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Conceptualising (Un)reliable Narration and (Un)trustworthiness

Unreliable narrators abound not only in fiction and film, but, unfortunately, in real life, too. From little children to leading politicians, unreliable narrators can be found everywhere. Since it is in the interest of human beings to manipulate others to make them behave in a way that ensures their own well-being and survival, miscommunication has even been called a part "of the proper functioning of social communication" (Sperber 2006: 177). According to this worldview, deception and manipulation are ingrained in human interactions. On the other hand, sociologists have emphasised the crucial importance of reliability and trust "as a basic fact of social life [...]. [A] complete absence of trust would prevent [man] even from getting up in the morning" (Luhmann [1968] 1979: 4). Social interactions run more smoothly, and time and cognitive effort are saved when people who communicate with one another do not have to ask themselves in what possible ways and to what ends the narrator might be trying to deceive them. Trust is therefore the starting point for defining the rules of proper conduct; its function is the reduction of complexity (cf. ibid.: 8, 21). Following Niklas Luhmann, researchers in different disciplines proceed from the premise that, as a necessary condition (and result) of human interaction, trust is the basis of social life.[1] Unfortunately, however, trust has to be distinguished from knowledge. The decision to believe in the reliability of a person always involves a risk and may be misguided and entail radical consequences for the future behaviour of both speaker and listener.

We are therefore faced with a situation fraught with contradictions: As narrators, we may profit from telling unreliable tales; as listeners, we need reliable information. It has even been claimed that human beings have

1 Trust has a number of positive consequences in that it "enables cooperative behavior; [...] reduces harmful conflict [...] promotes effective responses to crisis" (Rousseau/Sitkin/Burt et al. 1998: 394). Even the economy depends on the trust of buyers both in material goods and shares.

developed particular skills for "cheater detection"[2] during the course of our evolution in order to distinguish trustworthy from untrustworthy communicators. Whether we adopt the sceptical view of human nature voiced by Dan Sperber and others or whether we regard trust as the basis of human interactions,[3] the identification of untrustworthy stories is certainly of great importance in many areas of human life. The question of whether to believe a narrator or not transcends the field of literature. It is crucial in daily life as well as in social and economic interactions. The exploration of (un)reliability is conducted across a broad gamut of academic fields ranging from law to history, and from psychology to the study of culture. Each discipline has developed its own elaborate research traditions, methods, and approaches to analyse this phenomenon. The growing wealth of studies on (un)reliability in many fields, particularly in literary studies, at the same time raises the question of why one should read yet another volume on this topic; surely nothing new can be said about it. Looked at more closely, however, this statement itself turns out to be unreliable.

There are at least three reasons for the kind of research presented in this volume. First, though unreliable narrations have been the focus of a host of literary analyses, these have so far been mainly concerned with one specific type of unreliability: the phenomenon of unreliable homodiegetic (character) narrators. Even though there are a few articles on heterodiegetic ('omniscient') narrators, much unmapped terrain remains in this field. Perhaps more importantly, literary interpretations of unreliable narration have so far concentrated on a particular kind of narrator who, according to Wayne C. Booth (1961: 304), becomes the object of dramatic irony while a story is told "behind his back" in a communication between implied author and reader. However, there are quite a number of other unreliable narrators who should be taken into consideration, too. Moreover, even within literary studies, the discussion of this phenomenon has so far been largely confined to the study of fiction, novels and short stories. There are a few pioneering works in other fields, especially film studies, but though it has long been acknowledged that it would be rather naïve to trust all the stories that narrators tell in literary ballads, dramatic monologues, memory plays or even lyric poems, the analysis of unreliability in drama and in poetry has been neglected. A consideration of the

2 Cosmides/Tooby (1992: 198). These two authors have reviewed the relevant empirical studies and concluded that "people have inference procedures specialized for detecting cheaters: individuals who have illicitly taken benefits" (1992: 199).

3 Tomasello/Carpenter/Call et al. (2005) have shown that children tend to be trusting in social communication till the age of four; ontogenetically, distrust is developed later than trust.

particularities of these forms of unreliability can be the starting point in closing a gap in the existing research; it can also highlight specific features or characteristics that might then be transferred to the study of fiction and to other academic fields.[4]

Second, the literary study of unreliable narration has been pursued more or less in splendid isolation, with a rather narrow research orientation geared towards the analysis of a specific type of homodiegetic narrator in fiction published from the late eighteenth century onwards. Wayne C. Booth set this track of inquiry in his famous definition, the importance of which will briefly be considered below. By choosing this focus, the literary discussion has closed itself off against the insights that other disciplines have achieved in their studies of unreliability. Given the basic similarities between (un)reliable narrators in daily life and those featured in fictional stories, there is much to gain from looking at the way other research traditions conceptualise the phenomenon. In order to connect the literary study of unreliability with other disciplines, however, one should also consider related terms which are closely linked to the discussion of reliability. The concept of trust or trustworthiness, for instance, is an object of debate in a large number of disciplines ranging from psychology and philosophy to sociology, which have explicated trust and related terms to achieve insights we ignore at our own peril.[5] A comparison between the approaches, methods and criteria for exploring unreliability can highlight gaps in our own discipline, open up new perspectives and make it possible to modify and elaborate existing categories.

Third, the research on (un)reliability and trust has so far mainly been conducted within disciplinary boundaries, too. Even within a field like economics, the joint consideration and discussion of the concept of 'trust' that had previously been analysed separately in different approaches within economics was considered a milestone in the field (cf. Rousseau/Sitkin/Burt et al. 1998). The tendency to stay within disciplinary boundaries therefore seems not only to pertain to literary studies—other fields con-

4 The research on unreliability in films is quite substantial by now; for a brief overview see Sulzbacher/Socha (2009). There is as yet next to no exploration of unreliability both in drama and in poetry, however, although the untrustworthiness of narrators in dramatic monologues has been studied by Rohwer-Happe (2011).

5 Even though the terms '(un)trustworthiness' and '(un)reliability' cover any number of aspects that are not applicable to untrustworthy narrators or unreliable narrations, they will sometimes be used as a shorthand for the reference to the respective narrators or narrations both in this introduction as well as in the other chapters. Other usages of the word (for instance unreliable utterances in general in contrast to unreliable narrations in particular) will be made explicit. Moreover, the terms narrators and narrations will be used indiscriminately in those cases where both a narrator and a narration is unreliable. When only one or the other is unreliable, the distinction will be made explicit by the respective use of terms.

cerned with the exploration of (un)reliability adhere to the same kind of policy. A multidisciplinary analysis of (un)reliability and (un)trustworthiness, concepts which are arguably at the core of social life, promises new insights. Moreover, it seems that narratological methods and concepts can fruitfully be used in the study of non-fictional narratives, too.

