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An Empire of Delusion: The Process of Alienation as Expressed by Robert W. Chambers' "The Repairer of Reputations"

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This work is dedicated to all those who fight bias, misinformation and ignorance in today's world - both within and without.

Do not go gentle into that good night.

Rage, rage against the dying of the light.

(Dylan Thomas)

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Resumo

No final do século XIX, devido às mudanças socioculturais alavancadas por novidades científicas como a teoria evolucionista de Darwin e a ciência psicológica de Freud, histórias que quebravam as fórmulas tradicionais da escrita passaram a ganhar cada vez mais espaço, adicionando nuance e incerteza à prática narrativa.[1] Um dos fenómenos literários que surgiu neste período foi o conceito do narrador não fidedigno, ou seja, um narrador que, por incapacidade de perceber seu mundo ficcional de forma objetiva, desonestidade ou inabilidade narrativa, não dá ao leitor uma visão precisa sobre a realidade da história que conta. A análise dessa estratégia literária começou com Wayne C. Booth e Seymour Chatman, que defendiam que a deteção de um narrador não fidedigno dependia da distância entre o narrador e o autor implícito ao texto. James Phelan e Ansgar Nünning, por sua vez, propunham que o essencial para a deteção de um narrador não fidedigno era a distância entre esse narrador e o leitor implícito ao texto.

Devido a essas diferenças ideológicas e à complexidade do assunto, a deteção e análise do narrador não confiável tornou-se uma área de debate entre os teóricos da literatura até os dias atuais, nos quais duras críticas são encontradas a essas teorias. De uma forma ou de outra, todas estas teorias utilizam-se de elementos externos ao texto para avaliar fatores internos a ele, e, através de diversas falácias lógicas, usam de métodos prolixos e desnecessários para chegar a um resultado aceitável mas impreciso de deteção do narrador não confiável.

Tais teorias desconsideram o fator das interferências entre a intenção do narrador e o que está de facto escrito no texto e a impossibilidade de verificação de interpretações pessoais subjetivas. Ao mesmo tempo, todas baseiam-se de uma forma ou de outra no texto, antes de seguir para conclusões diferentes. Ao focar uma análise textual no texto em si, encontra-se uma forma de respeitar seu nível ontológico, de manter-se focado apenas em informações diretamente ligadas ao narrador e de garantir que todos os argumentos tenham uma origem verificável. Theresa Heyd propõe uma teoria de deteção do narrador não fidedigno que leva, justamente, tais parâmetros em

consideração. Esta teoria é mais confiável e verificável por fazer uma análise textual e pragmática sobre os contextos envolvidos em cada parte do texto e por buscar contradições expressadas pelo narrador dentro da ficção de forma a detetar seu status como não fidedigno. Com base nessa teoria, conduzo uma análise do texto escolhido para a dissertação, "The Repairer of Reputations", primeiro conto na coletânea de contos *The King in Yellow* (1895), de Robert W. Chambers.

O narrador deste conto é Hildred Castaigne, um estudioso que acaba de sair de um sanatório após uma queda de cavalo. Durante seu tratamento, Hildred leu uma peça banida por seu conteúdo subversivo, homónima à coletânea. Durante as primeiras páginas do conto, Hildred expõe viver numa Nova Iorque dos anos 1920, futurista em relação à data de publicação do livro. Hildred descreve o contexto social e histórico dessa América, de forma simples e vaga, pintando um retrato curioso do país: uma distopia nacionalista, militarista e eugenista, onde a segregação é a lei e até doentes mentais são incentivados a um suicídio legal através da instalação de Câmaras Letais por todo o país. Este retrato, no entanto, é apresentado de forma positiva por Hildred, que certamente compartilha destas ideologias sociopolíticas. Afinal, segundo o narrador, ele nunca teve qualquer problema psicológico, e seu internamento foi desnecessário e injusto. De facto, Hildred crê ser o herdeiro da Dinastia Imperial da América, e que seu internamento e o casamento de seu primo são golpes políticos para impedi-lo de assumir o trono.

Numa análise mais objetiva a seguir o modelo de Heyd, conclui-se que Hildred é um narrador extremamente não fidedigno. Ele demonstra discordar de muitas coisas aceitas por outros personagens, mente ou omite informações do leitor e de outros personagens, descreve-se de formas que não condizem com seu comportamento, falha em manter descrições consistentes de seus arredores, e por fim, termina a história capturado por organizar uma tentativa de assassinato, e falece em um manicómio para os criminalmente insanos, enquanto continua a julgar-se como vítima de um golpe político.

É também suspeito que toda a descrição da América de Hildred seja tão próxima de seus

próprios valores pessoais, tendo influências estilísticas da mesma era da história militar que o narrador tem em sua biblioteca, e adotando características que refletem seus interesses e sentimentos pessoais. Mesmo a descrição positiva feita por ele quebra quando analisada com mais cuidado, e diversos problemas morais e sociais podem ser encontrados nessa sociedade apresentada como ideal pelo personagem.

Com isto em mente, seria fácil descartar quase todos os aspetos da narrativa de Hildred como não fidedignos, mas há pontos que os complicam. Outros personagens, tidos como relativamente e até mesmo muito fidedignos na narrativa, em certos pontos, interagem com a realidade descrita por Hildred, e mesmo oferecem testemunhos e fazem comentários que apoiam as teorias de conspiração que o guiam. É praticamente impossível determinar com precisão onde terminam os delírios do narrador e começa sua realidade.

