Jarmila Mildorf
Life Storying in Oral History

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Fictional Contamination and Literary Complexity

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In memoriam
Jan and Kruna Mildorf
whom I miss sorely

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Mildorf, Jarmila (2008). Thought Presentation and Constructed Dialogue in Oral Stories: Limits and Possibilities of a Cross-Disciplinary Narratology. *Partial Answers 6*(2): 279–300.

Mildorf, Jarmila (2010). Narratology and the Social Sciences. In: Jan Alber and Monika Fludernik, eds. *Postclassical Narratology: Approaches and Analyses*. Columbus, OH: Ohio State University Press, 234–254.

Mildorf, Jarmila (2012). Second-Person Narration in Literary and Conversational Storytelling. *StoryWorlds 4*: 75–98.

Mildorf, Jarmila (2013a). Referential Frameworks and Focalization in a Craft Artist's Life Story: A Socionarratological Perspective on Narrative Identity.

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In: Claudia Holler and Martin Klepper, eds. *Rethinking Narrative Identity: Persona and Perspective*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 103–116.

Mildorf, Jarmila (2013b). 'Unnatural' Narratives? The Case of Second-Person Narration. In: Mari Hatavara, Lars-Christer Hydén and Matti Hyvärinen, eds. *The Travelling Concepts of Narrative*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 179–199.

Mildorf, Jarmila (2016a). Performing Selves and Audience Design: Interview Narratives on the Internet. In: Mari Hatavara, Matti Hyvärinen, Maria Mäkelä and Frans Mäyrä, eds. *Narrative Theory, Literature, and New Media: Narrative Minds and Virtual Worlds*. London: Routledge, 256–277.

Hatavara, Mari and Jarmila Mildorf (2017a). Hybrid Fictionality and Vicarious Narrative Experience. *Narrative 25*(1): 65–82.

Mildorf, Jarmila (2019b). "Narratives of Vicarious Experience in Oral History Interviews with Craft Artists." *Journal of Pragmatics 152*: 103–112.

Contents

1 Introduction

American author George Saunders, when asked in an interview about his use of sci-fi or fantastic elements in otherwise realist fiction, responded: "I use those elements as a way of honing in on the emotional truth of a situation. When I look at what my life has actually been, to just represent what literally happened is to shortchange the emotional range that I've experienced" (Begley 2017: 78). Even though Saunders talks about his works of fiction, what he says about the role of unusual story elements in depicting emotions and personal experience seems to me a vital point that holds equally true for everyday storytelling: we enliven our stories with elements that push them close to fiction, and, in doing so, we also give added meaning to the moments in our lives thus depicted. Extreme cases of such imaginative storytelling may amount to what Joseph de Rivera and Theodore R. Sarbin (1998) called "believed-in imaginings," e.g., when people report that they have seen ghosts or have been abducted by extraterrestrials (see Chapter 2).

However, one need not look as far as such extreme examples to find elements in real-life stories which show a convergence between fictional and nonfictional storytelling. Take, for instance, someone who recounts a conversation he had with someone a while ago and renders this conversation in direct speech. Linguists would argue that much of the presented dialogue is in fact "constructed" and by no means a verbatim rendition (see Chapter 5). Indeed, who could ever hope to remember the exact same words that were actually spoken in a conversation? So, while the narrative refers to a conversation that truly took place and has real-life people as 'characters' in it, the way this conversation is presented is partially 'made up,' even though it may at least in spirit come close to what was actually said. Another example: how often do we tell someone about what happened to another person even though we may not have been direct witnesses of that event? Hearsay and gossip, as we all know, often rest on what we ourselves were merely told. This does not usually hinder us from embellishing our descriptions of situations and events or even from ascribing thoughts and emotions to the person whose story we tell – despite the fact that we technically cannot have first-hand knowledge of that person's thoughts and emotions. In conversational contexts, we usually ignore such inconsistencies and accept the 'factuality' of such stories. Most existing theories of fictionality leave out such examples where the fictionalized aspect or, as I shall put it, the narrative's inherent potential for fictionalization or *fictional contamination*, is not necessarily self-evident. However, it is precisely these examples that should be of interest from the perspective of fictionality studies because they

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show that 'fictionality' can sometimes be neither here nor there. What would one classify as the fictionalized part in these examples? Where would one draw the line to non-fictional elements as some theorists try to do when talking about "local" and "global" fictionality (Nielsen, Phelan and Walsh 2015)?

I shall argue in this book that the very *act of storytelling* already opens the door to potential fictionalization since the narrative discourse mode may entail features that – if pushed too far in non-fictional storytelling contexts – may diminish the credibility of the story told while also attesting to the creative impulse that storytelling in general accommodates. After all, when we tell stories we strive to 'draw in' listeners or readers, to engage and involve them in the actions and situations we present in our stories. We do so by using seemingly literary or even fictional elements, e.g., existing story templates (see also Maier and Stokke 2021a: 1), linguistic phenomena like double deixis and free indirect discourse, discursive modes such as dialogue and thought presentation, narrative-functional elements such as focalization and characterization, as well as subcategories of narratives such as second-person narration and narratives of vicarious experience. On a deeper level of human interaction or what Kenneth J. Gergen (2009) describes when he calls humans "relational beings," these narrative techniques and elements fulfill various functions, ranging from the creation of bonds between interlocutors to the exploration of personal or others' experiences, their evaluation and the attendant expression of emotions. I call this convergence between fiction and non-fiction in everyday storytelling *fictional contamination* in analogy to theories of contamination in linguistics and psychology that capture the processes whereby elements from different realms (lexical or conceptual) come into contact and mutually influence each other, both semantically and structurally.

In two articles I co-authored with Mari Hatavara, we proposed "hybrid fictionality" (Hatavara and Mildorf 2017a) and then "cross-fictionality" (Hatavara and Mildorf 2017b) as terms for our concept of fictionality. We devised these terms in response to Nielsen, Phelan and Walsh's (2015) proposal of a rhetorical approach to fictionality, which is based on the assumptions that fictionality is marked by the 'invention' of characters, settings and facts and is discursively or rhetorically 'signaled' to recipients. By contrast, we argued that this account was too simple and did not fit discursive contexts where fictionality cuts across fictional and non-fictional textual genres in complex ways, e.g., oral storytelling or documentary texts in museum contexts. We already looked more closely at features like thought representation and narratives of vicarious experience as markers of fictionality in non-fictional stories but also stressed the importance of the pragmatic context in which such stories operated. In this book, I revisit

and build on some of the ideas and examples presented in those articles, but I also move away from the terms "hybrid fictionality" and "cross-fictionality." In my reconceptualization, fictionality is not some discrete or definable entity that 'moves' or 'travels'[1] between different narrative modes and genres but a complex relationship of mutual influence that is made possible because of what one may call "narrative homology," a likeness between fictional and non-fictional forms of storytelling that is grounded in shared basic narrative parameters. More generally, I therefore also explore what fictional and non-fictional narratives have in common, while acknowledging that they are – especially in their contemporary manifestations – in many regards different from one another (see also Hyvärinen 2019), just as evolved species may no longer be easily recognizable as being related at the core or as having the same biological ancestry.

Furthermore, linking the potential for fictionality to narrative, I argue that *fictional contamination* can be present on the level of the 'what' or the content of stories (narratologists call this the *story* side[2]) – for example, when we recreate scenarios that resemble those in films or literary fiction or when we present other people analogously to fictional characters – , and on the level of the 'how' or the narrative *discourse* of stories – as when we use referential expressions and tenses to create specific viewpoints or what narratologists call *focalization*, or when we position narrators as well as the 'characters' we present, including ourselves, through certain pronouns. Needless to say, the distinction between the 'what' and the 'how' concerning stories is a theoretical construct that is sometimes hard to maintain in actual practice because the *discourse* of a narrative is to some degree also constitutive of its *story* or content. As film narratologist Guido Heldt (2013) writes,

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1 On the metaphor of travel in narrative studies, see various publications by Matti Hyvärinen and colleagues (Hyvärinen, Korhonen and Mykkänen 2006; Hatavara, Hydén and Hyvärinen 2013). A recent collection on fictionality studies draws on the same metaphor again (Fludernik and Nielsen 2020).

2 For example, Seymour Chatman (1978) distinguishes between *story* and *discourse*. More recently, Luc Herman and Bart Vervaeck (2019: 47) have used the terms *narrative* and *narration* and have reserved *story* for the deep-structural level of any narrative (the gist of a story, as it were). However, I find that usage confusing because *narrative* and *narration* look too similar. I will use the *story/discourse* dichotomy, which has wide currency in narratological circles, instead. At the same time, I should add the caveat that, since I do not want to be too technical in my vocabulary, I will be using *story* and *narrative* interchangeably in my analyses. For a recent study that applies the story/discourse distinction to political discourse, see Björninen, Hatavara and Mäkelä (2020).

> the story/discourse distinction does not really posit one as logically independent of the other: *a story is a mental construct on the basis of discourse*. The distinction between fact and fiction may clarify the point. If in real life someone tells us what happened to him that day, we indeed assume that the facts of the matter are logically independent from the discourse (his report) – at least if we believe him. Discourse does not generate the facts, but gives us (mediated) access to them, and 'story' is the name we give to that mediated access. In fiction, discourse does generate the entire story and storyworld, but – at least in most realist fiction – it pretends to give us access to story facts, or rather, gives us access to pretend story facts … (55; emphasis mine)

While I concur with Heldt in saying that "a story is a mental construct on the basis of discourse," I argue that non-fictional stories resemble fictional ones by equally creating "mental constructs"[3] for listeners and that, in doing so, they may come close to crossing the boundaries to generic fiction. Listening to stories also involves imagining. Storytelling can thus be said to be a two-way process: our personal experiences come to life (again) through stories but they equally require the workings of recipients' imagination for this coming to life to happen. Heldt obviously considers referentiality to the real world as a distinguishing mark between non-fictional and fictional storytelling, as do many other theorists (see Chapter 3). Achim Barsch (2013: 214–215) similarly argues in a handbook article on fiction/fictionality that *fictive*, i.e., invented, scenarios are quite common in non-fictional contexts such as teaching resources or legal examples, etc.[4] but that they only become *fictional* when their reference to the real world is no longer given. In principle, these theorists have a point, but they overlook the fact that, as my initial examples already indicate, the picture can be somewhat more complicated: there may essentially be referentiality to a real event and to real people in a narrative but the way they are rendered may introduce aspects that, if looked at more closely, call into question this very referentiality and thus the possibility of a clearcut fact/fiction divide. One reason is that some features may be part of the story as well as the discourse levels, depending on which aspect or function of the feature one focuses on.[5] And both story and discourse can be sites for *fictional contamination* in my framework, which may or may not be signaled in the pragmatic context of the storytelling situation.

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3 Deborah Tannen (1998) also foregrounds the significance of the imagination – both in remembering the past 'scenically' and in creating images in the recipients' minds.

4 Barsch draws on Hans Vaihinger's (1922 [1911]) concept of the "als ob" ('as if') that captures the ways in which imaginative scenarios pervade humans' knowledge systems.

5 For example, as I show in Chapter 5, dialogue may be used to indirectly characterize people while also constituting story content, or various discursive techniques may be used to present a person's mind (Chapters 5 and 9).

Jerome Bruner (1987, 1991) already pointed out how literary story templates may influence people's perceptions of their own lives and may feed into their life storytelling practices. Other scholars have foregrounded the role of the imagination in storytelling (see Chapter 2). At the same time, linguists have drawn attention to the literary qualities of everyday discourse, particularly narrative discourse and informal talk. They have shown how stylistically complex seemingly simple conversational stories can be and how creative speakers are when using language in such quasi-literary ways (Carter 2004; Carter and McCarthy 2004; Tannen 1992, 1998). In analyzing "literary complexity" alongside *fictional contamination*, I continue this line of work in linguistics. Literary complexity may encompass linguistic features such as repetitions and other stylistic figures, metaphorical and metonymic speech, the inclusion of other discursive modes such as dialogue, or intertextual references to literary story elements and templates.

Obviously, literary complexity is not the same as fictionality: fictional narratives need not be stylistically complex, nor are narratives marked by literary density automatically fictional. However, as my examples in this book illustrate, literary complexity on both story and discourse levels can further contribute to *fictional contamination*, that is, more complex conversational stories may have an increased *potential* for fictionalization. Even though I shall argue that there are no discrete narrative-discursive modes that by themselves already signal fictionality, I show how those basic narrative features mentioned above may lead recipients to call into question the story's credibility and the teller's trustworthiness if they are used to an extent that goes beyond what is expected in non-fictional storytelling contexts.

The question what fictional and non-fictional narratives share also ties in with my previous work in *socionarratology*[6] (Mildorf 2006, 2008, 2010, 2012, 2013a, 2013b, 2015, 2016a, 2019b), where I already explored the literary complexity of seemingly simple conversational stories. I bring together much of this work in a more systematic discussion in this book. My research over the past two decades has rested on the belief that fictional and non-fictional storytelling share some fundamental aspects. In this regard, I follow in the footsteps of narratologists Monika Fludernik and David Herman, who have both championed the idea that there is a common basis to all storytelling and have therefore foregrounded similarities or commonalities rather than differences (Fludernik 1996; Herman 2002, 2009). This does not mean, however, that I consider fictional and nonfictional forms of storytelling the same. Quite on the contrary, I do want to

6 *Socionarratology* (Herman 1999), the methodological tools of which I use and expand in this study, combines literary narratology and sociolinguistic narrative analysis (see Chapter 4).

see them as distinct in their current manifestations. Still, I emphasize that they share features because they go back to the same narrative-discursive roots. While in my previous research I explored how quasi-literary or seemingly fictional[7] narrative-discursive phenomena 'made their way' into non-fictional forms of storytelling, I now argue that it is precisely the *a priori* 'sharing' of some fundamental narrative features that makes *fictional contamination* possible – the fact that ostensibly simple, non-fictional narratives already carry in them the potential for fictionalization. This potential, if taken further, might push these narratives closer to fictionality as we know it from generic fiction.

Questions surrounding fictionality are of unabating importance, even more so in times when the media as well as scholars talk of and explore 'fake news,' 'alternative facts,' or unreliable political discourses, to mention only a few areas of investigation. Various studies attend to the boundaries between fact and fiction or factuality and fictionality (Browse, Gibbons and Hatavara 2019; Cullhed and Rydholm 2014; Fludernik, Falkenhayner and Steiner 2015; Fludernik and Ryan 2020; Gabriel, Gymnich and Münch 2023; Klauk and Köppe 2014; Johansen and Søndergaard 2010). To my knowledge, none have hitherto systematically explored the tension between factuality and fictionality in conversational storytelling. In this book, I look at *fictional contamination* and *literary complexity* in life storying, especially in narratives drawn from oral history interviews, i.e., interviews the purpose of which is to collect people's reminiscences about historical events or generally to document the lives of ordinary people,[8] and other interview conversations. I have a closer look at how processes of sense- and meaning-making manifest themselves in the stories people tell, the little anecdotes that lace our conversations. In the next chapter, I provide a theoretical background for oral history and conversational storytelling before I outline my concept of *fictional contamination* in Chapter 3. In Chapter 4, I discuss my methodology and also explain the data used for this study in more detail. This is followed by my analytical chapters, in which I discuss, in turn: the positioning and characterization of people through story templates and constructed dialogue (Chapter 5); how double deixis and pronoun use more generally contribute towards the positioning of tellers and listeners (Chapter 6); second-person narration (Chapter 7); the use of focalization and perspective-taking to draw listeners in (Chapter 8); mind representation (Chapter 9) and narratives of vicarious experience (Chapter 10).

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7 'Fictional' at this point simply means 'related to or to be found in generic fiction,' but I will return to this troubled term in Chapter 3.

8 In Chapter 2, I define oral history in more detail and discuss this field of inquiry further.

2 Life Storying in Oral History and Conversational Contexts

In this chapter, I want to broadly map out the fields of research that constitute the background to and inform this book: oral history and conversational storytelling. Both research fields are of course by now so specialized that one can hardly do them justice by treating them together in one single chapter. The outline I am going to present is therefore inevitably going to scratch on the surface, and interested readers may want to consult some of the authors I mention to explore certain ideas further. In outlining these fields, I will intermittently concentrate on points that are going to be of relevance to my purposes in this book – that is, issues of fictionality, truthfulness, reliability, as well as the crossing of boundaries between literary and non-literary genres – while also trying to offer a larger introduction to oral history and conversational storytelling. Many of these points have already been covered extensively in the literature, so again I see my task more in pointing readers in directions for further research rather than giving a complete overview myself, which would be impossible anyway. I will start by looking at the nexus between narrative and identity that, in turn, has received much scholarly attention over the years and can also be touched upon only cursorily here. Still, this discussion is important because it forms the backbone to the kinds of storytelling I then lay out. While oral history comes close to the kinds of life storying we may engage in when talking to others, there are of course also considerable differences since oral history emerges from semi-structured interviews while everyday conversational narratives do not. Throughout, I will draw on research undertaken in psychology, philosophy and linguistics to broaden up perspectives.

2.1 Narrative Thinking and the Imagination

As Hatavara and I (2017a) already pointed out, it is almost a cliché now to foreground the significance of stories and storytelling for our daily lives. From early on, we grow up with both artistic and conversational stories: stories our parents read to us, or family stories that we listen to attentively because we seek to find ourselves in them. Psychologist Jerome Bruner (1986, 1991) argued that at least some of us think narratively, and scholars in the fields of narratology and narrative psychology have continued to emphasize narrative's function as a mode of thinking (Brockmeier 2013, 2015; Freeman 2010, 2013; Herman 2002, 2009; Schiff 2017). What is meant by this is that, in contrast to scientific reasoning, narrative

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allows us to give shape and meaning to often chaotic life events and experiences retrospectively with hindsight or as we go along (see also contributions in Schiff, McKim and Patron 2017). Theodore R. Sarbin (1986: 11) even argued that: "Survival in a world of meanings is problematic without the talent to make up and to interpret stories about interweaving lives." Sarbin's choice of the verb "make up" is interesting as he not only seems to imply that we need to be able to tell stories about us and others but that this storytelling may even entail an element of inventiveness or fictionalization.

Molly Andrews (2014), among others (see also Nielsen, Phelan and Walsh 2015: 63–64), emphasized the role that the imagination plays in our narrative constructions of self. She writes:

> Even when our memories are accurate—for instance we believe certain things happened at certain times with certain people, and we are right—the meaning which we attribute to those experiences, in other words the reason they are important to us, is highly influenced by the imaginary world we weave around them. [. . .] It is the drive of the imagination which impels us to ask 'if only' of our past, and 'what if' of our futures. When we revisit the past, as we do when we tell stories about our lives, it is our imaginative urge which gives us the ability to contemplate a world that might have been, as well as one which might still be. (Andrews 2014: 4–5)

Weaving an "imaginary world" around our experiences and giving in to the "drive of the imagination," as Andrews puts it, is part and parcel of how we relate to our surroundings and to our lives more generally. In fact, we do so with a good deal of fantasizing. Brockmeier and Harré (2001: 56) also emphasize that narrative, through its "exploratory and experimental options," "endows the human condition with its particular openness and plasticity." We can hypothesize storyworlds and thus give expression to our regrets, desires and wishes. We can also make plans and – perhaps within limits – create new life paths for ourselves. Psychologists have stressed the importance of imagining future narrative trajectories for one's life (Sools, Tromp and Mooren 2015; Sools, Triliva and Filippas 2017; Sools 2020). Needless to say, 'dreams' about the future can have a significant impact on how we live our lives in the here and now. Even true stories of the past, Andrews argues, or should we say, those stories that we take to be true, are revived in our memories in conjunction with our imagination – a point I will return to below. In that sense, much of our lives is subject to "believed-in imaginings," albeit perhaps not in such extreme versions as investigated by Joseph de Rivera and Theodore Sarbin (1998). The two psychologists analyzed stories of an – at least to outside observers – fictional nature that the tellers nevertheless believed to be true, e.g., stories about Satanistic ritual abuse, abduction through extraterrestrials, apparitions of ghosts or fairies, the hearing of voices and similar stories

that many a psychologist and psychiatrist will have come across in their work with clients. Such stories may seem unbelievable from an 'enlightened' westernized perspective, but they constitute an intrinsic part of the reality that those people who tell them experienced.

In a recent contribution, Hutto (2023) has argued that narrative approaches in psychotherapeutic contexts have been saddled with challenges that could be overcome if they were to "go fictive" (59), as he puts it, that is, acknowledge the potential fictitiousness of narrative accounts. For example, these therapeutic approaches face the "explanatory challenge" (53) when they expect people to present true and verifiable self-accounts. Another challenge is that narrative techniques are seen as applicable to all individuals while in fact they may not be. The third challenge Hutto identifies is the "manipulation challenge" (57), which addresses the criticism raised against narrative-therapeutic approaches that they may, in the worst case, help foster imagined pasts and false accounts in clients. Recognition of the inherent potential for fictionalization in conversational narratives or what I call *fictional contamination* may help one avoid such conceptual pitfalls and misguided expectations.

Some scholars have already argued that life stories share a number of features with fictional novels. William Randall (2014: 258–267), for example, contends that the life story and the novel are similar in that they both create an atmosphere for recipients; they are "open" in the sense that the emotional and experiential terrain they cover is potentially boundless; and they share "integrity" to the extent that both entail numerous side stories or subplots, several characters with different qualities and intersecting lives, etc. in "one story" (265). Seeking to bring together "the storied aspect of our lives with both our (self-)creativity and our uniqueness" (257), Randall proposes the term "novel-ty" with a hyphen. This analogy between life stories and novels of course also has its limitations. For one thing, unlike the author of a novel, we cannot know the ending to our life story (see also Abbott 1988). Furthermore, we cannot 'invent' our life worlds from scratch. Even if we manipulate our life *stories* to a certain degree, the influence we have on our actual lives as they unfold is minimal at best because many conditions and parameters are simply given – although re-narrativizing oneself to some degree does work in psychotherapeutic contexts. I will come back to this below. A good example for a failed attempt at overwriting one's life story is Anna Sorokin, also known as Anna Delvey, who pretended to be a German heiress and duped much of New York high society before she was convicted of fraud.[1]

1 Her story was also made into a hugely popular Netflix mini-series.

Still, as this example shows, telling one's life story is intricately connected to who we are, to our identities, even if they may be only fake to an extent.

2.2 Narrative and Identity: Sites for Self-Fictionalization

The literature on the relationship between narrative and identity is vast and reaches across numerous humanities and social science disciplines. A commonly held assumption is that identity (or identities) is closely linked with narrative or that, expressed more strongly, identities *are* fundamentally narrative in nature. German philosopher Wilhelm Schapp (1953) writes that we are entangled in stories ("in Geschichten verstrickt"). Paul Ricoeur (1988: 246) talks not just about narrative and identity, but about "narrative identity," i.e., an identity that constitutes itself through stories. Psychologists Dan P. McAdams, Ruthellen Josselson and Amia Lieblich (2006: 4) describe narrative identity as "the stories people construct and tell about themselves to define who they are for themselves and for others." In psychology, the question of narrative identity is debated along three axes: the first axis (*unity or multiplicity*) concerns the extent to which narrative identity supports a sense of unity and integration of the self rather than multiple and sometimes conflicting aspects of the self; the second axis (*self vs. society*) addresses the question whether narrative identity is regarded as an achievement of the individual or as constructed in and through a psychosocial context; the third axis (*stability vs. growth*) considers the idea of a core self which remains stable over the course of a lifetime in contrast to notions of change, development and growth (McAdams, Josselson and Lieblich 2006: 5–9). To my mind, the various axes should be considered as continua or clines rather than either/or dichotomies, and they can vary for each individual and across a life span.

Whichever of these theories one ascribes to, it is clear that their tenets have real-life psychological implications. One often hears people say that they have finally discovered their 'true self' or that they feel they are 'only pretending' or 'acting a role.' In other words, there is an aspect of performance in how we wield our identities, and people at some level seem to distinguish between 'sincere' and 'insincere' identities. It is now almost commonplace to say that identity is not something monolithic and constant, a uniform and idiosyncratic substance which is intrinsic to each and every one of us, but that we in fact have several identities which we constantly renegotiate with the world surrounding us, depending on the situation and on whom we are with. These negotiations in large measure take place discursively and, more specifically, through narratives, as linguists argue (see below). In this connection, it is noteworthy that philosopher Richard Rorty (1989: 73) talks about a "final vocabulary" that we use, among

other things, to "tell, sometimes prospectively and sometimes retrospectively, the story of our lives," suggesting that our lives are contingent on the language we use to describe them. Given that we can manipulate language and, by extension, the stories we tell, there is a dimension of in-built playfulness and a potential for fictionalization in how we create our identities. It is my aim in this book to unravel this kind of potential.

Some philosophers have conceived of narrative as a means to explore and discover oneself (MacIntyre 1981), implying, of course, that there is a self to discover. This argument sometimes also entails a hint to fictionalization. Roger C. Schank (1990), for example, contends that stories constitute an important factor for self-understanding when he says:

> We tell stories to describe ourselves not only so others can understand who we are but also so we can understand ourselves. Telling our stories allows us to compile our personal mythology, and the collection of stories we have compiled is to some extent who we are, what we have to say about the world, and tells the world the state of our mental health. (44).

Once again narrative is seen as enabling us to impose coherence and orderliness on our otherwise chaotic life experiences and helps us create integrative life stories (see also McAdams 1985, Sarbin 1986). The term "mythology," however, is telling as it implies a degree of fictionality in our personal storytelling. Schank even goes as far as to say that narrative enables us to (re)invent ourselves, to take control of our lives. Thus, he (1990: 137) also contends that "we are the stories we like to tell," and we gradually become the stories that we like to tell often. This stance is at the heart of psychotherapeutic practices where clients are encouraged to give up negative and detrimental self-narratives in favor of more positive and beneficial ones. The fact that such approaches work indicates that, within bounds, self-fictionalization may lead to positive outcomes, even though it cannot overhaul our life trajectories at large. Whether our mental health can be measured against the kinds of stories we tell about ourselves, as Schank also suggests, is perhaps questionable or at least remains open for debate (see Mildorf, Punzi and Singer, forthcoming). Nevertheless, it is interesting to observe that simply talking about our lives seems to be considered salutary – whether in psychotherapeutic settings or in everyday life contexts.

Many scholars also contend that identity is interactional: that what we understand to be our identity can only surface in our dealings with others. Fludernik (2007), for example, argues that "[t]he continuity between present and past self that subjectively exists for individuals relies to a significant extent on the support that identity construction receives from the other" (261). And Bruner (2001) maintains

> that it is probably a mistake to conceive of Self as solo, as locked up inside one person's subjectivity, as hermetically sealed off. Rather, Self seems also to be inter-subjective or 'distributed' in the same way that one's 'knowledge' is distributed beyond one's head to include the friends and colleagues to whom one has access, the notes one has filed, the books one has on one's shelves. (34–35)

The argument about the interactional nature or relationality of our identities (see also Buber 2008 [1923]; Freeman 2014; Gergen 2009) also comes in a strong version that says that there is no identity outside that which others mirror to us. Lars-Erik Berg (2014), for example, argues along those lines and arrives at the conclusion that identity at large is only fiction:

> My only way to know myself derives from Other's definitions of me. They cannot possibly reflect a "reality." Therefore I am exposed to fictitious and virtual pictures of myself. But in this way, I develop a capacity to keep a definition of myself that I am content with and that does not violate the definitions that I have built up until now. (105)

This extreme viewpoint is in a way problematic because it implies that one cannot have an identity without others at all – a point which is impossible to verify or falsify in a world where humans are interdependent from day one when they are born (if not before then). However, it is perhaps this interdependence or inevitable relationality that proves Berg and scholars arguing similar points right. Even if we imagine that we could be all alone on this earth, would we not have to argue that even then our identity was only possible because, in this minimal scenario, we would be both ourselves and our imagined other, the dialogical partner in our minds to whom we could tell our stories?

There is of course also a debate about whether identity is necessarily narrative in nature at all. Galen Strawson's (2004) critique is prominent in this context.[2] *Narrative identity* is perhaps too inflationary a term to use because there are multiple other ways in which one can express one's identity. Any other artistic practice – whether it is painting, playing music, dancing, or whatever – can be considered an expression of who one is. In fact, any practice – how we go about our daily business, how we do or do not engage with others, our predilections and preferences and so on – are expressive of our identities. Since I connect the potential for fictionalization to narrative, I also argue that it is only *narrative* or *narrativized* identity that can be subject to the kind of self-fashioning I mentioned earlier. This of course does not mean that everyone who tells stories about his or her life is automatically an impostor or liar. There are boundaries within which

2 For further discussion, see Hyvärinen (2008, 2012) and McDonald (2013).

life stories will not arouse any suspicion in listeners, but such boundaries can naturally be transgressed. Furthermore, there is the added problem of normativity: when we think of the claim that narrative creates coherence and is even said to become a measure of our mental health (see above), then what about narratives that do not add up or make sense? Life stories may be disrupted, discontinued or distorted. Hydén and Brockmeier (2008) call them "broken narratives." It is important to be aware of the potentially stigmatizing effect that narrative normativity may have on people when they are 'judged' or 'assessed' against such norms.

So, to sum up, one can perhaps follow philosopher Dieter Thomä (1998), who tries to synthesize this mire of theories surrounding narrative and identity and avoid their conundrums. Thomä argues that both those theories that posit narrative as a means for self-discovery and those that see narrative as a tool for self-creation or self-fashioning are flawed in that they demand too much of either the concept of *self* or *narrative*. Instead, he proposes a modification in that one should move away from thinking of life storying as taking a *whole life* into view to the kinds of stories that we tell at every juncture of our lives as it unfolds. These stories and anecdotes may also recount past experiences, but what is important is to recognize that they are situated in the here and now of the telling and fulfil functions that relate to ourselves at that moment, our current dispositions, worries, anxieties, expectations, etc. In listening carefully to our own stories, in reflecting on what they may tell us about ourselves at that point, we can use narrative as a practical tool to readjust our life trajectories, which can potentially go in a number of directions at any such juncture, to react to our lived experiences and to choose a path that suits our needs or revise a direction already taken. This way, Thomä argues, we can practice *self-love*, which he defines as an acceptance of oneself, a benevolent coming-to-terms with who one is that leads to taking actions one is not averse to (254). Thomä of course acknowledges the fact that some people may be blind to or deceive themselves about what is at stake in their lives and what might be the best way forward (248). A degree of self-delusion may even be necessary to protect oneself against one's own probing criticism. However, this denigrates neither the lived experiences people have nor the narratives they tell others about them but merely points to the fact that more work needs to be done for them to reach agreement with and acceptance of themselves, some form of integrity – which, arguably, some people may continuously struggle to achieve. Being yet another proposal concerning how to lead a good life, Thomä's suggestion may perhaps still strike one as utopian, but its appeal lies in viewing *narrative as practice* and in tying it to identity in a way that neither obliterates identity nor elevates narrative to life (as in Bruner's (1987) notion of "life as

narrative"; see also Hyvärinen 2008). What I take away from Thomä is the situated, interactional and performative aspects of identity that are made possible through the *usage* of narrative – alongside other forms of expression, as mentioned above. And as my discussion up to this point indicates, the nexus between narrative and identity offers a potential for (self-)fictionalization, an insight which is relevant for my purposes in this book.

2.3 Life Storying as Discursive Action and Positioning

Storytelling in connection with identity formation has also been dealt with in linguistics. Gabriele Lucius-Hoene and Arnulf Deppermann (2002: 53), for example, argue that everyday life can become central to the creation of identity precisely because it offers the possibility to present linguistically one's experience of time and to re-enact previous life experiences in the here and now of the telling. Instead of talking about identities as being interactional (see above), one can specify this by saying that *telling personal stories* is "a relational act," as Charlotte Linde (1993: 112) also has it, because

> the narrator is maintaining and extending a relationship with the other participants by the act of narrating. The narrator also indicates his or her relationship to the protagonist (of the same name) and to the other characters in the narrative, as well as indicating the relation between these characters. In addition, by their comments on the narrative, the interlocutors may indicate or establish relations with the characters of the narrative. (Linde 1993: 113)

We use our stories to justify or explain our actions and to present ourselves in a certain light – to others as well as to ourselves.[3] When we tell stories we first decontextualize our past experiences to re-contextualize them again in the given storytelling situation. We also accommodate our stories to our interlocutors as well to the situational context, while all the while pursuing our own agenda of self-presentation (Günthner 2005). As sociolinguistic research has amply demonstrated, speakers use stories to create professional, ethnic and gendered identities for

3 As I discuss in more detail in Chapter 4, these stories can vary in their extent and shape. Thus, while scholars working in social and human science disciplines often search for narrative identity in elaborate and often lengthy life stories usually elicited in life story interviews, it is equally important to address the kinds of stories people tell one another on a daily basis since everyday selves are constructed collaboratively in conversational storytelling (Pasupathi 2006). Ochs and Capps (2001) call these everyday narratives "embedded stories" and Georgakopoulou (2007) "small stories." These terms also capture the fact that such narratives are sometimes fragmented or incomplete and are part of the conversational flow.

themselves (see contributions in Thornborrow and Coates 2005b). Their stories also mark their participation in social groups such as the family (Langellier and Peterson 2004), the workplace or other institutions (Linde 2009). In this sense, stories contribute towards people's "performances of self," as Erving Goffman (1959) put it. The term "performance" already suggests an affinity to 'make-believe' and 'fiction.'[4] Given this interrelationship between storytelling and self-presentation, which is also bound up with the kinds of identity creation discussed above, it is perhaps not so surprising that *fictional contamination* is closely linked to this discursive practice – and perhaps even more so with gifted storytellers. Here, we also begin to glimpse some of the reasons why people may *deliberately* fictionalize parts of their lives. Social and self-imposed pressures to perform certain roles are immense, perhaps never more so than in our day and age, where new media formats have made it possible for everyone to put their selves online – and, in doing so, often enough on the line.

The identity formation that can be discerned in and through storytelling also comes under closer scrutiny in research following the tradition of discursive psychologists, where attention is paid not to narratives as cognitive constructs or products but to "narratives-in-interaction" (Bamberg 2005). This line of research seeks to track "identities-in-the-making" in the situated verbal interactions between individuals and to make use of positioning theory as well as conversation-analytical tools in order to arrive at an understanding of how people create identities for themselves locally in a given interaction. Positioning has to do with roles and identities allocated to persons in interactions. Positions depend on people's status, relationships, worldviews, individual backgrounds, but also situational and institutional role formats, social expectations and the like. Bamberg (1997: 337) enumerates three types of positioning, which address the following questions: "How are the characters positioned in relation to one another within the reported events?" (level 1 positioning); "How does the speaker position him- or herself to the audience?" (level 2 positioning); "How do narrators position themselves to themselves?" (level 3 positioning). Positioning theory as a heuristic tool is very helpful and can be well combined with narratological analytical categories (see Björninen, Hatavara and Mäkelä 2020). In my analyses, I will look at how storytellers position other people as 'characters' in their stories (Chapter 5) and how they position themselves as storytellers in the conversational situation (Chapter 6). Let me now turn to oral history.

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4 It also reminds one of Deborah Tannen's (1992: 43) idea that "sensemaking is essentially scenic," i.e., that we must dramatize our narratives. I will expand on this idea in my discussion of language use and creativity in the next chapter.

2.4 Life Storying in Oral History

Oral history is far from being a unified field, and the term "oral history" is already confusing because it can refer to a subdiscipline of history, its method of inquiry and the outcome of that method. It encompasses the collection and study of "oral reminiscences" (Ritchie 2011: 3) of historical events by means of interviews (see also Wierling 2003). Outside of academic oral history, where the main aim is to learn about historical events through eyewitness testimony, the field has broadened up, and oral history has effectively become "a primary tool for documenting the lives of ordinary people" (Sharpless 2006: 24). As Marta Kurkowska-Budzan and Krzysztof Zamorski (2009: xiii) also point out for oral history interviews, "we care for, organize, and catalog them" so that "the narratives of our contemporaries will be available for the future."

In his introductory chapter in the *Oxford Handbook of Oral History*, Donald A. Ritchie (2011: 3) writes: "Oral history is as old as the first recorded history and as new as the latest digital recorder." What he means by this seeming paradox is that, of course, the recording of witness accounts of historical events goes far back in history – in that sense it is very old – but it also keeps changing and renews itself with each new technology that enables chroniclers to record, preserve and disseminate what they have collected. Ritchie mentions as early examples of oral history Thucydides, who documented the Peloponnesian Wars, and the oral traditions of troubadours (3; see also Thompson 1981). Indeed, one of the key functions of Medieval heroic epics that were performed in public places was to keep recent and not so recent history alive in people's memories. Johannes Merkel (2015: 105) aptly calls this the 'singing memory' ("das singende Gedächtnis"). It was only in the twentieth century, however, that oral history became closely associated with the method of interviewing. The *New Yorker* ran an article in 1942 which reported that Joe Gould, a local bohemian, was compiling "An Oral History of Our Time" by conducting interviews. Apparently, no manuscript was left behind to prove this endeavor (Ritchie 2011: 3). However, the term "oral history" was then adopted by historian Allan Nevins, who founded the first archives for interviews at Columbia University in 1948 (3).

Ritchie also describes the skepticism that oral history projects and researchers had to face in the beginning because traditionally, historians were accustomed to working in archives and with written documents. They associated interviewing as a method more with sociology and journalism, although there are obviously great differences between the kinds of interviews conducted in journalism and those undertaken in sociology and oral history (Quinlan 2011: 25). Furthermore, (spoken) eyewitness testimony struck many as dubious and less reliable (Ritchie 2011: 4). This question of (un)reliability is interesting insofar as its

assessment has changed over the years. As Alistair Thomson (2011: 77) points out, the criticism of memory as an unreliable factor that was still held against oral history in the 1970s was countered with a reconceptualization of the very notion of memory itself.

2.4.1 Memory, Subjectivity and Unreliability in Oral History

The problem of memory has occupied scholars from Aristotle onwards (Thompson 2017[1978]: 127). Thomson (2011: 77) quotes Alessandro Portelli, who wrote in 1979 (originally in Italian): "But what is really important is that memory is not a passive depository of facts, but an active process of creation of meanings" (Portelli 1998: 69). More recently, Jens Brockmeier (2015) has argued along similar lines in his book *Beyond the Archive: Memory, Narrative, and the Autobiographical Process*. Brockmeier debunks the metaphor of memory as an archive or storage space as it can be found, for example, in cognitive-psychological conceptions of long- and short-term memories (see Schacter 1996: 42–43), and reconceptualizes memory as a dynamic process that is closely linked to the narrative practices involved in life storying (his "autobiographical process").[5] Indeed, even though neither Portelli nor Brockmeier use the term, at least not in connection with memory, I suggest that one can conceive of memory as *emergent* rather than fixed or static, and as dependent on the situational context in which a memory or memories emerge.

Oral historians often perceive what Thomson (2011: 91) calls the "memory paradox": on the one hand, people's memories seem to be remarkably stable over long periods of time, and yet, on the other hand, these memories can shift and change significantly. Thomson illustrates Portelli's statement about memory as an "active process" of meaning-making with an example from his project on postwar British migration to Australia, where an interviewee gave an account of her departure 40 years earlier that was considerably different from the account she had written down in her journal around the time when she left (77–78). Portelli himself relates his previous research on workers in the Italian town of Terni, who temporally misplaced a significant event (the killing of a protesting union member, Luigi Trastulli) and recontextualized it by placing it at a later moment in history (see also Portelli 1991). The examples Portelli and Thomson discuss show that memories are not just there, entities that wait to be retrieved, but that they

5 This also reminds one of the art of mnemotechnics practiced in the Middle Ages (see Carruthers 2008).

change depending on what people need in terms of meaning-making and what circumstances they find themselves in at the moment when they remember something. Certain aspects of the remembered past will gain in significance over time, others will fade away because they become less important. What is needed in oral history, therefore, is that researchers "adopt a 'double-take' approach to memory, and to use it to explore both the past (history) and the past in the present (memory)" (Thomson 2011: 91). Put differently, one should not only attend to what memories are about, but also to what they do in, and how they are possibly shaped by, the current situation of remembering. As Portelli (1998: 68) points out: "Oral sources are credible but with a *different* credibility. The importance of oral testimony may lie not in its adherence to fact, but rather in its departure from it, as imagination, symbolism, and desire emerge." It is this imaginative quality as well as oral history's narrative dimension – both of which have also been discussed as key features in everyday storytelling (Andrews 2014) – that make it desirable to employ methodologies devised for literary studies or, more specifically, narratology. Portelli writes: "Oral historical sources are *narrative* sources. Therefore, the analysis of oral history materials must avail itself of some of the general categories developed by narrative theory in literature and folklore. This is as true of testimony given in free interviews as of the more formally organized materials of folklore" (Portelli 1998: 66). In Chapter 4, I present such a narrative toolkit: socionarratology.

Sometimes oral history accounts can be influenced by cultural artefacts without interviewees even being aware that this is the case. A study by Harald Welzer (2002: 185–206), for example, shows that German soldiers' stories about their memories of the Second World War include scenes and elements of famous war films. It is easy to brush such accounts off as 'false' or 'biased,' but perhaps one reason why these story templates were adopted in the first place is that there might not have been any other discourse available to these soldiers to talk about the traumas of war (see also Gilmore 2001). Cultural story templates may offer frames of reference that help one verbalize one's own experience. Another example for this is the tradition of lament performances and wailing rituals that exist in certain cultures, e.g., in pre-democratic Greece (see Giaxoglou 2019). While we are accustomed to thinking about the expression of one's grief as an individual and idiosyncratic activity, certain cultures offer story templates, poetic-discursive formulae and ritualized paralinguistic patterns that members of a community can tap into. Private emotional experiences are thus subsumed under a communal practice that is remembered and passed down for generations, and this may well have a cathartic and stabilizing effect. Aleida Assmann (2008: 100) also stresses the significance of the arts, including literature, alongside religion and

history as one of "three core areas of active cultural memory." I will discuss examples of story templates and their impact on storytelling in Chapter 5.

"Memory," Egyptologist Jan Assman (2008: 109) summarizes, "is the faculty that enables us to form an awareness of selfhood (identity), both on the personal and on the collective level." Since both memory and identity are closely linked to time and to the experience of time passing, stories and storytelling also play a major role for the constitution and sustenance of memories. Moreover, remembering moments when memories were formed can in turn contribute to the structuring of our life stories, as Paul John Eakin (2008: 170) points out: "[E]xperience itself, especially in its acts of arbitrage when we remember remembering, is already autobiography in the making. And this making, this mapping of our lives in time, I like to think, helps us to keep track of who we are."

Jan Assmann (2008: 109) systematically distinguishes among individual, communicative and cultural memory as can be seen in Table 1.

Tab. 1: Types of memory (adapted from Assmann 2008: 109)

Level	Time	Identity	Memory
inner (neuro-mental)	inner, subjective time	inner self	individual memory
social	social time	social self, person as carrier of social roles	communicative memory
cultural	historical, mythical, cultural time	cultural identity	cultural memory

Individual memory refers to the thoughts about the past that cross our minds and form our personal memories. Assmann (2008) points out that this is the "only form of memory that had been recognized as such until the 1920s" (109). *Communicative memory* is situated at the social level. Here, people not only remember things in their minds, but they also communicate them to family, friends, oral history interviewers and so on. At this level, it is still individuals rather than groups or communities that experience and remember historical events as part of their personal biographies. The temporal scope of the remembered period is therefore limited to roughly 80 to 100 years and is anchored in the present time. *Cultural memory*, by contrast, is related to the distant past, often to a nation's founding stories or mythological origins. Cultural memory is usually maintained and transported in well-defined, rather rigidly circumscribed discourses, ceremonial practices and cultural artefacts. These in turn require specifically designated people for carrying and passing on those memories (Erll 2011: 30–33). Cultural

memories in particular are tied to ideology[6] in the sense that the selection of memories and decisions about how and when certain things are remembered will depend on what a dominant group in society deems important and worthy of (institutional) commemoration.

One may criticize the term "cultural memory" along the same lines that "collective memory," a term coined by Maurice Halbwachs (1950, 1952) can be criticized. Thus, according to Anna Green (2011: 104), the term may obliterate the dynamic relationship between *semantic memory*, which is tied to "the norms and values of our social environment" (104), and *episodic memory*, which is personal and experiential (104) and therefore corresponds to Assmann's *individual memory*. Green also criticizes the metaphorical expansion of the term "collective memory" because, to her, it obfuscates the political tensions and complex (and potentially conflicting) attitudes that people may experience when 'remembering' their nation's past: "Defining learned forms of historical consciousness as collective memory runs the risk of reifying national memory and obscuring the processes through which dominant political and cultural elites deploy cultural symbols and narratives in pursuit of ethnic or nationalist ends" (105). So, rather than stipulating some collective memory which ultimately perpetuates the accepted truths or "grand narratives" (Lyotard 1979) 'floating' around in a nation or society, Green (2011: 107) suggests that we attend to the individual memories emerging in oral history interviews. She writes: "The specific content unique to personal memory and the choice (conscious or unconscious) of the frameworks through which personal experience is remembered and understood, provide the means through which historians can test grand narratives against personal memory or measure history from above against history from below."

In this connection, as I argued in Mildorf (2019b), it might be instructive to draw on what Charlotte Linde (2009: 7) calls "institutional memory." This term is not exclusively linked to businesses – even though it emerged from a study of talk at work[7] – but can also apply to social or cultural institutions such as the family, marriage, medical practice and so on. It thus fits the diverse range of materials covered in my book, including health narratives, life interviews with craft

6 Like Herman and Vervaeck (2019: 8), I think of ideology as "the collection of conscious or unconscious views of the world" that one has. In this sense, everybody shares some ideology or even ideologies. However, the term is often used in a derogatory sense to discredit what other people believe. Thus, the assumption often is that others have an 'ideology' while oneself owns the 'truth,' which is obviously problematic.

7 Linde's seminal study investigates how a company's storytelling practices – both those of the corporation and of its individual members – contribute towards the constitution of institutional memory.

artists and the collaborative storytelling of couples. All of these groups can be regarded as cultural institutions in this wider sense and can be said to participate in "communities of practice."[8] They form a community on the grounds of their work, their shared life experiences, skills, knowledge and everyday practices. Arguably, they also share certain beliefs and values, and their identities are created in a process of "relational dialectics," as Elliot G. Mishler (1999: 136) called it in his study of craft artists: "How they define themselves, 'who' they are, reflects the particulars of their social space and their ways of positioning themselves within it" (Mishler 1999: 144). These positionings, alongside the meaning-making and identity constructions I mentioned above, can be observed in the oral history interviews I present in my analyses.

Within an institution in this wider sense, questions that arise are: who does the remembering and whose past is remembered? As Linde (2009) points out, history is always "of someone, for someone, for some purpose" (9), and institutions are as much interested in remembering some things as they seek to forget other things (10). Furthermore, an institution's sense of continuity is not given in and of itself but has to be constantly worked on and reinforced (9). Corporate and members' stories play a vital role in conveying this sense of continuity, and they have the potential to constitute a projected future – if they are filtered and stored accordingly. More importantly, they have to be used and consulted again lest they lose their institutional power (12). As Linde puts it, "institutions and people within institutions do not mechanically record and reproduce the past. Rather, they work the past, re-presenting it each time in new but related ways for a particular purpose, in a particular form that uses the past to create a particular desired present and future" (14). What is noteworthy here is once again this focus on the *processuality* of remembering, on how storytellers "work the past" in and through their narratives.