The contributors to this volume attempt to close the gaps outlined above and to broaden the horizon of the discussion of unreliable narrators. There are three major aims: First, this volume is meant to initiate an interdisciplinary dialogue on the concept of (un)reliability—a dialogue that will hopefully be pursued further in the future. Second, several contributions offer suggestions for a re-conceptualisation of (un)reliability and related terms. These suggestions are mainly found in the theory section of this volume, but many of the contributions that focus on intermedial or interdisciplinary approaches to unreliability contain valuable insights concerning the conceptualisation of unreliability, too. The third goal consists of a transgeneric and intermedial consideration of (un)reliable narrators; instead of focussing on literary prose, there will be pioneering chapters on lyric poems and drama. In keeping with the broad scope of this volume, non-fictional unreliable narrators on YouTube, as well as in news broadcasting, journalism, politics and other areas such as law, medicine, psychology, and history will also be considered.[6]

In order to provide a framework that will be referred to in the following chapters, this introduction will differentiate between five aspects that are involved in the transfer of a concept like unreliability between disciplines. What is more, the framework will make it easier to compare the results. First of all, it seems necessary to clarify the terminology and explicate the key terms for characterising a given phenomenon. As far as this volume is concerned, these terms centre around (un)reliability and (un)trustworthiness, but a host of other related terms like authenticity are taken into consideration as well. The brackets surrounding 'un' indicate that it is helpful to focus not only on unreliability but also to consider reliability; this is after all the unmarked case, which serves as the default and measure of unreliability. A second aspect involves the theoretical

6 One might object that fictional unreliable narrators are fundamentally different from factual ones, since, in fiction, there is the literary (or implied) author who uses the unreliable narrator for specific ends. However, this difference is not as fundamental as one might think: First, more complex factual narrations include three narrative levels (and thus the 'implied author'), too, and James Phelan (2005: 66–97) also discussed a factual memoir in his exploration of unreliable narration. Second, Richard Gerrig argued that "in cases of unreliability readers [of fiction] generally treat the narrator as the sole originator of the misinformation" (2013: 31; see also ibid.: 32–25). Besides, the boundaries between factual and fictional narrations are blurring; with regard to many genres, particularly in television or the new media, it is often impossible to decide whether they are factual or fictional.

framework in which the terms are embedded; for without this framework, it would be impossible to fully gauge their meaning. Third, the methodology—in particular, the criteria for identifying (un)trustworthy narrators—should be explored in an interdisciplinary framework. Both this third aspect and a fourth one, creating a typology of unreliable narrators, are concerned with issues common to most interpretations of particular fictional works; so far, however, they have not incorporated perspectives gained from other fields. The last aspect focuses on the question of which functions unreliable narrators can fulfil. The second part of this introduction provides a brief overview of the contributions to this volume.

1. Sets of Criteria for the Intermedial and Interdisciplinary Discussion of (Un)Reliable Narration and (Un)Trustworthiness Terminology: Explication of Terms

Conceptual transfer between literary studies and other disciplines is impeded by the fact that unreliability was first—and decisively—defined by an academic working within a rhetorical approach to literature. Wayne C. Booth, the renowned scholar who introduced the term in 1961, wanted to come to terms with a specific type of narrator whom he conceptualised within the theoretical framework of the Chicago school—that is, within rhetorical and ethical narrative theory. For him, literary works are part of a dialogue between an author and reader in general, and between the implied author located within the text and the individual reader in particular. Moreover, he was interested in ethics and morals and concerned with the distinction between the often highly questionable values of the narrator and those of the work as a whole or, in his terminology, of the implied author. These concerns shape his approach to the topic and his definition: "I have called a narrator reliable when he speaks for or acts in accordance with the norms of the work (which is to say the implied author's norms), unreliable when he does not" (Booth 1961: 158–159). This definition makes clear that the implied author does not communicate questionable morals to the reader; instead, implied author and reader are "in secret collusion, behind the speaker's back" (ibid.: 304). The narrator therefore becomes the "butt of the ironic point" (ibid.: 304); unreliable narration is a kind of dramatic irony in which a narrator tells a story while the reader recognises the unreliability of the story as well as the faults and flaws of the narrator. Author and reader agree upon "the standard by which [the narrator] is found wanting" (ibid.).

Within the context of literary studies, this definition seems perfectly reasonable. Some scholars have questioned the role of the implied author and established other criteria for the identification of unreliable narrators, but the basic thrust of Booth's definition is more or less taken for granted in the field. This has led to two problems: First of all, literary scholars have for quite a long while neglected to ask whether there might be other kinds of unreliable narrators, for instance overt—or even covert—heterodiegetic ones. And second, with one worthy exception, Liesbeth Korthals Altes, who is among the contributors to this volume, there has been no attempt to relate the concept of unreliability to that of reliability (cf. Korthals Altes 2008).[7] One of the reasons for this neglect is probably the fact that literary scholars are aware that there is no reliable narration in the sense of an objective rendering or mirroring of the events that are told. Instead, narrative is a way of attributing meaning to occurrences, a process governed, among other things, by selection, perspectivisation, moral positioning, and genre conventions.

However, the correspondence between the content of the story and the events that are told only plays a minor role in many considerations of reliability, for instance in sociology or psychology. In these fields, different aspects are foregrounded in order to explore the reliability of a speaker. Reliability is linked to the concept of trust, which is held to be a necessary precondition as well as a result of human interaction both in personal relationships and in institutions. A preliminary overview of some major publications in the multidisciplinary discussion of trust yields a number of insights, which are further elaborated on in this volume. Reliability and trust can be understood as aspects of communication; they are constructs that arise out of the interaction between a set of given partners.[8] Therefore, a number of structural as well as performative aspects pertaining to the specific situation should be taken into account as well. The situation in which a story is told is, moreover, influenced by a host of factors such as the previous encounters between narrators and listeners and the relations of dominance and power between them. Aspects such as these influence listeners' opinions that it is worthwhile to act 'as if' the person trusted were sincere, open, and moral as well as competent to act in a way that is beneficial—or at least not detrimental—to the truster.[9] Dispositional

7 For the human disposition to first accept and believe information, and only critically question it later on, see the path-breaking essay by Gilbert (1991).

8 Dernbach/Meyer state in their introduction to the volume *Vertrauen und Glaubwürdigkeit* [i.e. trust and reliability] that all of the interdisciplinary contributions gathered in the volume start from the assumption that trust and reliability emerge in communication processes (cf. 2005: 19); see also Möllering/Sydow (2005: 87).

9 There are many interesting aspects explored in the interdisciplinary debate that cannot easily be related to the understanding of unreliable narrations in literature. A widely

aspects such as the sincerity, consistency, competence, and morality of a narrator are therefore held to be of paramount importance. The attribution of trust is part of the dynamics of communication or of the distribution of information throughout a story.

In this context, sincerity and reliability can be understood as dispositions and personality traits indicative of the trustworthiness of a speaker.[10] Trust can function as a cover term for at least three characteristics attributed to the person one trusts:

- Reliability—'engagement' (the expectation that speakers will act according to their words and manifest intentions)[11]
- Sincerity—the belief that someone is giving a truthful account of his or her beliefs, knowledge, feelings and motives
- Competence—the belief in the ability of the speaker to do what he or she intends.[12]

In defining fictional (un)reliable narrators, therefore, there are several aspects to consider; in addition to those already noted, consistency, expertise, morals, and ethics play a role.[13] These terms are defined in different ways, and it seems promising to look more closely at the prevailing definitions of both trustworthiness and reliability in order to establish a common ground. The contributions to this volume not only raise the question about the meaning of the term (un)reliability but also consider the relation between this phenomenon and other related concepts.