No entanto, o foco desta dissertação é estabelecer um panorama da psicologia de Hildred, não detetar os limites de sua realidade ficcional. O que percebe-se é que Hildred lida com a leitura da peça e seus conteúdos como um trauma, e, como muitas pessoas que têm traumas não tratados, entra em negação sobre a experiência traumática. Neste estado de negação, transforma o objeto de seu trauma em uma ferramenta que o dará poder (a peça é o que lhe faz descobrir sua suposta linhagem nobre), permitindo-lhe revisitar a experiência traumática de forma ativa. Aliena-se ao resto do mundo, julgando-os ignorantes por não terem lido a peça, e permite verdadeira conexão apenas com aqueles que concordam e apoiam aquilo que ele pensa. Todos os outros, a seu ver, são mal-intencionados ou mal-informados, e portanto suas opiniões não contam. Hildred distancia-se da sociedade normal, nega as próprias limitações, e por fim constrói uma narrativa delirante em que ele é sempre a vítima, mas tem um grande destino a cumprir; que valida sua paranoia e desconfiança expressa através do conto, e que o permite manter uma auto-imagem heroica mesmo enquanto pratica ações amorais e por vezes abertamente imorais – para Hildred, é tudo culpa de outros, e para garantir seu destino, tudo é permitido.

Este padrão de pensamento faz um paralelo extremamente próximo ao descrito por Theodor W. Adorno, Else Frenkel-Brunswik, Daniel J. Levinson e R. Nevitt Sanford em *The Authoritarian Personality* e com a forma de governo descrita por Hannah Arendt em *The Origins of Totalitarianism*. As duas obras detetam uma forma de pensar que aprende a avaliar a si e a outros conforme uma performance de conformidade a determinados valores. O que importa são as aparências, e não há conexão profunda entre um indivíduo e qualquer ideologia específica, mas apenas a performance desta ideologia e o quanto esta performance lhe permite expressar frustração e projetar culpa àqueles que não se encaixam nela (como é o caso dos segregados no país fictício de Hildred). É um padrão de pensamento fortemente influenciado pela divisão de pessoas em grupos e uma falta de compreensão de igualdade, guiado por busca de poder e autoridade de forma a diminuir a sensação de insegurança causada pelo confronto com a realidade, e as ansiedades causadas por suas próprias limitações humanas. Para o autoritário, isto acontece a nível individual. Para o estado totalitário, isto acontece ao nível de um país inteiro. No conto, percebe-se isto no personagem narrador, que constitui uma representação ficcional porém realista de um processo mental como este.

Palavras-chave: Alienação; Autoritarismo; Robert W. Chambers; O Rei de Amarelo; Narrador Não Fidedigno.

Abstract

The concept of the unreliable narrator has been studied and debated ever since its appearance at the end of the XIX century, with several theories attempting to analyse it and determine how best to detect it. By analysing the prevalent canonized theories critically, and creating a panorama of the discussion, this dissertation detects several issues with their proposed methodologies, and finds more common ground with newer theories such as Theresa Heyd's pragmatic approach.

By utilizing these methods, this dissertation analyses Hildred Castaigne, the narrator character of "The Repairer of Reputations", the first short story in the anthology *The King in Yellow*, (1985) by Robert W. Chambers. Hildred is found to be an extremely unreliable narrator, to the point where it is impossible to determine precisely where his delusions end and his reality begins.

His psychological processes also parallel the psychological processes described in Adorno et al.'s *The Authoritarian Personality* and the sociological processes in Hannah Arendt's *The Origins of Totalitarianism*. By creating a layer of denial and delusion through which he can protect his self-image and project his evil deeds as justified in attempts to protect against perceived greater evils, Hildred, the authoritarian individual and the totalitarian government seek to impose their will on the world, and thus protect themselves from feeling helpless and vulnerable ever again.

Key Words: Alienation; Authoritarianism; Robert W. Chambers; The King in Yellow; Unreliable Narrator

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Introduction

The North American author Robert William Chambers (1865-1933) had a curious literary career. Being famous for his collection of short stories, *The King in Yellow,* published in 1895, he is nowadays a mostly unknown and unexplored author, except for the subtle influences his work wields in popular literary and televisive media nowadays. These influences are especially shown through writers such as Stephen King, Neil Gaiman and Howard Phillip Lovecraft (1890-1937), eventually being adopted into the latter's fictional mythos, and the popular HBO series *True Detective* (2014 – ongoing), which uses the central ideas of *The King in Yellow* as the themes in the pattern of a serial killer (Laycock "Time is a Flat Circle"). Chambers was a majorly successful writer in the genres of historical adventure and romance between the years of 1897 and up to his death in 1933, but even so, the biggest portion of his bibliography has been forgotten, being a failure with critics despite the roaring success with the public.

Chambers started his career as an illustrator for magazines such as *Vogue* and *Life*, after studying in Paris at the *École des Beaux-Arts* and the *Académie Julien* in the period between 1886 and 1893, when he returned to the United States. Having published his first book, *In the Quarter*, anonymously, in 1894, he met enough success to induce a second publication in the following year, when his prestige skyrocketed. *The King in Yellow* was met with both public and critical acclaim, earning him comparisons to names like Ambrose Bierce (1842-1914) and Edgar Allan Poe (1809-1849), and putting him on the map as part of New York's literary elites.

Despite this success, the author did not stick to writing macabre tales of existential and cosmic horrors, although he did dabble a bit more in the genre up to 1897, most notably with *The Maker of Moons* (1896) and *The Mystery of Choice* (1897), works in which his genius shows on occasion but does not hold on throughout like it did in *The King in Yellow*. Instead, he noticed the commercial opportunity in his knack for romance and historical fiction. Thus, Chambers quickly switched to writing about adventures during war periods and typical romance stories between

working-class women and aristocratic, cynical men. The latter ones were an attempt at capturing the social change brought about by the Women's Movement but failed to portray realistic or interesting female characters or complex plotlines. As Michael Grant Kellermeyer puts it, Chambers' books were seen as unartistic and sentimental, to the point of being so popular that they sold for very low prices and were so commonplace they even had been used as doorstops, yet now have become rare and forgettable in comparison to the literature of the time (Kellermeyer, "Nightmarish Horror Stories").

