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## History Impossible: Narrating and Motivating the Past

I might...expect that the cause of excluding me from England should be frankly and fairly stated for my own consideration and guidance. However, I will not grumble about the matter. I shall know the whole story one day, I suppose; and perhaps, as you sometimes surmise, I shall not find there is any mighty matter in it after all. (29)

The protagonist of Walter Scott's novel *Redgauntlet* (1824), Darsie Latimer, writes this to a good friend, Alan Fairford, from a journey he makes to the borderland between Scotland and England. Darsie, who lives in Edinburgh and turns out to be an Englishman, is on a mission to find out his family past. The quest for Darsie's personal past evolves into a study of British history, and of the possibilities to write history altogether. Darsie yearns for proper motivation, "frankly and fairly stated," for the instructions he has been given never to visit England, although he also realizes there might not be "any mighty matter in it after all." This thematizes the core feature of the novel, its persistent discussion on the motivation, tellability and epistemology of its own story. The reader encounters both explicit commentary on and implicit allusions to the past events for her "consideration and guidance" to make sense of. I have nothing to grumble about about that, but rather to investigate what the mighty matter here might be. The reader of Scott's novel, much like Alan in the storyworld, finds her expectations both confirmed and subverted at times—a feature once suggested as accounting for the fascination of fiction (see Tammi 47).

But there is more for the reader to encounter than for the protagonist Alan. As Henrik Skov Nielsen has pointed out, narrative fiction contains an inherent tension: whereas narrative etymologically suggests knowing, fiction rather alludes to invention (275). This question is, of course, even more pressing as far as historical fiction is concerned. The genre is defined by the reference the storyworld has to historical knowledge (see Maxwell 545). As I have suggested elsewhere (Hatavara, "Contested"), this reference is far from straightforward, and, for example, contesting a known version of history is one of the possible ways to make the reader

of historical fiction pay attention to the storyworld and its connection to history. Furthermore, I indicate that despite the link the storyworld has to reality, the modes of narrating do not correspond with those in real life storytelling situations. This matter, only touched upon in my previous article, is the main focus here: what are the distinctively fictional means of narrating used in historical fiction. These, if compared to face-to-face communication and everyday storytelling situations, include narrative acts with idiosyncratic impossibilities or illogicalities for the reader to enjoy and investigate.

The question about the (possible, some would say) distinctiveness of fiction has been addressed lately in the context of natural or unnatural narratives and narratology. The natural/unnatural-distinction has been defined in several ways. Some of the known advocates for the unnatural narrative discussion, namely Jan Alber, Stefan Iversen, Henrik Skov Nielsen and Brian Richardson, have in a joint article divided unnaturalness into three aspects: unnatural storyworlds, unnatural minds and unnatural acts of narration (116). The first one is not my interest here, but the second and third ones are—these two are also intertwined, which can be detected in the very reasoning of Alber and the others. The biggest issue concerning unnatural minds they wrestle with is the coherence and continuousness of a constructed human mind in fiction, which in the mentioned article pretty much boils down to the question of the relationship between the narrating and the narrated self in first person narrative (121, 123–24). Then again, according to Alber, Iversen, Nielsen and Richardson, acts of narration may become unnatural by being physically, logically, mnemonically or psychologically impossible (124). According to many theories of mind, the psychological impossibility would also include the breaking of the continuous consciousness assumption between the narrating and the narrated self, which is the aspect number two in the argumentation of Alber and the others. Thus, both second and third versions of unnaturalness are about the relationship between discourse and story, and more precisely between enunciators and existences.

The rule of thumb is, I believe, the statement clearly formulated by Dorrit Cohn according to which “a work of fiction itself creates the world to which it refers by referring to it” (*Distinction* 13). This entails the synchronicity and interdependence of the act of telling and the existence of the told. This rule does, however, come with a twist in historical fiction: the synchronous story–discourse relation is supplemented by the intertextual link the reader builds between the story and the previously encountered representations of the same historical events. Hence the narrative motivation may take forms associated with historical writing. This does not, however, prevent the use of narrative modes alien to histori-

ography proper and distinctive to fictional discourse. My examples in this article are Scott's *Redgauntlet* and *I, Claudius* (1934) by Robert Graves.

The two novels both have a narrator posing as a historian, even though they otherwise manifest narrative strategies far apart: *Redgauntlet* has a third person narrator with varying focalization, but also contains many letters and journal entries. *I, Claudius* is narrated solely by one first person narrator, who identifies himself as an autobiographer already at the beginning. *Redgauntlet* is set in history fairly close to the time of writing the novel, during the summer of 1765, and actually describes conjectural history, a Jacobite rebellion that never took place. *Claudius* the self-acclaimed autobiographer recounts the history of the Roman Empire from Julius Caesar's assassination to Calicula's assassination around the beginning of the Christian era.