Linde looks at occasions for remembering from two perspectives: *modality* refers to how people remember something, including the time of remembering (both regular and occasional occurrences), the place where one remembers something, and the artefacts that help one do so; *design intention* denotes whether occasions are specifically designed for remembering or offer themselves despite being designed for some other purpose (46–47). These aspects can also be applied to interviews conducted as part of an oral history project. Especially the question

8 Penelope Eckert and Sally McConnell-Ginet (1992: 464) define such communities as "an aggregate of people who come together around mutual engagement in an endeavour. Ways of doing things, ways of talking, beliefs, values, power relations – in short, practice – emerge in the course of this mutual endeavour."

of design intention becomes pertinent here because there is always a specific theme or topic that an interview is about. And the place where the interview is conducted also plays a role: an interview may follow somewhat different trajectories if it is conducted in the interviewee's home rather than his or her work place, for example. The immediate environment with its sounds and other sensory input may become a source of disturbance or generate topic shifts. To summarize, one can say that oral history is always situated – which is also one of Herman's (2009) defining criteria for narrative – both regarding the (historical) contexts within and surrounding the stories told, the contexts of interviewees' remembering and, connected to that, the interview situation. Given what I said earlier about the impact the situational context may have on one's verbal self-presentation – to the extent of self-fictionalization – these points become hugely relevant for my study.

2.4.2 Oral History Interviews: A Special Communicative Situation

Oral history data have proliferated over the last decades, not least because new technologies have made their recording, storage and dissemination so much easier and cheaper. Since oral history projects generally involve average members of a group and focus on the 'everyday' in an attempt to understand, document and even create historical moments in a society, such projects have sometimes been praised for being "democratic" and for seeing informants as "partners and participants in a dialogue about the past" (Kurkowska-Budzan and Zamorski 2009: xiv). At the same time, oral history interviews raise numerous questions concerning the roles interviewer and interviewee play in co-constructing the past and the audiences for whom this past is constructed (Stögner 2009: 211–212; Quinlan 2011). Arguably, interviews already have certain asymmetries related to participants' age, gender, expertise, experience, etc. built into them (see contributions in Marková and Foppa 1991).

As I already pointed out in Mildorf (2016a: 260–261), interviews are not simply 'conversations' or even 'chats' with another person, although they do follow some basic rules of ordinary conversation (Riessman 2008: 23–24). Usually, only a limited number of topics is covered, and these topics are more or less predetermined. Unlike conversations, interviews normally progress smoothly because the interviewer willingly yields the floor to the interviewee and because both participants strive to make the interaction 'work,' i.e., they use linguistic cues such as questions and self-repairs to clear up misunderstandings, as is delineated by conversation analysis and interactional linguistics (Sacks, Schegloff

and Jefferson 1974; Schegloff 1992; Clift 2016; Couper-Kuhlen and Selting 2017). Furthermore, in contrast to ordinary conversations, the interview is not only recorded, but it is also usually guided by the researcher. As Mishler (1986: 245) contends, "the aim of an interview is defined by the interviewer who also controls its shape and flow as well as the form and intent of specific questions." However, "narrative interviews" (Schütze 1983; Lucius-Hoene and Deppermann 2002) and "person-centered interviews" (Hollan 2001; Avineri 2019: 97–99) aim at providing narrative opportunities for research participants, and interviewees are therefore given as much time to talk as possible. Ultimately, one can summarize the oral history interview with Quinlan (2011: 24), who calls it "an intensely interpersonal exchange between a prepared interviewer and a willing narrator who set out purposely to record the narrator's first-person information and experiences in a structured interview setting and to make that information available to others." As we shall see in Chapters 7 and 10, the account need not exclusively be a first-person account, but this makes storytelling in oral history even more fascinating.

As I discussed above, the potential unreliability of informants' memories poses interpretive problems for oral historians (Stögner 2009: 213). Sociologists Paul Atkinson and David Silverman (1997) criticized an "unreflective endorsement of the core assumptions of the interview society" (Atkinson and Silverman 1997: 310) by cautioning against an overly enthusiastic perception of interviews as sources of 'authentic' knowledge. Ironically, research has shown that the spoken word makes what is said seem more 'authentic' to audiences because they can associate someone's voice more directly with a specific person and that person's 'direct' experience of what is related (Klebl and Lukosch 2008: 143). According to Atkinson and Silverman (1997: 309), the interview society relies "pervasively on face-to-face interviews to reveal the personal, the private self of the subject. The techniques of contemporary mass media and the interests of social researchers converge in the cultural forms of the interview society." At the core of this interview society, one could argue, is a shared craving for human-interest stories – a fact that the recent pandemic and its medial representations and scholarly treatment have amply demonstrated. Kurkowska-Budzan and Zamorski (2009: xiv) also argue that the dialogue that takes place in oral history "has its place in our human historicity which shifts and changes; each contact with a new experience influences our understanding of the past as a building block in human identity." This quote nicely illustrates how oral historians seek to connect the individual or personal with the social, cultural or even human. I suggest that narratives of personal experience assume a special function in oral history because they not only relate what happened in the past, but also how storytellers

evaluate these events with hindsight (see also Freeman 2010) and how they feel about them.

Interview narratives therefore require heightened critical attention and a self-reflexive stance on the part of the researcher. They also require awareness of all the factors that may influence the trajectory and outcomes of the interview (Quinlan 2011: 27–29). In the following section, I focus on three aspects that are immediately relevant for the discussion of interviews and that have been covered in linguistics: the implicit audience design and the "community of practice" (Eckert and Mc-Connell-Ginet 1992) within which these interviews are conducted, the double dialogue that ensues because of this set-up, and the co-constructedness of the dialogue and the narratives constituting the interview.

2.4.3 Audience Design, Double Dialogue and the Co-Constructedness of Interview Narratives

In sociolinguistics, the term "audience design" initially emerged in the context of sociophonetic variationist research (Coupland 2007: 58–62). Allan Bell (1984) investigated radio news broadcasts in New Zealand and discovered that the same news readers used different phonetic styles depending on whether they read for national radio or a smaller community radio station. He used the term "audience design" to account for this finding. Alessandro Duranti (1986: 243) emphasizes the importance of taking into consideration the audience for whom utterances are produced and he even talks about "co-authorship," a notion that by now has widespread currency in sociolinguistics: "Speaker and audience are equals not simply because their roles are interchangeable – in fact, they may not be in some situations – but rather because every act of speaking is directed to and must be ratified by an audience." Drawing on Clark and Carlson's (1982) observations regarding hearers in speech acts, Duranti also points out that we need to "recognize the informative function that certain utterances have with respect to hearers and bystanders – as opposed to addressees" (243). That is, things might be said indirectly for other people rather than the immediate interlocutor. Conversely, bystanders may glean information that was not originally intended for them.

In oral history interviews, the notion of an "audience" is further complicated by the fact that there is not only the interviewer with whom the person interviewed interacts directly, but also an unknown larger audience for whom this interview is conducted and whom both interviewer and interviewee may have in mind when conducting the interview. Irene Etzersdorfer (1987: 57) calls this a 'double dialogue' ("doppelter Dialog") between the historian and the informant

on the one hand and between the informant and a certain social group or society more generally on the other. Etzersdorfer argues that informants are aware of the historical dimension of the interview and that this awareness will color the content of their responses. There can be an unconscious dimension which surfaces in the interview text in what is particularly emphasized or what is left out, what is answered in response to questions never asked, what is denied or what is distorted, and in displays of emotionality (Etzersdorfer 1987: 57). One could add to Etzersdorfer's list more rhetorical items such as the use of metaphors and irony, for example (Sperber and Wilson 2012; Wilson and Sperber 2012b), and of course silence as an important discursive feature in oral history interviews (Quinlan 2011: 31) and in communication more generally (Jensen 1973; Jaworski 1993; Jefferson 1989; Tannen and Saville-Troike 1995; Kurzon 1998; Ulsamer 2002).

Quinlan (2011: 32–33) provides several examples of interviews that did not go so well because both participants felt inhibited to touch on certain issues (in one of her examples, it is the question of racism that neither interviewer nor interviewee wanted to broach more openly), or because participants failed to build trust because of their perceived differences (34). The interview may also be affected by the purpose and design of the oral history project. Thus, digitization and a projected web-based presentation of the materials may intimidate some participants, while others may feel a stronger need to fall back on what linguists and anthropologists call the "looking good" constraint or principle (Ochs, Smith and Taylor 1989: 244; Bauman 2004: 93). Quinlan (2011: 27) writes: "Oral history narrators, like anyone else engaged in talking to another person, consciously self-edit for a wide variety of reasons, but faced with the prospect of digital fame, some may be tempted to elaborate their roles, while others may be less than forthcoming." As Quinlan quite rightly observes, the same constraints operate on interlocutors in any other conversational setting – whether it is friends talking to one another, parents talking to their children's teachers or clients meeting psychologists in therapy, to give only a few examples.

The idea of two levels of communication in oral history interviews reminds one of James Phelan's (2005) concepts of "narrator and disclosure functions" in what he calls "character-narration," i.e., essentially traditional first-person narratives. Phelan starts out from the assumption that narrative is a means of indirection, of conveying (sometimes discrepant) messages through storytelling. He assumes that communication in character narration takes place along two "tracks," as he puts it: "the narrator-narratee track" and the "narrator-authorial audience track." The first track (narrator-narratee) involves the fact that "the narrator acts as reporter, interpreter, and evaluator of the narrated for the narratee." This is what Phelan calls "narrator functions" (Phelan 2005: 12). Along the

narrator-authorial audience track, narrators communicate to the authorial audience (i.e., the readers) all sorts of things that they are unaware of. Ultimately, it is the (implied) author who makes the narrator tell those things and thus creates a special communicative situation. Phelan terms this "disclosure functions" (12), i.e., the workings of textual signals conveying underlying messages, which may diverge from the narrator's ostensive messages. Such discrepancies are at the heart of unreliable narration.

How does Phelan's narrative communication model, which is geared towards describing *written* and, for that matter, literary narratives, map onto interview narratives? And how can his model, which includes an author, an implied author, a narrator, a narratee and an authorial audience, possibly be applied to a speech situation where we typically have two interlocutors? When I tell a story about myself, I draw my interlocutor's attention to a specific, more or less explicit image of myself. One could call this the "implied self" in analogy to the literary term "implied author." In fact, "implied self" seems to be even more appropriate because the question of 'authorship' can be a tricky one. Whether the self we create and transmit through our stories provides an image we also consciously authored or whether it is conveyed without our realizing it may not always be clear. Indeed, we may not be the author of our own story, but may be recycling cultural stories of self, for example, or a story someone else 'authored' for us. And the implied self, the image of ourselves that we create through storytelling, will vary from one storytelling situation to another.

This process of accommodation and self-adaptation may even involve the use of 'fictive' material. Thus, Ricoeur (1988: 246) contends that "the story of a life continues to be refigured by all the truthful or fictive stories a subject tells about himself or herself." Too much variation or, put more negatively, inconsistency will result in others questioning our identity and integrity. In Phelan's terms, one could say that interlocutors can become aware of a narrative's "disclosure functions," which – in the case of conversational storytelling – may be transmitted consciously or unconsciously. These disclosure functions may well be revealed in the degree of fictionalization one perceives in a narrative. For example, if a storyteller ever so subtly 'invents' parts of his or her story, we may well ask why that is the case and what the storyteller tries to achieve by doing so (see also Hatavara and Mildorf 2017b).

The point I wish to make in this book is that the speech situation in interviews or, indeed, in everyday storytelling is not as simple as one might expect, and much of this complexity can be attributed to a diversification of speaker positions and perspectivization (see also contributions in Graumann and Kallmeyer 2002). I already pointed to the idea that the addressee can be accompanied by other

people overhearing the talk or audiences that are implied. In the interviews I discuss throughout the analytical chapters, there is usually a dyadic setup. However, some of the narrative features I discuss in my examples show that speakers accommodated to a perceived or imagined audience in what they said and how they said it even though that audience was not physically present.

It also makes sense to distinguish between the "narrating persona" and the "experiencing persona" in oral storytelling, just as scholars in autobiography studies differentiate between "narrating" and "narrated I" (Smith and Watson 2010). I prefer the term "experiencing," however, because conversational storytelling in oral history affords people the opportunity to re-enact prior experiences rather than merely telling others about them. In this connection, Monisha Pasupathi (2006) distinguishes between the "dramatic mode" and the "reflective mode." In the dramatic mode, speakers offer their interlocutors a 'scenic' or dramatized rendition of a previous situation, including dialogue, while the reflective mode remains more strongly anchored with the narrator and offers an abstract reflection of what happened. As I already argued in Mildorf (2016a), elaborating on an idea suggested to me by Matti Hyvärinen (personal communication), it might even be more accurate to assume a three-partite division of the speaker's role in conversational storytelling: the "narrating persona," who tells the story in a given communicative situation; the "narrated persona," i.e., the version of the speaker within the presented storyworld; and the "experiencing persona," i.e., the persona who experienced a situation in the past and partially re-experiences it in the present storytelling situation. Put differently, the "experiencing persona" in fact allows for a merger of narrating and narrated selves in the dramatic mode.

The notion of "speaker" or "narrator" in everyday storytelling is often taken to be self-evident: the person telling his or her story is author and narrator at the same time and, in cases of narratives of personal experience, also becomes a character in the story. That is, most people assume that there is a unity of these three functional roles. Erving Goffman, however, already pointed out in his book *Forms of Talk* that the notion of "speaker" can be more complex. He distinguishes between the "animator," i.e., the person giving voice to an utterance; the "author," who selected what is said and how it is said; and the "principal," i.e., someone whose position or beliefs are expressed through the words that are spoken (Goffman 1981: 144).[9] One can imagine someone reciting or reading out a text

9 Similar complexities in conversational talk are revealed in French enunciation theories, e.g., that of Oswald Ducrot (1984: 99), who distinguishes among the *enunciator* ("l'énonciateur") or persona to whom the points of view of an utterance are attributed, the *locutor* ("locuteur"), i.e.,

that was authored by someone else, or one can talk in someone else's words and thus express some other principal's opinions. An obvious example would be a strategic political speech, where a politician might give a speech that has not been scripted by himself and that expresses the values and opinions of, say, his political party rather than his own.

Goffman's division can also be found in more mundane examples. Some instances that I already mention in Mildorf (2016a: 262) are learners of a foreign language, who often use phrases and expressions they have heard and then recycle them in conversations, thus turning passive into active vocabulary, or married couples or other people living together, who sometimes use words and express beliefs that really originated from the other person. There are also situations – especially in times of crises such as the ones we have recently experienced and are still experiencing – where people may express other people's worldviews rather than their own in conversation because they feel pressurized or fear repercussions.

Furthermore, because storytelling is also connected to performance, some storytellers may create complex speaking positions to make the narrative more engaging and to distinguish their various roles in the narrative. Elizabeth A. Falconi (2019), for example, reports an interesting case of a Zapotec speaker in the Mexican town of San Juan Guelavía who not only mimicked others' voices in his narratives (more on direct speech in narratives in Chapter 5), but also offered the following laminations of his own changing voice: "(1) his reported voice from past interactions, (2) his voice as storyteller [i.e., telling stories to others inside the narratives he related to the interviewer], (3) his voice as narrator of past experiences, and (4) his present voice," i.e., the voice he used in the direct interaction with the interviewer (Falconi 2019: 183). Examples like these indicate that it would be naïve to assume that the perspective adopted in spoken personal narratives is automatically that of the person telling the story. Sometimes, we may not be aware of the fact that we are merely recycling someone else's phrases or that we express views of which we do not really consciously know where they originally came from. Mikhail Bakhtin calls this process *double-voiced discourse*, and he maintains that the struggle with others' discourse is important for "an

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the persona responsible for the utterance, and the *empirical speaker* ("producteur empirique"). The enunciator and locutor are discursive or textual categories, whereby the locutor is further subdivided into the locutor as such ("locuteur-en-tant-que-tel"), i.e., the one whose sole purpose it is to be responsible for the utterance, and the locutor as being from this world ("locuteur-en-tant-qu'être-du-monde"), who represents a whole person with all his/her characteristics.

individual's coming to ideological consciousness" (Bakhtin 1981[1935]: 348).[10] All this implies that even oral narratives produced in face-to-face interaction are more complex than they may appear at first glance and that they consequently deserve more detailed linguistic and narratological analyses.

Oral narratives' complexity also rests on the fact that they are *co-constructed* between interlocutors (Goodwin 2015; Slembrouck 2015). Co-construction inevitably happens because speakers *accommodate toward* the current speech situation and to what they perceive to be required by that situation and by their interlocutors (Giles 2009, 2016; Giles and Smith 1979; Giles, Coupland and Coupland 1991). As we already saw above, interviewees are likely to be influenced by the larger context of the oral history project in which they participate. This implicit or covert influence will also be felt in how they tell their stories. However, there is also a more immediate and obvious influence that emerges from the face-to-face situation in which interviewer and interviewee engage in conversation. Interviewers inevitably 'ratify' interviewees' storytelling by nodding, by using backchannels such as "mhm," "right," etc., or simply by signaling through their glance and body language that they are still attentive. Likewise, a sense of discomfort, boredom, disagreement, and so on may be signaled in many other than merely verbal ways.

On the verbal level, interviewers guide the thrust of the conversation by asking specific questions and perhaps follow-up questions, or by initiating topic shifts. It is hardly surprising that lengthy life interviews as are collected, for example, in the Smithsonian Archives of American Art often follow similar trajectories, especially in the beginning, because participants relate their childhood memories, upbringing, family backgrounds, schooling, etc. Many of the anecdotes are offered in response to questions directly asked about these points by the interviewers. And even if the stories are volunteered without direct prompting, one has a sense that there is a tacit understanding between interviewer and interviewee that this is the kind of information that should go into a life narrative. Such understandings, in turn, are grounded in cultural storytelling norms: we start our narrative from childhood because we follow the *bildungsroman* convention, or because we know from our folk psychology knowledge that our childhoods matter in who we become. As Jerome Bruner (1987: 21) has it, "stories must mesh, so to speak, within a community of life stories; tellers and listeners must share some 'deep structure' about the nature of a 'life,' for if the rules of life-

10 Bakhtin's concept of "double-voicedness" or "polyphony" was also taken up in linguistic theories by Ducrot (1984) and Henning Nølke (2017). For an overview, see Patrick Dendale (2006).

telling are altogether arbitrary, tellers and listeners will surely be alienated by a failure to grasp what the other is saying or what he thinks the other is hearing." This "life-story meshing" may also contribute towards fictionalization if existing stories from fiction, film or other sources are tapped into in order to prop up one's own life narrative. Whether storytellers draw on fictional content or storytelling patterns or whether, as I argue, certain storytelling patterns in their most basic form already underlie all storytelling practices and make fictionalization at least possible – the outcome remains the same: they lead to what I call *fictional contamination*, which I delineate in the next chapter.

3 Fictional Contamination and Literary Complexity

One of my main tenets in this book is that fictionality is intricately linked to the narrative mode. Imagine a husband coming home late in the evening. His excuse is that an unexpected meeting was called at work, and this ran over time, so he could not make it earlier. In reality, he just spent a couple of hours with his secret lover. One can consider the assertions of the husband's explanation simply as lies. If the secret lover also happens to be one of the husband's colleagues, then we could perhaps say that the husband created alternative facts by offering some half-truths and suppressing the essential information. Now imagine instead that the husband begins to tell his wife an extensive story over dinner about how boring the meeting was, what it was all about, who had said what, and how he and his colleagues failed to solve the problem. To my mind, this is a fictionalized account because it moves beyond a mere misstating of the facts. By presenting events and his own experiences in that situation, the husband *narrativizes* what actually did not happen and thus imaginatively transgresses the boundaries between fact and fiction. He may be using narrative-specific techniques such as dialogue and perspectivization to make the narrative more engaging. In this example, the outright fictional status of the narrative is clear – albeit perhaps not to the wife – because there is no referentiality to real events. A staff meeting like this could have taken place but actually did not on this occasion.

And yet, as I argued from the outset, referentiality to 'reality,' however conceived, need not on the surface be an issue with a story told in conversation. Let us imagine another storytelling situation. The same husband tells his best friend about his secret affair and, in doing so, recounts a concrete instance of a date he was on with his lover. He would perhaps talk about how gorgeous this lover was, how much the two of them enjoyed their illicit lovemaking, things they had said to one another and emotions they had shared. Even though in this case the narrative would not obviously be fictional, one can see how easily such a story can still become fictionalized in ever so many ways: for example, the husband might be drawing on cultural story templates of what a passionate relationship and a 'hot lover' should be like; he might exaggerate some of the things that allegedly happened; he might render his and his lover's conversation in words that were perhaps not spoken like this verbatim but that sound more exciting in the current storytelling situation; he might describe the lover's devotion and infatuation, which may or may not correspond to reality. For all we know, the lover may simply be having this affair out of boredom.

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As this – also fictional, but possible – example demonstrates, conversational storytelling is a potentially complex and multi-layered activity that can turn a seemingly true or real event into something at least partially fictionalized. I argue that it is the elaborate *narrative about this event* – both in terms of story content and also its stylistic-discursive rendition – that makes such fictionalization possible. In this connection, it is important to note that the narrative need not be verbalized. The husband may simply remember that situation in such a way in his mind, probably in the form of mental images. This would still make it part fiction and would be a good example for the kind of self-fictionalization that takes place when we narratively recapitulate our life experiences (see Chapter 2).

Before I elaborate on my concept of *fictional contamination*, I want to present the theoretical background against which I develop this concept: fictionality studies. This will be followed by interrelated linguistic discussions about literary complexity in conversational discourse.

3.1 Fictionality: A Difficult Concept

Studies about concepts of fictionality not infrequently begin by stating how difficult, if not impossible, it is to define "fictionality" (e.g., Missine, Schneider and van Dam 2020: 3). Lena Rydholm (2014: 26) argues that this difficulty arises because any definition will inevitably be contingent on the time as well as cultural and ideological contexts in which it is developed. One could add institutional or disciplinary contexts to this list since they offer different theoretical frameworks and thus different research questions. Fictionality has implications for, and has consequently been debated in, numerous disciplines, among them: philosophy (Currie 1990; Davies 2007; Friend 2008, 2014; Goodman 1982; Lamarque and Olsen 1994; Reicher 2020; Searle 1975; Stock 2017), theology (Kutzer 2020; Vaihinger 1922 [1911]), some branches of psychology (Boothe 2020), history (Schley 2020; White 2010; Zhang 2004), political science (Kohns 2020), sociology (Benkel 2020), pictorial art and photography (Schröter 2020), film and media studies (Thon 2020), ethnography and ethnology (Schrover 2020) and legal studies (Lieb 2020; Lind 2020). Interestingly, in some disciplines such as psychology, ethnography and sociology, writing fictional texts or otherwise engaging with generic fiction is promoted as an alternative to more mainstream methodologies or treatment (see, for example, Jacobson and Larsen 2014; Longo 2015; Oatley 2011; Watson 2021, 2022). There is a sense that fiction can expand our life worlds and experiences and offer creative means to express 'truths' (see also Bareis 2015; Demmerling and Vendrell Ferran 2014; Gregory 1998; Nünning

2014). Even though here the question is not so much what fiction *is* but what it can *do for us*, such examples are nevertheless interesting because they show once again that storytelling in its manifold forms and expressions matters to people.[1]

It is therefore not surprising that generic fiction and the question what constitutes fiction have been studied in disciplines outside of literary studies, e.g., in philosophy and linguistics. In the latter field, the study of the *language* of generic fiction has received increased attention over the past years (Locher and Jucker 2017; Predelli 2020; Maier and Stokke 2021b), but to my knowledge there has been no corresponding investigation into fictionalizing tendencies in conversational stories as I analyze them in this book. Research on conversational storytelling has, however, considered issues concerning the epistemics, truthfulness and authenticity of what is told and, related to that, questions about storytelling rights (Filutowska 2022; Norrick 2020; Shuman 1986, 2015). I will return to this line of research below.

Given the vast scope of fictionality studies in all the disciplines just mentioned, the purpose of this chapter cannot be to give a comprehensive overview. Nor do I aim to offer a new definition of the term "fictionality." Still, I need to explain what notion of fictionality my concept of *fictional contamination* is based on. Since my interest in the question of fictionality was piqued by the recent revival of fictionality studies in narratology, especially Nielsen, Phelan and Walsh's (2015) proposal of "Ten Theses about Fictionality," I will use this research as a starting point to reflect on some blind spots in these attempts to devise a theory of fictionality that fits all contexts. I am of course aware of the fact that there has been a long-standing discussion about fictionality in the history of narratology (e.g., Cohn 1990, 1999; Doležel 1980; Hamburger 1957, 1979; Genette 1990; Ryan 1997). With the expansion of narratology into "postclassical narratologies," this interest in the phenomenon of fictionality has also moved outside the realm of generic fiction (Browse, Gibbons and Hatavara 2019; Cullhed and Rydholm 2014; Fludernik, Falkenhayner and Steiner 2015; Fludernik and Ryan 2020; Klauk and Köppe 2014; Johansen and Søndergaard 2010), as I already mentioned in my introduction. Still, by exploring fictionalizing tendencies in conversational storytelling, I can perhaps shed new light on some of the debates and draw attention to hitherto neglected areas.

1 Possibly one reason for this is because fiction is also connected to (self-)reflexivity and can accommodate abstract reflection about the world (see contributions in Fülöp 2021; Puschmann-Nalenz 2021), which in a sense also erodes the fact/fiction divide.

When linking fictionality to narrative as I do in this book, it is important to take into account all factors pertaining to that discourse mode: the content and form of a narrative or what narratologists call the *story* and *discourse* dichotomy (see Chapter 1), as well as the situated pragmatic context in which the story is told. Most existing theories of fictionality emphasize one or the other of these factors rather than how they combine. Many theories, for example, stress the importance of *invention* and thereby – even though they do not expressly draw a link between narrative and fictionality – some deviation of a story's content from a perceived reality or 'truth' (Nielsen, Phelan and Walsh 2015; Ryan 2022); they may also posit some discursive elements as being exclusive to the fictional realm – the idea of "signposts" of fiction (Cohn 1990, 1999; Richardson 2006, 2021); or they see fictionality as located in the pragmatic context of a discursive exchange, where speakers/writers somehow signal to recipients that fictionality is at stake (Zetterberg Gjerlevsen and Nielsen 2020; Walsh 2019). I argue that all three factors – story/content level, discourse and pragmatic context – must be considered to arrive at a fuller picture.

3.1.1 Fictionality as Cognitive Skill and Communicative Strategy

Henrik Skov Nielsen, James Phelan and Richard Walsh (2015: 62) argue that fictionality or what they prefer to call "fictive discourse" is a ubiquitous discourse mode that must be distinguished from fiction as a set of conventional genres. They consider fictionality a specific communicative strategy that is used "to accomplish some purpose(s) within its particular context" (63). This context is marked by "global nonfictionality," while the fictional discourse is embedded in it and thus constitutes "local fictionality" (Phelan 2016). Fictionality as communication "also informs an audience's response to the fictive act" (Nielsen, Phelan and Walsh: 62–63). Nielsen, Phelan and Walsh even talk about "the facility of speakers and audiences with it" (63), thereby implying that fictionality is a playful language game that recipients will easily follow and appreciate. Then they broaden up the perspective on fictionality by seeing it as part of humans' special endowment: "The ability to invent, imagine, and communicate without claiming to refer to the actual is a fundamental cognitive skill" (63).

Those three premises, on which the authors found their ten theses, already invite commentary. For example, the third point – that humans' ability to invent and imagine is a fundamental cognitive skill – is undoubtedly correct but it begs the question: what is the difference then between the imagination and fictionality? It is obvious that, without the ability to imagine things, we would

not have invented the technologies we are now in possession of, nor would we have dreamed up the political and social systems that we live in, or shaped the world the way we have done, for better or worse. However, all these things still do not sufficiently explain why humans also started to imagine fictional worlds and peopled them with fictional characters. That kind of imagining surely is different from conjuring up a model for a brand-new, hitherto unknown piece of technological equipment (such as the counting machines that Charles Babbage and Ada Lovelace imagined long before there were computers), and yet both are founded on the same "cognitive skill" to invent and communicate what is non-actual. What is missing in this general assessment is the aspect of narrativization, which I consider a key prerequisite for *fictional contamination*.

As my example at the outset of this chapter showed, without narrativization, stating the non-actual falls into other categories such as the misrepresentation of facts, deception or lying. When Anna Sorokin claimed she was Anna Delvey and a German heiress, she was telling a lie. However, as I already pointed out, she is likely to have told other people stories about her family, about her relationship to her parents, perhaps her upbringing, etc. This is when she began to create her own personal fiction.[2] While I do think that all forms of fictionality – whether in generic fiction or outside of it – must include narrativization, it would be wrong to say that all narratives are automatically fictional. Albrecht Koschorke (2012: 331) even argues that storytelling, because of the world construction it accomplishes, is by default a notoriously untrustworthy activity ("notorisch unzuverlässige Aktivität") and is therefore rightfully excluded from scientific discourse. I do not fully share Koschorke's negative assessment. However, I see in his argument an allusion to narratives' in-built *propensity for fictionalization*, and in this Koschorke has a point. Narratives not only create worlds in the sense of mental constructs that are shared with recipients, but above all they encode subjective experience, drawing for this purpose on various narrative-specific means, including a narrator whose perspective colors the narrative.[3] As I indicated in the previous chapter and will discuss further in Chapter 6, even in conversational

2 The Netflix series that was created on the basis of Anna Sorokin's story continues this fictionalization on yet another level. Viewers encounter a truly fictionalized version of Anna in the sense that much of what is shown could not possibly be known by anyone and must therefore be made up. And yet, the series still references a real-life persona and several facts about her. In the artistic realm, this playfulness is taken for granted. My point is that non-fictional storytelling may also be playful within certain pragmatic boundaries.

3 From transmedial perspectives, the 'narrator' obviously needs to be reconceptualized but the fact of some kind of mediation still remains (Thon 2016).

storytelling the role of the 'teller' is more complicated and multifaceted than one might expect.

3.1.2 Fictionality and Referentiality to the World

Nielsen, Phelan and Walsh's claim about recipients' facility with fictionality can be doubted if one considers how often people are surprised to find out that a story they were told turns out to be fictive. There are also instances where storytellers unselfconsciously embellish their own narratives with content borrowed from fiction (Gerrig and Gagnon 2020). And the examples I have given so far have shown that fictionalization need not even be immediately recognizable in a non-fictional narrative. In other words, the boundaries between fact and fiction are not as clearly demarcated as Nielsen, Phelan and Walsh make them out to be, or at least not everybody perceives such boundaries the same way. The main problem lies in how Nielsen, Phelan and Walsh make their concept of 'fictionality' dependent on content and on that content's referentiality to the real world.[4] Elsewhere, Phelan (2017: 265) argued that "the broad generic difference between the rhetorical action of telling a nonfictional narrative and that of telling a fictional narrative" is as follows:

> Nonfictional narrative consists of *somebody telling on some occasion and for some purpose(s) what happened to someone (the teller herself or someone else) in the extratextual world*, whereas fictional narrative consists of *somebody telling on some occasion and for some purpose(s) what happened to invented characters, that is, ones who exist and act only within the textual world*. (265; italics original)

In other words, ontology and referentiality to the 'real' world are taken to be *differentiae specificae* in the distinction between factual and fictional storytelling. Similarly, Marie-Laure Ryan (2022: 84) recently defined facts "as the referent of true propositions," which relegates the problem into a communicative framework but still foregrounds the importance of reference to the world. Brian Richardson (2021: 86) posits "falsifiability" as the watershed feature by which to distinguish non-fictional from fictional works. Many theorists' thinking about fictionality is founded on the same or a similar argument, relating the invented, albeit also "possible," world of fiction to the real world (e.g., Doležel 1998; Mihailescu and

4 In a revised version of his own specific 'brand' of fictionality studies, Walsh (2019) slightly distances himself from this previous, co-authored work and no longer proposes referentiality as a central defining criterion.

Harmaneh 1996; Pavel 2006; Ronen 1994). However, as my examples indicate, there can be more complex instances of storyworld construction where seemingly clear reference is made to the 'real' world on the surface level, but some aspects of that referentiality turn out to be fictionalized on closer inspection.

In the two research papers I co-authored with Mari Hatavara (Hatavara and Mildorf 2017a, 2017b), we contend that there are narratives "where the frame of reference is nonfictional but the narrative modes include those that are conventionally regarded as fictional" (Hatavara and Mildorf 2017b: 393). For example, in our case study of a war veteran's memory of the army he served in and of a particular general in that army, Hatavara and I show how the storyteller relates aspects he did not have first-hand knowledge of as if he did, especially concerning someone else's mind, thus effectively fictionalizing his narrative. We argued that "storytellers in everyday life may, through mind attribution, *invent* on 'some occasion and for some purpose(s)' what happened to someone in the real world" (Hatavara and Mildorf 2017b: 394).[5] I do not want to rule out the criterion of referentiality or, conversely, invention. In many cases, this criterion is a valid one. However, I argue that it is not the only one, and it certainly fails to offer a full picture of fictionality if we take into consideration the borderline examples I mentioned above and the potential for fictionalization or *fictional contamination* that I analyze in this book. The examples I present in this book are essentially non-fictional narratives although they are infused with elements which, if they were taken further, would move these narratives closer to generic fiction.

3.1.3 Markers of Fictionality

Walsh (2019) as well as Nielsen, Phelan and Walsh (2015) convey a sense of fictionality as some clearly identifiable rhetorical strategy that authors or speakers intentionally flag as fictionality and that is subsequently (easily) understood as such by recipients. This conceptualization implicitly rests on the idea that there is some tacit understanding between communicators about what fictionality is and how it can be recognized in discourse. At the same time, the authors discard approaches such as Dorrit Cohn's (1990, 1999) which seek to identify discursive markers of fictionality (see also Nielsen and Phelan 2017; Walsh 2019: 407). The argument is that there are no 'one-to-one correspondenc-

5 Mind attribution and thought representation are more common in everyday storytelling than one might think; in fact, in this book I consider them important subsets of the features that make *fictional contamination* possible in conversational narratives (see Chapter 9).

es' between discursive features and fictionality.[6] Gregory Currie (1990: 3) already argued along similar lines, saying that there is "no linguistic feature necessarily shared by all fictional works and necessarily absent from all nonfictional works." I agree in principle, but this argument raises the question how recipients can recognize fictionality at all if there are no markers of fictionality whatsoever – whether they are signaled by the text or the pragmatic context or paratexts such as (sub)titles, introductions, cover blurbs, etc. One way out of this impasse is to argue that, while there are no one-to-one correspondences between certain discursive features and fictionality, there are still features which one would typically associate with generic fiction more than with nonfictional narratives.

Cohn's research may serve as an example here: Cohn (1978) worked on the presentation of consciousness in fiction and came to think of this aspect as the key distinguishing feature of fictional – in contrast to non-fictional – storytelling, which she elaborated on in her book *The Distinction of Fiction* (1999). It is certainly true to say that the number of possibilities of diverse forms of consciousness presentation may be limited by concerns about the epistemics and credibility of stories in conversational or other non-fictional settings (Norrick 2020). This does not mean, however, that consciousness presentation is not possible at all or never occurs. My argument is that non-fictional and especially conversational storytelling basically offers the same storytelling principles or mechanisms as fiction, albeit not to the same extent. In this book, I want to show that there are narrative techniques – all of them quite central to storytelling – which make fictionalization possible, even if they do not necessarily automatically lead to full-fledged fictionality: the creative use of pronouns to position tellers and characters, and the consequent shifting and blurring of referentiality in "double deixis" (Herman 1994) and second-person narration; perspective-taking and focalization as means to engage and guide the listener's perception of the storyworld; "constructed dialogue" (Tannen 1989) as indirect means of characterization; free indirect discourse and other forms of thought (re)presentation; and other people's stories or "narratives of vicarious experience" (Norrick 2013a, 2013b). Furthermore, the *rhetorical* dimension of fictional-

6 Hatavara and I were equally criticized by Nielsen and Phelan (2017) for allegedly making the claim that there were one-to-one correspondences among fictionality, narrative and narrative techniques or narrative-discursive "signposts," as Cohn (1990) had called them. Similarly, Walsh (2019: 407) criticizes that the notion of fictionality "has been reduced to pure discursive form rather than rhetorical function" in our more discourse-oriented approach. These critiques overlook our strong focus, in both publications, on the discursive and pragmatic *contexts* in which the stories we analyze were told.

ization is foregrounded in detailed linguistic analyses not only of the selected narratives but of the discursive contexts to which these narratives directly or indirectly respond and in which they serve certain purposes.

3.1.4 Fictionality, Relevance and Pragmatic Context

Walsh's (2019) slightly revised account of fictionality, which draws on pragmatic Relevance Theory (Sperber and Wilson 1986; Wilson and Sperber 2012a), redefines fictionality as "a contextual assumption prompting us to understand an utterance's communicative relevance as indirectly, rather than directly, informative" (414). Earlier in his essay he writes: "when we recognise in context that an utterance is exploiting the communicative resource of fictionality, we look to grasp its point without the expectation that it will be straightforwardly informative" (412). Looking at these explanations and the example that opens Walsh's essay – of a man who comes to a pub and tells the others that he was held up by someone who had bitten his own ear – one forms the impression that Walsh has more or less straightforward instances of fictionality in mind, i.e., instances where speakers deliberately invent things, possibly for the sake of being playful in conversation. By focusing on indirection and on what fictionality *does* in any given communicative context, Walsh's relevance-theoretical approach works well for examples of fictionalization in non-fictional contexts.[7] In my examples above, for instance, one could say that the husband's fictional story about the staff meeting does not serve the purpose of informing his wife about that meeting but, quite on the contrary, to cover up the fact that there was no such meeting. The fictionalizing tendencies in the story about the 'hot lover' could be said to serve the purpose of bragging in the current storytelling situation with the best friend. They may also help the husband 'justify' to himself why he has an illicit affair. However, both examples also demonstrate that Walsh's account possibly lacks nuance: a fictional story's purpose may actually be *not to signal its fictional status*, as in the first story. Similarly, when Anna Sorokin told other people about her 'life' she presumably also did not want

7 In fact, one could argue that Walsh's theory suits non-fictional instances of fictionality better than it does generic fiction. For a discussion of why Relevance Theory or Speech Act Theory are not so helpful for the study of generic fiction at large, see my critical response to Walsh's target essay in Mildorf (2019c). See also Félix Martínez-Bonati's (1996: 67) comment that a "speech-act theory of literary discourse seems to be pointless because literature is not a specific type of speech act (or a specific group of such types), but rather the reproduction, in the realm of the imaginary, of all the types of speech acts that occur in real life."

them to discover that it was a fiction. Or take the media scandal about German star journalist Claas Relotius, who had won four awards for his engaging and high-quality journalistic writing for the *Spiegel* magazine but was then found out to have invented large parts of his reportages and to have twisted the 'facts.'[8] Relotius's intention certainly was not to signal the fictionality of his texts to his readers, but quite the opposite.

Furthermore, speakers in conversational settings need not be aware of the fact that they are partially fictionalizing their life experiences, as I argued for my second example above. Indeed, the examples of *fictional contamination* that I discuss in this book – where speakers use narrative-discursive strategies and features that introduce a potential for fictionalization – serve a myriad of purposes in the pragmatic contexts in which they were told but rarely the purpose of deliberately foregrounding that potential fictionality. Neither speakers nor their interlocutors need even be conscious of the fictionalizing tendencies in these stories. Perhaps the problem in Walsh's account lies in his focus on communicative relevance, i.e., speakers' aim to be relevant and to understand others' talk as aiming for relevance (Grice 1975). One could equally posit other factors such as speakers' egotism or cognitive salience of certain topics as determining factors in what emerges in talk-in-interaction, which may lead to miscommunication, talking-at-cross-purposes and so forth (Kecskes 2014) or, indeed, to a kind of self-presentation that entails fictionalization. Deliberate attempts at creating fictions furthermore need not be light-hearted or playful as in Walsh's example but may be used for deceiving and betraying others.

The receiver's side is equally complex. Psychological research has shown that what people perceive as factual or fictive depends on their prior beliefs and on processes of *belief polarization*, i.e., the phenomenon when new information does not match one's prior beliefs and people "become more strongly aligned with their original position" (Gerrig and Gagnon 2020: 136). Distinguishing between 'fact' and 'fiction' is also connected to the mind's *source monitoring* and *reality monitoring*, i.e., processes whereby we determine through inference where a piece of information we stored in our memories originated from and whether we believe that we actually experienced or just imagined something we 'remember' (139–140). Gerrig and Gagnon stress that misattributions are of course possible in these processes, which may lead to wrong judgments and phenomena like unconscious plagiarism.

Generally speaking, our assessment of an assertion or a piece of information as factual or fictive also depends on whether we deem a source *credible*, which

8 For a discussion of Relotius' journalism, see Björninen (2019).

usually entails a combination of trustworthiness and assignation of expertise (Gerrig and Gagnon 2020: 135). Moreover, we are guided by judgments concerning the quality of our own memories, or *metamemory*: if we generally trust our memories, we are more likely to believe something we remember as correct or factual, even when we are presented with new information that states the opposite. By contrast, doubts about the force of our memories are more likely to create uncertainty (137). This brief overview already shows that judgments about factuality and fictionality are subject to complex psychological processes – not only those on the speaker's or writer's part but also on the recipient's.

3.1.5 Fictionality and Intention

The question of "intention" is therefore another central aspect of the rhetorical approach to fictionality that I consider problematic. It may make sense in the context of generic fiction to argue that fictionality is fully intended by the author (Stock 2017) or that authors want their readers to recognize the fictional status of their work (Currie 1990). After all, the author deliberately sets out to write the fictional text for an audience and is arguably in control of what enters this text.[9] And yet, a glance beyond the Western paradigm of fiction writing already informs us that intentionally flagging fiction as fiction need not always be what authors do. As Lena Rydholm (2014) shows for generic fiction in Chinese literature, it actually developed from non-fictional story formats such as stories told in the streets, and when the written genre came to vie for legitimacy with other literary traditions, authors did not convey it as fiction but, on the contrary, claimed that "the stories were true and based on actual events, that they belonged to the genres of history and biography, even though they contained supernatural beings, miraculous events and the like" (21). Similar developments can be seen in Western mythologies and oral storytelling traditions (Merkel 2015). Likewise, there has been a long tradition in fictional texts to 'pretend' to present true stories (see Kuhn 2018).

In a situation where a speaker deliberately tells a tall tale or some other kind of fictional story, as in Walsh's (2019) initial example, one may also perceive a high degree of intentionality or 'design.' However, as Hatavara (2019:

9 Still, the question of intentionality is highly contested in both literary studies and philosophy. Wimsatt and Beardsley (1946) already spoke of the "intentional fallacy" in literary studies, and, as Stock (2017) repeatedly points out in her book *Only Imagine*, the extreme intentionalism she champions has in fact been rather unpopular in philosophy.

454) rightly points out in her response to Walsh's target essay, if this storytelling situation had been represented more realistically as a face-to-face interaction where speakers co-construct stories and at each point adjust their individual turns at talk, the question of "intentionality" would have become more complicated, too, precisely because speakers in face-to-face interaction typically negotiate what they talk about, and narratives therefore seldom are products of one's intention only (see also below and Chapter 4). The examples I discuss in this book make it clear that fictionalization in its 'weaker' or potential form or, in my terminology, *fictional contamination*, need not be, and in fact rarely is, premeditated by speakers but is a side product of the very act of storytelling. This of course also presupposes a view of fictionality as a gradable phenomenon rather than a phenomenon that follows an either/or logic, which is diametrically opposed to the view put forth by Nielsen, Phelan and Walsh (2015). The idea of gradation also counters theoretical positions that absolutely want to separate stories told in everyday storytelling situations from generic fiction, as can be seen in discussions about the *sameness or difference* of these forms of storytelling or in the narratological paradigm of *'unnatural' narratology*.

3.2 Unnatural Narratology, Sameness vs. Difference

It has been objected that novels are a far cry from the mundane and usually much simpler forms of storytelling to be found in everyday contexts. Brian Richardson (2006) and other proponents of "unnatural" narratology (see Alber, Iversen, Nielsen and Richardson 2010; Alber and Heinze 2011; Alber 2016) complain that one should not conflate naturally occurring storytelling with fictional storytelling and that postmodern experimental fiction is not adequately captured by narrative theories as proposed by Fludernik (1996) with her "natural" narratology or Herman (2009) in his *Basic Concepts* because they have a "mimetic bias." "Unnatural" narratives offer scenarios that are "physically, logically or humanly impossible" (Alber 2016: 3). Furthermore, Jan Alber argues that the "unnatural (or impossible) in such narratives is measured against the foil of 'natural' (real-world) cognitive frames and scripts that have to do with natural laws, logical principles, and standard human limitations of knowledge and ability" (3). The assumption that postmodern fiction (and equally playful fiction from other periods) is somehow 'special' and therefore ought not to be considered as mere derivation from more "natural" types of narration raises the ques-

tion what "natural" and "unnatural" really mean.[10] Alber, Iversen, Nielsen and Richardson's (2010) definition of the "unnatural" as essentially anti-mimetic already begs the question: which "cognitive frames and scripts" and "logical principles" do they assume for 'natural' storytelling? Storytelling practices in other cultures may be full of 'unnaturalness' from a Western perspective (Moll 2011), e.g., when storytellers take ghosts or magic for granted or believe in anthropomorphized natural phenomena. Elisabeth Falconi, for example, shows for storytelling in a part of Mexico that "the lines that might conventionally divide 'real life' narratives and fictional tales are drawn somewhat differently within the Gualavian community" (Falconi 2019: 176) and that non-fictional stories told by community members may well contain "references to supernatural events, interactions with animals and non-human entities" (174).[11]

The contributions in section five of the recent handbook on *Narrative Factuality* (Fludernik and Ryan 2020) also nicely illustrate the fact that distinctions between what is considered factual or fictional depends on cultural as well as historical contexts. Even in our cultural hemisphere, storytelling may yield examples of marked or unusual features such as ghost stories (Herman 2001) or, as I mentioned above, other forms of "believed-in imaginings." So, one may criticize "unnatural narratology" for its neglect of such larger cultural and historical contexts, if not for its Eurocentric perspective on storytelling. At the same time, it seems that fictionality as a possibility is in fact quite 'natural' in all kinds of storytelling and that it is cultural conventions and expectations that determine what is deemed acceptable or not in certain storytelling genres. This is not to say that storytelling genres are different *in essence*.

I argue in this book that we have not yet fully fathomed the extent to which non-fictional forms of storytelling, also and especially conversational storytelling as is also found, for example, in oral history and other interview contexts,

10 Unnatural narratologists appear to use "natural" as meaning "mimetic" and in connection with that, "realistic," a correlation which in itself is highly problematic (for a discussion of this problem, see Durst 2010). They introduced "unnatural" in contradistinction to Fludernik's paradigm, thus running into all sorts of definitional problems, not the least of them being the fact that they are constantly forced to explain what "unnatural" does *not* mean (see, for example, Iversen 2013).