The success he met with the public, however, was resounding. Two of these books even became best-sellers and sold over two hundred thousand copies, an astoundingly impressive number for the time. He was able to make a quite comfortable living, owning a large mansion in New York and indulging in expensive elite hobbies such as hunting, art collecting and building a library of rare volumes solely by dedicating himself to the churning out of these simple, heartwarming and straightforward stories (Orsi 15). These were quite popular indeed, but popularity alone did not make them memorable or remarkable, as Kellermeyer points out,

> Most of his books went out of print as soon as a new one came out – made immediately outdated and irrelevant by the advent of its successor. Unsurprisingly, an author who could erase the memory of his own books from the collective memory of his readership – merely by publishing a new one – has been rendered utterly forgotten in the century since his death. ... Chambers' love stories made him wealthy and famous, but the only thing saving his memory from oblivion is a three year period of his life (1895 – 1897) when he wrote the supernatural fiction, fantasy, and horror that has made him one of the most mysterious – and to some, disappointing – geniuses of weird fiction. ("Nightmarish Horror Stories")

Chambers' books were at one point one of the most commonplace household names for readers in America, and yet were almost completely forgotten by history. This is precisely the

phenomenon he achieved - the superfluousness of overfamiliarity, being so thoroughly known and knowable, and such a widespread guilty pleasure that his work would just be considered a given, as showcased by Kellermeyer. Perhaps an apt although somewhat informal comparison would be that his books were as soap operas: extremely popular with the masses, yet thoroughly forgotten as they ended and the next one came out and, save for rare exceptions, never to be picked up or analysed or, at times, even thought of again.

At the same time, Chambers is considered one of the most important North American writers of strange and supernatural fiction since Edgar Allan Poe, and *The King in Yellow* is widely regarded as having led the vanguard of somewhat of a golden age of weird fiction in the period between the 1890s and 1940s alongside Arthur Machen's *The Great God Pan* (1894) and Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897) (Kellermeyer, "Nightmarish Horror Stories"). His thematic influence on the works of Howard Phillip Lovecraft is undeniable, and in the years post-1927, when August Derleth was composing a theological compendium of Lovecraft's mythos, the lore built by Chambers in *The King in Yellow* was assimilated and canonized alongside it as part of the same fictional universe due to Lovecraft's use of names lifted directly from Chambers' works in *Whisperer in the Darkness* (1931) (Orsi 16-17).

As most of Chambers' literary production consists of these pasty romances, *The King in Yellow* remains a singular phenomenon among his body of work. Therefore, despite the far-reaching influence and the transcendental, psychological, existential and philosophical horror masterfully explored in it, it remains majorly overlooked by mainstream culture and even formal academia. Relevant sources found for this dissertation were blog posts and analyses made by academics in informal contexts, such as Kellermeyer, who has been cited repeatedly throughout this introduction so far. There are, however, a few formal academic articles and dissertations on the subject.

In "A Jaundiced View of America", Scott D. Emmert explores the subversive elements through the entirety of *The King in Yellow*, comparing it to other instances of North American

literature that had a tendency to validate the American way of life, individualism, militarism and the capitalist mode of thinking, while at once comparing its elements to the questioning of those same values and ideals, and to other books which do the same.

Most other analyses found, such as Kellermeyer's previously mentioned entries, focus on the analysis of the form and content of the stories within, and its other possible connections to literature. Examples include comparing Chambers' fictional play to Lovecraft's Necronomicon, or Ambrose Bierce's *Haita the Shepherd*, such as in Maciej Sulmicki's "Studies in Madness", or even the appearance of *The King in Yellow* as a recurring theme in *True Detective*, or contextualizing the sociocultural background of the date of publication, such as in Carlos Orsi's Introduction to the Brazilian edition of the book by the Intrínseca publishing company.

On the other hand, in "Degenerative Decadence and Regenerative Militarism in the Invasion Narratives of Robert W. Chambers and Erskine Childers", Lucas C. Townsend conducts a research that defends and supports an eugenistic and nationalistic tone projected onto *The King in Yellow*, going directly against most other interpretations on the subject and drawing on sources such as Lombroso and Nordau for theoretical basis, the first of whose pseudobiological theories of phrenology have been debunked as early as the 1840s, and who is cited precisely regarding such theories.

It is within this context of simultaneously lowbrow and highbrow literature that Chambers' work exists. The inevitable question that is raised is what makes *The King in Yellow* so different from his other attempts at horror, and especially from his other general attempts at writing. The book consists of 10 short stories, of which the first four are loosely connected by the fictional play eponymous to the collection. The following two short stories are not directly connected to it, but maintain the presence of the strange and supernatural, and even make some indirect allusions to some of the names used in the first four. The last four short stories are much more mundane, although arguably still carrying some slight elements of the supernatural and mysterious, are much more similar

to his later romantic pieces, and do not have any noticeable connection to the play. We can therefore classify these ten stories into the four that consist directly of the Yellow Mythos: "The Repairer of Reputations", "The Mask", "In the Court of the Dragon" and "The Yellow Sign", two of a transitional quality between these tales of existential horror and the romantic misadventures of young people: "The Demoiselle D'Ys" and "The Prophets' Paradise", and four of a more jovial exploration of the bohemian *joie de vivre* of young artists in love "The Street of the Four Winds", "The Street of the First Shell", "The Street of Our Lady of the Fields" and "Rue Barrée", aptly referred to as the Four Streets Collection. Seeing as the Four Streets has a much more similar tone to the rest of his bibliography, exploring the romantic misadventures of Parisian youth, the focus to investigate what makes *The King in Yellow* differ from the rest of Chambers' work will not be veered towards it, but to the Yellow Mythos directly. It is here that the critics and public alike found Chambers succeeded expertly in creating something unique, and this uniqueness is exactly what concerns me. The goal is, then, to find patterns and symbols repeated throughout it and what they represent and distill from the society of the period.