In this article, I will concentrate on the narrative means with which these novels are offered as historical narratives. Epistemological verification and the ensuring of reader engagement in these novels revolves around three questions, which will be addressed in the following order: firstly, narrative embedding, secondly, the relationship between the narrating and the narrated, and thirdly, the question of narrative communication. Although my discussion is genre and case specific, I believe these novels pose questions with broader relevance to narrative theory about the specificity of fictional narrative and the ways of studying it. Telling, experiencing and reflecting past and history offer the reader a rich interpretative range of insights into fiction's communicative structure.

## Narrators and Narrative Levels

It is a critical commonplace to distinguish fiction from history by pointing out that whereas in historiography the narrator and the author are the very same person, in fiction they are undoubtedly separate (see Genette, *Fiction* 69–78; Cohn, *Distinction* 123–31). This does not prevent many fictional narrators from presenting themselves as authors, as the narrators of *Redgauntlet* and *I, Claudius* do. In historical fiction this is, one could think, an easy strategy to offer a natural frame of telling: a historian giving an account of true events. Yet fictional embeddedness, be it in the form of many manifest narrators or incorporated in one explicit narrative instance, is crucial to historical fiction. The multiplicity of the past can be conveyed through the indirect communication involved: narrators and characters speak to different narrative audiences on different narrative levels. It is the reader's task and privilege to navigate through different audience positions offered in the text.

In *Redgauntlet* the third person narrator comments on the different narrative modes as he makes his first appearance. This occurs in the novel only after thirteen letters, and the narrator points out the advantages of epistolary narration, but maintains that third person narrative is needed to inform readers:

The advantage of laying before the reader, in the words of the actors themselves, the adventures which we must otherwise have narrated in our own, has given great popularity to the publication of epistolary correspondence, as practiced by various great authors, and by ourselves in the preceding chapters. Nevertheless, a genuine correspondence of this kind (and Heaven forbid it should be in any respect sophisticated by interpolations of our own!) can seldom be found to contain all in which it is necessary to instruct the reader for his full comprehension of the story. (141)

*Redgauntlet* and its use of authorial narrator's commentary has been discussed by Harry E. Shaw in an article about historical fiction. Shaw calls for serious, realistic description of history, and deems the use of the narrator's self-reflexive, metafictional commentary in the quoted extract to be Scott's way of undermining himself as an author (179, 182–83). According to this interpretation, Scott flaunts his shifts from one narrative mode to another and emphasizes the way in which they may undermine reliability. It is true that the fabricated element of the letters is emphasized here—the reader is reminded that these letters are designed to tell a story. But does that indicate a failure to take plot and narration seriously, as Shaw sees it? In this regard, a discussion by James Phelan on unreliability provides another angle. Phelan makes evident that the focus has too much been on the estranging effects of unreliability, and the contrary effects of bonding unreliability have been overlooked. This is the kind of unreliability which brings the unreliable narrator closer to the authorial audience.

Phelan introduces six types of bonding unreliability, and the second type is of special interest here (“Estranging” 226–32). Phelan calls it “playful comparison between implied author and narrator.” In *Redgauntlet* the third person authorial narrator's expressed doubt about the ability of the modes used to convey a full picture of the past for the reader does raise the question of reliability. But it also makes the authorial audience sympathetic towards the narrator, as he admits his inability to depict the characters as accurately as they appear in their own words.<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, the narrator strongly expresses his commitment to giving his audience

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1 Richard Walsh has discussed Scott's way of negotiating authorial control especially in his prefaces (136–37). In *The Fortunes of Nigel* (1822), for example, he finds Scott practicing pre-emptive self-criticism. This is another means to build and maintain the narrator–audience relationship.

the best possible insight into the events depicted. This makes it evident that the narrator is aware of the epistemological problems inherent in both homo- and heterodiegetic modes of narration and will do his best to overcome them for the benefit of the readers. This good-will creates a bond between the narrator and the authorial audience. Thus self-reflection serves to build and maintain a mimetic interpretation of the story-world as something to be reflected upon.

This bond between the narrator and the authorial audience is, of course, subject to the reader's interpretation of other elements in the novel. Phelan's model for narrative communication suggests a difference between the narrative audience, who trusts the narrator and takes the world depicted as real, and the authorial audience, who concentrates on the artistic means, the synthetic element of fiction, and the interplay between different aspects in an artistic whole (*Reading* 5–6, 8; *Living* 18–21). Both audience positions with corresponding mimetic and synthetic interpretive inclinations are needed in order for the reader to participate in the illusion of the storyworld and to understand the novel as a literary artifact.

It is evident that in *Redgauntlet* the narrator's declaration about the originality of the letters and the absence of modifications only holds true inside the mimetic language game of the novel. Moshe Ron characterizes literary language as bearing semblance to true discourse, and from time to time as simulating the truth conditions of truth-oriented statements in a probable way (18–20). Ron refers to realistic motivation, which warrants any aspect of the story to be explainable in terms of why and how. He points out that such motivation typically is not present in the text. This agrees with Gérard Genette's formulation on *vraisemblance* and motivation (240–43). According to Genette, the further away from the common understanding of a supposed audience the motivation of a story is, the more it requires explicit motivation in the form of overt comments—and vice versa: events that follow shared maxims do not need explicit motivation.