11 Some narratologists argue that this kind of storytelling situation is the cognitive template for readers even with very 'strange' or experimental novels. Bareis (2008: 150), for example, assumes that readers will still tacitly 'believe' or accept the make-believe that someone is telling them such a weird story. Researchers in psychonarratology and cognitive narratology have arrived at similar conclusions about how readers tend to imagine a narrator (see Bortolussi and Dixon 2003: 72; Popova 2015).

can include fictionalized elements both on the levels of story and discourse. There has been considerably little cross-fertilization between literary narratology and other disciplines focusing on naturally occurring storytelling, e.g., linguistics, sociology, anthropology or psychology (see Hyvärinen, Mikkonen and Mildorf 2008). As I see it, literary narratology can still learn from conversational storytelling, and research into non-fictional stories can benefit from new exploits in literary narratology.

Some scholars, however, refute this possibility of cross-pollination and anxiously seek to draw clear demarcation lines between fictional and non-fictional storytelling. Lars-Åke Skalin (2017), for example, ends a chapter entitled "Turning Life into Stories—Turning Stories into Lives" pessimistically by saying that "concepts that 'immigrate' into new contexts dominated by interests different from those of their original habitat will not be able to bring with them the practice that gave them the specific meaning they had in their previous context" (134). His immediate example at this point is the term "coherence," which, as he argues, means something different when "used as a term by a therapist attending to people's life stories" compared to "how it is used in an aesthetic context" (134). What he overlooks is the fact that psychotherapy does not primarily attend to life stories but to the clients' lives as they are represented in those life stories. Coherence in a lived life – if there is such a thing – indeed need not correspond to the textual coherence found in many, but by no means all literary narratives. Of course, attending to an actual life has other pragmatic and ethical implications than reading about a character in a novel. However, why should it not be possible to analyze a client's *story* about his or her life with the same analytical tools one would use for the study of a novel? The *discourse and story sides* of life storying, I argue, are not so different from telling a fictional story – at least when it comes to its most basic parameters of world-making and story-world disruption, perspectivization, evaluation, experientiality or the question of 'qualia,' i.e., descriptions of what a situation is like, and the situatedness of the telling (see Herman 2009).[12] Narrative coherence – or lack thereof – in a client's life story, which manifests itself in logical connectors, sequentiality and temporality, for example, may serve as a pointer to how the client experienced life events and in the telling tries to make sense of them. Here, narrative-analytical approaches prove useful to unravel the ways in which parts of a life are narratively-discursively encoded and connected (Boothe 2010; Lucius-Hoene and Deppermann 2002; Schiff 2017).

12 These parameters may then be developed further in fiction because there is more contextual and generic leeway for creativity.

Greger Andersson and Tommy Sandberg (2018) delineate in an article on two approaches to narrative fiction what they perceive to be the "sameness approach," i.e., an approach that allegedly views fictional and non-fictional narratives as the same. According to the authors, this approach is founded on the following premises:

> (a) the idea that "narrative" is a definable category that can be manifested in different forms and media, and hence that narrative fiction is a subcategory within this wider field; (b) that narrative fiction mimics narrative non-fiction; (c) that narratology has provided a set of distinctions and core concepts that can be used in analyses of all kinds of "narratives," and that, moreover, explain how narrative fiction adheres to the common system; and (d) that readers make sense of narrative fiction in the same way as they make sense of non-fiction and their everyday. (Andersson and Sandberg 2018: 242)

I would concur with Matti Hyvärinen (2019) in criticizing that Andersson and Sandberg offer a rather simplified account of narratology as a discipline here. Hyvärinen even talks about a "reductionist fallacy" (58) in the authors' discussion. For one thing, the proliferation of continued conceptual refinements in classical and postclassical narratologies (Herman and Vervaeck 2019) attests to the fact that narratology has by no means "provided a set of distinctions and core concepts that can be used in analyses of all kinds of 'narratives.'" On the contrary, transmedial narratology in particular has shown that specific kinds of narrative require acknowledgment of their specificity as well as of the features that they share with other kinds of narrative (Bernaerts and Mildorf 2021; Ryan and Thon 2014; Thon 2016). Still, it stands to reason to assume that there are features which narratives share across contexts and media because otherwise it would be hard to explain how people manage to recognize stories at all when they come across them. More importantly, people are able to retell stories – whether fictional or non-fictional ones, and also from one medium to another – which means that they not only recognize story elements but are able to draw on narrative-discursive means to recreate them. If these means were not shared, it would be hard to explain how such a recreation should be possible in the first place.

Andersson and Sandberg's claim that narratologists believe that "readers make sense of narrative fiction in the same way as they make sense of non-fiction and their everyday" is also an oversimplification. No-one, to my knowledge, would claim that readers read fiction *exactly like* non-fiction or the other way around. For instance, in a discussion of fictional dialogue (Mildorf 2014), I give the example of a passage from Jean Rhys' novel *Good Morning, Midnight*, where two characters begin to have a verbal fight. Unlike in a situation where real people might start arguing right beside us, I contend, we do not

feel the urge to keep a distance or to even go away in case the fight escalates and becomes physical, for example. We do not have the exact same reactions and do not act on our immediate emotional response because we *know* that what we read is 'only' fiction. Still, the fact that we recognize the fictional dialogue as *representing an argument* indicates that we map what the fiction presents to us onto what we know from our real-life experiences of such verbal exchanges. In other words, there are fundamental features that fictional and non-fictional dialogues share. The same could be said of fictional and non-fictional narratives more generally. They are and are not the same, depending on which particular aspects of them we pay attention to.

As we see in the example of Andersson and Sandberg's contribution, debates about the different 'kinds' of storytelling are also and especially connected to questions of 'fictionality,' and some scholars are quite adamant about differentiating between fictional narratives and non-fictional stories used in everyday life. And yet, the boundaries between "fact" and "fiction" can become blurred, as numerous scholars have also argued. Literary scholar Peter Blume (2004) contends that all fiction – even fantastic or non-realist fiction – is informed by reality and contains non-fictional elements.[13] Drawing on cognitive semantics as his theoretical framework, Blume maintains that we would not be able to appreciate works of fiction if they did not contain non-fictional elements, i.e., elements we can recognize and use as building blocks to create a coherent whole. Blume's argument reminds one of Werner Wolf's (2002: 51) definition of narrative as a representation of at least the rudiments of an imaginable and experiential world, in which at least two actions or events are centered on the same anthropomorphic figures and are connected in a potentially, but not necessarily, logical relationship. By saying that characters in a story must be anthropomorphic – even if they are things, animals, aliens or the like –, Wolf basically also presupposes that fictional narratives would not 'work' without some resemblance to the real world, or what he calls an "imaginable and experiential world." "Experientiality," i.e., the combined narrative techniques that allow readers to perceive the ways in which a storyworld is experienced by and through someone's consciousness, is also at the heart of Fludernik's

13 This is similar to Ryan's (1980: 403) "principle of minimal departure" – derived from David Lewis' (1973) work on truth conditions for counterfactuals – which posits that "whenever we interpret a message concerning an alternate world, we reconstrue this world as being the closest possible to the reality we know." Conversely, Uwe Durst (2010) points out that even realist fiction contains elements of the fantastic or supernatural – for example, in its use of an omniscient narrative viewpoint.

groundbreaking study *Towards a 'Natural' Narratology* (1996) and is there considered as the most central criterion for determining and defining narrative. Again, the functioning of experientiality seems to presuppose a minimum of shared storyworld experience.[14] In that sense, ground must be ceded to those fictionality scholars who base their theories on referentiality to the world. However, as I pointed out above, this is by no means a necessary and definitely not the only criterion.

Wolf's argument can also be turned on its head, and one can look at the manifold ways in which fiction enters reality. Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckman (1966), who can be considered the founding fathers of social constructivist thought in the sociology of knowledge, discuss how language contributes to the 'creation' of reality:

> The reality of everyday life appears already objectified, that is, constituted by an order of objects that have been designated *as* objects before my appearance on the scene. The language used in everyday life continuously provides me with the necessary objectifications and posits the order within which these make sense and within which everyday life has meaning for me. (21–22, italics original).

Berger and Luckman do not talk about fiction or fictionality in their book, and there is perhaps a danger of succumbing to 'pan-fictionalism' if one reconceptualizes their constructivist theory under the rubrum of 'fictionality' (see also Blume 2004: 12). However, they do refer to folk tales as one discursive means of creating social life (see Berger and Luckman 1966: 94): children are taught certain values and assumptions when listening to folk tales and are thus socialized into their community.[15] A similar point is also made by Daniel D. Hutto (2008: 184–186) in his book *Folk Psychology* when he describes how children may acquire folk psychological categories by engaging in storytelling activities with their parents or caretakers. What these discussions show is that, from an early age on, people's perceptions of the world are influenced by fictional narratives. Even though such fantasy worlds are gradually replaced by 'the real world,' the narrative techniques that provide access to this real world essentially remain the same. And that adults are still subject to the workings of their imagination

14 Given the close link between narrative and experientiality, it is perhaps not surprising that case studies in social and human science research frequently make use of narrative methods since narrative "is particularly critical to the making of experiential knowledge" (Rentz 1999: 54). Case studies invite the interpretations of readers and allow them to read the data against their own 'folk knowledge' and life experiences.

15 Children are furthermore taught culture-specific properties of 'good' stories such as linearity, for example (Ochs and Capps 2001: 88–102; see also Becker 2005).

can be seen in superstitious practices, for example, or in how they create fantasies about their lives which, for better or worse, they then try to live up to.

In his book *Mimesis as Make-Believe*, Kendall L. Walton (1990: 102) writes:

> We have seen that fictionality has nothing essentially to do with what is or is not real or true or factual; that it is perfectly compatible with assertion and communication, including straightforward reporting of the most ordinary matters of fact, yet entirely independent of them; that it is not essentially the product of human action nor paradigmatically linguistic; and that fiction is not parasitic on "serious" discourse or non-fictional uses of symbols. These results, though unexpected some of them are, flowed easily from the simple intuition that to be fictional is, at bottom, to possess the function of serving as a prop in games of make-believe.

Walton deconstructs numerous accounts scholars have put forth to explain 'fictionality,' including those that draw on referentiality, speech act theories or intentionality as explanatory models, and he argues for an alternative account by using the analogy of a make-believe game. When a child uses a doll to play mother and baby, for example, that doll will function as a prop to prompt the creation of an imaginary world wherein it is true that the doll is a baby and the child is the baby's mother. A prop is fictional "by virtue of the conditional *principles of generation*," Walton argues, and each proposition generated in the make-believe game constitutes "*fictional truth*" (69; italics original).

What is missing in Walton's account is a more explicit link between such a make-believe game and storytelling. After all, *world-making* is at the heart of both game playing and storytelling (for the latter, see Herman 2009: 19–21; see also Goodman 1978). As I already indicated, the presentation of how a storyworld is *experienced* by someone to my mind constitutes an essential criterion for narratives because this becomes the watershed whereby narratives can be differentiated from mere reports, for example. Such definitions may not work so well with art forms whose capacity to *tell* a story is debatable (see Ryan 2004, Wolf 2002). Imagine, for example, a video and sound installation that represents the deep sea. Even if we can walk through the installation, seeing fish and other oceanic creatures floating by, it remains nothing but a representation. However, imagine that you are given goggles to wear while you walk through the installation. The suggestion that you are now in a make-believe game involving you as a diver is stronger through the added prop. Why? It is because the installation now begins to 'tell a story' with visitors as actants or characters in the story, who are invited to experience the storyworld accordingly. I argue that it is only when such narrative experientiality is added – possibly with props in Walton's sense – something becomes fictionalized.

J. Alexander Bareis (2008) adopted Walton's theory and refined it for fictional storytelling by saying that fictional narratives are those that create a make-believe game of storytelling, whereby the story recipient takes it to be fictionally true that he or she is told a story by someone ("dass die Erzählung dem Rezipienten erzählt oder auf andere Weise vermittelt wird," 215). In real-life storytelling, that ultimate make-believe game need not be suggested: the storyteller is as real as the storytelling situation. Still, the idea of make-believe may be applied to the story told: I want my interlocutor to believe that the incidents I recount are true and that the people I talk about are the way I depict them. Telling a story triggers an imaginative activity in the listener – albeit perhaps one that requires less "suspension of disbelief" (Coleridge 1965[1817]) than a fictional narrative does. So, even if one does not want to subscribe to a pan-fictional stance, it stands to reason that storytelling as a special discursive practice involving *world-making* and *experientiality* as intrinsic properties must contribute significantly to the ideational creation of the world surrounding us and, more importantly for the purposes of this book, to our (fictionalized) self-creations. It is time to lay out in more detail my concept of *fictional contamination*.

3.3 Fictional Contamination and Narrative Homology

Summarizing what I have said so far, fictionality to me is a gradable concept that is closely linked to the *narrative* discourse mode and whose defining features must therefore be sought in the three pillars of storytelling: the content or story level, the discourse level and the contextual or pragmatic level. Rather than looking for a single criterion that is meant to explain fictionality in generic fiction or in various other, non-fictional contexts – whether this is invention or lack of referentiality to the real world, distinct discursive features such as mind representation, or a specific pragmatic context in which speakers/writers signal somehow that they engage in fictionalizing discourse – I would say it is in fact a complex mix of all of these criteria that must be taken into account. Judging on a case-by-case basis, some criteria may be more relevant and may have stronger explanatory power than others. At the same time, the degree of perceived fictionalization can vary and is ultimately dependent on narrative-generic as well as sociocultural and historical conventions and expectations. In contrast to other theories of fictionality, I propose looking at the *potential for fictionalization* that can already be found in seemingly simple storytelling activities in everyday life. I call this potential *fictional contamination*.

Fictional contamination as a concept explores the multiple ways in which fictional and non-fictional storytelling can influence one another by sharing

fundamental elements such as world-making and storyworld disruption, perspectivization, evaluation and experientiality or the question of 'qualia' – all of which are expressed in numerous narrative-specific features and techniques. Fictional and non-fictional narratives have these features in common because there is *narrative homology* between them, which means that both forms of storytelling originate from the same archaic discourse type – whatever this initial 'storytelling' activity or activities in our distant past may have actually looked like. Of course, oral storytelling came first – simply because orality precedes writing. However, as ancient mythologies show, oral storytelling is in no way less creative or even less fictional (see Merkel 2015). The more interesting question – one that I cannot pursue further here and to which there is probably no conclusive answer anyway – is *when* different forms of oral storytelling began to separate out along the fact/fiction divide. In other words, when did mythical stories begin to be perceived as 'fictional' and those of lived, personal experience as 'real'? There must have been some point at which unified forms of storytelling became subject to different pragmatic constraints.

In some cultures, the boundaries between factual and fictional storytelling remain blurred to this day, as I mentioned above, and sometimes people tell the 'weirdest' stories one can imagine even outside of fiction. In that sense, there is no "unnatural" storytelling. Obviously, fictional and conversational storytelling in their current manifestations are also different. The cultural practice of writing has significantly contributed to the expansiveness of storytelling both in terms of story and discourse levels that we now see in generic fiction.[16] However, this does not mean that the two forms of storytelling and many others besides cannot share basic elements, as I outlined above, which are then expressed in narrative-specific features. The concrete features I analyze in this book – which cut across the story/discourse dichotomy – include existing story templates, linguistic phenomena like double deixis and free indirect discourse, discursive modes such as dialogue and thought presentation, narrative-functional elements such as focalization and characterization, as well as subcategories of narratives such as second-person narration and narratives of vicarious experi-

16 Moreover, in our day and age of what Walter J. Ong (2002) called "secondary orality," even our 'oral' stories are often technologically mediated and may therefore follow a script. Furthermore, it stands to reason that oral storytelling over time has also developed under the influence of written forms of storytelling or, to put it differently: we may nowadays tell stories not only the way we have *heard* them but also the way we have *read* them before. And there are already indications that storytelling practices, also life storying, currently undergo changes in the wake of the explosion of storytelling in social media and the internet (Georgakopoulou 2016, 2017a, 2017b; Page 2012, 2018; Reichert 2013).

ence. My focus is on how life storying in oral history and conversational contexts can be *contaminated* with such features and thus begin to show tendencies of fictionalization.

What exactly does *contamination* mean? I use the term in a non-medical sense metaphorically and in analogy to how it is used in linguistics, notably in traditional morphology and lexicology, where it describes "a union of two forms or expressions whereby a third is produced" (Knight 1919: 152). In my conception, the "union" of forms for the most part already happens at a deep-structural level because non-fictional and fictional storytelling historically share basic parameters. In psychology, too, the term *contamination* is used to mark the merger of neighboring entities, and it also includes the linguistic definition just mentioned.[17] The term has its origin in Latin *contaminatio*, which means "contact." In English, alternative terms are sometimes used in the linguistic literature: "blend," "hybrid," "amalgam" or "telescoped word" (Bußmann 2008: 367). Regarding language contact, the phenomenon can be observed whenever linguistic elements are closely linked by association and then begin to merge. This can happen at all structural levels: phones and phonemes (sounds) (Arndt-Lappe 2013); morphemes (parts of words) (Mattiello 2013); lexis (words) (Cienkowski 1971; Lăzărescu 2015); and syntax (sentences) (Lauttamus, Nerbonne and Wiersma 2007).[18]

Lexical contamination in particular is widespread and is commonly investigated in historical linguistics (Georgiev 1979; Goddard 1989; Fortis 2015). It can be caused deliberately when speakers/writers use language creatively or it can be attributed to a lapse in language use (Sturtevant 1937). This distinction is useful for the concept of *fictional contamination*, too, because storytellers may deliberately 'fictionalize' their narratives to create involvement (see my discussion of narratives of vicarious experience in Chapter 10) or they may resort to 'fictionalizing' elements more or less unselfconsciously because these elements are either in the nature of storytelling across the fact/fiction divide (such as perspectivization and person deixis as discussed in Chapters 6 and 8) or be-

17 The *APA Dictionary of Psychology* lists the following definitions: "1. in testing and experimentation, the situation in which prior knowledge, expectations, or other factors relating to the variable under study are permitted to influence the collection and interpretation of data about that variable. 2. the mixing together of two or more discrete percepts, such as might occur on the Rorschach Inkblot Test or the Machover Draw-a-Person Test. 3. the creation of a neologism by combining a part of one word with a part of another, usually resulting in a word that is unintelligible" (see entry at: https://dictionary.apa.org/contamination).

18 An English example for lexical contamination in the strict sense, i.e., a combination of morphemes or morpheme fragments which end in a new word, is 'emoticons' (from emotions + icons).

cause these elements are so entrenched in the storyteller's culture that their origins may no longer be reflected upon – for example, when common story templates are drawn upon (Chapter 5).

One may of course object here that, in everyday parlance, the term 'contamination' is negatively connoted and that the phenomenon which I want to describe here is thus unduly presented in negative terms. Conversely, the term "contamination" may also suggest 'purity,' as if there were purely fictional, in contrast to purely non-fictional, narratives. Indeed, as my discussion of some scholars' concerns about "sameness" and "difference" above indicates, these scholars seem to have notions of purity in mind or seem to consider it desirable as a premise for narratological inquiry. However, my discussion should also have made it clear that no such notion of purity underlies my conception. On the contrary, the term "contamination" strikes me as suitable because it offers an implicit counterpoint to such positions of purism. I already mentioned that at least some readers or recipients of stories seem to expect a degree of 'purity' – which also explains why there is so much outrage when factual stories turn out not to be true. One only needs to follow media coverage of certain politicians' stories, or the anger directed against authors whose autobiographies turn out to be made up, etc. Clearly, some culturally determined narrative-generic conventions and expectations have been breached in such instances. My argument is that, when it comes to storytelling per se, fictionalization is already a built-in possibility, and there will be a point where the degree to which a story becomes fictionalized due to excessive or unexpected use of certain storytelling features may turn it into a story that people no longer trust or believe in. This flipside of non-fictional storytelling is also nicely covered by the term "contamination."

Furthermore, the term "contamination" in its technical sense as it is used in linguistics and psychology may help us theorize the relationship between fiction and non-fiction, if only to then lead us to the conclusion that clear distinctions are ultimately impossible. According to Cienkowski (1971), there are various possibilities for how words can influence one another, involving mergers of their phonetic forms and meanings in different measures.[19] Similarly, I posit that fictional and non-fictional storytelling share at least a potential for fiction-

19 More specifically, Cienkowski identifies four possibilities: 1. the meaning of the strong word merges with the sound pattern of the weak word; 2. the phonetic form of the strong element merges with both the phonetic form and the meaning of the weak word; 3. both the phonetic form and the meaning of the strong word merge with the phonetic form of the weak word; 4. the phonetic form and the meaning of the strong word merge with both the phonetic form and the meaning of the weak word.

alization – to a greater or lesser extent respectively – both at the story/content and discourse levels and may or may not signal this fictionalization in the pragmatic contexts in which they occur. We can see such mergers in genres such as historical novels, for example, where authors base some characters on real-life historical figures but invent others and then recreate a storyworld that is part fact and part fiction. On the discourse level, they use techniques such as internal focalization, i.e., insight into a character's mind, or dialogue to dramatize these historical figures and to make them come to life. Non-fictional history writing, autobiography or other textual genres such as certain forms of journalism may employ similar techniques typically found in novels precisely for the effect of engaging readers. The resulting trespassing of the boundaries between fact and fiction can have dire consequences, as I mentioned above. In contrast to these (written) forms of storytelling, which have already received more scholarly attention when it comes to the question of fictionalization (see, among many others, Curthoys and Docker 2013; Eakin 1985; Underwood 2013; White 2010), conversational storytelling in various settings still remains underexplored in this regard. This book therefore fills a gap.

However, one problem we face when researching *fictional contamination* is that it is impossible to single out discrete 'fictional' and 'non-fictional' story and discourse elements or, for that matter, to draw clear demarcation lines at the 'exact' points where a narrative is perceived to move from being 'factual' to slightly more 'fictional.' When does *fictional contamination* become too much in the sense that one begins to question the validity or truthfulness of what has been told? When does a narrative make one feel suspicious or give one the impression that one has been duped? A listener's suspicion will ultimately depend on his or her *interpretation* of the story at hand and hence on the recipient's perception and acceptance of features of *fictional contamination* – which are inevitably culture-specific. There is ultimately also the question whether someone suspects a reason or motivation for deception on the part of the storyteller. Even though it is impossible to determine the exact point at which a story flips from being considered 'truthful' to 'fictional,' the very fact that this happens is in itself remarkable, and examples for how much people are troubled by such transgressions are in abundance. In sum, one could say that people seem to have at least vague ideas about what fictionality is and which features may contribute or point towards it because they have been socialized into recognizing certain kinds of stories or story elements as 'fictional.'[20] The whole point of

20 Bareis (2008: 70), following Hempfer (1990), urges us to distinguish between the question "What is fiction?" – a question leading to a theory of fiction – and the question "How do I

my book is to argue that such categories are less discrete than we might think. Prototypicality as a concept, however, might be a good way out of this problem (see also Hempfer 2018: 100).

I will posit – by combining some tenets of theories of 'fictionality' as outlined above – that elements at the *story level* (proto)typically pertain to fiction rather than to non-fiction if they are fictive or invented or very unlikely to happen/exist in the real world (at least in a westernized cultural framework). Thus, invented characters, places, states/conditions and events would be a strong pointer for us to take a story to be 'fictionalized' – which of course does not mean that such stories cannot be told in real-life contexts.[21] Still, they would make us doubt the story's credibility and the storyteller's reliability – important points I will come back to below. Similarly, narrative discourse elements (proto)typically pertain to fiction if they are used in such a way as to compromise the epistemics required of narratives in real-life contexts. How can someone provide us with deep insight into the thoughts and feelings of other people? How can someone remember and reproduce lengthy conversations in a story? Here, too, different cultural storytelling practices and expectations will have an impact on when recipients start to have a sense of unease about a story they are told. At any rate, narrative-discursive features at both *story and discourse levels* begin to indicate *fictionalization* when they make listeners raise questions about the 'truthfulness' and reliability of the telling. Language use and, more specifically, *literary complexity* in conversational storytelling also becomes an important factor in this connection.

3.4 Everyday Storytelling, Literary Complexity and Creativity

Rhetorician Walter Fisher (1984) used the designation *homo narrans* to capture our special ability to tell stories, and he defined the "narrative paradigm" as "a dialectical synthesis of two traditional strands in the history of rhetoric: the

recognize fiction?," which deals with the empirical experience of fiction. In my conception, the second question is located on the pragmatic level of a storytelling situation and becomes important insofar as we need to understand how fictionalization in storytelling may impact on the interlocutors' relationship.

21 In Relotius' writings, for example, some of the things that did not 'add up' were connected to geographical information he provided. In life storying in everyday contexts, wrong information about places may be attributable to false memories, as when people remember the place they grew up in as big or fabulous, only to then discover that, in reality, it is on a much smaller scale.

argumentative, persuasive theme and the literary, aesthetic theme" (Fisher 1984: 2; see also Fisher 1985). That is, in telling stories, purpose is combined with a concern for aesthetic appeal. My use of the term 'literary' is grounded in Roman Jakobson's reflections on language and literature. Jakobson argued, together with Jurij Tynjanov, that literature was a system marked by a "network of specific structural laws" (Jakobson 1987: 47) and consisting of "synchronic and diachronic cross-sections" (48). As far as 'literary' language is concerned, Jakobson did not consider it radically different from other kinds of language use; the only difference lay in the main function it fulfilled. Thus, he writes in his essay "Linguistics and Poetics": "No doubt, for any speech community, for any speaker, there exists a unity of language, but this over-all code represents a system of interconnected subcodes; every language encompasses several concurrent patterns, each characterized by different functions" (Jakobson 1987: 65). The primary function of a literary (poetic) text is to fulfil a "poetic function," which "*projects the principle of equivalence from the axis of selection into the axis of combination*" (71, italics original). This rather technical definition is based on Jakobson's model of language use in general: we select from a paradigmatic axis words we want to use in any given syntactic slot, and then we combine the words selected for each slot on the syntagmatic axis, observing rules of grammar and coherence. In (lyrical) poetic language, the selection of the same patterns (be they on the level of sounds, rhythms, words, even clauses) are replicated on the level of combination (the syntagmatic axis), which eventually leads to repetition. By doing this, poetic language draws attention to the very features that our selected (and repeated) items or patterns share and, by extension, to its own linguistic choices or *design as poetic language*. There is thus a "focus on the message for its own sake" (69), which may co-exist with other language functions but which – at least in literary or artistic texts – is the primary function. Conversely, while non-literary language may primarily fulfil any of the other six functions Jakobson identified ("referential," "emotive," "conative," "phatic" and "metalingual," 71) it may equally show residues of the poetic function.

This poetic function is the baseline from which one can argue that there is much 'literariness' even in conversational discourse. Linguists have repeatedly made this point. For example, James Paul Gee (1985) argued that "*the distinction between oral and literate styles of communication is not in reality a dichotomy, but a continuum of styles*" (9, italics original). He concludes his close analysis of a schoolgirl's narrative by saying that: "L uses language full tilt, with prosody, parallelism, rhetoric, and audience participation all contributing, together with lexical choice and syntax, to the communication of message, emotion and entertainment. In this she is not far removed from literature, another use of words

to shape and understand experience…" (25). "Emotion" and "entertainment" are certainly also key functions of the narratives I investigate in this book, and both aspects tie in with and support humans' relationality, a concept I mentioned above and to which I return intermittently in my analyses.

Just how creative everyday language use can actually be – both in writing and in speaking – is shown by Ronald Carter (2004), who employs a corpus-analytical approach in his book *Language and Creativity*. The study demonstrates that we use unusual phrases or expressions more frequently than we are aware of, and we twist or play around with 'regular' linguistic features to suit a particular discursive context. This "inverts common assumptions that language use is wholly for ideational reference and for 'purposeful' transactional communication" (Carter 2004: 6). One example Carter already offers in his introduction and of which there are many similar ones throughout his book shows how a group of friends begins to use scatological humor and sexual innuendos around the word "screw" in the context of doing some DIY maintenance in one of the friends' home, thereby effectively "creating an alternative reality in which, albeit momentarily, representation takes over from reference" (6). So, it is not self-evident that even conversational stories are always 'mimetic' or 'referential.' They can equally conjure up imagined storyworlds.

The function of "representation" is arguably closely linked to the fact that "sensemaking is essentially scenic," as Deborah Tannen (1992: 43) contends. Long before cognitive science made its way into literary studies and narratology, Tannen – drawing on the case narratives of Oliver Sacks – already argued that: "The invoking of details – specific, concrete, familiar – allows an individual to recall and a hearer or reader to imagine a scene that has both meaning and emotion. It is this creation of meaning by means of emotion, and emotion by means of meaning and sound, that drives both conversational and literary discourse" (43). Tannen has a valid point here: we must make our stories such that recipients (whether listeners or readers) not only understand what we are talking about but also have a sense of our emotional investment in these stories. And this is achieved by (special) means of representation. In her earlier study *Talking Voices: Repetition, Dialogue, and Imagery in Conversational Discourse* (1989), Tannen took into focus the linguistic phenomena she outlined in the book's title. As I said above, literary complexity per se does not automatically render a text fictional. However, I take the idea of special representational modes further by looking at them in combination with specifically *narrative* features and functions in my analyses. The literary complexity of everyday language can potentially strengthen *fictional contamination* in essentially non-fictional storytelling by contributing on the narrative-discursive level features

that we commonly associate with literary, i.e., artistic narratives or generic fiction.

When it comes to verbal interaction and, more specifically, storytelling, questions concerning the "reportability" (Labov and Waletzky 1967; Labov 2013) and the "tellability" (Norrick 2005) of stories also become relevant. "Reportability" is connected to the question of what makes a story worth telling. William Labov and Joshua Waletzky (1967) posited that stories must be exciting, noteworthy or somehow interesting to warrant their telling. "Tellability" in Norrick's sense of the term, by contrast, is connected to whether the telling of a story is acceptable in a given situation. Stories may be highly reportable because they offer fascinating content, but not tellable because their telling could be perceived as offensive by the parties present, for example. The epistemics at work in storytelling are worth considering, as Norrick (2020) points out in a recent research article on this topic. He writes that "narration in conversation accomplishes much more than simply getting the story told, in the sense of imparting a body of information, but an epistemic perspective on telling is instructive, especially if we consider how epistemic concerns correlate with tellability, telling rights, identity display, positioning, and involvement in interaction" (211–212). Norrick conceives of storytelling as an activity where A-events (which are known to the teller only) are turned into AB-events (the knowledge of which is shared by interlocutors) (212–213). The way in which details of a narrative are fleshed out for the listener is closely connected with concerns about the epistemics of one's narrative, but also with the aesthetic appeal of the story performance. Thus, as Norrick contends:

> The basic narrative performance may present only a skeleton of schematized aspects from which recipients must pick and choose to construct a consistent and cohesive model, based on internal and external relevance. Recipients may leave gaps open and wait to see if these details matter in the further course of the narrative or sketch a vague image where the exact value remains blank. Finally, recipients of personal narratives in friendly/familial contexts may simply gloss over missing details for the sake of the interaction of the story performance as a whole. (Norrick 2020: 230)

What emerges here once again is an image of stories as contextually embedded and contingent on this context. However, it is noteworthy that Norrick concentrates on story *content* when talking about details and their epistemic implications. He does not take fictionalizing tendencies into account, but his argument implies that speakers make choices in what they narrate or leave out. Such choices may also contribute to *fictional contamination* on the story level, e.g., when tellers use elements or existents that we commonly associate with generic fiction. This may include partially fictionalized or downright invented events,

places, times and characters/personae. However, as I have already argued numerous times, it is desirable to take both story and content levels into view when considering fictionalization.

At the very end of his article, Norrick writes: "Unresolved are issues surrounding credibility, specifically what marks a story or a description in a story as questionable, and what makes a teller sound untrustworthy. So long as a narrative is consistent with what the recipient knows independently and is consistent within itself, are there markers that it involves a fabrication?" (Norrick 2020: 230). Even though I think it would be utopian to try and arrive at a clearly defined set of features or "markers" of fictionality because, as I already pointed out above, there are no fixed one-to-one-correspondences between such "signposts" and fictionality, this study attempts to describe narrative features which have the *potential* to turn a narrative into one that recipients may be more likely to perceive as fictive or at least dubitable. Put differently, the more pronounced and prevalent these features become, the more they will impact on a narrative's perceived credibility. In this connection, it is interesting that Labov (2013: 21–23) explicitly links "reportability" to "credibility" by arguing that "*credibility is inversely related to reportability*" (italics original). The more credible a story is, the less reportable (or the more boring) it is; highly reportable stories, by contrast, are marked by less credibility.

Sometimes, certain life experiences may be hard to capture in 'straightforward' or 'informative' narratives. Kataryna Filutowska (2022), for example, discusses difficulties speakers may have in telling the truth when talking about traumatic experiences such as rape. Linguistic strategies that may lead to partial fictionalization, according to Filutowska, are emplotment, narrative substances (the equivalent of story existents), vague predicates and approximate references. Such strategies may have ramifications for the perception of tellers' credibility. Filutowska's suggestion is to resort to other theoretical frameworks concerning truth – e.g., alethic pluralism (Lynch 1998) – which allow for the coexistence of multiple perspectives on the world and thus accommodate individual and personal truths. This ties in with Hutto's (2023) proposal that psychology ought to "go fictive," as I discussed in the previous chapter. Filutowska raises some very good points – for example, with regard to vagueness as one possible factor in creating a tendency for fictionalization. In Chapter 6, where I elaborate on my previous research on "double deixis" (Mildorf 2006), I also discuss the *fictional contamination* that is linked to vagueness on the grounds of shifting person deixis and indeterminate referential ties. Overall, my book seeks to provide a first systematic discussion of various narrative strategies that are at the heart of what I call *fictional contamination*.

3.5 Fictional Contamination and Unreliability

What Filutowska's discussion also shows is that, in many storytelling contexts, fictionalizing tendencies may lead to a perception of speakers as unreliable or untrustworthy. The issue of reliability is of course not limited to verbal interaction. People not only rely on the truth-value of what someone says but also on the sincerity and integrity on which the other person acts. That is, reliability is related to certain codes of conduct and practices that are perceived as adequate in a given social interaction. Unreliability is also closely connected to the ways in which people wish to present themselves in conversations, and therefore "many unreliable narratives are in a flux between conscious and unconscious behavior, often helped on by psychological suppression, manifested in euphemisms, half-truths, and diffuse hedging constructions" (Heyd 2011: 12). People may or may not be conscious of the fact that they are unreliable. If they are deliberately unreliable, they may pursue a host of different goals in being so. And unreliability may strongly depend on what the interlocutor perceives as 'unreliable' in a given situation.[22] Can one already talk about unreliability when people have different ways of explaining or expressing what a certain situation or event was like (the question of *qualia* in Herman's (2009: 21) typology) or does the term only apply to cases of deliberate attempts at deception, simulation and dissimulation? And how can such attempts be gauged and evaluated by hearers of a story? Elsewhere I have delineated and contrasted typologies of malingering and deception in psychology and the concept of unreliability in narratology (Mildorf 2015: 398–404), pointing out that 'unreliability' does not serve as a technical term in typologies used in psychological dissimulation studies. For Richard Rogers (2008), for example, unreliability is "a very general term that raises questions about the accuracy of reported information. It makes no assumption about the individual's intent or the reasons for inaccurate data. This term is especially useful in cases of conflicting clinical data" (5). In other words, there is a discrepancy between what someone reports and the circumstantial evidence to be arrived at.

In narratology, Phelan (2005) proposes a typology of degrees of unreliability along the three communicational functions of "reporting," "interpreting" and "evaluating" that I already mentioned in the previous chapter. Phelan identifies six kinds of unreliability: "misreporting" involves the false reporting of

22 In the context of generic fiction, Christoph Bode (2011: 266), drawing on Ansgar Nünning (1998), also argues that a story is perceived as reliable or unreliable depending on readers' perceptions and interpretations.

events and facts; "misreading" is the wrong interpretation of events or facts because of a teller's lack of knowledge or wrong perception; "misregarding" includes a breach of ethical or moral codes through lying, denial, etc.; "underreporting" can be found when a narrator tells us less than he or she knows; "underreading" is an insufficient (rather than an incorrect) interpretation of events or facts due to lack of knowledge or misperception; and "underregarding" involves an evaluation that is essentially correct but does not go far enough (51–52). The terms "misreporting" and "underreporting" thus address what kind of unreliability can be found in narratives, while the terms "misreading" or "underreading" and "misregarding" or "underregarding" span a continuum of unreliable behavior that takes into account the narrator's awareness/agency and his or her possible motivations or reasons. While Phelan devised his typology for fictional unreliable narrators, his framework can also be fruitfully applied to non-fictional forms of storytelling. As I already indicated above, storytellers may be deliberately untruthful (misregarding), they may misinterpret or insufficiently understand their own behaviors and motives (misreading or underreading), or they may engage in half-truths out of instinctive self-protection or to convey a specific image of themselves (underregarding).

I argue that, when it comes to conversational storytelling, the question of (un)reliability is also connected to the degree of *fictional contamination* at play in a story. The more a non-fictional story is *contaminated* with patterns of fiction, the more unreliable it is perceived to be. As I pointed out above, William Labov (2013) explicitly connects the "reportability" of stories (i.e., their capacity to be about something interesting, exciting or noteworthy) to (decreased) "credibility." As I will show in my analyses, one reason for why *fictional contamination* can lead to more elaborate forms of fictionalization is because storytellers want to make a story more engaging in order to involve the audience. Therefore, a higher degree of *fictional contamination* is potentially also inversely related to credibility: the more we sense that a story becomes like 'fiction,' the less we will credit the teller with reliability. This has ramifications for interpersonal relationships and hence warrants a closer look at the potential for fictionalization that I call *fictional contamination* – especially since its is ubiquitous in non-fictional storytelling, as I contend.

In the next chapter, I delineate my analytical toolkit, socionarratology, for readers hitherto unfamiliar with this branch of research that combines linguistic with narratological concepts and methods. I also introduce the data I used for this study.

4 Socionarratology: A Literary-Linguistic Method for Analyzing Non-Fictional Narratives

In this chapter, I outline the methodological toolkit I apply in my analyses and the data I used. I will start with a broader overview of various approaches to narrative before zooming in on David Herman's (1999) method of *socionarratology*, which combines linguistic and literary narrative analysis.

4.1 Approaches to Studying Narratives

When studying non-fictional storytelling, one can look to social science disciplines for methodological input. In sociology, for example, Catherine Kohler Riessman (2008) identifies methods that can broadly be separated into thematic analysis, structural analysis, dialogic/performance analysis and visual analysis.[1] Thematic and structural analysis are also at the core of a classification of the narrative analysis of life stories proposed by Amia Lieblich, Rivka Tuval-Mashiach and Tamar Zilber (1998). It is based on two parameters that yield four general possibilities: holistic-content, holistic-form, categorical-content and categorical-form (12–14). Various narrative approaches can be assigned to these categories (see also Mildorf 2010) – even though Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach and Zilber themselves do not do that in their outline.

The *holistic-content* approach, as its name suggests, looks at the content of a life story in its entirety. Even if only parts of the narrative are focused upon, e.g., the beginning or the ending, they are always interpreted holistically in relation to the entire narrative. The reconstruction of a life story can also involve using archival data and visual material. (Oral) history research and (auto)-biographical writing often take this approach.

In the *holistic-form* approach, broad structural categories come under closer scrutiny. Thus, one can look at genre allocations of life stories (for example, does a story develop as a tragedy or as a comedy?), or one can analyze in more detail how the 'plot' develops throughout the life course. Are there turning points, for example, or a climax? An example is Arthur Frank's (1995) typology of illness narratives: in the *restitution story* illness is overcome; in the *chaos*

1 The first two categories are broad enough to apply to any research data; dialogic/performance analysis seems suited for interview materials or conversational/discursive data, while visual analysis matches pictorial materials.

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story illness overpowers the ill person; and in the *quest story* the ill person actively seeks answers and solutions.

On the *holistic-form* side, social science research has brought forth, for example, sociolinguistic narrative analysis in the Labovian tradition, which delineates the overall shape of oral narratives in terms of the diamond diagram with *abstract*, *orientation*, *turning point*, *complicating action*, *resolution* and *coda* (see below). Since sociolinguistic narrative analysis also attends to features of narrative syntax it can partially be placed within the *categorical-form* area.

The *categorical-form* approach focuses on a more detailed linguistic analysis of narratives, comments, utterances, etc. Analysts might look at metaphors used by the speaker or at the distribution of active/passive constructions and the like. Some research paradigms that fit the *categorical-form* axiom is conversation analysis and the "small stories" approach to narrative (Georgakopoulou 2007) that I also come back to below. In these lines of narrative analysis, data are carefully transcribed including phonetic detail and prosodic features such as intonation patterns and pauses. These data are then analyzed on a turn-by-turn basis in order to trace the locally determined unfolding of the conversation. Discursive strategies and markers, such as backchannels, repairs (Schegloff 1992), hedges (Fraser 1975), boosters, interruptions, tag questions, etc., come under closer scrutiny.

The *categorical-content* approach, by contrast, is equated with what is otherwise known as "content analysis," i.e., the extraction, classification and collection of separate utterances under the heading of predefined categories (Krippendorf 2004). It involves "the generation of categories which can be reliably coded and imposed over the data for the purposes of hypothesis testing" (Potter and Wetherell 1987: 41). Categories can be broad or narrow, depending on one's research angle and detail of analysis. Data are coded for larger thematic features. The analysis can range from quasi-statistical forms where the frequency of recurring themes is measured, to more qualitative accounts marked by careful reading and contextualization of the data.

4.2 Labov and Waletzky's Framework and Narratology

In my own analyses in this book, the distinction between form and content maps onto the story and discourse levels I already mentioned in the introduction. Whether I then look at story and discourse elements of narrative from a more holistic or categorical perspective depends on the respective example. Mostly, however, the categorical approach predominates since in each Chapter I select a specific set of features that I analyze in more detail, albeit also consider-

ing the larger narrative context. One analytical framework that is very useful for my discussion of the oral history data and that I intermittently draw upon is the one proposed in Labov and Waletzky's (1967) and Labov's (1972, 1982) groundbreaking work,[2] which has been one standard research paradigm in sociolinguistics ever since. I already mentioned the diamond diagram above. In this diagram, the *abstract* provides a brief summary of the narrative even before it is told so listeners are cued to what kind of story to expect; the *orientation* section offers information on who was involved when, where and under what circumstances while the *complicating action* sequence relates the disruption of the storyworld through events that bring about a complication; this complication then leads to a *turning point* and finally to a conclusion (the *resolution*). The *coda* finally draws a connection between the events presented in the narrative and the current speech situation. Another key concept is "evaluation," which explains why a narrative is told in the first place, for example, because the related events are particularly exciting, important, dangerous, funny or, more generally, worth telling. Structurally, evaluation is marked through deviance from the overall "narrative syntax." This can be seen, for example, in a shift of tenses, modality, the use of more complex syntactical structures, etc.

Labov and Waletzky's set of terms could equally be applied to prose fictional texts such as short stories, or to stories in other media.[3] However, narratology as a discipline has brought forth its own terminology for the study of narrative texts. Over the last few decades, narratology, by (self-)definition the prime discipline for narrative analysis, has branched out into a wide array of "postclassical" narratologies, named so in contradistinction to "classical" or structuralist narratology that predominated in the 1960s and 70s (Alber and Fludernik 2010; Heinen and Sommer 2009; Herman 1999; Herman and Vervaeck 2019; Nünning and Nünning 2002). Postclassical narratologies have borrowed concepts from psychology, sociology, anthropology, history, cognitive science, artificial intelligence, computer studies, discourse linguistics and other fields. The question arises to what extent 'classical' narratological concepts as have hitherto been mainly applied to literary narratives can also be successfully exported to other disciplines which have an interest in narrative. Through their common interest in narrative, the disciplines I just mentioned are well placed to collaborate with

2 This linguistic tradition is also one of the starting points of "natural" narratology (see Fludernik 2012: 360; 1996: 57–58).

3 In fact, the pattern bears some resemblance to Gustav Freytag's (1863: 100) pyramid structure with its exposition, rising action, climax, falling action and denouement or catastrophe, which is still used today to analyze classical forms of drama.

narratology and to embark on joint scientific projects. However, rapprochement has been slow: as we saw in Chapter 3, some literary scholars are adamant about keeping fictional and non-fictional storytelling separate, and they may consider narratives produced in everyday contexts simplistic. Richardson (2017), for example, emphasizes that fictional texts are carefully crafted in contrast to the spontaneous and therefore 'messier' stories told in conversational storytelling contexts. I want to demonstrate with this study that storytelling in such contexts is actually more complex than we assume.

Even where scholars have been interested in linguistic theories, the traffic between disciplines has been one-sided. As Timothy R. Austin (1989), for example, contends for the relationship between discourse studies and literary studies: "[w]here insights from one field are drawn on the other, the direction of flow seems almost invariably to be from discourse theory into literary criticism rather than vice versa" (705). Fludernik's (1996) theory of "natural narratology" is a case in point. In her book, Fludernik argues that narratology can learn from oral narratives and discourse analysis because literary and conversational narratives are similar at their core – a point I also made in the previous chapter by using the term "narrative homology": "It will be argued that oral narratives (more precisely: narratives of spontaneous conversational storytelling) cognitively correlate with perceptual parameters of human experience and that these parameters remain in force even in more sophisticated written narratives, although the textual make-up of these stories changes drastically over time" (12). Conversely, however, Fludernik does not attend to the questions whether experientiality as a key parameter may not lead to similarly complex narrative practices in conversational storytelling and whether, as a consequence, studies of such narratives may likewise benefit from discussions conducted in narratology.

Social and human scientists, in turn, may feel daunted by the complex terminological apparatus put forward by narratologists and may ask: how does narratology help us find out how narratives *work* in everyday life, what they mean to people, how people employ narratives and to what ends? It is telling that a recent collection that expressly combines research into personal experience narratives in the sociolinguistic tradition and anthropological and ethnographic approaches (Falconi and Graber 2019) completely ignores literary narratology as a potential resource. However, there have been attempts in the past to build bridges between narratology and social and human science disciplines. For example, a collection of essays edited by Klein and Martínez (2009) looks at the roles and functions of narrative in real-life contexts such as journalism,

medicine, the natural sciences, psychology, law, religion, economics, history and politics.[4]

Individual features have been taken up by scholars to show affinities between fictional and non-fictional storytelling. Discursive psychologist Jonathan Potter (1996: 163–165), for example, dedicates a section of his book on the discursive construction of reality to focalization in conversational narratives, arguing that focalization assigns to the listener the role of perceiver and endows the speaker with the authority of a "witness" (see also Atkinson 1990). Potter concludes his brief excursion into narratology by saying that "a more systematic study of the kinds of focalization that occur in everyday talk and news interview talk could be particularly revealing" (Potter 1996: 173). Another feature that is generally considered to be mainly associated with prose fiction but has also been attested in conversational storytelling (Polanyi 1984; Fludernik 1993a; Tommola 2003) is free indirect discourse[5] (see also Chapter 9). Despite such efforts to encourage interdisciplinary approaches, however, a more consistent and systematic exploration of *contamination* between fictional and non-fictional storytelling and, hence, of potential areas of disciplinary cross-fertilization between narratology and other narrative approaches is still missing in the field. One approach that began to close the gap and whose tradition I follow is *socionarratology*.

