has two authorial narrators:

"Graves," who claims the book to follow an autobiography by Claudius, and Claudius in the mentioned autobiography, unaware of the outer frame. The outer narrative frame is textually present only in the title of the book and in two paratexts, a motto and a note by the author, preceding the autobiography, which "Graves" claims to faithfully translate from Claudius's manuscript written in Greek.

The motto is located between the title page and "Author's Note," clearly on the level of the narrating "Graves." It is a quotation from Tacitus, which expresses the historian's understanding of ideological distortion in historical writing and reception. Claudius expresses similar ideas at the beginning of the novel, but hopes that the remoteness of posterity will better aid understanding of the meaning of his manuscript (Cf. Koelb, 2000, pp. 41–42). "Graves," the proposed rewriter of the original autobiography, and Claudius the autobiographer, seem to hold similar views on historical writing. Both the motto and the beginning of the text posit Claudius the fictional autobiographer to the role of a historian conscious of his task of making his own time understandable to a future audience. Quite at the beginning of the text Claudius claims: "This is a confidential history" (*IC*, p. 11), but continues: "But who, it may be asked, are my confidants? My answer is: it is addressed to posterity" (*IC*, p. 11). This addressee justifies Claudius to take the role of a historian, explaining the events, habits and customs of his time. Without this declared later audience, if addressed to Claudius's contemporary audience, detailed explanations of the habits of the time would fall into the category of redundant telling with disclosure functions (cf. Phelan, 2005, p. 12); a mode of telling where the narrator discloses something to the reader in a context of an audience already in possession of that information.

At the end of this fictional autobiography Claudius recalls the incident (being caught in the "golden predicament") when he was made the emperor. He is thinking about the possibilities

this offers to go through secret archives in order to clarify historical events: "How many twisted stories still remained to be straightened out! What a miraculous fate for an historian!" (*IC*, p. 396) This ties up both the narrative situation and the story, since Claudius states the same intent to write history as in the beginning of the novel and the story reaches the point also indicated in the beginning.

To sum up, the narrative frames the two autobiographies offer are: a formal good bye and forgetfulness vis-à-vis a historian's account of his time for the later generations. The frames I have discussed are mainly paratextual, but also involve embedded narrative structures like *I, Claudius*, where Claudius is intradiegetic (cf. Genette, 1972/1980, p. 228) in relation to "Graves," who is located on a narrative level encompassed by the outer frame. Werner Wolf (2010, pp. 61–62) points out the two meanings of frame as text segments (like paratexts), and frames in the cognitive sense as mental schemata. For him, the former are possible realisations of the latter. Again, the cognitive approach assumes the existence of a mental model before the text. Yet, I hope to have demonstrated the importance of textual organisation like the order of paratexts for the interpretation. Both novels highlight their textual construction and the potential deceitfulness of given cues.

What is more, the narrative frames outlined offer different types of relationships between the narrating "I" and the narrated "I." Both narrators are dissonant, separated from the narrated selves both temporally and epistemologically. Graves in *Good-Bye to All That* writes in order to settle with and part from the former self, Claudius writes in the effort to clarify and explain history where he himself is more or less involved. The former self is somewhat alien to the narrating "I," and described through nicknames and epithets given by others. Next, I will look at

how experience is presented and mediated in the novels, that is, how the narrating "I" and narrated "I" make sense of the world and the events.

Mediated Experiences

Firstly, another specification regarding frames needs to be made. Marina Grishakova (2009, p. 190) has pointed out that cognitive operation frames may be understood either as the specific content and its ideologically or otherwise bounded nature, or as the very operation of structuring, the act of making sense. In this section, I will analyse both what is related and how experience is mediated in the two autobiographies. The textual frames of the two novels reveal implications to both the content and the mode of experiences related.

Claudius does act more like a historian than a biographer, especially if the reader expects a confessional autobiography. Claudius tells more about the lives of others than himself: He concentrates on public life and the motives behind it. His own private life is only briefly commented on. For example, his fifteen-year-long sexual relationship with a prostitute named Actë is only mentioned briefly in the context of his unhappy marriage with Urgulanilla. This little personal information is accompanied by a motivation for telling it: "I mention her [Actë] only because my readers will wonder what sort of sexual life I led when living apart from Urgulanilla" (*IC*, p. 202). This indicates the narrator is not actually following the frame of "history of my life", where relating circumstances like these would be expected. Usually, the further away from the common understanding of a supposed audience the motivation of a story is, the more explicit motivation is to be expected (Genette, 1969/2001, pp. 240–43). In this case, however, the narrator is very explicitly motivated to tell something the reader expects in an

autobiography. Thus, the given textual frame is deceitful; Claudius's personal history and his

experiences are not in the centre.