Ron's argumentation vis-à-vis Genette's argumentation has an important difference: whereas Genette concentrates on how a story with unusual story contents is motivated, Ron adds two other probability factors besides characters and events: epistemic motivation, which calls for perceivers and perception, and semiotic motivation, which calls for writers and texts (20–25). To follow Ron's line of thought, the third person narrator in *Redgauntlet* very openly calls for semiotic, and secondarily also epistemic motivation: he has quoted, and will continue to quote, letters and journals by the people who are in the midst of the action. Hence the letters both function as pieces of evidence about the source of the story, and are able to provide a perspective on the past experience.

The letters, on their part, often include epistemic motivation, as the writer explains from whom and on what occasion he has got the information he delivers—while he at the same time freely capitalizes mnemonic overkill (see Cohn, *Transparent* 162) with word by word citations from long dialogues. This is particularly striking when Darsie writes to Alan, and includes in the letter a tale orally told to him by a man called Wandering Willie: the story imitates Willie's dialect, and it includes itself parts of a dialogue Willie had heard, where the enunciators are occasionally marked only by their name, typographically separated by italics and placed at the beginning of a row. The tale is, according to Darsie, faithfully quoted: "I will not spare you a syllable of it" (102), he writes. Thus the narrative utilizes modes mnemonically impossible, while at the same time remarking the origin of each piece of information.

The conventional unnaturalness here lies in the ability of both Willie and Darsie to reiterate word for word conversations and stories they have heard. Thus the content is warranted by epistemic motivation, but the textual specificity is not—it has to be reckoned under the fictional tradition of impossible sentences and perhaps also impossible typography: the italics that indicate the name of the speaker do not originate from Willie experiencing them or telling them, but are solely a feature of Darsie's text. *Redgauntlet* builds up into a manifold construction of embedded narratives, where the origin of each piece of information is openly laid out—that is, the epistemological motivation is carefully given. The whole novel becomes epistemologically motivated at the end, where a scholar named Dr. Dryasdust turns out to be the founder and provider of the letters and diaries quoted in the novel.<sup>2</sup> The novel ends with a chapter titled "Conclusion by Dr. Dryasdust in a Letter to The Author of *Waverley*" (400–02). It is addressed to the author of the novel (Scott used the pseudonym *Author of Waverley*) by a professional historian, who, besides referring to the written material he has sent to the author, verifies many of the events of the novel and gives some information about events that succeeded the end of the narrative. Yet, on many occasions, the textual delivery in the story world (Willie quoting dialogues in his oral story and Darsie writing the whole story afterwards) surmounts normal human capacity. Additionally, the letters of the characters manifest features like redundant telling (cf. Phelan, *Living* 12), which will be analyzed in the next chapter.

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2 Jonas Dryasdust appears in several novels by Scott, including *The Antiquary* (1816), *Ivanhoe* (1819), and *Pevekil of the Peak* (1823). The last mentioned is discussed by Walsh (137–38).

The letters at the beginning and at the end of *Redgauntlet* are several steps apart in narrative levels. The novel opens with a direct quotation of thirteen letters by the first person narrators, continues as the third person narrator's explanation, and then in the form of journal entries and focalized narratives, and ends with the last letter's narrator's assertion of this all being collected and provided by a historian. On the contrary, *I, Claudius* has a symmetrical beginning and end with the same narrator. The novel starts with this assertion:

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. (9)

The enunciating "I" with the many names, nicknames and titles—some of them not disclosed—claims here the authorial position of the following narrative. He also addresses the reader in a friendly manner as "you," the direct addressee, and declares he will refrain from burdening her with too much information. At the same time this withholding of information provokes, anticipation: what are the titles not yet disclosed, and this "golden predicament" mentioned. This play is, of course, only illusionary, because the reader will have the historical knowledge of the missing title "Caesar."<sup>3</sup>

Claudius the narrator outlines a communicative situation in the first chapter. A few pages after declaring his intention to write his history, Claudius tells about a prophecy according to which this book of his will be discovered about 1900 years after it is written, and that he addresses the book accordingly—in this way the book is claimed to be written by Claudius, but still to be addressed to the reading public of the time Graves wrote the novel. The novel declares an unusual communicative situation, where the intended audience is marked, but behind a long temporal distance. Claudius the historian both has his cake and eats it: he is

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3 Leona Toker has discussed reticence as gaps in *fabula* information: narrative gaps depend on the reader's estimation of the completeness of the information given at any moment of reading (5–7). As stated above, the dynamics of withholding information change in historical novels, where the reader's intertextual historical knowledge plays a significant part (see also Hatavara, "Rhetoric" 32–35).

a contemporary witness to the events, and yet self-consciously speaks to the generations to come—seemingly to the reader of the novel.