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accepted definition of trust is "a psychological state comprising the intention to accept vulnerability based upon positive expectations of the intentions or behaviour of another". Quoted after Rousseau/Sitkin/Burt et al. (1998: 395); see also Möllering (2009: 140); Möllering/Sydow (2005). Economics places significant emphasis on the role of institutions and sanctions for breaking rules.

10 Reliability, then, is regarded as one of several dispositions that people ascribe to those narrators whom they decide to trust. In such definitions, reliability is a sub-category of trust (see Schweer/Thies 2005: 56). The three aspects listed here are further differentiated and expanded in a list of 18 categories that Laucken elaborates in his brilliant article (2005: 99–109).

11 However, different scholars define reliability in different ways; Habermas (1976: 435) also connects it to sincerity since this is the disposition which will guarantee that the speaker will do as he says. In medicine, unreliability serves as the cover term for all kinds of aspects that raise "questions about the accuracy of reported information" (see the contribution by Jarmila Mildorf in this volume). For a conceptualisation that refers to the future action of the partner, see Schipper/Petermann (2011: 246).

12 Cf. Schweer/Thies (2005: 57); Möllering (2001: 413).

13 In social psychology, trustworthiness is closely linked to (source) credibility, which has been connected to a number of factors like expertise, attractiveness, power and dynamism. The results of a large number of empirical studies are, however, ambivalent. For a review of pertinent studies see Pornpitakpan (2004).

1.1 Theoretical Frames of Reference

Any transfer of a concept from one discipline to another requires a consideration of the theoretical frame of reference. Terms cannot simply be singled out and incorporated into new frameworks in isolation; their meaning is also determined by the theory in which they fulfil a specific function and by their position in a network of related terms. In the following, I will briefly refer to the frames of reference used within literary studies; the articles in this volume will take into consideration a wide range of additional theoretical frameworks. In literary studies, the most predominant frame of reference has long been that of rhetorical narratology, which was briefly described earlier. However, the articles in this volume take into consideration a wide range of theoretical frameworks.

A second promising approach is opened up by structural and cognitive narratology. The toolkit of structural narratology makes it possible to provide text-internal signals for the identification of unreliable narrators. Cognitive narratology considers the cognitive rules, frames and schemata that readers apply when they process textual information. Instead of relying on the identification of textual clues alone, cognitive narratology stresses the reciprocal process between bottom-up and top-down operations on the part of readers, who apply preference rules and their knowledge of the world in order to understand a narrative text. For cognitive narratologists, the decision to call a narrator untrustworthy is a kind of naturalisation strategy that is used in order to reconcile and explain text-internal as well as -external discrepancies. When such inconsistencies become so pronounced that it is not possible to establish a coherent mental model of the narrative world, readers check whether identifying a narrator as unreliable can serve to eliminate major discrepancies; the aim is to establish a new interpretative hypothesis that can explain the most significant textual data. The importance of readers' knowledge and experiences therefore requires not only the consideration of textual features and cognitive processes but also the implicit cultural knowledge in a given period and culture.

Recently there has been an attempt to reconceptualise unreliable narration within the framework of pragmatics as a violation of the conversational maxims put forth by Paul Grice (cf. Heyd: 2011). This is compatible with the major premises of cognitive narratology, since the theoretical framework of Grice's approach within pragmatic linguistics also stresses the role of inferences on the part of readers. According to Grice, there are a number of rules that speakers are expected to adhere to in successful communication, and these are governed by the overarching 'Cooperative Principle' which requires speakers to adjust their utterances

to the given communicative situation. Grice specifies four conversational maxims that speakers are expected to adhere to: the maxims of Quality (truthfulness), Quantity (informativeness), Relation (relevance), and Manner (clarity, which concerns matters of style and wording).[14] However, there are a number of problems for a new conceptualisation of unreliable narration as a violation "of the Cooperative Principle without the intention of an implicature" (Heyd 2011: 7). Dan Sperber and Deirdre Wilson highlight, for instance, that Grice is concerned with intentional, overt breaches of implicatures such as joking or irony. Moreover, he does not distinguish between the ability and the willingness of a speaker to conform to these rules.[15] Both of these aspects impede the application of Grice's conversational maxims to the study of unreliable narrators.

1.2 Methodology: Criteria for Identifying Untrustworthy Narrators

In this section, I will briefly explore some criteria for identifying unreliable narrators put forward within the field of literary studies, which are, of course, geared towards the interpretation of fictional narratives; they do not cover many of the criteria that have been developed in other disciplines but which might be useful for analysing narratives. The schematic outline may also prove helpful for other fields, just as I hope that literary studies will profit from the criteria applied in other disciplines.

Since the criteria for detecting unreliability in narratives are situated within, and cannot be understood apart from, the theoretical frameworks in which they are embedded, the respective theory will serve as a reference point of this outline. Within rhetorical narratology, the "degree and kind of distance" (Booth 1961: 155) between the implied author and the narrator serves as one criterion; but though there are very lucid and convincing interpretations of particular literary works that feature unreliable narrators, it is not entirely clear how one can measure this degree and kind

14 Cf. Grice (1989: 368–372). In light of the first maxim, the question of truthfulness, it seems necessary to consider what Geoffrey Leech has termed the 'Politeness Principle' as well, since general rules of conversation often prohibit telling true stories which might be embarrassing or otherwise inappropriate. Leech distinguishes between the tact maxim, the generosity maxim, the approbation maxim, the modesty maxim, the agreement maxim and the sympathy maxim.

15 See Sperber/Wilson (2002: 6–9); Wilson/Sperber (2004: 608, 611, 613). This makes it impossible to consider deliberate liars as part of "[u]nreliable narratives [which] 'quietly and unostentatiously violate a maxim' (Grice 1975)" (Heyd 2011: 7). Both lying on the part of narrators, and the intention of making the narrator the butt of the dramatic joke by (implied) authors cannot be covered by Grice's approach.

of distance.[16] The criteria employed in structural and cognitive narratology are more explicit. Basically, this approach distinguishes between three types of clues: text-internal, text-external and paratextual clues (such as signals in the title or foreword).