One rare occasion of Claudius presenting his feelings and experiences is the occasion

when he is visiting a house of an acquaintance late in the evening, and the householder Plautius

sends him to sleep in the same room as his estranged, hostile wife Urgulanilla, without informing

either. Claudius immediately starts to fear for his life and tries to apologise to Urgulanilla and

leave her. She commands him to go to bed and start sleeping while she finishes reading a book.

Claudius tries to stay awake in order to be ready for an attempted murder he expects from

Urgulanilla.

> I heard Plautius go to bed after a time. "O Heavens," I thought. "He'll be asleep in a few
>
> minutes and with two doors between us he won't hear my cries when Urgulanilla throttles
>
> me." Urgulanilla stopped reading and I had no muttering and crackling of paper to help
>
> me fight against my sleepiness. I felt myself falling asleep. I was asleep. I knew that I
>
> was asleep and I simply must wake up. I struggled frantically to be awake. At last I was
>
> awake. There was a thud and a rustle of paper. The book had blown off the table on to
>
> the floor. The lamp had gone out; I was aware of a strong draught in the room. The door
>
> must be open. I listened attentively for about three minutes. Urgulanilla was certainly
>
> not in the room. (*IC*, p. 271)

Here the functions of experiencing and telling are clearly separated by temporal distance: the

narrating "I" is recalling what the experiencing "I" experienced years before. The voices of the

narrating "I" and the experiencing "I" are mixed, however. The passage includes the narrators

discourse ("I heard") and a direct quotation from the thoughts of the character ("O Heavens"),

but also psychonarration, where the narrator relates the character's thoughts, and free indirect

discourse, where the voices of the narrator and the character intertwine.[3]

From the discursive point of view, the most interesting passage is the sentences beginning

with "I felt myself falling asleep", which is clearly psychonarration, the narrator summing up the

feelings of the character. But the following series of short sentences imitate the abrupt thoughts

of a person struggling to keep himself awake. Yet, they are mostly in the narrator's discourse as

he is, for instance, summing up the different acts included in struggling to stay awake. In the

manner of free indirect discourse, some traits of the character's discourse can be found in phrases

like "I simply must" and in the temporal expression "at last" or modal expressions "must be" and

"certainly." At the same time, the teller's organising function is present in the verbs of

expressions like "I knew," "I was aware." This paragraph serves as an example of how literary

representation of experience may convey something that is only on the verge or even beyond

verbalisation for the character (see Cohn, 1978, pp. 7–8). Expressions like "I simply must" or "I

struggled frantically" pin down experience, which in itself is only half conscious, let alone

clearly thought of or verbalised.

In *Good-Bye to All That* Graves recalls his earliest memories and also talks about some of

the people who visited his home when he was a young child. He claims, "I knew all about them

in my way" (*GB*, p. 15). One person he mentions is the poet Algernon Charles Swinburne:

> Algernon Charles Swinburne, who often used to stop my perambulator when he met it on
>
> Nurses' Walk, at the edge of Wimbledon Common, and pat me on the head and kiss me;
>
> he was as inveterate pram-stopper and patter and kisser. . . . I did not know that
>
> Swinburne was a poet, but I knew that he was no good. (*GB*, p. 15)

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[3] See Cohn, 1978, pp. 11–17; although in Cohn's terminology free indirect discourse is called narrated monologue.

The way the child Graves knew the people "in his way" proves complicated in the passage. A child may object being patted and kissed, but hardly consider someone an "inveterate pram-stopper and patter and kisser." This is rather an adult's estimation, a content frame formed through several encounters with similar situations. A combination of child's and adult's estimation occurs in the last sentence of the quotation. The child intuitively knew Swinburne was "no good," and the adult frames that with the information that the child did not know Swinburne was a poet. This leads the reader to interpret that Swinburne was no good even without the knowledge about him being poet, and more so after the information.

Fludernik's cognitive model places experientiality at the core of narrative. The model relies on the oppositions of telling versus experiencing, and viewing versus reflecting. Fludernik (2010, pp. 116–117) maintains that viewing and experiencing are not language based. In both Graves's books analysed the frames of experiencing and telling are especially indeterminate and overlapping. This opposes Alan Palmer's (2004, pp. 9–12) famous criticism against the classical, speech-category approach to the study of literary minds: According to Palmer it puts too much emphasis on linguistic detail, which is irrelevant to the readerly dynamics. I hope to have demonstrated that attention to linguistic detail reveals the workings of the experiencing and telling "I"—and the porous boundary between them. The novels analysed include passages where the verbalising agent is unclear. This challenges the reader's task—crucial to the Theory of Mind approach—tracking minds, i.e. keeping track on the sources of representations (Zunshine, 2006, pp. 4–5). In *I, Claudius* and *Good-Bye to All That*, many utterances resist this tracking by mixing information and vocabulary from the narrated "I" and the narrating "I." The final section of this chapter tackles with the theories of mind.