In the first four narratives, young characters in different circumstances are plagued by the existence of a fictional play, *The King in Yellow*, a piece of writing supposedly so subversive and sublime in its corruptive ability that, after reading it, one would question elements as basic as society, reality and identity, causing an intense psychological breakdown that could lead to illness through somatization and even insanity. In all four short stories, the protagonists and those close to them reach a point of no return and a cathartic climax in the narrative when they find and read the play that inevitably, for better or worse, accelerates the entropic processes of the narrative and pushes it and the characters involved towards a conclusion. Whether the play is simply subversive or actually supernatural and a gateway through which an entropic entity might reach reality is uncertain, but its symbology and relevance to real-world ideas and movements prevalent at the time is undeniable, namely decadentism, an art movement consisting of expressions through the mediums of literature,

poetry, plays and paintings, which dealt with the same notions of existentialism and subversion of ideals.

The Decadents were artists handling the tensions brought about by the end of the nineteenth century in Europe: with the rising issues that would culminate in the First World War, the intense boom in technology and industry that changed people's daily lives at an astounding rate of acceleration, and the moral concerns and feelings of loss of control that came with it. In France, where the movement started, they also had to cope with the defeat at the hands of the Prussian army in 1870 and the end of the Paris Commune in 1871. The Decadents were also stuck with the massive literary names of romanticism - Hugo, Balzac, Flaubert - and needed to renew Baudelaire's *frisson nouveau* in order to find their own path within these suffocating anxieties and traditions (Orsi 12). The Decadents chose to embody this sense of fatalism and accept this existential crisis openly

> It was a campy movement devoted to cynical hedonism and a carefree fatalism that heralded the imminent consequences of their wanton lifestyles – syphilis, overdoses, scandal, arrest, suicide, destitution, and drug addiction were among the common ends expected of a Decadent whose bohemian existence embraced the YOLO ethos of the early 2010s. You can get an accurate idea of their values and beliefs by reading Poe's "Masque of the Red Death": tonight we shall dance and drink and make love, for tomorrow we will all be dead. (Kellermeyer, "Nightmarish Horror Stories")

They searched for hedonism, pleasure, aestheticism without purpose other than to busy themselves and sever any ties with the boundaries of tradition and morality. The literary works that would overindulge in these socially inappropriate ideals would be deemed as scandalous, blasphemous and be denounced publicly and banned. French books classified as too explicit or "perverted" for a British readership would have their covers be discreetly wrapped in yellow so as to hide their true nature, but as time went on and the code was figured out, it became commonplace to wrap even less problematic publications as a sales strategy, quickly earning the colour yellow the

association with all that was improper, subversive, decadent and contrarian (Kellermeyer, "Nightmarish Horror Stories").

It is against this cultural backdrop that *The King in Yellow* is released. The idea of a king, a leader and acumen of absolute debauchery mixed and awakened in the public these intense associations with the growingly popular Decadent movement, and mixed them with the also popular horror of Poe and Bierce. Introducing the element of the play adds another layer of mystery to it - this figure representative as the embodiment of decadence does not need to be directly represented, as its influence is felt through the subversive masterpiece of the homonymous play. In that sense, it is a perfect encapsulation of the wildest dreams of the Decadent movement - that through one of their works their abandon could connect the reader to worldview altering truths and make them question and leave behind the trappings of society that encase them. This idea was so powerful that it would later be mimicked in Lovecraft's Necronomicon. Naturally, these are ambitious dreams, but there are records of a popular Decadent play being banned from England due to its perceived corruptive nature:

> The King in Yellow play was probably inspired by another Decadent work, Wilde's French-published play Salomé, which was banned in Britain and became a moral scandal raged against for its depiction of the victory of vain sensuality over pious self-denial. ...
>
> While no one claimed that reading Salomé would make one lose touch with reality, it was regarded as highly corruptive and vulgar, and it was preached against from pulpits and the press. Like Wilde's drama – which challenged Victorian ideals of morality and womanhood – The King in Yellow challenges civilization's ideals of the value of human life, the virtues of work and ambition, and the power of love. (Kellermeyer, "A Two Minute Analysis")

It is relevant to point out, however, that despite this strong connection to the Decadent movement, and the aesthetic that can be found in the Yellow Mythos, the short stories themselves are not examples of Decadent literature, just as Chambers himself was not a decadent artist. The

narrators in his stories are concerned with beauty, love and far purer ideals than those upheld by these intellectuals, and even in the bleakest moments of the narratives, they search for connection and meaning or take chivalrous action to protect their loved ones, adding to their stories a surprisingly tame and even somewhat romantic undertone. Having had a career in painting and illustrations, Chambers' style in the media fell in line with a far more mainstream contemporary artistic movement - Art Nouveau, more concerned with delicate, adorned beauty and the exploration of a balance between simplicity and complexity in aesthetic patterns.

> Chambers could be said to have a foot in both camps – being fascinated with the lavish corruption of the Decadents while being more comfortable with the elegant innocence of the Art Nouveau style, and his stories frequently dally in both traditions. In none of his books is this balance between pure beauty and corrupt sensuality more apparent than in The King in Yellow. (Kellermeyer, "Nightmarish Horror Stories")

In "The Mask", young sculptor Boris Yvain is hosting his old friend Alec, the narrator and protagonist, with whom he competed years ago over the affections of Genevieve, his current girlfriend. Boris has accrued much success in the sculpting scene after devising an alchemical solution that can transform organic matter into marble, but as Alec spends time with him and Genevieve, he notices there are tensions and unspoken silences between them, and the woman is said to suffer from serious mood swings. Alec wakes up during one night to find her weeping and she shortly after develops a fever, becoming delirious and suicidal. Boris confesses to devising the formula through studying the text of The King in Yellow, and Alec finds a copy of the play in his office, and reads it himself. He also becomes bedridden and ill due to the influence of the work, and before he recovers Genevieve throws herself into a vat of the solution, becoming a statue, and causing Boris to commit suicide, although it is covered up as a heart attack. The sculptor leaves all of his work to Alec in his will, and after some time, the solution's effect ends, and Alec and Genevieve are implied to find each other through grief.