4.3 Socionarratology and the Small Stories Approach

In 1999, David Herman postulated a theoretical-methodological model which "situates stories in a constellation of linguistic, cognitive, and contextual factors" (219); this he termed *socionarratology*.[6] Herman combined notions and

4 One aspect I criticize in this edited collection is the fact that, even though it addresses narratives in real life ("*Wirklichkeitserzählungen*"), none of the contributions attends to spontaneous conversational storytelling, which, to my mind, can be considered the most prototypical kind of storytelling in comparison to the ones presented in the book.

5 Maier and Stokke (2021a: 7–8) define free indirect discourse as "a metarepresentational device for representing (or reporting) thoughts or speech."

6 Another 'version' of "socio-narratology" (written with a hyphen) was put forth by Arthur Frank (2010). Frank argues that stories – rather than just being artifacts that one can analyze – can have a life of their own and guide us in our living and thinking without us even noticing it. In this sense, Frank says, stories "breathe as they animate, assemble, entertain, and enlighten, and also deceive and divide people" (16). Even though Franks' basic premise – that it is important to look at what stories 'do' to and for people – is important, I do not consider it very helpful that Frank almost entirely discards structural, i.e., proper narratological analysis (see

methods from conversation analysis and interactional sociolinguistics with narratological concepts to illuminate the context in which ghost stories he analyzed were told. The assumption underlying Herman's analyses is that narrativeness or "narrativehood," as he puts it, requires more than specific structural properties:

> What makes a story a story cannot be ascribed to narrative form alone, but rather arises from the interplay between the semantic content of the narrative; the formal features of the discourse through which such narrated content manifests itself; and the kinds of inferences promoted via this interplay of form and content in particular discourse contexts (Herman 1999: 229).

Put differently, the relationship between narrative form and content only gains importance if a listener receives the narrative. In a vacuum, narratives, like language in general, do not really 'mean' anything. Narratives must be told to someone for a purpose. Therefore, in addition to content and discourse levels, we have to take into account the functional and contextual dimensions of narrative. As Herman emphasizes in his book on universal narrative properties, *Basic Elements of Narrative*, context – or "situatedness" – is crucial because the situation in which a story is told will have an influence on *how* the story is told as well as on *what* is told in this particular story at this particular moment and *why* (Herman 2009: 17–18).

Similarly, Alexandra Georgakopoulou (2007) re-anchors narrative analysis in a conversation analytical framework and argues that narrative is "an embedded unit, enmeshed in local business" as well as "sequentially managed; its tellings unfold on-line, moment-by-moment in the here-and-now of interactions" (4). Georgakopoulou moves away from the Labovian tradition of studying first-person narratives of personal experience as monolithic entities by placing emphasis on stories "as fluid, transient, fragmented, indeterminate, and contingent practices" (Georgakopoulou 2017c: 273). That is, rather than looking for narratives whose shape follow Labov and Waletzky's (1967) diamond diagram (see above), Georgakopoulou traces moments in conversations where narratives begin to emerge but may not be fully fleshed out.[7]

Frank 2010: 13). In my view, we ought not to simply 'interpret' what stories do (which can easily lead to rather impressionistic results), but interpretation needs to be based on a solid linguistic and narratological analysis of *how* stories do what they do. I demonstrate this kind of approach in this book.

7 Georgakopoulou's small stories approach was also taken up by Michael Bamberg (2006). Unlike Georgakopoulou, Bamberg juxtaposes small stories with the "big stories," or life narratives at large, commonly studied in psychology and autobiographical studies.

In a sense, my approach resembles Georgakopoulou's since I also want to trace fictionalization in the making, attending to storytelling practices that make fictionality possible but need not lead to the creation of full-fledged fictionality as can be found in generic fiction. I seek to explore *fictional contamination* by combining linguistic narrative analysis with narratological terms and concepts as proposed in *socionarratology*. More specifically, I borrow terms such as *experiencing/narrating I*, *focalization* or *slant* and *filter*, *free indirect discourse* and other *modes of consciousness representation*, *characterization*, *double deixis* and *you-narration* for my analysis, while also looking at *dialogue*, the *creation of storyworlds* through *space-time parameters* and *person deixis* as well as the inclusion of *cultural story templates* and *narratives of vicarious experience*. Regarding methodology, my further aim is to demonstrate that narratology can, if suitably adapted to social and human science requirements, add further insights into the particularly "narrative" features of conversational stories as can be found in oral history or in other kinds of non-fictional forms of storytelling. The concept of *fictional contamination* encourages us to question some of our assumptions about narrators and storytelling practices, and it offers a fresh view on the difficult question of unreliability (see Chapter 3), which has been discussed in the context of fictional narratives as well as non-fictional storytelling situations, notably doctor/patient or psychologist/client interactions (see Mildorf 2015).

Intermittently, I have alluded to the data which form the basis for my case studies: narratives, taken mainly from oral history interviews, that focus on life storying, i.e., the manifold ways in which people make sense of and communicate their lives (or indeed someone else's life) to others. My examples also include some other discourse genres such as eulogies. In what follows, I say more about my data and about what methodological issues they raise.

4.4 A Note on the Data

My data consist primarily of excerpts from oral history interviews published on the internet. These texts, which contain life storying in the strict sense of the word, are occasionally triangulated with texts that also take a life into focus, e.g., a commemorative speech presented at a funeral. All these data are secondary data in the sense that I look at them to elucidate issues that were not the main target of the original research (Brewer 2012: 166; see also Vartanian 2010). Some scholars, oral historians included, may object to this practice. However, in order to illustrate the workings of *fictional contamination* in conversational life storying it is desirable to cover a wider range of data from different sources so as

not to give the impression that the features analyzed are idiosyncratic for certain storytellers. Online oral history data constitute wonderful resources for this purpose because they offer a plenitude of examples with a diverse range of storytellers and topic areas – more than a single researcher could hope to compile.

However, this of course means that other researchers have prepared the transcripts and have decided which parts of the data to present, which to leave out and how to present their selection. This raises "interpretive issues," as Riessman (2008: 22) points out, "including imagined audience and other contexts implicated in production." What Riessman says about working in archives is partially also true of working with internet narratives: "Documents do not speak for themselves; decisions by the author and/or archivist have already shaped the texts an investigator encounters" (Riessman 2008: 22–23). It is therefore imperative to contextualize my data as best as possible. I should also mention that several of my examples are drawn from previous studies of mine and are here recontextualized. I indicate the respective sources in the chapters to come where applicable.

Two of the databases I use for this study (*healthtalk.org* and *StoryCorps*) do not provide complete interviews but only short excerpts on their websites. Here, a thematic selection has already been made. At least, these websites make recordings available where possible. The third database, the *Smithsonian Archives of American Art*, provides longer transcripts of interview excerpts but only snippet audio file samples. Furthermore, I draw on materials from oral history databases that were not necessarily devised by oral historians but are based on community projects: "What Did You do in the War, Grandma" and "Who Are You Now?" (see below). Here as in the other databases and archives, the transcripts have been tidied up, i.e., they contain no information on paralinguistic patterns or prosodic features. Furthermore – and this applies to all of these databases – I did not only have no access to the original experience which was narrativized in the interview situation (see Riessman 2008: 22), but I also had no direct access to the interview situation in the sense that I had not conducted the interviews myself. This means that my interpretations are not only once but twice removed. One needs to bear these points in mind when considering the data.

On the *healthtalk.org* website, which is hosted by the DIPEx charity, one can find excerpts from interviews with patients talking about illness experiences, either their own or their beloved ones'. DIPEx is a registered charity whose aim is to make people's experiences with a wide range of health conditions and issues available to the public, including patients and professionals in training. The database contains short video clips from in-depth interviews with patients.

In other instances, the interview excerpt has been completely anonymized. Only parts of the interviews are available online and the clips are presented out of context. They have been pre-selected according to the thematic criteria applied by the DIPEx research team. Thus, the excerpts illustrate topics such as signs and symptoms, getting the diagnosis, communication with professionals, work, social life, etc. Even though the clips are not selected on the grounds of particular modes of expression, they commonly show people who speak interestingly and well, which might mean that more colorful speech patterns are used, including narrative patterns. Hence, a certain bias, of which I am not aware because I am not part of this research team, may have been introduced by how the team arranged the materials. Moreover, the transcripts on the website are tidied up and have been made more readable for a large audience. There are no close phonetic transcriptions of the interviews. Still, a minimum of description of the oral nature of these data is maintained, for example, in the notation of pauses and breaks in speech.

Similarly, many of the interviews presented on the website of the *Smithsonian Archives of American Art* also feature short snippets that are made available as audio files, but by and large the interviews are presented in the form of transcripts. Unlike the interview excerpts on the *healthtalk.org* website, transcripts in the *Smithsonian Archives* are complete, i.e., they give one a good idea of the overall interview trajectory, but again, the transcripts do not offer a representation of prosodic and paralinguistic features, except for laughter, which is marked in the text. The main aim of the *Smithsonian Archives* is to provide "sources that document the history of the visual arts in America" and to thus become a "vital resource to anyone interested in American culture over the past 200 years," as the website states.[8] Furthermore, the interviews collected in the archives were typically conducted by someone who is also active in the arts and crafts, either as a practicing artist or as someone intimately related to this cultural area, e.g., a museum or gallery director, curator or art historian. Technically, these interviews therefore constitute "participant-interviews" (Quinlan 2011: 30), where interviewer and interviewee share the same background. This means that interviewers and interviewees talk about and verbally negotiate common knowledge about methods, traditions and pivotal 'masters' of their craft as well as the artist's personal life story. In that sense, as I discussed in Chapter 2, they can also be said to participate in a *discursive* "community of practice" (Eckert and McConnell-Ginet 1992). All this has ramifications for what kinds of questions are asked in these interviews and what kinds of stories are elicited. The

8 See http://www.aaa.si.edu/aboutus.

community of practice established in and through the interviews also extends to the audience. The fact that the Smithsonian Archives do not annotate interviews suggests that they assume that people interested in these interviews will have some knowledge about the arts and crafts movement or are at least willing to figure out references to people and institutions on their own because of their special interest.

Another oral history archive that gathers stories by a certain professional group and from which one of my smaller examples is taken, is the one hosted by the Association for Computing Machinery (ACM).[9] Here, computer scientists were asked about their lives and work, which – as with the craft artists – creates a tight-knit *network of shared experience* (Mildorf 2019b).

One interview excerpt I analyze was taken from the oral history project "What Did You Do in the War, Grandma?" that originally began as a school project at South Kingston High School and was developed by librarian Judi Scott and oral historian Linda P. Wood. The oral history project involved interviews with 26 Rhode Island women conducted and written up by students in the Honors English Program. However, no explicit information is given on how the interviews were conducted or the transcripts produced. In 1995, these written documents were digitized and archived online by Duke University.[10]

Another resource that involved volunteer lay interviewers is the project "Who Are You Now?"[11], which is run by Headway East London, a charity based at a community center in Hackney that supports people who sustained brain injuries. The website states: "This site tells the stories of survivors in their own words: who they were, what happened to them and who they are now." Indeed, the stories are all presented as first-person narratives, but it does not become entirely clear who eventually wrote and prepared those texts.

So, all these data can be considered problematic because they constitute 'only' secondary data and because they are decontextualized in the ways delineated above. Still, they are interesting as a testing ground for the socionarratological analysis proposed above. Depending on whether interview excerpts were available as audio files only or also as written transcripts, I present my data in a variety of ways, occasionally providing my own transcription of the spoken text. At any rate, I take into account whatever contextual features were available – for example, as regards the progression of the interview and whether answers

9 See https://dl.acm.org/doi/proceedings/10.1145/1141880.

10 The interview transcripts are now made available at the following website: https://cds.library.brown.edu/projects/WWII_Women/tocCS.html.

11 See https://whoareyounow.org.

were given in response to specific questions. In each analysis, I provide readers with as much information as is necessary to understand the larger context from which the excerpt was taken. Names have been anonymized throughout, except in those cases where the original website does not anonymize participants' names because knowing who these people are is part of the oral history project (as, for example, in the *Smithsonian Archives*).

Another text to be analyzed in this book is a eulogy given by Barack Obama at the funeral of Reverend Clementa C. Pinckney. Finally, I also revisit the data I collected for my study on physician's narratives about their experiences with cases of domestic violence (Mildorf 2007). Those narratives are excerpted from interviews I myself conducted with doctors in the city of Aberdeen in 1999 and 2000.

Concerning the notation of prosodic and other features pertaining to spoken conversation, I use as little of that as possible to ensure readability for non-specialists. However, in some excerpts where those features are of special importance or even at the center of my analysis, I draw on transcription conventions derived from the Jefferson system.[12] The various symbols are explained in my analyses.

12 For a full guide on this system, see: https://www.universitytranscriptions.co.uk/jefferson-transcription-system-a-guide-to-the-symbols/.

5 Positioning 'Characters': Story Templates and Constructed Dialogue

Fictional narratives contain a range of characters who interact in the storyworld and who sometimes also assume the narratorial function. In Uri Margolin's (1996: 113) conception, which draws on Doležel's possible-world-semantic approach, characters in fiction are individuals who

> can be regarded as a version of an original, bearing the same proper name, which is located elsewhere. This elsewhere may be another subdomain of the story world represented by this very text, or it may be another fictional, as if, story world represented by another text, or, finally, it may be a socially encoded model of the as is, actual historical world, as represented by a certifying discourse of the culture. The relation between original and version may hence be an *intratextual*, *intertextual*, or *extratextual* phenomenon.

Not only are characters mediated "versions" of personae that either 'exist' in the presented storyworld, are taken from other fictional storyworlds or from the real world, they are also 'designed' in such a way as to either represent what literary scholars following E. M. Forster call a "flat character," i.e., one with only a few character traits and thus a certain lack in complexity, or a "round character," whose complex emotional life, disposition and character traits resemble those of real-life people (Forster 1927: 103–118).

5.1 Techniques of Characterization

When it comes to identifying how these people in fictional storyworlds are characterized, literary scholars distinguish among two axes or aspects of characterization techniques: first, character traits can be presented *explicitly* or *implicitly*, and we can secondly be told about characters *by the author/narrator* or *by characters*. In the latter case, characters either characterize themselves (self-characterization) or someone else (other-characterization) (Pfister 2001: 250–264; Jannidis 2013, section 3.8). In novels, a range of combinations of these possibilities can be deployed to bring characters to life, as it were: an *explicit-narratorial* characterization may, for example, involve the narrator telling us that a character is very ambitious and ruthless in pursuing his goals. In an *implicit-narratorial* characterization, the narrator may deliberately juxtapose this ambitious man with another man who is very amiable, kind-hearted and full of moral integrity, thus foregrounding the first man's negative characteristics. In an *explicit-figural* characterization, the ambitious man himself would talk about his ambitions and

https://doi.org/10.1515/9783111073101-005

Machiavellian plans – for example, in a kind of interior monologue to himself or in a conversation with his confidante. An *implicit-figural* characterization, finally, would show us the man's ambition indirectly through his actions, his behavior towards others, his speech and his appearance and surroundings. He may, for example, be preferably presented in his office, pursuing his intrigues over the telephone. His interactions with others may display his duplicity because with some, he may sugarcoat his activities while being rather rude in conversation with others.

One may of course ask what all this has to do with conversational storytelling. Surely, 'characters' in real-life narratives must be different from fictional characters in that they are, after all, *real* people. They must therefore be more complex and, more importantly, they are certainly not 'designed' the same way that fictional characters are. Real human beings simply are – or are they? One could argue that, when we tell stories about ourselves and about other people, we *discursively construct* these characters just as authors construct their fictional characters. To speak with Margolin, we could say that the people we talk about are our "versions" of real-life people. In this sense, they are definitely "extratextual." Linguistically speaking, references to these people are therefore always *exophoric*, i.e., they point to the real person or persons outside the narrative. Of course, there will be limits to our constructions: after all, we cannot completely invent a person without reference to the actual person we are talking about. However, the way we portray someone verbally is influenced by our perception of this person and by our interpretation of that person's actions, behavior, characteristics, etc. And we all know that perceptions and interpretations can vary – so much so that sometimes people will argue over who has the 'correct' view of a person. It is precisely these interpretations and evaluations that narratives accommodate (Phelan 2005), and therefore it is worthwhile listening carefully to what storytellers have to say about themselves and others, and also to how they say it.

So, people feature as 'characters' in life stories. However, there are also those who listen to or read these stories and there are the storytellers themselves. In Chapter 2, I introduced the concept of *positioning* that is used in social psychology to talk about how people place themselves vis-à-vis their interlocutors but also as characters in the stories they tell. "Positioning" thus actually has two meanings: one is linked to how interlocutors are quite literally or geographically positioned to one another (face-to-face communication; mediation through communication technologies or certain media; distance vs. closeness, etc.); the other meaning is metaphorical and refers to how interlocutors are *socially* and *interpersonally* related to one another in the interaction. In the latter sense, positioning is closely connected to characterization since the characteristic features we attribute to

ourselves and others also contributes to our social, emotional or, generally, relational positioning. Characterization typically involves the use of descriptive verbal material such as adjectives, adverbs, verbs and nouns. Positioning in the 'geographical' sense is additionally marked by deictic elements such as person pronouns and time and space expressions, as subsequent chapters will demonstrate.

Much has been written about narrators (Currie 2010; Patron 2019, 2021), and I will discuss the relationship between teller and recipient in Chapters 6 and 8, where I am going to reflect on double deixis and perspective-taking. Here, I am more concerned with how storytellers inject themselves in their own stories as characters. I will look at questions of characterization and at how characterization may be tied to existing story templates. Then I discuss one verbal technique that, to my mind, significantly contributes towards characterization and character positioning: direct speech or what linguists call "constructed dialogue." In this connection, the question of "unnatural" narratives that I discussed in Chapter 2 will also be addressed.

5.2 Characterization and Story Templates

In depicting 'characters,' storytellers may resort to stories they already know, stories that constitute the knowledge base shared by cultural groups. Lucius-Hoene and Deppermann (2002: 50) point out that: "In performing their selves, people may or may not draw on existing cultural templates, and this is where the media play an increasing role: it is here that identities are presented, staged and discussed." Let us consider the following story told by a woman who suffered a stroke on Christmas Eve. The story is taken from an interview on the website of the Headway East London project "Who Are You Now?"[1]:

Narrative 5.1

1 It was Christmas Eve 2010.
2 We went to do some shopping at the supermarket
3 and I remember it was full of people and boxes.
4 I tripped over a box
5 and I was really annoyed;

1 See: https://whoareyounow.org/story/trudy.

whether I tripped because of pre-stroke symptoms, I don't know.
We came back home and had a cup of tea,
and ((name)), my partner, said he was going down for the Lottery ticket.
We were laughing because an Irish girl had won £20m on the EuroMillions lottery.
I remember I called him back–
I don't know what I was going to say to him.
He came back
and we were laughing again.
And then I called him back a second time,
and that's when I had the stroke.
((Name)) knew immediately.
I was in the downstairs loo
and I'd smashed the ceramic toilet roll holder.
He could see my face was down and my hand was down on one side.
I felt exhausted.
He says I was slipping from consciousness.
I remember I wasn't;
we still have that argument.
He rang the ambulance straight away
and he rang my daughter–
she was at her boyfriend's at the time
and she came running over.
They stabilised me in the ambulance.
My nearest hospital was full,
and the Royal London was full.
It seemed to be like the Nativity: no room at the inn.
And the paramedic said "what will I do now?"
They decided to take me to University College Hospital in Euston.
I remember all this going on around me, as well as anything.
There isn't a good time to have a stroke
but it was particularly busy.
It's very easy to knock the NHS

38 but you can't legislate for how busy it's going to be—
39 it's a lottery.
40 We even had an accident;
41 the ambulance crashed on the way up to UCH!
42 The stroke nurses and the consultant were ready for me
43 and they were very good.
44 Whether or not it would have been better to go to the local A&E, which is about five minutes away from me, whereas UCH is twenty-five minutes away, I don't know,
45 but what can you do?
46 There's no point in looking back.
47 These days I can't wait until Christmas Eve is over;
48 it's not logical,
49 but I'm watching the clock.

There is a lot that can be said about how this teller builds up her narrative by including many seemingly trivial and marginal pieces of information (see also Norrick 2020): the grocery shopping for Christmas Eve (lines 1–2), having a cup of tea with her partner (line 7) and then laughing about an Irish woman winning the lottery (line 9). These details show how storytellers assign significance to small things with hindsight and recontextualize life-changing events. The details signal a state of 'normalcy' before everything changes for good, thus giving the incident of the stroke even more weight. What is most interesting for my purposes here is how this teller frames her illness narrative: she refers to a well-known story, the Nativity (line 31), and implicitly compares herself to Maria and Joseph, who, on the height of Maria's pregnancy, had difficulty finding a place to stay. What the story template offers is the plot element of being turned down at a critical moment in life and the sense of despair that comes with that. The Nativity story lends itself because the teller's stroke also happened on Christmas Eve, a time when A&E departments are particularly busy. Still, the teller is adamant about defending the NHS since "you can't legislate for" (line 38) overcrowded hospitals, as she says. And yet, that part of the story – how everything went badly after the first physical shock, including the ambulance's accident – is precisely what has stuck in the teller's mind and is foregrounded again in her retelling of the story.

The conceptual frame that is set in place by the Nativity story emphasizes the teller's negative memories by creating a stark contrast. After all, Christmas Eve is

generally associated with happy feelings, hope and a new beginning. For the teller, that particular Christmas came to mean the exact opposite. It is not surprising, then, that she concludes her narrative by saying: "These days I can't wait until Christmas Eve is over" (line 47). In Labovian terms, this sentence marks the *coda*, the part of the story which links it to the here and now of the speaker's present situation. At the same time, there is a potentially humorous dimension to comparing oneself to Maria and Joseph in their quest as the holy story is linked to a more mundane (albeit no less dramatic!) life experience. Interpreted this way, the reference may tell us something about the ambivalence the storyteller felt and still feels about her stroke. Humor is often used as a discursive means of self-distancing. It distances us from common sense and, in doing so, re-familiarizes us with it (Critchley 2002: 18; see also Curcó 1996, 1998). However, while it may accomplish this on the verbal level, that does not necessarily mean the distancing strategy has been entirely successful on the 'inside,' i.e., at the emotional level.

We can see in this example how a well-known cultural story template can be used as a shortcut in life storying: by referring to a particular story one can easily and quickly evoke story or plot elements and even attendant emotions without having to fully explain all these things in detail. In this regard, story templates can be compared to metaphors since they also assume this 'shortcutting function,' as I argued in my book *Storying Domestic Violence* (2007: 70–71), drawing on reflections by Laurence J. Kirmayer (2000: 155). In the story above, the teller can reveal the complexity of her emotions and thoughts about her condition without having to use ever so many words. However, this also carries the risk of ambiguity: like in a fictional narrative, the onus of interpreting the story shortcut and what it stands for is ultimately on the listener.

We can also see here how story templates may be used for indirect characterization. The storyteller characterizes her 'experiencing self' in the story as helpless and as having to endure all the things that happen to her because the circumstances are less than ideal. At the same time, she explicitly characterizes the hospital staff in positive terms to signal to the interviewer that she recognizes the hospital staff's hard work and that she does not blame them for what happened: "The stroke nurses and the consultant were ready for me and they were very good" (lines 42–43). This explicit endorsement may also be interpreted as the teller's attempt, in the interview situation, not to come across as ungrateful by unjustly criticizing the NHS and the hospital staff that helped her.

Even though this narrative is clearly non-fictional, it contains a reference to a common cultural story and thus begins to show a minimum of *fictional contamination*. Had the reference been more extended and, above all, less explicit – i.e.,

without the overt simile marked by "like" (line 31) – the story may have shown even more degrees of fictionalization. One can imagine other storytelling contexts where tellers may draw on story templates to dramatize an experience or to aggrandize themselves. There, fictional contamination may become more obvious. For example, in one of the articles I co-authored with Mari Hatavara (Hatavara and Mildorf 2017b), we discussed a war veteran's story about famous General Patton, and we identified story elements that were reminiscent of popular romance. Whether they explicitly refer to them or not, storytellers sometimes resort to characters, plot lines and story elements one can find in popular or well-known stories. This hardly comes as a surprise, given that a) we are storytelling animals and b) we are saturated with stories surrounding us in families, institutional contexts like the classroom or the workplace and, increasingly, in the (social) media.

In this example, the narrative contains a mix of indirect self-characterization by means of a well-known story template and a direct characterization of others. Frequently, the characterization of others is also done indirectly. In the next story, the teller does not characterize the people in her narrative explicitly but rather implicitly through the way they talk.

5.3 Characterization through Constructed Dialogue

The following story was told by an African American woman as part of the oral history project "What Did You Do in the War, Grandma?" (see Chapter 4). In this narrative, the storyteller relates how she faced racial discrimination when trying to find a job:

Narrative 5.2

1 When I would go down for a job, the girl in the office would look like this,
2 and then she called for the employer.
3 He'd come;
4 he'd say, "Uh, uh Miss ((name)), um, yes, well the job is filled."
5 I'd go home and call right back.
6 "Is there a position open as a secretary in your office?"
7 "Yes there is."
8 By my voice, he didn't know that I was colored because I spoke the same as anybody else.

9 And so I said, “I was just down there.”
10 “Oh,” he said, “Oh were you the Miss ((name)) that was down here?”
11 I said, “Yes, I was.”
12 He said, “Oh, well one of the girls…”
13 I said, “You said the job was open.”
14 He said, “Well, one of the girls has decided that she’s going to take it.”
15 And this was the run-around that I got.
16 When I went to the school department where they were giving out jobs to help people they said to me, “((Name)), you’ve done very well, haven’t you?”
17 And I said, “Yes, I have.”
18 She said, “Well,” she said, “we don’t have any jobs for you as a secretary or a stenographer.”
19 Because these jobs were going to white girls.
20 I said, “There’s nothing for me?”
21 She said, “I have a little job for you taking care of these twins if you want to take that.”
22 I said, “No, thank you.”
23 And I went out.
24 You know I was crying.
25 I cried all the way home.
26 I got home and I said to my mother, “I’m never going to be able to work.”
27 She said, “Why?”
28 I said, “Because they’re only giving out jobs to white people.”
29 She said, “That shouldn’t be.”
30 I said, “it shouldn’t be, but it is.”

The first line of this narrative already illustrates how oral stories are always embedded in the here and now of the current speech situation and are hence dependent on the spatial and temporal parameters of that situation (more on space-time deixis in Chapter 6). The storyteller refers to the secretary’s reaction by saying that she “would look like this” (line 1), presumably showing to the interlocutor a facial expression that she frequently encountered in the office staff she met while searching for a job. The modal verb “would” furthermore suggests habitual

action, which indicates that this negative reaction occurred on more than just one occasion.

In this anecdote, which picks out one such specific occasion, dialogue or what linguists also call direct speech presentation immediately catches the eye. It is a phenomenon we are all quite familiar with: good storytellers will enliven their stories by using direct speech. They do so not only to bring their listeners closer to the situation they relate in their stories; they also give them a flavor of what the people presented in the story sounded like in that particular situation and, by implication, what they *were like*: their manners, their emotions, their characteristics. In this regard, dialogue also plays a crucial role for the characterization and the positioning of characters. In the story at hand, direct speech gives us a better sense of the duplicity in the employer's attitude and of the manner in which he tried to wiggle himself out of a situation where it was obvious that he had lied to the narrator about the job on offer: "'Well, one of the girls…'" (line 14). The discourse marker "well," whether it was really used by the employer or added by the storyteller in her retelling of the situation, signals his discomfort at a moment when he was caught out as a liar. It may also point to his attempt to quickly come up with a good explanation. The subsequent speech cut-off may corroborate this reading. At the same time, it may reflect the fact that the storyteller cut him off to challenge him further, in which case the replaying of this discursive move would characterize her as a tough lady who did not simply take 'no' for an answer.

Later in the story, the teller's own frustration is quite literally voiced in the dialogue she had with her mother and which she retells quasi verbatim for the purposes of the interview (lines 26–30). Moreover, the use of direct speech seems especially pertinent in this narrative because it is also a story about *voices*: the narrator relates how the employer did not recognize her voice as that of a woman of color over the phone and therefore made the blunder of revealing his previous duplicity. A clerk at the school department is reported to have said: "we don't have any jobs for you as a secretary or a stenographer" (line 18), which the narrator complements by continuing: "Because these jobs were going to white girls" (line 19). This is not what the lady actually said in that situation but what the narrator assumes she had in her mind. Unvoiced thoughts, words that are not spoken, can be just as important as what was said, especially if they are verbalized retrospectively.

What this example illustrates is the commonality of dialogue in conversational storytelling. It also shows that, as with direct thought ascription, we are quite happy to accept this discursive mode in storytelling even though we cannot be sure whether what is retold verbatim as dialogue is an accurate rendition

of the original speech situation. Was it really those words that were used by speakers? What else was said that is now left out in the storytelling situation? How can tellers remember the exact words someone else or even they themselves used in the (distant) past? However, as everyday conversationalists, we do not seem to be disquieted by those questions. We take it for granted that, when dialogue is reenacted in a story, it must at least resemble the original speech situation. And even if it does not, it seems to be the spirit of the original situation that mostly matters to us – regardless of whether its rendition is 'accurate.' This possibility to include partially 'made-up' material, I argue, is exactly what makes dialogue a candidate as a marker of *fictional contamination*. Just when would excessive use of dialogue make us feel suspicious? Again, it is not only a question of quantity, of *how much* dialogue is used, but also of quality, i.e., *what kind of* 'original' speech is remembered and reported in a story.

Some linguists call the kind of direct speech presentation discussed here "constructed dialogue" precisely because it need not reflect an original speech situation. As Deborah Tannen (1989) points out, direct speech is by no means a truly verbatim rendition of such an original speech situation but always speech that has undergone some transformation in the process of storytelling:

> In many, perhaps most, cases [...] material represented as dialogue was never spoken by anyone else in a form resembling that constructed, if at all. Rather, casting ideas as dialogue rather than statements is a discourse strategy for framing information in a way that communicates effectively and creates involvement. [...] what is called "reported speech," "direct discourse," or "direct quotation" (that is, a speaker framing an account of another's words as dialogue) should be understood not as report at all, but as constructed dialogue. It is constructed just as surely as is the dialogue in drama or fiction. (Tannen 1989: 110; see also Tannen 1997)

Isabelle Buchstaller (2014: 49–50) also contends that "there is plenty of evidence that quotes are very rarely verbatim representations of the original speech act" (see also Holt 2007: 47). From a linguistic perspective, quotes are obviously not the same as dialogue since they can merely capture single utterances. Furthermore, speech can be reported as direct speech, indirect speech or free indirect speech and even in some more complex mixtures of these three (Vandelanotte 2009; see also Chapter 9). Nevertheless, Buchstaller's claim about quotations equally applies to constructed dialogue. She defines quotation as "a performance whereby speakers re-enact previous behaviour (speech/thought/ sound/voice effect and gesture) while assuming the dramatic role of the original source of this reported behaviour" (Buchstaller 2014: 54).

Constructed dialogue is used by speakers to make a conversation come to life or to dramatize it and thereby to interest their interlocutors in what they have to

say. Prosody, which I discuss in more detail below, plays an important role in this regard as speakers usually mark off reported direct speech prosodically and thus not only 'animate' the presented persons but also convey their speech activity types and their affective stance (Günthner 1999: 704; see also Irvine 1990). Direct speech can not only be introduced by classic inquit formulae such as "I said" / "they said" but also by reduced forms using the verbs "be" and "go" or the comparative preposition "like": "he was just like, 'Oh my God,'" "and they went, 'Oh, what was it then?'." When quotatives such as "I was like..." are used, the boundaries between thought and speech presentation may potentially be blurred (Haakana 2007: 172).

So, in sum one can say that constructed dialogue is generally assessed as an approximation to the original speech situation at best and as complete invention at worst. The terms "performance," "enact" and "dramatic role" in Buchstaller's definition are interesting in this context, as they point towards a conceptualization of speakers as actors fulfilling a quasi-theatrical role in conversation. Thornborrow and Coates (2005a: 13) also talk about "performances of self" in the context of conversational storytelling. This conceptualization can already be found in Irving Goffman's (1959) use of the metaphor of theatrical performance to explain human behaviour in social contexts (see Chapter 2). In all these studies, the emphasis is clearly on the linguistic phenomenon of reported speech as both an instrument and manifestation of *discursive action*, and the main function of such discursive action is to achieve a speaker's conversational goals in social interaction (see also contributions in Holt and Clift 2007). The question arises what exactly speakers try to achieve by using constructed dialogue. This can obviously vary from one speech situation to another but, to my mind, one key function is to convey interior states and to ascribe thoughts, motivations and feelings to the presented characters, albeit in an indirect way. In this sense, constructed dialogue also contributes to characterization.

5.4 Reliving the Moment: Constructed Dialogue and Prosody

In the following example from an interview on the former *healthtalkonline.org* website, now *healthtalk.org*,[2] a 63-year-old woman talks about her experience of

2 The example is taken from Mildorf (2016a) and the transcript is based on the original audiofile that could be listened to at the *healthtalkonline.org* website. Unfortunately, the new *healthtalk.org* website has disabled all links to the interviews contained in the category of carers for people with dementia.

caring for her husband, who suffered from Alzheimer's. In this excerpt she describes how difficult it was to obtain a diagnosis.

Narrative 5.3

1 So >we went back to the doctor<,
2 we went back to the neurologist
3 and this time I went too. (1.0)
4 And she ↑trashed me. (1.3)
5 .hh uhm (1.5) he, his, ((husband's name)) father had just died
6 and I said he'd behaved inappropriately.
7 "People, all sorts of-, no behaviour is inappropriate (0.5) after a death."
8 And I really felt swooping round the green outside the house where he was, >pretending to be an aeroplane when he'd just been told his father was dead<, was inappropriate.
9 .hh And (1.6) >I said the neighbours were beginning to comment< (0.4) and show concern.
10 >And she said "Just because your neighbours think he's got Alzheimer's doesn't mean he has."<
11 .hh And I said (0.3) I wanted a second opinion. (0.8)
12 And she was very angry (0.3)
13 and she said (0.2) "You'll get the same message from (( ))"
14 but, yes I could see (.) a psychiatrist. (1.3)
15 And so he saw (.) a psychiatrist (0.4) who said to me (.) he thought the problem was neur- neurological. (0.9)
16 And I ↑read the Alzheimer's (0.4) uhm, News
17 and by ↑chance (0.6) there was (.) an article about Professor ((name)) clinic in ((place)).
18 And I phoned him
19 and said "Can I bring ((husband's name))?"
20 And he said "Yes" (0.6)
21 and (.) told me how to do it through the NHS (.)
22 and my doctor cooperated. (1.0)
23 .hh And I've told that story in detail (0.2) because (0.4) I consider that was the first (0.3) unethical (1.4) thing that was done (0.3)

24 in that that neurologist knew (0.7) he had Alzheimer's, >knew he had a dementia< (0.8)

25 because (.) when she wrote (.) to ((professor's name)) she told him so. (1.4)

26 And (1.2) had we been told the truth in the first place things would have (0.7) worked out very differently. (1.2)

27 Uhm, I ↑can't pass a comment on >whether it would have been better or worse< (0.4)

28 but >((husband's name)) certainly would have been here< (0.5)

29 and we would have (.) followed a much more conventional path. (2.2)

30 .hh Uhm (1.42) they were marvellous to me (.) at the (0.6) clinic (0.8)

31 a::nd ((professor's name)) talked to me at length, er, (0.9) about (1.2) preserving life or not, >quality and quantity of life.< (0.6)

32 .hh And essentially said (0.6) "Let him take all the risks he wants to. (0.8) If he's knocked down by a bus what does he lose? (1.2) Just (.) years of (0.6) gathering dementia, uhm, so (.) let him do as much (.) as he wants to do."

33 And I said (0.6) "I have thoughts about things that coroners sometimes ((laughs)) say."

34 And he said >"If it ever came to that I would support you."< (0.5)

35 And so (0.9) I (0.4) allowed and encouraged ((husband's name)) >to ride a bicycle< (1.0) for as long as was possible (0.5) .hh uhm,

36 and I kept him (0.6) out (0.4) of full-time care (0.4) for as long (.) as was possible (0.6)

37 because he was a ve↑ry ↓prou:d and very independent man (1.1)

38 a:nd (0.9) I felt (.) that was what he (0.3) what he would want.

The first thing to notice when listening to the audio file is that the speaker talks in a very measured tone, weighing her words and using marked pauses (given in seconds in the transcript) to structure her sentences and to accentuate single words. The more noteworthy are moments in the narrative where the speaker's speech is sped up, thus enlivening the narrated events for the interlocutor. This happens, for example, when the speaker in the beginning relates her visit to the neurologist (lines 1–14). The narrative contains another, embedded narrative, namely the story of how the speaker's husband behaved when he heard about his father's death (line 8). By increasing the speed of the narrative, the speaker renders it more dramatic (Pasupathi 2006; Tannen 1989). This is further achieved

through the use of constructed dialogue, e.g., when the speaker relates seemingly verbatim how the neurologist responded to her concerns (lines 7, 10 and 13).

Günthner (1999: 704) assigns four functions to prosody in constructed dialogue: "(i) to contextualize whether an utterance is anchored in the reporting world or the storyworld; (ii) to animate the quoted characters and to differentiate between the quoted characters; (iii) to signal the speech activities and the affective stance of the reported characters; (iv) to comment on the reported speech as well as on the quoted characters." The last two functions are particularly interesting for the study of character presentation in conversational stories. In 'repeating' what the doctor said to her, the speaker in this example also assumes a reproachful tone, thus enacting the doctor's irritation for the current audience. The speaker actually says that the doctor was "very angry" (line 12), but by using constructed dialogue, she additionally signals that the doctor's verbal reaction affected her in that situation and became memorable in a negative way. In other words, "constructed dialogue" not only fulfills what Phelan calls the "reporting" part of the narrative function here, but it communicates something of the doctor's and the woman's feelings at the time. On the level of the current storytelling situation, this lively rendition of the encounter also discloses the extent to which the speaker is still emotionally affected because the dramatization decreases the speaker's distance to the events in the storyworld.[3]

More importantly, as Pasupathi (2006: 142) also points out, the dramatic mode co-opts the listener as a 'partner' who is placed "in the position of simultaneously supporting the story and the proffered version of the self." We can see this in the second example of constructed dialogue in lines 32 to 34, where the speaker reports what the professor at the specialist clinic said to her. The professor's suggestion that the husband should be allowed to take "all the risks he wants to" (line 32) may well be viewed controversially, given that other people may have come to harm, too. In re-enacting her own scepticism at the time of the consultation ("I have thoughts about things that coroners sometimes say," line 33), the speaker signals to her current interlocutor that she is and was aware of the potentially problematic nature of this suggestion. At the same time, however, her slightly laughing voice invites the listener to also adopt a less severe viewpoint (in case the listener's position *was* more critical) and to yield to the supportive words of the professor, who, after all, spoke as a person of authority. In a way, we are implicitly invited to understand the speaker's predicament and feel sympathetic towards her.

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3 Compare this to a potentially more "reflective mode," as Pasupathi (2006) sets it in contrast to the performative mode of dialogue.

In line 23, the speaker offers a meta-narrative comment: "I've told that story in detail." It is not so much a justification for holding the floor (because this is, after all, an interview, where she is by definition given more floor space) but an opener to the speaker's criticism of the way she had been treated by the neurologist. She even calls the doctor's withholding of a clear diagnosis "unethical"[4] and explains what ramifications this behaviour had for her life.

In lines 26 to 29 the speaker uses what Gary Saul Morson (1994) calls "sideshadowing": she reflects on what might have happened had things been different in the first place.[5] In doing so, she engages her audience in a special way, inviting listeners to entertain the possibility of a different life and thus conveying to them a stronger sense of her own feelings of loss and frustration. She thus also confirms in an indirect way the same "moral stance" (Ochs and Capps 2001: 50) on the related events that she openly already expressed in her critical comment. Here we can see how narrative indirection can be used to justify one's own position and to create empathy in listeners.

This example, where I also described the sonic quality of the spoken narrative, indicates furthermore how prosodic features and voice qualities offer additional layers of meaning to the reporting of direct speech that, ideally, one should try to take into account if possible (see also Karpf 2014; Mildorf 2017). They add 'texture' to the (re)constructed dialogue and thus help listeners conjure up images of the related scenes and the 'characters' presented therein in their minds. Even though, again, the story told by no means represents a fictionalized account, we can see how its vividness contributes to the *creation* of a 'storyworld' for recipients who do not have direct access to the teller's original experience. This is not dissimilar from how storyworlds are conveyed in fiction, with the main difference being that there is strictly speaking no 'original experience' underlying a fictional narrative (see Hamburger 1957: 55; Martínez-Bonati 1996: 72).

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4 This interview was conducted as part of an Oxford University study of the ethical dilemmas facing carers of people with dementia. Hence participants (including this interviewee) may have been more likely to frame issues as 'ethical' (Sue Ziebland, personal communication).

5 This kind of hypothetical storytelling is not as uncommon in everyday life as one might perhaps think. In her study of how people make sense of their divorce, Catherine Kohler Riessman identified similar stories about how things could have been, which she calls "hypothetical narrative" (Riessman 1990: 76).

5.5 A Note on Constructed Dialogue and 'Unnatural Storytelling'

So far, the examples I presented are inconspicuous in that they resemble the kinds of direct speech presentations used by storytellers every day. No-one, I presume, would consider the dialogue or direct speech in these stories fictitious – even though, technically, they mostly are. However, can one truly say that they constitute an example of *fictional contamination*, i.e., that they resemble, on a very basic level, dialogue in fiction? To answer this question, I will end this chapter with an example where the dialogue seemingly transgresses storytelling boundaries in a way which 'unnatural narratologists' would deem only possible in fictional storytelling. The following story is taken from excerpts of an interview with a young man who sustained severe brain injuries during an attack. This interview can be found on the project website *Who Are You Now?*[6] (see Chapter 4). The most striking aspect in the narrative is the fact that pets talk. When thinking of talking animals Aesop's fables may come to mind, or indeed many Disney films. According to the logic of 'unnatural' narratology, it should be impossible for animals to talk in the real world. Hence, only fictional narrative can accommodate such 'unnatural' occurrences. What 'unnaturalists' overlook is the power of the imagination that also governs everyday storytelling.

The teller of this story or, in fact, sequence of very short or minimal stories[7], starts by prefacing his narrative as follows: "The other thing I enjoy is my little birdies. I have budgies and cockatoos in a cage." He describes how he looks after them, giving them water and taking them out into the garden when it is hot to give them a little shower, "which they don't like." Like many pet owners, he ascribes thoughts and dispositions to his birds. Then he also describes how he listens attentively to their singing and how he talks to them when he has the sense that something is amiss, for example, when they turn quiet: "I go to them, 'What's wrong? Why aren't you screaming? You were screaming.'" And the birds communicate with him through their glances: "And my cockatoo is looking at me, he's proper giving that angry look that says, 'Move the cat away. You know we're scared that it is going to do something.'" Now, up to this point, we can recognize a pattern of behavior that many pet owners will recognize: our pets are 'talking' to us through their gaze and body language. However, the narrative becomes

6 http://whoareyounow.org/story/mahmood.

7 I deliberately do not use the term "small stories" here because these two narratives, despite being rather short, fulfill Labov's criteria for a narrative of personal experience, offering orientations, complicating actions, turning points and resolutions, as well as evaluation.

truly interesting when the storyteller offers a sequence of two unrelated shorter narratives that both illustrate the animal interactions the storyteller observes and that keep "my mind off a lot of things. Stress and thoughts," as he summarizes the narratives in the end. The first narrative relates a fight between the storyteller's and someone else's cat; the second narrative relates how his birds enjoyed a day of liberty but then were happy to go back into their cage:

Narrative 5.4

1 But bless the cats, they don't do nothing.
2 Once another cat came from somewhere else.
3 She came up and tapped the cage,
4 and my next-door neighbour's cat came
5 and they had a little cat-fight between themselves.
6 "How dare you come near this cage. Keep away."
7 And the cat went away.

Narrative 5.5

1 Yesterday no-one was home
2 so I thought I'd let the birds have some exercise.
3 I let them out of the cage
4 so they could fly around in the room.
5 They enjoy that.
6 When they get tired they come up to my feet and peck: "We want to go back in!"
7 Then I'll bring the cage,
8 I'll open the doors from the top and the sides
9 and they'll fly around screaming: "Yeah, the cage is here!"
10 One by one they go inside by themselves.

Narrative 5.4 is fascinating as it assigns intentions and ethical values to the presented cats. An alien cat "from somewhere else" (line 2) comes apparently with the intention to catch the birds in the cage. After the *orientation*, where the alien cat is introduced, the narrative is *complicated* by the actions taken by the alien cat ("She came up and tapped the cage," line 3), which the neighbor's cat obviously interprets as an attempted attack. The neighbor's cat then engages in a fight with the alien cat because it wants to defend its pet mates, the birds. Line 6 dramatizes this motivation and the neighboring cat's bravery by assigning direct speech to the cat. It tells the alien cat off and sends it away. This dramatized

climax also brings about the *turning point*: the other cat finally surrenders and leaves, which constitutes the *resolution* in line 7. We can see how the narrative corresponds to a perfect Labovian-type narrative. Even the first line could be interpreted as an *abstract*, i.e., a short summary of what the story is about or what it illustrates: "But bless the cats, they don't do nothing." Ironically, the little story shows that what is going on is by no means "nothing," but the animals seem to have their own adventures where they can prove their prowess and loyalty. We seem to have a heroic narrative here. Direct speech is instrumental for this narrative as it anthropomorphizes the cats, i.e., it ascribes human characteristics to them.

The second example (5.5) is equally interesting. Here, the storyteller relates how his birds talk to him to signal that they wish to return to their cage. His slippage into present-tense narration from line 3 onward suggests that the specific incidence the narrator began to tell the interviewer about gradually merges into a generalized version of the story, one that depicts the situation the way it must have occurred numerous times. *Will*-future in lines 7 through 9 also strongly implies the conditional relationship among the presented actions: whenever the teller lets his birds fly, they will react in this way. Again, the use of direct speech is fascinating because it creates a sense of communicative intent on the part of the birds. They talk to their owner, even if only in his imagination.

Of course, one can now argue that the 'unnatural' events can be naturalized by recipients to the extent that we can understand them as the teller's psychological truth rather than some kind of 'reality.' Still, the point I want to make is that even seemingly simple stories that people tell in everyday life begin to look more like fiction once they include certain embellishing or dramatizing discursive features such as – in this case – animals engaging in dialogue.

In the next chapter, I explore how storytellers position themselves and listeners in the storytelling situation through their narratives.