Theories of Mind and Narrative

Iversen offers a detailed discussion on David Herman's (2011, pp. 8–9) take on the exceptionality of fictional minds in his chapter of this volume. My aim is not to take part in that discussion in detail, since the exceptionality of fictional minds is not the main issue here. My chapter is first and foremost about the exceptionality of literary text, the implications textual arrangement and structuring has to sense making. Real and fictional minds undoubtedly share many features and differ in many ways, but the distinction between our interacting face-to-face and reading a literary text is undeniable. When reading a literary text, we encounter textual representations—discourse cues or discourse prompts, in Herman's (2011, pp. 5, 10) words— which represent gestures, tones of voice and so on. Still, cognitive models for sense-making can be found in both of Graves's texts.

In *Good-Bye to All That*, the narrator tends to keep a mental distance from the narrated. One of the recurring ways of doing that is making and giving risk calculations, e.g. what were the odds anyone risking life or limb for a fellow soldier or a prisoner in different situations (see *GB*, p. 218). This falls under what Herman (2003, pp. 172–173) calls chunking experience, which is one of the basic principles a human mind uses to make sense of the ongoing flow of information. The narrator also distances himself from the former experiencing "I" by giving rather stark estimates of his condition:

> I had now been in the trenches for five months and was getting past my prime. For the
>
> first three weeks an officer was not much good in the trenches; he did not know his way
>
> about, had not learned the rules of health and safety, and was not yet accustomed to
>
> recognizing degrees of danger. Between three weeks and four months he was at his best,

unless he happens to have any particular bad shock or sequence of shocks. Then he

began gradually to decline in usefulness as neurasthenia developed in him. (*GB*, p. 220)

Here any individual officer, including Graves himself, is made to follow a certain pattern.

Experience is a key element, whether in the sense of being experienced enough to know one's

way around or being damaged by prolonged exposure to war. Yet, the passage does not account

for an individual experience, and could be classified to follow the frame of viewing, detached

from experientiality. Reflecting is another possible frame to be applied here, but viewing seems

better to fit the plainly declarative style. Graves starts with the personal pronoun "I" referring to

himself, but makes a move to a general "he" via the universal "an officer."[4]

Even clearer overt references to cultural scripts that overlay experience are several

references to caricature scenes, culminating in the narrator's remark when summoned with the

other officers to listen to a colonel's petty complaints about the officers' behavior: "This is one

of those caricature scenes that now seem to sum up the various stages of my life" (*GB*, p. 230).

The use of the pronoun "those" further highlights the canonicality of not only the scene but also

the mode of representing through almost banally typical scenarios. Martin Löschnigg (2010, p.

259) argues that "[t]he experiential in the sense of psychological re-living and cognitive re-

construction of experience is . . . an element of the autobiographical act itself." This does apply

to the autobiography of Graves, but with a twist: The autobiographer wants to maintain distance

from and refrain from psychological re-living of his former experiences, save for events from his

life before the war. Most of the narrative is dominated by a Hermanian mind, who wants to

come to terms with the past by chunking it into bearable pieces.

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[4] This may be compared with what Brockmeier writes in his chapter about localising oneself in multiple scenarios of
possible lives. In the case of *Good-Bye To All That*, Graves places himself in the scenario he claims every officer
goes through.

While *Good-Bye To All That* thematises typical scripts and chunking of experience, *I, Claudius* thematises Theory of Mind and its use in the story-world. The novel gives several accounts of situations where a person, most often Claudius himself, avoids difficult situations by trying to read what is expected of him by others, and to perform the correct gestures on the basis of their expectations of his feelings. The following quotation presents minds reading each other:

> I was being got out of the way. While Germanicus was in the City I would not be
> allowed to return, and all my letters home would be opened. So I never had an
> opportunity of telling Germanicus what I had been saving up for him so long. On the
> other hand, Germanicus had his talk with Tiberius. He told him that he knew that
> Postumus's banishment had been due to a cruel plot on Livia's part—he had positive
> proof of it. Livia certainly ought to be removed from public affairs. Her actions could
> not be justified by any subsequent misbehaviour of Postumus's. It was only natural for
> him to try to escape from undeserved confinement. Tiberius professed to be shocked by
> Germanicus's revelations; but said that he could not create a public scandal by suddenly
> dishonouring his mother: he would charge her privately with the crime and gradually take
> away her power.
>
> What he really did was to go to Livia and tell her exactly what Germanicus had
> said to him, adding that Germanicus was a credulous fool . . . He had taken exactly the
> right line with her. She was pleased that he still feared her sufficiently to tell her so
> much, and called him a dutiful son. She swore that she had not arranged false charges
> against Postumus: this story was probably invented by Agrippina, whom Germanicus
> followed blindly and who was trying to persuade him to usurp monarchy. Agrippina's

plan, she said, was no doubt to make trouble between Tiberius and his loving mother.

