Story and self

The healing possibilities of anachrony and style in Ali Smith's Hotel World *and* How to Be Both

Hulda Westberg Sparbo

ENG4390 – Master's Thesis in Literature in English

60 credits

A thesis presented to the department of Literature, Area Studies and European Languages

The Faculty of Humanities

November 2019

Story and self

The healing possibilities of anachrony and style in
Ali Smith's Hotel World *and* How to Be Both

Hulda Westberg Sparbo

University of Oslo

November 2019

2019

Story and Self:

The Healing Possibilities of Anachrony and Style in Ali Smith's *Hotel World* and *How to Be Both*

Hulda Westberg Sparbo

http://www.duo.uio.no/

Print: CopyCat / Reprosentralen, University of Oslo

Abstract

The story is an explicit motif in Ali Smith's *Hotel World* (2001) and *How to Be Both* (2014), two novels that experiment with the possibilities of narrative voice and explore how the act of storytelling restores the characters' shattered selves after traumatic experiences. This thesis explores the ghost stories, the elegiac narratives, and the significance of the characters' autobiographical memories within their present narrative. The close reading of these texts allows an analysis of how Smith's characters use the constructive force of language to shape their identities – or *selves* – by the act of telling their stories. Both novels are populated with characters who are initially broken – by death, grief or illness – to the degree that they no longer recognise themselves. During the course of their narratives, some characters manage to mend the rifts that have taken place in their selves, and some do not. My hypothesis is that healing of the self, in these novels, is dependent on the *telling* – the act of verbalising memories and creating a new self-narrative.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my supervisor, Nils Axel Nissen, who made me understand that I would have to kill a whole lot of darlings in order to get anywhere at all, and who responds to e-mails with the speed of light.

I am very grateful to my employers at Oslo by steinerskole for giving me a semester's leave to write, to my colleagues, whose support have no bounds, and to my students, who make every day worthwhile.

A great thanks to the members of Oslo Cathedral Choir, my home away from home, whose voices and laughter has kept me sane throughout the writing process. The pre-Christmas marathon awaits, and I am going to enjoy every second of it.

Writing this thesis would have been impossible without my enthusiastic study buddies. We sure did plant a lot of trees and got stuff done. And then we sat down at the break room and discussed life and Buffy and other important matters.

I would like to thank LCE at the University of Oslo for allowing me to attend a highly stimulating master class on literature and psychology with Siri Hustvedt in May 2019.

Thanks to Merete Alfsen, Ali Smith's Norwegian translator, for introducing me to my favourite author – and to Ali, who gave me carte blanche to write whatever I wanted.

Thanks to Fredrik Cappelen, healer of self, and to Leif Pedersen, healer of bones.

I am forever grateful to my parents, Åse Westberg and Njål Sparbo, for bringing me up in a house filled to the brink with books and music, and for your unwavering belief in my abilities and my willpower. A special thanks to my mother for the countless hours you have spent proof-reading my writing throughout the years – you have taught me what language can do if you know what to do with it.

Last, but not least: My wife, Charlotte – three thousand thanks for volunteering as proof-reader, private chef, and tea-maker in the finishing stages, for pulling me away from the desk and out for a walk now and then, for being certain when I was nervous, for keeping me company through late nights, and for making up stories about Clover the rabbit in order to help me sleep when my mind was in overdrive. You make everything seem doable, my love, and that is indeed a superpower.

Table of Contents

Introduction

In 1966, Robert Scholes, James Phelan and Robert Kellogg – then three "brash young scholars with no academic standing to speak of" (ix) – defined narrative simply, but succinctly as "all those literary works which are distinguished by two characteristics: the presence of a story and a story-teller" (4). These two characteristics will serve as the mainspring of this thesis. Throughout her entire body of fiction, Ali Smith has concerned herself with the concept of the story and the infinite ways of telling them, not only in her short story collections,[1] but also in her novels. To Smith, *story* is more than a literary genre, it is the cornerstone of our collective and individual identities. The story also serves as an explicit motif in *Hotel World* (2001) and *How to Be Both* (2014), two novels that experiment with the possibilities of narrative voice and explore how storytelling restores the characters' shattered selves after traumatic experiences. The stories in these novels range from universal and autobiographical to mythical and contemporary. Smith borrows from a rich canon of mythology and literature, rewrites old stories into new, and transforms history into fiction. Memories are as prominent as the present action, as the novels are scattered with analepses, or flashbacks, allowing her characters to continually revisit and process their past, adapting their memories to adjust their present identity after losing a loved one – or themselves.

The author and critic Erica Wagner asserts that Ali Smith "has always wanted to tell a good story but also to question the methodology of storytelling" (Lyall). The quote illustrates the blending of the everyday meaning of story and the specific, narratological one. Kent Puckett simply defines story as "the event or sequence of event" (4), or *what* is being told – as opposed to discourse, which describes the representation or transmitting of these events, "how the story is conveyed" (4). In layman's terms, a story constitutes much more: "a description, either true or imagined, of a connected series of events" (Cambridge Dictionary). As such, what comprises a story may be a newspaper article, a history book, a lie, a work of fiction, or a religious myth. Humans shape our individual selves on autobiographical memories that must be narrated to be shared with others, and to be better understood by ourselves. Collective memories are essential to our understanding of historical events and the societies we are part of, as well as the fictional stories and myths of our cultures.[2] The story does not only inform

[1] A case in point is the metafictional titles of some of her collections: *Other Stories and Other Stories* (1999), *The Whole Story and Other Stories* (2003) and *The First Person and Other Stories* (2008).

[2] Smith has a tendency to write the lives of obscure and forgotten artists into her novels. She is also concerned with the story of the world in which we inhabit today (in ongoing *Seasonal Quartet*, Smith explores the story of Britain after the 2016 Brexit referendum – *Autumn* has been referred to as the first Brexit novel).

us of the past; Smith's experimental, playful writing suggests that the story – and the telling of stories – has the potential to induce change. As Julia Breitbach argues, "Smith's work is . . . considered 'literary' for its meticulous attention to how language is a constructive force, rather than a transparent medium, in the building and shaping of contemporary realities and identities" (115). The aim of this thesis is to analyse how Smith's characters use this constructive force to shape their identities – or *selves* – by telling their stories. Both novels are populated with characters who are initially broken – by death, grief or illness – to the degree that they no longer recognise themselves. During the course of their narratives, some characters manage to mend the rifts that have taken place in their selves, and some do not. My hypothesis is that healing of the self, in these novels, is dependent on the *telling* – the act of verbalising memories and creating a new self-narrative. If one were to attempt a Smithian pun, one might even suggest that the analepses have an analeptic effect on the characters, insofar that they have the potential to cause heightened awareness, help treat their depression, and restore the strength of their selves.

Autobiographical storytelling, or self-narration, is essential to the characters' healing because the analepses demand that they consciously engage with their past within the context of their narrative present; when they think or talk about their stories, they reshape their relationship with their past and consequently modify their present identity. My claim is that this is true both for the novels' homodiegetic, intradiegetic (first-person) narrators and for two of the characters in heterodiegetic, extradiegetic (third-person) narratives, George (*HTBB*) and Else (*HW*). This claim is not self-evident, because characters in third-person narratives are not in control of how they stories are told. Nonetheless, I believe that George's and Else's narrators reproduce the characters' *verbalised* thoughts in the analepses, rather than their unconscious minds – which means that even though it is the narrator who is reporting their thoughts, the characters actively engage with their memories and the emotional impact of remembering. This is *not* the case for the third-person narratives of Lise and Penny (*HW*), which I will demonstrate in chapter 3.

Through close reading, this thesis will analyse what value the analepses have as stories that shape the identity of the narrator's/focaliser's present self. The homodiegetic narrators, who choose how to shape their narratives, have added freedom of choice in their stylistic expression; the thesis will attempt to identify how stylistic experimentation contributes to the character-narrators' recovery of their selves.

The plot structures of both novels are rather intricate, so I will provide a short summary. *Hotel World* is an ensemble novel about five characters whose lives connect briefly

in the setting of the Global Hotel. Sara Wilby, a 19-year-old chambermaid, dies on her second day on the job in an absurd dumbwaiter accident on May 24, 1999. One night, approximately six months after Sara's death, her ghost is on the verge of "moving on" after a period of lingering. On this central night of the novel, Else is begging on the curb outside the Global, and the hotel receptionist, Lise, offers her a room for the night. Penny is staying at the hotel to write a hotel review for her newspaper, and during the evening she meets Else and Clare Wilby, Sara's little sister, in the corridors of the hotel. Clare has sneaked into the hotel to visit the place where her sister died in hope that she may come to terms with her loss.

How to Be Both[3] consists of two parts, one narrated by the ghost of the Renaissance painter Francescho del Cossa, who suddenly becomes conscious after more than five hundred years of oblivion – seemingly in order to follow a young boy around. Francescho was born female, but has presented as male almost their[4] whole life so that they could be educated and find work as a painter. Now, the ghost of Francescho narrates their life story while watching the boy – whom they realise, approximately one third into their narrative, is in fact a girl. Francescho's chapter starts roughly when the other part ends. The other part is about George, the young girl, who unexpectedly lost her mother, Carol, four months earlier. Because her father is drinking excessively to dull his pain, George struggles to cope with her loss, while also taking care of her little brother, Henry. Her narrative begins at New Year's Eve 2013 and continues into the spring of 2014. George's memories from a trip to Italy with her mother, where they visited Palazzo Schifanoia and saw the masterpiece of the relatively obscure painter Francesco[5] del Cossa, are juxtaposed with her present story: In the early hours of 2014, she is befriended by a classmate, H(elena), and their relationship allows George to return her focus from the past to the present, and even to the future.

The ambitious goal of this thesis – to investigate both the parts and the sum of Smith's very complex narratives – led me to reduce the number of primary texts from three to two. As for the choice of texts, *HW* was an obvious starting point, because out of all her novels, this is the one who has attracted most scholarly attention. Initially, I was interested in identifying patterns in the whole body of Smith's writing; her ghost narrators, how she utilises the figure of the stranger, queerness and social critique in her novels – but I soon understood that my scope was far too wide. My primary academic interest is close reading and narrative analysis; I needed to reduce the numbers of novels. However, I found that *HW* and *HTBB* have

[3] The novels are hereafter referred to as *HW* and *HTBB.*
[4] I will give grounds for my use of the gender-neutral pronoun in chapter 1.
[5] The accurate spelling of the historical figure's name.

discernible similarities that would allow me to study the stories within as types, or genres, since both novels contain a homodiegetic ghost narrator and a grieving adolescent. The two ghosts, Sara (*HW*) and Francescho (*HTBB*), both use storytelling to recreate their selves in the confusion of afterlife. The grieving adolescents, Clare (*HW*) and George (*HTBB*), piece together stories of the ones they have lost in order to comprehend how to go on. Moreover, the mourners' stories may be read as elegies, because they engage with "the idea that loss leads individuals from initial confusion to regained self-possession" (Kennedy 35), which has been the foundation for psychological theories about mourning, and for literary discussions about elegy. Both novels juxtapose the bereaved's subjective stories of loss and the stories of the objects of their grief, which allows them to return "to the present, finally, with renewed affirmation" (Knox-Shaw 33).

Both novels insist on a plurality of voices, but in different ways: The Wilby sisters' homodiegetic chapters in *HW* are intertwined with four heterodiegetic narratives that offer a varying degree of closeness and intimacy between narrator and focaliser. Read as a whole, the novel suggests that there is, in fact, no such thing as a "whole story" – the fragmented form of Smith's fiction insists on openness. *HTBB* is equally concerned with how the two parts are connected: The novel consists of two parts of equal length (both parts are exactly 186 pages), which are both called "One". To set them apart, some critics have dubbed George's chapter "Camera" and Francescho's chapter "Eyes" after Sarah Wood's drawings on the chapter title pages (Young, Invisibility and Power in the Digital Age: Issues for Feminist and Queer Narratology). The novel is published in two editions, and the ordering of the parts is randomised.[6] By doing this, Smith has surrendered the authority of the novel's form to chance while simultaneously underscoring its conceptual framework – the fresco. In *HTBB*, themes, motifs and stories echo back and forth between the two parts, and "the notion of the underdrawing of the image" is "a presence beneath the surface, unseen yet present" (Higgins). The novel discusses how a person can be more than one thing, and how a story can be told in many different ways simultaneously.

Theory, method, and Smith scholarship

In order to show how the narrative voice works, Gérard Genette points to three elements that function simultaneously in a narrative: the time of the narrating, the narrative levels and the category of person. Genette borrowed the term *diegesis* from film theory and used it as a

[6] In my edition, George's part comes before Francescho's.

substitute for *story* (in the story/discourse distinction). What Genette envisioned was a hierarchy of narrative situations, where the terms *intradiegetic* and *extradiegetic* denote whether the narrator reports from within or without the story-world, that is, on the same level as the story or on a level above. Furthermore, Genette argues that the terms *first-person* and *third-person* narrator are insufficient, because the grammatical form (of first or third person) is simply the consequence of the narrator's posture – either the narrator is a character in the story and tells the story from his perspective, or the narrator is absent from the story that he tells (244-5). Because of this, Genette calls the first type *heterodiegetic* and the second type *homodiegetic*.

Genette's term *focalisation* can be defined as "the perspectival restriction and orientation of narrative information relative to somebody's (usually, a character's) perception, imagination, knowledge, or point of view" (Herman 173). There are three categories of focalisation; non-focalisation (a completely omniscient point of view), internal focalisation (where the events are presented through the perspective of one focal character), or external focalisation (the narrator describes only what would be visible to the eye) (173). Since Genette, narratologists such as Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan have broadened the term to include the focaliser's "cognitive, emotive and ideological orientation" (72) – asking not only "who sees?" the events, but also "who perceives?" (Herman 174). Dorrit Cohn's *Transparent Minds* presents three techniques of presenting a character's consciousness in heterodiegetic narratives that I have found particularly useful: "1. psycho-narration: the narrator's discourse about a character's consciousness; 2. quoted monologue: a character's mental discourse; 3. narrated monologue: a character's mental discourse in the guise of the narrator's discourse" (14). She also discusses techniques for representing the past self in homodiegetic narratives. I will expand on her terminology whenever these techniques are relevant to my analysis.

The final narrative aspect that needs explanation is *anachrony* (Genette), or the temporal ordering of the novel – because in Smith's fiction, events are seldom told in the order in which they occur. Genette argues that "Every anachrony constitutes, with respect to the narrative into which it is inserted – onto which it is grafted – a narrative that is temporally second, subordinate to the first in a sort of narrative syntax" (48). What he calls *first narrative*, I sometimes refer to as *the narrative present* – by which I mean the primary temporal plane, or level, into which the *analepses* (events that take place earlier than the beginning of the present story) and *prolepses* (events that take place on a later point in time, after the present narrative has ended) are inserted (40). The effect of non-chronology in

Smith's fiction is mainly that the conditional relationship between events is emphasised, but the anachronies also play on the novels' discussions of time and grammar.

Ali Smith's prose is often characterised as lyrical (Anker) and enthusiastic (Pohl), and her writing has a tendency to draw attention to its own constructedness because she sometimes disregards rules of syntax, grammar, and punctuation, plays with rhyme and rhythm, or, as in *The Accidental*, has one of the characters expressing himself through disintegrating sonnets. These are all stylistic choices, and Smith is well aware of the powerful effect they might have. In her keynote speech at the 2012 Edinburgh International Book Festival, she said: "The last thing literary style is is a matter of indifference; that's why it's so powerful a stirrer of love and passion, anger and argument. That's why it can really trouble us. That's why a style you don't take to can feel so like a personal assault" (Style vs Content).

In *HW* and *HTBB*, the style of the ghosts and the mourners add another layer to the way they see themselves. In order to show how the homodiegetic narrators' selves are expressed through their language, I will rely on stylistics in my analysis. In *Style in Fiction*, Geoffrey Leech and Mick Short define style as "the linguistic characteristics of a particular text" (11). Both my primary texts consist of self-contained parts or chapters, written in distinctly different styles, which is something of a trademark of Smith's fiction. Leech and Short allow for their method to be applied only to parts of a text, such as chapters within a novel: "The recognition that a text may set up its own secondary norms leads to further conclusion, that features of language within that text may depart from the norms of the text itself: that is, they may 'stand out' against the background of what the text has led us to expect" (44). This "standing out" is called *foregrounding*, which, according to Alison Gibbons and Sara Whiteley, refers to "the ways in which certain aspects of a text can be made to stand out or appear prominent through forms of textual patterning. As such, foregrounding is the psychological effect of certain textual devices" (15). My analysis will focus on how Sara's, Francescho's and Clare's styles deviate from standard rules of syntax, grammar and punctuation, and interpret the effects of the phenomena that are foregrounded in the context of my main hypothesis. I have used Leech and Short's checklist of linguistic and stylistic categories (61-72) in my stylistic analyses, and interpreted the relevant findings.

Smith scholarship is not yet expansive, which is why my analysis is founded on close reading, narratology and stylistics. However, the number of scholarly articles on her works is growing by every year. Monica Germanà and Emily Horton's monograph, *Ali Smith: Contemporary Critical Perspectives*, published in 2013, was a significant contribution – but there are only a handful of articles and book chapters that discuss her later works. As

mentioned above, *HW* has been subject to a great deal of discussion, both in terms of grammar (Mark Currie), spectrality, subalternity and trauma (Stephen M. Levin, Gemma López Sanchéz, Takolander and Langdon), style and enthusiasm (Rebecca Pohl), postmodernism (Raoul Eshelman), ecofeminism (Justyna Kostkowska), gothic homelessness (Emily Horton), communal narrative (Emma E. Smith), and capitalist criticism (Alissa G. Karl, Mary Horgan, Alice Bennett). The topics of their research differ substantially, and only a handful of them are relevant for the scope of my thesis. However, I have drawn from the available sources when and if they touch upon characterisation, narration, or style. I found Emma E. Smith's "'A Democracy of Voice'? Narrating Community in Ali Smith's *Hotel World*" particularly useful and have attempted to build on her narrative analysis.

There are fewer available sources that discuss *HTBB*, so I have drawn from book reviews from *The Guardian*, *Los Angeles Times*, *Chicago Tribune* and *The New York Times*. Scholarly articles have focused on power relations (Tori Young), portraiture (Milly Weaver), gender and art (Sonya Andermahr) and art history (Robert Kusek and Wojciech Szymanski). The article most relevant to my analysis has been Elizabeth S. Anker's article "Postcritical Reading, the Lyric, and Ali Smith's *How to be Both*", where she analyses George's healing as contingent of rejecting her mother's interpretative approach to art. Anker views George's relationship with her mother as an allegory of a larger discussion within the novel – how we read, interpret and create meaning.

Self, memory, and biofiction

Rimmon-Kenan describes two opposing approaches to how the literary character is regarded: "the so-called 'realistic' argument sees characters as imitations of people" (32), whereas "in semiotic theories [characters] dissolve into textuality" (33) – in other words, the realistic approach is to view characters as human beings, whereas the semiotic approach sees characters as textual figures, or patterns. Suzanne Keen even cautions students not to engage with the realistic/mimetic approach, because "assumptions about [the characters'] 'psychology' may provoke" structuralist critics (70). However, there is a middle course. Rimmon-Kenan believes it is possible to approach characters both as persons and as part of the novel's design,

> provided one realizes that the two extreme positions can be thought of as relating to different aspects of narrative fiction. In the text characters are nodes in the verbal design; in the story they are – by definition – non (or pre-) verbal abstractions, constructs. Although these constructs are by no means human beings in the literal

> sense of the word, they are partly modelled on the reader's conception of the people and in this they are person-like. (33)

It may indeed be tempting to read Smith's characters as if they were people, because Smith's distinct voices – with individual verbal tics and ways of expression – can make the narratives sound as if real people are speaking. Moreover, Smith's plots are about change; they often ask the characters to find out who they have become in the aftermath of a life-changing event, a task that mirrors the work that real people do when they experience life crises. On the other hand, Smith's novels continuously draw attention to their own artificiality – by playing with literary conventions and genre-swapping, by the nature of their elaborate superstructures (how the narratives are connected), by pointing to themselves *as* books or stories, and by fictionalising historical figures. They invite a double reading of the characters, both as representations of human beings, and as textual structures.

But why call them *selves*, and not characters? *Cambridge Dictionary* defines *self* as "the set of someone's characteristics, such as personality and ability, that are not physical and make that person different from other people" ("Self", def.). This is very similar to Seymour Chatman's approach to character. Chatman views the fictional character as "a paradigm of traits; 'trait' in the sense of 'relatively stable or abiding personal quality,' recognizing that it may either unfold, that is, emerge earlier or later in the course of the story, or that it may disappear and be replaced by another" (126) – in other words, the distinction is small. The reason why I want to discuss the characters' *selves*, is because self-searching is so deeply embedded in the novels' pots – the characters verbalise their autobiographies to find out who they are now, in their narrative present. Kristina Dvergsdal, in her master's thesis on the narration of self in novels by Virginia Woolf, argues that Woolf's textual beings ought to be considered as selves because they are "what their respective novels fundamentally explore, and which without – they cannot be" (1). I make the same claim about Smith's novels.

There are many reasons to tell a story. For the ghosts in Smith's novels, the stories are tied to their consciousness – they exist as long as they narrate, and then they will cease to be. For the mourners, the stories represent the labour of grief. The act of storytelling and the act of remembering are very similar, as Dan P. McAdams points out: "We are all tellers of tales. We each seek to provide our scattered and often confused experiences with a sense of coherence by arranging the episodes of our lives into stories" (11). Autobiographical memories do not become stories until we contextualise them, mix in our motivations and emotions, see different stories in relation to each other, and begin to draw longer lines in our life narrative. David C. Rubin asserts that "autobiographical memories are constructed. This

does not mean that they are either accurate or inaccurate, but that they are not encoded, stored, and retrieved as wholes but rather are created at retrieval using components" (4) such as narrative, imagery, and emotion. In the process, they become coloured by our self-perception and our perception of others; we add some and retract some. Another central aspect of how we construct autobiographical memories is the communicative one. As William Hirst and David Mainer points out:

> We cannot divorce the act of remembering from the act of communicating, nor can we treat an autobiographical memory as something distinct from the discourse itself. Recollections arise not from the depths of a storehouse in the head, but from a desire to communicate with others about the personal past. What is remembered and how it is remembered are functions of the resulting discourse. (271)

This communicative desire is evident in the homodiegetic narratives in *HW* and *HTBB*; both ghosts have a wish to tell their story before they dissipate, and the mourners have suppressed their grief for months prior to their narratives' beginning.

Biographers (and to a certain degree authors of historical novels) are expected to represent the "authentic" selves of historical figures (Lackey 7). Ali Smith, in writing Francescho's story, invents a fictional character based on a few historical facts. Several critics have pointed out similarities between Francescho's story and Virginia Woolf's *Orlando*, especially in how the novels experiment with gender ambiguity and how both stories touch upon the biographical[7]. But whereas *Orlando* is generally read a fictitious (meta-)biography loosely based on Vita Sackville-West, Francescho's narrative belongs to the genre of *biofiction*, "literature that names its protagonist after an actual biographic figure" (Lackey 3). It is safe to say that Smith, in writing Francescho's story, had little or no intention to represent the biographical subject's "authentic self". Smith has claimed in an interview that Tom Stoppard advised her to do as little research as possible: "Whatever you are doing, never go so far into it that the imagination is lost" (Higgins). del Cossa's relative obscurity makes him a suitable starting point for fictional elaboration, and Smith has used the few, known facts about him as foundation for the novel. These facts – and the historical circumstances of his life – are worth mentioning here, to make it easier to separate fact from fiction in the analysis:

Francesco del Cossa (ca. 1435/6-ca. 1477/8) was a Renaissance artist from the Ferrarese school whose name had been forgotten for centuries – and so had the Palazzo Schifanoia, the palace that George and her mother travel to Italy to see. The frescoes were

[7] Woolf is echoed in Francescho's part: "He was a woman", the narrator of *Orlando* exclaims (p. 132, Oxford World Classics 2008), cf. Francescho's "The boy is a girl" (251).

commissioned by the Duke of Ferrara, Borso d'Este (1413-1471), and the paintings illustrate a year in the Duke's life. The hall was painted white in the 18th century, and the frescos within were not rediscovered until the first half of the 19th century. Their recovery coincided with a growing interest in the Italian Renaissance: "Consequently . . . the frescoes were re-born and their second life was about to begin – their life after life" (Kusek 265). Art historians and archivists discovered that del Cossa was not only part of the workshop-based painters' collective that decorated the palace's walls, but that he "proved to be the most outstanding and original contributor" (266), responsible for three of the twelve months of the year – a quarter of the room. Archivists discovered a letter in which del Cossa complains about his salary, because his fee was no higher than what was given to the less qualified artists collaborating on the project. The Duke did not grant him better pay, and he left for Bologna, where he resided for seven years. There, he "exercised a profound influence on the course of Bolognese painting. Cossa's style is characterized by stiff, heavy drapery folds and a sharply linear rendering of complex surfaces" (The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica).

Types of story

The chapters in this thesis are organised thematically. The first chapter discusses the two ghost stories, the second deals with the two elegiac narratives and the third chapter with "the whole story" – the remaining heterodiegetic, extradiegetic chapters of HW, the total effect of the polyphonic voices in HW and how the two parts of HTBB tie into one another. Both the ghost story and the elegy are literary genres that have evolved over a long stretch of time, and in order to evaluate how the novels respond to the conventions of the genre, I find it necessary to provide some background.

Stories of spirits, the afterlife and redemption have been told since antiquity, through medieval times and famously on the Elizabethan stage. The Gothic novel first appeared in the period of Enlightenment, whereas the ghost story genre became more widespread in the Victorian age. The ghost story has retained its popularity throughout the 20th century, and today, numerous hit TV shows, Box Office hit films and bestseller novels utilise the audiences' knowledge of ghostly conventions and their desire to be frightened. Smith's ghosts, Sara and Francesco, resemble typical ghost in some respects – they are disembodied and confused, and their sojourn on Earth is limited, as they are both destined to "pass over to the other side" when their narratives end. Both ghosts need to leave a final message before they cease to be conscious selves, to make an imprint of themselves and know they have been

listened to – there is certainly purpose to their temporary immortality. However, neither is vengeful, and neither seek help from the living to finish whatever unfinished business they have on Earth. Smith's ghosts have tempted scholars such as Maria Takolander, Jo Langdon and Jorge Sacido-Romeiro to attach labels such as 'magical realism' or 'Scottish gothic' to the novels, particularly *HW*. In my opinion, neither label covers what these ghosts signify. The old tropes of gothic novels – haunted castles, darkness, violence – are not present in either novel, and by making the ghosts narrators of their own stories, Smith has ensured that they are *selves*, not frightening, inexplicable Others.