According to the same manner *I, Claudius* ends with Claudius' declaration of himself as a historian. He has now involuntarily been made Caesar, but finds solace in the opportunities this provides for reaching all the archives and finding out the truth about many events and "twisted stories". He concludes:

What a miraculous fate for an historian! And as you will have seen, I took full advantage of my opportunities. Even the mature historian's privilege of setting forth conversations of which he knows only the gist is one that I have availed myself of hardly at all. (396)

This conclusion pairs with the beginning: whereas the beginning motivates the narrative as being based on lived experience, which creates epistemic motivation, this end conjures semiotic motivation through historical documents. Yet the assertions of telling about one's own life and not conjuring up discussions do not hold to the narrative practice of the novel. These comments suggest historical accuracy and documentation, but the narrator does not, however, confine himself to the role of a character narrator, but has several extraordinary abilities, which I will study in the next chapter. The discrepancies between explicit commentary and narrative modes are essential in the interpretation of both these novels. Just as unreliability may be estranging or bonding, other narrative means may take on multiple functions.

## Narrating and the Narrated

The beginning of the novel *I, Claudius* discloses an important feature of the narrating I: his many roles and masks, indicated by the many mock-names. The historical figure Claudius, who became emperor at a fairly late age, is believed to have suffered from cerebral palsy or Tourette's syndrome: he limped, he drooled, stuttered and was constantly ill. Family members mistook these physical disabilities as reflective of mental infirmity, and kept Claudius mostly out of the social life. It has also been suspected that Claudius magnified these symptoms in order to appear harmless and avoid being killed as a rival to the throne. Accordingly, the novel's Claudius is a master of disguises and a utilizer of multiple narrative modes.

The readerly expectations raised by the opening of the novel are surpassed in terms of the story content. The reader is led to look for an autobiographical narrative about Claudius' life ("this strange history of

my life" [9]). This is, however, not the case, since the story begins well before Claudius' birth, and mostly depicts important events in the public life, which Claudius is not much part of. Most emphasis is put on many conspiracies during the reign of Augustus, Tiberius and Caligula. Only on few occasions does Claudius tell about his feelings or thoughts, but mostly relates the events like a historian, distanced from these events. Throughout the novel Claudius in many ways resembles a heterodiegetic narrator, with similar epistemological and discursive possibilities over the other characters. Claudius the narrator possesses all but one of the traits of an omniscient narrator William Nelles lists. Nelles suggests omniscience to be a flexible notion with several features an author may use to her ends (119–21). These features include omnipotency, omnitemporality, omniprecency and telepathy. Claudius is not omnipotent: actually quite the opposite, he has very little power over what happens to himself or to others, and does on many occasions lament that. According to Nelles, omnipotent narrators present themselves as creators of the fictional world, and hence have the ability to make happen anything they want.

As Nelles himself points out, omnipotency really isn't an attribute of omniscience, but entails it (120). It may also be noted, that the extradiegetic narrators in *I, Claudius* and in *Redgauntlet* may not want to pose as the inventors of the storyworld, as they are doing their best to assert the reader of historical accuracy. Thus this lack of omnipotency is not a restriction imposed upon these narrators, but a strategy adopted to maintain the illusion of semiotic motivation of the storyworld. An analogical structure in biblical narratives, where the role of the creator needs to be allotted to God, has been pointed out by Meir Sternberg ("Omniscience" 691). As far as concerns the freedom of moving in space, time and minds of other characters, Claudius is well equipped, and only rarely motivates his sources of information.

On one occasion Claudius narrates at length his grandmother Livia's thoughts about her husband Augustus, and even openly declares this in the end: "How many mere kings paid tribute to Augustus!...Had not Apis, the sacret bull of Memphis, uttered a bellow of lamentation and burst into tears? This was how my grandmother reasoned with herself" (29). The form of this passage follows free indirect discourse (FID) as the narrating Claudius apparently partly follows the emotive and expressive language of his grandmother. But where does this language originate from? We are told that these are the private thoughts of Livia, who "reasoned with herself." So we have a textbook example of the literary paradox: narrative fiction obtains its greatest realistic illusion when it narrates in ways unattainable to real human beings, such as depicting the inner thoughts of another person (Cohn, *Transparent* 5–9). Possibly Livia

told Claudius later about her reasoning, and Claudius again later wrote them down. A little earlier in the novel Claudius explains he has heard many things about the actions of his grandmother from herself on her death bed (25). But despite this possible epistemological motivation, the violations against human knowledge and narrative abilities are as apparent as were the ones in Wandering Willie's tale in *Redgauntlet*: How could the dying Livia remember word for word her thoughts years before? And how could Claudius then remember the same words, again years later?

These questions, however, are not the essential ones. More important is that Claudius the narrator is free from the subject position of a common man, and the novel utilizes fiction's possibility to free the discourse from the normal anchoring to a stable narrating entity and position—even though the narrating Claudius is explicitly homodiegetic (cf. Fludernik, *Towards* 269–310). Monika Fludernik considers this mind-hopping capacity of a first person narrator an infringement of natural story-telling parameters (“New” 621). Yet, as demonstrated by Pekka Tammi's (41, 47) analysis of Vladimir Nabokov's short story “Recruiting,” this is possible and even plausible in fictional narratives: their distinction, and appeal, lie in the transposition between disclosing and transgressing the natural functions of our minds.