The text-internal clues consist of inconsistencies concerning the story and/or discourse level as well as stylistic features. Since fictional homodiegetic unreliable narrators are often deeply emotionally involved, obsessed or disturbed monologists, they can frequently be recognised by features like exclamations, ellipses, rhetorical questions, any number of repetitions and the tempo of their narration. In trying to convince readers of the truth of their story, they often appeal to the reader by direct address and explanations. A third group of criteria in the field of cognitive narratology can be applied to those narrators who are untrustworthy not mainly because of their incorrect account of the facts within the fictional world but rather because of their faulty interpretations, evaluations and morals.[17] A murderer may gleefully and consistently tell the story of how much he enjoyed torturing and killing his victims; a paedophile may tell the story of his love for a young girl realistically and truthfully—but they would both still have to be considered untrustworthy. It is possible, of course, that individual readers who enjoy torturing young girls may think of these narrators as perfectly reliable, but by having recourse to the prevalent cultural norms and values one can point out their untrustworthiness. Thus aspects such as the general knowledge, personality theories and values of a given culture have to be taken into account. This also applies to the values dominant in subcultures or those characteristics that are deemed normal or natural with regard to different kinds of people. Children, for instance, are regarded as untrustworthy according to different criteria than adults; in certain cultures, women may be expected to display different kinds or degrees of emotion than men, etc. Literary frames of reference and genre conventions should be considered too. In fantastic novels, trustworthy narrators may talk about rides on broomsticks, and in realistic 'authorial' novels a narrator may have insight into the consciousness of all of the characters within the fictional world.

While most of these criteria are taken for granted in the contributions to this volume just as they were during the lectures of the conference preceding it, there has been some controversy in the discussion of whether pragmatics and, in particular, breaches of the conversational rules put forward by Grice can be used for the identification and typology of signals for unreliability. Some contributors to the current volume are in favour of

16 James Phelan (2007) has convincingly argued that there are also cases in which the distance between narrator and reader is minimized, a process which he calls 'bonding unreliability'.

17 See Ansgar Nünning (1997, 2005) for a more elaborate discussion of these signals.

such an integration of Grice's conversational maxims, which they combine with other theoretical frames of reference. In the debate following the lectures, others were more sceptical, citing unresolved theoretical problems concerning the difference between intentional and unintentional implicatures, the incompatibility between speech acts (as studied in pragmatics) and narratives as well as the particularities of aesthetic fictional works, which employ language that cannot simply be equated with everyday speech. Apart from the theories sketched above, the chapters of this book will take further criteria into account which are important in face-to-face communications and can enrich the more or less text-related features that usually dominate the analyses of unreliable narrators in literary studies.

1.3 Typology

The most striking difference between the types of motives (and persons) involved in untrustworthy narrations is that between people who set out to deceive others and try to profit from their misconceptions and people who want to tell the truth but are unable to do so. The reasons behind this incompetence can be manifold: it might be due to a lack of insight into the facts, some kind of emotional involvement or even obsession that leads the narrators to distort events, a more general inability to interpret and evaluate what is going on, the application of an inadequate pattern of explanation or evaluation, or sheer incapability as far as social and narrative conventions are concerned. In spite of this wealth of reasons which may cause the involuntary self-delusion of narrators, the underlying similarities between these various reasons deserve to be stressed as well as the radical differences to those of the other type of storyteller who deliberately misleads his or her audience. In line with these observations, the category of intentionality plays a large role in several contributions to this volume. Schematically, one might refer to the two basic types as the liar and the fool—though admittedly there can be complex combinations such as the case of a deliberate liar who at the same time fools himself.

Within literary studies, the typology of untrustworthy narrators is a matter of contention. At first the research was concerned with identifying different character types such as the madman, the picaro, the naïf, or the clown; but these kinds of detailed and not very fruitful distinctions soon gave way to another discussion which centred on the question of whether only a homodiegetic narrator (i.e. a narrator who is part of the story world and tells about his or her own experiences) can be called untrustworthy, or whether 'authorial', heterodiegetic narrators can be called unreliable too. This discussion made perfect sense for two reasons: First, omniscient,

heterodiegetic narrators were held to be trustworthy by way of definition; they are often thought to establish the facts which make up the story world. Second, within the tradition initiated by Booth, it is part of the preconditions for untrustworthiness that there is a human or humanlike character who becomes visible as a person; otherwise, one cannot attribute untrustworthiness to him or her. Though it is futile to ascribe unreliability to the narrators of fantasies, fairy tales, or postmodern fiction merely because they conform to genre conventions by telling unrealistic or impossible stories, one still has to be able to identify a human-like narrator who can become the butt of the joke and unwittingly reveal him- or herself.

Recently, however, new insights have been achieved—insights which will be pursued further in this volume. First, it is possible for omniscient, heterodiegetic narrators to become visible as personalities. Such overt narrators comment on the story, voice value judgements and generalisations. Their interpretations and evaluations can become suspect to the reader, who may arrive at the conclusion that they are untrustworthy not because of their rendering of the facts but rather on account of their interpretations and evaluations. Gunther Martens has been one of the first to draw attention to these narrators; his analyses (see Martens 2008) also integrate insights from other scholars. Such narrators are rare, but they existed both in the eighteenth and the twentieth century; and they may become more popular in the twenty-first. Second, the precondition of becoming visible as a person only pertains to the kind of narrators that Booth was interested in—those that unwittingly expose their delusions.

There seems to be another kind of narrator, however, that misleads the reader by leaving out crucial information or by presenting the data in a way that makes it very likely that it is misunderstood. Building on the work of Fabienne Liptay (2005) and Britta Hartmann (2007), Robert Vogt (2009) has introduced this second type into narratological theory. According to him, examples of this type of narrator run across the homodiegetic—heterodiegetic divide. In Agatha Christie's *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd,* for instance, the narrator tells the story of his involvement in a 'murder hunt', even though it turns out that he himself committed the murder but skilfully left out those ten minutes in which he killed his victim. In Ambrose Bierce's short story "An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge", in contrast, a covert, heterodiegetic narrator narrates a tale that seems to show that a man about to be executed at the beginning of the story can escape and reach his home. At the end, however, it becomes obvious that this is just the final fantasy of the man before he is hanged. Such homo- as well as heterodiegetic narrators differ from those defined by Booth, since none of them unwittingly reveals the flaws of his or her

own story or becomes the butt of the irony. The contributions in this volume start from these distinctions between different kinds of unreliable narration and further explore their distinctive features.

1.4 Functions

There are many functions that unreliable narrations may fulfill. They can damage relationships, destroy trust, make listeners buy goods they never wanted in the first place or, if recognised as unreliable, make them aware of personality traits of the speaker. In different social contexts, the detection of unreliable narrators can evoke pity just as well as hatred; it can do damage just as well as good. The functions that unreliable narrations can serve differ quite substantially in different disciplines; they depend on the main research questions, the theoretical frame, and the methodology employed.

From the narrators' point of view, the most important function is to convince others of the truth of their stories. As far as storytelling is concerned, there are other aims involved, too, such as the interest to amuse or entertain, to show what a good guy one is, to establish common ground or a common identity, to become accepted by others, to break the ice, or simply to pass the time. However, nearly all of these additional functions in some way involve an interest in being believed; if the narrator is suspected to be a fraud or a liar, he or she will have difficulty realising his communicative intentions. We must also differentiate between the aims and intentions of those who willfully misrepresent the truth and those who unwittingly and naïvely want to share their misguided view of the events.