(*IC*, pp. 219–220)

Besides thematising Theory of Mind, people in the story-world reading each other's minds and presenting their own by acquiring certain mimicry, the passage demonstrates an important feature of fiction: It is a system of quotations. As Tamar Yacobi (2000, pp. 712–717) maintains, all fiction is a system of embedded discourses: Narrators quote characters, and so on; in many cases, with several layers of both narrators and characters. The emphasis on voices and quotations is another angle to the study of fiction's several levels, in addition to textual and narrative levels discussed earlier in this chapter. Claudius, the intradiegetic narrator (inside the frame of "Graves," who translates Claudius's autobiography) and homodiegetic narrator (a character in the story; Genette, 1972/1980, pp. 244–245), seems to quote other characters in the story-world. His quotational capacities surpass the given situation and the normal mind reading techniques of interpreting the gestures and expressions of another person. What the passage explicitly states in the beginning is Claudius's absence from the events. Yet, the minds of the other characters are not only accessible to him as they might be to a heterodiegetic third person narrator (cf. Cohn, 1978, pp. 119–120), but also representable with discursive privileges, which enable him to mix the words of other characters with his own.

Again, the linguistic features make evident the layers and interpenetration of several intentional minds, many of them simply assumed by another mind in the chain of quotations. The first paragraph consists mostly of what Germanicus had said to Tiberius. The emotive and assertive language after the dash hints that the text follows an original statement by Germanicus, only with tenses changed from present to past (*I have positive proof of it.* etc.). The last two sentences of the quotation are more complex. Claudius is telling what Livia has said to Tiberius

about what Germanicus had allegedly thought, following what Agrippina had told him. The claimed intentions of Agrippina, the fifth layer of minds in this quotation, are directed firstly to Germanicus and through Germanicus to Tiberius and Livia. In the last sentence, Livia starts from the alleged intentions of Agrippina but in the end the text is infiltrated by what Livia wants to tell Tiberius: that she is "his loving mother"—which, again, is not the truth, as Claudius has revealed by telling Livia's satisfaction with Tiberius' fear of her.

The first paragraph indicates the mixture of voices and the second the mixture of intentions in *I, Claudius*. Both destabilise the conventions of mimetic telling. According to Fludernik (2001, p. 621) this mind-hopping capacity of a first person narrator is a transgression of natural story-telling parameters. Yet, as demonstrated by Pekka Tammi's (2008, pp. 41, 47) analysis of Vladimir Nabokov's short story, *Recruiting*, narrative situations like this are possible and even plausible in fictional narratives: He argues that their distinction, and appeal, lie in the transposition between disclosing and transgressing the natural functions of our minds. This often leaves the reader with mutually exclusive narrative options, unable to prioritise one over the other (Tammi, 2008, p. 51). I want to add that these "unnaturalities" thematise the question of mind-reading in both meanings of reading, the interpretative and the textual. They alert the reader to do the latter reading task carefully. This may be frustrating to the reader reaching for the familiar, but often rewarding to the reader who enjoys seeking the meaning of the text at hand.

Conclusion

I, Claudius operates with the theory of social mind, and the narrating "I" constantly positions himself according to his assumptions about the expectations of others present. The story is rife

with intrigues, where a flexible identity is the only sustainable one. *Good-Bye to All That*

presents a narrating "I" eager to take control of his former experiences, and to clear himself from

emotional or social involvement. Crucial to both are the possibilities offered by fictional

embedding that enable the narrators to move from one position to another, whether the aim is to

recall, explain (away) or understand the events narrated. In all the instances, the narrating minds

intrude into the minds of the others and the minds of their former selves.

In these novels, the reader is often faced with narrative structures where sense-making is

interrupted and the minds and intentions cannot be discerned from one another. Here may lay

one distinction of literary narrative: While in real life it is important to make sense of our social

reality, in literature we—like the unnatural narrators—are freed from this need to put everything

in its right place. Making sense of a literary text involves dealing with both stories as sense-

making and the reader making sense of these stories. Of utmost importance is, however, the

possibility to linger between the need to naturalise—to infer meaning—and the enjoyment

brought by the divergences from ordinary communication.

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