In “In the Court of the Dragon”, an unnamed narrator finds himself in a chase through the streets of Paris after witnessing an uncanny moment at the Church of St. Barnabé: a strange-looking organ player was thought to have left the room twice. This chase is both physical and psychological, as he tries to avoid the man but mainly tries to avoid the feeling of unease and disgust he gets by thinking of the man. As he encounters the organ player several times on his way home, it is not clear whether either is being followed by the other or whether the narrator is just trying to escape this sense of dread he gets when confronted by his image. As he finally reaches his address - Rue du Dragon - he gets caught by the strange man and tries to put up a fight but realizes resistance is futile. Then, he wakes back in the church, as though from a daydream, and realizes he knew the identity of the organ player, finally awakening back in the Lake of Hali, implying the entire experience had been an illusion created by The King in Yellow due to his influence over the narrator’s mind and soul.

In “The Yellow Sign”, the narrator is Mr. Scott, a bohemian painter who starts an affair with his nude model, Tessie, as both become haunted by the image of the watchman in the church across the square from his house - a pale, sickly, bloated figure. Mr. Scott is hesitant to open up to Tessie’s naive affections, and as they grow closer together and the anxieties grow with this proximity, they both start having vivid dreams about the watchman and a funerary hearse that would be carrying Mr. Scott’s body, but he would still be conscious. They hear a story about an acquaintance - the building’s bell boy, who confronted the horrendous watchman to find out his flesh was putrid and his finger came off when touched. One night, as they kiss on the square in front of the house, the watchman asks him if he had seen the “Yellow Sign”, and a day later Tessie gives the narrator a strange pin with a yellow symbol on it, saying she found it near the aquarium she visited. That day, going through his library, Mr. Scott finds The Yellow King - a book he does not own - in his library. Tessie becomes curious and after a brief argument, they read it and discuss it together. Later on that very night, the hearse arrives and the watchman barges in, assaulting and embracing the artist, who believes him to be The King in Yellow. Mr. Scott comes to in his deathbed, going through his last

rites, and the priest points out the corpse of the watchman who, according to him, must have been dead for months.

There is, however, another separation to be drawn between the short stories, as these three are noticeably different and far more similar and parallel among themselves than the one chosen as the subject of this dissertation, "The Repairer of Reputations". In it, first-person narrator Hildred Castaigne fights for his perceived right to succession to the throne of the Imperial Dynasty of America in the relative fictional future of 1920, working through intrigue, deceit and attempts at murder to secure his position as the true heir and stop his cousin´s marriage to a noblewoman. This high stakes plot and alien futuristic environment filled with strange notions about the government and country, and a noble line in America, stands out clearly among the other short stories even at a first glance; not necessarily due to the quality of the writing itself, but due to the central subject matter - the protagonist and setting both far less mundane and humble in their depictions. Where the central characters of the three other tales are at worst disheartened romantics, Castaigne is ambitious, manipulative, petty and cruel. Where the other three show the comforting simplicity of a bohemian lifestyle of young artists in Paris, "The Repairer of Reputations" takes place in a fictional futuristic United States of America that is at once completely different to the political reality and eerily similar to some of the social ideals of the country at the time of writing. Where the other short stories have a plot based on human connection and interaction - a love triangle, a blooming new romance or simply the enjoyment of a Sunday at mass - this one features a storyline of intrigue, conspiracy, plotting and murder. This clear dissonance makes this narrative the strangest story within the strangest series of short stories in Chambers´career.

There are numerous reasons as for why this dissonance may have occurred, not the least of which is the fact that this story, along with "In the Court of the Dragon" starts with the protagonist already having read the accursed play, and therefore already, from its starting point, being affected by its corrupting influence. Another factor that is shown to be important is that the relationship

between Castaigne and the play is diametrically opposite to all of the other narrators'. To them, the King in Yellow is an insidious, terrifying force that should not be dealt with and, despite succumbing to curiosity, they take great efforts in avoiding the thought and the influence of the play. To Castaigne, The King in Yellow is a prophet and a redeemer, a play that not only revealed to him the mysteries of the world but which also is an important tool in the quest for his goals. Moreover, while the other narrators can all be classified as morally decent or, at worst, morally ambiguous in their stories, Castaigne is very clearly an amoral character, having no qualms with using murder and deceit in order to reach his selfish ends.

One cannot study "The Repairer of Reputations" without recognizing the unreliability of the narrator within, and yet the story is exemplary in how thoroughly it manages to blur the lines of said lack of reliability. Throughout its thirty-five pages, there are so many examples exposing Hildred's delusions and yet so many others supporting his viewpoint that it becomes difficult to pinpoint what is real and what is not within the fictional world.

This dissertation provides an analysis of "The Repairer of Reputations", its main character's psychological processes and how well it parallels the psychological processes of authoritarian and fanatical thinking in real life. I carry out this goal through three chapters. In the first chapter, "The Unreliable Narrator", I will explore the existing theory for the analysis of unreliable narrators, pointing out logical fallacies and issues within the older canonized theoretical concepts and practices defended by Wayne C. Booth, Seymour Chatman, James Phelan and Ansgar Nünning, while finding more accurate and foolproof ways of approaching the subject with theorists such as Theresa Heyd, Paul Grice and Per Kogh Hansen.

In the second chapter, "Textual Analysis", I will apply the concepts established in the first chapter to a practical textual analysis of "The Repairer of Reputations", conducting an exploration of the narrator character and his unreliability, as well as its origins, how it affects his capacity to represent and relate to his reality, and how it affects his way of thinking. I will also establish how

thoroughly his unreliability affects every aspect of the story, and use all the acquired information to create a verifiable picture of his identity, even as I prove the impossibility of conjuring an accurate picture of his reality.

In the third chapter, "Connections to Society", I will first establish theoretical validation for using literature as sociological data by basing myself on theory by Mariano Longo, Hans Robert Jauss, Jacques Rancière and Keith Johnstone. Afterwards, I will compare the narrator character's pre-established mentality and traits onto the real life phenomenon of authoritarianism, totalitarianism and fascism in general, as explored by several authors in *The Authoritarian Personality* in conjunction with Hannah Arendt.