What is more, the representation of Livia's thoughts is overtly literary and foregrounds its own representational power: it abounds with expressivity in its use of exclamations and questions, and openly voices that these are the private thoughts of another character. Cohn has pointed out that FID (narrated monologue in Cohn) may at times resemble a mock-quotation, where the narrator partly imitates the words of the character (*Transparent* 119–20). The rather ironic mock-quotation of what Claudius' grandmother supposedly thought opens up several interpretative possibilities and thematizes the blurry relations between voice, knowledge and narrative positions.

The freedom to move in time and place is evident in the next example. Claudius tells about an incident where an esteemed senator, Calpurnius, sues Urgulania because of an unpaid debt. Urgulania has a superior position as a favourite of Livia, who is wife of the late Augustus, and mother of Caesar Tiberius.

When Urgulania read the summons, which was for her immediate attendance at the Debtor's Court, she told her chair-men to take her straight to Livia's Palace. Calpurnius followed her and was met in the hall by Livia, who told him to be off. Calpurnius courteously but firmly excused himself, saying that Urgulania must obey the summons without fail unless too ill to attend, which clearly she was not. Even Vestal Virgins were not exempt from attendance at court when subpoenaed. Livia said that his behaviour was personally insulting to her and

that her son, the Emperor, would know to avenge her. Tiberius was sent for and tried to smooth things over, telling Calpurnius that Urgulania surely meant to come as soon as she had composed herself after the sudden shock of the summons, and telling Livia that it was no doubt a mistake, that Calpurnius certainly meant no disrespect, and that he himself would attend the trial and see that Urgulania had a capable counsel and a fair trial. (223)

This extract, without the frame of Claudius posing as a first person narrator, would fall into a conventional heterodiegetic narration, with epistemological and discursive privileges such as FID, mixing the narrator's discourse with the discourses of Calpurnia, Livia and Tiberius in turns. An interesting observation may also be made about the storyworld: Tiberius the Emperor is talking to two people separately and in secrecy from each other, even if they all share the same space. Like characters in a play, Tiberius changes his tone from one to another, and the other characters don't see or hear what happens under their very eyes. Furthermore, what Claudius declares Tiberius to have told to Calpurnius includes an assumption about Urgulania's thoughts and intentions. The last sentence does not actually manifest a mind-reading ability of Tiberius, but an intentionally false depiction of Urgulania's aims and motivations. Still this false mock-quotation, heavily modified by the teller (cf. Cohn, *Transparent* 119–20),<sup>4</sup> suggests an original—even though never existent—feeling of Urgulania: the "sudden shock," which again Tiberius tries to convey she "surely" had, and now needs to recover from. Here the question of unnatural acts of narration or unnatural voices comes in layers and penetrates diegetic levels: not only the narrating Claudius but also other characters allegedly know and represent each other's thoughts.

In some cases, Claudius refers to himself as Claudius, alternatively with I: "You may be sure, though, that it caused poor Claudius the greatest possible grief...How was I to know that it was Clement who had been killed" (171). Claudius the teller is clearly separated from Claudius the character, although the pronoun "I" refers to both. The epistemologically privileged position of the narrating I over the narrated younger self is prominent as the ignorance of the latter is emphasized by a rhetorical question. This discursive and epistemological anchoring into the moment of telling is further emphasized by addressing the extradiegetic audience directly as "you." Then again, many passages, where Claudius speaks about his earlier self as I blend the frames of telling and experiencing. In the next extract Caligula the emperor has just ordered Claudius to marry

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4 See also Daniel P. Gunn about the prevalence of the narrator in FID.

a young girl called Messalina, and Claudius relates this to his long time companion, the prostitute Calpurnia.

I told her [Calpurnia] that the marriage was forced on me and that I would miss her very much indeed. But she pooh-pooched that: Messalina had twice her looks, three times her brains, and birth and money into the bargain. I was in love with her already, Calpurnia said.

I felt uncomfortable. Calpurnia had been my only true friend in all those four years of misery. What had she not done for me? And yet she was right: I *was* in love with Messalina, and Messalina was to be my wife now. There would be no place for Calpurnia with Messalina about.

She was in tears as she went away. So was I. I was not in love with her, but she was my truest friend and I knew that if ever I needed her she would be there to help me. I need not say that when I received the dowry money I did not forget her. (381)

Claudius speaks to several audiences here. In terms of classical speech category approach (see Palmer 9–13, 53–57) the first sentence could loosely be interpreted as indirect discourse, where the telling I is summarizing what he said in the past—or as free indirect discourse, especially in the light of the (excessively) reassuring choice of words “very much indeed.” The second sentence again comes close to FID, with the words of the telling I mixed with the words or thoughts of either Calpurnia or the experiencing I. It is most probably Calpurnia who points out the superior qualities of Messalina, her looks, brains, birth and money, as she has just “pooh-pooched” Claudius’ attempt to assure her of his affection for her. The second paragraph, from the second sentence on, comes closest to FID in this passage, if we consider—which *I, Claudius* seems to suggest—FID to be possible in first person narration. The telling I and the experiencing I act as a narrator and a character. The narrator changes the tense to the past, but remains an “I,” only a later version. One deviation from traditional FID can be discerned: the change from a presumable original of “*these* four years” to “*those* four years.” Whereas the persistent pronoun “I” reduces the narrator’s visibility and perspective here, this change of pronoun, on the contrary, brings the narrator again to the fore. This categorization makes clear that the narrating I and the experiencing I both differ from and intermingle with each other in many ways. Thus Claudius discursively shifts not only between first and third person modes of narrating, but also between dissonant and consonant first person narrative (see Cohn, *Transparent* 143–72).