The same difference between liars and fools should be noticed when one explores the consequences that unreliable narrations have for those people who are exposed to them. One might posit that a narrator who deliberately distorts the events in face-to-face communication probably causes some kind of damage to those listeners who believe him or her since they act upon mistaken beliefs and probably suffer from the results of these actions. While the liar often profits from misrepresentations, the opposite seems to be the case with regard to unwitting but sincere narrators. Since the latter are likely to involuntarily provide signals that make it possible to detect their untrustworthiness, they cause damage primarily to themselves. If they are recognised as untrustworthy, listeners will arrive at less than favourable conclusions about the personality traits, competence or ethics of the narrator in question. Moreover, narrators who unwittingly provide insight into their ways of thinking make it

possible to recognise their aims, delusions, dispositions, or personality traits. It becomes possible to characterise and know them in a more profound way, since the knowledge gained about them is derived from signals that the narrators did not intend to send.

From the perspective of the anthropologist, sociologist, and (literary) historian, unreliable narrations can be a means of gaining insights into a given (sub)culture. What is perceived as unreliable at a particular time and place is marked as beyond the pale. Judgements concerning unreliability thus highlight the borderline between the normal and the deviant; they show those implicit norms, values, and personality theories that are part of the implicit cultural knowledge but rarely expressed in explicit terms. The treatment of untrustworthy persons in a given society is highly interesting too; how unreliable narrators are dealt with allows one to recognise what is unreliable but tolerable and just within the limits of the acceptable, what is considered as scandalous and criticised, and what is mad or deceitful to such an extent that it is deemed necessary to send the narrators to closed psychiatric wards or commit them to prison. The central values of a culture, the fuzzy borderlines between normal and abnormal, between adequate and dangerous, become visible in a culture's treatment of different kinds of unreliable narrators.

Since the functions of unreliable narrations depend on the social context in which they are told and upon the disciplinary approach to their analysis, the contributions in this volume explore a number of different functions which have not been mentioned in this brief sketch. In Jarmila Mildorf's chapter on unreliability in patients' narratives, for instance, the great divide between intentional and unintentional unreliability becomes obvious: On the one hand, there are millions of Euros lost because healthy people pretend to be sick and consequently do not work; on the other hand, many patients are not treated in the way they should because they do not manage to give an appropriate description of their symptoms to their physicians. Even within literary studies, the functions that are highlighted in different chapters differ not only according to the theoretical approach but also according to the type of character and the genre that is the focus of the discussion.

2. Overview of the Chapters in This Volume

This short outline of the main aspects which are discussed in this volume shows that there is a lot of ground to be covered. At the same time, there are many noteworthy studies which have provided valuable insights into the topics of (un)reliability and (un)trustworthiness. An important work

on the study of unreliable narration in fiction, edited by Elke D'hoker and Gunther Martens, was published a few years ago and put forth a number of new theoretical insights as well as broadened the scope of fictional texts. Whereas most book-length studies of fictional unreliable narration had, up to that time, been restricted to British and North American literature, the volume by D'hoker and Martens is transnational and includes texts from many European and Latin American cultures. As the title indicates, however, the volume focused on "First-Person Novel[s]" of the twentieth century, which arguably excludes a host of interesting texts and issues worthy of exploration.[18]

The present volume builds on previous research, but at the same time extends its range in several ways. In the first section, "Theoretical Issues and New Directions", new frameworks and categories for the study of unreliability in fictional as well as factual texts are developed. The chapters in this part build on existing (interdisciplinary) research and consider presuppositions as well as criteria for the analysis of homo- and heterodiegetic narrators and focalizers. In the following sections, the scope is enlarged in ever-widening circles beginning with literary genres in which the potential unreliability of narrators or focalizers has yet to be explored. The section on transgeneric and intermedial issues begins with the consideration of lyrical and dramatic texts, which is followed by an intermedial application of the concept of unreliable narration, including new forms of storytelling on the Internet. Especially with regard to narratives on YouTube, the distinction between factual and fictional storytelling becomes a contentious issue. The last and largest section comprises interdisciplinary approaches to factual unreliable narration which—with the exception of the article on unreliability in several legal discourses—concentrate on individual (homodiegetic) narrators. In these chapters, the focus lies on the particular features of unreliable narration in non-fictional discourses in which the detection of (un)reliability can have important social and economic consequences; for instance, the sentencing and imprisonment of people whose guilt is questionable or the inadequate and detrimental treatment of patients who may or may not pretend to be sick.

The first section, which deals with theoretical aspects of the definition of and approaches to (un)reliability and (un)trustworthiness, consists of six chapters. It begins with Uri Margolin's wide-ranging, cogently argued,

18 A special issue of the *Journal of Literary Theory* (2011), edited by Tom Kindt and Tilmann Köppe, also provides a host of noteworthy insights into the phenomenon of unreliable narration; citations of articles in this issue crop up in many of the chapters in the theory section of this volume. While many of its contributions in the *Journal of Literary Theory* concern issues also discussed in D'hoker/Martens, the explorations of Theresa Heyd, Tilmann Köppe/Tom Kindt and Frank Zipfel are closely related to issues explored here.

and innovative reconceptualisation of unreliable narration. Straddling the fact/fiction divide, Margolin differentiates between three areas of unreliable narration, viz. between the product (the narrated text), the production (the process of narration), and the producer (the narrator). These three areas are different in kind; the narrated product, for instance, belongs to semantics, while the process itself is pragmatic in nature. Moreover, the existence and degree of (un)reliability have to be explored by applying specific criteria which are aimed at the differences between these three components. Starting from these premises, Margolin provides an overview of the different units and status of the three areas. At the same time he distinguishes between the three basic modalities of the "alethic (what there is), the epistemic, and the axiological" (40), thus incorporating the three functions of communication introduced by James Phelan and Patricia Martin (1999), which concern facts (report), interpretation ("regarding") and evaluation. The (un)reliability of these three modalities must be judged by different criteria. Concentrating on the question of the (un)reliability of narratives with regard to their correspondence to what is believed to be true in a given society, Margolin also considers aspects such as coherence and completeness. He also discusses the process of narration, suggesting that in some instances, in which a narrator occupies the role of "fabulator or spinner of tales" (47), the correspondence to facts and beliefs is irrelevant, while aesthetic and emotive aspects concerning skilfulness or inventive power become more important. Most of the contributors to this volume were not only impressed with this feat of scholarship, they also use Margolin's distinction between the three areas of narrated texts, processes of narration, and narrator in their own chapters.

Equally wide-ranging and innovative, the second chapter, "What about the Default, or Interpretive Diversity?" by Liesbeth Korthals Altes, explores narratology's potential for theorising and identifying unreliable narrators by comparing different narratological approaches and developing a new, encompassing framework for the analysis of unreliability. Skilfully and subtly teasing out the main differences between these approaches, Korthals Altes shows the cognitive and heuristic value of each of them while also drawing attention to their limits. She employs a metahermeneutic approach, integrating rhetorical, structural, cognitive and pragmatic conceptualisations of unreliability and elaborates "on some of the factors that, arguably, combine into an over-arching, dynamically synthetic *framing* assumed to play a steering role in readers' interpretive decisions regarding a narrator's or author's (un)reliability" (60). Some of these framing acts—which she relates to Ervin Goffman's and Gregory Bateson's definition of frames—are connected, and the chapter focuses on how these can be conceptualised in order to gain insight into readers'

interpretative strategies. Such activities include framing effects that pertain to the construction of the overall intention of the work—for instance, the decision to read a text as meta-fictional or autobiographical, to read in terms of psychology or morality instead of aesthetics, or to create an image of the author's ethos. By discussing key issues arising in an interpretation of Christine Angot's *Sujet Angot* (1998), Korthals Altes convincingly points out the importance of the readers' choice of communicational and generic conventions, which provide the basis for readers' and scholars' interpretative activities, and prompt them to identify particular textual elements as signals for unreliability. She acknowledges the potential of fields like discourse-analysis and sociology to back up and concretise some of the issues discussed in the chapter, but nonetheless confirms the importance of hermeneutics and interpretation.