In this manner, it is my hope that this dissertation will offer a panoramic and critical picture of the theory for detecting narrative unreliability, to then analyse the narrator character in "The Repairer of Reputations", his traits and reasons for being the way he is. Finally, it is my goal to determine the process of authoritarian and fascist thinking as expressed in Hildred's case through comprehensible examples, theoretical basis, textual analysis and the use of socio-psychological research conducted at the end of the second World War, when fascism had most recently been in vogue.

Chapter 1 - The Unreliable Narrator

1.1 Concepts and Context

In this chapter, I will start by contextualizing the concept of the unreliable narrator and its rise in literature. Then, I will analyse the different approaches to the definition and detection of the unreliable narrator by picking apart the theory developed by canonical authors such as Wayne C. Booth, Seymour Chatman, James Phelan and Ansgar Nünning, covering main concepts such as the implied author, the implied reader and authorial audience as factors for detecting a narrator's unreliability before bringing in more recent theorists such as Per Krogh Hansen and Theresa Heyd to form a conclusive method based on all of these discussions. With this more processed method, I will then move on to the analysis of "The Repairer of Reputations" and its narrator character in the following chapter.

Towards the end of the nineteenth century, a gradually growing phenomenon started to become prominent in literature, despite there being examples of it as early as the sixteenth century.[2] This idea is that of a first-person narrator character who may not be able to or interested in revealing the whole truth of the story they tell to the reader. As the reader can only access that story through the words of the narrator, this concept puts into question our relationship with fiction, narrative strategies and, especially, with our understanding of the text. It raises the question of whether there are significant and relevant elements in a story that the narrator (for whatever reason) may not divulge to the reader, thus breaching and subverting one of the primary elements of fiction, namely, the need for suspension of disbelief and the implicit trust in whoever tells us their story.

It is not surprising, when looking at the societal context of the turn of the twentieth century, how this tendency first came to be *in vogue*. As explained by Nünning, "Formal properties of novels like unreliable narration, it can be argued, reflect both the understanding of reality and subjectivity and the moral concerns and unspoken epistemological assumptions of a given period" ("Reconceptualizing" 61). In the case of the nineteenth century, it was still prevalent, in science as in culture at large, the notion that one single objective and unbiased truth could ultimately be reached.

This applied not only to studies and scientific thought, but also to the knowledge of the other, and of the self. (Nünning, "Reconceptualizing" 58). With the palpable scientific advancements in several fields such as Darwin's evolutionary theory, and Freud's developments in psychology (and especially his introduction of the concept of the unconscious or subconscious), the clear, fixed notion of what it meant to be human and the certainty of identity and self-knowledge became increasingly blurred and undefined. Even as a society, with the incredible expansion of urbanization due to the Industrial Revolution, all social classes were pushed together into smaller areas, faced with inequality, crime and the influx of workers who had left the country to find new life in the city. The artists, writers and even the greater part of artistic and literary consumers belonged to a layer of society that was proud of a supposed moral superiority that justified its economical and social status as better than most, and now were faced with growing challenges to the traditional values upon which these beliefs were built (Byron 186).

All these factors combined to lead writers to become popular by expressing the ideas and concerns society had but could not process, and turned to deconstructing and analyzing (either as a way to defend or criticize) the cultural image of the human being itself and its roles within society. This is seen in the process by which literature veered off into two different lines, as explained in the following excerpt,

> These clear distinctions broke down as the creative climate of the early twentieth century produced two new forms of modern writing: the modernist, with interests in self-consciousness along Freudian and existential lines, and the "realist" where the interest was in telling the story of class conflict or stories within recognisable social, economic and religious settings. The former gained attention as an experimental form for its lack of orthodoxy and departure from the objective focus of narratives of the previous generation. Modernist texts of the 1920s could be distinguished by extreme changes in their form:

> ambiguity, introspection and a focus on psychology, replacing chronological order with a fluid and often backtracking sense of time and the absence of a reliable narrator. (Young 4)

While "realist" literature focused on class tensions and relationships, a modernist approach began to focus more on impressions and psychology rather than external issues or relationships. As most cultural changes do, this epistemological shift did not happen in a matter of months, but of decades. In the period of transition between the latest decades of the nineteenth century and the earliest of the twentieth, the unreliable narrator truly gained traction (Nünning, "Reconceptualizing" 59) as some type of medium between the fluidity of the modernist *avant-garde* and the structure of the Victorian tradition: literature maintained the fixed narrator character, but started to find a way to diminish its credibility as it explores the fallibility of human points of view. If one may not trust another to even know themselves, then the amount of trust one deserves about knowing and describing the world and events around them is potentially even lower.

The study and analysis of this practice made its debut in literary theory in 1961, at the hands of Wayne C. Booth, who deals with the technique almost from a communicative approach, analysing the layers of the factors involved in the communication of the story to the reader. Critics to his method point out that, "However, it falls short on systematizing and making explicit the suggested method for detecting and explaining the phenomenon ..." (Heyd 218). Upon this model, Seymour Chatman built his theory in 1978, changing the focus of the analysis slightly and adding new elements to it. This actualization did not solve the issues pointed by Heyd, instead inciting more and more authors to join the discussion, eventually forming two entirely separate narratological schools studying narrative unreliability: the rhetorical (constituted by Booth, Chatman and Phelan) and the cognitive (mainly constituted by Nünning) (Mihães 1). From these, Mihães explains,

> The rhetorical approach to unreliability relies on the implied author, the agent who encodes unreliability in the text for the implied reader to decode. On the other hand, the cognitive approach shifts the burden from the implied author (whose existence is even questioned) to

> the flesh-and-blood reader, contending that unreliability is no longer a textual property but rather a reading strategy. (1)

The disagreement, however, even between authors of the same school of thought, is so major that it is hard to find a single quote from their works with a neutral definition of the term, untainted by the writer's specific theory and that is not, at best, in disagreement with the other authors' characterization of the term. Perhaps the most adequate definition for our purposes is Nünning's: "Unreliable narrators are those whose perspective is in contradiction to the value and norm system of the whole text or to that of the reader." ("Reconceptualizing" 38), although it still relies heavily on the importance of the reader, in equal standing to the text, clearly defending his cognitive ideals, which will be explored and discussed in greater depth later on in section 1.3.