The second storyline this thesis seeks to investigate is the elegy – the mourners' story of the dead, of their experience of grief and of their process of sorting out who they are now, after having lost a loved one. David Kennedy suggests that "if a novel, the traditional picture of life, can be an elegy then this suggests that our experience of loss is not just confined to our responses to death. Loss may, in fact, be inextricable from our general experience" (1-2). There are two principal meanings of elegy in English poetry: "a song of lamentation, in particular a funeral song or lament for the dead; and, in addition, meditative or reflective verse, more properly termed elegiac poetry" (2). In classical times, the elegy was defined as a metre (couplets that alternated dactylic hexameters and pentameters, often accompanied by woodwind music), and not restricted to any particular subject or any single function – although the Greek *elegos* means "mournful song" (11). Over time, the elegy began to change – Kennedy points to Coleridge, who attested that the elegy "*may* treat of any subject, but it must treat of no subject *for itself*; but always and exclusively with reference to the poet" (4). Friedrich Schiller, in his essay "On Naïve and Sentimental Poetry", agrees that the object of mourning must be an "internal ideal object; even when it mourns over a loss in reality, it must first transform it into an ideal. In this reduction of the limited to an infinite consists the true poetical treatment" (n. pag.). In addition to idealising the dead, the English funeral hymn that originated after the Reformation followed certain conventions, including "a movement from grief to consolation" (Kennedy 6). As most conventions, these were broken in the 20th century: "Modern elegists . . . have tended to attack convention and often leave their readers and themselves inconsolable" (6), or express their rage towards the dead. Ramazani argues that in "Daddy", Sylvia Plath "remakes the elegy for the twentieth century, helping to shift the genre's psychic work from consolatory mourning to the violent, contradictory, and protracted work of melancholia" (1144). Mourning used to be a private matter, but in recent years, social media and globalisation has changed the landscape of mourning from private experiences to "participatory, public spectacles" (Kennedy 7) – especially when catastrophic events cause

massive casualties, such as the 9/11 attacks, the 2004 tsunami or July 22nd here in Norway. The way we mourn is changing, and modern elegies represent that. Today, reading novels – and even films – as elegiac is not unheard of; Virginia Woolf asked herself whether a novel could be an elegy already in 1925 (and Peter Knox-Shaw's analysis of *To the Lighthouse* demonstrates that it could).

The final chapter offers an analysis of the remaining four heterodiegetic narratives in *HW*. These narratives are often overlooked in critical discussions about the novel, or they are mainly analysed in terms of thematic function. My close reading will focus on the narrator/focaliser relationship, and how the characters' approach the stories being told affect whether they experience meaningful change.

1 Ghost stories

Remember thee!
Ay, thou poor ghost, whiles memory holds a seat
In this distracted globe.
(*Hamlet*, 1.5)

The story had made me forget we were dead.
(Sara, *HW* 19)

Any narrative discourse requires that the reader accepts and identifies with the fictional world presented by the author (Leech and Short 206), but stories that deal with supernatural or fantastical elements demand even more – that the reader, for the duration of the reading, tolerates that in *this* fictional world, the rules of reality are altered. Smith's novels position ghosts as homodiegetic narrators with complete naturalness, without explaining the metaphysics of their mysterious narrative position. The narrators are intangible phantoms, unable to communicate with the living, and yet, as Rebecca Pohl argues, they speak directly to the reader in a manner that resembles verbal communication: "The effect of narrative immediacy, approximating the spoken word, is fundamental to Smith's prose" (697). I will argue that Francescho and Sara come across as distinct, authentic selves, even when they experience autobiographical and semantic memory loss and their narratives dissolve into fragments, partly because of this narrative immediacy and partly because of how they order their stories. Sara and Francescho's selves are represented dually, through the stories they choose to narrate and through the style in which they express them. Their motivation to tell their stories is also of great importance, as the telling itself is the process in which they regain their narrative selves.

The premise of my hypothesis, that the ghosts manage to regain their sense of self for a limited time through the process of telling their stories, rests on three presuppositions about the reality of afterlife – the ghosts' narrative situation – that apply to both novels. First, that the experience of dying is a trauma that effectively dissolves the coherent self. Second, that ghosts move between a spirit dimension superimposed on the world of the living, and a state of oblivion or dissolution, either by their own volition or as a result of some higher power's decision (authorial or celestial). Third, that the ghosts – who are unable to communicate in a

meaningful way with the living characters in the novels – either hope or know that their message will be received by the narratee. The ghost narrators solicit attention because it is vital to them that their story is told and heard; the telling is how they manage to find back to their coherent selves, albeit only for the duration of their narrative. The first part of this chapter will analyse the stories they tell, and how these stories help the narrators understand who they are.

In some respects, ghost Sara resembles a patient with Alzheimer's disease, as much of her autobiographical memory is gone, and her semantic memory worsens as she loses her grip on herself towards the end of her chapter. A similar syntactical and semantic confusion is evident in Francescho's opening and ending. Their narrative begins and ends with impressionistic passages that resemble poetry rather than prose. These sections frame the main portion of their narrative, which is set in George's present. The openings and ends of the ghosts' narratives – their transitions between consciousness and oblivion, or between the realm of the living and the dead – stand out from the main portion of their chapters, which is why the second part of this chapter is devoted to an analysis of the linguistic and stylistic choices that are foregrounded in these segments, following Leech and Short's method of stylistic analysis. My claim is that the ghosts remain themselves even as they transition in and out of reality, from the moment they begin to speak until their narratives end, despite the syntactic and semantic breakdown that takes place.

1.1 Sara: Remainders of self

Sara Wilby's death was such an enormous trauma that her identity was split into three – the lost self of the living 19-year old girl, which the reader never gains direct access to, and the two remaining selves of the ghost and the corpse. The ghost came into being the moment the dumbwaiter hit the ground, and was immediately struck by retrograde amnesia (W. Hirst 254) – she can form new memories, but is mostly unable to remember her past life. She remembers that she died because she fell down a shaft, but not *why* she climbed into the dumbwaiter, and she cannot rest until she learns "the whole story" – just as her sister Clare needs to hear Duncan's account of what happened to Sara in order to move forward in her grief. The quest to reconstruct her self is the force behind Sara's narrative. In her narrative present, she narrates the memories she has created during her six months as a ghost. The main events of her ghostly existence have consisted of attending her own funeral and wake, haunting her family, and seeking out her corpse in order to find out which events led to her death. Sara

narrates these stories on her final evening on Earth, confiding to an unidentified narratee everything she will miss about life: "this is it, my last night, and tonight what I want more than anything in the world is to have a stone in my shoe" (*HW* 3). In this new state, Sara has had time to contemplate all the sensory joys and annoyances that most people never have the time to register, and to anticipate the forthcoming loss of those senses she still has been able to experience. Her narrative is an elegy of the exquisite details of living – of being tactile, having limbs, and owning a body that itches, tastes, smells and moves. Her hearing diminished some time ago, and recently colours disappeared from her sight. Meanwhile, the seasons are changing, and Sara's preparation for her passing is mirrored by the city's autumnal changes. The living girl died suddenly, whereas the ghost's narrative describes the cruel, slow process of dying a second death, which entails both the intense enjoyment of being conscious and more aware than ever before, and the inconceivable knowledge that she will be no more. Imbued in her narrative is a message that she has attempted to convey to objects, birds and people in the city: "Remember you must live" (27). She makes a subtle homophonic change on the following page: "Remember you must leave" (28) – it is a warning not to sleep-walk through life. This *memento vivere* (Bennett 40) is further developed towards the end of Sara's chapter. The mutation of letters shows a linguistic playfulness and creativity that seems to be present in all versions of Sara – the ghost, the corpse, and in Clare's description of the living girl. The ghost narrator has lost much of what made up her identity – her memories of who she was and whom she loved, her body and her agency. The only thing that remains is her voice.

Dorrit Cohn argues that "In some respects a first-person narrator's relationship to his past self parallels a narrator's relationship to his protagonist in a third-person novel" (143), especially if there is a vast distance between the subject (the narrating self) and the object (the experiencing self). The relationship between narrative subject and object may be distanced if much time has passed between experience and narrating, or if the narrator has changed in the interim between experiencing the events and narrating them, so that he no longer identifies with their past self. Nonetheless, Cohn stresses the crucial difference between first- and third-person narration:

> [E]ven when a narrator becomes a 'different person' from the self he describes in his story, his two selves still remain yoked by the first-person pronoun. Their relationship imitates the temporal continuity of real beings, an existential relationship that differs substantially from the purely functional relationship that binds a narrator to his protagonist in third-person fiction. (144)

However, Sara's past and present self has been *discontinued*. The death of the first self meant the birth of the other, and the loss of her life narrative (Neisser 1), especially her knowledge of the relations and connections she used to have with the people in her life, has transformed the ghost's self almost to the unrecognisable. As mentioned above, she mourns the ability to feel, sense and touch – not the people she loved nor the opportunities that are lost to her, such as a spot on the national swim team and the unfulfilled relationship with the girl in the watch shop. One might argue that when Sara died and her self split, the ghost was given a raw deal compared to the corpse, because the latter retained the memories of their past life and a coherent identity (although the corpse obviously lacks the ghost's freedom of movement), whereas the ghost is a helpless amnesiac, marginalised and homeless. Her narrative changes this dynamic. Emma E. Smith argues that of all the characters in HW, Sara has "the least hegemonic positioning", and yet "her voice is the one most clearly interpellating the reader" (86). Sara gains narrative authority both because of her narrative's initial position in the novel, which ensures that her death is the central event of the novel, affecting all the narratives that follow, and because of "the first-person pronoun's effect of unmediated immediacy" (86), which also allows her to address the narratee directly. Sara insists that the reader not only listens, but engages with her: "You could put ground in your mouth, couldn't you? You, yes, You. You have a hand. You could hold the earth in it" (*HW* 26-27). This directness is an aspect of Sara's self that does not depend on memories; neither does her humour, her language or her goofiness. As Ulric Neisser argues, "self-narratives are *a* basis but not *the* basis of identity", and self-knowledge is based on much more than memories – for instance "perception, conceptualization, and private experience" (1). Sara's observations, reactions and melancholy show that although she does not know her *past* self completely, ghost Sara is indeed a fully-fledged self.

That does not mean that Sara is unchanged by death. Quite the contrary; the ghost's inability to remember important people from her past life, and the fact that they matter so little to her now, renders her quite dehumanised, as proven by the story of how she reacquaints herself with her family. She first identifies them at her funeral by using her knowledge of socialised behaviour in mourning rituals: "I chose the saddest people and I followed them to see where we'd lived. They seemed vaguely familiar. They sat at the front in the church" (*HW* 10). At the wake, Sara learns where she used to live and observes her family curiously: "I hovered above the sad. . . . I hovered above the hoover" (10). She observes and describes their grief, but her detachment is obvious in her choice of determiners (she uses the definite article

instead of pronouns) – *the* mother is broken, *the* father active and furious, whereas the "still-alive child" (11) bottles her feelings in. They do not belong to her anymore, and their misery does not seem to affect her emotionally.

Throughout this analepsis, Sara's dry puns are juxtaposed with her descriptions of the oppressive mood in the house. The contrast emphasises how distantly she observes her past life and the effect her passing has had on the people she has left behind. Death has robbed her of her social belonging, which makes it harder for her to fully identify and empathise with the grief of those who formerly were most important of her. Still, the shared history fascinates her, and she spends much time mimicking the photographs of herself. The photographs are echoes of what she looked like, still images that she practices resembling until she has perfected every photograph in the house: "I checked to see if I was performing the right girl. . . . I worked hard at the warmth of her look in the picture on the mantelpiece" (12). Her appearances reverberate Judith Butler's theory of gender performativity. Butler argues that gender is "in no way a stable identity or locus of agency", but "an identity tenuously constituted in time – an identity instituted through a stylized repetition of acts" (519) – we learn how to become a member of our gender by practicing, and by the response these acts invoke from others. In my opinion, her theory translates to Sara's identity search. Sara describes the photographs as *selves* (*HW* 12), her experience of self is strengthened by this exercise, and this method makes it possible to receive responses from those who knew the living girl. In want of a physical body, she projects and recreates these images in a way that makes her visible. Butler writes that "gender is instituted through the stylization of the body and, hence, must be understood as the mundane way in which bodily gestures, movements, and enactments of various kinds constitute the illusion of an abiding gendered self" (519). Likewise, Sara attempts to reconstruct the outward appearance of herself in a decidedly stylised manner, through facial expressions, colours, angles and looks, as if she is posing for the photographer for a second time. Her apparitions are motivated by curiosity and ambition to perfect the likeness, not by a belief that she will be a comfort to her grieving family. Nonetheless, she is not unmoved by their reactions – especially her mother's, because it "ended in tears and sleepless weeks" (13) and she decided it was kinder to stop appearing to her and let her alone.

The discontinuation between Sara's past and present self is also evident in the pronouns that the ghost uses to mark her separation from or identification with the other Saras – the living girl and the corpse. As demonstrated in the examples above, sometimes they are

separate entities, other times they are one. The ghost's play with identities, and its dissolution of the subject/object binary, is turned into a joke:

> We were a girl, we died young; the opposite of old, we died it. We had a name and nineteen summers; it says as much on the stone. Hers/mine. She/I. Knock knock. Wooo-
>
> hoooo's there? Me. You wooo-
> hoooo? You-hoo yourself. (9-10)

The ghost's cry, her most characteristic sound, is turned into a fundamental question about her identity that echoes through the novel: Who was she? Who is she now? The insipid formula of the knock-knock joke[8] reveals how unstable the personal pronouns have become as signs of identity. In this context, they are symbols of something unknown, just as the grave is merely an empty identity marker, a "passport in the oval, the face of the shape we had taken together" (14).

Trauma theorists assert that the inability to remember trauma is a survival mechanism of the brain. As Cathy Caruth argues: "trauma is not locatable in the simple violent or original event in an individual's past, but rather in the way that its very unassimilated nature – the way it was precisely *not known* in the first instance – returns to haunt the survivor later on" (Unclaimed Experience. Trauma, Narrative, History 4). As Sara's self split, the corpse was cursed with knowledge of both the traumatic event and the weight of contemplating her unrealised future – a cross much heavier because she still perceives the value of the relationships she used to have with other people. This explains the corpse's brusqueness and initial refusal to revisit her past life – it is simply too painful to be reminded. The ghost, on the other hand, represents the trauma response of unassimilated experience. It may also be argued that she experiences what Sigmund Freud called *repetition compulsion* (Sanchez 45), as she is fixated on mastering her fall by calculating how fast it happened, and because it is far more significant to her than everything that preceded it. She would even do it again with the same outcome, just to gain access to the actual experience:

> (and this time I'd throw myself willingly down it wooo-
> hooooo and this time I'd count as I went, one elephant two eleph-ahh) if I could feel it again, how I hit it, the basement, from four floors up, from toe to head,

[8] Unverified reports claim that the origin of the knock-knock joke might be *Macbeth* 2.3, where the hung-over porter uses the phrase "Knock, knock" as a refrain. The success of a knock-knock joke's punchline depends on the quality of the pun served in the formula's fifth line. Moreover, Encyclopaedia Britannica argues that "Most puns strike one as atrocious, perhaps because they represent the most primitive form of humour; two disparate strings of thought tied together by an acoustic knot". https://www.britannica.com/topic/humor/Verbal-humour

> dead. Dead leg. Dead arm. Dead hand. Dead eye. Dead I, four floors between me and the world, that's all it took to take me, that's the measure of it, the length and death of it, the short goodb–. (*HW* 4)

This paragraph from the beginning of Sara's chapter shows her fascination and obsession with the event that caused her death. The adjective "dead" is repeated six times, emphasising the deadness of separate body parts, "death" is inserted into an idiom where it does not belong, and the phrase "the short goodbye" is interrupted mid-word, to emphasise the unbearable abruptness of her passing. The ghost wants to encompass the body and feel how death took her legs, arms, hands and eyes from her. Here, in the beginning of her narrative and the beginning of her existence, she and the body are both part of the "dead I". This has changed when she visits the corpse months later, because she has a clearer grip of who Sara was after performing her for so long. The conversation between ghost and corpse begins in the middle of Sara's chapter and takes place in the autumn, not long before her narrative present.

The ghost's conversation with the corpse is the most important story in her narrative. It takes up a third of Sara's chapter and reveals the answers to the ghost's question, and furthermore, it poses interesting questions about narration and self in *HW*, because the corpse's I is interposed into the ghost's, and at times takes over the narrative. Here, the corpse and the ghost are contrasted as two very different Saras, the ghost as eager to revisit the past, and the corpse as adamantly opposed to it. The corpse attempts to ignore the ghost, but the ghost manages to get under the corpse's skin by slipping in and out of her, singing West End musical hits "till complaints rolling around from the neighbouring graves made me stop" (16) and manipulating the corpse's body by sticking its fingers up its nose[9]. This interaction between them emphasises the difference between the two selves; the corpse is cranky and determined, whereas the ghost is silly, impulsive and rather annoying, almost childlike. The corpse finally agrees to tell the story of the fall (but nothing else), on the condition that the ghost does not remind her of her mother, that she will never bother her again afterwards, and that she will simply listen and not interrupt – she will only endure this once, and wants the storytelling to be as painless as possible. The ghost insists that her narrative is a story, and emphasises that it is *hers*:

> – and **here's the story**, since you're so desperate for one. Happy is what you realize you are a fraction of a second before it's too late.
> Too late? Too late for what? I said.

[9] Sara is probably embellishing her persuasive pranks for comic effect, as she has not demonstrated anywhere else that she is capable of manipulating solid objects.

> No interrupting, she said. **It's my story**, this is it: are you listening? I fell in love. I fell pretty hard. It caught me out. (17, my emphasis)

Whereas the ghost is fixated on the fatal fall, the corpse's story begins with another – falling in love with the girl in the watch shop, approximately three weeks before the accident, and realising for the first time that she was attracted to girls. As Sara's monologue changes to dialogue, the tagging (I said, she said) is the only clear indicator of who is speaking, and because the corpse speaks for long stretches and the ghost obediently refrains from interrupting too much, the voices sometimes blend. Only the parentheses differentiate the two I's in the section below, despite the corpse's insistence that this is *her* story – at least until the ghost looks at the corpse:

> I didn't know what was the matter with me. I thought how I could go back into the shop and say, your watch is a lot nicer than mine, I'd like one with those Roman numerals, sell me one the same as yours. But I didn't move. I couldn't move. I stood outside the shop and listened to my heart ticking. I felt strange, and different.
>
> Then I realized. I had fallen, and it was for the girl in the watch shop. I was happy. And I had a receipt.
>
> (I stretched out on top of her in the room beneath the ground. There wasn't much space; it was lucky I am so insubstantial. The story had made me forget we were dead. But I looked and I saw the grim shut corners of her mouth folded down.) (19)

The two I's create the illusion that the corpse is speaking directly to the narratee, without Sara acting as intermediary – that she has relinquished narrative control to the ghost, when she, in fact, is the one who reproduces the ghost's speech. The illusion is supported by the difference in the two selves' manner of speech and the structure of their narratives. Stylistically, the corpse's voice differs somewhat from the ghost's; her sentences are shorter and semantically and grammatically more coherent, the paragraphs and her vocabulary less allegorical. Her narrative is more detailed and has a clearer development of plot – ordered as a series of chronological events set in a limited time span, with a beginning and end. The corpse's story does not only provide facts about Sara's last weeks, they also give insight into her fear that she would be ousted from her social group because she was gay (as the uncomfortable story about the fat lady from the swimming pool illustrates – Sara felt ambivalent belonging to the in-group laughing at the woman). The accident itself is downplayed – this part of the story fills less than a page and focuses on the truly stupid and random circumstances of her death; two teenagers messing about, getting to know each other, trying to make a boring work-night entertaining. When the corpse has finished telling, she dismisses the ghost: "That's your story.

Go away" (25). The story now belongs to the ghost, she knows what she needs to know, and the only thing left to do is to pass on her message to the living.

An interesting note is that the ghost, in retelling the story, circumvents her own aphasia. In the beginning of her narrative, she has forgotten the word for the "lift for dishes" (6), the apparatus that became her death trap. When she narrates the corpse's story she somehow remembers that the corpse reminded her of the word, and makes an effort to keep it alive in her vocabulary: "(That's the name, the name for it; *that's* it; dumb waiter dumb waiter dumb waiter.)" (17). However, as her narrative closes, the ghost loses her grip on both the story and the words: "I have already forgotten it again, the name for the lift for dishes. It has tired me out telling you her story" (26). The task of narrating Sara's story, the living girl's experience through the voice of the corpse, has exhausted her.[10] The corpse has requested that the ghost should visit the girl from the watch shop, and she does: "I passed through her. I couldn't resist it. I felt nothing. I hope it was the right shop. I hope she was the right girl" (29). Sara's end offers no climactic recognition, only heartache – the corpse's story has made her care for her own forgotten, lovelorn self, and for the girl in the watch shop, but the ghost is incapable of experiencing their connection emotionally. However, she offers the only gift of love she can give; whispering a message about appreciating life to a girl who cannot hear, before fading away, as one word after another is vanishing from her vocabulary – she is "hanging falling breaking between this **word** and the next" (*HW* 31, my emphasis), and when her narrative ends and there is no next word, she will cease to exist.

1.2 Francescho: "You who are more than one thing"

Francescho's[11] narrative situation differs from Sara's because they[12] remember their life well, their self is quite intact, and their purpose of narrating is not to find out who they were, but to be the eyes that watch George, to forgive the injustice done to them in their lifetime and to let go of their grudge against a contemporary artist, Cosmo. Whereas Sara's quest is about self-

[10] It is worth noticing that the ghost now, after telling the story, passes it on – she calls it *her* story, without specifying whether she means the ghost or the girl.

[11] The spelling of del Cossa's first name as Francescho is a deliberate misspelling by Smith, and several scholars drop the added H, writing Francesco instead, in discussing the character. In my opinion, the H separates the fictional character from the historical figure, which is why I follow Smith's lead.

[12] Critics tend to choose a gendered pronoun when discussing Francescho (Anker uses "her", Lyall and Andermahr uses "him") or avoid pronouns altogether (Pohl). Ali Smith bypassed the whole issue by making Francescho a homodiegetic narrator. The combined subjective form "s/he" might work in the context of this thesis, but I fear that the combined objective form ("him/her") and possessive form ("his/hers") will become rather tedious after a few pages. Instead, I opt for the gender-inclusive singular they (them, their), which encompasses both genders, in accordance with the novel's title.

knowledge, Francescho's narrative tells the stories of who they were by emphasising their relationships with others. Sara's perspective is distant and dehumanised, while Francescho's memories are coloured by tenderness, love and passionate enthusiasm, although their ambition and pride also show through their narrative. Artistry is weaved into all aspects of their identity – their style of narration, their gender performance and their sexuality. The analysis below aims to show how Francescho's personal and professional self is dependent on myths and stories. The chapter examines how their mother's stories – and the way the stories were told – have shaped Francescho's artistic and narrative self, and how their change of gender and their sexual identity affect their artistic expression. My claim is that Francescho, by re-narrating their life story, succeeds in overcoming the dejection that characterised their final years, thanks to George's recognition of their painting and the opportunity to contextualise their memories and ask for forgiveness.

Francescho, who has been dead for centuries, has no memory of dying – nor of their whereabouts in the interim between losing and regaining consciousness[13]. Francescho's return from oblivion shows that dying does not cause a permanent destruction of the self – there exists some other place where the essence of souls (or selves) is being stored. Francescho drafts a protest letter to the higher powers, lamenting the fact that they have been thrown back into being and forced to follow George wherever she goes. Francescho presumes that they have been "*formerly until this renaissance in a heaven of forgetfulness, and now for some unforgiven sin reborn into a place of coldness and mystery*" (*HTBB* 226-7, italics original). Noticing their portrait of St. Vincent Ferrer[14] on the museum wall, Francescho jumps to the conclusion that they are thrown into Purgatory for the sin of depicting Christ as older than 33 years old (and thereby contradicting the teachings of the Catholic church). Renaissance art in the Holy Roman Empire revolved around the church, and stories of saints and holy people run through Francescho's narrative. To them, the explanation of Purgatory makes the most sense, because it fits with the cultural-religious beliefs of their time, and they know they are not in hell, because they feel intrigued rather than hopeless: "I am surely put here for some good use albeit mysterious : in hell there is no mystery cause in mystery there is always hope" (277). Thus, Francescho settles down in their new existence and observes this "grey and horseless world" (226) with keen interest.

[13] Francescho's inability to remember where they have been may be a nod to Greek mythology – oblivion would be a given if they had crossed Lethe, the river of forgetfulness in the underworld.
[14] The painting in question is available at https://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/paintings/francesco-del-cossa-saint-vincent-ferrer

In their narrative present, Francescho's understanding and focalisation of George is limited to vision. Francescho does not understand English (and it is unclear whether they can hear much), so they interpret what they see, which leaves facial expressions and body language. Given the lack of insight between the focaliser and the focalised, and the fact that the narrative spends far more pages on the past than the present, Francesco's present storyline seems subsidiary to their analepses. This is especially true if Francescho's part is read before George's – understanding Francescho's observations requires the context from George's chapter. However, the present functions as an important ordering device, because Francescho's memories are triggered by associations to the goings-on in George's timeline – they narrate stories from their life that they wish they could share with George, as they come to like her and care for her. Francescho addresses George several times, albeit without much hope of being heard. Nonetheless, their stream-of-consciousness narrative is filled with stories about their parents, of how they dealt with the loss of their mother (something they and George have in common), of their sexual awakening, and of their best friend Barto. They speak of curves, images, colours and texture, and of their skill and knowledge as an artist. The narrator returns their attention to George when the stories – or trains of thought – have run their course. Elizabeth Anker describes Francescho's narrative as "vertiginous" (23) because it does not comply with chronology; storylines are split up and delayed, and as a result, the narrative "jumps from one decontextualized scene to another" (23). The aim of this analysis is to contextualise a selection of these scenes and interpret them in terms of story and self.