In my own contribution, I attempt to re-conceptualise (un)reliability and (un)trustworthiness by drawing on definitions from several disciplines, particularly from psychology, communication theory, and sociology. I adapt three major categories in order to identify and typologise (un)reliability: the (un)reliability of narrations, which concerns the correspondence between the content of the narrative and the facts within the story world; the (in)sincerity of narrators, which is closely connected to the category of intentionality and concerned with the relation between the narrators' knowledge and the facts that are told throughout the major part of the story; and the (in)competence of narrators, which refers to the narrator's ability to present, interpret and evaluate the events as well as his or her competence with regard to conversation rules and narrative conventions of a particular situation. While these criteria can serve to analyse fictional as well as factual (and oral) stories, the study of literary narratives should additionally take into account another set of criteria: the communicative level on which the narrators tell their tales (i.e. embedded narrators or homodiegetic narrators) and the question of multiperspectivity along with the related issue of the scope or extension of unreliability with regard to the story as a whole. An over-arching framework that combines these categories makes it possible to show the particularities of unreliable focalization and to consider kinds of narrations which have not been discussed in the debate on unreliable narration so far. In addition, I consider the presuppositions that have to be met in order to judge the (un)reliability of a tale, relate certain criteria for (un)reliability with Grice's conversational maxims and distinguish between different functions of fictional unreliable narration. I also draw attention to the as yet unexplored field of identifying and evaluating unreliable narrators in factual texts, particularly in those which were told before the eighteenth century.

Bo Pettersson adds a number of salient aspects to the theoretical debate. In the first part of his chapter, he takes a closer look at the typology of unreliability. Building on his previous studies of unreliability, Pettersson considers both unreliable narration and focalization; he also includes different markers of unreliability. Moreover, he integrates a scale of intentionality into his theoretical framework. This scale has as its two opposing poles fallibility (that is, unintentional under- or misrepresentation) and intentional deception, with a variety of forms of (self-)delusion in between. Elaborating on the importance of intentionality, Pettersson not only takes up a criterion that is often mentioned in passing in other studies; his suggestions also fit in well with the interdisciplinary discussion on the relevance of narrators' competence for gauging their reliability. Furthermore, Pettersson draws attention to the importance of the reading process's dynamic nature, which he explores under the heading "expositional manipulation" in the second part of his chapter. Starting from Menakhem Perry's insight that "the reader maintains the rejected meanings as a system of 'hovering' meanings" (Perry 1979: 356) and that discarded interpretations are part of the meaning of a fictional text, Pettersson distinguishes between different "*techniques and features of fictional unreliability by expositional manipulation*" (117) and illustrates how devices such as 'speculation' or 'partiality' serve to mislead the reader.

The theoretical discussion of unreliable narration continues with Robert Vogt, who distinguishes between three major types of unreliability: first, ironic-unreliable narrators, the type of narrator focused on by Booth and others; second, ambiguous-unreliable narration (i.e. narrations in which readers are unable to decide whether the narrator is unreliable or not); and, third, alterated-unreliable narration, which refers to tales in which readers are led to believe in one version of the story throughout the major part of the text, with the 'true' story only becoming apparent at the end of the tale. He also considers unreliable focalizers and stresses their close resemblance to ironic-unreliable narrators. In order to further explore the features of these three types of unreliability, Vogt employs insights from literary possible-worlds theory and analyses which kinds of internal inconsistencies can serve as indications of unreliability. He distinguishes, for instance, between conflicts within a narrator's world and those between a narrator's world and a focalizer's world. In a final step, he draws upon insights from cognitive narratology, particularly on the concept of decoupling, i.e. of 'tagging' particular propositions and bearing in mind that they are believed by specific characters. This perspective stresses that it is necessary to remember which character holds particular beliefs and then to construct the character's mental world as well as comparing this to the worlds of others. Vogt's insights highlight some

cognitive practices that readers employ in order to make sense of unreliable narrations.

Gunther Martens' contribution on unreliability in nonfiction provides an interesting link between the issues highlighted in the theoretical section and those which are discussed in the intermedial and interdisciplinary parts of this volume. Addressing unreliability in interdisciplinary settings and in terms of a more general competence beyond understanding fictional stories, Martens discusses narrative unreliability in relation to nonfiction. He does so in the context of a specific approach to rhetorical narratology which aims to draw attention to the unreliability of the addressee rather than to that of the narrator. Martens focuses on narrative situations and narratorial profiles which provide corrective information contradicting an obsessively monologistic account and which make it possible to detect unreliability. In this way, he shows that this possibility does not imply that actual addressees take advantage of it. According to Martens, this reluctance or inability is due to increasingly hybridized multicultural contexts and memory communities, but also to the fact that seemingly reliable narratorial profiles (such as the documentary voice-over) can be re-appropriated and rendered unreliable by rhetorical means. His examples of unreliable narration focus on genres that obscure the divide between fiction and nonfiction and include gonzo journalism, fake manuals and news reports as well as subversive corporate storytelling, but also the ambiguous trend of New Sincerity in docu-fiction. Showing that, to some extent, unreliability has become a new norm in several formats, Martens argues that addressees are, on the one hand, held to be able to decode unreliability, while they are at the same time denied markers of irony which would allow them to form a communicative bond 'behind the back of the speaker'. The exploration of hybrid forms which straddle the fact/fiction divide in several media formats relates this chapter to Beatrice Dembach's discussion of new forms of journalism and to Markus Kuhn's concern with questions of authenticity in narratives on YouTube.

The transgeneric and intermedial section of this volume, which considers the importance of unreliable narrations in literary genres other than short stories or novels and in several media, begins with Peter Hühn's exploration of unreliability in poetry. After a brief glance at dramatic monologues, the most likely candidates for an analysis of unreliability in poems because of their narrative structure and the often pronounced unreliability of their narrators, Hühn takes up the more difficult task of examining the potential and functions of unreliability in lyric poems. Even though such poems are usually held to be non-narrative, Hühn argues that quite a number of at first glance unlikely poems do contain narrative structures, particularly with regard to con-

veying experiences. Concentrating on poems in which narrators do not address a narratee but speak to themselves, he introduces the concept of 'self-intransparency' for those speakers who are not aware of important blind spots, which distort their narrative as well as judgement, and highlights two different functions that unreliable narration in lyric poems can fulfil.