From a cognitively inspired narratological point of view, the frames of experiencing and telling (cf. Fludernik, “Natural” 244–47) are of interest here. In the first paragraph, does the narrator read the mind of Calpurnia or does he cite her words? The second paragraph is even more interesting:

is it the experiencing I organizing his thoughts at the moment when he “feels uncomfortable,” or is it the telling I reflecting his former thoughts and speculations? It seems like the experiencing I is trying to grasp the reality by narrativizing it, organizing his thoughts by rational reasoning, and that the telling I is at least trying to reach his former thoughts and feelings. This indeterminacy and overlapping of the frames of telling and experiencing has been discussed by Maria Mäkelä in some short stories by Richard Ford. Her important observation is that literary minds always merge the representation with the represented. In Claudius’ case this means that experiencing and telling are simultaneously present in both the past and the present of telling.

But how about rhetorics—and who are the audiences? Who is the narrator telling to at which point? In the first two paragraphs, it seems like he is reasoning with himself, or trying to explain his reasons to an audience who would read his history later. In the last paragraph, especially at the end, the audience is addressed more directly and from a later time point, as the narrator refers to later events. Claudius is overtly and self-declaredly a protean character, someone, who at the beginning defines himself in terms of how people used to call him. This also includes an overt assertion of dissonance: “I *was* known” (9; my emphasis). Throughout the narrative Claudius not only exercises narrative liberties associated with omniscient narration, but he also takes two roles in the storyworld and oscillates between them: Claudius, the man of letters, who is witty and knowledgeable—and a capable historian—and Claudius the clumsy stutterer, who feels alienated in the world and is incapable of expressing himself. The story of the novel illustrates and thematizes the need to understand the occasion and to adjust one’s story accordingly. The circumstances in the court are ever-changing with mentally unstable emperors, who have declared themselves to be Gods or semi-Gods. On many occasions Claudius survives because he is able to draw quick conclusions about bizarre situations – and also to lead others to interpret situations in a manner favorable to him. In this sense the story thematizes the power of narrative as a cognitive tool for mastering reality. But, on the other hand, this is all just a game (also) in the storyworld, and the characters quickly change their narratives whenever necessary. Thus the story mocks efforts to make sense of the reality by narrativizing it, and depicts those efforts as momentary and even meaningless.

*Redgauntlet* openly discusses the freedom of subjectivity and of speech in a line by Redgauntlet himself. Redgauntlet, who turns out to be Darsie’s uncle, declares to Darsie his deep belief in the forces of destiny—even though he himself has gone to great trouble to control his nephew’s life and future.

Yes, young man, in doing and suffering, we play the part allotted by Destiny, the manager of this strange drama, stand bound to act no more than is prescribed, to say no more than is set down for us; and yet we mouth about free-will, and freedom of thought and action, as if Richard must not die, or Richmond conquer, exactly where the Author has decreed it shall be so! (212–13)

Taken literally, this would all but ridicule the mimetic language game of the novel: how is the novel to portray characters with motifs and aspirations, if they are fully aware of being but masks for the voices the author wants to contest. Still, a sounder interpretation takes *Redgauntlet* not really to be aware of himself being a literary character, but to dramatize his faith in the powers of destiny by this allusion between people and characters in a drama. The reader may interpret this as another joyful undermining of authorial privileges, or as a reminder to stay on guard for the next move in the mimetic game. Both *Redgauntlet* and *I, Claudius* have a narrator who wavers between the position of a character and that of a narrator. This obscurity has an impact on the communicative structure of the narrative.

### Narrative Communication

I have demonstrated how *Redgauntlet* surpasses the natural abilities of its narrators by mnemonic (cf. Cohn, *Transparent* 162) and discursive overkill for example in Wandering Willie's tale. As the novel begins with private letters, redundant telling with disclosure functions (cf. Phelan, *Living* 12) is recurrent. The thirteen letters between Darsie and Alan at the beginning of the novel are drafted in a manner that ensures the reader gets the relevant information about the characters and events introduced. The first letter is rhetorically quite heated, as the protagonist Darsie is irritated by the fact that his friend did not join him to an adventure. This gives him the opportunity to go over their relationship in past and present, his own personal history, and also his hopes for the future. (13–15)