The selection that arguably has had the greatest formative effect on Francescho, both from a psychological and narrative point of view, are the series of memories about their mother. These stories are all about storytelling. The mother is central to their very first memory, which Francescho summons up quite early in their narrative. Failing to remember how they died, Francescho asks: "maybe I . . . never ended?" (202). The idea of the never-ending creates an association to their first observation of how ripples move in water. Francescho describes noticing a circle growing in a puddle of horse piss and recalls their infantile alarm and shock as the circle reached the edges of the puddle – they could not understand where it went. Their mother's explanation is as comforting as her lap: "You were lucky to see it at all. Cause when it got to the end of the puddle it left the puddle and entered the air instead, it went invisible. A marvel. Didn't you feel it go through you? No? But it did, you're inside now. I am too. We both are" (204-5). Francescho's mother thus transforms a ripple in a pool of urine into an unstoppable force that moves beyond the edge of the Earth, a secret force that ties them together forever. The child, who was deeply disturbed because the

circle had simply vanished – can things simply stop existing? – is soothed by the wondrous idea that there is a continuance of things that stretches infinitely through time and space. Things do not have to end. To comfort her child, the mother also turns their attention to the power of the seed that caused this marvellous ripple effect: "If we put that seed in the ground, she said, and we cover it with earth and it gets the chance, enough sun, enough water, with a bit of luck and justice it'll make another tree" (205-6). The seed may be read as a metaphor for raising a child, and this, in combination with the ripple effect, suggests the power of influence that one person may have on others. This is one of many stories that has triggered Francesco's attention to the small, wondrous miracles of nature, to the mysteries that glimmer behind the surface of common objects, if you only look closely and with an open mind – a trait they share with Sara.

Francescho's mother teaches them about justice by telling them stories about Vincenzo Ferreri (St. Vincent Ferrer), a Valencian priest who died approximately a decade before Francescho was born, and who was to become the patron saint for builders and brickmakers. Travelling salesmen circulated illustrated pamphlets with stories of the priest's doings, such as: "True Happenings From The Life Of Most Humble Servant Vincenzo Ferreri Including Countless Miracles That Came To Pass" (247). These stories were favourites in the household, and it is evident that they followed Francescho through their life, because George is watching their portrait of Vincenzo in the National Museum. Now, studying the portrait alongside George, Francescho wishes they could tell her Vincenzo's story about a boy who wishes to see the Virgin Mary. Seeing the mother of God comes with a price, though – the boy would lose an eye, but he accepts the trade willingly. Then he wishes to see the Virgin again, although it would render him completely blind. When Francescho's mother tells them this story, she forces them to ruminate the now one-eyed boy's alternatives: "I rocked up and down on my mother's knees with the blatant unfairness of it" (246). Only after their mother is dead, Francescho reads the pamphlets themselves, and discovers that she "had never ever, in all her tellings of it, told me the end of the story . . . instead she had always left me twisting myself in her arms on her lap with the dilemma of it" (247). Here, the story within the story asks an important question about narrative itself: What is the point? Is it to reach the resolution of the plot, or to identify with and learn from the characters' ordeals and moral conundrums? Francescho's mother believes in interpretive reading, and she challenges her child to interact with her and the story. (In this, she is strikingly similar to George's mother. This will be expanded upon in chapter 2.) This leaves an indelible imprint on Francescho's

self – their mother has shown them that stories are open-ended, that creative interpretation is welcome, and that their opinion matters.

Their mother's repertoire also covers Greek mythology. Two myths most known for illustrating the hubris of mortals are weaved into Francescho's narrative, the story of Phaeton and the chariot, and the tale of the musical contest between Apollo and Marsyas. The Renaissance period saw a renewed interest in the classical Greek style in all aspects of society – visual arts, architecture, and theatre, to mention some – and painters would be required to not only know the stories in detail, but to interpret them symbolically, something Francescho's mother has prepared them for. These myths are rooted so deep in Francescho that they resurface as the first thing that comes to mind when they are pulled out of oblivion. Francescho's memory of being told the story of Phaeton is intimate and thrilling at once: "she held me on her knee after my bath and told me the terrifying stories like the one about the boy whose father, Apollo the sun-god, forbade him from driving the horses who drew the sun across the sky" (248). Franchescho's mother uses her whole body as a narrative device; her arms show the movements of the horses, and she pretends to drop the child as she reaches the story's climax:

> as if I'd fall and hit the ground like them, but no, cause as soon as the fall seemed to start I'd find myself instead flung upwards not down, cause she'd stand up just as she dropped me, swing me up instead into the air very high and dangerous and free as if my heart and throat might leave my body and leap up above us both towards the ceiling – yet she never let go of holding me firm for a moment on either the down or the up, my mother. (249)

Because Francescho associates the story with movement, it is no wonder that it comes to mind in the confusing transition between non-consciousness and consciousness. This is a memory that fuses fear with comfort; the story is terrifying, but the child's trust in their mother makes the thrill not only bearable, but desirable. Narration is juxtaposed with love in their relationship, and Francescho's mother is described as the epitome of an engaging narrator.[15]

Their mother's storytelling also teaches them what effects stories have on people, and of the many ways stories can be told and retold. In one of the most moving scenes, she tells

[15] C. S. Lewis, in his essay "On Three Ways of Writing For Children", argued that children should be exposed to frightening stories, because these stories prepare them for the real world: "Since it is so likely that they will meet cruel enemies, let them at least have heard of brave knights and heroic courage. Otherwise you are making their destiny not brighter but darker. . . . Let there be wicked kings and beheadings, battles and dungeons, giants and dragons, and let villains be soundly killed at the end of the book. Nothing will persuade me that this causes an ordinary child any kind or degree of fear beyond what it wants, and needs, to feel. For, of course, it wants to be a little frightened." (39-40)

the story of when Vincenzo cured a dumb woman, who thanked him and subsequently chose to remain silent for the rest of her life: "My mother always laughed hard at this miracle : one day she fell off a stool she was laughing so much at it, and lay on the floor beside me next to the upturned stool with her arms holding her chest, tears coming out of her eyes" (248). The sound of her laughter rings through the centuries – seen through the eyes of the child, re-experienced by the ghost four hundred years later, the scene is still vivid and recognisable. The mother's laughing fit says a great deal about what kind of person she is; unpretentious, joyous, and wholesome. The word "always" demonstrates that storytelling is a continuous activity in Francescho's childhood, a part of everyday life. Francescho's storytelling, both in images and words, is born of their mother's, so thoroughly that they have adopted "her habit of putting these 2 dots between clauses where a breath should come" (337) into their own writing. The stories they share ponder choices, risks and consequences, they provide Francescho with valuable tools to face the challenges of the world and a large repertoire of motifs. Because the mother died so young, Francescho has to re-experience the stories as they grow older, to notice what the adult sees and not the child – in pictures and discourse. The current re-experience, narrating the stories to George, allows Francescho to contextualise the stories further and identify how their mother's legacy is intertwined with their adult life and artistic vision.

Another central aspect of the novel – and of Francescho's self – is their gender identity, which transgresses the stereotypical idea of gender as a binary. In discussing *HTBB*, critics use different terms to denote Francescho's gender identity; Anker views Francescho as a woman disguised as a man, and mainly uses female pronouns in discussing them, whereas Andermahr defines Francescho as a transgender man and uses male pronouns. In my opinion, modern identity labels seem somewhat anachronistic when applied to Francescho, because being male to them, in their time, is first and foremost a means of attaining freedom of choice, movement and autonomy – the only way to become an artist. Francescho does not transition because of body dysmorphic disorder, but because their father, Christoforo[16], has seen their talents and wishes to give the child the opportunity to develop them, which requires the child to present as a boy. Moreover, Francescho's identification with their mother after her death becomes problematic.[17] Francescho wears nothing but her mother's dresses for several weeks,

[16] Most sources state that the brickmaker's name was Cristofano del Cossa, but Smith's Francescho calls their father Christoforo (301).

[17] Because Francescho's gender is so vital to the subject matter of this particular analepsis, they are temporarily referred to by the pronouns of their birth gender.

perhaps to feel close to her (initially, the fabrics smelled like her mother) – but clothes are closely connected to self-presentation and identity, and putting on someone else's garments is a way of becoming them. The mother's dresses are far too large for the little child, and the bizarre sight eventually becomes unbearable to Christoforo. He sits his daughter down and asks her to stop: "It is like your mother has become a dwarf and as if her dwarf self is always twinkling away in all the corners of the house and the yard, always in the corner of my eye" (*HTBB* 215). Robing herself in her mother's clothes is the child's way of dealing with her loss. Yet, Christoforo recognises that this way of mourning, haunting the house as the mother's "dwarf self", eventually would be detrimental for her – because she is too small to fill out the dresses, and the skirts trail after her, they would dilapidate into rags. The image suggests that there is no future in an identity as a miniature copy of her mother (imagine the grim figure of a child version of Mrs. Havisham). Christoforo must help his daughter through her grief. His radical plan involves shifting her situational and social role, and thereby changing other people's perception of her: "you'll be seen to be working with me and your brothers, and then, when you are established, when it is clearly established in others' eyes as to who you have *become* . . . we will get you into a painters' workshop" (218). The child's transitioning is seen as a process, not only for the child, but for the eyes of the *others*. Christoforo accurately postulates that the members of their society will believe the story their eyes tell them, adapt to the child's gender transformation and in time allow the expansion of Francescho's social and professional range of movement.

By picking a male name that resembles their mothers', Francescho's identification with their mother finds a healthier form: "On that day with that blessing and that new name I died and was reborn" (222). The symbolic death of the girl child does not automatically mean that Francescho's female self is eradicated – the novel's fresco structure suggests that Francescho may be one gender on the surface and the other underneath – but it becomes difficult to point out specific female identity traits in a character so ambiguous, as they constantly undermine the idea of gender essentialism. In *Sexual Identities*, Patrick Colm Hogan discusses how gender can "be understood if it is not a consistently recurring complex of psychological and behavioural properties predictably linked with sex" (108), arguing that when (biological) sex ceases to be fundamental to the definition of (socialised) gender, it makes it rather hard "to explain the gender patterns that rather obviously do exist descriptively" (108). In his analysis of *Orlando*, Hogan points out that society traditionally has deemed certain psychological and behavioural properties as feminine (for instance tender-heartedness) and others as masculine (boldness), but because the protagonist inhabits both, it

leaves us "with no basis on which to distinguish 'feminine' and 'masculine' types except as a matter of gender ideology" (200-1). The same applies to Francescho, who refuses to narrow down their identity, their gender performance, or their sexuality to a question of either/or. To them, their gender is simply both, as the novel's title infers. I agree with Amy Gentry, who argues that Francescho's

> secret female identity doesn't so much define her as emblematize deeper mysteries of art and transformation. Cleverly writing del Cossa's section in first-person to obviate the need for gendered pronouns, Smith creates a being whose consciousness of art precedes and perhaps even precludes a consciousness of gender. (n. pag.)

If there is any essence to Francescho's self, it is art, not gender. However, becoming a man and a painter is the same thing to them, and they must learn to rely on the magic of unspoken secrets in a society. Because they are socialised as male and no one questions it, Francescho is free to be an artist: "the general acceptance of my painter self had always meant I'd be left to be exactly that – myself . . . : it was as simple as agreement, as understood and accepted and as pointless to mention as the fact that we all breathed the same air" (279). Their identity and presentation rests on this agreement. Francescho does not speak much of their fear of exposure, but, as Anker suggests, "del Cossa nonetheless meets with the real threat of persecution, should her gender be exposed" (23), and there are some risks that might be too great. Francescho never marries, perhaps because it would be too difficult to maintain a public façade as someone's husband. In some respects, their life is as fragmented as their narrative. They must move around to find work, and after their father dies, they have no ties left to the city of their birth.

However, Francescho has one life-long friend, Barto. Throughout their adolescence, Barto and Francescho come to view each other as brothers (which is a great comfort to Francescho, whose biological brothers despise them), and Barto's family offers Francescho patronage. However, their friendship is dependent on the wall that prevents Barto from acknowledging Francescho's biology. That wall collapses when Barto learns Francescho's secret from one of the girls at the pleasure house they venture into:

> Is it true? he said. You've been false? All these years?
> I have never not been true, I said.
> Me not knowing, he said. You not you.
> You've known me all along, I said. I've never not been me. (278)

Francescho insists that Barto knows their true self – and that there is no pretence or falseness in their gender performance, but to no avail. By the look in Barto's eyes, they understand that Barto has pretended to be blind to the layers beneath Francescho's male presentation in order to repress his feelings for them: "our friendship had been tenable on condition that he could never have me, that I was never to be had" (279). Now that Barto's unspoken and unrequited love has shifted from subtext to text, Barto feels doubly humiliated, for having his feelings exposed and for being excluded from the conspiracy. The unspoken truth that Francescho relied upon has been uttered; they are "other than painter" (279) – they are a sexual being too. Francescho is heartbroken that Barto rejects them and pronounce the end of their friendship, but stands their ground: "the fault is with your thinking, or with the person who has changed your thinking, not with me" (279). Although they eventually resume their friendship, the knowledge never goes away.

In tradition with the unintended consequences that actions tend to have in Greek myths, Barto was the one who introduced Francescho to the ways of love, by the proxy of a Bologna brothel. Francescho delays their sexual initiation for several nights because they choose to *draw* the women instead of sleeping with them. They are nervous because of who they are and because of their lack of experience, and wishes to appreciate and master the women's bodies figuratively, on paper, before daring to interact physically with the models. Francescho's reaction when the prostitute Isotta initiates sex suggests that they have not imagined themselves as a sexual being, or acknowledged their own desire, until this moment:

> But what she did to me next with that hand made me feel something *1000 times stronger* than any fear, and when I comprehended that this girl was now all delight, when I felt delight go through her at what her hand had found there . . . I understood this, then : that fear is a nothing in the world, a paltry thing, compared. (271)

The prostitutes are experienced in all sorts of gendered and sexual fluidity, and they have all seen through Francescho's performance, so they can simply let down their guard and enjoy the thrill of their first sexual experience. This act echoes another story-lesson of their mother, about hazards, fearlessness and disguises: "So always risk your skin, she said, and never fear losing it, cause it always does some good one way or another when the powers that be deign to take it off us" (250). Francescho takes their mother's advice and bravely goes all in: "in no time she'd taught me the rudiments of the art of love and let me practice back on her generously" (271-2). Their sexual identity, as expressed in the brothel, takes on both an active and a passive role; they focus on the other's pleasure as well as their own. These roles,

however, do not translate into masculine or feminine properties; there is nothing inherently male or female in being an attentive lover. Nor is it never stated whether Francescho identifies as a lesbian or a bi/heterosexual trans man. As Elizabeth Anker points out, neither Francescho's nor George's sexual experiences "comport tidily with the received categories demarcating gender in academic discourse" (23). To Francescho, lovemaking has nothing to do with gender – it is an artform that they study eagerly. The newly awakened desire consumes them: "all I could think of that week was flowers for breath and flowers for eyes and mouths full of flowers, armpits of them, the backs of knees, laps, groins overflowing with flowers and all I could draw was leaves and flowers, the whorls of the roses, the foliage dark" (*HTBB* 272). In art history, floral imagery has traditionally been associated with female innocence and virginity (Stott 66), but to Francescho, flowers come to symbolise erotic desire and erogenous zones. Soon, their reputation as a lover has spread like wildfire in the brothel, and the women swarm around them. Francescho is no ordinary punter; they give pleasure as eagerly as they receive it, and the women are tantalised by the prospect of receiving drawings of themselves as well as being sexually satisfied. Francescho's hands-on education allows them to apply what they have learnt from studying the books by great painters, and shapes them both as an artist and a sexual being. In applying what they have learnt, they better understand "the function and the measure of the body" (*HTBB* 275), but also how art and love is connected:

> we must always take pleasure from our work : cause love and painting both are works of skill and aim : the arrow meets the circle of its target, the straight line meets the curve or circle, 2 things meet and dimension and perspective happen : and in the making of pictures and love – both – time itself changes its shape (273-4).

To Francescho, lovemaking and art are the highest form of interpersonal connectivity. Both are creative acts that give humans the possibility to stop time and change the way we understand the world. An artist with these kinds of aspirations – no matter how awe-inspiring they are – is bound to face resistance from their more simple-minded, avaricious peers, and Francescho's professional life is haunted by their former teacher and nemesis, Cosmo. The historical figure Cosimo Tura is known for founding the School of Ferrara, succeeding in obtaining patronages from two of Ferrara's dukes, and playing a major part in the decoration of Palazzo Schifanoia. Francescho's animosity towards the fictional Cosmo is expressed continually, from the moment they become aware of the ratio of their paintings in the present-day National Gallery – "4 Cosmos to my 1 saint" (195) – but Francescho rarely, if ever,

allows the character Cosmo into their narrative. He exists only in the margins of the stories. In side comments, Francescho hesitantly appreciates what they have learned from Cosmo, but for the most part, they resent their former teacher for his arrogance and spite.

Their relationship is illustrated in a scene from Francescho's youth, which is positioned near the end of Francescho's narrative. Francescho is in their workroom in their father's house, painting another of their mother's hubris stories: "It's a story I've puzzled over almost all my years : right now though I've found the way to tell it" (360). Francescho is painting Marsyas, a satyr who boasts that his pipes produce music that is superior even to Apollo's cithara. The god challenges him to a contest, wins, and flays the satyr alive. This is the story their mother refers to when she advices them to always risk their skin, which is what Francescho is doing in this painting: Apollo stands disappointed to the side, watching as the "inner body of the musician is twisting up out of the skin in a kind of ecstasy . . . the body appears through the skin's unpeeling like the bride undressing after the wedding" (360). Francescho has changed the power dynamic in the story by making Marsyas female and giving the mortal sway over the god. The satyr's pain is transformed into pleasure, while Apollo's victory gives him no satisfaction. Then a young man turns up in Francescho's workroom, watches the painting critically and announces that the composition is wrong:

> Says who? I say.
> Says the story, he says. Say the scholars. Say the centuries. Says everyone. You can't do this. It's a travesty. Says me.
> Who're you? I say
> (though I know quite well who he is).
> Who am I? Wrong question, he says. Who are you? Nobody. No one will ever pay you, not money, for this. It's worthless. Meaningless. If you're going to paint a Marsyas, Apollo has to win. Marsyas has to display ruin and be defeated. (361)

The young man's name is never mentioned, but I belive that this is Francescho and Cosmo's first face-off, and the original reason for Francescho's more than 500-year-long grudge against Cosmo. Cosmo is wealthy and already established in the profession, he speaks from a position of power compared to the relatively poor, young apprentice, and yet he perceives Francescho's subversive storytelling as a threat. Cosmo's idea of worth and meaning is expressed in terms of money and recognition; to him, art is a commodity and must be marketable to have any value. Moreover, the myths are unchangeable, solid truths – if they are tampered with, they become meaningless. Although gender transformations are rather

common in Greek myths[18], they should not play a part in *this one*. Stephen Fry points out that the flaying of Marsyas has been an enduring motif in art and literature: "For some his tale echoes the fate of Prometheus: a symbol of the artist-creator's struggle to match the gods, or of the gods' refusal to accept that mortal artists can outdo the divine" (Fry 291). The story of Marsyas touches upon the core of Francescho's self – the integrity and fearlessness their mother engrafted in them, which they now transfer to the canvas, and through the parallels that their narrative has drawn between skin, gender and frescoes. They do not want to tell one fixed story in a certain way; the wish to "tell it more than one way at once, and tell another underneath it up-rising through the skin of it" (237). Their insistence on "both-ness" challenges the established norms of their society – not only through their artistic vision, but through their physical presence. Francescho has been taught to believe in themselves, and they have the gumption to assert themselves in a profession that society thinks they have no right to execute. Cosmo resents the challenge this represents to their privileged position. The Marsyas picture disappears without trace two days later, and Francescho never finds out where it went.

Francescho's work at Palazzo Schifanoia conflates all the different strands of their life narrative. They are now 32 years old, and recognised insofar as they are assigned an assistant, Ercole, and the task of painting a large portion of the room, yet their nemesis is still one-upping them: "Cosmo'd had a private tour of the room on a different day. Cosmo'd been *instrumental* in the *design*" (291) – the italics here seem to convey irony. They learn that Cosmo calls them Francescha behind their back, and he is probably given a much higher salary. Throughout the process, Francescho is displeased with their fee, but tell themselves that it is a mistake; the Duke is a just man, and that once he sees their work and understands its quality, they will be compensated accordingly.

Francescho literally pours their soul into the project, although within the limits of the overall design: The tableaux are divided vertically into the months of the year. Each month consists of three sections, divided horizontally, in which all the top panels are populated with the Greek gods, the middle panels depict a "blue sky space" (295) with three astrological figures that symbolise the three decades of each month, and the bottom panels are illustrated with life-size images with "the illustrious Borse at its centre" (295), surrounded by

[18] One example is the Theban Thiresias, who was turned into a woman by Hera because he struck two mating snakes with a stick – an act that "annoyed her greatly at the time, for reasons best known to herself" (Fry 330). Another example is the love story of Iphiante and Iphis from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, which has a happy ending (a rarity for mortals who seeks assistance from the gods) and is the basis of Smith's 2007 novel *Girl Meets Boy.*

commoners and prominent visitors. Francescho knows that the whole point of creating this room is to fulfil the new Duke's narcissistic desire to be idolised, and that the details of the design substantiate his megalomania with much ostentation. The painters are given strict orders of which symbols should be included, but Francescho takes liberties in other ways, and populates their scenes with models from their own life – their brothers, their mother and father, the women in Bologna that had taught them so much, the great Alberti (who wrote the books on painting that Francescho has learnt their craft from), and the beautiful male stranger they made love to as their paths crossed, who called them a word in his foreign language that meant "you who are more than one thing" (284). The people in Francescho's life come together in Palazzo Schifanoia, in new shapes:

> Francescho's picaresque adventures – romances with sympathetic prostitutes; a one-night stand with a wandering "infidel"; skirmishes with a tightfisted patron over payment – are incorporated within the dazzling frescos for the palace. Prostitutes become the three Graces; the Moor morphs into a guardian for Aries the ram. (Benfey)

The prostitutes become the personification of beauty, charm, and grace, whereas the Duke – after he disregards Francescho's request to pay them what they are worth – is repainted and clandestinely exposed as unjust and hypocritical. The process of role-reversal is liberating to Francescho. Although their work on the surface yields to the Duke's worldview, there is another story being told underneath, available to those who look for it. The process changes Francescho's relationship to their models: "I looked at the faces in torchlight and I saw they were escapees : they'd broken free from me and from the wall that had made and held them and even from themselves" (307). This is the fate of the storyteller; their characters will eventually become independent selves. But this shift in Francescho's relationship with the people in their life is not only a relief, it signifies loss of control and meaning. What are they to do now that the people in their life have become strangers to them?

Francescho skips town after leaving their incendiary, hidden message of the Duke. The few fragments in Francescho's narrative that touch upon the subsequent years suggest that they struggle with nightmares and sleeplessness, and that their work has changed as a result of bitterness – the people in them have become colder and darker. Barto is so worried about Francescho that he persuades them to undergo a cleansing ritual in the name of Mnemosyme. According to Barto, the ritual will put Francescho in a trance, allowing them to share what bothers them with the oracle, and then wake up the next day, "Clean like a wall that's been

returned to what it was like before the painting" (334). He offers Francescho two cups of water, containing respectively "the Water of Forgetting" and "the Water of Remembering":

> But you poured them both out of the same jug, I said. They're both the same water. How can this one be forgetting and this one be remembering?
> Well, they're in different cups, he said.
> So it's the *cups* of forgetting and remembering and nothing to do with the water? I said.
> No, it's the water, he said. You have to drink the water.
> How can the same water be both? I said.
> It's a good question, he said. The kind of thing I'd expect you to ask. (327-8)

It is conspicuous that Francescho asks how the same water can be both, because they have insisted that a whole range of things can have different signifiers throughout their entire life. The question can mean that they have changed to the extent that they no longer believe that one thing can have more than one meaning – or it can be a challenge to Barto, an attempt to have him admit that yes, the same water can make you both forget and remember, and thereby validating Francescho's self. The way that Francescho plays with Barto after drinking the water of forgetfulness – pretending that they lose consciousness and do not remember anything when they wake up – suggests that much of the old Francescho is left.

Although the ritual did not work, per se – Francescho did not see any oracle – it is possible to view Francescho's rebirth as ghost as a result of the ritual. They died and forgot everything; now they have woken up and begins the re-remembering of their life. Scattered through their narrative are inserted declarations of forgiveness, mostly directed at Cosmo. Death must also has given them a degree of omniscient knowledge, because they know that Cosmo died poor and old, long after they themselves had passed away. As their narrative closes, Francescho re-imagines Cosmo's death and, as a peace treaty, makes sure that he would not die of cold, "cause I take my unfinished working of an old old story and unroll it over you, spread it all your length, tuck you in beneath it and fold its end down under your chin to keep you that bit warmer in the winters of being old – *I forgive you*" (363-4). The image shows the conciliatory effects of Francescho's narrative; the old story (perhaps the Marsyas picture) has reached through the centuries and made Francescho regard their life narrative in a new perspective, which makes them able to comfort their oldest enemy at his most vulnerable.

Francescho also recalls glimpses of their own death. Plague gives them yet a new skin, but this time, the change is fatal. Ercole, the loyal assistant whom Francescho has nicknamed "the pickpocket", watches over them, unbinds their breasts so they can breathe and carries

them on his back when they are evicted from their quarters. Unlike Cosmo, they are not alone in death. Most importantly, the assistant has visited Palazzo Schifanoia and is able to comfort Francescho with a message that acknowledges that they are appreciated and understood: *their* panels are the ones that attract the visitors' attention, and ordinary people understand the symbolic messages that the Duke is blind to. Ercole tells how people look into Francescho's eyes, immortalised on the palace's wall, seeing in them the eyes of both a woman and a man. And what is more:

> The story goes, the pickpocket said, that when the workers passing through the room of the months get anywhere near the far end of that room they veer towards the month of March where they stop below your worker painted in the blue and stand there for as long as they can. Some have even started coming in with their sleeves full of hidden flowers and at a given signal between them all they let their arms fall to their sides and the flowers fall out of their clothes on the floor beneath them. (355-6)

Ercole's story may be exaggerated, but his telling of it is a gift to a dying man, an offering of devotion and respect. It allows Francescho to die knowing that their art, and their stories, are being received, interpreted and understood. More than five hundred years later, the ghost, by re-remembering and contextualising their life narrative, is able to forgive the injustice done to them.