6 Positioning Tellers and Listeners: Double Deixis

In conversational settings, speaker and hearer share the time-space parameters within which they are situated: they are together in the same location at the same time.[1] Language philosopher Karl Bühler (1982[1934]: 107]) talked about the 'I-Here-Now-Origo' or *deictic center* that every speaker constitutes, i.e., we are anchored in a spatiotemporal center and our language reflects this centeredness, especially through deictic or 'pointing' expressions. Thus, we use the first-person pronoun "I" to mark our own person in contrast to the "you," our interlocutor or addressee, and the "he," "she," "they" that we may also be talking about. We use spatiotemporal markers such as "here" and "now" to refer to our current situation in contrast to "there," "then," "yesterday," "tomorrow," etc. when talking about other times and places that form the backdrops for our narratives. In fact, narrative expands the space-time parameters of the current speech situation because the stories we tell commonly refer to events in the past. They may also capture what is happening right now or even what may happen in the future.[2] The latter instance is perhaps better called *hypothetical narrative* since the events have not yet taken place and indeed may never take place the way they are imagined.

6.1 *You*-Address in Conversational Storytelling

Storytellers address their interlocutors as "you," and addressees will generally know that they have been addressed because the face-to-face situation suggests it to them. Ultimately, talk-in-interaction is marked by interlocutors' *intersubjectivity* and *reciprocity*, as Deborah Schiffrin (2006) points out. She describes the dynamic process whereby speakers exchange roles and positions during conversation as follows: "First, although I consider myself to be 'I,' I am simultaneously the 'you' to you. And since we recurrently trade participatory roles during interactions (i.e. we take turns speaking and acting), we each have a chance at being the 'you' for whom communicative intentions and actions are designed and an 'I' who is involved in the design process" (Schiffrin 2006: 106). I will

1 In our technologically advanced world, this claim needs to be modified: speakers and hearers may speak over the telephone, have a Skype or Zoom conversation, or communicate via any instant messaging service, which of course has ramifications for the space-time-deixis used.

2 In psychology, the concept of future narratives has been explored, for example, by Sools, Tromp and Mooren (2015), Sools, Triliva and Filippas (2017) and Sools (2020).

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argue in Chapter 7 that second-person narration at least temporarily collapses the *I* and *you* positions and gives the speaker the power to *speak as the other person* as well as *in propria persona*. The story told in second-person narration is that of the *you*. In this chapter, I want to explore the potential complexity of the second-person pronoun even in narratives of (first-)personal experience and how this complexity can give storytellers a possibility to connect with their listeners by involving them in the stories they tell in rather special ways.[3] I will show that the narratological notion of *double deixis* can be useful in capturing the shifting and multiple meanings of *you* that bear resemblance to similarly complex pronominal uses in literary fiction and thus constitute another element that is relevant for fictional contamination.

In traditional grammar books, *you*-address typically features as part of, for example, discussions of imperatives, vocatives and address forms in politeness research. Pragmatic and conversation-analytic research on the use of terms of address such as first names, titles, honorifics, terms of endearment, invectives and the like shows that speakers use such terms strategically, not only to accommodate to each other's face wants and to create involvement (Norrick and Bubel 2005) but also to take a turn at talk, to resolve problems created by overlapping talk and to delay giving or receiving a dispreferred response (Rendle-Short 2007). The use of address pronouns – especially in language communities where speakers can choose between more intimate and more formal address forms, as with German *du* and *Sie* or French *tu* and *vous* – can also indicate speakers' attitudes toward their interlocutors and how they mark group identity (Liebscher et al. 2010). Bull and Fetzer (2006) furthermore demonstrate in their study of political interviews that the personal pronouns *we* and *you* "index one or more of the individuals' multiple discursive, social, and interactional roles" (15). Even in contexts of conversational interaction, indexical *you* need not straightforwardly refer to the person addressed but may also include "a group of singled-out co-participants" (in this case, a subgroup of the face-to-face audience) or an "unspecific, indeterminate group" (e.g., a political party, or the audience in general). As Bull and Fetzer (2006: 11) put it, the "implicit vagueness of the personal pronoun *you* leaves the coparticipants room for keeping their communicative intentions and goals diplomatically unclear with respect to both production and reception." In other words, *you* can create referential ambiguity.

Another way of approaching personal pronouns is by applying the notion of a "cline of person," taking into account how languages display a semantic

3 I partially draw on Mildorf (2006) in this chapter.

structure in which linguistic forms are ordered according to their distance from the speaker (Becker and Oka 1995). Tannen (2005) adopts this idea to reflect on what she perceives as the "paradoxical fact" – which also impacts on the way we interact verbally – that we are "simultaneously individuals and social creatures": "[W]e are all caught in the double bind of being the same and not the same as others. That is why all communication is a double bind" (Tannen 2005: 24). Thus, in the context of talk-in-interaction, personal pronouns become an indicator of how interlocutors position themselves with regard to the topics and persons they talk about – and also vis-à-vis each other. As became evident in Chapter 2, positioning is bound up with the "online" construction of self- and other-identity, and storytelling frequently assumes the function of affording such positioning moves and of allowing interlocutors to negotiate their respective views, positions and identities (see Georgakopoulou 2007: 114–115, 119–125). Especially stories of shared experience "can be brought into current storytelling in order to (de)legitimate a course of action or to assess characters" (Georgakopoulou 2007: 115). How characters are assessed was at the center of Chapter 5. The present chapter focuses on the relational work speakers achieve through pronoun use.

6.2 Double Deixis in Research on Second-Person Narration

Before I explain David Herman's concept of *double deixis* – central to my discussion here – let me take a short detour by first defining second-person narratives, out of the context of which this notion emerged. Second-person narration as such will be further explored in Chapter 7. Monika Fludernik provides the following criteria for second-person narrative:

> For a text to be considered as a second-person narrative there has to exist a (usually fictional) protagonist who is referred to by an address pronoun. Situations that lend themselves to initiating such a state of affairs include the invocation of the character and his story in a kind of extended apostrophe [...]; the projection of the current addressee as the actant in a projected story [...]; or the modulation of generalized *you* and the function of address to the "real" reader who thus participates within the fictional action [...]. (Fludernik 1994b: 302)

For an illustration of this peculiar narrative phenomenon, consider the following example quoted in Phelan (1994: 356). It is the beginning of Lorrie Moore's short story "How":

> Begin by meeting him in a class, a bar, at a rummage sale. Maybe he teaches sixth grade. Manages a hardware store. Foreman at a carton factory. He will be a good dancer. He will have perfectly cut hair. He will laugh at your jokes.
> A week, a month, a year. Feel discovered, comforted, needed, loved, and start sometimes, somehow, to feel bored. When sad or confused, walk uptown to the movies. Buy popcorn. These things come and go. A week, a month, a year.

This kind of narrative raises a number of questions. To whom is the story addressed: the unnamed protagonist, the narratee, the reader? What effect does this form of address have on the communicative situation and on us as participants in this communication? Phelan contends that:

> [s]ome of "what happens to us" when we read "How" depends upon our dual perspective inside the fiction, on the way that we step into and out of the enunciatee position, while we remain in the observer position and discover what the narrator assumes about our knowledge and beliefs in the enunciatee role. Furthermore, moving into the enunciatee role means that we move into the ideal narrative audience – the narrator tells us what we believe, think, feel, do – while in the observer role we evaluate our position in the ideal narrative audience. (Phelan 1994: 356)

In other words, second-person narratives draw us into the story as we inevitably identify to a certain extent with the *you* addressed in the narrative. A paradox is thus created: while we can keep a distance by observing how the text implicitly creates an audience for itself, we already also become members of that audience and are lured into participating in the storyworld.[4]

In complex second-person narratives, *you* can be dilated to such a degree that it is no longer possible to ascribe it to a specific referent, whether intradiegetic or extradiegetic, i.e., inside or outside the narrated storyworld respectively. Herman (1994) discusses this problem in Edna O'Brien's *A Pagan Place*. One of his examples is the following text passage from the novel where the actions of a masturbator in a hotel room next to the one of the protagonist are described: "you heard panting from the next room, the amateur actor's room. It was like something you had heard before, distantly, a footprint on your mind, you didn't know from where" (O'Brien 1970: 169–170; quoted in Herman 1994: 398). In this passage, Herman argues, the audience finds itself conflated with the fictional self addressed by *you*, as the readers' own experiential memories of similar events may be actualized by the description. Herman then concludes by saying

4 The same is more or less true of any narrative, especially if it is written in a captivating manner. However, in second-person narratives the role(s) of the recipients are foregrounded more strongly through the direct address.

that the "deictic force of *you* is double; or to put it another way, the scope of the discourse context embedding the description is indeterminate, as is the domain of participants in principle specified or picked out by *you*" (Herman 1994: 399).

Herman draws up a list of five discourse functions of *you*: generalized *you*; fictional reference; fictionalized (=horizontal) address; apostrophic (=vertical) address; doubly deictic *you* (399). Generally speaking, these functions can be further categorized according to whether there is agreement between the morphosyntactic form of *you* and its textual functions or not. Thus, instances where the *you* encodes the participant role of addressee display full agreement, for example, in narratives where an intradiegetic narratee (horizontal address) or the reader (vertical address) is invoked. Complete disagreement of *you* and its deictic functions results in what Herman, following Margolin (1984), calls *deictic transfers*, for example, from *I* to *you* as when a first-person protagonist refers to him/herself as *you* in the narrative, or when *you* comes to stand in for an impersonal, generalized *you* equivalent to *one* in English (as in: 'You should wash your hands regularly'). Cases of doubly-deictic *you*, by contrast, show neither full agreement nor disagreement or, put differently, one can speak of double deixis when the relationship between the morphosyntactic form of *you* and its textual functions is not entirely clear-cut and when *you* assumes more than one of the above-mentioned first four functions at the same time. Thus, doubly-deictic *you* renders the referential framework within which *you* is employed ambiguous.

All this is well for the study of literary narratives, I can hear skeptical readers say, but how can the concept of *double deixis* be operationalized for the study of oral narratives? In fact, double deixis as a concept and analytical tool to my mind works better in the analysis of face-to-face interactional contexts than in the reception context created through fiction precisely because in face-to-face interaction stories are *always* addressed to a *you*[5], i.e., there is a concrete interactant whereas the reader of a novel usually remains an unknown and distant participant. Linguists have already proposed dialogical accounts of multiply deictic pronouns. Anne Salazar Orvig (1999: 119–153), for example, challenges a univocal identification of personal pronouns by demonstrating their context-dependent dynamic shifting in medical interviews. Salazar Orvig observes that the displacement ("déplacement") or gliding ("glissement") of the referential meanings of personal pronouns frequently correlates with changes

5 Given the recipient-oriented nature of face-to-face communication, it is not at all surprising that the frequency rate of the second-person pronoun is much higher in spoken English than in written English (see Biber et al. 1999: 334).

in time or types of discourse, and that speakers 'play' with multiple deixis in order to achieve specific discursive effects (144). How can the identificatory and referential shifts indexed by people's pronoun use be correlated with shifts in perspective, and when do these shifts come to resemble double deixis in fiction? How do storytellers position themselves and their interlocutors through such shifts? The following narrative from the *healthtalk.org* website may illuminate these points (the example is taken from Mildorf 2010).

6.3 Illness, Identity and Deictic Transfers

The story is a personal narrative of a 60-year-old woman suffering from depression, who recounts the way in which she managed to go back to a 'normal' life by taking on a secretarial post. The narrative is particularly interesting for its use of double deixis.[6]

Narrative 6.1

1 One day she ((my social worker)) knocked on the door
2 and she said, "We're going to start a MIND group, a sort of MIND group, would you be interested in joining us?"
3 So I got into that
4 >and because of my secretarial business I was immediately taken on as a secretary of the working group.<
5 And, and that's how it ↑went.
6 And a↑gain, >because you were to-, becoming friendly with the< (.) <professionals as it were,> (.)
7 and (0.2) >that's the point where you, you were starting to give something back, starting to help other people.<
8 And that made me realize how important it was (.) to, TO help other people.
9 >And I think that gives you an uplift doesn't it<.
10 And that's, that's really what happened,
11 that's, that's how I got back into normality.

6 The interview from which this excerpt was taken can be listened to at: https://healthtalk.org/depression/interview-12

The narrative begins with a kind of mini-dramatization including direct speech (or *constructed dialogue* – as explained in Chapter 5 – in line 2 and the image "knocked on the door" (line 1), which can be understood literally as the social worker knocking on the narrator's door and also figuratively as an image for the social worker's request. The complicating action from line 3 to 7 relates how the narrator became a secretary of the working group. This part of the plot then culminates in the resolution of the narrative (lines 8–11), the main point of which is the narrator's recognition of how important the job was for her well-being. In other words, the narrative describes a turning point in the narrator's life. As Rimmon-Kenan (2002b: 18) argues, the turning point structure in illness narratives "counteracts disruption" and thus offers a sense of coherence to the ill person. However, this structure can also constitute a kind of "entrapment" in the sense that it suppresses the experience of chaos and can thus lead to a meaningless recycling of a culturally expected narrative type.

In this narrative, the turning point in the narrator's life – indicated prosodically by a marked pause ("(0.2) >that's the point where...") – is presented in positive terms and thus matches the expectation of the 'getting better' or *restitution* plot line (Frank 1995: 75) – a common cultural story template. Interestingly enough, the narrator switches from first-person to second-person narrative when she describes which aspects of her new job brought about the change in her life. As the transcript already indicates with its markings of speech speed-ups (inward-pointing arrows) and slow-downs (outward-pointing arrows), the speaker's narrative is prosodically lively and uses changes in rhythm, intonational changes, as well as pauses for emphasis[7]: "And a↑gain >because you were to-, becoming friendly with the professionals< (.) <as it were,> (.) and (0.2) >that's the point where you, you were starting to give something back, starting to help other people<" (lines 6–7). The pronoun *you* clearly indicates a replacement of the first-person pronoun with *you* which, however, still refers to the narrator as experiencing self. After all, it is the narrator herself and not some generalized *you* who became friendly with the professionals and started to help other people. The use of *you*-narrative creates a peculiar sense of self-distancing, as though the narrator were looking at herself from the outside of the narrated storyworld – which makes this narrative resemble the literary examples mentioned above. There is a marked separation between 'narrating I' and 'experiencing I/you.'

One could also interpret the *you*-narrative in more positive terms as an inclusive move that enables the ill person to enter a dialogue with herself. At the

7 In the video clip, this speech pattern is furthermore supported by the speaker's lively gesturing with her hands.

same time, since the narrative was related in an interview, one can assume that there is also a residue of the vertical address function of *you* left. Put differently, the *you* could be read as including the interviewer and thus it assumes the dialogical function of creating involvement by suggesting that, had the interviewer been in a similar situation, she may also have had a similar experience. The vertical address element is only minimal, however, since the recounted story is very specific and depicts a distinct part of the narrator's life.

In line 9, generalized *you* becomes more dominant again: ">and I think that gives you an uplift doesn't it<." While it was the narrator in particular who felt an uplift because of her changed situation, anyone in such a context may experience the same feeling. The simple present, which generalizes the statement, and the tag question, which has the phatic function of securing the listener's agreement with the statement made, support this interpretation. Only in line 8 does the narrator return to the first-person pronoun when she relates the point of her realizing what was important in her life, which also happens to be the turning point in her illness narrative.

What possible functions does the *you*-narrative in this particular story have? The fact that the narrative at this point is also marked by pauses points towards the narrator's thinking about how her job affected her life and thinking about how to frame this process in the interview. In a way, the narrator mentally (and then verbally) recapitulates her life, and the distance between the experiencing self in the past and the narrating self in the present is captured in the distancing *you*. As I said, it is almost as if the narrator entered a dialogue with herself at this point, thereby also supporting the memory work she is accomplishing in the interview. At the same time, *you* clearly lacks a sense of full identification if compared to *I*. One could therefore argue that the use of *you*-narrative here enacts a process of de-centering or the narrator's shift of focus from herself as the ill person to others who also needed help. This reading is corroborated by another comment the narrator makes later in the interview: "And I do think that the idea that it was benefiting somebody else as well, that it wasn't just 'self.' Which is a good thing because you do turn in on yourself. And it made one sort of stop being focused on just oneself." This statement is highly interesting as it contains a deictic shift not only to second-person *you* but also to generic *one* and moves the whole experience even further away from the narrator. It foregrounds the almost universal and indeed generic aspect of such turning point structures in illness narratives.

This example shows how deictic transfers in narratives can help elicit the dynamics of identity construction. In this narrative a move away from self-awareness typically expressed through the first-person pronoun *I* (Giddens

1991: 53) correlates with the narrator-protagonist's removal of focus from her sick persona to others on the intradiegetic level. This de-focusing is constructed as a beneficial process and as the prerequisite for change. The narrator's affirmative resolution, where she talks about "uplift" (line 9), "that's what really happened" (line 10) and "that's how I got back into normality" (line 11), underlines the positive tenor of the narrative.

On the extradiegetic level, the *you*-narrative places the listener in the peculiar position of someone who overhears the dialogue of the narrator with herself and at the same time in the position of an addressee who is invited to feel included in the narrated events. What we observe here is the kind of narrative work that forms the basis of our self-identities, as Giddens (1991) suggests: "A person with a reasonably stable sense of self-identity has a feeling of biographical continuity which she is able to grasp reflexively and, to a greater or lesser degree, communicate to other people" (54). Illness disrupts continuity in a life *lived* but the turning point structure in a life *told* remedies this disruption by providing a new sense of continuity that centers on a "before" and "after." Ironically, then, the narrative strategy of deictic transfer that normally destabilizes a sense of narrative identity is used here to accomplish and to convey an even greater sense of identity lost and found. We can also see in this example how the employment of double deixis contributes toward *fictional contamination*: it shows how in narrative – even a non-fictional one – we can at least discursively take control of our lives – which is possible only to a limited extent with our lived lives.

While this narrative exemplified how double deixis can serve the purpose of negotiating identities in personal stories, the next example demonstrates its employment to enhance rapport and to create listener involvement.

6.4 Deictic Shifts, Distancing and Listener Involvement

The following narrative from my own interview corpus (previously also discussed in Mildorf 2006) was related by a middle-aged male GP in a suburban practice in response to my question "How do you feel when you encounter domestic violence in a patient?", and it illustrates GPs' frustration with a situation where they 'cannot do much':

Narrative 6.2

1 we've got, uhm, one couple in the practice who are both, uhm, alcoholics
2 and she's the victim of, uhm, violence, uhm,

3 and *you*, ach, I don't know,
4 and it always seems to happen when they're on a bender
5 but, uhm, but, er, he hits her,
6 he punches her
7 and kicks her and ((pause))
8 and you still, I, I think you still feel sympathy for, for what's happened
9 but, uhm, I think it's frustration as much as anything,
10 you think, "Well, why do they do that? Why stay on? Why keep drinking?"
11 but, you know, it's, it's, it's, it's their life really.
12 That's the way it's always been.
13 and it isn't something that can be changed usually.

The most striking feature in the narrative as far as deixis is concerned is the shift from the first-person pronoun *I* to the generic pronoun *you*, which can both be said to refer to the narrator (*I* think *you* feel sympathy…). On this interpretation, the narrative offers an example of Margolin's and Herman's "deictic transfers" because *you* is no longer used solely in its proper deictic function as address form. The generic *you* is used whenever the GP talks about himself as a character inside the narrative's storyworld. Thus, it is the GP himself who, in his role as family doctor, feels "sympathy for what's happened." As a character in his narrative of this specific case the GP feels sympathy, but he also reflects on his feelings from his current perspective as the doctor who is telling the story. In other words, the current perspective of the narrator, from which the story is evaluated, is expressed in the personal pronoun *I*, whereby the GP also locates himself within the interview frame. This can be seen again in the difference between "I think" in line 9 and "you think" in line 10. In line 9, the GP evaluates the narrative from his current perspective as the narrator who is outside the story ("I think you still feel sympathy"), whereas in line 10, he evaluates the case from within the story in his role as family doctor ("you think, 'Well, why do they do that?…'"). In Seymour Chatman's (1986) terminology, which will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 8, the GP as narrator has a particular "slant" on the events he narrates, while the life of his patients is also "filtered" through him as an actor or character in the storyworld. However, the referential function of *you* in this case is not entirely clear.

As I discussed above, the referential function of *you* normally excludes the speaker and either addresses one person or a group of two or more people. In English, *you* can also express a non-specific group of people comparable to that comprised in French *on* and German *man*. Here, the generic pronoun *you* generalizes the GP's feelings and thereby implies that other people would probably

feel the same. Thus, one could argue that *you* may equally refer to any person, that means it is used in the sense of the generalized pronoun *one*. If the pronoun retains even a small residue of its original semantic value, it can also be regarded as a means of self-address. Understood in this sense, the doctor, by using *you*, seems to implicitly distance himself from himself and from the whole situation and immerses himself in an unspecified group of people. Put differently, he signals linguistically that the feelings he has are universal and do not solely apply to this couple.

At the same time, the GP justifies his distancing by presenting it as generally acceptable behavior. The GP in fact reinforced that notion later in the interview when he stated that feeling sorry for victims of any description was part of "human nature." The fact that the GP answered the question about his own *personal* feelings in a situation where he encounters intimate partner violence in patients in general and indeed generic terms, can be interpreted in two ways: first, it might indicate the GP's reluctance to speak openly about his emotions in the formal context of the interview; secondly, the GP offers a general statement because he assumes that sympathy for victims is an emotion generally expected of people and perhaps even more of doctors and thus needs to be addressed in the interview.

Interestingly enough, however, the sympathy mentioned in the narrative is not directed towards the victim but instead towards "what's happened," the incident in general. Similarly, agency is attributed to both parties when the doctor asks himself: "Why do they do that?", thereby implicitly making the victim partially responsible for the situation. The underlying question "why do they stay?", which is indirectly repeated and thus emphasized, points towards the GP's puzzlement, and it also underlines his "frustration" (line 9) with an unsatisfactory situation, unsatisfactory because the GP cannot do anything. The final clause in line 13 ("and it isn't something that can be changed usually") avoids any attribution of agency by employing a passive construction, thereby evading the potentially threatening question: 'changed by whom?'.

Since the communicative situation was an interview, which is commonly based on the linguistic interaction of (at least) two participants (see Chapter 3), *you* might even be interpreted in its proper function as address pronoun. On this interpretation, *you* refers to me as the interviewer, and the implication is that the feelings and thoughts depicted in the narrative could potentially also apply to me. In other words, I would probably also feel sympathy and think 'Why do they do that?' if I were placed in a similar situation. The fact that feelings of sympathy and disbelief about other people's seemingly irrational behavior are shared by many people and thus may well belong to my experiential repertoire

as well, supports the inclusive interpretation of *you* = interviewer/listener. This additional facet to the semantic range of the second-person pronoun in the narrative demonstrates that the *a priori* values attributed to pronouns need not be in opposition to one another but can be conceived of as gradable points on a continuum. These points may converge or diverge, thereby assuming new values depending on the context in which they are used. As Salazar Orvig succinctly puts it: "The gliding movements, the displacements, the alternations between JE and ON/VOUS emerge from the semantic-referential potentialities of these [discourse] units and at the same time they confer on them new values" (my translation; Salazar Orvig 1999: 151).[8]

The ambiguity of doubly-deictic *you* makes it possible for speakers to use the pronoun strategically. Thus, the facet of generalized *you* implies the GP's position vis-à-vis himself and other people. The GP can distance himself from his own, more personal self and move towards a more generalized, and perhaps more professional, self. The facet of vertical address including the listener allows a displacement or 'gliding' towards the interlocutor. This creates involvement and can function as a bonding device, which invites the listener to identify with the predicaments of the speaker. The GP indirectly addresses me, the interviewer, in order to signal to me that I may feel the same under similar circumstances. This strategy may also be used to circumvent possible threats to his face wants as may be posed, for example, by potential criticism on my part. In a sense, the generalized *you* in combination with *you*-address tacitly aligns the interlocutor with the propositions made.

The GP's linguistic behavior towards the end of the narrative supports the assumption that he might have suspected, and consequently tried to deflect, a potentially critical attitude. The emphatic adverb "really," together with the discourse marker "you know," for example, is used here in its phatic function to create involvement with the listener. It is a bonding device by which the narrator tries to gain the interviewer's approval of his point of view. The GP wants to make a point about the fact that distancing is the only solution since he cannot change the violent situation as such: "it's always been" like this (line 12) and "it isn't something that can be changed usually" (line 13). By using the generalizing adverbs "always" and "usually," the doctor reconstructs the violence in his patients' life as something irremediable and as an almost 'normal' factor in their

8 "Les glissements, les déplacements, les alternances entre JE et ON / VOUS se construisent à partir des potentialités sémantico-référentielles de ces unités et en même temps, ces déplacements et ces alternances leur confèrent de nouvelles valeurs."

more or less deviant circumstances, and thus he justifies his own reluctance to intervene.

Let us turn to other materials from the domestic violence interview corpus and see how doubly-deictic *you* is used there. Consider the following examples:

Narrative excerpts 6.3

a) Uhm, but mostly it's, it's the, the scenario that things aren't, that the patients have said things aren't going well and they'll tell you that the, their partner sometimes hits them, say, when they're drunk or, or that sort of thing. Sometimes they'll tell you in retrospect, you know, that they've left him because obviously he was just 'lifting the hand', that's always what they say up here. "He was lifting his hand and, uhm, that's why I left." And, uhm, that's quite common as well that they sometimes don't want to tell *you* actually at the time. Sometimes they do.
b) Now, it's, it makes a point, that story. A very big point. You can't make outright assumptions that men are bad, right?
c) Well, it was quite, och, I think, the problem was that we never knew what happened. You know, *you* never know how, how things turned out in the long term.
d) I do a lot of onward referral. Because my own particular skills in domestic violence, [I wouldn't say, are] brilliant. Having said that, you know, that the other issues surrounding domestic violence [as] a GP, [issues of] depressive illness you can deal with because that, that, that's your job. But any other particular issues, you've got to move on. So, no, I would nae-, I think we should always [have] our awareness increased just as we should have our awareness increased for any condition. But you can't be formally trained on every condition.
e) You can be aware all your life but, you know, unless there is some sign that, that will prompt you to ask a question then, you know, I'm not gonna ask every woman that comes in, you know, uhm: "By the way [laughs] how are things at home?", you know. Er, "any bruises under your clothes that you want us to have a look at?" - no, you can't do that. You can't do that. I mean, you know, that, that becomes almost abusive in its intrusiveness. And I don't think we have that mandate.

These interview excerpts are interesting as they illuminate the various ways that *you* can be employed. In example (6.3a), *you* first and foremost refers to the GP herself because it is her own personal work experiences she talks about. However, by using *you* rather than the first-person pronoun, the GP creates a dis-

tance between herself as the narrator of these experiences and herself as the person having these experiences. At the same time, her account is depersonalized and generalized. This corresponds with other discursive features which make this account sound like a general description, for example, the quantifying adverbs "mostly," "sometimes," "always" and the predicate "quite common," which suggest that the related events are not unusual. By using generic *you*, the GP implies that other doctors may well have similar experiences with intimate partner violence in their practices. As psychological research has shown, generic *you* indeed creates resonance in recipients (Orvell, Kross and Gelman 2020). In example (6.3c), the same strategy is employed to suggest that GPs in general have the problem of the unfinished story, that is, that they rarely know the outcome of such cases.

Examples (6.3d) and (6.3e) are particularly interesting as they not only display the switch from first to second-person pronouns but also from the first-person singular to first-person plural pronoun. In (d), the GP first talks about what he usually does when faced with a domestic violence case, but he switches to *you* as soon as he starts to make comments about medical practitioners in general. Thus, the phrases "issues of depressive illness you can deal with," "that's your job" and "you've got to move on" can be paraphrased by adding 'as a GP.' A sense of community is thus evoked, which is reinforced through the first-person plural pronoun *we*. Here, the GP clearly signals group identity by using the collective but also exclusive person marker. At the same time, he demonstrates his entitlement to speak on behalf of his professional group. As Margolin (2001: 243) points out:

> the question immediately arises whether or not the speaker(s) are empowered to speak on behalf of the reference class as a whole, thus conveying a joint/common communicative intent. If they do, they are speaking *for* the group, not only *about* it, and their utterances possess the status of group or collective speech acts. (italics original)

Interestingly enough, however, the GP then gives up this exclusive pronoun in favor of *you* again: "you can't be formally trained on every condition." Bearing in mind what I said above about the inherent address function of *you*, I would interpret the GP's use of *you* here as a move towards greater inclusiveness and thus as an attempt at convincing me as the interviewer of his predicament, namely lack of training due to a heavy workload.

Example (6.3e) shows the same mechanism. Again, *you* is used whenever the GP makes generalizing statements which supposedly not only refer to other GPs but also try to involve me in the general group of people evoked by *you*. Thus, the GP implies that no-one has the right to be intrusive by asking delicate

personal questions. The pronoun *we* at the end shifts attention from the linguistically underspecified, general group of people to the very clearly demarcated professional group of general practitioners. As in the previous examples, the pronouns thus allow the GP more or less well-defined positionings, depending on, for example, how sensitive the discussed issues are or how strong a statement he wants to make.

6.5 The General/Universal and the Individual/Singular Experience

This mixture of the personal and the general or universal is something we often come across in people's narratives. I think this is a sign of the trade-off we all try to accomplish between a sense of ourselves as unique individuals with very specific, idiosyncratic life experiences and our recognition of the fact that we also share many of those experiences with a lot of other people all over the world and even in the past. In other words, while we treasure a sense of self (whether and to what extent we do this is of course very culture-specific) we also participate in a general *conditio humana*, and this potentially creates tension for life storying: in telling about ourselves, we conceptualize ourselves as singular and (perhaps) special; at the same time, we want to speak with authority and entitlement about what certain life experiences mean and we try to engage our interlocutors or readers and create resonance by generalizing what we experienced. Shifting pronouns and double deixis in the address pronoun *you* can contribute towards negotiating these conflicting trajectories, or at any rate they point towards the fact that such negotiations are at stake. Storytellers appeal to their listeners and readers by implicitly including them in doubly-deictic *you*, thus reaching out on the narrative-discursive level.

Even though the examples I discussed in this chapter are clearly non-fictional, their employment of pronoun reference and shifting deixis make them potentially more complicated than one may expect in conversational storytelling. We saw how seemingly simple stories can have a literary complexity that fulfils a whole range of different interpersonal functions in conversation. If the ambiguities thus created were pushed further, they might eventually come to look like similar referential ambiguities devised in fiction, notably in second-person narration, where the focus is no longer on talking about one's own personal experiences but the interlocutor's. In the next chapter, I look more closely at how, even in conversational storytelling, speakers may at least temporarily resort to telling someone else his or her story.

7 Second-Person Narration: A Literary Narrative Genre?

In Chapter 10, I will look at narratives of vicarious experience – i.e., narratives which relate someone else's, rather than one's own, experiences – as potential sites for *fictional contamination*. Second-person narratives,[1] that is, narratives which are addressed to the 'protagonist' of the related events, can be considered special cases of narratives of vicarious experience. Like narratives of vicarious experience, second-person narratives also raise questions regarding storytelling rights and epistemic stance: Who has the authority or the right to tell someone else's story? In addition to that, second-person narratives raise the question of purpose: What is the point in telling such stories? It seems to be counterintuitive that someone should tell someone else his or her life story, especially since one must assume that the other person knows his/her own personal story better than anyone else and that, in this sense, there is not really anything to tell (Petersen 2010: 94). So, cases where the addressee coincides with the protagonist of the narrated events are marked; they would seem to violate the Gricean maxim of relevance. Segal et al. (1997) raise a similar point about truth claims and justifications of utterances: "First person utterances are directly justified by the experience of the speaker, whereas second and third person utterances often require the drawing of inferences. [...] The speaker can have only indirect evidence of the truth of his assertion" (276). Brought to bear on instances of second-person narration in everyday discourse, these considerations suggest that if we tell someone his or her story we can only justify doing so via the authority of *knowing* that story ourselves (unless we jokingly 'make up' a story about what the other person did or does). I will also argue that, if a second-person narrative is told during conversation, there must be a special reason for it; in other words, its telling must be made relevant for the hearer, and it must fulfill additional functions beyond those of less marked or more typical modes of narration.

7.1 Second-Person Narration in Everyday Contexts

As a playful variation on storytelling in the realm of literature, second-person narration is a fascinating, if somewhat odd, phenomenon – not least because it

1 In the present chapter, I draw and expand on my previous research on second-person narration in Mildorf (2012; 2013b).

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is often coupled with other playful or marked narrative features such as present tense narration. In everyday storytelling, second-person narration has not yet received the attention it deserves. Even though Charlotte Linde (1993: 112) mentions the possibility that personal stories may be addressed to the self (e.g., in diaries), I am not aware of any linguistic study that systematically explores instances of second-person narration in non-fictional contexts. One of the reasons may be that relevant narratives are not easy to come by. After all, telling someone his or her own story presupposes intimate knowledge between the interlocutors and a degree of shared experience of past events (see also Mildorf 2012). It also requires a very good reason for why that story must be told in the first place – either because the person to whom the story is addressed cannot remember what happened, or because what happened was so extraordinary that it warrants its retelling even to the person who experienced the event (see Labov's (2013) notion of "reportability" discussed in Chapter 3).

An example for such an unusual storytelling context can be found in Dylan Thomas's famous radio play *Under Milkwood* (1989[1954]), where Mrs Cherry Owen tells her husband – not without a sense of pride – what outrageous things he did the previous night while he was completely drunk. Similarly, one can find an inserted, lengthy stretch of second-person narration in Peter Carey's fictional autobiography *True History of the Kelly Gang* (2000: 214–217). Here, Joe Byrne gives Ned Kelly, the protagonist and narrator of his own life story, a detailed account of a fist fight Ned had got himself into and which he cannot remember because he was knocked unconscious. These are of course *literary* examples of storytelling situations involving second-person narration. And yet, they allow us a glimpse into possible storytelling scenarios in real life where the use of this rather marked form of narrative is made necessary and actually makes sense. Intoxication and unconsciousness during an event may be only two reasons why people do not remember what happened and why they must be told about that moment. But one can think of numerous other contexts in which second-person narration may be used: for example, you may tell your elderly parent about the past because she simply cannot remember it, or you tell your child what she did when she was very young – too young to remember that period in her life. What these examples show is that second-person narration's function of extending the storytelling to the person addressed seems to play an important role in what I elsewhere called "stories of shared experience" (Mildorf 2012) and, by extension, in collaborative storytelling. In this chapter, I discuss two examples where couples co-tell a story about their shared past and, in the course of this narrative collaboration, also slip into second-person narration.

These are examples of "small stories" (Georgakopoulou 2007; see also Chapter 4) as one can find them across many everyday storytelling situations.

The question arises whether more extended uses of second-person narration are also possible in non-fictional contexts. In my book chapter "'Unnatural' Narratives: The Case of Second-Person Narration" (2013b), I discuss Ahmadou Kourouma's novel *Waiting for the Wild Beasts to Vote* (2004[1998]) as an example of fictionalized life storying that almost exclusively employs the *you* throughout. The African *sora* or storyteller Bingo tells the dictator Koyaga his life from when he was born up to the point when he reached the position of power he now inhabits. In real life, such an extended second-person narrative is hard to conceive because it would require the storyteller to know everything about the person whose story he tells, including many moments at which he himself cannot have possibly been present. An example that comes close to this scenario is the 2007 biography of German philosopher Wolfgang Harich written by his wife, Anne Harich, nearly a decade after her husband's death. The book mixes first-person with second-person narration, oscillating between Anne Harich's personal memories and those thoughts and emotions she attributes to her husband (Mildorf 2023). This is possible because the two shared a life and because the wife presumably also has the most intimate knowledge of her husband's inner life. And yet, can one ever really know someone else's inner life?

Life storying in (auto)biography usually also involves saying something about the person's thoughts and feelings. While such features already contribute to fictional contamination in third-person narratives (see Chapter 10), they seem even more ludicrous in second-person narration: Why should I tell you what you felt/thought/experienced? This only begins to make sense again when we think of a storyteller who addresses his own story to himself – as a kind of personal communion that may also constitute an act of self-exploration. I am here reminded of a joke I once read on a postcard. The card said: "Of course I talk to myself – sometimes I need expert advice." While the joke operates at various levels of meaning, one facet that is rather more implicit in this statement is that it is only we who can be experts in knowing our own lives. We may of course be biased and 'misconstrue' some of the things we experienced; but essentially only we can reasonably tell ourselves our life story. And this is in fact what we can see in contemporary autobiographical writing. A number of authors have resorted to second-person narration as the chosen narrative form in which to cast their life story. Paul Auster's companion pieces *Winter Journal* (2012) and *Report from the Interior* (2013) come to mind, for example (see also Mildorf 2019a), or Neil Patrick Harris's *Choose Your Own Autobiography* (2014). The function of the narrative form in these examples is diametrically opposed to

the function it fulfills in examples of face-to-face storytelling: instead of creating a bond through collaborative storytelling, second-person narration in these autobiographies has a distancing effect – not only because the authors create a distance to themselves by using *you* rather than *I*, but also because readers are only seemingly offered a projection screen by which to identify or empathize with the author-narrator-character of the autobiography. The playful usage of *you* at best creates an illusion of resonance.

Before I come to my oral history examples, I will offer a brief outline of second-person narration research in narratology and thus continue the discussion I began in the previous chapter.

7.2 Second-Person Narration: A Brief Theoretical Outline

In the *Routledge Encyclopedia of Narrative Theory*, second-person narration is defined as a "story in which the protagonist is referred to by the pronoun *you*. Second-person stories can be homodiegetic (protagonist and narrator being identical) or heterodiegetic (protagonist and narrator being different)" (Jahn 2005: 522). In other words, the main distinction made here is between a character's self-narration and a narration in which a character's story is addressed to this character by a narrator figure. However, this definition does not fully capture all possible playful variations on relationships between narrators and their addressees – at least as far as fictional texts are concerned. In a special issue of the journal *Style* (Fludernik 1994a), scholars outline various approaches to second-person narration in literary texts. For example, Kacandes (1994; see also 2001) and Phelan (1994) forge links between narratological approaches and classical rhetoric. Phelan juxtaposes the concept of "narratee," i.e., the persona addressed by the narrator, with rhetorical theory's concept of "narrative audience," i.e., an imaginary audience for whom the narrator writes the story (see also previous chapter). Taken together these concepts account for the ways in which second-person fiction affords "multiple positionings" (363) for actual readers, mingling a larger audience capable of understanding the broader thematic issues at stake in a story and a more individualized narratee persona.

Kacandes (1994: 343) refers to the rhetorical figure of "apostrophe" to explain how second-person narratives are directed toward two addressees: a direct recipient who is meant to react emotionally to the apostrophe and a secondary listener or "witness," i.e., someone overhearing what has been said. In a sense, these two positions are reminiscent of Phelan's distinction between "narratee" and "narrative audience." However, in her 2001 book *Talk Fiction*, Kacandes – drawing on ideas from conversation analysis (Clark and Carlson 1982;

Duranti 1986) – further differentiates the reader's role into "addressee" (to whom speech is addressed directly), "hearer" (who is not directly addressed but who nevertheless hears what has been said) and "recipient" (who orients or reacts physically to what has been said, e.g., by turning toward the speaker). To this set of roles Kacandes adds a fourth role, namely that of "respondent," which she defines as "recipients who become speakers by verbally responding to the speech" (Kacandes 2001: 154). This differentiation bears similarities to David Herman's (1994) concept of "double deixis," which I discussed in Chapter 6. As we saw, doubly deictic *you* makes it difficult for recipients of a story to decide whether the pronoun is to be interpreted as generalized or generic *you*, as the protagonist's self-address, as the text's internal address to some narratee, or as an external address to the reader (in the case of a written narrative) – or, in fact, as a combination of some or all of these possibilities at the same time (Herman 1994: 402). Kacandes' and Herman's reflections on the use of the second-person pronoun in fictional texts to my mind work even better for nonfictional *you*-narration, as I already pointed out, – not least because they draw their ideas from rhetorical and linguistic traditions to begin with. After all, storyteller and interlocutor or addressee are concrete personae in a distinct interactional and situational context whereas the contexts of production and reception in the case of literary narratives are not only marked by spatial distance but often also by temporal or historical distance.[2]

Monika Fludernik's (1993b) account of second-person fiction offers an elaborate taxonomy. Drawing on Genette's (1980[1972]) and Stanzel's (1979) narrative typologies, Fludernik argues that a defining feature of second-person narration is its more or less consistent use of a pronoun of address (Fludernik 1993b: 219). Taking the story/discourse dichotomy as a baseline – that is, the distinction between what is told in a narrative and the way this "what" is presented (see Chapter 1) – one can distinguish between three basic structural possibilities: (a) there is an address function and this address function combines an addressee/narratee outside the storyworld with a more or less "visible" enunciatory figure/narrator; (b) both the addressee and the narrator are part of the storyworld and have an "existential" link, i.e., the narrator shares parts of the addressee's past; and (c) the pronoun *you* refers solely to a character inside the storyworld with whom the narratorial instance does not communicate – in other

2 A recent book by Sandrine Sorlin (2022) considers literary and non-literary examples of *you*-narration across a wide range of contexts and discusses them from a pragmatic perspective.

words, the address function is missing here (Fludernik 1993b: 221–222).[3] This last possibility, I contended elsewhere (Mildorf 2012: 93), constitutes one of the key differences between literary and conversational second-person narration. In face-to-face communication, there is arguably always an addressee. Another point to note is the fact that literary second-person narration need not exclude the usage of other pronouns. In conversational *you*-narration, the shift to other pronouns seems to be the rule, not least because the interlocutors share the same storytelling moment and space (see Chapter 5).

Fludernik introduces the terms "homocommunicative" and "heterocommunicative" narration, i.e., "narratives in which participants on the communicative level (narrators, narratees) also function as protagonists (the homocommunicative realm) and those in which the world of the narration is disjoined from that of the fictional world (the heterocommunicative realm)" (Fludernik 1994b: 446; see also Fludernik 1993b). Within the category of homocommunicative narration one can in turn distinguish between first-person (homodiegetic) and second-person (homoconative)[4] narration. Put differently, Fludernik's concepts refer to the question whether there is a communicative link between the story and discourse levels (homocommunicative) or not (heterocommunicative). If we imagine a scale or cline of narrative situations, this distinction indicates a shifting emphasis from the narrator-character speaking as *I* to the addressee-character being spoken to as *you*. The strongest case of homoconative narration is a story in which the narrator and the addressee are collapsed (which would be an example of self-narration). However, it is open to interpretation whether the narration is a form of self-narration or whether the *you*-protagonist is addressed by some discrete and covert narrator after all. In literary second-person narration, narrative functions such as "narrative instance" and "protagonist" can be distributed in various combinations. In non-fictional life storying, there seems to be less of an interpretive conundrum. Recipients must assume that the storyteller equals the narrator and the protagonist, that is, there is personal union among those three categories.

This presupposition correlates with what Philippe Lejeune (1996) called the autobiographical pact ("*le pacte autobiographique*"). However, it is fair to as-

3 In another article, Fludernik (2011) elaborates on her typology and lists possible combinations of the uses of *you* on the story and discourse levels. For my purposes, however, the initial basic typology is more useful.

4 Fludernik here draws on Roman Jakobson's notion of the "conative function" of language, i.e., the way utterances are often targeted at a recipient for specific purposes and therefore make use of address markers of the sort that can be found in imperatives and vocatives, for example (Jakobson 1987: 67).

sume that, if, in an autobiography, say, an author chooses the second-person pronoun instead of the more conventional *I*, this not only has rhetorical implications but may impact on how readers perceive what they read. What does it mean to disentangle the narrative instance from the protagonist of the story told, even if they ultimately refer to the same person? And what does it mean to use the address pronoun *you*, which may create a slippery cline towards the reader of the text (who, after all, is also an 'addressee' of sorts)?

The "protean form" of fictional *you*-narration, as Brian Richardson (2006: 19) calls it, may also be one of the reasons why it is considered "unnatural." In an earlier article, Richardson (1994) made a rather strong claim about the incommensurability of a poetics of fiction and theories of nonfictional narrative, a point he further elaborates in his 2006 book *Unnatural Voices*: "any thorough, systematic, universal narratology must do justice to the radical heterogeneity, ontological conflations, and logical impossibilities that proliferate in, and only in, fictional narratives" (325). Richardson surveys "multipersoned narratives," i.e., narratives which deliberately oscillate between first-, second- and third-person narrative situations, as well as "impossible," i.e., implausible or unnatural, narratives. Second-person fiction becomes implausible or impossible in this sense when, for example, a narrator tells the *you*-protagonist what he/she did or is currently doing even though the narrator was/is not physically present at the scene of action, or even better, when the narrator knows and relates in great detail what the addressee felt and thought or feels right now. The use of present tense heightens this sense of unnaturalness since it suggests contemporaneity and co-presence where narrator and narratee may in fact be far apart. In this regard, literary *you*-narratives constitute a complex and multi-faceted phenomenon, as I already argued above. Conversational *you*-narration is admittedly less complex and serves somewhat different functions. However, the fact that second-person narration exists already shows that it is not an exclusively literary phenomenon and deserves to be looked into more closely as an instance of *fictional contamination*.

In my article on literary and conversational uses of second-person narration (Mildorf 2012), I summarize the differences between those two storytelling contexts as follows:

Tab. 2: Contrasting Features of Conversational and Literary *You*-narratives (taken from Mildorf 2012: 91)

	Conversational *You*-narratives	**Literary *You*-narratives**
Occurrence, Extent	story fragments, "small stories"	frequently short stories but also entire novels

	Conversational *You*-narratives	**Literary *You*-narratives**
Form	always homocommunicative (in Fludernik's sense) (Fludernik 1993b, 1994b)	both homo- and heterocommunicative
	closely linked to first-person perspective (I + you)	first-person perspective can be absent (only *you* is possible)
Epistemology	narrator needs to have first-hand knowledge of events → justification of telling, authority	narrator can simply assert what happens → no justification needed
	narrator and addressee share past events	narrator and addressee need not share experiences in the storyworld
Functions	always conative + phatic	address function can be absent
	pragmatic (story is told for a purpose, e.g., co-construction of memories)	poetic (story draws attention to its own deployment of storytelling devices and verbal texture)
	performance of "you and I"	playful variation on narrative modes and voices, defamiliarization
	(re)construction of shared identities	diffusion of identities

As I argued, conversational and literary second-person narratives involve different epistemological conditions or requirements. In conversational storytelling, the narrator needs to justify his or her telling of the story and needs to have the authority to do so (i.e., he or she *also knows* the addressee's story). By contrast, narrators in fiction can tell their addressees about things that, realistically speaking, they could not possibly know. Also relevant in this context is the extent to which a given instance of second-person narration is similar to first-person narration. Whereas *I*-narrators in conversational settings are typically limited when it comes to what they can know and tell, fictional *I*-narrators are sometimes endowed with incredible knowledge of events they did not experience first-hand and indeed other people's experiences (see, however, chapters 5 and 10).

Furthermore, in Fludernik's terms, conversational *you*-narratives always have to be homocommunicative – which means that the narrator and the narratee must also be protagonists of the storyworld – whereas literary *you*-narratives can be either homo- or heterocommunicative. This difference is linked to the contrasting situational contexts in which conversational stories and literary narratives are told and interpreted. By definition, conversational settings always include at least two interlocutors. Thus, if a *you*-story is told in conversation the expectation is that this story will be addressed to the other person. Furthermore, the address

pronoun *you* always coincides with the person addressed, unless, as we saw in the previous chapter, *you* is also used in generic and generalizing terms or in ways that blur the actual number of referents (Bull and Fetzer 2006; Herman 1994). In addition, because of the epistemic condition mentioned above, *you*-narration in conversational contexts will also always be intricately related to first-person narration, so much so that in many instances one may not be able to draw a clear distinction between the two. The key factor here is that in conversational storytelling the narrator is always a real person, whereas in fictional stories the narrating instance can be actualized as a "disembodied voice." Thus, fictional second-person narratives can lack a (human) narrator. Let us explore two examples of conversational *you*-narration.