These disclosure functions in the embedded narrative level, followed by the extradiegetic reminder of authorial powers—consciously refraining from “interpolations”—question the mimetic communicative telling-frame, which Phelan has characterized as “somebody telling somebody else on some occasion and for some purpose(s) that something happened” (*Living* 18). The subjects, occasions and purposes do not always neatly meet at the same diegetic level. The characters, who are made to carry redundant information in their letters, are also made to give excuses for it, like Darsie in the first letter: whereas the rendering of their shared past is communicatively motivated by Darsie feeling upset about Alan's behavior,

in the case of Darsie's past the redundancy needs to be overtly motivated. This is achieved, as Darsie explains his repeated telling of the story with his effort to "wring some sense out of it." He also hopes Alan will consider his story and its significance. (17) In this manner *Redgauntlet's* letters thematize the epistolary effort to create a shared space for the writer and the addressee (see Herman 531–32). As Vimala Herman argues, epistolary writing itself has a communicative structure at one remove: the presence of the addressee is illusionary (529–30, 539–40). The letters in *Redgauntlet* use abundant reference to this epistolary communicative situation, for example in the form of addressing "you," the receiver. The content is however, directed to the reader of the novel.

Tamar Yacobi's discussion of these instances—redundant telling or disclosure function in Phelan's later terms—adds another important observation. Yacobi separates rhetorical and fictive content in a speaker's discourse: the latter follows the given communicative situation in the storyworld, the former denotes the disclosure functions ("Fictional" 123–26). She sees these disclosure functions as deviating from communicative symmetry, and forming overlapping communication, where the embedded speaker addresses not only the addressee within the fictional world but also, even if unwittingly, the reader of the novel. Thus the asymmetric communication structure may either be incomplete—there may not be a receiver<sup>5</sup>—or excessive: there are several receivers to one sender.

Like *Redgauntlet, I, Claudius* also rejects the mimetic, symmetrical telling-frame. Both novels defy the definition of narrative as communication with symmetrical sender–receiver pairs. Claudius argues that his contemporaries do not understand what he wants to say, but he hopes that the future generations several hundred years later will appreciate his history. This address from the narrator does not have a corresponding narratee in the fictional world—the narrator actually denies the sole possibility of a contemporary audience. What is more, Claudius as the narrator has a variety of teller-functions that cannot be reduced to a single sender person, and where the receiving end of the communicative continuum may also be lacking: Claudius vacillates between homo- and heterodiegetic positions, and occasionally reasons with himself in between those.

Whereas Yacobi used the terms 'fictive' and 'rhetorical' to denote narration which either follows or does not follow given communicative situation, Phelan in his treatment of redundant telling specifies between narrator functions and disclosure functions, where the former is constrained by the narrative situation, and the latter is not (*Living* 12). While

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5 See also Phelan's discussion on lyrical narrative (*Living* 158).

I find this division to be useful, I still think the terminology is in need of revision. With regard to Yacobi's choice of words, the later development of the theory and conceptualization has brought along a risk of confusion: the more recent argumentation around the concepts fictive, fictional and rhetorical makes her theory hard to access today. What Yacobi labels fictive, would be more clearly defined under mimetic today—whereas mimetic thirty years ago would have been a term too wide to use in this meaning, as referring to interpretation faithful to the overt communicative situation.

Phelan's terminology, to my mind, has two possible problems. Firstly, this distinction between narrator and disclosure functions is at risk of being mixed with the distinction between narrator and character functions, which is a separation on a completely different level of narrative. Secondly, and what is more important here, this distinction indicates too narrow an understanding of narrative and narrator, equalizing narrator with teller. My suggestion is to make the separation between communicative and informative functions. I would then propose the overall concept to be narratorial functions, and that we divide these into communicative and disclosure functions, the first ones abiding to the rules of communication, the latter defining them. This also gets me back to the discussion about natural and unnatural narratives, since the communicative may be called natural and the disclosure unnatural narrative functions.

Here my argument comes close to Nielsen's claim that "one does not have to consider all forms of narration as report and communication" (279). I do agree, and hope I have demonstrated what this means in the novels analyzed in this essay. The reader does not only have possible audience positions to choose between, but is confronted with voices whose sender–receiver positions are lacking or fuzzy if compared to communicative models. Nielsen suggests a definition for unnatural narrative as narration which is not communication, as opposed to natural oral narratives. This seems a plausible move, and one that supplements the idea of fiction's language being able to displace the origin of the speaker deictically, which is discursively exemplified in free indirect discourse.

Fiction's discursive potential, due to its embedded narrative structure, has not always been welcomed by theorists of the historical novel. Shaw alleges *Redgauntlet* to be marked by Scott's frivolous use of history and narrative. This is supposedly due to the novel's use of various narrative modes which do not constitute a distinct and coherent story. I claim quite the opposite. There is nothing frivolous in using several narrative modes in order to convey history; on the contrary, these modes enable a fuller picture of the past depicted, and encourage reader evaluation of the story and discourse. From my position, the problem—if there is one—with

*Redgauntlet* is precisely the opposite from what Shaw is concerned about. The problem is that towards the end of the book the third person narrator increasingly takes over the narrative. The narrative mode moves from letters to a journal, then to internally focalized third person narrative and finally to third person narrative with zero focalization. This has a negative impact on the bond which the authorial audience has formed with the first-person narrators, who as characters also act as focalizers.