In a pathbreaking attempt to conceptualise the forms and types of unreliable narration in plays, Ansgar Nünning and Christine Schwanecke show how fruitful it can be to transfer terms and categories from narratology to the study of plays. They proceed from the assumption that a transgeneric conceptualisation of unreliable narration can highlight gaps and blind spots in narrative theory, too: after all, most studies have concerned themselves with fiction and foregrounded the presence of an anthropomorphic narrator. Starting from a model of narrative communication fitted to the analysis of plays, they locate unreliability on three levels of communication: First, the level of action in which characters can serve as 'embedded narrators' and can turn out to be unreliable; second, on the level of narrative mediation, narrators can present the scene and comment on the action, sometimes revealing their highly untrustworthy memory and interpretation of the events. In addition, Ansgar Nünning and Christine Schwanecke propose a third, more abstract level of communication that determines the selection, perspectivisation and staging of the events, which they call 'focalisation', and which can be exposed as unreliable at the end of a play when the 'true' course of happenings is revealed. They further differentiate between different types of unreliability on these communicative levels. A brief discussion of examples demonstrates that there are more instances of unreliability in plays than has been supposed hitherto; it also highlights some of the possible combinations of the three basic types of unreliability.

The intermedial analysis of unreliability begins with Matthias Brütsch's exploration of unreliable narration in fiction and in film. As the title of the chapter indicates, Brütsch differentiates between three types of unreliability, "Irony, Retroactivity, and Ambiguity". While this distinction is compatible with Robert Vogt's contribution to this volume, Brütsch's perspective is informed by film studies. He chooses the fact that readers and viewers of fiction and films as a rule are only able to detect the unreliability of the second kind of narration in retrospect at the end of the story as its most significant feature, and stresses the differences between the three types. Moreover, he relates his discussion of the third kind of unreliable narration to Todorov's study on the features of fantasy and to the latter's concept of "fantastic hesitation" (221). Brütsch's discussion of examples of short stories, novels and films shows that the three kinds of

unreliability can be found in verbally told stories and in films, but that there are media specific ways of establishing unreliability. His probing into signs of unreliability leads him to conclude that, in particular constellations, "partiality are signs of narrative *reliability* rather than of narrative unreliability" (235), an insight that is, in slightly different form, also stressed by Stephan Jaeger in his analysis of unreliable narration in historical studies. Moreover, Brütsch agrees with other contributors to this volume that there is no fixed relation between the type of narrative situation (i.e. homo- or heterodiegetic narrators) on the one hand, and the three kinds of unreliability on the other.

Markus Kuhn's exploration of "(Un)reliability in Fictional and Factual Audiovisual Narratives on YouTube" adds another facet to the study of intermedial issues by discussing key topics concerning the identification of (un)reliability in narratives across new media. Concentrating on several narrative formats of audiovisual storytelling on YouTube, Kuhn differentiates several concepts and criteria that impinge upon reliability-judgements of users. He develops a theoretical framework in which he stresses the impact of "*intermedial and other media- and genre-specific* contextual frames of reference" (248). He refers back to Ansgar Nünning's exploration of generic and contextual frames of reference, but his discussion at the same time provides further substantiation of the importance of interpretative frames explored by Liesbeth Korthals Altes in this volume. In particular, Kuhn draws attention to the alleged factuality of the tale and its correspondence to events in the real world and uses Manfred Hattendorf's definition of authenticity in order to highlight the importance of the believability of the media-specific narrative mediation of the events. This appearance of trustworthiness is linked to the effect of filmic strategies creating the impression of authenticity, i.e. stylistic patterns serving as "signposts of authenticity". Paying close attention to the rapid changes in genre conventions and authenticity markers in several kinds of audiovisual storytelling on YouTube, Kuhn singles out some combinations of devices such as the hand-held camera or breaking the fourth wall by directly talking to the camera. At the same time, however, he emphasises the rapidity and simultaneity of counteractive processes: conventions are subverted more or less at the same time at which they are established. The study of (un)reliability on YouTube therefore has to be highly aware of the particular context, of intermedial references, of the use (and possible manipulation and functionalisation) of media-specific "signposts of authenticity", and of negotiation processes and commentaries by the users. Though many of Kuhn's insights can be transferred to other modes of storytelling on the Internet, the example of unreliability in particular forms of audiovisual narrative on YouTube points to a broad range of

(un)reliability in narratives across new or digital media waiting to be explored by future scholars.

Christoph Bietz' chapter on "Reality Effect and Unreliable Narration in TV News" provides a link between the intermedial contributions and the interdisciplinary section. In his wide-ranging article, which considers several basic aspects concerning the discourse on unreliability, Bietz inspects TV news both from the point of view of intermediality as well as from the point of view of journalism. Criticising the stance that journalism cannot be truthful because of the "added" narrativity of the news story, Bietz demonstrates that the consideration of narratological categories can help to avoid some problems which are inherent in standard approaches to the analysis of news, particularly news value theory. Additionally, he develops the stepping stones for an intermedial narratology specifically geared at the study of TV news. In order to delineate criteria for judging the reliability of TV news, Bietz concentrates on the level of discourse and on categories which can be used to explore the reliability of this level of narration as well as possible world theory (thus providing a link to Robert Vogt's chapter). Interestingly, Bietz distinguishes between several levels of narration, defining the "filmic composition device" as well as the "televisionary composition device (TCD)", which enables him to explore unreliability on different levels. Positing that journalists have to try to appear trustworthy by their job's virtue, Bietz explores the importance of verisimilitude and the "effet de réel", which enhance the credibility, though not the reliability, of a narrative. The last part of the chapter distinguishes between different forms and levels of unreliability in TV news by analysing two exemplary news stories from German public television. Similarly to Stephan Jaeger, Bietz concludes that one form of admitting unreliability increases the credibility as well as reliability of the story.

The third part of the volume, "Interdisciplinary Perspectives to (Un)reliability", begins with Beatrice Dernbach's chapter on unreliability in journalism. In her contribution, Dernbach questions the role that reliability plays in a discourse the very function of which is to provide accurate information. At the same time, readers often know better than to expect precise and correct information in some media formats. The potential unreliability of journalistic texts is therefore closely linked to their usefulness as well as legitimacy. Journalism is subject both to internal changes and to external circumstances, which may lead readers to doubt the reliability of the stories. Distinguishing between the media (the main function of which, according to experts, is entertainment) and journalism (which is supposed to offer truthful accounts of real events), Dernbach looks at three levels on which reliability is important within journalism: the macro level of media and journalism, the meso-level of institutional

organisations, and the micro-level of individual actors and journalists. She provides useful data about journalists' self-image and reader responses while exploring the "fine line" between fact and fiction as well as that between unreliable and reliable journalism. The main theses of the chapter are illustrated by the discussion of some examples in which journalists were heavily criticised because they wrote stories that infringed upon different criteria of journalistic reliability.