7.3 Let Me Tell You Your Story: Conversational Second-Person Narration

My examples in this chapter are drawn from the *StoryCorps* archive (storycorps.org). In this oral history project, participants are encouraged to tell stories to one another rather than to an interviewer. One might object that my examples are flawed in that *you*-narration here is largely attributable to the rather artificial storytelling situation created by the *StoryCorps* interview setup. Indeed, the influence of the interview situation can be felt, as I show in my examples below. At the same time, this kind of data makes it possible to analyse second-person narration in conversational settings, which, as I mentioned above, are by nature difficult to come by. In my first example, a couple remembers how they fell in love.[5] Speaker 1 is the husband, who worked as a road manager for a famous singer, and speaker 2 is the wife, who was a back-up singer. The co-constructedness of the story is captured in the way the speakers' interlacing turns are laid out in this transcript. Generally, the transcription is more elaborate here to give a flavour of the prosodic dynamics in this conversation.

Narrative 7.1: Love story

1 S1: The plan was for me to stay at the office 'n run the road from the office [so]

5 The entire audiofile can be listened to at: http://storycorps.org/?p=26255; I previously discussed this example in the context of a discussion of how storytellers mentally engage their interlocutors (Mildorf 2016a).

2 S2: [Right.]
3 S1: I would train managers 'n send them up.
4 I would sneak out on the road to see if they were doing their ↑job
5 'n (.) I'd been (.) tryin' to hit on you 'n date you for yea::rs
6 'n you wouldn't give me the time a day.
7 S2: I didn't ↑trust management.
8 S1: Right. [((laughs))]
9 S2: [So I didn't] have nothin' to do with you.
10 All you di::d wa- for me was [gimme information. Gimme my check.]
11 S1: ["Gimme my check." That's what you sai::d.]
12 S2: And that was it bro. [((laughs)) I'm so::rry.]=
13 S1: [((laughs))] =I know. It's lonely bein' a manager=
14 S2: =Right.
15 S1: [It's true.]
16 S2: [But our] relationship was goo::d=
17 S1: =mhm=
18 S2: =as far as bein' able to hang out.
19 S1: Well, you were my counselor when I had women problems
20 I'd come talk to you.=
21 S2: =Right, right=
22 S1: =And you'd listen so goo::d
23 'n then to send me back to my room=
24 S2: =Right.=
25 S1: =You know and I'm like (.) "Now, can I stay?" [you know]
26 S2: [No.]=
27 S1: ="Don't you wan-na hug me=
28 S2: =No.=
29 S1: ='n hold me" ['n-]
30 S2: [No.]

31 S1: and you like (.) “No:, let’s pray:: or read some scripture”
32 ’n] I’m like (.) “O::h ↑no.”
33 S2: [Right.]
34 S1: Well (.) you remember I trained this ↑guy
35 ’n (.) I heard this guy was not doin his jo:b
36 ’n he was sittin in the audience while the show was goin on ’n doin different things
37 ’n (.) I ↑came out on the road to check up on you guys
38 ’n (.) as I was ↑goin through the ↑venue (.) I came upon the ladies’ dressing room (.)
39 ’n it was just a ↑law that you don’t go in the ladies’ dressing room=
40 S2: =Right=
41 S1: =e↑specially without kno:cking=
42 S2: =Exactly.
43 S1: But the ↑door was cracked (.)
44 ’n I ↑go in (.)
45 and there you were.
46 Our ↑eyes meet (.)
47 ’n I kiss you (.)
48 ’n you kiss me back (.) [on the lips.]
49 S2: [I remember] that, I remember that.
50 S1: And I’m like “↑IT’S ↓OVER. ↑THAT’S ↓IT.”
51 I gotta fire this guy, alright?
52 [Even if this guy was-]
53 S2: [Because ↑you wanna] come back out on the ↓road.=
54 S1: =Right. Even if this guy was doin’ a great jo::b he was fired that day, okay?
55 [↑It’s ↓over.]
56 S2: [O↓ka↑y:]=
57 S1: = I need your job man ’cause I wanna get ((name)) alright? ((spoken with laughter in his voice)) (.)
58 ’n the ↑next morning I gave ((laughing voice)) that guy his ticket (.)
59 ’n (.) I’m standin’ at the bus waitin’ for everyone to come (.)

60 ’n you ↑come to the ↓bus
61 ’n I ↑see it on your ↓lips,
62 you’re about to say (.) “That kiss’d meant nothing.”
63 >’n ↑I looked you in your eyes
64 ’n before you could say anything I said< (.) “It’s too late.”
65 S2: ((laughter))
66 S1: and (.) after (.) thirteen years of marriage=
67 S2: =Yes=
68 S1: =[uh]
69 S2: [↑thir]teen years of ↓marriage=
70 S1: =I just, I just ↑love what we have (.) in each other,
71 I, I’m thankful of, to, to have you in my ↑life,
72 I mean, you, you when I wake up ’n see you, you know (.)
73 there’s not a ugly day as long as you’re there.

The first thing to notice is the great amount of interactivity between these two speakers. Their turns are interlaced to such an extent that they almost seem to be telling the story as one voice. Falk (1980) called this phenomenon verbal “duetting,” which is quite common in couples (Coates 2005). The couple’s involvement in this conversation can be seen in numerous overlapping turns, shared laughter and in the great amount of latching, i.e., when a turn almost, but not quite, overlaps the preceding one (indicated by equals signs in the transcript). Both speakers also frequently use backchannels, i.e., linguistic items that signal an interlocutor’s attention and support in a conversation (e.g., “right,” “mhm,” “I know”). Nevertheless, it is mainly the woman’s role here to be supportive. The husband has far longer turns at talk. Interestingly enough, he uses short instances of *you*-narration, addressing the story to his wife, even though she of course knows the story, having participated in it herself. Indeed, this example of *you*-narration seems to support collaborative memory work and also contributes towards a “performance of *you* and *I*” (Mildorf 2012). A lot of the information the couple exchange is redundant in the sense that they both know the facts anyway. So, when the husband provides background information in lines 34 to 37 (“Well (.) you remember…”), for example, this is clearly more for the audience’s benefit than for the wife’s. When the husband begins to explain in lines 51 to 52 why he had to fire one of the road managers, namely

because he wanted to take his job so he could be close to his future wife, she immediately explains the real motivation behind this action in an overlapping turn (line 53). Presumably she does this in support of her husband's narrative, to make it clearer to an audience that does not have all the background information and needs to be informed about it.

Another striking feature of performativity in this verbal exchange is the predominance of the dramatic mode (Pasupathi 2006). We find a lot of direct speech representation, and in lines 25 to 32 husband and wife even re-enact the kind of bantering argument they already shared before they actually became a couple, each assuming their own proper role and effectively turning their narrative into a 'theatre play' in listeners' minds. When the husband eventually imitates the wife's response ("No, let's pray or read some scripture," line 31) he even mimics her sweet tone of voice. Even where there is no direct speech presentation the narrative is very animated, as can be seen in the lively intonation contour including numerous rises and falls in pitch (indicated by vertical arrows), stressed words (underlined expressions) and brief pauses used to accentuate narrative clauses. The climax of this narrative, the moment of the couple's first kiss (lines 47–48), is additionally foregrounded by means of extremely short narrative clauses and by present tense, which relocates the past experience to the present moment and thus makes it even more dramatic.

The story is also interesting as far as its representation of emotions is concerned. The way the husband presents his reaction at the moment of this first kiss is similar to such presentations earlier in the excerpt: he uses direct speech ("↑IT'S ↓OVER. ↑THAT'S ↓IT," line 50), and his speech becomes emphatic through shifting pitch and a loud voice, here marked through uppercase lettering and arrows indicating rising and falling pitch. Now, one can hardly imagine that the husband spoke exactly those words at the moment when he kissed his wife. At best, he may have *thought* those words. In the interview situation, they seem to be used to re-enact the excitement the husband felt back then. Later in the story, the husband describes how he could "see" on his wife's lips that she was going to deny the significance of their kiss. The use of second-person address in combination with direct speech once more not only presents what she might have said but what the husband inferred must have been going on in his wife's mind at the time. This example demonstrates how performativity in conversational storytelling is used to enliven a story for listeners and to create involvement.

In my second example, another couple remember how they met and fell in love in their workplace. Speaker 1 is the husband, speaker 2 the wife.[6]

Narrative 7.2: Another Love Story

1	S1:	Our relationship started in a grade school.
2		We met each other at Kenwood Ele↑mentary in Minne↑apolis where I was (.) a cu↑stodian and you Catherine were a special ed ↑teacher.
3	S2:	I remember watching you moving around the school.
4		You were sliding down the ↑banisters, popping bub↑ble gum
5		and I used to think (.) "They're ↑watching you ma::n you have to be a good e↑xample to these kids."
6		And then I watched you with your gui↓ta::r, getting in the ↓cla::ss-rooms and singing and getting ↑so involved with the kids (.)
7		and so I asked you a question that >you told me later a lot of people had asked< (.)
8		"↑Why aren't you a teacher."
9		And then I found out that (.) you didn't think college was meant for you or you could cut it. (.)
10		>And then we started to talk< 'cause the teacher in me came out
11		"I have questions for you (.) <wayward (.) boy"> ((laughter))
12	S1:	I was always (.) ready for a conversation with you.
13		It was the best time of my day.
14	S2:	I would sit there, you know,
15		>and do my paper work at the end of the day
16		and watch the clock
17		and< (.) I could hear you coming down the hall 'cause you were pushing the big rolling garbage can.
18	S1:	People would er often (.) say "You look >like you're in a hurry"
19		well I had things to get done because I knew exactly what I wanned to do< (.) go hang out (0.2) in ↑your room.

6 The interview can be listened to at: https://storycorps.org/stories/scott-and-catherine-kohanek/. I also discuss this example in Mildorf (2013b).

20 S2: When you came in (.) and emptied my ↑trash (0.2) you would always sit on the counter by the door.

21 S1: That was a favorite place of mine to ↓sit with my feet upon the (.) ↑chair

22 and er our conversations would go on for hours and hours.

23 S2: I remember thinking "<Oh my go::sh,> I think I'm falling in lo:ve, this isn't goo::d."

24 ((laughter)) I remember tha:t.

25 S1: ((laughter)) And then there came a ↑time when I (.) realized that (.) my path was (.) you know (.) seriously going to (0.2) change.

26 (.hh) >After eighteen and a half years of being a custodian< I stepped into a: (.h) college for the first ↑time

27 S2: And er I remember >when you first started college< (0.2)

28 you were pushing your (.) garbage can

29 a:nd (.) er (.) you came >↑up to me really really ex↑cited<

30 you had written your first paper (0.2)

31 and you'd gotten an A. (0.2)

32 D'you remember that?

33 [You were–]

34 S1: [It was] the scariest thing I had ever ↑done

35 and when (0.2) there came the time to:: (0.2) ↑get a job (.)

36 I went back to ↓Kenwood (.) as a second grade ↑teacher (.)

37 and that's where I've been (.) ever si::nce,

38 so (0.2) it became obvious (.) uhm=

39 S2: =But [↑what became obvious. ((laughter))]

40 S1: [uhm, w- that (.) that] ↑we:: that ↑we were going to get married. (0.2)

41 So ↑why did we get married (.) [at Kenwood school.]

42 S2: [((laughter))]

43 Of ↑course we were gonna get married at the school.

44 I do remember asking you "What do you wa::nt?" (0.2) and knowing it would be unconventional.

45 S1: We got married [(0.2) in] the lunchroom (0.2)
46 S2: [Mhm.]
47 S1: and served milk and [cookies.]
48 S2: [Cookies.]
49 And then the students obviously go "On the sta::ge?"=
50 S1: =((laughter))=
51 S2: =Yeah, we were at the school store, yea(hh)h, on that stage. (0.2),
52 It's, it's funny, you kno:w (0.2)
53 you and I both work there
54 and now we take our kids down to lunch,
55 "Get in li::ne ↓ki::ds" (0.2)
56 >°oh you know what I mean°<
57 and >when everyone's in line< I just turn my head
58 and I glance up at that ↑stage
59 and (0.5) I just smile.

What is immediately noteworthy when one looks at the transcript is the fact that all the clauses that could be counted as belonging to *you*-narration do not constitute a sustained or continuous narrative. Instead, they alternate with instances of *I*- and *we*-narration. Both the narrator and protagonist are part of the storyworld. In fact, the two speakers here take turns as narrator and addressee-protagonist respectively and thus together achieve a shared *we*-narrative. The fact that *you*-narration does not feature as a monolithic "block" but is rather fragmented and distributed across various conversational turns reminds one once again of Georgakopoulou's (2007) concept of "small stories" (see Chapter 4).

The influence of the interview situation can be felt especially at the beginning of this excerpt. There is no speech overlap or latching between turns as would be common for a naturally occurring conversation. Furthermore, the intonation contours in the husband and wife's turns suggest that they are very much 'in sync,' as it were. The up-talk, i.e., regular rises in pitch at the end of intonation units, in the husband's orientation section (line 2) is paralleled by the wife's up-talk pattern in lines 4 and 5. She also uses falling intonation at regular intervals in line 6 ("I watched you with your gui↓ta::r, getting in the ↓cla::ssrooms and singing"), which phonetically supports her enumeration of the things she observed in her husband. Both patterns make the speech interaction here sound "rehearsed" or at least well thought through beforehand. An-

other indication of the artificiality created through the interview setup can be found in line 41, where the husband asks his wife why they got married at the school they now both work in. The fact that there is no rising intonation at the end of this interrogative clause (it is spoken more like an assertion than a question) and the fact that the wife responds with laughter suggest that, rather than being a genuine question, this question may have been an item on a questionnaire or at least a question the two had agreed on beforehand as one they wanted to 'cover' at some point during their conversation. However, the conversation does become more spontaneous, as will become evident shortly.

In this story, second-person narration is intricately linked with first-person narration. Thus, for example, the husband right from the beginning juxtaposes what he did at the elementary school where they met with his wife's job ("I was (.) a cu↑stodian and you Catherine were a special ed ↑teacher," line 2). Likewise, the wife, in her response, starts with a phrase typical of stories of remembering, "I remember" (Norrick 2005), only to continue with what her husband did: "I remember watching you moving around the school. You were sliding down the ↑banisters, popping bub↑ble gum…" (lines 3–4). The second-person narrative is embedded in a typical first-person narrative frame, and even the actions presented in second person can be said to be safely tied to the 'experiencing I's' deictic centre.

After all, the husband's actions were observed by his wife-to-be, which is grammatically captured by the fact that the non-finite clause with the verb "moving" is subordinated to and depends on the verb "watching" followed by the raised object "you." This pattern of embedding can also be seen in constructions such as "I asked you a question that >you told me later a lot of people had asked<" (line 7), "I found out that (.) you didn't think college was meant for you" (line 9), "I could hear you coming down the hall" (line 17) and "I remember >when you first started college<…" (lines 27–31). These constructions support my assumption that second-person narration may not appear as an independent form in conversational storytelling but is rather meshed with a first-person perspective. The reason for this mixing of narrative perspectives, as I indicated above, is the fact that it would be extremely odd for real-life speakers to 'bore' others with a story they already know anyway and to present at length events from a perspective they cannot possibly adopt.

This also explains why the presentation of the addressee's thoughts or feelings needs to be couched in a phrase that again anchors the main perspective with the first-person narrator: "And then I found out that (.) you didn't think college was meant for you or you could cut it" (line 9). Even though the *that*-clause presents what the husband thought and how he felt about going to col-

lege, the verb "found out" in the matrix clause suggests that the wife must have gained this knowledge through conversations they had. And in another example, where the presentation of the husband's feelings seems to be more independent grammatically speaking, the clause can also be reinterpreted as not merely relating *what he felt* but *how she perceived what he felt*: "you came >↑up to me really really ex↑cited<" (line 29). After all, it is possible to see in someone's facial expression, for example, whether this person is "excited." This lack of complete access to another person's feelings makes the conversational example different from literary examples of *you*-narration, where the addressee's feelings can technically be rendered by means of focalization at all times (see Chapter 8). Interestingly, however, the wife retrospectively enlivens her husband's sense of excitement in her talk through a number of emphatic features such as rises in pitch, increased loudness of voice, stress on three subsequent words and the immediate repetition of the intensifier "really." This rendition might also express the wife's own excitement on hearing her husband's good news about his first success in college. So, what we find here is a peculiar blending of the husband's feelings as perceived or empathized with by the wife and what must have been her own emotions at the time.

This example highlights one possible function of *you*-narration in conversational storytelling: signalling involvement with the other person both linguistically and personally. It thus assumes a relational function. By using a relatively extended stretch of *you*-narration in her story (lines 29–31), the wife temporarily adopts her husband's position while at the same time expressing her own feelings. The cut-off sentence "You were–" (line 33) suggests that she was going to say more about how he presumably felt but then cut off her speech to yield the floor to her husband. He self-selects for his next turn, in which he takes the cue from her to dwell on his feelings: "[It was] the scariest thing I had ever ↑done" (line 35). The speech overlap here and at other points in the second half of the excerpt (lines 39–40, 41–42, 45–46 and 47–48) indicates increased involvement of the interlocutors. They are both eager to contribute to the retelling of this shared moment in their life story. Involvement can also be seen when the wife uses direct thought presentation in line 5: "I used to think 'They're ↑watching you ma::n you have to be a good e↑xample to these kids'" and line 23: "I remember thinking '<Oh my go::sh,> I think I'm falling in lo:ve, this isn't goo::d.'" The first example is particularly interesting as the wife presents her thoughts about her husband by employing *you*-address and by imitating the tone of voice and intonation contour of real direct speech, as if she had addressed her thoughts to him directly in her mind (which she may well have done, obviously feeling an affinity with him). This could be an example for how second-person

narration may pervade people's lives even though it goes largely unnoticed because it is not externalized or verbalized (see above and also Mildorf 2012).

7.4 Literary Complexity in Conversational Storytelling Revisited

As I already outlined in the third chapter, one can hardly deny the fact that literary narratives and spontaneous conversational stories are different in many ways. My own examples in this and in previous chapters indicate that this has something to do with the general context and conditions under which the respective narrative genres emerge. For example, literary texts can have omniscient narrators. In the *StoryCorps* data, narrators rarely 'pretend' to have full knowledge of all the details of the other person's story or even access to that person's mind or thoughts, and if they do, they tone down their claims by phrases such as "I think," "probably" and the like. Instances of intimate knowledge are accompanied by expressions such as "I found out that" or at least one is left to assume that the husband talked to his wife about how he felt and vice versa. And yet, the fact that speakers use second-person narration at all seems to suggest that they wish to signal to their interlocutor that they assume the other person's position at least temporarily, which implies showing understanding for and empathy with the other person.

Above, I already pointed out that real-life *you*-narration must always be conative, i.e., addressee-oriented, because the pronouns *I* and *you* refer to real people and therefore cannot be indistinct or represent non-referential signs. The French linguist and language philosopher Émile Benveniste (1966: 254–255) already cautioned us not to forget the fundamental difference between language as a sign system and language as action or practice. As soon as speakers *use* language, the linguistic system changes into discourse instances ("*instances de discours,*" 255), which are marked by a referential system the key to which is the pronoun *I* ("*système de références internes dont la clef est* je," 255).[7] The pronouns *I* and *you* cannot exist as virtual signs. They only become meaningful in actual discursive instantiations which mark the ways in which speakers appropriate language ("*le procès d'appropriation par le locuteur*," 255). In other words, first and second-person pronouns are very context-sensitive and their meaning or reference may shift even within one and the same discourse in-

7 Again, one must not forget cultural differences. Moll (2011: 255–256) cites research which shows that Aboriginal stories are a lot less "ego-centric" than European stories, for example.

stance. In my examples, it becomes clear from the storytelling situation who talks to whom and that the speakers refer to their respective experiences of shared moments in the past. So, if literary *you*-narration allows for more creative freedom in the usage of referents than conversational *you*-narration this may also be connected to the fact that the narratives appear in written form, thus having the possibility to create more complex space-time parameters whereby to engage our imagination. Do we then have to regard fictional stories as radically different from other kinds of stories? My answer would be "no." To my mind, it is striking that one can find second-person narration in conversational storytelling at all. Even though it seems to be closely linked to a first-person perspective, my examples show that there still are independent clauses cast in second person that are also reminiscent of such sentences in literary second-person narration. In other words, there is a 'family resemblance' in the sense of *narrative homology* that points to gradable characteristics rather than an 'either-or' dichotomy. Instances of second-person narration, if ever so minimal, are thus indicative of *fictional contamination* (see also Chapter 3).

The more interesting question to ask is why interlocutors resort to such a marked form of co-narrating a story. Norrick (2000) contends that the collaborative retelling of familiar stories can serve various functions. It can "ratify group membership and modulate rapport" or be undertaken just "for fun" (Norrick 2000: 154). It also "allows participants to re-live common experiences," it "confirms the long-term bond they share," and "collaborative narration itself redounds to feelings of belonging" (Norrick 2000: 93). I would argue that all of these functions are even heightened when second-person narration is used because then speakers narratively adopt their interlocutor's position. In my examples, both spouses aim at re-establishing a common memory when recounting (from the other's vantage point) what happened. Throughout their co-narrations, husband and wife collaboratively reconstruct their shared experiences as well as their memories of those experiences (see Eakin 2008). *You*-narration in this context does not become 'boring' because the other person already knows the story, but it signals empathy and understanding. It also affords the speakers ways of expressing their own position regarding the other person's thoughts and feelings. Put differently, *you*-narration in conversational storytelling does not address the point "this is what happened" but rather "this is what I think you felt and this is what it was like for me."

In this chapter, I addressed the issue of second-person narration – a narrative situation that many scholars deem exclusive to literary texts but that, I argued here and elsewhere, can also be found in non-literary storytelling contexts. Second-person narration can assume a range of rather diverse, and even

diametrically opposed, functions. Thus, while it presupposes and (re)creates a special bond between speaker and hearer in conversational storytelling situations, it may well be used for distancing in writing. Its actual effects are difficult to gauge and very much depend on the concrete storytelling context and on the recipients' expectations. Generally speaking, this special narrative form can be said to serve the purpose of engaging an audience, but too much of it would certainly be perceived as 'odd.' As a marked form of storytelling both in oral and written contexts, second-person narration once again indicates the relative kinship between the literary and the non-literary and points to processes of *fictional contamination*.

In the next chapter, I explore the question of perspective-taking, where we see a similar tension in the trade-off between creating involvement and 'merely' relating the facts.

8 Perspective-Taking in Life Stories: Focalization

In Chapter 6, I explored how double deixis in pronoun use can lead to shifting meanings and complex structures that can be employed to create interesting positionings not only of storytellers with regard to themselves in their stories but also between narrators and their recipients in the storytelling situation. In this chapter, I still focus on the relationship between interlocutors, but I want to concentrate on the question of how storytellers try to draw their listeners into the storyworlds they present. How do personal narratives become engaging? As I discussed in Chapter 3, storytelling typically hinges on what is special, noteworthy or "reportable" (Labov and Waletzky 1967). This is relevant for a discussion of *fictional contamination* insofar as features marking narrative's fictionalizing tendencies are likely to be those that contribute towards the creation of involvement. Put differently, making a story interesting is closely linked to *fictional contamination*.

Furthermore, storytellers seek to align their listeners with the viewpoints they inadvertently express through their stories. The second concept that is therefore of interest when looking at how storytellers connect to their interlocutors is *focalization*, a term used in narratology to replace the term "point of view." Storytellers offer a certain perspective on the events they relate because they obviously want their interlocutors to understand why they are telling this story and what their evaluative stance is. At the same time, as I already said, they want to engage their listeners by telling a story that is worthwhile listening to. Let me explain the term "focalization" first before I move on to some examples.

8.1 Focalization: A Brief Outline

Focalization is a widely discussed and not entirely uncontroversial concept in narratology derived from photography and film (see Phelan 2001; Prince 2001; Niederhoff 2009). The term was first introduced by Gérard Genette (1980[1972]) to replace the even more troublesome concept of *point of view*. According to Genette, previous discussions of point of view or narrative perspective displayed "a confusion between the questions *who is the character whose point of view orients the narrative perspective?* and the very different question *who is the narrator?* – or, more simply, the question *who sees?* and the question *who speaks?*" (Genette 1980[1972]: 186; italics original). Focalization – at least in its non-metaphorical usage – assumes the visual facet of these two key functions.

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A slight problem arises because, the way it is commonly used, "focalization" also encompasses other sense perceptions as well as non-visual aspects such as characters' inner experiences of the surrounding storyworld. Narratologists following Genette further distinguish between *external* and *internal* focalization, where external focalization lies with an "anonymous agent" (Bal 1985: 105) outside the storyworld (usually the *narrator*[1]), and internal focalization with a character in the storyworld.

Seymour Chatman refined the distinction between *seeing* and *speaking* by proposing the alternative terms "filter" and "slant." "Filter" refers to the possibility that the narrator "can elect to tell a part or the whole of a story neutrally or 'from' or 'through' one or another character's consciousness" (Chatman 1986: 196). "Slant," by contrast, encompasses the attitudes narrators may share with characters about people or events in the storyworld and which manifest themselves in narrators' comments, judgements, and the like.[2] Focalization or Chatman's "filter" thus allows for both the non-metaphorical, perceptual facet including space and time, and the psychological facet including cognitive and emotive components (Rimmon-Kenan 2002a: 78–82).

Another useful term is Manfred Jahn's (1996, 1999) notion of "windows of focalization" that allow us glimpses into the storyworld.[3] In his model, Jahn distinguishes between two types of focus which he then applies to the concept of focalization: *focus-1* is "the burning point of an eye's lens, usually located in a person's head," while *focus-2* is "the area of attention which the eye focuses on to obtain maximum sharpness" (Jahn 1999: 88). Depending on where we imagine the "lens" to be located through which we perceive the storyworld, we can have a more or less limited field of vision or perspective. Jahn's technological imagery is reminiscent of film and other visual media. In those areas of study, Jean Mitry's (1965) notion of a "half-subjective image" has also been employed to refer to the way in which film viewers are sometimes invited to

1 I should mention here that, although the narrator and focalizer functions are separate, they can be combined in narrative texts. For an overview, see Phelan (2001), Herman and Vervaeck (2019).

2 Chatman adamantly denies narrators the possibility to see the storyworld literally. They can only *relate* what they perceive imaginatively or from memory. As Jahn (1996) points out, this insistence on the distinction of literal and non-literal perception is counterproductive since in actual practice to see something in one's mind's eye is an experience not essentially different from 'really' seeing something.

3 Jahn draws on Henry James' image of the "house of fiction" through whose windows readers are made to perceive the storyworld. He combines this image with that of an eye or camera.

almost (but not fully) adopt a character's position and perspective, being both "inside" and "outside" the picture (see Schüwer 2008: 392).

This double position can be illustrated by the following passage from Katherine Mansfield's short story *Bliss*, which constitutes a case of internal focalization:

> It was dusky in the dining-room and quite chilly. But all the same Bertha threw off her coat; she could not bear the tight clasp of it another moment, and the cold air fell on her arms.
> But in her bosom there was still that bright glowing place – that shower of little sparks coming from it. It was almost unbearable. She hardly dared to breathe for fear of fanning it higher, and yet she breathed deeply, deeply. She hardly dared to look into the cold mirror – but she did look, and it gave her back a woman, radiant, with smiling, trembling lips, with big, dark eyes and an air of listening, waiting for something...divine to happen...that she knew must happen...infallibly. (Mansfield 1983[1918]: 129)

While there is a narrator telling us about Bertha, we do not look at her from a distance or from a bird's eye perspective, but the perspective adopted here is Bertha's own. She experiences the chilliness of the room, and she regards herself in the mirror, perceiving her own radiance, the trembling of her lips, and so on. In other words, whatever is observed in the room is focalized through Bertha, and we as readers are invited to look at the same things as if we were looking through Bertha's own eyes. Moreover, we have access to Bertha's state of mind and emotions: "she could not bear" the tight clasp of the coat; she felt a "bright glowing" in her bosom, and she "hardly dared to breathe" because of her overpowering sense of bliss. In Manfred Jahn's scalar model of focalization Bertha occupies the position *focus-1*, this means she offers the lens or 'burning point' through which parts of the storyworld are perceived. The room, Bertha's reflection in the mirror, and so on consecutively occupy *focus-2* or the areas of attention Bertha's eyes focus on.

Although I used a literary example to illustrate the concept of focalization it would be wrong to assume that focalization only occurs in literary texts. On the contrary, one can contend that any text, whether fictional or factual, whether written, spoken or conveyed through other media, inevitably assumes a certain perspective on its given subject or topic. As I already pointed out in Chapter 4, discursive psychologist Jonathan Potter (1996) suggests in his book *Representing Reality* that the narratological concept of focalization may be of use for the analysis of oral narratives. He draws upon the concept to explain ways in which storytellers can invite listeners to adopt the position of the perceiver. At the same time, storytellers come across as "entitled to provide an authoritative description of a scene or event because he or she is a *witness*" (Potter 1996: 165;

italics original). In other words, focalization in conversational storytelling can contribute to category entitlement,[4] which allows speakers to achieve their conversational goals. In that sense focalization becomes, as Mieke Bal (1985: 116) argues, "the most important, most penetrating, and most subtle means of manipulation."[5]

In Chapter 2, I discussed how narrative is linked to identity and how storytellers position themselves in and through their stories. The question that arises is: how is positioning borne out in life stories especially with respect to their 'narrative' strategies (rather than discursive moves that can also be part of non-narrative verbal interactions)? "Focalization" or perspective as an analytical category is central to exploring this question. The psychologist Richard Gerrig (2001) demonstrated through a number of reader response tasks how perspective influences readers' perception and inclines them towards either dispositional or situational attribution in assessing characters/persons. His main claim is that "participation, realized by participatory responses, directs readers to discover particular perspectives" (Gerrig 2001: 305). I would suggest that something similar is at stake in oral storytelling, where listeners are invited, by means of specific linguistic cues that create involvement, to adopt certain perspectives and thus to follow the rationalizations offered by the storyteller. As Frank (2010: 31) succinctly puts it, "[s]tories have the capacity to make one particular perspective not only plausible but compelling."

For oral history narratives or conversational stories, we could claim that the storyteller tells the story and introduces a certain view on the related events in retrospect. There might also be instances, however, when we are offered a view on past events through the eyes of the narrator at the time when he or she experienced those events. The terms "narrating self" and "experiencing self" (see Chapter 2) can be helpful in this regard, the former referring to the persona telling her story from the present vantage point and with her current knowledge of past events and the latter to the same persona as a character in her story re-experiencing those past events as if she was there. Wallace Chafe (1994: 211) usefully distinguishes between "representing" and "represented" consciousness in this connection. Even though oral stories are verbal and mainly con-

4 On the notion of entitlement in storytelling, see also Shuman (2015).

5 This point is debated among narratologists. Genette's original classification also allows for the possibility of what he calls "zero focalization," which is an instance where the storyworld is not focalized through anyone in particular and the narrative thus remains 'neutral.' I would agree with Bal (2002: 42) that neutrality is impossible and that arguing in favor of such a notion mystifies the ideological thrust of a text.

veyed orally/aurally, they have the capacity to create pictures or images in listeners' minds, and for this reason one is justified in drawing on Mitry's concept here. However, in line with Jahn as well as Fludernik (2001: 104), I think that focalization needs to be traced in linguistic cues such as referential frameworks (Schiffrin 2006) created through deixis and pronoun use, as we saw in Chapter 6.[6]

In this chapter I look at two examples drawn from an oral history transcript of a tape-recorded interview conducted with fiber artist Dominic Di Mare by Signe Mayfield, June 4-10, 2002, in the artist's home in Tiburon, California, for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. The overall interview is three hours long.[7] I already covered the second example in an earlier article (Mildorf 2013a). However, since I have in the meantime gained access to the actual recording thanks to the artist's generous permission, I have made some corrections to my previous transcript, which also affect the interpretation slightly, and I mark prosodic aspects such as stress through rises in pitch (upward-pointing arrow), vowel lengthening (colons after the vowel), increase in loudness (capital letters), speech cut-offs (dashes), increased speaking rate (right/left carats), distinctly quieter speech (degree signs) and pauses (in brackets) where appropriate. The two examples illustrate how focalization can contribute towards making a story interesting by drawing listeners into the action and situation of the presented storyworld.

8.2 Creating Scenes of Action for Listeners

In the first excerpt, Di Mare tells the interviewer of an experience he had while being on his father's fishing boat at night when he was about twelve years old.

Narrative 8.1

1 We were off the coast of Mexico. (1.2)
2 I must have been (1.0) twelve maybe (0.4) maybe even younger, I think.< (0.4)
3 U::h, we had dropped our ↑sea anchor
4 >and there was no ↑land in sight<

6 A corpus-linguistic approach to viewpoint is offered by Eekhof, van Krieken and Sanders (2020). Viewpoint has also been studied extensively in cognitive linguistics (see, for example, Dancygier and Sweetser 2012; Dancygier, Lu and Verhagen 2016; Vandelanotte 2017).

7 The whole interview can be accessed at: https://www.aaa.si.edu/collections/interviews/oral-history-interview-dominic-di-mare-12551.

5 we dropped a sea anchor, which, uh, is like a parachute,
6 and it slows you down >so the current doesn't take you too far< (.) ↑off course.
7 And I ↑could not sleep.
8 >°I remember that I couldn't sleep.°<
9 My ↑father was sound asleep.
10 I got out of my little BUNK, (0.6)
11 went ↑o:n the deck, (0.5)
12 and there were ↑no: stars,
13 >°I don't remember any stars or any–
14 it was ↑pitch black.°< (0.6)
15 And as I ↑sat there I heard (.) this ↑sound approaching (0.7) uh the boat.
16 And, as it got closer, >it dawned on me that they were like< ↑splashes. (.)
17 <And this ↑sound> (1.2) >too at the time felt like it was just ↑rushing at the boat.
18 I had ↑no idea what it was.< (1.0)
19 >It could even 've been a ship, for all I know, heading right ↑for us 'cause we were ↑in a traffic lane.< (0.2)
20 >And as it came closer it dawned on me that it was a school of either< do:lphins (.) or alba↑co:re (.) or ↑some large fish (.) ↑came by us (0.6)
21 >and it got louder and louder
22 and passed me
23 and it kept right on going.< (0.4)
24 And it dawned on me that, you know, (1.2) I was ↑witnessing this almost sort of ↑magical (0.7) pa↑rade, if you wish, a ↑procession, (0.9) and tha:t (.) I was the only person ↑there to hear it. (1.8)
25 And to ↑me: that was ↑so powerful. (1.5)
26 >You know I mean< I ↑think when you're young (.) you feel ↑so con↑nected to everything and everybody (.) that you as↑sume that everyone is ↑feeling, ↑thinking (0.6) and ↑seeing what you're ↑feeling and ↑seeing and ↑thinking. (.)
27 And it dawned on me that you ↑can isolate yourself to a point where it's almost like a religious experience. (1.2)
28 And, uh, it was one in which there was, there was no picture, no color, (0.2)
29 there was just a sou:nd. (1.1)
30 It was ↑very powerful. (0.5)
31 Ah, uh, it was scary, too, at the same time.

The story can be divided into Labov and Waletzky's (1967) categories of the diamond diagram of narratives. The orientation ranges from lines 1 to 9, offering information on the circumstances of that experience, the complicating action covers lines 10 to 19, followed by a climax and resolution in lines 20 to 24. Finally, there is the coda, which evaluates the event with hindsight, in lines 25 to 31. However, one can see that the various parts are in fact intertwined in interesting ways. Thus, the orientation and complicating action sequences overlap, for example, in lines 12 and 14, which also give background information on the situation: "there were ↑no: stars," "it was ↑pitch black." Conversely, one could argue that Di Mare's comment about his sleeplessness ("I ↑could not sleep," line 7 and repeated in line 8) – emphasized through a rise in pitch on "could" – already constitutes the first 'action' of the complication. The boy's sleeplessness contrasts with the father's being "sound asleep" (line 9), which is important for the subsequent events in the story as it ensures a moment of solitude.

The orientation also contains repetitions, for example, about the dropping of the anchor (lines 3 and 5), and there is excess information in lines 5 and 6 about how the anchor functions. This information is not strictly necessary for the progression of the narrative, so it can be considered a form of narrative digression (Norrick 2020). However, as in a fictional narrative, this descriptive information adds texture to the circumstances, and it partially contributes towards creating suspense because the relevant action is put on hold, as it were. Generally speaking, we can see how the narrative creates a background by using descriptions of the 'scene' against which the actions begin to unfold in the foreground.

What is particularly relevant for the purposes of this chapter is the implementation of focalization. From the beginning, we can distinguish between the position of the 'narrating I' as expressed, for example, in the formulaic phrase "I remember" and "I don't remember" (lines 8 and 13) or in the retrospective reflection entailed in "I must have been twelve" (line 2), and the 'experiencing I,' whose actions and experiences in the past are reported. Internal focalization, as narratologists call the experience of a storyworld through an internal character's perspective – which comes close to Chafe's "represented consciousness," see above –, is mainly achieved here through verbs of perception and other phrases alluding to sense perceptions as can be found throughout the entire narrative and which capture what Di Mare saw and heard there and then as a young boy. Thus, as I already mentioned, we are told that "there were ↑no: stars" (line 12) and that "it was ↑pitch black" (line 14), but also that there was a "↑sound approaching uh (0.7) the boat" (line 15) which "got louder and louder" (line 21) – the repetition of the adjective here emphasizing the increase in noise.

This sound is further specified as "splashes" (line 16), and it "felt like it was just rushing at the boat" (line 17). The partial synaesthesia, whereby a sound is physically felt rather than heard, is interesting as it vividly captures the situation in which the boy could not see anything and therefore had to rely on his other sense perceptions.[8] Furthermore, the verb phrases "got closer" (line 16), "came closer," "came by us" (line 20), "passed me" (line 22) and "kept right on going" (line 23) also deictically anchor the experience with the boy Di Mare as the perceptual center of the events.

The listener is encouraged to imaginatively re-experience the moment with Di Mare as a child. This is further underlined by the suspense structure that is used in lines 18 and 19, where Di Mare offers a re-enactment of his bewilderment at the time and his speculations about what all this could mean: "It could even've been a ship, for all I know, heading right ↑for us" (line 19). Like a good novelist, Di Mare withholds information he of course has as 'narrating I' simply to give a more vivid account of what the situation was like for him as the 'experiencing I.' There is again narrative digression in the phrase "I had ↑no idea what it was" (line 18), which supports the build-up of suspense about what Di Mare came to realize, as is re-enacted through the tripartite repetition of the phrase "it dawned on me that" (lines 16, 20, and 24). Like Di Mare back then, we are invited to, firstly, identify the strange sounds, secondly, realize where they emanate from and, thirdly, have an insight into what all this means for the boy's overall life experience. The different levels of narration – the current storytelling situation in contrast to the presented storyworld – are also linguistically expressed through changing spatiotemporal parameters in deictic pronouns indicating distance or proximity and adverbials which oscillate between the time 'here and now' and the time 'back then': "*there* I heard *this* sound" (line 15), "*this* sound [...] *at the time*" (line 17) and "I was the only person *there* to hear it" (line 24).

8.3 External Focalization and Retrospective Evaluation

Line 24 then offers in the form of a climax the epiphany the boy had on this boat when he experienced "this magical (0.7) pa↑rade" all by himself.[9] While the

8 The visual metaphor underlying the term "focalization" can be considered a problem here. An alternative term would be "auricularization" (see Schlickers 2009).

9 An epiphany or a moment of recognition or realization is a very typical feature in short stories by James Joyce, for example, or in drama, where this is called *anagnorisis*.

sense of being witness to something important and special may well have been an emotion felt by the young boy, one wonders whether the words used here to describe this moment ("magical parade," "procession," "witnessing") – and the pause before "parade" indicates that Di Mare is looking for the right word here – are not ascriptions made by the older Di Mare, who reflects on the meaning of this experience with hindsight. One is reminded of Wordsworth's (1984[1802]: 611) idea of how a poet processes a powerful moment, namely by recollecting it afterwards "in tranquillity" and by conjuring up the original emotion so vividly that the moment is imaginatively re-experienced. Good storytelling, I would argue, is not all that different in this regard. The powerful moment is rendered in such a way that listeners are inevitably drawn in and are invited to 're-experience' the situation with the storyteller.

The coda in lines 25 to 31 elaborates on what that moment meant to Di Mare and what he learned from that experience. The retrospective evaluation is marked by lexical items such as the adjectives "scary" (line 31) and "powerful," the latter of which is repeated twice and emphasized through "↑so" and "↑very" (lines 25 and 30) with added rises in pitch, which give these words even more tress. Furthermore, there is deviation from a comparatively simple narrative syntax through hypotaxis or strings of subordinate clauses in lines 26 and 27. This emphatic structure underlines the significance of the statements made at this point, as does the repetition with slight variation in "everyone is ↑feeling, ↑thinking (0.6) and ↑seeing what you're ↑feeling and ↑seeing and ↑thinking" (line 26). Moreover, hyperbole or exaggerations as can be found in the pronouns "everything," "everybody" and "everyone" foreground the sense of sublime connectedness that Di Mare experienced at that moment. Interestingly, by using the generic second-person rather than the first-person singular pronoun here, Di Mare furthermore suggests a certain universality of this experience, as if anyone would feel the same awe in such a situation. This kind of generalization also makes it possible for the story to resonate with listeners (see also Stukenbrock and Bahr 2017; Orvell et al. 2020). They might well be reminded of similar experiences in their own lives. When Di Mare comments that such a moment of isolation can be "almost like a religious experience" (line 27), he once again seems to offer a retrospective reflection even though he claims that this is the insight which "dawned on" him at the time.

What this example illustrates very nicely is the literary quality that even conversational stories can have. The use of focalization, the numerous repetitions, the interlacing of orientation and complication and complication and resolution respectively contribute to a density and cohesiveness that is not unlike that found in literary narratives. The desired effect is also similar: to draw

listeners into the storyworld and to allow them to imaginatively re-experience the moment presented in the storyworld. There is nothing fictional about this story, although one could argue that the suggestion of some divine intervention or intention as indicated by the expression "religious experience" may possibly constitute a kernel of *fictional contamination* at least for some recipients of the story. The tacit allusion to other 'great fish stories' (Coulter 1926), which often have a mythological dimension to them and thus offer powerful story templates, are also part of the *fictional contamination* in this particular story.

The next example equally demonstrates how focalization is used to draw interlocutors into the storyworld. Additionally, it shows how narratives contribute towards the construction of identity (see Chapter 2) since 'identity formation' is both the story's theme and its performative result.

8.4 Focalization in Constructing and Conveying One's Identity

The given stretch of interview talk appears nearer the beginning of the interview, where the participants expressly talk about the relevance of Di Mare's family background and upbringing for his later life. Line numbering begins with the actual narrative. In this story, which I also discussed in Mildorf (2013a), Di Mare relates a moment of epiphany in his work life. He realized how much his father's behavior towards him as a child influenced his adult life.

Narrative 8.2

Di Mare: I was never quite able to keep up with my father in terms of functioning as a fisherman, because he expected me to function as an adult, and I wasn't an adult. His voice is always at the back of my head when I work. We can talk about that later on.
Mayfield: Well, we can talk about that now.
Di Mare: Really?
Mayfield: Yes. I remember reading something that Philip Guston once said, and I don't remember exactly what it is, but it was something like, when you're in the studio and you're lucky, first the critic leaves–
Di Mare: Yes, yes. ((Laughs))
Mayfield: then the teacher leaves
Di Mare: Ah
Mayfield: and then if you're lucky, you leave; that disassociation of self. But I've always thought that when you're in the studio, first the

critic leaves, then the teacher leaves, but the parent really, sometimes–

Di Mare: Stands out.

Mayfield: sticks around.

Di Mare: Yeah, I like that. I've never heard–, you've never said that quote to me before. I like it. I don't think the artist ever leaves. I think that would be a mistake.

Mayfield: Well, I think it's, it's this sense of disassociation of self, when you are so immersed and in touch with your intuition. It's a different kind of self that leaves.

Di Mare: Yeah, okay, since you describe it that way, yeah. But it is true, uh, I think I've talked to other artists about this, they all have little tapes, in their heads, and they're usually their parents.

Mayfield: Yes.

Di Mare: Their parents.

1 And ↑I discovered it when, u:h (0.6) oh, quite a few years ago. (0.5)

2 I used to take great pleasure just sitting (.) at this desk (.) and maybe (.) like braiding for two days, (0.4) >just to braid after braid for two days.<

3 And I could ↑find myself sometimes (.) in the middle of braiding getting ↑so anxious (0.4) that I'd have to ↑stop. (1.0)

4 I mean, I got ↑that ↑anxious.

5 And (0.7) that ↑day that I ↑heard my father's voice saying, "Presto," [(1.2)] which is Italian for "faster"

Mayfield: [mhm]

6 Di Mare: and he used to ↑say that to me. (1.5)

7 He would ask me in Italian "CAN'T you work faster?" (0.6)

8 >And this is the guy working with all these little hooks on the ((inaudible)) [(0.5)] or cutting gauge, you know, (.) with my ↑fingers there.<

Mayfield: [Right.]

9 A:nd when I heard– when it, when it dawned on me, uh (0.3) then I ↑think (0.6)

10 >how am I going to say this< (0.2)

11 I think we ↑all have these tapes (0.7)

12 a:nd (0.7) I think when we first begin to hear them,

13 >when we start to see ourselves as doomed to always hearing these tapes.<

14 Mayfield: Yes.
15 Di Mare: And (.) I don't (.) think that's true.
16 You have to ↑really listen carefully. (0.4)
17 And when I heard ↑that particular one, (0.4) I then knew to, to slow down and say to myself >°"I'm doing the best I can"°< (0.5)
18 which is what I (0.2) wish I had said to him (0.5) when I was (0.6) thirteen, twelve years old (0.6)
19 "I'm doing the best I can." (0.5)
20 And that, uh, although it ↑doesn't stop the anxiety level ((laughs)) from building up.
21 Mayfield: Right.
22 Di Mare: At least now I don't have to ↑stop and like, (0.5) you know, think about "What's going ↑on here?"
23 There are a lot of tapes.
24 I can tell you ↑endless stories about tapes.
25 Mayfield: Endless stories.

Di Mare prefaces his story by referring back to what has been said previously in the interview concerning the influence of parents on artists. The overall interview situation in which the story is embedded is important because Di Mare responds to the interviewer's already quasi-philosophical train of thought concerning identity formation by offering yet another metaphor (the "tape"). The interview context also shows that stories in interviews are often the result of questions that attempt to elicit such responses and that the interviewee's 'narrative identity' that emerges from such a story is co-constructed at best (and a figment created to cater towards the interview requirements at worst). It is interesting that Di Mare prospectively tries to enhance his story's credibility and universal message by referring to "other artists" he has talked to about "this": "they all have little tapes in their heads, and they're usually their parents." At this point, the image of the "little tapes" in one's head has not been clarified yet but, even before the story is told, Di Mare generalizes the validity of his experience by drawing on other 'reliable sources,' as it were: the experience of hearing one's parents' voices is presented as 'common and shared experience,' as the maximum quantifier "all" ("they all") and the adverb "usually" ("they're usually their parents") suggest.