In *Redgauntlet* the reader is first acquainted with the past world through and with the people who experience it. Then, step by step, the narrative moves away from the experienced story-time to the retrospective discourse-time. This development culminates in the last chapter's letter to the author of the narrative just presented. Thus the audience positions gradually move closer to the position of the real reader, who, in the end, is left at the same point where she started. After forming a bond with the characters as narrators and actors in the past, the authorial audience is taken back to the distant temporal and epistemological position. It seems like the novel, after all, demonstrates mistrust in the reader's capacity to navigate between different points of time and different audience positions in the process of making sense of the past and participating in the understanding of history. Still, *Redgauntlet* exemplifies the possibilities of fictional embedding and several narrative voices to mediate, and also to thematize, different temporal positions involved in writing history.

As Jonathan Culler has indicated, knowing is a very relative or even irrelevant issue as far as fiction is concerned (23–24). Fictional discourse may or may not be assigned to a dramatized teller person, but always originates in the implied author. Character-narrators represent the storyworld they live in, but all kinds of narrative voices, I claim, convey information that constitutes the storyworld and its characters. In this creation, even if the aim is to compose an illusion of a storyworld mimetically resembling our own, the unnatural or synthetic elements of fiction are crucial.

## In the End

According to natural narratology, the process of narrativization, making sense of narrative fiction, is founded not only on our experience of everyday life, but also on our experience with fiction's generic properties (cf. Fludernik, "Natural" 244). This is a feature of the theory worth more attention than it has received so far. Fiction, be it natural or unnatural, is part of our everyday life and experience. Both *Redgauntlet* and *I, Claudius* present a protagonist who is not only a conscious teller character

but also an experiencer and reflector of his life through literary models. Claudius takes the majority of his examples from historical literature, enriched by stories like the Horse of Troy (325). Darsie mostly resorts to Shakespeare and romantic literature, folk tales and sayings of famous contemporary people, but also to general ideas about, for example, the functions and centrality of plot—for instance, by proclaiming “[t]he plot thickens, Alan” (90). These or other explicit comments by the narrators do not, however, indicate that either of the novels would be solely or even mostly about metafictional play—rather they are attempts to narrate history in a meaningful fashion. The reader’s effort to interpret the text with incongruences between explicit commentary and the narrative tools implemented requires the same kind of activity the characters utilize in testing different models of understanding, be their origin in the reader’s lived or read experience.

Yacobi’s suggestion for interpreting self-contradictions in a given text includes five principles: the genetic, the generic, the existential, the functional and the perspectival (“Fictional” 114–19). In recent narratological argumentation the existential (the fictive world) and to some extent the perspectival (the observer of the fictive world) have gained much attention—compare, for example the signs of unnatural narrative quoted at the beginning of this article. What seems to be perhaps the one master principle above the others is the functional one. As Yacobi maintains, “[t]he work’s aesthetic, thematic and persuasive goals invariably operate as a major guideline to making sense of its peculiarities” (117). She also makes evident that the principles she gives do not operate separately but come in mixtures and as interpretative options. Formal patterns can serve a number of different effects, and vice versa (Yacobi, “Package” 223; Sternberg, “Proteus”; “Omniscience” 687–88; cf. Phelan, *Living* 68), which has been eloquently exemplified by Phelan’s discussion on bonding unreliability (see also McCormick 324–34).

But, what is more, it is not the product but the process of making sense of narrative fiction which is of essence. Tammi demonstrates how fiction may “teeter between mutually exclusive, impossible narrative options” (51); likewise, Cohn calls for recognizing the certain “two-mindedness” inherent in the interpretation of fictional narratives, where the reader is left wavering between two possible solutions (“Discordant” 309). This teetering and wavering I have tried to demonstrate in my analyses of *Redgauntlet* and *I, Claudius*. It applies to the position and the abilities of the narrators, be they in relation to the narrated or to the audiences, and is precisely the reason for the analysis. Darsie the correspondent writes to Alan:

I continue to scribble at length, though the subject may seem somewhat deficient in interest. Let the grace of the narrative, therefore, and the concern we take in each other's matter, make amends for its tenuity. We fools of fancy, who suffer ourselves, like Malvolio, to be cheated with our own visions, have, nevertheless, this advantage over the wise ones of the earth, that we have our whole stock of enjoyments under our own command, and can dish for ourselves an intellectual banquet with most moderate assistance from external objects. (118)

Narratives like *Redgauntlet* or *I, Claudius* offer rich material for literary scholars, who may go on to dish themselves one intellectual banquet after another, even upon the smallest detail in these narratives. This scribbling is what we do, more or less gracefully. This is why, even though I agree with Nielsen's observation about the need to exclude the necessity of communication from narrative (296–99), I disagree with his suggestion that this would make the real flesh-and-blood author pivotal. Nielsen concludes that “[t]o realize the full potential of authors, we should rather ‘employ’ than ‘imply’ them” (299). I would much rather have us literary scholars realize our full potential as readers of the endlessly intriguing and never fully explainable fiction, be it natural or non-natural, schematic or strange, logical or impossible—or all this together.<sup>6</sup>

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