Admittedly, part of the reason why so many scholars diverge on this definition is due to the fact that narrative unreliability is deeply diversified, and based on a vast series of variables (Pettersson 109) that may influence a narrator character's behaviour and account of a story. Two equally unreliable characters may be characterized as such in wildly different ways, for entirely contrasting reasons. These reasons include narrators being more or less aware that they are unreliable, keeping information from the reader willingly or unwillingly, simply not understanding the information they are given and therefore being incapable of adequately conveying it to the narratee, or even lacking the basic communicative skill necessary to give a proper account of events (Phelan, *Living* 50-51).

There is an effect that is agreed upon by several authors, however, which is caused by the presence of narrative unreliability in a given text, which is the foregrounding of the narrator's character and psychology over any other elements of the work (Nünning, "Reconceptualizing" 38-39). Jedličková takes the point further,

> … I would argue that unreliable narration may be observed as a particular subtype of narrative mediation employed to fulfill a particular function: to call our attention to unstable,

> variable values of human life for instance. Employing "functional perspective" in our observations suggests that textual inconsistencies in first-person narratives may be revealed as symptoms of the narrator's inconsequent or uncertain report on fictional facts, but also as aspects of the semantic structure of the whole, that is of its aesthetic function at the same time. (283)

Therefore, despite past epistemological debates, the unreliable narrator can be defined as a narrator who, for some reason, does not offer a reliable telling of a narrative or part of a narrative, whether consciously or unconsciously, whether because they themselves have an inaccurate reading of their diegetic reality, because they fall short in their capacity to communicate such a narrative or because they willingly omit or editorialize parts of a narrative to protect their own self-interest. At any length, the effect such a narrator has on a story is the foregrounding of that narrator's psychology and character over elements and events told in the story.

1.2 The Implied Author

In this section, I will explain and explore a concept introduced by Wayne Booth, further developed by Seymour Chatman and subsequently contested and criticised by several different authors. I will attempt to expose both sides on the issue and form a viable conclusion on the use of the implied author as a factor to determine the unreliability of a given narrator.

In order to properly analyse the concept of the implied author, we must first understand the theoretical basis behind it. That is, any given written narrative is necessarily a communicative act, and thus consists of several different factors and players around it. As Booth observes, "In any reading experience there is an implied dialogue among author, narrator, the other characters, and the reader" (*Fiction* 155). Within this structure, Booth localizes the concept of the implied author as another layer or tool in the communication process.

Booth defends that it is impossible to differentiate an author's judgement from their work; as everything that is put into or taken out from it, the change in descriptive pacing between plot and theme, related and unrelated events, the changes in characters' perspectives and the inside view into their thoughts and motivations, even the story they choose to tell in and of itself are all direct representatives of the author's choices and therefore of their will. Or, as he puts it, "In short, the author's judgment is always present, always evident to anyone who knows how to look for it." (Booth, *Fiction* 20).

However, Booth also claims that it is not the real author that is expressed by these choices, but an implied version of the real author, the parts of the self that the real author chooses to express, to highlight or let fade away in a particular work. This process, in his view, is inevitable, and will always lead to the reader's reconstruction of this mental image of the author implied by the work, and that implied image chooses, whether consciously or not, what we read. We infer them as a creative expression of the real author, conveyed by the sum of that author's choices (Booth, *Fiction* 70-75).

Chatman, Booth's following theoretical partner, develops and further defines this idea in a more concise way:

> [The author] is "implied," that is, reconstructed by the reader from the narrative. He is not the narrator, but rather the principle that invented the narrator, along with everything else in the narrative, that stacked the cards in this particular way, had these things happen to these characters, in these words or images. Unlike the narrator, the implied author can *tell* us nothing. He, or better, *it* has no voice, no direct means of communicating. It instructs us silently, through the design of the whole, with all the voices, by all the means it has chosen to let us learn. (148, emphasis in the original)

This is the concept upon which the rhetorical school of thought bases its notion of narrative unreliability. To Booth, what dictates narrative dynamics is the degree and type of distance that each

part of the narrative communication has in relation to its other parts (*Fiction* 155). Unreliable narration, therefore, is no different; focusing specifically on the distance put between the narrator character and the implied author. Booth states, "For lack of better terms, I have called a narrator reliable when he speaks for or acts in accordance with the norms of the work (which is to say, the implied author's norms), unreliable when he does not" (*Fiction* 158-159).

Chatman recovers this idea in his work, *Story and Discourse* (1978) agreeing with Booth's assessment of the definition of an unreliable narrator: "What makes a narrator unreliable is that his values diverge strikingly from that of the implied author's; that is, the rest of the narrative … conflicts with the narrator's presentation, and we become suspicious of his sincerity or competence to tell the 'true version'" (Chatman 149). However, he adds another layer into the process of communication, that of the implied reader, something the real author uses as a guiding concept such as that of an intended or target audience, to whom they try to communicate their narrative. This concept, to Chatman, added to that of the implied author in the determination of an unreliable narrator. "If the communication is between the implied author and the implied reader at the expense of the narrator, we can say that the implied author is ironic and that the narrator is unreliable" (229).

This notion is not entirely new, rather a supplement to Booth's ideas, still directly building off of *The Rhetoric of Fiction* (1961), namely of his attribution of narrative unreliability as an expression of irony. He states, "There can be no dramatic irony, by definition, unless the author and audience can somehow share knowledge which the characters do not hold" (Booth, *Fiction* 175). In these ways, both authors majorly overlap and complement one another, categorizing unreliable narration as a matter of irony being expressed by the implied author. That irony, in turn, is what is expressed in the distance between the narrator and the implied author, but this is the point where their theory becomes vague.