Closely connected to Dernbach's topic, Andreas Elter's contribution explores the importance of narratives and their (un)reliability in the field of politics, with a particular focus on American election campaigns. Starting from sociological and psychological definitions of trust as well as the relevance of the need for a certain degree of plausibility and trustworthiness in order to motivate citizens to vote, Elter goes on to analyse these requirements in the context of American elections. He also takes the importance of the media and the move towards staging, marketing and personalising political issues into account, while he stresses that candidates' stories have to match the goals of the party as well as the attitudes, self-images and aims of voters who have to be able to identify with the candidate. These narratives have to refer back to well-known myths, to stories that invite voters to become a part of the common (national) identity that is conjured up and shaped by such mythic narratives. Identifying four main American myths which have proved to be successful over the past few centuries, Elter distinguishes between (un)reliable (factual) narratives, which can be verified or falsified with recourse to facts, and (un)reliable mythic narratives, the plausibility of which lies in their consistency with the main American myths as well as with the concordance between the narrators' self-image (as projected in the stories) and the goals of the respective party. Comparing Barack Obama's and Mitt Romney's key election speeches, Elter shows that Obama refrains from appearing to be an egotistic, potentially unreliable narrator by saying little about himself, but rather he casts himself as the witness and mediator of personal stories of selected 'common people', while Romney sometimes succumbs to the temptation of self-heroisation—and, therefore, to the creation of unreliable (factual) stories.

In their article "Unreliable Narration in Law Courts", Andreas von Arnauld and Stefan Martini also refer to American politics, using quotes from the American Declaration of Independence as an example of one of those—factually unreliable—stories that are told in legal documents. In their poignant survey of legal discourses in which unreliable narration may play a role, they show how unreliability is identified, especially in law courts. However, they do not confine themselves to the consideration of predictably unreliable texts—such as witness narratives in court. Rather,

they begin by explaining how various kinds of legal discourse narrate and differentiate between binding (prescriptive) and non-binding (empirical) texts. In addition, they unravel the implications of the setting of norms, which are backed up by prototypical (though culturally variable) stories—and which, in turn, can influence the interpretation of facts and the way in which they are related to the law in question. Interestingly, von Arnauld and Martini do not exclude binding legal texts and judgements from their analysis. Narratives play a role in the decision finding process, too, since the statements of witnesses are directed by questions concerning what is relevant to the (breaking of the) law in question, and the judge selects and integrates those parts of the stories that seem to be both pertinent and reliable "into her own version of legal and factual reality—eventually, she creates a legally valid and enforceable master narrative laid down in the opinion of the court" (357). The criteria that von Arnauld and Martini list for establishing the unreliability of a narrator are similar to, but also different from those used in narratology: internal consistency; the provision of details and the expression of an adequate degree of emotionality on the part of the narrator; external consistency (including the relation to other stories and a 'hegemonic' narrative) and plausibility with regard to culturally accepted notions of 'normality'. The authors stress that, on the one hand, the "ruling establishes the facts of the case; it determines the law because it is legally entitled to do so" (361), and thus, by definition, cannot be illegal. However, they also emphasise that the judgement may be illegitimate and unreliable. This is demonstrated by their analysis of a legal case study, the decision of the German Federal Constitutional Court on the penalisation of sibling incest from 2008, which was finally upheld by the European Court of Human Rights in 2012.

Stephan Jaeger's exploration of "Unreliable Narration in Historical Studies" also deals with the (un)reliability of the narratives of witnesses, but he adds another dimension to the discussion in that he focuses on historical studies. Three quotes from historical texts, placed at the beginning of his chapter, highlight the importance of as well as the difficulty in determining unreliability in different types of historical works. On the one hand, similar to a judge, a historian is held to give an unbiased, correct account of what happened; on the other hand, objectivity is unattainable. In the first part of the chapter, Jaeger explores the conceptualisations of unreliability in historical studies as well as the critical methods which are developed to deal with the problem. 'Source criticism', that is the critical evaluation of the historical text which is studied in order to get insight into past events, is differentiated from the possible bias as well as value judgements of historians, which Jaeger relates to the discussion of objectivity and partiality. After an analysis of three different approaches to

the narration of past events, all of which have to face the problem that all that is left are traces of a past, which at best add up to incomplete narrations, the second part of the chapter deals with three narrative levels of (un)reliability and (un)trustworthiness: primary narration, which consists of the sources and the narratives of witnesses, and a secondary level, on which Jaeger locates the (un)reliability of the historian's discourse and the reliability of the historian; and a third level, which also concerns the potential unreliability of the historian's narration; but in contrast to the use of unreliability in the other articles of this volume, this kind of unreliability turns out to be both correct and sincere on a higher level: It concerns an "unreliable narration [which] consciously undermines the supposedly reliable narrative" (380). In this mode of writing, historians do not fill the infinite gaps of history or smooth over and synthesise contrastive sources by integrating them into a seamless narrative. Instead, they use metanarration or provide multiple points of view to highlight the gaps and contradictions. According to Jaeger, this reveals the unreliability of the account and makes it more reliable at the same time.

Jarmila Mildorf's investigation of the different types and consequences of unreliability in patients' narratives demonstrates not only the overlap between the questions that are asked in medicine and in narratology but also supplies cogent arguments for a dialogue between the two fields. Mildorf begins with a brief sketch of the two different approaches to patients' unreliability in medicine, clinical approaches on the one hand, and narrative medicine and the medical humanities on the other, which attempt to detect and deal with patients' unreliability in completely different ways. She also differentiates between various terms used for the description of those narratives that do not conform to physicians' data; her definitions of unreliability, nondisclosure, self-disclosure, deception and dissimulation highlight both the correspondences between and the differences to narratological conceptualisations of different types of unreliability. Revealing the grave repercussions that both the deliberate feigning of symptoms and the unintended distortion of facts (or the incongruity between the terms and language of the patients and those of the physicians) can have, she calls attention to the possible damage an insufficient understanding of unreliable narratives can cause. Mildorf succeeds decisively in showing the potential importance of applying (and developing) narratological categories for the analysis of patients' narratives.

The section comprising different disciplinary approaches to (un)reliable narration and (un)trustworthiness closes with Brigitte Boothe's and Dragica Stojković's exploration of unreliability in dream reports. This is related to Mildorf's chapter as such narratives are often recorded during sessions in which patients tell their dreams. Boothe's and Stojković's

contribution provides a fitting conclusion to this part of the volume since it underlines the complexity of the issues involved in the study of unreliability. Though the sincerity of the tellers of dreams is usually as pronounced as their attempt to understand and interpret their dreams in retrospect through the act of narration, the reliability of their narratives is impaired by the crucial differences between the experiencer and the narrator: lapses of memory as well as the obscurity and intransparency of dreams render understanding precarious. In addition, the act of developing a fully-fledged account following a narrative logic, which contrasts sharply to the passivity of the experiencer of dreams, is often shared by a listener, who participates in the process of narration and interpretation. The implications of embedding (un)reliable narratives in an act of communication, which are considered in a number of contributions, are taken up from a different perspective: on the one hand, the privacy of dreams is paramount, on the other, people feel the urge to communicate, which often leads eventually to a retrospective sharing of a less than reliable narration.

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