After this story preface, which is meant to arouse the listener's interest because the central image used remains slightly opaque, Di Mare provides a brief orientation, in which he specifies the 'where' and 'when' of the life-changing incident: "And ↑I discovered it when, u:h (0.6) oh, quite a few years ago. (0.5) I

used to take great pleasure just sitting (.) at this desk (.) and maybe (.) like braiding for two days" (lines 1–2). The light stress on "I" shifts the previously mentioned general experience of hearing one's parents to a personal one, which now becomes the center of the narrative. The temporal adverbial "quite a few years ago" locates the event squarely in the past, and the background scenario is set by means of the habitual preterit construction "used to." Di Mare describes the intensity of his work at the time not only by mentioning its duration, "for two days," but also through the durative present participle construction with "just sitting at this desk."[10] Note also that the demonstrative pronoun "this" implies proximity, which is not surprising because the interview took place in Di Mare's studio. Di Mare functions as the deictic center and the spatial deictic pronoun "this" points to the nearby desk. At the same time, the listener is 'drawn into' the spatial setting of the storyworld in which the upcoming event is going to take place. This intensification of the narrated moment could be interpreted as the first step towards focalization in this story.

The narrative continues with a complicating action sequence, which ranges from lines 3 to 5. The topic is Di Mare's anxiety, which suddenly overcame him while he was working: "And I could ↑find myself sometimes (.) in the middle of braiding getting ↑so anxious (0.4) that I'd have to ↑stop. (1.0) I mean, I got ↑that ↑anxious. And (0.7) that ↑day that I ↑heard my father's voice saying, 'Presto,' (1.2) which is Italian for 'faster.'" Again, the preterits "could" and "[woul]d have to" indicate habitual action while the continuous form in "getting" introduces a sense of immediacy as well as dynamism and thus opens a conceptual window onto how the narrator must have felt in that situation. This feeling is further stressed by the immediate repetition of the phrase "getting ↑so anxious," this time in the regular preterit form and with the slightly more colloquial demonstrative pronoun "that" as an intensifier. The discourse marker "I mean" is used to ensure that the listener understands what has been said, and it generally also establishes rapport between interlocutors (in the sense of 'I am trying as best as I can to make that plain to you').

Line 5 then contains the event that leads up to the climax in this story. Suspense is created through a delay of relevant information, in this case in a relative clause which further specifies "the day": "that day that…". The presentation of the father's voice in direct speech furthermore dramatizes the moment and aims at involving the listener. Again, these elements contribute towards

10 Admittedly, this present participle could also be interpreted as a gerund if one sees it as complementary to the preceding verb phrase "I took great pleasure [in]…" This reading would weaken but not erase the point I am making here as "-ing"-forms generally imply dynamism.

focalization in the story: we are invited to experience the narrator-character's, or experiencing self's, emotions and to peer into his head at the moment when the significant event occurred. Line 5 also shows the different narrative levels at which the narrator positions himself and, at the same time, the listener: we accompany the narrator-character within the story ("I heard my father's voice saying…"), while on the interview level Di Mare also feels the need to explain to the interviewer what the word "Presto" means: "which is Italian for 'faster.'"

Lines 6 and 7 are particularly interesting in the context of temporal frameworks since they relate a kind of 'pre-story,' or prior story, to the one about the experience of hearing the father's voice. Di Mare takes the interviewer right back to his childhood: "and he used to ↑say that to me. (1.5) He would ask me in Italian, 'CAN'T you work faster?'" Interestingly, Di Mare's tone of voice changes when he impersonates his father speaking, stressing the verb "can't" through an increase in volume – which can be considered as an attempt to re-enact, rather than just tell about, the moment. On the level of grammar, habitual preterit constructions are again used to indicate the regularity with which Di Mare's father responded this way to his son's work. The demonstrative pronoun "that" in line 6 is anaphoric (or pointing backward) because it ties back to "Presto," but it can also be seen as cataphoric (pointing forward) since the following line repeats at full length what the father said. The use of direct speech in line 6 again makes the scene vivid for the listener. We 'hear' the father's reproachful comment as it must have been made on several occasions. This immediacy is even strengthened in the following two lines, where suddenly the tense shifts from simple past, the standard tense used for narrative recounting, to present tense. At the same time, the speaking rate becomes faster, underlining the dramatic thrust of the moment when Di Mare 'heard' his father's reproachful voice while working on a wood art project: ">And this is the guy working with all these little hooks on ((inaudible)), (0.5) or cutting gauge, you know, (.) with my ↑fingers there<" (lines 7–8). Di Mare implies that 'hearing' his father's demand for being faster was potentially dangerous at a moment when he was working with tools that could hurt him. The historical present brings the related events closer to the listener since they are temporally relocated to the here and now of the interview situation. This is supported through the proximal demonstrative pronouns "this" and "these" at the beginning, which shift to the distal deictic "there" only in the end.

The self-reference to Di Mare as "the guy working […]" is interesting since it suggests self-distancing through the definite determiner "the" and the lexical choice of the colloquial noun "guy," which is only overcome when Di Mare then mentions "my fingers," using the first-person possessive pronoun. The self-

referential "I" in the subsequent clause in line 10, which first refers to the 'experiencing I' in that situation ("I heard") and then to the 'narrating I' reflecting on that incident ("I think") also shows how the narrative is woven into the interview situation. Di Mare not only strives to tell the interviewer about a noteworthy event or action but also searches for the right words to retrospectively evaluate this event. This insertion of another mini-narrative or account demonstrates once again the performative side of storytelling: the narrator to a certain extent re-enacts what happened 'then' in the 'now' of the interview situation (see also Chapter 6).

Line 9 temporarily moves back to the point of time of the incident, the hearing of the "tape," only to move on to an evaluation that is marked by present tense: The events are evaluated in retrospect from Di Mare's present-day perspective (lines 9 to 16). It is interesting that this relocation is troubled, which can be seen in two false starts: "And when I heard– when it, when it dawned on me, uh (0.3) then I, I think (0.6)..." (line 9). Through replacement of one referring subordinate clause with another, the event ('I heard the "tape"') is conflated with its consequence ('and then I realized something'). That this 'something' is difficult to verbalize becomes obvious in the numerous self-corrections (the false starts already mentioned and the repair introduced by "I think" at the beginning of the clauses in lines 9 and 11). The parenthetical self-reflexive question: ">how am I going to say this?< (0.2)" (line 10) supports this interpretation. Here, Di Mare adopts a meta-communicative stance to reflect on how to word what he wants to say.

What the narrator realizes at that moment, and then recapitulates in his telling of this story, is that everyone possesses parental voices in their heads and that this is inevitable: "I think we ↑all have these tapes (0.7) a:nd (0.7) I think when we first begin to hear them, >when we start to see ourselves as doomed to always hearing these tapes<" (lines 11–13). The choice of "doomed" suggests a story template that probably resonates with many people: our parents' influence can be like a never-ending curse. Narrative cohesion is again established through repetitions ("I think") and parallelisms ("when..."). The most striking feature here, however, is the shift in pronouns. Di Mare uses the inclusive first-person plural pronoun "we" first and then shifts to generic "you" in line 16: "You have to ↑really listen carefully." The second-person pronoun can also be said to assume the function of "double deixis" (see Chapter 6) here: "you" refers to anyone who had similar experiences but can also be understood as addressing the interviewer to some degree. The shift from "we" to "you" generalizes the related experience and thus makes it more universal. At the same time, Di Mare

himself is no longer directly included in the pronoun and thus he distances himself from the experience he talks about.

My analysis of this narrative's discursive features up to this point again shows its literary complexity: the replaying of other people's words, deictic shifts and self-distancing as well as meta-communication are features that one equally finds in fictional narratives. Like any good piece of fiction, Di Mare's non-fictional story also aims at engaging the recipient's mind and at conveying an important idea about life. The main difference is that, while the author of a piece of fiction need not be personally invested in the story he tells, Di Mare or any real-life storyteller usually is: what they tell presumably sits at the heart of their life experience, otherwise they would not talk about it at such length and, as in this case, with such intensity. Still, were these little anecdotes that Di Mare tells throughout the entire interview expanded upon and integrated into a larger, continuous narrative, the end result would not be very different from a written autobiography – whether fictional or non-fictional. What contributes to this impression is also Di Mare's penchant for narrating moments of recognition or epiphanies, that is, moments in which he learned something significant about himself and his relationship to others – which, as I already pointed out, is a common feature in literary narrative genres such as the short story, too, for example.

8.5 Epiphany and Self-Reflection

The distancing strategy mentioned above can be explained if we once again separate the experiencing self in the narrative from the narrating self in the interview situation. Di Mare assesses his experience in retrospect and no longer considers it as downright negative ("And (.) I don't (.) think that's true," line 15) as he did before (">when we start to see ourselves as doomed to always hearing these tapes<," line 13). By using the first-person pronoun, he makes a clear statement concerning his newly gained conviction at the time of the interview and beyond. This is a good example for third-level positioning, in which storytellers position themselves vis-à-vis themselves and thus say something more fundamental about their identity (Bamberg 1997). Rather than still dreading the moment when he hears his father's voice, Di Mare thinks it is helpful since it tells him something about his behavior as an adult. This revaluation of the incident is further elaborated in line 17: "And when I heard ↑that particular one, (0.4) I then knew to, to slow down and say to myself, >°'I'm doing the best I can'°<." The causal link between the incident and the lesson learned from it is marked by the consecutive temporal adverbial "then," and the subsequent

change in behavior is emphasized by means of direct speech. The sentence "I'm doing the best I can," which is interestingly spoken with a lowered voice as if under the teller's breath, is said quasi in direct response to Di Mare's father in this replay. The change in voice quality suggests that this kind of situation Di Mare recounts here still emotionally affects him.[11]

The 'response' he offers is the kind of response Di Mare wishes he had been able to give to his father but was not, which becomes the topic of lines 18 and 19. They both belong to the resolution of the narrative. The repetition of the late response in line 19 again stresses the conflict resolution Di Mare achieved, albeit too late. Lines 20 and 22 function as a kind of coda in which Di Mare draws a link between the experience related in the actual story and his current life situation. The bottom line is that, even though he is not able to make his anxiety go away, he can now rationalize it: "At least now I don't have to ↑stop and like, (0.5) you know, think about 'What's going ↑on here?'" (line 22). The question in the end, presented in direct speech, once again dramatizes the type of anxiety-ridden situation the story refers to and re-enacts Di Mare's mental and emotional response.

Lines 23 and 24 eventually lead back to the interview situation, in which Di Mare once again justifies the telling of this particular story, namely by claiming that it is not singular and out of the range ("There are a lot of tapes") and that many similar stories could be told. This meta-narrative comment signals the significance of 'this kind of story' through reference to many others like it ("↑endless stories") but at the same time cuts short the potential telling of all those stories. The fact that Di Mare resumes his image of the "tape" can be interpreted as a bonding device in the interview situation since now the interviewer is 'in the know' about what the mentioned "tapes" mean. The comment linguistically conveys a sort of 'tongue in cheek' atmosphere between interviewer and interviewee and defuses the seriousness of the overall topic: one's parents' sometimes not so beneficial impact on one's adult identity.

Mishler (1999: 122) says: "Identity is not static, a stable achievement of adulthood that resolves the uncertainties and diffusion of adolescence. [...] A structure in tension, it is always in process of change and reformation." The story at hand illustrates such change or rather, it shows how narratives are used to *discursively (re)create* changes in one's identity and to thus serve one's self-

11 The relationship between tone of voice and emotionality is a fascinating field that deserves closer attention. I remember distinctly how, for some time after I had suffered my stroke several years ago, whenever I mentioned this to someone I invariably and automatically lowered my voice, as if I was compelled to whisper a sad secret to my interlocutor.

presentation. It also demonstrates what Mishler calls the "restorying" of one's past, which may involve a degree of self-mythologizing as discussed in Chapter 3. Literary complexity and *fictional contamination* as can be seen, for example, in the extended use of metaphorical imagery ("the tape") support such myth-making.

Di Mare "restories" his childhood experience and frames it as a major influential factor for his behavior as an adult. In Frank's (2010) terminology, we can see to what extent Di Mare's father's ideals of work and diligence have held a grip on Di Mare without him realizing it until he experienced this moment of recognition, of which his interview narrative tells us. More importantly, however, this example shows that the storyteller recreates a storyworld for the interviewer in the here and now of the interview situation. Through linguistic cues such as spatiotemporal deixis and references to persons and actions, focalization is achieved – albeit not quite in the Genettean sense –, which means that the listener is drawn into the storyworld and is given the opportunity to view events from the vantage point of the narrator-character or experiencing self. Since this 'immersion' of course only happens imaginatively and partially as both speaker and listener remain anchored in the current context of the interview situation, we may well talk about a "half-subjective image" in Mitry's (1965) film-terminological sense as mentioned above.

8.6 Focalization and Alignment

In literary studies, one function frequently attributed to focalization is that the reader is brought closer to the character that functions as the focalizer, as I pointed out above. This technique often has the effect of arousing sympathy for the character whose perspective we assume. I would argue that something similar happens in oral stories. Listeners are aligned with the predicaments, views, experiences of the narrator-character when they are offered special insight into his or her perception of what happened. In Chapter 6, the use of double deixis and focalization in the GPs' narrative about a patient who experienced domestic violence is a case in point: the GP creates distance to the lifeworld of his patient while also trying to gain approval from the interviewer concerning his own role in a situation where he "cannot do much." This example and the examples in this chapter show that storytellers position themselves vis-à-vis their interlocutors. Within the story told, the narrator-character, through his or her particular vantage point, is also positioned vis-à-vis other 'characters' – in the second example above, for instance, the artist's father. This positioning can display harmony or ruptures, love and friendship or antagonism. Again, because listen-

ers are invited to participate in this positioning by means of focalization, they are drawn into the storyteller's life world and perhaps gain a perspective close to that of the storyteller's.

Aesthetically, this kind of 'drawing in' is not so different from focalization in fictional narratives. The examples in this chapter demonstrate that oral stories, too, operate at multiple levels and serve the purpose of creating strong images of a specific moment in listeners' minds. It is not difficult to imagine how easily such creations of 'dramatic' scenes can tip over into something so embellished and extraordinary that tellers' credibility becomes compromised. As the first example also showed, dramatizations like these may tap into existing story templates (see also Chapter 5). Ultimately, the sum of linguistic aspects that contribute towards focalization and story elements on the level of content can once again be counted among narrative features that signal *fictional contamination*.

9 Conveying People's Thoughts: Mind Representation and Free Indirect Discourse

In the previous chapter, I attended to focalization as a literary concept that may also be useful in analyzing narratives in non-fictional contexts. Focalization, which answers the question "Who sees?", entails perception in general, including all the senses: visual, auditory, tactile, olfactory, gustatory. Readers or listeners are invited to imagine all the sensual aspects of the presented storyworld. However, focalization as it is used in literary studies usually also encompasses the question how these sense perceptions are processed in characters' minds. That is, thought and mind representation is one significant subcategory of focalization and, as I demonstrate in this chapter – which draws on Mildorf (2008) – it also plays an important role in oral history narratives.

In literary narrative, at least if one follows the speech category approach, i.e., the approach that models thought representation in analogy to speech representation, thought can generally be presented in one of three ways: as direct thought, thought report, or free indirect thought (Palmer 2004: 54)[1]:

a) She thought, Where am I? (direct thought)
b) She wondered where she was. (thought report)
c) She stopped. *Where the hell was she?* (free indirect thought)

What can be seen in example (c) is an instance of *free indirect thought* or *free indirect discourse* (subsequently abbreviated as FID), also called *discours indirect libre* and *erlebte Rede* in French and German. We have here a peculiar mixture of the narrative voice and the subjectivity of the presented character or, in Hernadi's (1972) terms, "the narrator substitutes his words for a character's speech, thought, or sensory perception" (35). While the sentence still belongs to the narrative on account of its third-person narrative situation and its continued use of past tense, the direct interrogative clause and the colloquial expression "the hell" point towards the character's subjective feelings in this situation and can be regarded as a transformation of her original thought: "Where the hell am I?" More finely grained typologies with further distinctions and intermediary steps have been proposed, for example, by McHale (1978, 2005) or Fludernik (1993a), but I will limit myself to the more basic typology here.

1 Palmer in fact criticizes that very same speech category approach. For simplicity's sake, however, I maintain this approach here and will later introduce another set of terms used by Palmer which may ultimately prove more useful.

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9.1 Uses of FID in Fiction and Non-Fictional Texts

To illustrate the working of FID in a larger textual context, let me quote a passage from Dawn Powell's autobiographical novel *My Home Is Far Away* (2001[1944]). The passage is exclusively written from the perspective of a child, Marcia Willard:

> Every night in London Junction Lena cried and sometimes their mother rocked her in her arms, big girl that she was, and sang to her. Sometimes she cried, too, leaning over to hide her tears on Lena's yellow curls, and sometimes this sniffling woke up the sensitive Florrie who would set up a great sympathetic bellow and have to be taken up, too. Marcia stood in front of this emotional spectacle, puzzled and unmoved.
> "What's Lena bawling about?" she asked repeatedly, and her mother always answered, "She's homesick for the old house on Peach Street."
> Marcia tried in vain to understand. *Lena had been as excited as she herself had been to come to London Junction. All right, now they were here. They had their wish, didn't they? Just as they'd made it so often on loads of hay and falling stars. But instead of being happy Lena had to bawl. It didn't make sense. Mama cried, too. Florrie always cried, so that didn't count.* (19–20, italics mine)

The stretch of text marked by italics represents young Marcia's thoughts and feelings when faced with the 'strange' behavior of her sister Lena. While the preceding sentence ("Marcia tried in vain to understand") can be read as pure narratorial comment, the subsequent sentences clearly depict the scene from Marcia's perspective and reveal her thoughts. The narrative voice mingles with the subjectivity of the little girl, which can be seen in expressions and syntactical constructions typical of spoken discourse, e.g., "All right," and the tag question "didn't they?"

Furthermore, words like "Mama" indicate a level of familiarity and intimacy the protagonist has with her mother. In terms of grammar, this text passage is a classic example of FID because it is cast in third-person narrative written in past tense but with deictic features pertaining to the here and now of the narrated storyworld as though it were presently experienced: "All right, *now* they were *here*." The effects of using FID here are, first, to present the storyworld from one particular character's perspective and thus to highlight her personal feelings and experience and, second, to convey irony. The reader realizes that Marcia's childlike view is limited and that she does not fully comprehend the extent of what is happening in her family. Creating irony, especially verbal irony, is a recurrent pragmatic function of FID in literary texts (Oltean 1993: 707; see also Oltean 2003).

It has been argued that FID is exclusive to literary texts; indeed, most of the literature on FID features literary examples.[2] The evaluation of FID as a literary narrative technique results from the attribution of qualities of fictionality and factuality to the respective narrative genres and modes, whereby claims of truth-commitment and sincerity are made for spoken language. Genette (1990), for example, closely associates the possibility of internal focalization as expressed in FID or interior monologue with fictional rather than non-fictional texts:

> Though one might endlessly argue the degree to which these subjectivizing constructions are present in non-fictional and even nonliterary narratives, it is incontestable that they are more natural in fictional narrative, and, give or take a few nuances, we could very well consider them to be distinctive features which differentiate one type from the other. (762)[3]

Genette goes on to argue that

> "omniscient" narrative is even less verisimilar than [narrative marked by external or internal focalization], logically speaking, for if it is a violation of verisimilitude to know the thoughts of one person, then it ought to be a quantitatively greater violation to know the thoughts of everyone (though to do so one only needs to have invented them all, of course). Let us keep in mind, then, that mode is, at least in principle, revelatory of the factual or fictional status of a narrative and, therefore, a point of narratological divergence between the two types. (763)

In other words, factual narrative cannot allow for access to a third person's consciousness through techniques such as FID since this would violate our expectations of what counts as possible in real life.

Ann Banfield (1978) argues along similar lines when she characterizes sentences of represented speech and thought as non-communicative or, to use her terminology, "unspeakable":

> Represented thought is the linguistic style which captures the direct (noninterpreted) expression of the "stream-of-consciousness" without suggesting that this latter is communication. The SELF, who is not necessarily the first person, is addressing no one. Even represented speech is syntactically noncommunication: speech rendered as perceived or experienced — "overheard" — expression, but with the communicative function removed. (Banfield 1978: 431)

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2 For accounts that include the possibility of FID in non-fictional stories, see Fludernik (1993a) and Tommola (2003).

3 Subsequently Genette contends that external focalization, where any intrusion by the narrator is avoided and the characters' actions are presented entirely from the outside (as in texts by Hemingway or Robbe-Grillet, for example), are equally "unnatural" and indicative of the fictional nature of a narrative.

Since represented speech and thought are stripped of their communicative function in the sense that the thought/speech represented is not really targeted at anyone, Banfield considers this mode of narrating a "literary" style (432). What doubtlessly underlies such interpretations is the Gricean maxim of quality, which urges one not to say what one believes to be false and not to say that for which one lacks adequate evidence. To have access to other people's minds is generally considered to be impossible in real life except in special cases of socially extended cognition (Palmer 2004: 143–147); therefore, the representation of other people's consciousness in conversational narratives must be regarded as impossible or limited to rather contrived narrative settings. I shall suggest, however, that the distinction between knowing the thoughts of others and not knowing them is not as clear cut as these discussions appear to assume.

A more recent account of FID in non-fictional discourse is offered by Andreas Stokke (2021). Stokke analyses examples from history books, where thoughts are indirectly ascribed to real historical figures. One of his examples reads:

> Sitting in sunlit Rome at the height of his powers, a little giddy with invincibility, Caesar must have imagined a nice little sideshow, a triumph on the cheap. Faced with the glittering armour of the legions and the eagle standards, the barbarians would simply line up to surrender. They would understand that history always fought on the side of Rome. (Schama 2009 [2000]: 29, qtd. in Stokke 2021: 1).

The last two sentences constitute examples of FID because they suggest what may have been on Caesar's mind at that point. Stokke interestingly argues that these sentences have "fictional force" since they are not based on anything Caesar actually said or thought. This distinguishes them from instances of FID with an "assertoric force," where the reference is to something that was said or thought in the real world (Stokke 2021: 2).[4] Such introductions of "small-scale (historical) fictions into the otherwise non-fictional discourse," Stokke argues, "facilitate acquisition and retention of factual information about the relevant historical figures and events by the audience" (11). Indeed, looking at Stokke's example, one can see how fictionalization is already used before the onset of FID: thus, a little scene is conjured up with Caesar sitting "in sunlit Rome," and he is ascribed an emotion of 'giddiness' at that moment. This degree of fictionalization is perhaps not surprising in a popular history book, i.e., one which is specifically geared towards a mass, rather than an expert, audience.

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4 An example for assertoric uses of FID could be the minutes of a meeting, which report what participants contributed to a discussion.

Such examples are widespread, and other linguists in the past have identified FID in non-literary texts such as news articles, for example (Redeker 1996; Semino, Short and Culpeper 1997; Short, Wynne and Semino 1999). For conversational narratives, however, the examples are few, and it is debatable whether they are instances of FID at all. Consider, for instance, the following sentences presented by Livia Polanyi (1984: 159) as "'classic' indirect free speech":

> And he was telling Dolly, *I don't want Dolly*.
> And he goes to her, he goes, *I don't think she's gonna die anymore. She's gonna live*. (my emphasis)

Since there is co-referentiality between the addressee of each utterance and the person spoken about as well as because of the unusual usage of personal pronouns, Polanyi identifies in the marked sentences "a mixture of speech forms" (159), which to her seems to be a sufficient criterion for the sentences to count as FID. Following Laurel J. Brinton (1995), who discusses similarly complex mixed constructions of free indirect style containing non-anaphoric reflexives, e.g., pronouns that do not (as would be expected) relate back to a noun in the preceding discourse, I would consider Polanyi's examples as instances of "partial direct quotation" (179) that blends with constructed speech (see also Chapter 4) used as a kind of thought report to convey what the speaker must have felt or thought at the time.[5] One could also interpret these examples as instances of Lieven Vandelanotte's (2009) DIST or *distancing indirect speech or thought presentation*, i.e., when a direct address is represented indirectly but the deictic center of the present speech situation is maintained. Thus, instead of using the address pronoun *you* to fully imitate the direct speech situation they relate, the speakers in the examples above use a full noun ("Dolly") or a third-person pronoun ("she"), thus mixing their current vantage point with that of the original speech situation.

Possibly the reason why FID is hard to find in conversational discourse is, as Stokke suggests, that, in its assertoric force, it would have to refer to actual speech or thought. The latter seems to be problematic, as narratologists have argued (see above), because to relate another person's thoughts and feelings might clash with rules of entitlement and storytelling authority. However, as my examples in Chapter 5 and this chapter demonstrate, such pragmatic restraints do not hinder storytellers from still ascribing thoughts, feelings and motivations

5 Truly "classic" FID versions of Polanyi's examples would read as follows: "He just didn't want Dolly!" and "He didn't think she was gonna die anymore. She was gonna live!"

to others. It seems that a preferred option for conveying other people's speech as well as thoughts is to use direct discourse. There may, however, be borderline cases where the status of a sentence as either the teller's assertion or an example of FID may not be clear, as in the following quote from an interview with computer scientist Raymond E. Miller.[6] In this excerpt, he mentions the hobby of another colleague, playing the pipe organ.

Narrative 9.1

1 But he built a house at Stanford when he was out there.
2 I guess he's still there, in the Stanford region.
3 And the house had to be specially designed.
[...]
4 *He had to have a pipe organ in his house*,
5 so the place for the pipe organ had to be worked out to have in his home.
6 He's currently a very good organ player, as well. (my emphasis)

The sentence "He had to have a pipe organ in his house" is ambiguous, I would argue, because it looks light a straightforward assertion on the surface, but the semantics of the verb phrase suggests that the sentence expresses an inner state, namely what this colleague urgently wished to have. If one interprets "had to" as a past tense form of the modal auxiliary "must," which is commonly used to express some inner compulsion rather than the workings of external forces (Leech 2013 [1971]: 83), then the verb phrase may be read as relating what this colleague felt or even verbalized: "I must have a pipe organ in my house." This reference to an actual thought or speech would then make the sentence a case of FID.

Even though this and the other examples above may be flawed, Polanyi's explanation of the occurrence of FID in oral storytelling is interesting and can serve as a starting point for further reflections: "this style may be used principally when there are three levels of individuals involved in a reporting: the character in the storyworld, the narrator who observed goings on in the storyworld via an original telling, and the speaker who must report both the embedded story (what was said in the movies in our examples) and the embedding story (that the speaker heard it said)" (160). While I would go along with Polanyi's tripartite division of narrative personae, I suggest the use of the narratological categories "character" for the actor(s) whose thoughts/feelings are "re-

6 The full interview can be accessed here: https://dl.acm.org/doi/10.1145/1141880.2349376

ported" (see Chapter 5), "experiencing persona" for the speaker/narrator as part of the storyworld (the person perceiving/observing/hearing, etc. what is going on in the storyworld) and "narrating persona" for the speaker/narrator who relates in retrospect what he or she perceived, observed, heard (see Chapter 1). Furthermore, I would not limit instances of FID and, by implication, of third-person consciousness, to "tellings," i.e., *speech* situations, but would also apply this term to similar techniques used for thought representation.

Another useful framework in this context is Rita Landeweerd and Co Vet's (1996) adoption of Peter Sells' (1986) distinction between such discourse roles as *source*, *self* and *pivot* for their explanation of tense in indirect and free indirect discourse: "the role of *source* is taken by the person who is the agent of the communication, *self* refers to the role of the one whose mental state or attitude the proposition describes, *pivot* stands for the role of the one with respect to whose mental space-time location the content of the proposition is evaluated" (144). As far as FID is concerned, Landeweerd and Vet (1996) claim that "all three roles are assigned to the internal subject. This is a remarkable fact because FID does not always refer to some saying event, but may very well represents [sic] a character's feelings, perceptions or thoughts in a free indirect way" (157). In the example of FID from Dawn Powell's autobiographical novel, it is Marcia's lack of understanding for her sister's crying that is presented rather than any other character's emotions. This makes Marcia the *self* in this passage. At the same time, the events are presented entirely from her perspective as is indicated by the space-time deixis. Thus, Marcia also becomes the *pivot*. Furthermore, since the words used to describe Marcia's attitude are mostly her own, she can also be seen as the *source* of the communication, at least for the duration of the FID passage.

These examples show how storytellers ascribe thoughts to the persons or 'characters' they talk about. Guessing what others thought or felt in a situation is inevitably part of storytelling because this is what we constantly do in our relationships with other people anyway: we try to understand other people's motivations and actions, what they think about certain topics and, more importantly, about us. The techniques for mind and thought representation that are available to authors and narrators in fictional stories are essentially also at the disposal of storytellers in non-fictional settings (see also Hatavara and Mildorf 2017a, 2017b). To explore this possibility further, I now turn to a narrative taken from the *healthtalk.org* website.

9.2 Creating Personal Identity through Thought Ascription in Family Stories

In the preceding chapters, I concentrated especially on the presentation of professional identity in contrast to personal identity in the narrative discourse of general practitioners and craft artists, for example. However, other groups like friends and family also play a significant role in our lives and determine our identity. Srikant Sarangi (2006) maintains that "[f]amily is conceptualized as a social institution that mediates the individual and the social, with identifiable structures, functions, and hierarchies" (403). Family structures in turn are largely based on narratives, as Langellier and Peterson (2004) argue, and these narratives establish members' in-group and out-group status and thus define who belongs to a family and who does not: "What we commonly call 'the family' is not a single, naturally occurring phenomenon but variations in small group cultures produced in embodied, situated, and material performances such as family storytelling. Family storytelling is a multileveled strategic discourse carried out in diverse situations by multiple participants who order personal and group identities as family" (113). A problem arises when personal stories potentially threaten family unity because of a discrepancy between feelings of loyalty on the one hand and misgivings about other members of the group on the other.

To illustrate these points, I turn to the following interview narrative related by a 52-year-old man suffering from epilepsy (previously discussed in Mildorf 2010). The narrative recounts his second seizure and the reaction of his family.

Narrative 9.2

When the second time it came round,
when I had the second fit which wasn't very long afterwards,
and they decided that "yeah you've got epilepsy,"
my grandmother, my grandparents, my grandmother particularly was really distraught, sobbing.
And basically my parents were supportive
but um, they kept the,
it's like they kept the lid on things.
Um, yeah they didn't want,
there was a degree of shame if you like,
not, I don't mean that unkindly on them,
I think they meant well
and they were very supportive to me.

13 But they didn't want to go round saying "Excuse me but my son's an epileptic,"
14 and they would much rather I suppose naturally talk about success rather than what was certainly perceived as a failure.

This narrative can be divided into two larger parts: the actual narrative ranging from lines 1 to 7 and a lengthy evaluation from line 8 onwards, which resumes and elaborates the key point of the narrative, namely that the family were not willing to discuss the narrator's illness openly ("they kept the lid on things," line 7). The narrative begins by anchoring the storyworld temporally in lines 1 and 2: "When the second time it came round, when I had the second fit which wasn't very long afterwards." While the first line gives a rather vague image of the incident because of the replacement of "the fit" with the third-person pronoun "it" and the somewhat unusual verb phrase "came round," the second line specifies what happened by explicitly mentioning "the fit" and by tying the incident back to the narrator's first seizure alluded to in the relative clause "which wasn't very long afterwards." The following narrative clause in line 3, which entails the complicating action of the story, depicts a crucial point in the illness narrative: the labeling of the illness as "epilepsy." Labeling plays an important role in medical consultations since giving a label to a physical condition turns this condition into a definite disease or problem and thus establishes it as a fact (Maynard 1988).

What is also noteworthy here is the use of direct speech or "constructed dialogue" (see Chapters 3 and 5): "'yeah, you've got epilepsy?'" Like in literary narrative, direct speech is used to enliven a scene and to create in the listener a sense of vicinity to the characters in the scene. In this particular example, the use of direct speech gives additional weight to the labeling of the narrator's disease, which is also reinforced by the affirmative interjection "yeah." The revelation of the diagnosis is dramatized and the characters in this 'drama' come to life, as it were. More importantly, however, the direct speech here also assumes a distancing function that works in two ways. On the one hand, the narrator as experiencing self distances himself from the doctors who passed the diagnosis by making them stand out as distinct characters or actors in his illness narrative ("*they* decided that..."). On the other hand, the narrator also distances himself from his ill persona and refuses identification with the label of "epilepsy" by reconstructing the diagnosis in direct speech and by thus presenting himself as second-person *you* rather than *I*. The address form implies that the label was imposed on the experiencing self from the outside and has not been fully incorporated yet (compare with 'and they decided that I had epilepsy'

or even 'and they decided that I've got epilepsy'). A similar strategy is used in line 13, where the identification, and hence acknowledgment, of the illness through labeling is again presented in direct speech: "'Excuse me but my son's an epileptic.'" This time, however, labeling the disease is precisely what does not happen, what the narrator's family "didn't want to go round saying." The constructed speech in this context displays the speaker's criticism of the way in which his family dealt with his condition. Especially the apologetic phrase "excuse me" suggests that, for the family, there was something to be apologetic about when it came to the son's epilepsy. Likewise, the generic category "an epileptic" indicates a degree of stigmatization.

Criticism of the family's attitude towards the narrator's problem is the central topic of the narrative, and the family's behavior constitutes large parts of the plot. What is interesting, however, is the fact that the narrator repeatedly tries to tone down his criticism and that he uses a number of linguistic strategies in order not to come across as someone who is unjustifiably disappointed with his family. To use Tannen's (2006) term, the narrative is "rekeyed" in the sense that the overall tenor changes. In line 4, the narrator depicts the distress felt by his grandparents and especially his grandmother (see the self-correction from "my grandparents" to "my grandmother") and emphasizes this through the adverb "really" as well as the additional action verb "sobbing." The continuous form of the verb implies that this expression of the grandmother's distress must have been lengthy and ongoing. Line 5 focuses on the parents and describes them as "supportive." The adverb "basically," however, already anticipates some contrasting action, which is then introduced through the coordinator "but" in the following line: "but um, they kept the, it's like they kept the lid on things" (lines 6–7). The container metaphor evoked in the expression "they kept the lid on things" suggests that the parents regarded the narrator's illness as something that must be contained or suppressed. More precisely, the metaphor expresses what the narrator as experiencing self thought his parents did and felt. The hesitation marker "um" used at this point (lines 6 and 8), the speech cut-off in line 6, and the use of the modifier "it's like" in line 7 after "they kept the" before the phrase "they kept the lid on things" is completed – all these indicate a high level of self-monitoring and point towards the interaction work the narrator is doing as the narrating self, i.e., from his present-day perspective. In Jahn's (1996, 1999; see Chapter 8) terminology we could say that the narrator occupies *focus-1,* i.e., he offers the 'lens' through which the storyworld is perceived. Furthermore, the narrator also occupies *focus-2* since he concentrates on himself in relationship to his parents in his narrative. As I already argued, even in conversational storytelling one ought not to assume simple co-referentiality

between the storyteller and the person expressed in the first-person pronoun *I*. Instead, it can be useful to differentiate between various narrative personae and functional roles a narrator may assume (see Chapter 2).

Rather than presenting the behavior of his parents straightaway as an absolute fact, the narrator reformulates it in terms of his own retrospective perception or focalizer position ("it's like") and thus mitigates the potentially critical stance conveyed in the metaphorical phrase. This mitigating strategy is repeated in another clause cut off in line 8 ("Um, yeah they didn't want"), which is then resumed in line 13 ("But they didn't want to go round saying…") with a range of excuses and justifications of the parents' behavior placed in between (lines 11–12: "I think they meant well and they were very supportive"). We can see how the narrator tries to convey something of the internal mindset of his parents and thus to explain their behavior. Furthermore, hedges are employed to deflect the impression of the narrator as unduly critical: "I don't mean that unkindly on them" (line 10); "a degree of shame" (line 9). The conditional clause "if you like" (line 9) indirectly negotiates the word choice of the noun "shame" and has the additional phatic function of establishing rapport between storyteller and listener (in the sense of 'I am lacking a better word at this point but you know what I mean').

Chatman's (1986) distinction between *filter* and *slant* can also be useful for the analysis of this narrative. While the events at the time of the diagnosis and the family's reaction are "filtered through" the narrator's eyes both on the level of the experiencing and the narrating self, the critical judgment that is implicitly passed can be reframed as the "slant" the narrator takes on the events in retrospect. This slant, however, becomes more ambivalent through the excusatory tone introduced because of the interview situation. When talking to the interviewer the narrator feels obliged to maintain face as the understanding son of the family despite his likely disappointment about the reaction of his parents.

The division of the narrator's position into *slant* and *filter* can be further observed in the final line of the narrative, in which the narrator speculates on reasons why his parents did not want to discuss his illness openly: "and they would much rather I suppose naturally talk about success rather than what was certainly perceived as a failure" (line 14). The most striking aspect here is the free indirect discourse (FID) in "they would much rather […] talk about success," which blends the narrator's voice with the alleged thoughts/motives of his parents (something like: "We'd rather talk about success").[7] It is important

7 Typical features of FID in this example include the omission of the reporting clause ("they thought" or "they said" or "they felt"), the change from first-person to third-person pronoun

to bear in mind that the narrative does not represent what the parents actually said or thought but what their son *assumes* they may have said or thought. In other words, the clause containing FID is used to convey hypothetical thought or speech. This corresponds to Stokke's (2021) suggestion that FID may be used with "fictional force" in non-fictional discourse to illustrate a point.

As I mentioned above, FID is often said to be limited to literary narrative because it enables the narrator to access the minds of characters in the storyworld, a phenomenon that is supposed to be impossible in real life. In this narrative we see that even conversational storytellers can make use of FID if they present the thoughts, feelings, or motives of other people. That this form of access to other people's minds is unusual and hence needs to be explained or justified in oral narratives (while it is a perfectly legitimate form in literary narrative), can be seen in the insertion of the above-mentioned verb phrase "I suppose," which identifies the speaker's statement as his conjecture rather than an observable and verifiable fact. The parents' reasoning, which could easily come under attack if understood as a sign of lack of courage and acceptance of the son's predicament, is thus again mitigated and presented in a defensive manner. This verbal defense of the parents culminates in the passive construction used at the end of the narrative: "what was certainly perceived as a failure" (line 14). The adverb "certainly" again frames the presented feelings in terms of what the narrator "believes to be true" rather than what "is true" (what Leech (2013 [1971]: 115–119) calls "theoretical meaning") – a hedging move that would be unnecessary in a fictional text. More importantly, however, the "experiencers" or "originators" of these feelings are completely blotted out. In other words, the perception of the narrator's illness as "failure" is not explicitly attributed to anyone. One could interpret the relative clause as referring to the perception of others ('what other people perceived as a failure'), in which case the parents' behavior would imply shame and lack of courage. One could also read the clause as indicating the parents' own perception ('what they perceived as a failure'), which would even magnify their sense of shame. Both interpretations are problematic in the context of family storytelling as they suggest criticism of one's parents and thus pose a potential threat to family unity.

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use ("we would rather" to "they would rather"), tense backshift of the modal verb "would," and the use of features of spoken language such as the combination of the quantifier "much" with the adverb "rather" (see also Leech and Short 2007: 260–268). Since the verb is a modal verb, the backshift is not evident from the linguistic form alone as modals typically do not change when they are in past tense. However, the context with past tense in the preceding and following clause strongly suggests that the modal verb must also be set in the past here.

Tajfel (1978) demonstrates that denigration of members of the out-group is necessary for the definition and demarcation of one's in-group. If family members are criticized, they are indirectly placed on a par with out-group members and the boundaries between groups become blurred. For this reason, criticism needs to be toned down by means of a defensive slant on the narrative expressed in numerous linguistic and narrative strategies. Chatman's distinction between *filter* and *slant* proves useful as it helps explain a discrepancy in this oral narrative: while the *slant* the narrator offers on the storyworld is defensive of the narrator's parents and ostensibly presents them in a positive light, the narrator's function as filter grants the listener an insight into the minds of the parents, which implicitly conveys a sense of disappointment and criticism. These two levels of communication remind one of Etzersdorfer's (1987) "double dialogue" or of Phelan's (2005) distinction between "narrator functions" and "disclosure functions" as discussed in Chapter 2. On a more global narrative level, the switch between the experiencing self and narrating self positions, which entails a switch from the filter to the slant function of the narrator, mark a shift in the narrator's positioning. He moves from the position of son who confirms his membership in the family group to the position of ill person who feels excluded and stigmatized by people who do not inhabit the same domain of illness (in the sense of Anne Donald's (1998: 23) "wellness-illness divide").

The examples of mind ascription through thought report and FID – even though the examples for the latter are admittedly imperfect – indicate that storytellers do try to 'read' others' minds and to make sense of people by ascribing to them certain motivations, emotions and thoughts. There are obviously limitations to what extent this can be done in conversational settings – in contrast to fiction, where an author can make up any thoughts for characters. Furthermore, in conversational settings such mind attributions reflect back on the teller or, put differently, we may begin to wonder why storytellers assign such thoughts to others and to what extent their 'interpretations' in turn characterize them rather than the people they talk about. Everyday storytelling thus displays a complex intersubjectivity. The narrative techniques used to convey people's thoughts are indicative of *fictional contamination* because, strictly speaking, complete mind attribution should be impossible in real life. And yet, people do this all the time, albeit with the necessary mitigating strategies that I discussed in my examples. If tellers were to extend such mind ascriptions further, they would certainly move closer to creating actual fictions, and their credibility as storytellers would be compromised.

9.3 Character and Audience Positioning through Thought Representation: Alignment and Manipulation

My final example in this chapter can be located on the margins of the category of life storying. It is an excerpt from a eulogy that former president Barack Obama gave at the funeral of Reverend Clementa Carlos Pinckney, who had been killed together with eight members of Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Charleston during a bible study class on June 17, 2015.[8] The eulogy does engage in partial life storying, however, to the extent that Obama also talks about the life of Rev. Pinckney. What is especially interesting for the purposes of this chapter is the moment when Obama starts talking about the murder and, indeed, about the murderer. Even though the incident itself is not, strictly speaking, accessible to anyone through their memories, Obama manages to conjure up a sense of the situation and, more importantly, of what must have gone through the killer's mind:

Narrative 9.3

1 We do not know whether the killer of Reverend Pinckney and eight others knew all of this history,
2 but he surely sensed the meaning of his violent act.
3 It was an act that drew on a long history of bombs and arson and shots fired at churches,
4 not random but as a means of control, a way to terrorize and oppress
((applause))
5 an act that he imagined would incite fear and recrimination, violence and suspicion,
6 an act that he presumed would deepen divisions that trace back to our nation's original sin.
7 Oh, but God works in mysterious ways.
((applause))
8 God has different ideas.
9 He didn't know he was being used by God.
((applause))
10 Blinded by hatred, the alleged killer could not see the grace surrounding Reverend Pinckney and that Bible study group,

8 The speech can be accessed in its entirety at: https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2015/06/26/remarks-president-eulogy-honorable-reverend-clementa-pinckney

11 the light of love that shone as they opened the church doors and invited a stranger to join in their prayer circle.
12 The alleged killer could have never anticipated the way the families of the fallen would respond when they saw him in court in the midst of unspeakable grief, with words of forgiveness.
13 He couldn't imagine that.
((applause))
14 The alleged killer could not imagine how the city of Charleston under the good and wise leadership of Mayor Riley, how the state of South Carolina, how the United States of America would respond not merely with revulsion at his evil acts, but with ((inaudible)) generosity.
15 And more importantly, with a thoughtful introspection and self-examination that we so rarely see in public life.
16 Blinded by hatred, he failed to comprehend what Reverend Pinckney so well understood — the power of God's grace.

Obama begins with a hedging move when he says: "We do not know whether the killer of Reverend Pinckney and eight others knew all of this history" (line 1), by which he refers to the history of black churches in America, which have provided shelter and a safe haven for black people during times of slavery and beyond. The negation of the verb "know" suggests precisely that neither Obama nor anyone else can possibly look into the murderer's mind. And yet, this does not prevent Obama from making conjectures about that very mind in the remainder of his narrative: "but he surely sensed the meaning of his violent act" (line 2). "Surely" as an adverb signals near certainty even though it still marks what is said as hypothetical. What strikes one is the contrast between "knowing" and "sensing" that Obama ascribes to the murderer. While he did not "know" the history of black churches in America, nor that of Pinckney's life, he "sensed" why he committed the murder. This juxtaposition implies ignorance on the one hand and a personality driven by emotions and affects on the other – a contrast that runs through the entire narrative.

The theme of affect returns most strikingly in the twice repeated phrase "Blinded by hatred" (lines 10 and 16). The murder is thus labeled as a hate crime. Other motivations are offered: "It was an act that drew on a long history of bombs and arson and shots fired at churches, not random but as a means of control, a way to terrorize and oppress" (line 3). Obama here creates a sense of fatality that also has a historical dimension. The murder is contextualized in a series of similar crimes committed in the past, all of which share the same goal: to "control," "terrorize and oppress." Obama's description is rhetorically pol-

ished as can be seen in the fact that he uses three verbs that more or less mean the same (rhetorically speaking this would be a special instance of *hendiadys*), which balances with the three types of weapon he mentioned earlier to give those crimes more weight: "bombs and arson and shots," which are combined through "and" (*polysyndeton*) to make the phrase more rhythmical.

Obama then continues to ascribe various motivations to the murderer directly. Thus, he is said to have "imagined" (line 5) and "presumed" (line 6) that his deed "would incite fear and recrimination, violence and suspicion" (line 5) and that it "would deepen divisions" (line 6). The two verbs of thinking or *verba putandi* are interesting as they imply that Obama is now looking into the murderer's mind – despite his previous claim that he could not "know" – and they introduce a special instance of focalization. The moment is now filtered through the murderer's thoughts. More importantly, Obama ascribes clear intentions to the murderer, and again these are emphasized rhetorically through the sequential combination of two sets of two goals, all of them negative ("fear and recrimination, violence and suspicion"), and an *alliteration*, i.e., the same phonic onset in subsequent words, in "deepen divisions." These intentions strike one as the more peculiar since Obama continuously talks about the murderer as "the alleged killer" (lines 10, 12 and 14), thereby signaling that we cannot even be sure whether the person who had been caught was the actual murderer.

Obama then traces the divisions he mentioned back to "our nation's original sin" (line 6), leaving unspecified what exactly he refers to here but of course alluding to the nation's history of slavery. In using the term "original sin," Obama frames the murder in religious terms, thus presenting it as an inevitable consequence of some original evil deed, which is at odds with the previous presentation of the murderer's willfulness and intention. This tension between a premeditated crime and an act that almost followed 'naturally' from history is then seemingly resolved when Obama brings God into the equation. In an adversative clause introduced through the discourse marker "but" and preceded by the interjection "oh," which dramatizes that moment in the speech, Obama now suggests that the murder was in fact God's work: "Oh, but God works in mysterious ways" (line 7) and "God has different ideas" (line 8). He further specifies that the murderer "was being used by God" but "didn't know" that (line 9). This is a potentially audacious move because the question of guilt becomes diluted: while the murderer is assigned an intention, that intention and the resulting killing become instruments of God, thus something neither the murderer nor anyone else is in control of. Put differently, agency is now transferred to God, beyond the power of humans. At the same time, Obama ascribes a certain motivation to God.