1.3 In transit: Consciousness and style

The aim of this subchapter is to analyse the style of Sara's and Francescho's openings and endings, which show the characters literally in transit – moving at high speed while transitioning from one state to another. The analysis will focus on what is foregrounded in these sections – for instance graphological deviation, lyricism, rhythm, unusual word choices, syntax and punctuation. My claim is that although the language in these sections show the character-narrators' confusion, caused by their transition between unconsciousness and consciousness, their selves are still represented by the stylistic and lexical choices the narrators make: As long as they are conscious, they remain themselves. When their narratives end, the ghosts cease to be.

Sara and Francescho both plunge into their narratives. Their initial communication is unapologetically devoid of context, the syntax is unusual, rules of punctuation are discarded and the language rhythmical, suggesting both prose and poetry at once. These transit sections resemble each other in narrative context, form, immediacy and style. While Francescho's

grogginess is evident both in the beginning and end of their chapter, Sara is clearheaded in the beginning, but is increasingly struck by aphasia during her narrative, until the syntax disintegrates, and she disappears. Her story begins with a scream:

> Wooooooooo-
> hooooooo what a fall what a soar what a plummet what a dash into dark into light what a plunge what a glide thud crash what a drop what a rush what a swoop what a fright what a mad hushed skirl what a smash mush mash-up broke and gashed what a heart in my mouth what an end.
> What a life.
> What a time.
> What I felt. Then. Gone. (Hotel World 3)

The introductory howl is an exclamation that is difficult to interpret – is it a cry of joy, of terror, or a call for attention, or all of the above? These shouts are repeated several times, within her narrative and again at the end of the novel, on an unpaginated page. It is her signature sound, a reminder that she is still here, looming in the very structure of the novel.

Instead of describing the fall, the narrator invites the reader to re-experience it with her; the series of nouns invoke images that gradually become more solemn. The nouns form groups of synonyms that describe movement, sounds (most of them of a collision of some sort), and existential nouns, such as *life, time,* and *end* – which are, of course, some of the novel's most important themes. The construction *what a [noun]*, a template that dominates this opening and is repeated eighteen times, is a common intentional fragment, commonly used as an exclamation (*what a drag*), or as an introduction to an independent clause (*what a delightful evening we had last week*). This passage, however, include no independent clauses, only sentence fragments. The grammar creates a discrepancy: On the one hand, the features that shape the text – the parallelisms and their rhythmic effect – draw attention to its artificiality, to the *way* it is constructed and the fact that it *is* constructed, while on the other hand, sentence fragments "give writing the flavour of spontaneous speech [and] are often used to express the stream of thought" (Hasselgård 395), which makes the opening seem improvised, perhaps even spoken, rather than carefully planned on the page. To Rebecca Pool, the spontaneous effect seems to be the more prominent. Discussing the opening of *Hotel World*, she argues that:

> The absence of context (speaker, addressee, situation) and quotation marks lend this passage the air of unmediated and spontaneous speech: The text begins with voice. The effect of immediacy is further emphasized by the fact that the context provided is

> encoded into the voice rather than separated out into description. The speaker is tumbling downward with increasing alarm; this is figured through the initial caesura, a series of interruptive onomatopoeias ("thud crash"), a catalogue of emphatic anaphors struggling to keep up, and the absence of commas, signifying breathlessness. These elements combine to create the effect of immediacy . . . the text produces a distinctive tone of voice somewhere between exultation and terror. (698)

Sara's simultaneous expression of joy and trauma runs through the whole passage. The rhythmic beat is enlivening (at least initially, when it keeps a steady pace), yet the collective effect of the parallelisms is quite brutal, as all twenty-three nouns insistently co-refer to one single moment: The narrator's fall and abrupt collision, the trauma to her body, and her experience of dying. The prominence of monosyllabic nouns, most of them with a consonant in initial position, and the repetitions of this rhythmic formula (*what a – what a –*, and the variation *into –*, which also consists of two unstressed syllables) create an anapaestic rhythm. This goes on more or less undisturbed until the phrase *what a mad hushed skirl* disrupts the anapaestic beat, because of the stress on the second adjective. From here on, the rhythm is more uneven, the alliterations more prominent (*what a sma**sh** mu**sh** ma**sh**-up broke and ga**sh**ed*), and the increase of stressed syllables seem to slow the sentence down towards its end, as a preparation for the short fragments that are to come. The final three *what a*-fragments are placed below each other, which gives them more prominence. These fragments are ended with a period mark, which is generally to be expected from sentences, but the lack of commas in the first sentence makes the period marks in the final line stand out, as they deviate from an established pattern of breathlessness.

The anapaest is not a very common meter in English verse. Encyclopaedia Britannica characterises it as a "jog-trot rhythm" and explains that "pure anapestic metre was originally used only in light or popular English verse" (Britannica Academic)[19] until the 18th century. It may convey energy, but also has a lulling or rocking feeling. In *Moving Words*, Derek Attridge emphasises the phenomenon of rhythmic pleasure, "the psychological and physiological reality of the sequences of rhythmic energy pulses perceived, and enjoyed" (104) by readers of poetry. He also argues that rhythm is intrinsically connected to the movements of the human body, such as beating the rhythm with your hand: "… this phenomenon occurs not because a rhythmic structure, such as a melody, has been *imposed* upon the language, but because the language, read aloud, produces a rhythmic organization that encourages regular muscular movement" (111). The first sentence of *Hotel World* begins

[19] The anapest is most commonly known as the foot of limerics.

lightly, evoking this rhythmic pleasure, but as the rhythm becomes more uneven and disturbed, the choice of lexis turns increasingly violent and fearful (*fright, broke, gashed*). Although there is no mention of a physical body in the opening lines, the occurrence of a personal pronoun in the final sentence is a clear break with the established *what a [noun]* pattern that focuses on events. The "I" is revealed as the source of the pulse that is built into the rhythmical structure of the sentences, which slows down to a halt when the heart ceases to beat and she is gone. The opening is playful because of its rhythm, parallelisms, alliterations and onomatopoeia, but when the rhythm begins to be disturbed, a layer of violence, pain, loss and emptiness is revealed beneath the lightness of the formal features. The style of the opening passage thus encompasses and illustrates Sara's death, the trauma she investigates for the remainder of her chapter.

Likewise, the ghost of *How to Be Both* enters the narrative in motion. Francescho's journey from oblivion to consciousness in the opening of their part – and subsequent return to the "heaven of forgetfulness" (226-7) – is visualised on the page by graphic patterning. The opening pages of their chapter in *How to Be Both* depicts the rapid movement of the narrator, starting with: "Ho this is a mighty twisting thing fast as a / fish being pulled by its mouth on a hook" (189) – the "thing" being their reawakening from unconsciousness. Their confusion of waking up, and the journey itself, is represented through language in serpentine form, fragmented words and sentences moving back and forth across the page, until the movement stops, the narrator suddenly find themselves in the National Museum, and the narrative stabilises in a traditional, left-aligned format. The form of the opening tells the story about the narrator's transition to consciousness. Moreover, the layout and language partake in the larger story about who this narrator is. Alison Gibbons and Sarah Whitely explain that "unusual textual layouts and page designs" is a feature of multimodal printed fiction (250) – the shape created by the text adds another layer to the words on the page. Elizabeth Anker comments on Francescho's opening that "the basic visual arrangement of the words on the page stimulates an embodied, sensory approach to the literary. . . . The text accordingly refuses to obey not only the standard formatting of prose but also the metrical and other regularities of much poetry" (33). These two pages suggest the dichotomies that the novel continually challenges by refusing to be either/or: The text is poetry and prose, fragmented and cohesive; the narrator is male and female, alive and dead, all at once.

Francescho's fall is deliberately unspecific, the narrator refuses to define its place of origin and its direction. The serpentine layout underscores the movement, suggesting that the journey from oblivion is far from straightforward. Are they plunging upwards or downwards?

Are they descending from the heavens, as the references to the sky and earth imply, or pushing up from the grave, like a root digging through dirt, as one of Francescho's similes suggests? Cambridge Dictionary defines the meaning of the word serpentine as "curving and twisting like a snake", but also "complicated and difficult to understand". The text refuses to clearly define what happens in the metaphysical transition between non-consciousness and consciousness, except through imagery that allows for a range of interpretations, evoking the both-ness of the title and the novel's overall project of discarding binaries.

The words in the serpentine passage do not describe what Francescho sees, in what direction they are travelling, or what they move past, except a few references to the blue sky, the sun and the Earth: "same old sky? earth? again? / home again home again / jiggety down through the up" (190). Instead, Francescho attempts to make sense of what is going on – and remember who they are – by using similes. Images are easier to convey than an event-based narrative for several reasons; Francescho is less than clearheaded after being unconscious for five hundred years and seems to have trouble completing a sentence, and images make more sense to them because of their profession and training in the visual arts. Leech and Short refers to Terence Hawkes: "'Metaphor . . . is not fanciful embroidery of the facts. It is a way of experiencing the facts'. Poetic metaphor denies us a literal sense, and so induces us to *make* sense" (21, italics original). This opening sequence invites the reader to take the plunge and join in on the narrator's experience, rather than being a passive receiver of context and description.

The imagery is also connected to Francescho's relationship with stories and myths. Already on the first page, Francescho compares their speed with the fall of Phaethon, who attempted to ride his father's chariot of the Sun across the skies, with fatal consequences[20]. As mentioned above, Francescho returns to the full story of Phaethon and what it means to them later in the narrative, but in the opening, the story lacks reference to names and context: "… the fast coming down / of the horses in the story of / the chariot of the sun when the / bold boy drove them though / his father told him not to and / he did anyway and couldn't hold them" (189). Phaeton's disastrous ride ended with destruction and death, which is why Francescho is anxious about crashing. They are concerned that their fall at some point will also end with a collision, and seem to be hitting into objects mid-air:

. . . dear God old

[20] Many sources claim that Helios is Phaethon's father, not Apollo. However, Apollo became the dominant sun god from the 5th century BCE, and many sources conflated the two gods (Encyclopaedia Britannica).

Fathermother please spread extempore
wherever I'm meant to be hitting
whatever your target (begging your
pardon) (urgent) a flock of the nice
soft fleecy just to cushion (ow) what the
just caught my (what)
on a (ouch)
dodged a (whew) (biff)
(bash) (ow)
(mercy) (190)

This passage is the most fragmented of the opening serpentine section, as the narrator is constantly interrupted and more concerned with dodging solid objects than narrating what these objects may be. Francescho's state of fear and confusion is contrasted with the almost comical interjections associated with fight scenes in comic books for children (biff, bash), and their cry for mercy is dulled by its parentheses and lack of capitalisation. The passage creates an illusion of oral immediacy, flurry and commotion, even without reference to what is going on, as a film script without directions. In addition to creating an auditive effect, the interjections – specifically the "ouch" and the "ow" – suggest that the narrator can experience tactile sensations while they are transitioning into consciousness. Because there is no mention of tactile experiences anywhere else in the narrator's present, it is more likely that Francescho *expects* that hitting something will hurt, because the last time they were conscious, they were corporeal – and have yet to fully realise the spectral nature of their current self. The missing words in the sentence "just caught my (what) / on a (ouch)" suggest that Francescho is realising that their body is not as it was, but the circumstances make it impossible to articulate questions such as: What has happened to my body? Where are my arms and legs?

According to Leech and Short, graphological variation concerns "such matters as spelling, capitalisation, hyphenation, italicisation and paragraphing" (105). Unconventional graphology and syntax are foregrounded throughout Francescho's chapter, but to a much larger degree in these transit sections at the beginning and end, where there are no period marks or commas, and where the sentences and fragments bleed into each other. The combined effect of the unusual syntax and the lack of capitalisation and punctuation is that the narrator's thought seemingly runs too quick to transcribe; there is no time to finish sentences or capitalise words. Dorrit Cohn argues that "When a first-person text contains no evidence of writing actively or of fictional listeners present on the scene, and yet adopts a distinct tone of oral colloquy, the narrative presentation itself becomes mysterious" (177-8). Both Sara's and Francescho's openings create an illusion that the narrator speaks directly to the reader without

the medium of text – the written status of the text is played down while simultaneously drawing attention to itself because of the layout.

Because so few words are capitalised, the four instances where standard rules are followed, become noticeable. The first capitalised word marks the beginning of the chapter ("Ho"), the personal pronoun 'I' occurs (only) once, and the remaining two are part of the prayer to the divine: "dear God old Fathermother". The capitalisation here is a sign of respect, yet the vocabulary – especially calling God "old Fathermother" – signifies a personal, unceremonious relationship to the higher power, and, for a Renaissance Catholic, a blasphemous refusal to comply with the standard gender of God. Francescho's nonbinary gender reference to God hints about their own identity, their rebelliousness, stories about their upbringing, cultural understanding and choices in life.

Francescho's and Sara's exits are marked by aphasia and confusion – both cognitive and grammatical. When Francescho tells their final autobiographical story about Barto, they have already forgotten their friend's name. The narrative task is nearly done, and Francescho is being pulled out, losing their grip on themselves and their memories once more. As the narrative returns to the present, Francescho has forgotten all they have learned about George, H and Lisa Goliard. The syntax becomes fragmented, as Francescho begins to interrupt themselves again:

> We are outside a house, have I been here before? There are 2 girls kneeling on the paving.
> An old woman, I think I
> do I know her? no (369)

Here, Francescho's memory loss is expressed through the grammar and sentence structure as well as the semantics – the phrase "there are 2 girls …" suggests that they are just starting to tell their story, and the articles has lost their anaphoric reference, because what they refer to is no longer known. The language returns to fragmented serpentines on the final three pages, more complex and enigmatic than in the introduction. The narrator points to the line between the wall and the ground, marvelling at nature's way of pushing through solid elements, creating paths that seem covered and closed, just as Francescho themselves did in their life:

> there at the very foot of this
> (really badly made just saying)
> wall at the place where the crumble of
> the brickbase meets the paving
> look

the line where
one thing meets another
the little green almost not-there weeds
take root in it
by enchantment
cause it's an enchanted line
the line drawn between planes
place of green possible (370)

Francescho implores the narratee to look between the solid truths, between elements that are considered immovable and fixed, and into the "green possible", a place of explosive growth. Even though their memories have all but disappeared, and they have forgotten to insert their mother's "two dots" and instead left a blank space, the essence of Francescho lingers on: Their impressionistic way of seeing, after a lifetime of studying motifs and representing their emotional impact; their childhood knowledge about brick-making and structure (and their strong objection to poorly made walls), which is etched deep into their being; their philosophical, curious worldview; and their need to be heard and listened to.

Here, the serpentines and language work together in describing Francescho's cosmic, dizzying return trip. As in the opening, Francescho does not narrate what is happening to them. Instead, they investigate what they see and convey the associations created by their observations. They ponder both the microscopical and the vast miracles of nature, such as the point "where a horizontal line meets a / vertical and a surface meets a surface and a / structure meets another which looks to / be 2 dimensions only but is deeper than /sea" (371). Francescho reminds the narratee that a change of perspective can transform a simple angle into something multi-dimensional, and that infinite shapes – such as the ring in the puddle of horse piss – surround us, all the time. At the same time, all things are made of smaller building blocks. Francescho's attention turn to the worms in the ground (perhaps because they are being pulled back into their coffin) and the order of nature; that insects help mix the clay that human beings use to make bricks, which again make up the architectural wonders of the world. Francescho's last words express gratitude for being a part of all of this:

hello all the new bones
hello all the old
hello all the everything
to be
made and
unmade
both (372)

Francescho's final narrative act is to greet everything and everyone and give thanks for the opportunity to live their life as more than one thing.

Sara's narrative does not unravel in the same degree as Francescho's, but her aphasia increases dramatically towards the end of her chapter, and homophonic variation makes her message more and more cryptic. E. E. Smith points out that "the 'voice' which most overtly 'speaks' in this novel issues from a self which, in addition to being dead, is in the process of breaking apart, deconstructing" (86). And yet, Sara's determination to tell her story and get her message across never wavers, even as more words disappear from her narrative. Her ending sees the full transformation of her *memento vivere*:[21]

> Here's the story.
> Remember you must live.
> Remember you most love.
> Remainder you mist leaf.
> (I will miss mist. I will miss leaf. I will miss the, the. What's the word? Lost, I've, the word. The word for. You know. I don't mean a house. I don't mean a room. I mean the way of the . Dead to the . Out of this . Word.
> I am hanging falling breaking between this word and the next.
> Time me, would you?
> You. Yes, you. It's you I'm talking to.) (30-1)

The passage includes Sara's last story, as well as the message she has attempted to convey to everyone she has met, but in telling this story, Sara also "narrates her own unravelling" (E. E. Smith 84). The blank spaces come to represent the word Sara has forgotten – *world*. She still remembers idioms that include the word, but she cannot complete them – perhaps because she no longer belongs to this world, and her linguistic decomposition is mirrored (or echoed) by the physical decomposition of her corpse (Karl). Whereas Sara's beginning was narrated as one long, swooping sentence that completely lacked punctuation, her ending is characterised by short, unfinished sentences and sentence fragments, separated by period marks. The contrast underscores the transformation that has happened to her during the narrative, and that her narrative force is ebbing out. Currie writes that "the falling out of words and letters and the analogy they form for the falling out of life into death, the blank space and the blank page, and the relationship between writing and silence, help us understand the last things that Sara Wilby says before she descends into eternal silence" (59).

[21] I have borrowed the variation of the Latin proverb from Alice Bennett: "The novel is both indebted to and haunted by Muriel Spark's *Memento Mori*; it quotes Spark in its epigraph and offers a re-reading of *memento mori* in terms of *memento vivere*. The novel is also structured around the question of the gift and the exchange, starting with an examination of the idea of the world as a hotel, from which one checks out of and pays the bill upon departure" (40).

The *memento vivere* is a play with signifiers – the whole point is that the message means more than one thing. To Karl, the transmutation of the message reflects Sara's narrative, from her "desire to re-live the experiences of her physical self . . . to recalling distinct but fleeting bodily sensations ('Remember [that which] you most love'), to quite literally witnessing her decomposing body disperse 'all over the world' at a cellular level" (80). Her reading is in accordance with my interpretation of what happens to Sara's sense of self throughout the narrative; Sara has re-experienced her life by narrating it, mourned her loss and is now ready to move on and become something else entirely. Levin argues that the "breakdown of the rules of grammar and fading into partial significations offers . . . the possibility for new significations and, eventually, the potential for new modes of individual and cultural expressivity" (43), which is a hopeful way of interpreting Sara's end. The memento vivere is repeated (on an unpaginated page) after the final chapter of the novel, this time with all the words placed underneath each other with decreasing font size. Now, the reader will have learned the full story of Sara's life and death, and the re-reading of her message will potentially change its significance.

Printed at the bottom of a second unpaginated page is an echo of the ghost's cry:

WOoooo –
hooooooo
oo
o

The scream frames the novel, and its presence at the novel's end suggests that Sara's narrative is simultaneous with the rest of the novel's telling; the duration of her narrative lasts until morning, and she does not let go until all the threads of the novel are tied up.

2 Elegiac stories

Everyone can master a grief but he that has it.
(*Much Ado About Nothing*, 3.2.26)

In the deserts of the heart
Let the healing fountain start
(W. H. Auden, "In Memory of W.B. Yeats")

The thanatologist David Kessler explains that "Each person's grief is as unique as their fingerprint. But what everyone has in common is that no matter how they grieve, they share a need for their grief to be witnessed" (n. pag). Although Clare and George grieve differently, their situations are similar in several ways: They are adolescents who refrain from voicing their feelings, and their parents are too consumed with their own grief to provide their daughters with adequate support and attention – which means that in the beginning of their narratives, they have no functional output for their grief, and they do not allow anyone in. Although both girls are being watched over by ghosts, Sara and Francescho are not in a position to comfort them. However, as the first chapter showed, the redeeming communicative outlet can be the elegiac narrative itself – at least for Clare. Her homodiegetic narrative reads like a frenetic journal entry, addressed to herself and to Sara. This chapter will show that her grief is expressed through stylistic means, and she is able to deal with her feelings by narrating her own story, as well as the story of her lost sister, and find hope in the process. George's narrative, on the other hand, is heterodiegetic and extradiegetic, which means that she is not in control of the chapter's ordering or style, the selection of stories and events, or how her grief comes across as narrative. Although the narrator is far from self-assertive, she seems to have unlimited access to George's thoughts and emotions and shows every sign of conveying her consciousness faithfully. There is nonetheless a mediator between George and the narratee – she is not heard directly, as opposed to Francescho, Sara and Clare. Her deliverance is H(elena), the stranger who swoops into her life and helps her to find a way forward by urging her to continue exploring the story about the Renaissance painter that George and her mother were so engaged in.[22] H is not a passive audience, but an interlocutor.

[22] Smith's disruptive strangers act as catalysts in several of her novels, Amber in *The Accidental* (2005) upturns the lives of the Smart family, and Miles in *There but for the* (2011) locks himself into the spare bedroom during a dinner party and refuses to come out – indefinitely. (This sets off a series of narratives that curiously enough have little, if anything, to do with Miles.)

This indicates that what is most important for the bereaved is not to address the narratee directly, or stylistic self-expression per se, but to reassess the stories of their lost ones to accept the fact that they are gone. Exploring the past is the key to escaping the numbness of the present, and by doing so, Clare and George find the means to imagine a future for themselves independent of their lost ones. Because neither Clare nor George express their feelings directly, the analysis below will show how grief manifests in their narratives and how they manage to shift their focus from the past and onto the future. Peter Knox-Shaw writes that the elegist, as a rule, has "three functions to perform: he offers a life of the departed; he records the impact of death; he returns to the present, finally, with renewed affirmation" (33). This chapter will reorder these functions slightly, and first explore the impact that death has had on George and Clare, and then examine the stories of the objects of their grief and the mourners' returns to the present. Finally, the chapter seeks to explore how Clare's grief and healing is expressed through language. I limit the stylistic analysis to Clare's homodiegetic narrative; because George's grief is mediated through an extra-/heterodiegetic narrator, her emotions do not affect the style of the narrative.

2.1 The impact of death: Grief reactions

The psychologist Oddbjørn Sandvik broadly defines grief as "reactions to significant experiences of loss" and explains that what decides these experiences depends on to what degree the loss affects a person's "fundamental situation in life and their perception of what life is all about" (16, my translation). Moreover, grief entails the lengthy process of adapting, in which the bereaved come to accept the loss and its consequences, and readjusts their life in light of this process (16). A common social conception is that grief comes with a time limit, and that the bereaved should "move on" and "get over it" after a certain duration of time; if she does not, she is in danger of the grief becoming pathological. This was articulated in Sigmund Freud's essay "Mourning and Melancholia" (1917), which describes mourning as the healthy and natural response to loss, whereas melancholia may be all-encompassing and dangerous, because the melancholic person does not comprehend his loss on a conscious level and cannot engage in the work of mourning: "Freud portrays melancholia as an 'open wound'. In contrast, successful mourning is a process of healing and return to full health" (Kennedy 40). The elegy traditionally describes a restorative mourning process, as Peter Knox-Shaw argues: "Where tragedy presents, metaphorically speaking, the 'darkening slope' towards death, the ascent from death is the concern of elegy. While it begins in lament the elegy ends

by offering consolation" (32). This sentiment supports my hypothesis that *HW* and *HTBB* can be read as elegies, because both mourners begin their narrative deep in grief and end them on a more hopeful note. Nonetheless, it is worth mentioning that throughout the 20th century, elegy has come to include a wide range of grief reactions, not all of them consolatory. Kennedy points to Ramazani, who asserts that the contemporary elegy is "a mimesis of mourning" (55). Grief manifests in different ways and provokes a range of unpredictable reactions – many of which are not necessarily signs of pathology – and may last for an extended period of time. (Although the idea of appropriate mourning periods is "very ancient" (36),[23] the grief of an individual often fails to comply with the standards of society.)

Sandvik refers to Shucther and Zisook, who have attempted to describe the variation of reactions that may occur at different stages of the grieving process. They distinguish between physical, emotional, cognitive, and behavioural reactions, and point out that grief often changes people's relations to others (17). Naturally, the significance of loss is influenced by its circumstances, especially if someone dies suddenly or as a cause of a dramatic incident – which is the case of both Sara and of George's mother. Violent death is traumatic for those left behind, and trauma may have long-term effects, such as obtrusive thoughts and fantasies, or repression and avoidance (18). Grief can also cause an acute sense of isolation, both because the bereaved retract into themselves (especially adolescents), but also because our modern society is inept at dealing with people in mourning, which both *HW* and *HTBB* provide ample examples of. At the beginning of their narratives, both Clare and George seem completely alone; neither girl receives significant support from their peers or parents. Clare suffers because of the rumours going around her school that her sister committed suicide, whereas George, who is very self-aware of the public aspect of her status as "in mourning", notices that other people's reactions to her have changed since her mother died. If she makes jokes, her teachers initially laugh, but "then look embarrassed, because they've laughed when they were supposed to be being attentive and mournful-looking, and can George really even have *made* a joke, is that *done*, since she's supposed to be feeling so sad and everything?" (13-4). Clare also experiences people becoming flustered or pulling away from her if anyone mentions death in general:

[23] For instance, Kennedy mentions how the Israelites mourned for thirty days after Moses' death. However, inappropriate mourning behaviours are also described in the Bible: "we find Isiah complaining about people lingering in cemeteries eating and drinking after the permitted period of mourning" (36). A more recent example is the etiquette of mourning in the Victorian age, especially for the upper classes. A widow was expected to refrain from entering society for twelve months following her husband's death and wear black for several years. The Victorians saw no indecency in prolonged mourning, as the widow could choose to remain in "full mourning attire" for the rest of her life, as Queen Victoria did herself.

> God it is amazing what people will do so they don't have to say the word or come anywhere near anyone who has been anywhere near it like at school looking embarrassed like I've done something to embarrass them it's sad no that's not sad sad is what it was when Fluff died that's how I remember it sad looking round & there being no cat in the kitchen or on the chair it was very sad but that was cat-sized sad with this it is as if the kitchen is meaningless it is stupid to even have one the chair is irrelevant it is what is not on it or in it that is made into everything (197-8)

The comparison between the "cat-sized sad" and the absolute loss of meaning – represented by the emptiness of the chair – shows the magnitude of Clare's grief. People shy away from her because they cannot face that kind of emotion, which leaves Clare and George isolated. Not only do they have to process their grief, they must also deal with the fact that everybody around them act self-consciously.

The girls' unpredictable grief reactions are easier to find in their narratives than overt statements of how they feel. Both act irrationally; Clare collects dust from around the house in order to hold on to Sara on a molecular level, whereas George allows her room to rot from a leaking roof as a representation of the destruction she feels inside. Their sense of alienation is emphasised because their families are broken; George's father drinks excessively and often leaves George to take care of her little brother Henry, while Clare's father throws away all of Sara's things in a paroxysm of rage. Both girls skip school, and no one seems to react. For days on end, George takes the train from Cambridge to London to see a del Cossa painting her mother did not know about, while Clare sits outside the Global Hotel and tries to work up the courage to go inside. The narratives do not explicitly say whether these acts are characteristic of either of the girls, but they imply that there is a clear before/after divide in Clare and George's selves, caused by the deaths of Sara and Carol, respectively. George refers to this several times: "The George from after can still feel the fury at the wrongness of things that beat such huge dents into the chest of the George from before" (92). Reality has shifted, and as a result, she is not herself anymore.

Clare and George are both aware of a discrepancy between their subjective experience of grief and the various theories that seek to describe the grief process in an objective and general manner. The theories that identify stages of grief are well known, although psychologists differ widely in their opinions of how many stages there are and what each

stage entails.[24] To George, these stages appear wildly insufficient, and the idea that grief has a time limit, and that the mourning period follows a fixed pattern, appals her. What she experiences is unique to her, and reducing these experiences to a general pattern seems ridiculous and offensive: "Stage nine (or twenty three or a hundred and twenty three or ad infinitum, because nothing will ever not be like this again): in this stage you will no longer be bothered with whether songwords mean anything. In fact you will hate almost all songs" (5). Her observation is not only adolescent hyperbole. Kessler's observations of mourners have led him to assert that grief never really goes away, simply because the object of grief will never *not* be dead – a sentiment echoed by George. According to his expertise, losing a loved one causes another loss – hope disappears too, and life becomes dark and meaningless. In Kessler's opinion, the labour of grief should not be oriented towards making the loss less significant and painful, but towards finding a way back to experiencing hope for the future.

Although six months have passed since Sara died, Clare's grief is still fresh and raw. She suffers from insomnia, and her mind is in overdrive. Yorick Spiegel, in *The Grief Process*, claims that the regressive stage of bereavement (following shock and control) is a critical period where the bereaved "faces experiences that are not only extremely painful but often also of a frightening nature" (72-3). The bereaved has lost someone close, a person who "represented a mutual world of existence, which has now fallen apart" (73). Sara has left the "mutual world of existence" that was their shared bedroom and left behind a physical and emotional void that Clare is unable to fill. Her parents' behaviour does not model a healthy way of mourning; the whole Wilby family is weighed down by grief. The mother seems barely functional: "our mum not our only my completely out of it going round like she's a ghost herself all the time getting that stuff from the doctor to help her" (193). The father has tried to remove all traces of Sara by giving her bed away, taking down photographs from the walls and throwing her swimming gear, her medals and her clothes away in the trash. Clare pictures Sara's belongings on the dump, "all mixed in with old teabags & leftover food condoms shit with like a skin of mouldy stuff over it" (195). This defilement and erasure of Sara has made Clare so angry with her father that she refuses to refer to him as "dad" for much of her narrative; the father remains only a "he" for a long time. There is no space in the house for Clare's grief, so instead she finds her own, rebellious way of honouring her sister. Not only has she managed to save some of Sara's things without her

[24] The psychologist and theologian Wayne Oates adopted six phases that I find refreshingly precise: "shock, numbness, struggle between fantasy and reality, breakthrough of mourning, selective recollection connected with stabbing pain, and, finally, acceptance of loss and the reaffirmation of life itself" (Spiegel 60).

father's knowledge, she has also collected dust from their room, because she has learned at school that dust consists of human cells: "picked up what I could of it still there after he hoovered & it is in the handkerchief in with my pants & tights underneath them in the top drawer because maybe it came off you Sara" (191). By saving particles of Sara's skin, Clare honours her sister and ensures that traces of her will remain in their house. She is also keeping Sara alive by watching new episodes of her favourite TV series for her, although she herself does not particularly like them, and savouring the taste of the food she eats. Without knowing it, she supplies Sara with one of the words she has forgotten (toast) and follows Sara's message to the letter – fully experiencing what toast tastes like while she has the chance.

George also has ways to honour her mother's memory, and in a way keeping her alive, by continuing her mother's physical exercises, which she did every morning: "Every single day, George has decided, from its first day onwards for this first year in which her mother won't be alive, she will not just wear something black somewhere on her person but she will do the sixties dance for her in her honour" (21-2). The rituals they did together as a family, however, have become meaningless: The family had a New Years' ritual where they would take two notes, "write their wishes and hopes for the new year on one of them and write the things they'd hated most about the old year on to the other one" (27) and then burn them over the sink. This year, in George's present, her father is out on a bender, and Henry is asleep. There is no one to perform the ritual with, and George neither wishes nor hopes for anything.

The idea of keeping watch over her mother translates into another obsession for George; she has discovered a porn video on the Internet that is so intensely uncomfortable, because the girl in it looks underage and dejected. Watching it "had changed something in the structures of George's brain and heart and certainly her eyes, so that afterwards when George tried to watch any more of this kind of sexual film that girl was there waiting under them all" (35). What shocks George the most, is that unlike the other porn videos with their silly pretend-stories, the girl's look suggested that what happened in the video was not acting – it was real. George has promised herself to remain this girl's witness, in the hope that her daily "completely different watching of it" (38) somehow will make a difference.

While George and Clare are keeping watch over their dead, they are also being watched throughout their narratives. The outside focalisation provides an added dimension to the expression of their grief. Clare is not only watched by Sara, she also figures in Else's, Lise's and Penny's narratives. Else studies Clare outside the Global Hotel, and because she herself is in severe pain, she recognises Clare's: "She holds herself, that girl, as if she is all bruises" (51). Sara also notices how Clare's body reveals her inner turmoil:

> She had a fracture of anger starting under her yellow hairline, crossing her forehead and running right down the middle of her face, dividing her chin, her neck, her chest, all the way to her abdomen where it snarled itself into a black knot. This knot only just held the two halves of her together. (11)

Else's and Sara's observations suggests that Clare's grief, as manifested in her narrative, is an outlet of emotions she has not allowed herself to express in any other way – that she has kept herself together with all her might. Everything hurts, and it is evident on the surface if one knows how to look. Francescho offers a similar observation of George the first time they see her face (when they still believe George is a boy): "Most I see that round his eyes is the blackness of sadness (burnt peachstone smudged in the curve of the bone at both sides of the top of the nose). It is as if he is a miniver that's been dipped in shadow" (235). These outside perspectives describe their pain much more directly than Clare and George's own narratives, where their grief is expressed through declarations of absence. In Clare's and George's chapters, the reader is witness to the repeated adjustments to the fact that the dead truly are gone, such as Clare's realisation that "somehow she is still here too but that's a lot of shit because she's gone I mean she's really really gone aren't you" (200), and George's corrective tense shifts: "(George's mother is a feminist). (Was.)" (93). These examples show the pain of grief indirectly; the shift of person in Clare's narrative and the shift of tense in George's represent the shocking realisation that all mourners experience every time they are reminded that their loved one is dead. George's little brother Henry experiences the same thing: "When I remember, it is like an earthquake, Henry said yesterday. Sometimes I don't remember, for almost all day. And then I do" (174). Until the mourner accommodates this information as a stable fact of their new reality, they live in a state of limbo, always under siege to the brutal truth they are trying to adapt to.

The narrator of George's part refrains from spelling out how she is *really* feeling, because according to her, she is not feeling anything. This heterodiegetic, extradiegetic narrator belongs to the category that Dorrit Cohn calls consonant; "who remains effaced and who readily fuses with the consciousness he narrates" (26). As such, it is not the narrator's place to disclose unconscious processes that George herself is unaware of, or to divulge what she is repressing. Instead, George expresses her own state of mind as direct speech, admitting that she knows her feelings are somewhere, but they are far away: "Like, say you wake up one morning to the noise of someone along the road having work done on his or her house and you don't just hear the drilling happening, you feel it in your own house, though it's actually

happening several houses away" (14). Her numbness masks the earthquake that Henry cannot defend himself against.

Clare, on the other hand, feels more than she can handle, but is unable to talk about any of it except describing the experiences in her narrative. She has been fixated on the terror of Sara's story. It is quite obvious that she is not coping well with her loss, although she never says it directly. She is indeed haunted by her sister's ghost:

> every night ever since then since that night it has been the bits of her coming at me like they are all demanding I never know what & it's like say she was standing there at the end of my bed & then suddenly flew apart she just fell apart small bits of her her ear neck the hollow of her neck hand fingers toes her heel her foot the bit where her swimsuit dipped down & the shoulderblade in it eye mouth muscles her oh God fuck sake it makes me weird in my stomach (187)

Clare's vision of her sister's explosive destruction is truly frightening; Clare is powerless against the intense force of her own imagination, triggered by trauma (and possibly survivor's guilt). This is emphasised by her family's dysfunctional grief; she believes her father thinks of her as insolent, "not just because I don't say anything but because I am the one who is still here" (214). The frenetic narrative reveals the obsessive churning of her mind that takes away her sleep; she is unable to shut these intrusive thoughts out, and she feels worse because of it: "God I am weird I am fucking gone I tell you I am a lobotomic case" (187). After the tragedy of her sister's death, she faces a second tragedy of facing her grief alone, and because no one explains to her that her reactions are normal, she believes she is losing her mind.

2.2 Stories of the departed / stories of the future

"I still don't get it a dead person & her a dead person & her how the two things are the same thing" (211), Clare says – and George echoes the sentiment: "How can that advert exist and her mother not exist in the world?" (15). Death is initially incomprehensible, the loss seems impossible to fathom, and it seems beyond impossible to let go of the person who has passed away. Kennedy argues that modern elegists often struggle to give up their dead (57), and Schuster writes that they can "get caught up in repetition and resistance to acknowledging loss" (131). Clare's fixation on Sara seems especially unhealthy because she views Sara's dead skin as a keepsake: "maybe I have some of her skin from spring 1999 in the top drawer" (192). Although her desire to hold on to Sara is rooted in loyalty, she needs to find other ways to keep her memory if she is going to continue her own life. Letting go does not mean to stop

grieving, or to sever the bond completely. Sandvik points to Shuchter and Zisook, who believe that "complete severance with the deceased is both impossible and undesirable . . . the goal of grief work rather is to find ways to maintain emotional contact with the dead while also developing ways to live on and take part in activities and relationships with other people" (27, my translation). Kennedy's stance is similar: "it is simply not possible to give up one's dead. Time may reduce the pain of their loss, but our dead remain a part of us" (57). In many ways, the story of the dead continues with the living – something which this subchapter will attempt to demonstrate.

2.2.1 The lives of the departed

As Knox-Shaw suggests, one of the elegist's functions is to tell a story of the life of the departed, which is the case in both George's and Clare's chapters – although their stories of the dead are tightly entwined with their own. George's narrative offers glimpses of her mother's life before her own birth, for instance the Super 8 film of her three-year-old mother, where she is dancing the dance that George now copies in her daily routine: "She looks serious and grim but she is also smiling; even then her mouth, when she smiled, was that straight line and it looks like she is already, even so young, being polite yet firm about the fact that she's having to concentrate" (24). George mentions that her grandmother died before she was born, which means that her mother also had experienced losing *her* mother when she was young. Once, George asked her mother which words scared her when she was a child: "Lockjaw. Quicksand. Polio. Lung" (25). The choice of words indicates that her mother had real fears as a child, and perhaps experience with serious illness in the family.

Carol Martineau's character is mainly shown in analepses from George's past. Focalised by George, Carol comes across as a vibrant, enthusiastic human being who disregards rules and cares little of what other people think of her. George recalls listening to records from her mother's youth together with her parents, all of them crying with laughter on the floor because the lyrics are so silly – a scene that mirrors one of Francescho's stories about their mother. The stories George tell are filled with laughter, jokes and kind teasing. For instance, George was told off for her normative view of language and grammar: "How did I, the most maxima unpedantic of all the maxima unpedantic women in the world, end up giving birth to such a pedant? And why the hell wasn't I smart enough to drown it at birth?" (10). Another time, when George disturbed her mother in the study, her mother sent her away with the following comment: "Go away. Shut the door after you, you annoying and challenging little pest" (30). Comments like this would have been horrible if it were not for the

unconditional love Carol had for her family, which allowed her to say such things in jest. She is depicted as funny, honest, and above all genuinely interested in her children. She challenged her daughter to participate in philosophical and moral discussions, and she made fun of her when she was being adolescent and silly. Carol wanted to watch meteor storms with her children, and took them out of school to go to Italy on a whim, asking her children to lie and say they were sick. George paints a picture of the mother everybody wished they had.

Carol had earned several university degrees – in art history, women's studies and possibly economics. At the time of her death, she worked at a think-tank, gave talks and published op-eds in newspapers, focusing on poverty in the UK and systemic economical unfairness. Her obituary read: "*Dr Carol Martineau Economist Journalist Internet Guerrilla Interventionist 19 November 1962–10 September 2013 aged 50 years . . . renaissance woman . . . tragic unsuspected allergic reaction to standard antibiotic*" (20-1). She earned the "Internet Guerrilla Interventionist" title because of the Subvert movement, a side project that she was very passionate about. George has no memory of the subvert's origin story, but it has been retold so many times that it has become part of the family myth: On holiday, Carol had been reading about Edna Clarke Hall, a talented artist, educated at the Slade School of Art, whose husband wanted her to throw away her paints and brushes. Carol had burst into tears:

> That's the story. George has no memory of it but the story goes that her mother raged round the cottage's garden like a mad person and that the letting agency had sent a bill afterwards for some of the plants she'd wrecked. Your mother is a very passionate person, her father always said whenever the story got told. (94)

This was the genesis of the first subvert: Any time anyone looked up the word Slade, a list of names – all female art students – would pop up without any explanation. The "*anonymous influential satire Subverts online art movement*" (21) wished to point out uncomfortable truths and fight injustice with art, stimulating people to make connections without providing context. Carol was passionate, cultured and opinionated, but she wanted other people to draw their own conclusions – not force her own onto them.

The main analepsis in George's chapter, spread out in fragments throughout the first two parts of her narrative, is the story of the trip to Italy. Carol's opening question, asked in a car in Italy, frames the narrative: "Consider this moral conundrum for a moment" (3) – which is what George and the reader does for the rest of the novel. The moral conundrum connects George's and Francescho's chapters, both because they had mothers asking such things of them, but above all because the conundrum is about the historical figure Francesco del Cossa,

and the letter he wrote to the Duke of Ferrara: "You're an artist, her mother says, and you're working on a project with lot of other artists. And everybody on the project is getting the same amount, salary-wise. But *you* believe that what *you're* doing is worth more than everyone on the project, including you, is getting paid" (6). This letter was what made art historians aware that del Cossa had been involved in Palazzo Schifanoia; his artwork had been attributed to another artist. Carol's approach to her daughter's education in this matter is phenomenological; she introduces the dilemma before supplying the facts of the story. George seems to be familiar with her mother's pedagogic approach:

> Is this something that already has an answer in reality but you're testing me with the concept of it though you already know perfectly well what you yourself think about it? George says.
>
> Maybe, her mother says. But I'm not interested in what I think. I'm interested in what you think.
>
> You're not usually interested in anything I think, George says.
>
> That's so adolescent of you, George, her mother says.
>
> I *am* adolescent, George says.
>
> Well, yes. That explains that, then, her mother says. (6-7)

George is not impressed with her mother's strategy; she craves facts before she makes up her mind. She asks whether the conundrum is real or hypothetical, whether it is happening now or in the past, and whether the artist is a woman or a man: "Past or present? George says. Male or female? It can't be both. It must be the one or the other" – to which her mother replies: "Who says? Why must it?" (8). George likes rules and stable signifiers, and her mother's belief that everything is open for interpretation frustrates her: "Talking to you . . . is like talking to a wall" (8), she says, and although she means to tell her mother that she is stubborn, walls in *HTBB* are always multi-layered, which her mother promptly points out. Fragments of the story of their journey (their visit to the palace, lunch in Ferrara and a conversation at the hotel) are spread out throughout the two first parts of George's chapter, but this conversation is particularly important because it is a structural element of the novel – Carol's instruction to consider the moral conundrum re-enters George's mind towards the end – and because it illustrates Carol's approach to conversations with her daughter, and to life in general.

Clare's story of Sara is even more fragmented than George's memories of her mother. She does not tell a full life story of her sister for several reasons: Sara has already been allowed to tell her own story, she had not lived that long or experienced that much, and because both girls were teenagers, they kept many things to themselves. Now that Sara is dead and cannot answer, Clare has finally opened up to her: "I talk to her all the time now we never

used to talk at all hardly ever but now all the time I can't get my head round it if someone is dead they can be more alive than they are when they're actually like alive" (210). Nonetheless, her narrative adds crucial bits of information about Sara that add to the pieces from the previous chapters. Sara was a promising swimmer who were 0.45 second away from a substitute spot in the butterfly national team, she was ambitious, watched her weight and spent much of her time practicing. Sara did not tell anyone but Clare about the possibility of the substitution spot, because she was afraid to jinx it, and Clare has kept the secret. The sisters shared a room, which always smelled of chlorine. Clare is in awe of how fast Sara was:

> she was always miles ahead reaching the side turning that way under the water like doing a somersault in it pushing off first from the side in one push way ahead miles ahead of whoever she was racing you couldn't believe she could stay under for so long then her shoulders & head bursting up out of it imagine her taking a breath after holding it for so long imagine not being able to breathe & then at the last minute being able to again (196)

Here, Clare emphasises the speed of Sara's life; she was always ahead, always chasing, never taking the time to breathe. Unbeknownst to Clare, this is Sara's greatest remorse as ghost. When she was alive, she probably thought she would have time to slow down and appreciate the world as she became older – and the fact that Clare senses this indicates that she knew her sister better than she perhaps thinks. Clare mourns Sara's lost opportunities, and is fixated on the fact that Sara's time has stopped: "I am thinking all that stuff again like how she was going to be 20 years old & it would have been on Jan 22nd next year & she was about to be 20 in a couple of months' time she would have been 20 in 2000 on Jan 22 20 2000 22" (188). Here, the repetitions of the numbers illustrate the circularity of Clare's obsessive and intrusive thoughts, she simply cannot stop. She is equally hung up on Sara's death date. Clare is reading *Tess of the d'Ubervilles*, where the heroine begins to think that "we all know our dates of birth but that every year there is another date that we pass over without knowing what it is but it is just as important it is the other date the death date" (188). To Clare, the idea that Sara has gone through nineteen May 24's without knowing this would be the day she would die, treating it like any other day – and that this applies to all of us – is too much to bear.

Clare admires her older sister and thinks that she could have become anything she wanted:

> you could have been anything a doctor someone selling jumpers in a shop selling shoes in a shoe shop papers in a paper shop someone who looked after trees & bushes at a garden centre . . . all I can think of is that the list of things it would have been possible for you to do is never fucking ending it goes on forever new things adding to

> it all the time you could have been a TV vet or done the things they keep telling us to do at school with computers & personnel or got married or been a person working in a hospital the night a dead girl who'd fallen down a lift shaft got brought in" (207-8)

Pondering the possible futures makes the loss even more real – Sara can do none of these things. Clare is so engulfed in her sister's lost possibilities that she cannot imagine a future for herself, either. She does not feel as though she can measure up to Sara. Her sister was the star of the family, whereas Clare never mentions standing out in any way. She was the little sister; now she is the only remaining child, and she does not know how to fill that role. She remembers a night not long before the accident when Sara was staring at her in the dark (probably thinking about the girl in the watch shop), and the look made Clare feel horrible:

> my whole insides filled it made me angry it was sore it filled me up as simply as water will fill a cup a sink a bath a pool a river the ocean basin or whatever you put it in it filled me so I could hardly breathe came right up over my nose like I was too small for the depth of it Sara (215)

Clare cannot survive in water – she is literally a bad swimmer – and her grief takes her breath away. She is too small, too insecure, and she is afraid she cannot fill the void that Sara left behind. Clare's biggest fear is that she did not matter to her sister, that she was insignificant. But telling the story of Sara, especially the things only a little sister would know, comforts her. Clare knows that Sara liked crocuses, that it was her job to set the table for supper every day, and that she "used to hit the sideboard with the sides of the knives along to whatever was playing on the radio or whatever was on TV" (218). She tells stories from their growing up together, especially of their quarrels: Once, Clare told Sara she was as fast as light and got a slap in return: "that stern look on her face her hand scuffing the top of my hair like it was a stupid little sister thing" (213). Sara did not pull her punches; once she pulled Clare's hair so hard that a patch of it never grew back properly, and she gave Clare a bruised arm after Clare told on her to their parents – but Clare also remembers how Sara would know that Clare was afraid at night, without Clare having to tell her, and comforted her. Although the sisters did not tell each other their secrets, they knew each other intimately: "I will always know off by heart I will not forget the sound of you breathing in the dark" (219). This side of Sara could only be focalised by Clare.

2.2.2 Returns to the future

During the course of the narratives, both George and Clare manage to refocus their attention away from the dead and back onto themselves. Yorick Spiegel claims that "A general phenomenon of regression in grief is the *simplification of complex coherences*" (74), which amongst other things leads the bereaved to view the world "only as the interaction of individual persons" (74) instead of thinking about how all things are interconnected. "Due to this personification, the bereaved frequently concentrates entirely on his relationship with the deceased, even though the death still has many more far-reaching consequences for the bereaved (74). However, the mourner can give up the regressive forms of grief and substitute them with adaptive forms instead: "The loss is recognized in its full extent; the bereaved begins to liberate himself from the image of the mourner. At the same time he begins to restore again the person whom he lost within himself" (81). The last point is crucial, because at the start of their narratives, both George and Clare are so lost in their grief that they hardly know themselves anymore. To find their lost selves, they need a redirection of story. When they become detectives into the secrets of the dead, they can tie these stories to a larger narrative – one that has a future, not only a past. As previously mentioned, neither girl discuss their feelings much with others, but remembering can be a form of communication even when you talk to yourself (Hirst and Mainer 271), and their narratives prove to be redemptive because they allow George and Clare to put their stories into words.

Clare's detective story is rather straight-forward: She investigates what really happened at the night of Sara's death, and the knowledge makes it possible to adapt to her present situation. George's development is more complex, as it involves the rejection of her mother's post-structuralist, interpretive approach to life: "George comes to terms with the tragic loss of her mother in part by actively repudiating the habits of interpretation her mother bequeathed to her" (Anker, Postcritical Reading, the Lyric, and Ali Smith's How to be Both 30). George exchanges her mother's intellectualised abstractions with a way of looking that is more intuitive and emotive. She achieves this by pursuing the story of Francesco del Cossa together with H, but this new relationship with H also forces her to assemble what she knows of her mother's mysterious spy friend in order to understand and accept her own sexuality.

Both Clare and George have trouble separating parts of their own selves from their lost ones. On many levels, Clare is uncertain that she really knew Sara, and whether she can ever fill her shoes. To get into the hotel without raising suspicion, she put on a hotel uniform, and although *that* garb was never worn by her sister, the uniformity of such work clothes makes them by all appearances the same clothes. As with Francescho, the act of wearing the

clothes of the dead is a way or performing them or becoming like them, and Clare is aware of this: "I wonder if I maybe looked a bit like her when I had the uniform on we don't really didn't really look alike but maybe a little bit I must have looked a bit like her I must have looked a bit" (213). Identifying with her sister is difficult because she feels so guilty of being the one who survived, when her sister had filled the role of the "talented" daughter, but it is also comforting to her to feel as though she is tasked with a mission on Sara's behalf – remembering things for her, since she cannot make new memories:

> I touched the velvet of the armcover of the reclining chair so you would know what it felt like though the touch of velvet makes a shiver go down my spine like if you scratch your finger across one of those old vinyl singles in his collection **not you me** & I look at things hard so you will know if you want to what they look like (209, my emphasis)

Clare's identification with Sara, which is evident in the example above, has been especially problematic because of the possibility that Sara committed suicide. If it were true, what would that entail for Clare? Which thoughts and secrets would Sara have carried before her death, and why had she never said anything? Her not knowing has made her defenceless against the bullies at her school. Now, when she has been assured that Sara's death was an accident, the story protects her from them, and she is able to unleash her anger:

> fuck off fucking wanker doesn't matter what they say wankers all this time it's been ClareWilby'ssister didherselfin ClareWilby'ssister didherselfin those fucking wankheads at the north gate shouting it when I went past on the other side of the road & now I know she didn't now I have proof so they can all fuck off (194)

The story of Clare's night at the hotel is the most important in her narrative. Just as Sara, she has executed her mission before she begins her narrative, and she continues into early dawn. Clare has just come home from the Global Hotel, where she posed as a member of staff to take a closer look at the dumbwaiter shaft and dropping a pile of items into it to count how long the fall took. Lise and Duncan, who both worked at the hotel at the time of Sara's accident, took care of Clare after she broke down in the corridor. Clare borrowed Lise's watch, and she and Duncan went up to the floor Sara fell from. There he told her "the whole story" (204) – that Sara bet Duncan five pounds that she could fit into the dumbwaiter, crawled in and fell to her death. After collecting herself, Clare does what she has come here to do:

> I hadn't really wanted to know not really I had only really wanted to do it I went over to the place I had my other trainer spare I could use I reckoned that would do it & I

> had the watch so this time I'd be able to do everything right I was careful I dropped it down & did the listening for it (205)

With Lise's watch, Clare manages to time Sara's fall, just as Sara asked in her chapter: "Time me, would you?" (31). Although Clare did not really want to hear the story, she recognises that it has changed something in her: "that it could be so sad I could be there & feel how sad it was then the next minute I could be eating this great breakfast & wearing these great Nikes & feeling really the best in ages" (207). The story has enabled her to take one step away from her regression and made her believe that joy is possible in her future.