Why does he do that? Especially to non-believers, this rhetorical reframing of the killing becomes strange because it begs the question: why would Obama of all people know what God wanted (if there was a God)? And secondly, is it not problematic to deflect agency away from the murderer and to assume that God had designed the killing of one of his servants and several devout believers? Of course, the bible is full of stories like that. And this seems to be precisely the point. Obama speaks on the occasion of the funeral of a religious man, and to draw on a religious explanatory framework in such a context seems appropriate as well as strategically adept. Obama reaches out to a community of believers. At the same time, he uses this argument of God's will to pursue another aim with his speech, namely, to instill a sense of community in his listeners – not just believers but anyone listening to him on that day.

He does this by, first of all, excluding the murderer from the community of believers. Unlike people trusting in God, the killer "failed to comprehend [...] the power of God's grace" (line 16). On several occasions, verbs of perception, understanding and thinking are negated to underline the murderer's lack of comprehension – the theme of ignorance mentioned above. Thus, he "could not see the grace surrounding Reverend Pinckney and that Bible study group" (line 10), he "could have never anticipated" (line 12) the unexpected reactions of the victims' families, and he "could not imagine" (lines 13 and 14) how his murderous act would in fact result in Americans' "forgiveness" (line 12) and "generosity" (line 14) rather than merely "grief" (line 12) and "revulsion" (line 14). In this connection, it is noteworthy how Obama gradually extends the community from the victims' families in line 12 to all Americans by using the rhetorical device of *climax*: he moves from the "city of Charleston" to "the state of South Carolina" to "the United States of America" (line 14). At the same time, the victims of the shooting are referred to as "the fallen" (line 12), thereby likening them to people who have fallen in a war. Both rhetorical moves confer magnitude on this incident.

In extending the scope of respondents to the United States, Obama implies that *all* Americans surprisingly showed "a thoughtful introspection and self-examination," and by adding the relative clause "that we so rarely see in public life" (line 15), he implicitly juxtaposes this reaction with what one would normally have expected, namely, the exact opposite: more hatred. In narratively creating this scenario of benevolence, generosity and self-reflexivity, Obama characterizes American citizens in an undoubtedly positive way; however, he also aligns them with an idealized version of themselves, one that they can hardly refute without first having to criticize the values on which this image is founded. This puts them in a double bind: while it is certainly flattering to be

cast in such positive terms, Americans are also divested of the possibility to view the incident negatively, to express their anger, grief and frustration, because to do so would immediately separate them from this 'holy' community Obama is talking about. Even as an atheist one is already excluded from the start because it is implied that one is definitely not going to be one of those who – unlike the murderer – can see "the power of God's grace" (line 16).

Despite (or precisely because of?) its rhetorical flourish and narrative-discursive strategies, the speech becomes problematic because it categorizes both the murderer, the victims and, ultimately, all Americans in an attempt to create alignment with its underlying ideology. Potential criticism or other reactions to the incident that people may feel are strategically suppressed as unfitting, even though anger, grief and even blaming may – psychologically speaking – be necessary steps in the working through of such a traumatic experience. Ironically, we can see how Obama uses strategies of exclusion in a speech that also serves the aim to unite the nation against racist sentiment and terrorist attacks.

As we see once more in this example, focalization and thought presentation are significant narrative strategies to create scenarios in listeners' minds, even scenarios that no-one could have first-hand access to but that are entirely *imagined*. This is important, I think, since it shows again how the boundaries between fact and fiction can become blurred through certain narrative-specific techniques and thus contribute towards *fictional contamination*. This blurring of the boundaries can ultimately also serve the purpose of manipulating people's views and emotions, for better or worse. Much has been made of the manipulative discourse used by Obama's successor. However, it is worth remembering that manipulation is part and parcel of the discursive strategies of politicians of all colors and that narrative, precisely because of its propensity for *fictional contamination*, has a big role to play in it.

In my final analytical chapter, I turn to narratives of vicarious experience as another feature bringing conversational stories and interview narratives closer to fiction.

10 Narratives of Vicarious Experience: Telling Someone Else's Story

In Chapter 5, I looked at characters as one important element in life stories. In narratives of personal experience, the central character is of course one's former self. Still, other characters are important since they play a role in our lives and impact in manifold ways on our development, actions and behavior. As Molly Andrews (2014: 8) writes: "How and what one perceives and understands about one's own life is always connected to one's view of others. Who am I (and who are 'us') invariably invites the question of who are 'they' (or other), just as the reverse is true." This construction of self "draws equally on (situated) knowledge and imagination," Andrews argues, but is also "deeply rooted in our pasts (sometimes acknowledged, sometimes hidden)" (8). Charlotte Linde (2009) makes a similar point when she contends that: "There are certain stories that I may tell as events distant in social time or space, which are unrelated to me. There are other stories from an equally distant past that I tell as part of my story, because they are a necessary part of understanding who I am and in what groups I claim membership" (78). Linde seems to imply that one may equally tell stories that are not related to oneself. She calls these "narratives of events not experienced by the narrator" "retold tales" (77). To my mind there is a difference between saying that stories are not about us and that stories are not related to us. I would argue that the latter is impossible because every story that we decide to tell we tell for a purpose, and if it is only to prove a point, to show off what we know, or whatever. In this sense, all the stories we tell are related to us and to our situational compulsion to tell these stories even though we may not be their immediate subject matter. Linde also seems to suggest that storytelling rarely has the sole function of reproducing knowledge about past events or of recounting the past, which seems to be diametrically opposed to Labov and Waletzky's (1967: 20) claim that narrative is "one method of recapitulating past experience by matching a verbal sequence of clauses to the sequence of events which (it is inferred) actually occurred." As already became obvious in Chapter 2, narratives do more than merely reconstruct the order of past events. Rather, they create identities in the stories as well as *in situ*, i.e., in the storytelling moment. Even very distant events may still turn out to be somehow connected to who we are, as is often the rationale behind family storytelling (see previous chapter). Olivia Guaraldo (2013) reports an interesting case where a Milanese woman decided to write down her friend's life story because her friend did not feel up to the task but still desired to "hear her story voiced by someone"

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(77).[1] The case illustrates that self-narration need not necessarily be the only means of creating narrative identity – a point which deserves more attention.

What interests me in this chapter then is the fact that oftentimes the story told is actually someone else's story and is thus not strictly centered on the narrator's own life experience. That is, the focus here is not so much on self-narratives or narratives of personal experience that also feature other 'characters' – which is a staple characteristic of autobiographical storytelling more generally (Rosen 1998: 9; see also Mildorf 2022) – but rather on other people's stories. Neal Norrick (2013a, 2013b), following Monika Fludernik's terminology (1996: 14), has called this phenomenon of stories about others "narratives of vicarious experience." In his survey of numerous such stories from three different databases, Norrick found that, in principle, they could locally fulfill almost all the functions that personal experience narratives also fulfill, e.g., "share news, illustrate a point in an argument, entertain, and so on" (2013a: 386), except for displaying self-disclosure (I can only disclose my own experience) or one's resistance to troubles (the troubles I talk about need to be ones that I personally went through). Interestingly, as far as the epistemic authority of the teller is concerned, Norrick finds that it "recedes in importance as the contextual significance of a story as an illustration increases" (403). Still, both Norrick and Linde emphasize that stories of vicarious experience raise questions concerning knowledge and storytelling rights since, strictly speaking, one can only tell *one's own* story with some confidence and authority. As this chapter demonstrates, this does not hinder storytellers from telling other people's stories. Amy Shuman (2015: 43) argues that "speaking others' words or telling other's stories" can be "a way of claiming authority – the authority to represent, for example, or the authority that comes from insider knowledge." Furthermore, one could argue that other people's stories have the potential to enrich the experiential dimension of interview narratives, just as the past tense extends the temporal framework of the discursive moment of the interview and spatio-temporal parameters more generally can create storyworlds which transcend the here and now of the interview situation. Indeed, there seem to be plenty of occasions when people tell narratives of vicarious experience, and for various reasons, but inevitably such stories make the boundaries between fact and fiction fuzzier.

1 A famous literary example for a vicarious autobiography is Gertrude Stein's (1989[1933]) 'autobiography' of her partner, Alice B. Toklas. What is particularly entertaining is those moments when Stein writes about herself in the voice of Alice.

10.1 Narratives of Vicarious Experience in Craft Artists' Interviews

I want to start out with a discussion of two examples of craft artists' interviews from the Smithsonian Archives (previously discussed in Mildorf (2019b) and Hatavara and Mildorf (2017a) respectively) and pursue the idea that stories about fellow artists contribute towards craft artists' sense of who they are as well as towards their *ad hoc* self-explorations in the more immediate discursive context of the interview. Frequently in the interviews I surveyed, stories about others occur because interviewers explicitly ask for those stories or at least ask interviewees about their relationships with other artists in their field. It is quite noticeable across the interviews that artists cross-reference one another and that they talk about moments shared with other artists, places they had been to together, etc. What emerges is what one could call a *network of shared experience* featuring the same personae and events (see Mildorf 2019b).

10.1.1 Reportability, Involvement and Community Building

The first excerpt shows an example of a spontaneously told anecdote, i.e., its telling was not directly solicited by the interviewer. Art and antique dealer Abraham M. Adler (1902–1985) was interviewed by art historian and gallery director Paul Cummings on 13 September 1975 in New York. In the context of talking about his work and which skills are required for it, Adler remembers an occasion when he met "Mrs. Stanford," presumably the widow of famous New York architect and interior designer, Stanford White. Line numbering begins with the actual story.

Narrative 10.1

	Mr. Adler:	Yes, these are the days that will never come back again because there never was a collection as extensive as that.
	Mr. Cummings:	Mm-hmm. ((Affirmative.))
	Mr. Adler:	And having had architectural training, you know it was easy for me to see what could be used, what could be adapted and all.
	Mr. Cummings:	Yeah, right.
1	Mr. Adler:	Which incidentally brings me back to a story.
2		I got to know Mr. Stanford's wife
3		and she wasn't very–, didn't have very happy memories about her husband.

4	Mr. Cummings:	Mm-hmm. ((Affirmative.))
5	Mr. Adler:	And she told me when he was doing the Morgan House–
6		and I could take up days with you ((inaudible)).
7	Mr. Cummings:	Fine. ((Laughs.))
8	Mr. Adler:	No, but it's a very–
9	Mr. Cummings:	Yeah. Yeah.
10	Mr. Adler:	interesting thing.
11		She said he used that sort of device
12		and doing the Morgan House he had previously gone to Europe
13		and bought up ((inaudible)), bought up these paneled copper ceilings
14	Mr. Cummings:	Mm-hmm. ((Affirmative.)) Right.
15	Mr. Adler:	and they would be of a certain size and all, you know.
16		They had these various places that they had demolished
17		and he would design a room ((inaudible)),
18		and then say, "Well, Morgan what we need for this room here is a copper ceiling. I think I'll take a trip to Italy for you and see if I can't locate a ceiling that's roughly that size and give it that,"
19		having the copper ceiling already in the warehouse in New York. ((They laugh.))
20		And then he cabled Mr. Morgan, "Found just the ceiling you wanted. $20,000 or what have you. Should I buy it?"
21		and then of course he'd cable back, "By all means."
22		And they waited a reasonable time
23		and out of the warehouse came this perfect ceiling. ((They laugh.))
24		But yeah, but this is quite different than–
25		our storehouse was the Hearst Collection.
26	Mr. Cummings:	Oh, yeah.

The fact that Mrs. Stanford is not further contextualized in the interview indicates that she must be so well known to an insider that no further explanation is necessary; or at least it points to Adler's assumption that his interlocutor must also know who is meant by this. He uses what Stivers, Enfield and Stephenson (2007: 11), following Sacks and Schegloff (1979), call a "recognitional reference form," i.e., a reference that allows interlocutors to recognize who is meant. Shared knowledge about eminent personae in the field and about their work is

presupposed. This can again be seen in Adler's reference to "the Morgan House" (line 12), where the definite article presupposes knowledge about the referent of the noun phrase. Adler then relates an anecdote about "Mrs. Stanford's" husband, which he was told by the widow ("she told me," line 5; "She said," line 11). This anecdote is embedded in the story of his encounter with her. Since the narrative relates events that had not been witnessed first-hand by the narrator, it falls into Linde's (2009: 77) category of "retold tales." Nevertheless, Adler takes advantage of a certain narrative license when he presents Stanford White's story *as if* he knew exactly what had transpired. Elements of dramatization include direct speech or "constructed dialogue" in line 18 and direct quotation of a short correspondence between White and his client in lines 20 to 21. Whether Mrs. Stanford had used exactly those words in her original story is debatable because, as Buchstaller (2014: 49–50) contends, "there is plenty of evidence that quotes are very rarely verbatim representations of the original speech act" (see also Chapter 4). In fact, when Adler 'quotes' the telegram that White cabled to his client (lines 21–22), the imprecision of the sum White demanded for his services ("$20,000 or what have you") suggests that Adler is merely making up a sum for the purposes of retelling the story. The idiomatic expression "what have you" signals the randomness of the figure to the interlocutor while at the same time playing down the importance of knowing the exact price.

The function of constructed dialogue and quotation here clearly is again to create involvement. The events are dramatized for the interlocutor so he can vividly imagine the scenario in his mind and feel a sense of immediacy of those past events. Another strategy used to engage the listener is that the narrative follows the ideal pattern of a personal experience narrative in the Labovian sense. The story about White's professional practices properly begins in line 11 with a short abstract: "She said he used that sort of device." The point of the narrative then is to elaborate on this "device" by offering one specific example. While the quotative "she said" still signals the epistemic status of what is told as someone else's story, the remainder of the narrative no longer does that, thus seemingly anchoring the story with the narrator of the current storytelling situation. The narrative has a lengthy orientation section ranging from line 12 to 17, which offers information that is necessary for listeners to understand the actual story. The 'pre-story' is temporally marked by the use of the past perfect (lines 12 and 16) in addition to the simple past. Furthermore, the modal auxiliary "would" (lines 15 and 17) suggests habitual action, i.e., White 'tricked' his clients on more than one occasion, if not as a rule. The complicating action from line 18 to 22 then illustrates by means of the particular, dramatized example how this 'trick' worked. The structural principle in this narrative is not so much

that it leads up to a surprising twist. In fact, the outcome of the story – as presented rather laconically in the short resolution in line 23 – is to be expected all along. Instead, the pleasure to be derived from this story resides in the fairly detailed description of how the client is duped by White. In other words, the listener enjoys the story because he has superior knowledge about what really went on while one of the characters in the story simply 'did not get it.'[2] That this special strategy of engaging the interviewer is successful can be seen in the laughter that the interviewer and interviewee share in lines 19 and 23. Significantly, laughter occurs at relevant moments in the story, namely after the resolution and at the moment when the 'secret' knowledge about White's practices is verbalized ("having the copper ceiling already in the warehouse in New York," line 19) and functions as a kind of joke between interviewer and interviewee in the current storytelling situation.

The way in which the story is told underlines its "reportability" (Labov 2013: 21), i.e., the fact that it is worth reporting. Adler also uses a number of evaluative clauses to mark the anecdote's reportability. He, for example, assumes his storytelling rights when he signals through a metalinguistic comment that he is just about to tell a story: "Which incidentally brings me back to a story" (line 1). This can also be seen as the abstract to the frame narrative, in which Adler relates how he met Mrs. Stanford. The subsequent orientation section in the frame narrative, where Adler mentions Mrs. Stanford's unhappy memories of her husband (line 3), is obviously meant to prepare the listener for an unusual story. Adler then makes two further metalinguistic comments that both implicitly and explicitly evaluate the narrative as worth reporting: he seems to suggest that he "could take up days" (line 6) telling Cummings about his encounter with Mrs. Stanford and the anecdotes she had told him, and he says about the story to follow that "it's a very [...] interesting thing" (lines 8 and 10). In these comments the evaluative stance gradually shifts from the frame narrative (the fact that Adler's encounter with Mrs. Stanford is worth reporting) to the actual narrative of vicarious experience (i.e., to the reportability of the anecdote about White's professional trickery).[3] It is worth considering the question of "reportability" in more detail at this point.

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2 Incidentally, such con man stories have a long tradition in American culture, both in literary writing and the oral tradition of the 'tall tale.' This shows how narratives of vicarious experience may also draw on powerful cultural templates (see also Chapter 5).

3 The fact that there is evaluation in this narrative of vicarious experience is of importance insofar as Labov (1972: 371) claims that such narratives typically lack evaluation. For a discussion that challenges Labov's view, see Norrick (2013a: 390). See also below.

As I pointed out in Chapter 3, Labov (2013: 21–23) explicitly connects "reportability" to "credibility" by arguing that "*credibility is inversely related to reportability*" (italics original). Applied to narratives of vicarious experience, this could mean that such stories have the potential to be on the whole even more reportable than first-person narratives of personal experience because the threshold for what one would deem credible in such stories is arguably much lower to begin with. This could also mean that a story's reportability correlates with its degree of dramatization. In the present narrative, the use of direct speech is used for dramatizing effects and thus potentially compromises 'truthfulness.' At the same time, there is still a need on the part of the storyteller to attribute epistemic knowledge to someone who is in an authoritative position to have this kind of knowledge: Mrs. Stanford. As we shall see in the next example below, the attribution of epistemic knowledge is less problematic there because the storyteller and the person whose story he is telling are more intimately related.

The other interesting point concerns Adler's self-positioning. Why does he tell this story at that moment in the interview? In lines 24 and 25, the narrative's *coda*, Adler consciously links the story back to his own working practice, contrasting the means someone like White had at his disposal with Adler's own resources. In referring to a famous predecessor, Adler places himself in a tradition of quality and renown. At the same time, he sets himself apart by presenting in his story a slightly more negative aspect of this famous predecessor's work ethos. When Adler relates this anecdote, he also assumes the position of an 'insider' – a position of authority – because he can display this piece of intimate knowledge about White. To a certain degree, this narrative is his 'claim to fame,' as it were. Again, we can see how a special narrative form – in this case, that of narratives of vicarious experience – points to *fictional contamination* as it generates a storyworld that could strictly speaking not be 'known' by the storyteller first-hand or only through hearsay and that therefore inevitably fictionalizes that same storyworld to a degree in the retelling of the story. Were the teller to offer further embellishing aspects and even more intimate knowledge, listeners would soon start to be suspicious and question the story's credibility as well as the teller's trustworthiness.

In the next section, I continue with a subcategory of life storying already discussed in Chapter 9, family storytelling, and I explore how narratives of vicarious experience contribute to it.

10.2 Family Stories Continued: Everyday Storytelling and the Imagination

The next example is taken from a life history interview conducted by Glenn Adamson with Gerhardt Knodel, a fiber artist, on August 3, 2004, at the artist's home (previously also discussed by me in Hatavara and Mildorf 2017a). It is one of numerous family anecdotes the artist relates as part of his own life narrative, and it tells the story of how his grandmother emigrated from Germany to America with the artist's then adolescent mother.

Generally speaking, storytelling in families can be said to have a constitutive as well as a preservative function. Langellier and Peterson (2004), for example, contend that: "Family storytelling is a multileveled strategic discourse carried out in diverse situations by multiple participants who order personal and group identities as family" (113). Even though the example does not show the usually interactive and co-constructional nature of family storytelling, the story at hand is presumably the result of years of family storytelling between mother and son. More interestingly, these stories must at least on some occasions have been triggered by pictures in the family photo album – a point the artist mentions right before his anecdote and again at the very end (see below). This narrative frame creates an interesting storytelling situation: since the artist never knew his grandmother in person, the story he tells must be one he remembers from other storytelling situations where his mother must have given him relevant information. The memory of a decisive moment in the family's history which the artist thus recalls and replays in the current situation is technically not only once but twice removed, and it raises the question: whose memory is it? And how reliable is the memory thus triggered? After all, as psychological research has shown, photographs can lead to the creation of false memories because they can help people imagine details of an event which they subsequently confuse with reality (Garry and Gerrie 2005). The story at hand also raises questions concerning the generic boundaries between fictional and conversational narratives.

Narrative 10.2

Mr. Adamson: I think what we should do is just start by talking about your childhood – I'm in Milwaukee myself – so maybe we could start by talking about, you know, being born in Milwaukee, how long you stayed in Wisconsin, that sort of thing.

Mr. Knodel: Interesting question – interesting place to start – and it's kind of a long dip back in time from the perspective right

now, but my family – actually my parents immigrated from Berlin, Germany, to Los Angeles in the 1920s and they met there. My father's family had moved there in the late nineteenth century, in the 1890s. He had two great aunts that lived in Los Angeles. We have wonderful photographs in the family album of them in dark black dresses and dark hats, standing in front of the newly planted palm trees in front of the bungalow in what is now the center of Los Angeles.

So, little by little – and I think this is characteristic of so many people who came to the country in the nineteenth century – their enthusiasm for opportunity led to bringing other members of the family and that was the case with my father's side.

My mother's–
I'm going to tell you this little story because I think it's interesting
and I want to remember it,
my mother's father passed away when she was very young, four years old,
so she was raised by my grandmother, who was a dressmaker in Berlin.
And at one point, when my mother was about 15, nearly 16 years old, a quite rogue of a man,
he was a young German man who had come from Los Angeles and was on summer holiday in Berlin,
met my grandmother, Emma,
and they apparently had a wonderful time together,
to such a degree that when Carl Jaeger returned to Los Angeles, he wrote to my grandmother saying,
"Dear Emma, love you dearly.
I'm enclosing two tickets.
I want you and your daughter Lilly to come to Los Angeles.
And marry me."
And my grandmother was quite taken back
but the times were such that she said to herself,
well, this is an opportunity that I didn't know I was going to have
and I know what life is like in Berlin,

19	I think I'll try Los Angeles.
20	So they packed up everything, including pots and pans, which my grandmother were sure did not exist in Los Angeles ((laughs))
21	and moved.
22	We had wonderful photographs of that whole period of time in the family album.

10.2.1 Evaluation, Composition and Narratives of Vicarious Experience

Labov suggests that one thing that is missing from narratives of vicarious experience is evaluation, i.e., linguistic features in a narrative which signal to us that the event depicted was "terrifying, dangerous, weird, wild, crazy; or amusing, hilarious, wonderful; more generally, that it was strange, uncommon, or unusual—that is, worth reporting" (Labov 1972: 371). Norrick (2013a: 390) challenges this view, arguing that family narratives in particular "represent a specific case of vicarious experience stories in so far as they include the teller by default as it were: even if the teller did not actually witness the events, she owns telling rights and claims epistemic authority by virtue of her membership in the family." This epistemic authority makes it possible even for narratives of vicarious experience to have evaluation and, as we shall see, even experientiality. Knodel's narrative also shows that Labov's assessment is inaccurate. After a speech cut-off interrupting the orientation section in line 1, Knodel immediately offers an external evaluation that provides two reasons for his telling of the story: first, that "it's interesting" (line 2) and that he wants "to remember it" (line 3).

At this point the narrator derives his storytelling rights from the situational context: a life story interview affords spaces for telling stories and it is a site for remembering the past through storytelling. More interestingly, however, Knodel later even evaluates the point of the story from within the narrative and from the perspective of one of his characters, namely his grandmother, when he presents her reflections on why she left Berlin for Los Angeles. She saw the things that happened to her as an "opportunity" (line 17). The word "opportunity" mirrors the same expression used right before the anecdote begins, when Knodel comments more generally on "many people who came to the country in the nineteenth century" because of their "enthusiasm for opportunity." Within this context, one of the main points of this story seems to be to illustrate this sense of

opportunity and other motivations for emigrating with an individual, albeit not personal, example.

Knodel's story represents a perfect Labovian narrative in that it contains nearly all the elements of the diamond diagram (see Labov and Waletzky 1967, Labov 1972): after an *orientation* section in lines 4 to 6, the lengthy *complicating action* sequence ranges from lines 5 to 19 and culminates in the *resolution* in lines 20 and 21. This is followed by a *coda*, which links the events of the story to the present situation, in which the narrator once again remembers earlier family situations of presumably joint remembering in which the family album played a major role. A feature that is quite noteworthy in Knodel's narrative and that deviates from the "narrative syntax" delineated by Labov (1972: 354–396) is the narrator's tendency to use parenthetical insertions, mostly to provide further background information.

A by-product of this manner of telling the story is that it creates suspense. We already see this in lines 1 to 4, where the inserted clause suspends the orientation for a moment before the narrator offers further information on the life circumstances of his mother when she was a child. Line 6 introduces a significant change in the mother's life, which is signaled by the fronted temporal adverbial "at one point": a new man arrives in the grandmother's life. But before this encounter is actually verbalized, Knodel again suspends the beginning proper of the complicating action sequence by giving more background information about this man in line 7: "he was a young German who had come from Los Angeles and was on summer holiday in Berlin." The epithet "quite a rogue of a man" (line 6) suggests a humorous tone, which is later resumed when the narrator talks about how his grandmother wrongly conceived of Los Angeles as a backwater that did not even have "pots and pans" (line 20). The ensuing laughter also shows that this family anecdote tends towards the comic rather than the tragic and thus functions as a positive "founding story."

In Knodel's story, when the narrator says more about the encounter between the man from Los Angeles and his grandmother, namely that they "had a wonderful time together," he for the first and only time in the story uses a marker of epistemic uncertainty: "apparently" (line 9). This is hardly surprising, given the fact that the love story Knodel relates is not one he himself witnessed. The modal adverbial either suggests that he is telling this from hearsay, on the basis of what his mother had told him about those past events, or that he drew certain conclusions about this relationship on the evidence of what happened subsequently (or both). The latter reading is substantiated by how the story continues: the man, Carl Jaeger, was so much in love that he proposed to

Knodel's grandmother despite their great geographical distance, and she was committed enough to take the plunge and follow his call.

What is very striking about the way this part of the narrative is fleshed out, and this contrasts sharply with the mitigating force of the adverbial "apparently," is that Knodel now tells the story in such a manner as if it were a personal experience narrative, knowing things that he could not really know about under other circumstances. The narrative suddenly offers instances of "experientiality" – what Fludernik (1996: 13) sees as *a*, if not *the*, key to what she calls "natural narrative," which is effectively Labov's story of personal experience.

In lines 7 and 10 of the fiber artists' story, the inherent deictic semantics of the motion verbs "come from" and "returned" anchor the events related in the respective clauses with one of the two characters presented in this narrative. In the sentence "he was a German man who had come from Los Angeles and was on summer holiday in Berlin," "come from" suggests a deictic center closer to Knodel's grandmother, because she is the one living in Berlin, or, if Carl Jaeger is included in this deictic anchor, it suggests that they had already been there together in Berlin for some time. "Come from" clearly contrasts with other possible verbs such as 'gone to' in an alternative sentence like, for example, 'he was a young German man who had gone from Los Angeles to Berlin to spend his summer holiday there.' Likewise, in line 10, the verb "returned," which could be contrasted with 'went back to,' anchors the perspective with Carl Jaeger in Los Angeles rather than with Knodel's grandmother. Even though these perspectival shifts are minimal, they already form the kernel of what in a fictional story could result in shifting internal focalization.

The quotation in lines 11 to 14 relates either verbatim or from memory, but at any rate directly, what Carl Jaeger actually wrote to the narrator's grandmother: "Dear Emma, love you dearly, I'm enclosing two tickets," etc. Whether these are the exact words Jaeger used and whether Knodel actually had access to this letter, knows its content through his mother, or whether he is just making up the words in the interview on the strength of what he presumes must have been the letter's content is not entirely clear, nor does it matter for understanding the quotation's function here. In this example, the quotation actually fulfills at least three functions: first, it dramatizes a crucial moment in the lives of people who were important for the narrator's own life. By quoting this love letter directly rather than just saying 'Carl Jaeger wrote this love letter in which he proposed to my grandmother,' Knodel creates involvement and gives more narrative weight to this decisive moment. The stark contrast between the letter's almost laconic telegram style and the far-reaching consequences of its message emphasizes the significance of this moment even more. Secondly, in quoting

Carl Jaeger's words, the narrator allows his character to "speak for himself," to give expression to his love for Emma directly. Put differently, the quotation enables the narrator to attribute thoughts and feelings to his character in the storyworld in a 'showing' rather than 'telling' way (see also Chapters 5 and 9). This narrative strategy can thirdly also be seen as a hidden or embedded form of evaluation because the quoted letter makes clear why this was a turning point in the family's early history and why, therefore, the story is worth telling.

The attribution of thoughts and feelings to characters who, we have to remember, are *not* the narrator, is pushed even further when Knodel depicts his grandmother's reaction to Carl Jaeger's proposal. Her feelings are captured in the emotive verb phrase "she was quite taken aback" (line 15). The *inquit* formula "she said to herself" (line 16) introduces a string of direct thought presentation: "well, this is an opportunity that I didn't know I was going to have and I know what life is like in Berlin, I think I'll try Los Angeles" (lines 17–19). The first-person pronoun singular, the present tense and signs of orality such as the discourse marker "well," the elliptical negative particle in "didn't" and the cliticized (i.e., contracted through elision) verb form in "I'll" are all very typical for direct thought presentation and, if carried further, could lead to an instance of interior monologue. That this does not develop into a full-blown interior monologue may well be attributed to narrative genre: for someone to quote someone else's thoughts at length would most likely be considered odd by most listeners in everyday storytelling contexts (see also Chapter 9). Still, the potential for such fictionalization is there.

As Hatavara and I (2017a) argued, stories about others in conversational and documentary storytelling often assume fictional qualities in the way they present other characters' thoughts and feelings but also direct speech allegedly used in situations of which the storyteller may not have first-hand knowledge. In the examples above, there is a productive tension between the craft artists' storytelling creativity and their need to justify their authority and reliability as storytellers – a tension that, I would argue, one frequently finds in conversational storytelling. The same tension can also be found in autobiographical writing, where authors may employ the same techniques for a range of purposes, the most important one being, I argue, to triangulate their own life story with other people's stories and to thus illustrate or even prove the validity of one's own experiences (see also Mildorf 2016b, 2022).

We can see here once again how non-fictional storytelling can move closer toward fiction under certain circumstances. Of course, there are still significant differences: in a fictional narrative, narrators need technically not justify their knowledge of the events, persons, etc. they are talking about, although some-

times they do (in imitation of 'real-life' storytelling). In non-fictional life storying, storytellers usually make an effort to adhere to acceptable epistemic frameworks by flagging their entitlement to tell a story through recourse to their sources. Again, there is a tension between the urge to tell an interesting story, which potentially leads one further astray, and the necessity to maintain face as a reliable storyteller. If it was not for those pragmatic constraints, non-fictional storytelling would not be all that different from fictional storytelling because *fictional contamination* is already part and parcel of all narrative production and offers the possibility for full-fledged fictionalization if the generic and contextual circumstances allow it.

11 Concluding Remarks

Fictional contamination as a concept captures the idea that stories told in everyday conversational contexts and in oral history carry in them the potential to become fictionalized, even if, on the surface, they are essentially non-fictional. In this book I explored basic features of narrative that, if they are used in an excessive way, may give the impression that the story told is further removed from factual storytelling than expected. These features include perspective-taking, thought presentation, characterization, the employment of personal pronouns and double deixis, as well as dialogue, second-person narration and the rendition of vicarious experience, i.e., someone else's story. "Contamination" is a term I borrow from linguistics and psychology, where it denotes the fact that features from one (linguistic or conceptual) realm or domain can merge with another when they are in close vicinity and can thus lead to mutual influence. In my conception, *fictional contamination* is already an inherent feature of different types of narratives because of the *narrative homology* that exists between them. *Fictional contamination*, I argue, is connected to the fact that all forms of storytelling share some basic parameters at their most basic level. The reason why storytellers put this *fictional contamination* to use to a greater or lesser extent – either consciously or unknowingly – is that it serves the purpose of engaging a listener or reader, of drawing the recipient into the storyworld and thus to achieve a goal, which obviously can vary from context to context.

At its most fundamental, the goal may simply be to fulfil the function of phatic communion (Malinowski 1923; Senft 2009), i.e., to create or reinforce a bond between interlocutors. Storytellers will make their stories such that they are interesting. In Labov's (2013) terminology, oral stories are usually "reportable" or worth telling. Proponents of Relevance Theory (Sperber and Wilson 1986) have argued that contributors to a conversation always strive for relevance, that is, they want to make their contributions fit the discursive context thematically and also interpret others' contributions as being relevant to the conversation at hand. Some contemporary theories of fictionality (Nielsen, Phelan and Walsh 2015; Walsh 2007, 2019) rest on the main tenets of Relevance Theory. In the third chapter, I called into question the notion that relevance predominates as an absolute driving force for conversation, especially narrative conversation. Indeed, the many stories one comes across that seem to feature a lot of irrelevant information (Norrick 2020) or that constitute boring narratives seem to suggest that it is often not the content that truly matters but the act of telling in and of itself.

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In Chapter 3, I started out from the premise that what narratives enable us to do and what consequently makes them such valuable discursive assets is to convey experientiality (Fludernik 1996) or, in Herman's (2009) terms, *qualia*: what was a situation like for the person who tells us about it and, by extension, for all the other people involved in that situation? Moreover, and perhaps even more importantly, how does the story relate to the present storytelling situation? In my survey of oral history research in Chapter 2, it became clear that any story we tell is somehow connected to the moment in our life when we tell it; otherwise, why would we tell it? The boundaries between fact and fiction are also blurred when it comes to life storying because any narrative about one's past will be tainted by one's own subjective experience. The deficiency and creative propensities of our memories obviously also play a role in this. Some scholars therefore go as far as to argue that narrative is by default unreliable (Koschorke 2012), that we are well advised not to trust narratives. I am not as pessimistic as that, and I also do not want to argue that narratives automatically become fictional simply because they are marked by *fictional contamination*. It is a question of measure and context: the features I analyze are to be found in any narratives and do not necessarily turn those narratives into fiction straightaway, but as soon as they occur at a frequency that is more to be expected in a fictional text or are used in ways that are no longer condonable in everyday storytelling situations recipients will become suspicious.

What is perhaps unsatisfactory about my conceptualization of fictionality is the fact that those cut-off points, those moments when narratives are perceived as more fictional than non-fictional cannot easily be identified, nor measured in a quantitative way. Or at least very finely grained measuring instruments and methods would be required to find out at which point people develop the kind of suspicion mentioned above. My hunch is that such measures will be hard to arrive at because storytelling and listening to or reading stories are intricately complex activities that are not easily, or can perhaps never be fully, broken down to simple building blocks. Furthermore, each storytelling situation constitutes a unique context which draws on certain frames of reference and expectations in people's minds. There may be similarities across many such contexts, and the fact that the features I analyze occur with such regularity across different stories seems to suggest that there is considerable overlap. Still, I do not think that even these features can become cut-and-dried examples of anything that is fixed. Rather, storytelling – and as a subcategory of that, life storying – is a fluid process, one that is negotiated between interlocutors at every point of a conversation, and therefore needs to be addressed individually and in context.

In my theory chapters, I resorted to the term "emergence" to capture this processual quality of narratives constantly being in the making.

Before I use this last chapter to summarize my findings and to provide a final overview of the very basic features that constitute narratives and indicate or are marked by *fictional contamination*, I would like to address the important question why such a concept matters. After all, inquiry into narrative and into uses of narrative is not a trivial pursuit, given the ubiquity of this cultural practice, and concepts developed for the sake of this inquiry should therefore make a contribution to the field. Fictional contamination to my mind makes us understand why we sometimes begin to be wary about stories we hear. Unlike theorists like Jim Phelan and many others, I do not believe that fictionality can be unequivocally attributed to how the content of a story does or does not relate to reality. Or at least, I do not think that such a focus on content or on the ontology of story content provides a full picture. As I pointed out in my third chapter, other theorists have concentrated on "signposts of fictionality" (Cohn 1990), i.e., discursive features or elements that seemingly point to fictionalization. Mari Hatavara and myself have tried to complicate the picture by saying that there are features that travel across fictional and non-fictional storytelling contexts and that mark kernels of fictionality – for example, mind representation, others' stories, etc. These features are inevitably tied to a story's content. In my reconceptualization, I move away from the metaphor of 'travelling,' suggesting instead that *fictional contamination* is a possibility of fictionalization already there in all narratives.

I also argued in this book that the story and discourse levels that narratologists distinguish (see Chapters 1 and 2) cannot always be separated, or only for theoretical purposes. In actual practice, story and discourse are mutually influential and co-depend on one another. For example, dialogue is a discourse mode that offers a change to the predominant narrative mode in a story and is thus often used to enliven narratives. At the same time, dialogue is also an element on the content level of the story and introduces another framework within which to place new content (e.g., someone's opinions or ways of speaking). It can therefore serve the purpose of characterization and of extending the storyworld parameters.

So, what I argue is that thinking about *fictional contamination* as the complex ways in which story *and* discourse level elements together can border on the fictional because they thwart expectations helps us form a more realistic picture of what stories do. In recent years, there has been a vibrant (and sometimes vicious) debate about stories circulated in public arenas (often political ones) and about their truthfulness or falsity, about the effects such stories can

have when they are believed in or disbelieved and when, as a consequence, people act on and react to these stories. As with ideologies, it is always the other camp's stories that are flawed. What this book essentially demonstrates is that in fact any story has the potential to become 'more fictional.' Fictional contamination is simply a built-in quality of storytelling.

Such a reconceptualization of fictionality may also prove useful in contexts like psychotherapy, where personal storytelling matters for the assessment of a person's psychological disposition (Hutto 2023). My approach in this book, which combines narratological analysis with linguistic approaches to narrative discourse, is useful in that it helps one approach narratives within their discursive contexts, especially the small stories that interlace much of everyday communication. Awareness of the processes that go into storytelling and of its potentially fictionalizing features may offer people working in mental health settings or, indeed, in any other settings where people by default tell (life) stories, ways to not only monitor and assess their clients' narratives but their own re-narrativizations of those narratives in the clinical context.

My claim that *fictional contamination* as a feature of all storytelling is ubiquitous does not mean that I propose a postmodern *laissez-faire* attitude towards stories. As my discussion in Chapter 3 amply showed, most people still care about truth and trustworthiness, no matter how much academic theorizing has called these notions into question. I also strongly believe that there needs to be narrative integrity or an ethical attitude towards storytelling that takes into account one's responsibility as a storyteller and that entails a self-reflexive and self-critical stance. To achieve this, it is necessary to have a good understanding of the intricacies of narrative, also on a formal level. Awareness of any narrative's *fictional contamination* may help one identify the points that make one feel uneasy about a story, but also to avoid certain pitfalls oneself. Essentially, then, one aim of my book is also to show the complexity of seemingly 'simple' forms of storytelling and to demonstrate *how* storytellers achieve goals with their narratives. "Does this not leave room for more manipulation?" I hear critical voices say. Well, this is the problem inherent in any investigation into cultural practices: their description may offer implicit guidelines for how to instrumentalize them. Ultimately, however, those who use stories to manipulate others – and to a degree we all do this in our small ways without even noticing it – already have the skills to do so and hardly need instruction.

It is important to note that fictionalization in my conception is not necessarily tied to intention – a point in which I clearly disagree with more recent conceptualizations of fictionality (see Chapter 3). Storytellers may inadvertently and unselfconsciously tell their stories in such a way that they begin to border

on the fictional. If we accept Labov's suggestion that credibility is inversely related to reportability and the other way around then it seems that good storytelling will inevitably involve the exploitation of stories' inherent *fictional contamination* to make these stories more exciting and engaging. In my analyses I also drew on positioning theory, which locates discursive engagement at three levels: the discourse- or story-internal level, at which speakers position themselves as characters vis-à-vis other 'characters'; the situational context, in which a story is told and which impacts on how speakers position themselves vis-à-vis their interlocutors and with regard to this context; and the cultural context, which always also has an influence on how individuals tell their stories because their stories are not told in a vacuum but reflect how individuals discursively act as members of larger groups.

Let me now delineate once more the features I identified as constituting candidates for pointing to *fictional contamination*: story templates and constructed dialogue; double deixis; second-person narration; focalization; mind representation and free indirect discourse as well as narratives of vicarious experience.

In Chapter 5, I begin by looking closely at the storyworld level and, more specifically, at how characters are created and positioned in narratives. As I pointed out, the term 'characters' may at first seem odd when applied to real-life people. However, I argued that, even though non-fictional stories are peopled by 'real' persons, they become 'characters' in the retrospective renditions of remembered situations because, as much as recalling those people's actions and words, for example, storytellers also (re)construct – one could even say, (re)invent – them for the purposes of the current storytelling situation. This becomes particularly noticeable in the representation of conversations that presumably no-one can remember in such vivid detail as they are replayed in oral stories. What "constructed dialogue," as linguists call it, does in life stories is both to enliven those moments recalled and related and thus to involve listeners and to characterize those persons presented as 'saying' certain things and 'talking' in a specific manner. Characterization may also entail explicit references to cultural story templates, as when a storyteller compares people he or she talks about to literary characters or other characters found in popular culture (see also Mildorf 2022). Such references indicate that the boundaries between life and literature, fact and fiction can be blurred in life stories and thus contribute to their *fictional contamination*.

When instances of dialogue become so prominent and numerous in a life story that one seriously begins to doubt the story's truthfulness, the status of the story as 'factual' is called into question. This easily happens in autobiographical texts, where authors frequently make use of a certain poetic license in

depicting the past by rendering moments that they cannot possibly have had first-hand knowledge of in as vivid and colorful detail as is hardly credible anymore. But we also find this in conversational storytelling. The function of such uses of dialogue, I argue in Chapter 5, can be manifold and needs to be examined for each instance. One function that pertains to all instances of dialogue is to dramatize the past events and to re-enact them in the here and now of the storytelling moment, thereby creating involvement for listeners and readers.

Involvement is one of the key aspects to be considered when looking at any form of storytelling. In life storying, too, engaging one's interlocutors or readers is of the essence. In Chapter 2, I emphasized how important it is therefore to closely analyze not just the story told but also the interactional context in which the story is told. In oral life storying, this context includes face-to-face interaction, which hinges on the exchange between a *you* and an *I*. However, as I demonstrate in Chapter 6, the use of these basic pronouns can be complicated even in conversational storytelling, which may ultimately lead to the kinds of ambiguity and uncertainty that can also be found in fictional texts. I refer to Herman's (1994) concept of "double deixis" to explain how the second-person pronoun can assume a variety of meanings including direct address, self-address, generalized 'you' or a combination of those. These various meanings can be employed by speakers to create diverse effects such as to involve interlocutors or to signal closeness to or distance from one's storied or narrated self.

This play with pronouns, especially the second-person pronoun, is also at the heart of second-person narration, a narrative technique that some scholars have claimed to be exclusive to the literary realm (Richardson 2006). Admittedly, to have someone tell someone else his or her story seems illogical at first: why do that if the other person obviously knows his or her own story best? In Chapter 7, I give examples of situations when second-person narration may be used even in non-fictional storytelling contexts, and I discuss instances of second-person narration in conversational storytelling. Unlike in fiction, conversational second-person narration typically meshes with a first-person account since the person addressing a narrative to an interlocutor must have been a witness to the events described or at least must have been told that narrative by the interlocutor at some stage. A situation where a speaker addresses his or her story to himself should be difficult to come by empirically, although there are no doubt many people out there who sometimes do so in a form of inner speech or self-communion (which may on occasion even be vocalized). The point is that even second-person narration is not utterly exclusive to the literary realm, and kernels of this marked narrative technique can be found in conversational story-

telling, that is, a feature can once again be said to be shared by fictional and non-fictional narratives and to thus mark narratives' *fictional contamination*.

Another feature that is more at the forefront of people's awareness is perspective-taking, which I discuss at length in Chapter 8. Anybody dealing professionally with people's (life) stories knows that those stories inevitably adopt and present a specific vantage point from which the events and experiences are related. This vantage point or perspective can be broken down into two components: the visual angle from which events are related and the attendant emotional or affective stance someone has towards those events. I refer to Chatman's (1986) distinction between *filter* and *slant* in this context. The question of perspective is further complicated because storytellers can choose to present past events from the perspective of their former or younger self (or *experiencing I*) rather than their vantage point now (*narrating I*). It is even possible to find instances where storytellers relate events from someone else's perspective, which obviously creates epistemic problems: how could they know how someone else experienced certain moments? These complications, which literary narratologists treat under the heading of focalization, also contribute to oral stories' *fictional contamination*. The more complex the focalization pattern in a story the closer it moves to fiction. Once again, the main aim of focalization is to draw listeners (or readers) into the storyworld, to engage them in this storyworld and thereby to enable them to experience it more closely.

Much the same can be said of the presentation of one's own and other people's minds, a topic that numerous narratologists have been interested in and that, to some, proves to be the watershed of fictional texts in comparison to non-fictional texts (Cohn 1990). In Chapter 8, I give examples of how thoughts, motivations and feelings are conveyed, even those of other people. This hardly comes as a surprise given the fact that we all engage with other people in our daily lives: friends and family, parents, children, colleagues and more. We also position ourselves vis-à-vis those people, and one way of doing it is by presenting what we think the other person thought, felt, etc. The more leeway is given to such a presentation, for example, by means of techniques such as free indirect discourse or, more commonly, direct thought presentation, the closer a narrative will be perceived to move toward fiction.

Telling other people's stories, finally, is the last feature I discuss in detail as one feature that indicates narratives' *fictional contamination* (Chapter 10). Linguists have already pointed to the epistemic conundrums created by what they call narratives of vicarious experience (Norrick 2013a, 2013b; see also Hatavara and Mildorf 2017a, 2017b; Mildorf 2019b, 2022). This chapter brings together some strands of discussion elaborated on in the context of second-person narra-

tion, perspective-taking and mind representation because all of these aspects become potentially fictionalizing if they are used not to talk about one's own personal experiences but about someone else's. Even though one should think that people cannot possibly do that with sufficient authority it is surprising that many still do – one only needs to listen carefully to people telling stories about others. The reasons for this are similar to the reasons we have for relating what purportedly goes on in other people's minds: we thus set ourselves into relation to others and portray them in a certain light. We may also wish to highlight our privileged position of knowing about someone else's life – whether this is founded on truth or on our (perhaps misguided) perception is another matter.

There are other features that more or less strongly mark stories' *fictional contamination* and that could be listed and discussed separately. One could technically break the features I identify down into even smaller units that are constitutive of those features, e.g., modalities expressed in verbs, particles and adverbials. In my analyses I pinpoint such smaller linguistic units but for the sake of reaching out to a broader audience I refrain from making this book an even more linguistic study than it already is. My main aim throughout was to foreground the actual complexity of life storying in oral contexts. I drew on the term "literary complexity" in this connection. While the creative impulse has long been acknowledged for autobiographical texts, the same impulse has been given considerably less attention in conversational storytelling (cf., however, Carter 2004; Tannen 1998). What we tell in our daily lives and even in such special situations like oral history interviews is often taken for granted and at face value as 'merely' little anecdotes that give color to our life narratives. And yet, what color! It is this literary complexity in combination with *fictional contamination* that we ought to listen to carefully when attending to other people's narratives and acknowledge the *fictional contamination* that is inherent in all storytelling, big or small.

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