George's relationship with her mother – and her identification with and rejection of her mother's values and outlook on life – is less straight-forward. Elizabeth Anker's reading of the novel is based on the hypothesis that George is on an odyssey in which "she comes to interrogate and reject certain axiomatic interpretive assumptions and moves that Smith's narrative overtly ties to academic literary culture" (20). Throughout the novel, George is asked to analyse and scrutinise both artworks and stories, and always look for hidden meanings. In Ferrara, her mother asks her to consider all the history that has happened within the city walls, but George resists, she finds it oppressive: "George is appalled by history, its only redeeming feature being that it tends to be well and truly over" (104) – she refuses to engage with her mother's stories about the massacre that happened in Ferrara during WW2. She wants to see things for what they are, not look for phantoms of the past, and finds her mother exasperating, exclaiming: "You're always talking such crap about things meaning more than they actually mean. It's like some drippy hippy hangover, like you were inoculated with hippiness when you were little and now you can't help but treat everything as if it's symbolic" (105-6). Nonetheless, she cannot help but be impressed either – by what her mother notices, especially about the del Cossa images. When they enter Palazzo Schifanoia, George attempts to play the "what's-the-point-of-art game" (46) – a family game their father excels at, to the point that bystanders believe he is "a mentally challenged person" (47). However, neither Carol nor Henry wants to play, and even George finds it impossible to remain distanced and aloof when surrounded by del Cossa's pictures. Her mother lights up as they enter the room, and Henry's response to the artwork is so sincere that George decides to drop the disinterested act: "Though it is embarrassing and excruciating when someone won't play your game George gets over herself. She slips into her real self again" (49). George's "real self" notices the details of the images, but she also realises that "everything is in layers", and that "The picture makes you look at both – the close-up happenings and the bigger

picture" (53). Carol, however, takes the interpretation to a whole different level, presenting the outline of a thesis where she would argue that the painter was female:

> if I had to, I don't know, write a paper about it or try to make a thesis about it, I could make a pretty good one about the vaginal shape here . . . on that beautiful worker in the rags in the blue section, the most virile and powerful figure in the whole room, much more so than the Duke, who's supposed to be the subject and hero . . . And how the open shape at his chest compliments the way the painter makes the rope round his waist a piece of simultaneously dangling and erect phallic symbolism . . . and as to the constant sexual and gender ambiguities running through the whole work (110-1).

Anker argues that Carol's approach to art, which entails always looking for hidden meaning and competing interpretations, can "create an interpretive relay or feedback loop" (27) that overshadows the unmediated and emotive aspects. Carol's impromptu analysis affects George's experience of the images in retrospect. She did not notice any of the symbols her mother mentions, and would not know how to draw such connections. Now she is struck by interpretation fatigue, and her immediate appreciation of the images is forgotten: "George is tired of art. She is fed up of its always knowing best" (113). I agree with Anker when she claims that George's mourning is closely tied to her rejection of Carol's interpretive attitude: "For George to heal, she must jettison her mother's suspicion and cultivate an alternative relationship to life as well as to art" (26). However, Anker does not consider the crucial role H plays in George's healing process. It is H's idea to tell del Cossa's story as a school project, and when George and H research the painter together, they are on equal footing. This allows George to explore art in her own pace and value her own responses. Moreover, the relationship with H teaches her a great deal about life, and about her own inhibitions.

H (Helena Fisker) makes an unexpected house call in the early hours of Jan 1st. George knows who she is, but they have hardly spoken before. However, H has an immediate effect on George. George's grief does not make her self-conscious at all; she enters the house like a whirlwind and makes George laugh "in an undeniable present tense" (80) for the first time since her mother died. In the following months, they play out stories that mirror Francescho's myths. H takes George "chariot-driving" (85) in a shopping cart: "H swings the trolley round so George is facing the expanse of the car park roof. . . .The next thing George knows is the way she's forced backwards by a forward shove so strong that for a moment it's like she's going in two directions at once" (86). This is George's experience of driving the sun-god's horses across the sky, but in her version, she does not fall. And what is more, she allows H to

take over control. Trusting another person has a profound effect on George, because it releases some of the emotions she has kept at bay for so long:

> Finally she lets herself think about how it feels:
> to be so frightened that you almost can't breathe
> to speed so fast and be so completely out of control
> to know the meaning of helpless
> to spin across a shining space knowing any moment you might end up hurt, but likewise, all the same, like plus wise you just might not.
> Then she wakes up and for once it's morning and she has slept right though without any of the usual waking up. (89)

The myth has echoed from Francescho's part over to Georges and provoked a release of the feelings she has repressed since her mother's death. Once she has acknowledged them, she sleeps better.

George and H are partnered in a school project, and they explore the idea doing a presentation of Francesco del Cossa. Although they eventually end up doing a mime instead, the brainstorming session sets off the idea of telling the painter's story in their own words. Studying the images with H is a different experience than viewing them with Carol. Now George enjoys the thrill of noticing: They discover a penis-shaped rock pointing at a cave in one of del Cossa's images, a suggestive background that completely changes their perception of the figure in front of the picture: "Once you've seen it, you can't not see it. It makes the handsome man's intention completely clear. But only if you notice. If you notice, it changes everything about the picture" (142). The discovery suggests that George is willing to incorporate some of her mother's interpretive vision into her own. Besides, her ability to see it now is an indication that she is beginning to become aware of her own sexuality. Before H came into her life, George's exploration of sexuality was driven by intellectual curiosity rather than desire; she watched Internet porn to see what all the fuss was about, but nothing made an impact until she saw the video that seemed so painfully real. Now, however, she has to deal with H's not very subtle advances. H is interested in George, and lets her know by adding the message "I will always want you" to her mnemonic biology song "for scansion" (96), taking Georges hand and telling her outright, "I'm definitely making stuff up about you" (139), which makes George blush.

George is not able to respond in kind. When H tells George she needs "To be more . . . more hands-on than hypothetical" (100), George freezes up: "George lies back down flat on the carpet again. She is not a girl. She is a block of stone. She is a piece of wall. She is

something against which other things impact without her permission or understanding" (101). The narrator never explains why she hesitates. She may be too numb to fall in love, or she does not want to identify as queer. It is possible that her reluctance to act on, or even respond to, H's flirting is connected to the story of her mother and Lisa Goliard. To George, Lisa's sexual advances to her mother – although they happened in the past – represents a threat.

George's detective work took place in the past, but her mother's death has made her review the story of her mother's strange friend. This story is far more far-fetched and dubious; George entertains the possibility that her mother was under surveillance before she died, and that the mysterious Lisa Goliard – a woman who befriended her mother – possesses information about why. George's suspicion is not pulled out of thin air. Her mother's phone disappeared when she died, which George finds suspicious (although her mother suffered an allergic shock and the circumstances were chaotic). Five years earlier, her mother was exposed publicly as "one of the Subvert interventionists" (69), and at the same time their mail started arriving already opened. The subverts are pop-ups that flash onto people's screens when they visit certain web pages:

> it was her job to subvert political things with art things, and to subvert art things with political things. Like, a box would flash up on a page about Picasso and it would say did you know that 13 million people in the UK are living below the poverty line. Or a box would flash up on a politics page and it would have a picture in it or some stanzas of a poem (69).

The pop-ups are another example of the novel's fresco motif; one message on top of another, perhaps changing how people view the information they originally tried to access. Carol and the subvert movement wanted to teach people to make connections and look beneath the surface of things. The story of Lisa Goliard also aligns with the motif, because her surface – the story she told about herself – was discovered to be a rather elaborate lie, and that affected how Carol viewed what went on underneath, her impression of who this woman was.

Carol tells George the story of her relationship with Lisa during their journey to Italy. The two women had met seemingly coincidentally, and Lisa had later called Carol and invited her to her workshop, although Carol never had given Lisa her number. Lisa was a bookbinder, and Carol liked her work as well as her company: "She was attentive, sweet to me. And there was something, some glimmer of something. She'd look at me and I'd know there was something real in it, and I liked it, I liked how she paid attention to me, my life" (119). But after Lisa had kissed her ("Properly, I mean against a wall" (119)), something felt off, and

Lisa's interest and curiosity seemed more obsessive than flattering. Carol came by her shop one day without calling in advance and discovered that the shop belonged to some other woman. She googled the woman she had known for more than two years and found that Lisa Goliard lacked an electronic footprint:

> She almost didn't exist, George says. She only just existed.
> Not that an absence online means anything, her mother says. She definitely existed. Definitely exists.
> If this was a film or a novel, she'd turn out to be a spy, George says.
> I know, her mother says.
> She says it quite happily in the dark next to George.
> It's possible, she says. It's not at all impossible. Though it seems improbable. It wouldn't surprise me. . . . It's as if someone had looked at my life and calculated exactly how to attract me, then how to fool me once my attention was caught. Quite an art. And she's quite a nice spy. If she is one. (121)

George's metafictional comment – and her mother's contented reply – suggests that the reader should not, in fact, read this story as a detective story – at least not with the expectation of a tidy plot resolution. Her mother did not want to find out what had really happened. She knew she might have been played, but she did not mind; in fact, she relished the story as it was, as well as connection with the other woman: "It was true, and it was passionate. It was left to the understanding. To the imagination. That in itself was pretty exiting" (122-3). Carol does not want to know who this woman really was; she is invigorated by the open interpretations of the story. George cannot let it go as easily; she mulls it over throughout her chapter. She also tells the school counsellor, Mrs Rock, about her suspicions, because her father will not listen to her "paranoid nonsense" (22). Mrs Rock's response supports Carol's approach – that the significance of the spy story is not, in fact, its resolution, but the mystery itself:

> The word mystery originally meant a closing, of the mouth or the eyes. It meant an agreement or an understanding that something would not be disclosed. . . . The mysterious nature of some things was accepted then, much more taken for granted . . . now we live in a time and in a culture when mystery tends to mean something more answerable, it means a crime novel, a thriller, a drama on TV, usually one where we'll probably find out – and where the whole point of reading it or watching it will be that we *will* find out – what happened. And if we don't, we feel cheated. (72)

Many a reader might feel cheated by how this story plays out – because George's narrative ends with the *future* arrival of Lisa Goliard in person. With just four pages left of the chapter, the narrator changes to future tense and announces what will happen next: George will

recognise Lisa Goliard as the person standing between the del Cossa painting and herself in the National Museum, George will follow her, sit down on a low wall outside her house, and take a picture. George will come back and take more pictures: "In honour of her mother's eyes she will use her own. She will let whoever's watching know she's watching" (185). When Francescho's narrative takes over, they will continue narrating this story, but without any details – because Francescho does not speak English, they do not give an account of what Lisa and George say to each other. Francescho also sees George with a friend, both at home and at the wall outside Lisa Goliard's house, but their narrative takes place after H has moved to Denmark, and the reader will never learn what happened – whether H comes back on holiday or for good, or whether she and George become an item. In this way, Smith makes sure that both George's detective story and her first love story remain mysterious, undisclosed and unanswered. Nonetheless, the detective story is useful to George, no matter the outcome, because by sharing it with Mrs Rock and H, she has allowed herself to talk about her mother. Similarly, the conclusion of the love story is less important; the miraculous thing is that a connection can arise between two human beings, and that is a powerful, wondrous thing which makes life worth living. Although the reader is not privy to the mystery, George has realised something important in pursuing it – about her mother and about herself.

George's process of grief is connected to the relationship between the past and the present, and with the possibility of multiple meanings. Before Carol died, George was a grammar pedant who used to correct other people's language, especially her mother's. Their respective points of view in this matter were as opposed as when they were discussing history or art:

> Grammar is a finite set of rules and you just broke one.
> I don't subscribe to that belief, her mother says.
> I don't think you can call language a belief, George says.
> I subscribe to the belief, her mother says, that language is a living growing changing organism.
> I don't think that belief will get you into heaven, George says. (9)

George does not explicitly say that she has cast off her normative approach to language after Carol's death, although she claims has become indifferent: "I do not give a fuck about whether some site on the internet attends to grammatical correctness, the George from after says" (5). Yet she continually corrects herself, because she keeps thinking about her mother in the present tense. George's desire to have things either/or extends to the tense in which she thinks of her mother – because her mother is dead, she belongs in the past tense. However, her

mother keeps butting into the present. In the beginning of the narrative George actively resists the narrator's representation of her thoughts and memories:

> Her mother doesn't say.
> Her mother said.
> Because if things really did happen simultaneously it'd be like reading a book but one in which all the lines of the text have been overprinted, like each page is actually two pages but with one superimposed on the other to make it unreadable. Because it's New Year not May, and it's England not Italy (10).

However, the narrator seems to side with Carol, because all George's analepses are narrated in present tense – and so is her present storyline. This makes the anachronies more difficult to spot and suggests that George's thoughts glide between past and present more subtly than she perhaps is aware of. Her argument that things cannot happen simultaneously is a comment on the sequential nature of textual narrative – two stories cannot literally be superimposed atop each other on the page of the book – but the narrator certainly creates the illusion that many stories are told at once throughout her narrative; the shifts between George's past and present occur suddenly and often. Her chapter is divided into three parts, and in the third part, which is significantly shorter than the others, the relationship between past and present has shifted. Now her present moment (sitting in the National Gallery) is narrated in present tense, the analepses are narrated in past tense, whereas in the prolepsis, verbs are in future tense. This shift indicates that George's chronology has changed – there is a new before and after, and this time begins between the second and third part.

The reason for this temporal shift is that George allows herself to feel again. When H moves to Århus because of her father's job, she continues to pursue George via text messages. H does not tell George how she is doing, because she is not like most people – instead she sends facts about Francesco del Cossa. These messages mean more than one thing, and George knows it. She does not know how to answer, because she "knew [the texts] were about the something real between them" (168). When H runs out of del Cossa facts, she fires "mysterious little arrows at George in Latin" (168) that consists of translated song titles, such as *Adiuvete!*[25] George has not particularly liked songs since her mother died, but now she begins to listen to the songs H sends her. When George finally replies, she is struck by the emotions that follow: "Back came a text that pierced whatever was between the outside world and George's chest. In other words, George literally felt something" (170). This is George's

[25] "Help!"

turning point; suddenly the words pour out of her, and while she writes an e-mail to H, she notices that "she'd used, in its first sentence, the future tense, like there might be such a thing as the future" (173). At the end of her e-mail, she adds: "*Oh yeah and also, if you remember. You asked, and te semper volam.* Please remember, she thought as she sent it" (174). This is George's leap of faith – at last, she has translated the message that H smuggled into the biology song. The final task of the elegist – the return to the present – manifests in George's narrative as a belief in the future.

2.3 Narrating grief: Style, structure and translation

This subchapter seeks to identify the style of grief in Clare's narrative, and what its unusual syntactical structure communicates. The analysis below will identify how her manner of expression is connected to her grief, to her sense of self, and to her ultimate acceptance of Sara's death.

Clare's homodiegetic narrative, "future in the past", is the most stylistically experimental in *HW*, because of the consistent deviations from standard syntax and punctuation. The complete lack of commas and period marks, the chaos of references to past events, and the paragraphs that stretch over several pages make the chapter more demanding to read, which reflects, perhaps, the demanding nature of teenagers, and the irrational, angry and uncontrollable behaviour of a young person in grief. All of the thirty paragraphs of the chapter begin with the phrase "& since", and the sentences bleed into each other. In her chapter, she internally processes the events of the evening and the information she has learned, which enables her to move from a regressive stage of grief towards acceptance. Sara and Clare's narratives are motivated by the same question, both characters need to learn more about Sara's death in order to move forward – in death and in life, respectively. In the example below, Clare likens her sister to a ghost, or a spirit, which the reader already knows to be true, and her imagery strengthens the connection between the chapters. Although their narratives resemble each other with respect to voice and level, they are different in style and addressee. E. E. Smith points out that while Sara often addresses a narratee (the reader), Clare's narrative seeks inwards (94). Clare's intense style initially seems less polished and more spontaneous than Sara's, as if her text is a transcript of spoken words, or written quickly in a diary without editing, because of the many repetitions and the lack of punctuation:

> & since she was fast since she was so incredibly fast I bet she'd be pleased I'm sure she'd be pleased how fast I like to think she is light as air lighter than it now like those

> pictures they take of car headlights in cities where the cars are going too fast to leave anything of themselves but their lights as they go so fast past the camera it is like that with her I am sure I think she could go round town all day & all night if she wanted at a really amazing stream of light & speed over the tops of the buildings she could even dive out of the high windows of that hotel she would just float she wouldn't fall she wouldn't have to because now she can tread air too not just water like people who are only alive well that's what I think anyhow (*HW* 185)

Although Clare's syntax seems hectic, her style is consistent. She uses the symbol '&' as replacement for 'and', uses apostrophes correctly in contractions and genitive, and adds punctuation in ciphers that represent time. Moreover, the overall clause structure created by each paragraph's initial "& since" shows that the narrator has chosen carefully what to foreground. If Clare did not care about punctuation or grammar, the text would be scattered with random mistakes; the choice to include apostrophes, but not commas, is deliberate. The lack of commas allows for ambivalence and double meanings, a refusal to indicate where one clause ends and the next one begins. In the excerpt below, *I am sure I think* (line 5) could belong to different sentences, depending on where one chooses to breathe: *it is like that with her, I am sure. I think she could go round town all day* – or both phrases could modify what comes next: *I am sure – I think – she could go round town all day*. The latter version encompasses Clare's doubt; she does not know where or what her sister is, she feels as though she did not know Sara as well as she should have, and now she will never know her properly. However, both versions are equally valid. We usually use punctuation to make our language more precise; Clare wishes to remain undeterminable.

The analysis of Sara's opening showed that lack of commas signifies breathlessness. The effect is even more intense in Clare's chapter, because the missing punctuation continue through her entire chapter. This makes her narrative into a sustained eruption of emotions that have been repressed for too long. Now that she finally speaks, she is furious that she has not been allowed to speak earlier:

> I'm not supposed to ever say fucking anything am I I'm just supposed to keep out of the fucking way imagine if I spoke actually said something the walls of this house would fucking fall down in shock like a ghost had spoke nobody's supposed to say anything about anything real how would I say it anyway it's too real to how would I start if I did what first words would I use what first word & anyway if I did she'd be too spaced out to hear or the crying would start that would make him go mad again (194-5)

The style of her narrative allows her to express the grief, anger and exhaustion she has carried for six months, and she has already found the first words. Here, in the safety of her bedroom,

she does not need to manage her parent's feelings by keeping quiet and pretend she is not there. Because she now allows herself to speak, she has taken a vital step towards healing.

According to Dorrit Cohn, the term "interior monologue" has been applied to two different phenomena. The first is the "narrative technique for presenting a character's consciousness by direct quotation of his thoughts in a surrounding narrative context", which often is framed by an extradiegetic narrative, whereas the second is "a narrative *genre* constituted in its entirety by the silent self-communication of a fictional mind", without external mediation, "apparently self-generated" and autonomous (Cohn 15). E. E. Smith argues that Clare's chapter belongs to the second category, presented

> as a fragment, an unfinished utterance that conveys the sense of a narrating self suspended in time, frozen by sadness. Every new line of thought in Clare's interior monologue, including the opening one, begins '& since …,' thus establishing the first clause of a sentence **whose second clause never comes** (94, my emphasis).

Although I agree that this narrative technique "works with the title to represent in textual form Clare's sense of rupture" (94), my interpretation of time and syntax in this chapter differs from Smith's, because I believe it is possible to read the final sentence as that second clause. Moreover, I claim that there *is* temporal movement in Clare's narration – both in the context the narrative is situated in, as the duration of her telling stretches from night to dawn, and in the conditional structure of her narrative.

A conditional sentence consists of two clauses, where one expresses a condition, and the other the consequence – e.g. *because you like apples, I saved one for you*. The first clause would not make much sense on its own; yet Clare's narrative is a string of dependent clauses that are not concluded, beginning with the clause "& since the main thing is I counted I was there". However, Clare counts in two ways during her narrative – she counts the seconds it took Sara to fall down the dumbwaiter shaft, but she also reveals that she is insecure about whether she counted for Sara when she was alive – whether she was important to her. The lack of commas allows two readings of Clare's final sentence: "that's all you took I know I counted for you" may be rewritten to

> *that's all you took, I know, I counted for you* or
> *that's all you took – I know I counted for you*.

Read like this, all the dependent clauses find their conclusion in the final six words of her narrative, signalling that Clare now trusts that her sister loved her, and that she herself is

valuable. Clare has indeed been frozen in sadness, but she has been thawing since she left the hotel earlier in the evening. E. E. Smith argues that her narrative "constitutes a process by which Clare works through the sources of her grief" (94); the way I see it, no process can take place when time stands still.

Mark Currie argues that the chapter title, "future in the past", has less to do with grammar than with Clare's preoccupation with all the opportunities Sara has lost, the future that she has been denied:

> There are many senses in which the future is in the past in Clare's heartbreaking, sleepless expression of grief, and none of them linked to any actual occurrence of the future perfect as a tense form. This is important for the way it transforms the grammatical into something more metaphorical and leads us away from its dreary analytical project into something more poetic. The 'future in the past' is close to being a periphrasis for *death*, and it is this sense of Sara's future as a thing of the past that drives Clare's grief (Currie 57).

The metaphorical aspect also applies for Clare's style. The lack of punctuation allows for a multitude of meanings and possibilities that are still open to Clare, once she manages to move forward.

3 The other stories

The two previous chapters have examined how the ghosts and the mourners of *HW* and *HTBB* have regained their sense of self by remembering and rediscovering their past. This chapter seeks to examine the remaining parts of *HW*, which in my opinion is necessary in order to understand "the whole story". Although most scholars, when discussing the novel, mention Else, Lise, and Penny's chapters, they tend to be analysed in terms of function rather than self, and their stories tend to be overlooked. This analysis of the heterodiegetic, extradiegetic chapters in *HW* aims to investigate how the relationship between narrator and focaliser affect how the characters' autobiographical memories are told, and whether the stories induce similar changes in the characters' self-perception as in the previous chapters. My claim is that the narrator's attitude towards each focaliser is determined by whether the characters are willing to – or capable of – changing the way they see themselves.

Although Else's, Lise's and Penny's chapters tell the story of the same night, their experience of the events are strikingly different, and each story is "narrated in a style colored by their different mental states and processes" (E. E. Smith 88) – which is much more important than their speech acts. Else, the homeless woman sitting outside the Global Hotel, speaks in shorthand; Lise, the bedridden former receptionist at the hotel, is too exhausted to utter a word throughout her chapter; while the journalist and hotel guest Penny cannot stop talking – to such an extent that the narrator stops bothering to report what she says. The central scene of the novel – where Else, Clare and Penny meet in the corridors of the hotel – is focalised through Penny – the character who is the worst judge of character of them all. The narrator's attitude towards the three focalisers varies from sympathetic (Else and Lise) to ironic (Penny). The narrator also fluctuates between distancing herself from and fusing with the consciousnesses that she narrates. In Else's chapter, "the narratorial discourse [is] only minimally perceptible" (E. E. Smith 89), whereas Lise is in such a confused mental state that the narrator assumes full authority. Else and Penny's chapters are being told on the night in question, with some anachronies when the characters revisit memories from their past, while Lise explores the night from a subsequent point in time (about six months after the event). Her chapter also include a prolepsis that show an episode in the future. In the final chapter, "Present", an omniscient narrator connects all the threads of the novel.

3.1 Else: Reunification of self

Emma E. Smith points out that the choice of a heterodiegetic narrator in Else's chapter, which prevents the character from speaking for herself and thereby puts her in a subjugated state, "might be read as a comment on the way in which social prejudice sees the homeless objectified and stereotyped, or not seen at all" (89). However, the narrator makes herself nearly invisible and presents "Else's thought processes . . . through her own subjective lens" (89), which in fact gives her more narrative authority than Lise and Penny. Else's chapter is narrated in the technique that Cohn calls *narrated monologue*, which "reproduces verbatim the character's own mental language" (Cohn 14), including style and idioms, while maintaining the third-person reference. The narrator seems aware that Else's acute financial need is paramount to the narrated monologue, even in the middle of a sentence:

> She is
> (Spr sm chn?)
> sitting near a grating through which some warmth rises. (35)

Else's economised, vowel-less utterings prove that she is given "as much control of her narrative as the third-person mode allows" (E. E. Smith 90). These abrupt interruptions also indicate that her attention is split, because she is always watching out for people who might offer her a coin, hurt her or chase her away. Her past experiences have taught her important lessons that she needs to remember constantly in order to stay safe; she is self-aware and observant, just as Sara. Else is used to being invisible and unnoticed, which puts her in a position to observe others:

> People go past. They don't see Else, or decide not to. Else watches them. They hold mobile phones to their ears and it is as if they are holding the sides of their faces and heads in a new kind of agony. The ones with the new headset kind of mobile phone look like insane people, as if they're walking along talking to themselves in a world of their own. (39-40)

She is outside, looking in, seeing insanity and misery in public behaviour. Her sense of presence is split between the external events that take place in her narrative present and the internal stream of thoughts and memories. She is doubly aware, as opposed to the faceless masses that walk past her, talking to invisible others, blind to what is right before their eyes. In addition to being invisible, Else is remarkably silent. Throughout her chapter she hardly says anything aloud, except the contracted pleas for money and a "Fck sk" (70) to Lise. In Penny's chapter, Else is far more vocal, but in her own, she is content to let the narrator speak

her thoughts. Her contracted direct speech is an economical measure that originated in an advertisement for secretary school she saw (and successfully interpreted) when she was a child: "F y cn rd ths msg y cd bcm a scrtry n gt a gd jb" (45). Stenography, to Else, has become "the shorthand for what was possible" (46). Now that Else is an ostracised adult, stenography has become necessary for her survival, as she is living on the bare minimum. The loss of vowels is part of her economy, vowels have become redundant. She has also economised her name from Elspeth to Else, and the shortened form allows for several instances of wordplay: "Or it could mean something she doesn't know, can't know yet, something else. Something, Else" (68). Else's sense of self is as split as her presence; in adverbial form she is something other, in capitalised form she is herself – or at least one version of herself.

The analepses in Else's chapter offer glimpses of her past life – happy childhood moments and fragments of a love story – but they refuse to tell a coherent narrative about her past. The narrator does not want to frame her autobiography as a morality tale about how she "went astray" or was victimised. Instead, Else comes across as smart, strong, and knowledgeable; her intellect far surpasses the other characters in the novel, and she even selects interesting news articles to put in her boots because she "likes to wrap relevant things round her feet" (45). Any expectations the reader might have about what a homeless person "is" or "should be" are effectively subverted. Else's three most important autobiographical memories are told in sequence, triggered by association after Lise has offered Else a room, "No strings" (57). In the first analepsis, a man offers Else money with no strings attached and tries to "heal" her by praying himself into a trance-like state. The second story is about Else's sexual encounter with a much older man, where she imagines herself as a marionette, while the third includes helping a man who is so drunk that he has lost control of his body. The second memory shows Else at her most vulnerable. Although the narrative never suggests that she did not consent to the encounter, it seems that she has cut herself off from the sexual act:

> And: she is fourteen and just home from school. It is four o'clock and Mr Whitelaw and she are having sex in the front room. . . . His face is gleaming with sweat, his forehead has furrows in it. They make her think of the run-rig system of farming in Scottish History III. (60)

Because the narrator never intrudes with her opinion, it gives the illusion that Else herself is in control the way this memory is revealed. The sentences are short and factual, and there is no mention of her bodily responses to the intercourse, neither pain nor pleasure. However, the

objects that Else focuses on (a topic from her history class, the cartoon on the television and the virginal Snow White puppet on her wall) belong to a child's world, and their presence creates a troubling dissonance; they show that this girl is far too young to have sex, especially with a man more than twice her age. Because her attention is on anything but the sexual act she is partaking in, his words are the only ones that draw attention to the intercourse:

> Then he says: *Elspeth. Let go. Of my back. You're too tight. Don't hold on. Your nails are. Jesus. Let go. You Little. For fuck.* She is doing it wrong. She is holding on too tight. She has to hold on more loosely. For the life of her she can't think of how to do it. (60)

What she decides to do is to *imitate* the puppet, an inanimate and controllable object, and mentally remove herself further from the present situation and retreat into herself: "I had strings, but now they're gone, she thinks. There are no strings on me. She thinks in the jerky tune from the film as her head hits the arm of the couch" (61). I agree with Takolander and Langdon that Else "endures the sexual abuse through disassociation", and that the scene "suggests how the transformation from the innocent Elspeth to the alienated 'Else' took place" (49). However, I believe it is too simplistic to conclude, as they do, that the episode "seemingly defined Else's destiny" (49) – this is only a fragment of her story. The overall narrative of the novel insists on multifaceted meaning; that there is always more than one story, and that identity is far more complex than we often assume. It is interesting what the narrator leaves out: Who suggested having sex, whether Else consented, and what lies behind her wish to please him. Is she fond of this man, or does she always want to please others, in any situation? These questions are never answered. Having sex with an underage person is a criminal offence and a gross transgression, yet in her present, Else chooses to re-remember this potentially momentous event. This story is important for several reasons: Else allows herself to recognise her vulnerability, and the manner in which this is revisited shows that Else chooses to look back without casting judgement upon neither Mr Whitelaw nor herself. This is a step towards healing the rift in her identity and moving back from "Else" to Elspeth.

Else refuses to identify as a victim, but there are moments when she reveals the damage her rough life has caused her. Shut inside the hotel room, which is supposed to be a luxurious treat, she feels more vulnerable than she does outside, like a caged animal – she is not used to letting down her guard. Examining her room, she is unable to appreciate the luxury items: "Someone in a factory or workshop somewhere has wrapped up the soap in paper so that to use it you have to unwrap it like it's a gift. There are cotton wool buds and

each one is individually wrapped. The fact that they are individually wrapped has made Else miserable" (70-1). Else sees what the ordinary customer would never think of; the labour behind worthless luxury items in first world countries. The isolated cotton buds are like the guests at the hotel, alone in their rooms. The bathroom scene shows how closely her self-image – and the rift in her identity – is tied to her body. On the one hand, her body is the only constant in her life, as she lacks both a home and possessions; on the other, the disassociation that took place during her first sexual experience may have been enhanced by instances of sex-work. Now it seems to have become entrenched in her identity. In her present, Else is confronted with her own reflection in the taps. She sees herself as "distorted, pink and smudged, squeezed small and tight into the reflection. She has tried to find it funny. A pigmy. A circus freak. But she looms at herself, small and misshapen" (71). Naked, in the bath, Else is forced to confront the alienated reflection that represents her. This is a crucial moment, because Else does not shrink away from her reflection. Instead she takes back control: "They're just taps. They're just stupid fucking taps. All they can do is what you make them do. They can't do anything else. Anything, Else. She reaches forward and turns the handle on the hot tap. She turns it as far as it will go" (75). Here, the "Anything, Else" becomes a reassurance. The taps cannot hurt her, but she can manipulate them, and she decides that their distorted reflection is not allowed to represent her. After turning the taps, she leaves her room and does not come back – she has exercised her power over them, causing a (literal) flood in her wake.

The changes in Else's self-image are almost imperceptible in her chapter, but they become clearer later in the evening. In Penny's chapter, she appears to be decisive, imperturbable and in charge. She seems very happy when Penny asks for her name, and she takes a moment to answer. The fact that she states her full first name, Elspeth, suggests that she has come to terms with the memory that made her shorten it – she is through with being less than she is. Her last name, which she probably makes up on the spot, is Freeman. The word has two meanings: the opposite of a slave or serf, and an honorary title, "a person who has been given particular special rights in a city" (*Cambridge Dictionary*). She views herself as free from the pressure of conventional, modern life with mobile phones and capitalism, from bills and demands, with the right to move freely out in the open. After revisiting her past and taking control of her present, she has moved towards a reunification of herself.

3.2 Lise: Lying in bed

Lise's crisis of self is not from the past, it is ongoing – and it characterises her whole chapter. Her narrative present is set approximately six months after the other characters'. She is bedridden and has not been outside her flat for a long time. Her body hurts all over and she is sensitive to light, although her doctor has found nothing wrong with her.[26] Whereas Clare's cathartic night enables her to accept the loss of her sister, Lise's night stretches over a long period of time, and does not end by her chapter's end. The date of her story time is only given in approximation, which suggests that the date is not important at all; what matters is that this day is more or less identical to every other day. Just as Else, who "can't remember which hand means which on a clock" (45), Lise has forgotten how time is organised: "How many hours in a day, and weeks in a year? That was the kind of thing children knew, the kind of thing you were never supposed to forget in a lifetime" (81). Yet she has forgotten, and without any fixed points, she feels as though she is falling.

The whole chapter has Lise lying in bed, waiting for her mother to come by at four o'clock. A sick pay form needs to be filled out, but Lise does not know how to answer the questions about who she is. She has an idea of who she used to be before she fell ill, but now her identity is impossible to pin down. Throughout the chapter, her attention returns to the questions on the standardised form, but the questions seem to demand answers that are beyond her reach:

> *Tell us about yourself.*
>
> Well. I am a nice person.
>
> It was some time in the future. Lise was lying in bed. That was practically all the story there was. (81)

Her later attempts to describe herself include "I am a sick person" (81), "I am a ( ) person" (85), and "I am nice/sick" (86). Her present identity is strictly limited to these

[26] Gemma López Sánchez argues that Lise is depressed, and that Sara's death is "the probable but unnamed traumatic cause of her present depression" (51). But Lise hardly knew Sara, and I find it unlikely that Sara's death has plunged Lise into crippling depression. Although I hesitate to diagnose literary characters, I find it more likely that Lise's symptoms (inexplicable pain, complete loss of energy, sensitivity to light) are indicative of severe chronic fatigue syndrome/ME, which also causes reduced cognitive function and forgetfulness (National Health Service) – a mental state that is deeply embedded in her narrative. Although the chapter's temporal setting is limited to an afternoon in the worst period of her illness, the tone in Lise's chapter is light, philosophical, and sometimes funny. Ali Smith was diagnosed with CFS/ME at the age of 27, and the experience made her reconsider her career in academia and start writing fiction. "She likens herself to Woolf's description of the ill person as 'a blown leaf on the edge of time'; she says now that 'I had to stop so that I could decide which road to cross'" (Clark). Lise's illness will induce similar existential choices.

adjectives; the blank space suggests that she briefly considers herself as being no one at all. A monologic exploration a few pages later shows that Lise previously viewed herself as empathetic, considerate, and rather worried about other people, animals and the state of the world, but the examination ebbs out into past tense verbs:

> I am no saint. I am no world-changer. But I will put a cup or a glass over a spider on the floor, slide a postcard under it with care so as not to catch its legs, and then open the front door and put it outside. Is that good? . . .
>
> Would've. Did. Was. Everything . . . other than this bed she was lying in was into a different tense now. Now: I am a sick person. (88)

She cannot find any clues to her identity in her past actions. Because she is no longer capable of performing them, they do not tell her the truth about who she is now. The excerpt above draws attention to the novel's play on grammar, which also is embedded in the chapter titles and the narrative mode. Lise thinks in present tense, the narrator speaks in the past. The frequency of these shifts is more rapid in Lise's chapter than in the others, as the narrator is prepared to assume authority whenever her thoughts trail off into something less verbalised. The variation between present, past and future is slippery in this chapter, and the changing tenses emphasise Lise's confusion and her sense of being lost.

Lise is so ill that she does not utter a word in her chapter – she has no agency besides thinking, she barely moves, and eventually, she falls asleep. Her sense of self is so fragile that other impulses hijack her voice and bleed into her quoted monologue, such as the language of the sick leave form and the Mazola, Kellogg's Country Store and Your Matey jingles. Perhaps to emphasise Lise's lack of agency, or the unmoving quality of the scene, the narrator repeats the phrase "Lise was lying in bed", or variations of it, at least a dozen times. Sometimes the repetitions restart the narrative, either by refreshing or disturbing Lise's associations, but they also guide the narrative back to the bed, showing that there is no escape. At one point, the phrase makes Lise question whether her illness is real, as if she is able to hear the narrator and interprets "lying" in the other sense of the word: "Lise was lying in bed. Was she lying? Was she faking, lying, in bed? The form made her ask herself. It made her nervous. *You probably aren't ill. Prove to us how ill you really are*, it said" (95). She cannot prove her illness, although it has crippled her completely; her test results were inconclusive, and now even her identity as a sick person is jeopardised.

The chapter title, "future conditional", suggests that the mode of Lise's chapter is – just as the verb form in conditional contexts – either open, hypothetical or counter-factive (Hasselgård 192-3). Modal auxiliaries (especially *would* and *could*) are used frequently

throughout the chapter. In the narrator's discourse, the modal auxiliaries often seem to express future in the past. The narrator informs the reader of what Lise plans to do in the immediate future: "In a minute she would sit up . . . she would try to find the pencil in the fold of the bedclothes, and then she would write the words on the form" (81). But because Lise does no such thing, the *would* turns out to be hypothetical, a lie Lise tells herself in order to hold on to her self-image as a person with agency and not to surrender to apathy. It is as if the narrator takes on the role of Lise's superego – the internal voice that tries to make her do the things she is supposed to. The narrator even tells a joke on Lise's behalf, ridiculing a question from the sick pay form about whether she can sit comfortably in a chair, and if so, for how long:

> One day (maybe) Lise would be well enough again to go to someone's party and someone would ask her in that way that means who are you, *what do you do*, and Lise would answer with her new job description. I've been ill. I could not sit comfortably in a chair for more than thirty minutes. Now I cannot sit comfortably in a chair for more than two hours. It's hard work, but I'm getting better at it. And someone has to do it. (100)

What value does a person have when she is incapable of action – to society, and to herself? The ability to sit comfortably in a chair for a certain amount of time is something people take for granted until the day they experience their first prolapse; for a healthy person, the task of sitting equals relaxation, perhaps even laziness. Lise cannot even sit upright; for her, this would be progress. The joke is funny because it twists the negated possible answers to the question, but her current reality – that even sitting is an impossible task – is tragic.

The second half of Lise's chapter is a long analepsis to the night when she gave Else a room at the Global Hotel, told in present tense by the heterodiegetic narrator. In her current state, Lise has no coherent memories of her past life, so the narrator takes over and asks the reader to make a leap of faith:

> So imagine Lise's memory opening, now.
> Imagine that when it did, it was as startling and fractious to her as it would have been had the dead telephone at the side of the bed suddenly started to ring.
> Imagine her heart, leaping. Imagine her mind, sluiced wide. (100-1)

The address echoes Sara's appeals to the narratee – but where she asked them to imagine bodily sensations, this narrator asks them to trust her storytelling, despite the fact that Lise, because of her reduced cognitive state, is excluded from her most important memory for the duration of the analepsis. The first part of Lise's chapter was defined by the hypothetical and

conditional mode, by quoted monologue, and the merge between narrator and focaliser; the second part sees the narrator emerge as omniscient. The present Lise is incapable of remembering the story of the novel's central night, when she functioned as gate-keeper of the hotel and enabled the other protagonists to meet and interact in the corridors. Therefore, the narrator takes over and jumps back in time. The narrative technique utilised in the analepsis is what Cohn calls psycho-narration ("the narrator's discourse about a character's consciousness" (14). Thus far in the novel, the hetero-/extradiegetic narrator has refrained from assuming this level of control; Lise's exclusion from this analepsis marks a shift in the narrator's attitude that continues in Penny's chapter and culminates in the final chapter. As Cohn points out, "the stronger the authorial cast, the more emphatic the cognitive privilege of the narrator. And this cognitive privilege enables him to manifest dimensions of fictional character that the latter is unwilling or unable to betray" (29). If this story is to be told, the narrator has no other choice. As if to emphasise the degree of omniscience the narrator is capable of, the analepsis that tells of Lise's actions on the central night of the novel, six months prior, is limited to five minutes, between 6:51 and 6:56 PM. First, the sequence is told once (101-3), then the narrator picks out phrases and fill in minuscule details in reverse order (103-19), such as the blood type on a smear of blood on the desk, and how long it takes before the pen Lise has had in her mouth, dries completely.

This new omniscience is useful for the overall plot, because now the narrator is in a position to tell the whole story about Sara Wilby's death, including her full name and age (characteristics that Sara herself had forgotten), which enables the reader to puzzle the pieces of the story together. The inner workings of the hotel are also exposed, especially tension between the corporate system and the poorly paid employees. In fact, the Global made money on Sara's death, because the media attention in connection with her spectacular fatality resulted in an increased demand for rooms. Most of Sara's colleagues, including Lise, had not had time to form any kind of relationship with her; this side of the story reveals that attendance at the funeral was made compulsory for all employees, that the staff made up highly inappropriate songs and jokes about Sara, and that the mood among the workers was rebellious. Lise did not partake in the staff's most repulsive acts of insurgence (such as chambermaids snooping in the guest's belongings and purposely spreading faecal bacteria in their rooms, and kitchen staff spitting onto the plates of random customers), but it is likely that her job was part of the reason she lost her sense of self. The narrator points out that working in a hotel "presses you hard, with your nose squashed and your face distorted and ugly, right up against the window of other people's wealth, for which employment you are,

usually quite badly, paid" (97). An encounter with a female guest her own age (probably Penny), who is wearing clothes that are "blessed by the smell of money" (112) makes Lise wonder how this guest sees her: "A neat no one . . . sleek and smiling, emptied of self, very good at what she does" (112). Their respective clothing represent their different stations in life; Penny is wearing clothes that would unravel if the wearer engaged in five minutes' worth of manual labour, while Lise is perspiring in a polyester uniform. At the moment, the idea makes Lise furious, and she finds an outlet for her anger by offering Else a room, free of charge. But her anger does not last, and she falls ill shortly after.

The analepsis is significant because it shows that Lise felt like no one even before she fell ill, as an underpaid cog in the corporate machine. The environment of the hotel was poisonous to her, partly because all Global branches look near identical – there is no room for individuality. The name badge became mandatory when the Global chain updated their "Quality Policy" (116), an example of business jargon devoid of actual meaning. The badge transforms her name, her identity, into something hollow and unrecognisable. Lise lost herself working here, performing her part as the smiling, vapid face of the hotel.

Lise's healing process is as slow as the path to her breakdown. Her loss of identity began before the central night of the novel, and her search continues beyond the novel's duration. Within Lise's analepsis, there is a prolepsis that first points to her present and then moves on to a future beyond. The omniscient narrator benevolently promises her a happy future, where she has put both her illness and her time at the Global behind her, and is financially stable enough to allow herself to travel and visit a hotel herself:

> In bed ill in six months' time, Lise will be unable to recall the precise scent of the Global lobby. In two years' time, on holiday in Canada and desperate to get out of a sudden spring snowstorm, she will shelter in the Ottawa Global and as she enters its lobby will unexpectedly remember small sensory details of her time spent working for Global, details she would never (she will think to herself afterwards, surprised) have imagined she even knew, and which remind her of a time in her old gone life before she was ill and before she got better, a time which she has almost completely forgotten that she had. (111).

The change in mode makes this prolepsis different from the joke about not being able to sit comfortably in a chair, the verbs have evolved from the hypothetical *would* to the neutral future marker *will*. However, the chapter ends with a return to Lise's present, and the narrator admits that Lise, in her current state, cannot vouch for the truth of the analepsis:

> That is then. This was now.

> Lise was lying in bed. She was falling. There wasn't any story like the one you've just read, or at least, if there was, she hadn't remembered it. All of the above had been un-remembered; it was sunk somewhere, half in, half out of sand at the bottom of a sea. Weeds wavered over it. Small stragglers from floating shoals of fish darted in and out of it open-mouthed, breathing water (119).

The first sentences stand out, because ordinarily *then* requires the past tense of the copula, and *now* the present; the reverse tense order collides with our linear understanding of time. Here, the paradoxical reversal reflects the narrative mode of the chapter, since the analepsis is written in the present tense, and the present story in the past. Another peculiarity is that the narrator addresses the reader directly and acknowledges that this is a story that is being read. The narrator shatters the illusion of the fiction, the contract between reader and narrator, and pulverises the authority of her omniscience. The reader, who was asked to take a leap of faith before this analepsis begun, is left in doubt about its validity. Thus, Lise's future remains a possibility rather than a premonition. The narrative has suggested how she lost herself, and that she might wake up one day, pick herself up and regain her voice. Her current condition, however, demonstrates that without language and the power of expression, there can be no coherent self.

3.3 Penny:

The narrator of Penny's chapter, "perfect", has a more distant and ironic voice than in the other hetero-/extradiegetic narratives, partly because Penny's narrative function is to watch the events of the central night unfold without understanding their significance. The nature of the ensemble novel, and this chapter's location in the second half of the novel, ensures that the reader is at least one step ahead of Penny at all times. Whereas the previous chapters have consisted of long stretches of interior monologue and less present action, this part focuses mainly on two events that unfold within its story time: Clare's successful attempt to re-open the dumbwaiter shaft and time her sister's fall, and Else and Penny's night-time stroll. The chapter begins and ends in Penny's hotel room, as she is writing a review of the Global. The journey of her chapter gives her an opportunity to change, which is underscored by her abandonment of and return to the spatial setting of the hotel, but her lack of self-awareness – and the nature of the perfect tense – block this opportunity.

Critics respond to Penny in different ways. Raol Eshelman calls her "the only figure in the novel who is able to write, speak, and act in a conventional way", who nonetheless is "mercilessly exposed as a fraud" (par. 11). Alissa G. Karl points out that Penny "exemplifies

the impulse to regulate and contain actual bodies within the neoliberal corporate sphere" (81), and that she participates in the creation of the corporate language that has made Lise ill. Emma E. Smith argues that Penny's chapter title reflects her narrative, especially compared to the preceding chapter, and makes the connection between the perfect tense and Penny's intransigence:

> Bearing the outer indices of success – self-assurance, travel, an expense account, designer boots – and narrated unwaveringly in conventional perfect-tense form, Penny's narrative conveys control and togetherness. . . . But there is a flipside which comes with her ambitious relation to the social hierarchy: the "perfection" of identity implies its fixity, and thus excludes the possibility of change, just as the rigid past-tense form fixes the story as definitively complete. . . . Perfection, here, ironically connotes narrowness and stasis. (92)

The narrator eagerly reports how Penny views other people, and how she balks when she is confronted with information that does not fit her worldview. She makes rash judgements and displays strong confirmation bias, for instance when Else tries to correct her assumption that a grand piano would fall faster than a clock. Not only is Penny's conception of gravity mistaken; her preconceptions prevent her from learning anything significant about the other characters she encounters. Her first impressions resist correction, and she is rather prejudiced to begin with. As she watches television in her room, the audience in the show appear to her as "old and out-of-work people" (126). When she meets the miserable Clare in the corridor, she only sees "the ideal sixteen" who could model "something northern-urban-wintry in Lifestyle" (135), whereas her first impression of Else is that she is "some kind of druggy eccentric guest or maybe even a minor ex-rock star" (139) – an understanding that colours her interactions with Else almost to the chapter's end. How she views herself is more difficult to pin down. E. E. Smith points out that Penny's narrative mode is

> predominantly indirect reported speech and thoughts. The narration of Penny's consciousness is dominated by fictional facts and inquit statements (the narrator's phrases of description and introduction) to a far greater degree than either of the others, so that as readers we observe her from without almost as much as we hear her internal thoughts. (92)

Tagging ("she thought") is more frequent than in other chapters, which suggests that the narrator wishes to separate herself from Penny, and create "a space for narrative irony" (93). The most striking feature of Penny's mind is her vivid imagination, which allows her to enlarge herself in heroic fantasies, but which also has a darker, less controllable side. She is a

writer, after all, so her desire to tell stories is unproblematic, but the motivation behind the storytelling is more dubious. In her hotel room, she kicks her laptop off the bed on a whim, which spurs a fantasy where she entertains an audience with a story about how the computer was broken (in her imagination, she uses it to hit a thug in the head). The narrative changes to quoted monologue, as she begins this imagined recollection of how she stood up to the bullies and thieves. The crowd keeps interrupting Penny with questions and laughter. The exaggerated use of her name feels somewhat stilted: "(Did it? Did what? What, Penny, what did you do?)" (133). One of the voices asks about the young boy she has fantasised hitting with her laptop – whether he was dead, ran away, or she left him, and when she tries to decide on the aftermath, she trails off: "That was an adventure. That –. That was –. That could have been –." (134). The narrator takes over, as she leans down and reboots the computer. The machine works perfectly, which makes the story unnecessary, but it also saves her from the uncomfortable outcome of the story. The acknowledgement that she has imagined killing a human being makes her pause. She has yet to experience any true adventure, and she is alone, without an audience of friends to entertain.

Her imagination feeds on what is happening in front of her eyes. More often than not, she is unable to rein in the images that flash before her eyes. The TV show where people are talking about communicating with dead people sets off an avalanche of ghosts, human and animal, that bang on an invisible barrier between the realms, "yawling and hooing in all their mute languages, barking and squawking it, snorting and mewing it, mooing and braying and squealing and squeaking and humming and hissing it, Hey, you! *We're* not dead! Don't call *us* dead!" (129). This time, Penny laughs the intrusive thoughts away. Her rationalisation echoes Muriel Spark's *memento mori* from the epigraph and Sara's edited *memento vivere*, as she continues to develop the phrase into a proverb for the modern middle-class woman: "Remember you must diet" (129). However, she is not able to keep her defences up throughout the chapter. The ghosts in the hotel – and the voices in her head – affect and frighten her and unveil a part of her unconsciousness that she is reluctant to connect with.

The central scene in Penny's chapter – perhaps the most central scene in the whole novel – is the meeting between the major characters in the corridors of the hotel. Penny discovers Clare, who is attempting to remove the panel that has been fastened to cover the dumbwaiter shaft. Of course, Penny knows nothing of Sara's death or Clare's agony. To her, a girl in a hotel uniform is a hotel employee, and she never questions Clare's right to be in the corridors or asks why she is doing what she is doing. For a second, she notices the "misery thick as velvet, luxurious, dramatic and gathered like a curtain about to fall over the girl's

head. Then she blinked and the thought was gone" (138). Penny is so excited that she hardly thinks, which is reflected in the narrative instance. Her monologue ceases, instead the narrator reports the characters' speech and reactions to one another. Penny is engrossed in the action, but lacks information to interpret what she sees. Instead, she imagines how to shape her narrative about the ongoing events in past perfect progressive tense, and the importance it will play in her future:

> This was excellent . . . Penny had been spending another dreary night working on another publicity job in another hotel when all of a sudden quite by chance she had become a cog in the mechanism of something really happening . . . And I will always remember it too, and look back on it many years from now as that night I helped the remarkable teenage chambermaid take the screws out of the wall in that hotel (138-9)

As she goes off to find a screwdriver, Penny's heroic fantasies flare up again. She pictures herself as "the heroine coming down in her dress to the ball . . . in her Southern Belle ballgown" (139). Penny's excitement about this adventure is understandable, because as opposed to her earlier fantasy, this is actually happening. Nonetheless, her elation is ironic in the larger context of the narrative, because she misunderstands the part she is playing. She is not the heroine of this novel, she is a secondary character. Her only contribution to the plot movement is that she stumbles upon Else, and brings her to Clare. Her only sacrifice is her expensive suede boots, which are ruined by the flood that Else has caused.

When the panel opens, Penny is utterly disappointed: "But there's absolutely nothing there" (144). She feels cheated, numb, and insignificant. Her questions to Clare remain unanswered, her nervous rambling is politely ignored – Else and Clare are nothing like her imagined audience, they do not comment, repeat her name or probe her onwards. When Else explains how gravity works, Penny does not contradict her. Not because she agrees, but because she believes Else is an important person:

> Penny wouldn't want to offend the woman in case the woman was somebody. The woman could be anybody. Who knew? It was good that she could keep quiet under pressure. But the nothing she said curled out of Penny's mouth and wound itself snake-like round her neck. It hissed; it was going to strike. Penny hated it, nothing. She hated her imagination, it was full of snakes, dead animals, and unexpectedly beautiful smashed-up pianos. This was turning into a very unpleasant evening (151).

This excerpt is not narrated monologue, but standard narration, because the narrator echoes Else's pronoun game, which Penny could have known nothing about. The change in Else's status from "somebody else" to "somebody" may be interpreted as a signal that Else, unlike

Penny, is undergoing a process during this chapter. As for Penny's reaction, her unspoken objection turns inwards. This confuses her, she feels threatened, and now she is defenceless against the images conjured up by her unconsciousness. Although she recently fantasised about reacting impulsively and resolutely in a hold-up, she is not able to voice her disagreement in a real, non-threatening situation.

When Else leaves, and Clare is crying, Penny panics. She must remove herself from Clare's uninhibited display of emotion – physically and mentally – as fast as she can. To her, Clare is no longer "the girl", but "this member of staff" (153); she assigns the responsibility to the hotel. She calls Lise at reception, heads for the elevator, and only briefly turns back to the weeping teenager before she runs away: "Someone's on their way up, Penny said in a cheery voice. Won't be long now" (154). Her cheerfulness is in bad taste; it demonstrates Penny's fear of emotion – both Clare's and her own. She seems aware that leaving someone who is in need of comfort is morally questionable, because she rationalises her action through the claim that this is who she is, something that cannot be helped: "Relief streamed over her, unheated unconditioned air. She had been blessed with the gift of no guilt, or at least the gift of guilt that was never more than momentarily, a matter of the imagination only. All she ever had to do was change her air" (154). She repeats the phrase verbatim to Else: "I can't bear it when people cry, Penny said. . . . But luckily I was born with the gift of no guilt, she said" (155). Penny does not realise that what she attributes to an innate personality trait is in fact an acquired defence mechanism that shuts her off from her subconsciousness. Her fear of witnessing someone in distress prevents her from going back to her hotel room: "Possibly she hadn't left it long enough yet for the hotel people to sort out the crying" (156). Penny is frightened of anger, guilt, discomfort, and awkwardness, because she does not know how to express these feelings. When she feels anger, she is unable to react in correspondence with her emotion – instead, she responds with politeness. She reports a variety of feelings: she becomes embarrassed when Else refuses to answer her questions, is "repelled and energized" (163) by looking into the windows of other people's houses, and thrilled when Else finally seems interested in listening to her storytelling.

Penny voluntarily narrates her autobiography to Else, but she undermines her own credibility even before she begins. In contrast to every other character in both *HW* and *HTBB*, Penny has spent her life self-narrating a fake identity:

> I usually tell whoever asked me a lie. You know, a white lie. I tell them that my childhood was miserable, and that I'm an orphan. . . . and watch their faces, it was kind of fun, seeing such immediate discomfort. . . . I think it makes people imagine

> I've come through something extraordinary . . . And at the same time it makes them see me as vulnerable, needing special care. Perfect combination. (166-7)

The story she presents as true, however, is more ordinary: her childhood was "averagely happy" (167). She tells of an unfaithful father and excessive shoplifting, but realises that her story needs more oomph to make an impression: "It hadn't worked yet. Now the mother, Penny thought" (168). The way she narrates her own past, the experiences that has made up her identity, seems scripted and planned, as if she has editorialised her traumas, and adapts her story to fit the listener's emotive response, either by hyperbole or outright lying. She tilts her "self-narrative" towards tragedy with a claim that her mother preferred her brother to her, and that she revenged herself by sleeping with an older family friend. This part of the story resonates with Else, due to her own experiences, and Penny is pleased to see her nod: "Hooked, Penny thought and felt the thrill of it, slight chill on the back of her neck" (168).

There is a striking difference between how Penny and Else view their sexual debuts. Whereas Else relived her experience silently, without hindsight judgement or commentary, Penny uses it to shock and awe her audience. She knows the PR value of sex, and adds adjectives such as exciting, seedy and terrible to tantalise Else. Even if this story is true, she has completely detached herself from its emotive impact and uses it as the climax of her story, a plot point she may resort to if the other events do not deliver the expected audience approval. She speaks as an experienced newspaper writer, choosing the angle that will sell the best: "Sex, she thought behind the doleful face. If the stealing doesn't do it, and the my-parents-didn't-understand-me, then the sex, the sex always does" (168). All of Smith's characters have been given the opportunity to genuinely reconnect with their pasts, but Penny forfeits her chance by telling the story as though she is speaking of someone else.

Gillian Beer makes the connection between the word that Else remembers from a poem (which Penny interprets as "rebiggot"), and John Donne's poem "A Nocturnal upon St. Lucy's Day" (69). The actual word, "re-begot", is from the second stanza:

> Study me then, you who shall lovers be
> At the next word, that is, at the next spring:
> For I am every dead thing,
> In whom Love wrought new alchemy.
> For his art did express
> A quintessence even from nothingness,
> From dull privations, and lean emptiness
> He ruin'd me, and I am re-begot
> Of absence, darkness, death; things which are not. (Donne 108)

The stanza invites the reader to discover the transformative power of love, and it is highly ironic that Penny misses the reference to a word that means rebirth. This night has led her far away from her comfort zone, but she avoids meaningful change with all her might. At one point she feels so generous that she writes Else a large cheque, which makes her feel overjoyed: "Penny slipped the folded cheque inside the woman's coat pocket, tucked it in, patted it. She forgot about her ruined boots. Her heart rose, flew about; her heart was like a bird, ecstatic, high above her head" (173). Yet the first thing she does when she comes back to the hotel is to order the porn channel on pay per view and cancel the cheque:

> For a minute there she thought she'd gone soft. For a minute there, the universe had shifted. But no. Good. . . . something inside her which had been forced open had sealed up again. Good, she thought again, pleased with herself first for the initial extravagance of her act, and next for being able to, crucially being sensible enough to, put a stop to it. If you were poor, you were poor. You couldn't handle money. . . . It must be a relief, to have none. It was no accident that the words poor and pure were so alike (178).

Penny is (obviously) wrong about the words' origin. There is no etymological relationship between them, although they both evolved from Latin via Old French, *poor* from *pauper* (having few or no possessions), whereas *pure* derives from *purus* (guiltless, innocent, chaste).[27] When Penny thinks back to what she has experienced this evening, it strikes her that no one would believe it, nor be interested in it. The one true adventure she has experienced is impossible to turn into a story. Penny tells herself that by cancelling the check, she is doing Else a favour. What she really does is choosing to remain a bigot instead of allowing the universe to shift and herself to open up to new, possible selves. Instead, she amuses herself with ridiculous bacon porn while writing her fake hotel review, lauding a hotel she in reality has deemed "a sham" (131) and "slightly shabby" (130). She goes to sleep with the TV and lights on, hoping they will shield her from her dreams, when her unconsciousness forces her to process everything she keeps at bay in the daylight.

3.4 "Present": The choir invisible

The final chapter, "Present", marks the end of the eventful night. Sara is at peace with herself, and Clare has learned the "whole story" of what happened to her sister. The first paragraph consists of a single word: "Morning" (225) – a welcome change of pace after Clare's hectic stream of consciousness in the previous chapter. As the analysis of HW has shown, the

[27] *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of English Etymology*, edited by T. F. Hoad

novel's narrative modes shift between and within chapters. This chapter stands out because it has no protagonist, and because the external focalisation covers the whole city. Some critics, such as Takolander and Langdon, argue that Sara is the narrator of this final chapter, and that her ghostly self has transformed to another level of diegesis. That the ghost opens and closes the novel is also a premise for Alice Bennett's interpretation of the novel as a whole; she sees "Present" as a narrative enactment of the gift bestowed upon Sara – her release from Purgatory – and claims that "Sara's voice has shed the last layers of her identity to expose her affinities with omniscient, third-person narrators" (45). I disagree with this interpretation; Sara's chapter saw her assembling her self as a final conscious, narrative act before her words dissipated. She has completed her mission and ended her narrative.

This omniscient narrative seems to belong on a level beyond and above the novel's homodiegetic narratives – it is "distinctly authorial" (E. E. Smith 96), both in tone and matter, and draws attention to the artificiality of the narrative by referring to the story as "this book" (*HW* 229). E. E. Smith's interpretation concurs with my own: "the writer-narrator is situated outside the storyworld, in the 'real' world where the narrative is to be published and printed and bound" (96). The narrator ties up all the loose ends of the novel, zooming out from a microscopic study of decaying nature to a macro-perspective of the whole community.

Nature itself is focalised in the first part, the slumbering rhubarb and naked trees juxtaposed with a variety of persistent flowers that keep on blooming when everything else is dead. The word "Morning" is repeated three times, each time refocusing the narrator's focus. The chapter offers new beginnings to everyone – to the myriad of ghosts that populate the world (amongst them Dusty Springfield and Princess Diana), and the minor, unnamed inhabitants of the city that Sara has observed and attempted to communicate with. As E. E. Smith points out, the message of this closing chapter is that "people are 'present' as long as they are remembered, or imagined" (96). Levin notices the similarity between the words "mourning" and "morning"; the small homophonic variation underscores the "dynamic between loss of recovery" (47) in the novel, and the process that Clare has undergone. In this way, the final chapter allows the past to coexist with the present, but it also opens the door to future possibilities: Because English only has two tenses, "the past and the present; the present might better be called the non-past, since it covers both present and future" (Trask 107). The many meanings of the word "present" are indicated in the novel's ending: Every new morning is a gift, but you need presence of mind to appreciate the experience. Most of the unnamed characters in the novel seem to be drudging through life, but narrator seems to

emanate gratitude on their behalf. She watches over the citizens that Sara whispered her message to:

> The people who brought prescriptions in Boots the chemist yesterday are feeling better, worse of the same. Some have colds. Some have infections. Some have nothing wrong with them. Some feel drowsy and ought not to operate machinery today. Some have temperatures going up or coming down. Some have healed in their sleep and will wake up refreshed. Some have found, or will when they wake up, that taking medicine has made no difference at all to how they feel.
>
> The people who queued outside the cinema to see a film yesterday are either awake or asleep. A small percentage of them remembers seeing the film at all. (231)

The unknown citizens all have their concerns, experiences and identities, and the narrator's bird's-eye view reminds the reader about the value of each person's experience. Because the spatial setting in the novel is so vague (a mid-sized city somewhere in the United Kingdom), the members in this community may represent anyone and everyone:

> [T]he range of characters covered in this final section, from young drunken lovers to cleaning ladies and driving instructors, fits with the novel's communal strategy, with Smith's distinctly 'democratic' aim to emphasize the plurality of lives and stories unfolding in any one space and time. (E. E. Smith 97)

The narrative seems to say that no one is inconsequential; everyone matters, even the overlooked extras that populate the stories of our lives.

The narrator's lens come to a standstill on the girl in the watch shop, and the final thread of the novel is connected. The girl has worn S. Wilby's watch for several months, remembering her every time she looks at it. Her story of Sara tells of what could have happened if they only had had more time: "S. Wilby stood outside the shop, for days, shy and slight, undemanding, intriguing, looking down at her feet all the time. She had pretended not to notice S. Wilby. She doesn't know why she did that. It seemed the thing to do. She wasn't ready. The timing was wrong" (235). Time has been out of joint throughout the novel, but now the watch is repaired, and although this girl only spoke to Sara once, she will remember her for a long time.

Conclusion

Ali Smith's writing shows that storytelling – the act of telling a story itself, the finding and exploration of stories, and the retelling of stories – has the potential to be redemptive. In *Hotel World* and *How to Be Both*, the stories let ghosts find peace and forgiveness, help mourners to envision a future beyond their immediate grief, and enable healing of broken and fractured selves. The ghosts use the stories first to regain themselves, then to pass themselves on – Sara borrows the self she had forgotten from photographs and from her corpse, piecing together the person she used to be; when the narrative act is over, she no longer needs the story/self, and passes on with an echo of her beginning: "WOOOOO- hooooooo oo o" (n. pag.). Francescho re-narrates their mothers' stories and examines how these stories have manifested in their art and in their self. Not only do they forgive their nemesis, they give Cosmo one of their mother's stories in order to give him some comfort in death. The elegiac narratives tell stories about the dead, about how grief manifests and of new futures: Clare goes into the hotel as a knot of pain, receives "the whole story" about Sara's and spends the night unravelling her pain as she re-narrates her relationship to the sister she has lost. George repeats the story of her mother – including all their disagreements – to find her own mode of interpretation. By looking closely and patiently, she uncovers layers of both del Cossa's images and of herself. The journey through the stories of their deceased help them rediscover the possibility of a future they had all but forgotten, and like the ghosts, they regain something of themselves. Clare's and George's exploration of the story of their sister and mother, respectively, also aid in retaining something of the dead on this side of the metaphorical veil: their stories are not lost, and can live on in the survivors.

The opportunities of the three focalised characters in *HW* demonstrate that the character must be aware in order to benefit from the story's redemptive qualities. Else, the most present character in the novel (somewhat ironically told through the past tense), understands the significance of her analepsis and manages to find a way back to her old self. Lise, who is too tired to think, and who will not remember who she is for a long time yet, is given hope through the future conditional. Penny, the professional storyteller, is not allowed to tell her own story – she has not told the truth about herself for so long that she has forgotten what it is, and misses the opportunity that the narrative offers, although Smith suggests she might never had the chance: her story is told through the perfect tense.

I have chosen to focus on the individual stories of the characters and what they mean for the characters' selves, and although I have made connections between the narratives within the chapters, I have not discussed either novel as a whole. This is partly because of space considerations, but also because the articles in my Works Cited list already contain excellent observations about the interconnectedness in these novels. Justyna Kostkowska has written the only article I have found that discusses self in *HW* as a whole; she argues that the connections between the characters undermine "the notion of the 'masterful, autonomous self' in which the characters seem to be locked" in "their (often self-chosen) isolation" (106). In her opinion, the characters are too busy with their own issues to notice the connections between them, but the narrative structure allows the reader to recognise their interconnectedness: "the more they isolate themselves, the more their affinities are made visible to the reader in the larger context" (107). Read in this manner, the novel's structure resembles a Foucauldian panopticon; only the authorial narrator – and the reader – can make connections between the chapters.

A full structural review of the framework of *HTBB* would have been interesting, as an interpretation suggested by several critics is that Francescho's narrative is written by George, as a continuation of the school project. Read in this light, *HTBB* becomes an infinite circle of watching and interpretation – George writing Francescho, Francescho focalising George. As Carol says, "Seeing and being seen, Georgie, is very rarely simple" (123). Such an analysis would, however, expand the scope of this master's thesis significantly, at the expense of the close reading.

Although *HTBB* is worthy of further scholarly attention, I would recommend anyone interested in Ali Smith to research her current work, because *The Seasonal Quartet* engage with the craziness of the times we live in. As I have pointed out, Smith's form and style draws attention to its own artificiality, which is a trait of postmodern literature. However, these novels are not ironic, they are political. It would be highly interesting to read them in light of New Sincerity and the ongoing cultural shift from postmodernism to metamodernism.[28]

[28] Suggested reading: van den Akker, Robin et. al. *Metamodernism: Historicity, Affect and Depth after Postmodernism*, Rowman & Littlefield 2017

Works Cited

Anker, Elizabeth S. “Postcritical Reading, the Lyric, and Ali Smith's How to be Both.” *Diacritics,* 2017, 4th ed., pp. 16-42.

Attridge, Derek. *Moving Words: Forms of English Poetry*. Oxford University Press, 2013.

Beer, Gillian. “Encountering Delays.” Shusterman, Ronald (ed.). *Des Histoires des Temps*. Presses Univ de Bordeaux, 2003, pp. 63-74.

Benfey, Christopher. “‘How to Be Both,’ by Ali Smith.” *The New York Times,* 31st Dec. 2014, www.nytimes.com/2015/01/04/books/review/how-to-be-both-by-ali-smith-review.html.

Bennett, Alice. “Anticipated Returns: Purgatory, Exchange and Narrative after Life.” *Oxford Literary Review*, vol. 31, no. 1, 2009, pp. 33-48.

Boddy, Kaisa. “All There Is: an Interview about the Short Story.” *Critical Quarterly,* 2010, 2 ed.: pp. 66-82.

Breitbach, Julia. *Analog Fictions for the Digital Age*. Camden House, 2012.

Britannica Academic. “Anapest.” *Encyclopædia Britannica,* 5th Aug 2019, academic-eb-com.ezproxy.uio.no/levels/collegiate/article/anapest/7363.

Butler, Judith. “Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory.” *Theatre Journal,* vol. 40, no. 4*,* 1988, pp. 519-531.

Cambridge Dictionary. “"Self", def.” 2019, dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/self.

Cambridge Dictionary. “serpentine.” 2019, dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/serpentine.

Caruth, Cathy. “Trauma and Experience: Introduction .” Caruth, Cathy (ed). *Trauma. Explorations in Memory*. The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995, pp. 3-12.

—. *Unclaimed Experience. Trauma, Narrative, History*. The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996.

Chatman, Seymour. *Story and Discourse*. Cornell University Press, 1978.

Clark, Alex. “Ali Smith: 'There are two ways to read this novel, but you're stuck with it – you'll end up reading one of them'.” *The Guardian*, 16th Sept. 2014, www.theguardian.com/books/2014/sep/06/ali-smith-interview-how-to-be-both.

Cohn, Dorrit. *Transparent Minds*. Princeton University Press, 1978.

Currie, Mark. “Ali Smith and the Philosophy of Grammar.” *Ali Smith. Contemporary Critical Perspectives*, edited by Germanà, Monica and Emily Horton. Bloomsbury Academic, 2013, pp. 48-60.

Donne, John. *Selected Poetry*. Edited by John Carey. Oxford World's Classics, 2008.

Dvergsdal, Kristina. *Insisting on the Self. The Narration of Self as Problem and Premise in Three Novels by Virginia Woolf*. Reprosentralen, Universitetet i Oslo, 2015, www.duo.uio.no/handle/10852/45308.

Eshelman, Raol. “Checking out of the Epoch: Performatism in Olga Tokarczuk's 'The Hotel Capital' vs. Late Postmodernism in Ali Smith's 'Hotel World' (with remarks on Arundhati Roy's 'The God of Small Things' and Miloš Urban's 'Sevenchurch'.” *Anthropoetics: the Journal of Generative Anthropology*, Fall 2004/Winter 2005, anthropoetics.ucla.edu/ap1002/transhotel/.

Fry, Stephen. *Mythos: The Greek Myths Retold*. Michael Joseph, an imprint of Penguin Books, 2017.

Genette, Gérard. *Narrative Discourse. An Essay in Method*. Translated by Jane E. Lewin, Cornell University Press, 1980.

Gentry, Amy. “'How to Be Both': Ali Smith's coin-flip.” *Chicago Tribune*, 14th Dec. 2014, www.chicagotribune.com/entertainment/books/ct-prj-how-to-be-both-ali-smith-20141212-story.html.

Gibbons, Alison, and Sara Whiteley. *Contemporary Stylistics. Language, Cognition,*

Interpretation. Edinburgh University Press, 2018.

Hasselgård, Hilde et al. *English Grammar: Theory and Use.* Universitetsforlaget, 1998/2007.

Hay, Simon. *A History of the Modern British Ghost Story*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2011.

Herman, David et. al., editors. *Routledge Encyclopedia of Narrative Theory*. Routledge, 2008.

Higgins, Charlotte. "Interview: Baileys prize winner Ali Smith: 'The canon is traditionally male. That is what this book is about'." *The Guardian,* 5th June 2015, www.theguardian.com/books/2015/jun/05/baileys-prize-winner-ali-smith-interview.

Hirst, William. "The Remembered Self in Amnesics." *The Remembering Self. Construction and Accuracy in the Self-narrative,* edited by Neisser, Ulric, and Robyn Fivush, Cambridge University Press, 1994, pp. 252-277.

Hirst, William, and David Manier. "Remembering as Communication: A Family Recounts its Past." *Remembering Our Past: Studies in Autobiographical Memory,* edited by Rubin, David C. Cambridge University Press, 1996, pp. 271-290.

Hogan, Patrick Colm. *Sexual Identities: A Cognitive Literary Study*. Oxford University Press, 2018.

Horton, Emily. "A Voice without a Name: Gothic Homelessness in Ali Smith's Hotel World and Trezza Azzopardi's Remember Me." *Twenty-First Century Fiction: What Happens Now,* Adiseshia, Siân and Rupert Hildyard. Palgrave Macmillan, 2013, pp. 132-146.

Karl, Alissa G. "Things Break Apart. James Kelman, Ali Smith, and the Neoliberal Novel." *Reading Capitalist Realism,* edited by Shonkwiler, Alison, and Leigh Claire La Berge, University of Iowa Press, 2014, pp. 64-88.

Keen, Suzanne. *Narrative Form.* Palgrave Macmillan, 2015.

Kennedy, David. *Elegy.* Routledge, 2007.

Kessler, David. "Our Experience of Grief is Unique as a Fingerprint." *Literary Hub,* 15th

Nov. 2019, lithub.com/our-experience-of-grief-is-unique-as-a-fingerprint/.

Knox-Shaw, Peter. “"To the Lighthouse": The Novel as Elegy.” *English Studies in Africa* Jan. 2009, pp. 31-52.

Kostkowska, Justyna. *Ecocriticism and Women Writers. Environmentalist Poetics of Virginia Woolf, Jeanette Winterson, and Ali Smith.* Palgrave Macmillan, 2013.

Kusek, Robert and Wojciech Szymański. “Ali Smith’s How to be Both and the Nachleben of Aby Warburg: “Neither here nor there”.” *Hungarian Journal of English and American Studies,* vol. 23, no. 2, 2017, pp. 263-284.

Lackey, Michael. “Locating and Defining the Bio in Biofiction.” *a/b: Auto/Biography Studies,* vol. 31, no. 1, 2016, pp. 3-10.

Leech, Geoffrey and Mick Short. *Style in Fiction. A Linguistic Introduction to English Fictional Prose*. 2nd ed., Routledge, 2013.

Levin, Stephen M. “Narrating Remainders: Spectral Presences in Ali Smith's Fictions.” *Ali Smith. Contemporary Critical Perspectives*, edited by Germanà, Monica and Emily Horton. Bloomsbury Academic, 2013, pp. 35-47.

Lewis, C. S. *On Stories and Other Essays on Literature*. Edited by Hooper, Walter, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Publishers, 1982.

Lyall, Sarah. “An Onion of a Novel, Demanding to Be Peeled.” *The New York Times,* 25th Nov. 2014, www.nytimes.com/2014/11/26/books/ali-smith-on-her-new-book-how-to-be-both.html.

McAdams, Dan P. *The Stories We Live By: Personal Myths and the Making of the Self.* William Morrow and Company, Inc., 1993.

National Health Service. *Overview: Chronic Fatigue Syndrom (CFS/ME).* 16th May 2017, www.nhs.uk/conditions/chronic-fatigue-syndrome-cfs/.

Neisser, Ulric. “Self-narratives: True and False.” *The Remembering Self. Construction and*

Accuracy in the Self-narrative, edited by Neisser, Ulric, and Robyn Fivush, Cambridge University Press, 1994, pp. 1-18.

Pohl, Rebecca. "Ali Smith, Enthusiasm, and the Literary Market." *MFS Modern Fiction Studies,* Winter 2017, pp. 694-713.

Puckett, Kent. *Narrative Theory*. Cambridge University Press, 2016.

Ramazani, Jahan. ""Daddy, I Have Had to Kill You": Plath, Rage, and the Modern Elegy." *PMLA* Oct. 1993, pp. 1142-1156. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/462991.

Rimmon-Kenan, Shlomith. *Narrative Fiction*. 2nd ed., Routledge, 2002.

Rubin, David C. "Introduction." *Remembering our Past,* edited by Rubin, David C., Cambridge University Press, 1996, pp. 1-18.

Sanchez, Gemma López. "'Mind the Gap': Powers of Horror and Trauma in Ali Smith's "Hotel World"." *Atlantis,* 2010, pp. 43-56. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/41055398.

Sandvik, Oddbjørn. "Hva er sorg, og hvordan kan den forstås? (What is Grief, and How Can it be Understood?)." *Sorg (Grief),* edited by Bugge, Kari E., Hilde Eriksen and Oddbjørn Sandvik, Fagbokforlaget, 2003, pp. 15-42.

Schiller, Friedrich. *On Naïve and Sentimental Poetry Part 1*. Trans. by Jr. William F. Wertz. The Schiller Institute, 2005, archive.schillerinstitute.com/transl/Schiller_essays/naive_sentimental-1.html#n13.

Scholes, Robert, James Phelan and Robert Kellogg. *The Nature of Narrative.* Fortieth Anniversary Edition, Revised and Expanded, Oxford University Press, 2006.

Schuster, Donna Decker. "Teaching "Beloved": Interrupting Cultural Logics and Defining Rememories as Elegiac." *The Journal of the Midwest Modern Language Association,* vol. 39, no. 1, 2006, pp. 123-133. *JSTOR,* www.jstor.org/stable/20464162.

Smith, Ali. *Hotel World*. Penguin , 2001.

—. *How to Be Both*. Hamish Hamilton, 2014.

—. “Style vs Content.” Keynote Speech, 18th Aug. 2012, www.edinburghworldwritersconference.org/style-vs-content/ali-smith/.

Smith, Emma E. “'A Democracy of Voice'? Narrating Community in Ali Smith's 'Hotel World'.” *Contemporary Women's Writing*, vol. 4, no. 2, 2010, pp. 81-99.

Spiegel, Yorick. *The Grief Process.* Trans. by Elsbeth Duke. SCM Press Ltd, 1977.

Stott, Annette. “Floral Femininity: A Pictorial Definition.” *American Art*, vol. 6, no. 2 (Spring), 1992, pp. 60-77. *JSTOR,* www.jstor.org/stable/3109092.

Takolander, Maria, Jo Langdon. “Shifting the “Vantage Point” to Women: Reconceptualizing Magical Realism and Trauma.” *Critique: Studies in Contemporary Fiction,* vol. 58, no. 1, 2017, pp. 41-52.

The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica. “Francesco del Cossa.” *Encyclopædia Britannica,* 1st Jan. 2019, www.britannica.com/biography/Francesco-del-Cossa.

—. “Phaethon.” *Encyclopædia Britannica,* 18th April 2013, www.britannica.com/topic/Phaethon-Greek-mythology.

Trask, R. L. *Dictionary of English Grammar*. Penguin, 2000.

Vice, Sue. *Introducing Bakhtin*. Manchester University Press, 1997.

Young, Tory. “"Love and the Imagination Are Not Gendered Things": An Interview with Ali Smith.” *Contemporary Women's Writing*, vol. 9, no. 1, 2015, pp. 131-148.

—. “Invisibility and Power in the Digital Age: Issues for Feminist and Queer Narratology.” *Textual Practice*, vol. 32, no. 6, 2018, pp. 991-1006.