One of the issues with Booth's work is that it analyses the possible different relationships the layers of communication can have towards each other, the different ways irony can be achieved and

in which an implied author can relate to a narrator, as well as how literary works can be analysed using the implied author, but when it comes to the issue of actually developing a pattern for determining unreliable narration, it is hopelessly vague. He mentions the reader detects irony by reviewing the literal interpretation of a reading in favor of a secondary one, due to the detection of "some incongruity among the words or between the words and something else that he knows" (Booth, *Irony* 10). The reader then would make an attempt at guessing the implied author's intentions through the contextual information of the work, and reinterpret the ironic passage from this contextual perspective, thus giving it new meaning instead of the literal one (Booth, *Irony* 11-12). He even details a small process that seems somewhat effective, but that agrees more with the theories that are presented in sections 1.4 and 1.5, however is still tied to the notion of the implied author.

The very idea of the implied author, as Booth presents it, is somewhat off-mark. Although it can be usefully applied to certain possible literary analyses, Nünning believes it to bear problematic theoretical implications (such as authorial intention) as well as be terminologically unclear and ultimately an arbitrary term from which to approach questions regarding the intricacies of the relationship between the author and the reader, but one which falls short of actually answering them ("Reconceptualizing" 35-36).

Even Chatman criticized Booth's defense that the norms of the narrative must be moral, defending instead that they are general cultural codes that can be played around within the realm of fiction without a direct moral compromise from the author, implied or otherwise. He notes that when reading a literary piece, "Our acceptance of their universe is aesthetic, not ethical. To confound the 'implied author,' a structural principle, with a certain historical figure whom we may or may not admire morally, politically, or personally would seriously undermine our theoretical enterprise" (Chatman 149). James Phelan adds into the discussion that when Booth "... defends his concerns with the relation between technique and morality as fully consistent with his conception of fiction as rhetorical action ... [He is] mixing his personal beliefs into his analyses and ... underestimating the

difficulties of ethical criticism." (*Somebody* 98). It is also questionable that simply due to diverging moral opinions with the implied author one could correctly classify the narrator as unreliable, otherwise, any character that remains noticeably morally flawed throughout the text immediately becomes so. It is not just because someone has a dubious character that they will necessarily give unreliable accounts.

When trying to reconcile these issues in his revision of the implied author, Chatman steers the concept to a pragmatic approach as a support against the mixing of the author's biography and body of work or their intention as part of the narrative interpretation. Per Krogh Hansen, however, points out that, "... the unclear mixture of textual structures and an anthropomorphic subjectivity persists, while he is maintaining an understanding where the implied author is a structural principle identical with the text as such and an intention related to an inferred authorial subjectivity" (232).

The implied author seems to be an interesting concept to, specifically, discuss how little the reader can glimpse of authorial intention. The reader does not know the real author and what they meant when they wrote this or that passage, and trying to look through the text to the person who wrote it can only reveal the part of them that is implied in the text. However, localizing the unreliable narrator as a tool extended from the implied author seems counterproductive. If the narrator is the object of analysis and unreliability is a phenomenon of either their discourse or their perceptive process and they are not aware, in their fictive reality, that it is fictive, then one cannot endeavor to understand who they are as a character by looking at their relation to something that does not exist in the same ontological level as they do and that, by all accounts, does not even register in their perception at all. Even if it did, it still would be incredibly convoluted to try to analyse a character's status and discourse by looking not at them, their speech and the reality of the fictional world around them, but by trying to gauge their relationship to a vague definition of an entirely separate entity that exists as an implied and inaccurate representation of the enunciator that the reader might build in their own minds.

Paralleling parts of that thought-process, theorists started noticing some patterns in the image of the implied author. Whatever is implied is implied not only by someone, but to someone else. The implied author is not an image that is simply projected by the real author, but an image that is constructed by the real reader. In this way, Nünning believes the focus to be mistaken, "... it is obvious from many of the definitions that the implied author is a construct established by the reader on the basis of the whole structure of a text" ("Reconceptualizing" 34).

There are even clues to that in Booth's own theory, which Chatman picks up on. Booth, however, believes that even the implied reader is a creation of the implied author. According to him, every authorial choice shapes the text and the text shapes the reader to become someone who may understand and appreciate it fully (*Fiction* 89). He states,

> It is only as I read that I become the self whose beliefs must coincide with the author's. Regardless of my real beliefs and practices, I must subordinate my mind and heart to the book if I am to enjoy it to the full. The author creates, in short, an image of himself and another image of his reader; he makes his reader, as he makes his second self, and the most successful reading is one in which the created selves, author and reader, can find complete agreement. (Booth, *Fiction* 138)

Hansen, however, argues that because of the development of values throughout history, it is not unusual to find narrators once considered reliable that are later found to be unreliable due to new contexts through which to interpret their actions. He concludes, "Narrational unreliability can but does not always depend on an intentional act by a higher level authorial agency; and whether it does is a discussion very seldom worth raising" (Hansen 240).

Indeed, as seen throughout this section, the claim that unreliability can be detected through an analysis of the distance between the narrator character and the implied author is limited and misguided. That does not mean it will fail to achieve results every time it is applied, but it takes a long and convoluted route to analyse a narrator character, one that overlooks several of the

communicative factors involved in the narrative process, and therefore does not result in verifiably accurate readings.

1.3 The Reader, Implied Reader and Authorial Audience

After exploring some of the issues with the first school of thought about narrative unreliability, I move on to the second school of thought, exploring the ideas of Phelan and Nünning on the topic, as well as bringing back concepts from Booth and Chatman that flirted with notions from this second group of theorists, and theoretical issues with the new focal point followed by both. It is relevant to point out that Phelan is sometimes identified with the first school of thought - the same as Booth and Chatman, but several essential parts of his theory hinge on concepts that fit better overall with the second one, and thus this is the moment I chose to approach them.

If the first school of thought regarding narrative unreliability was based on rhetoric, the second one is focused on a cognitive approach to literary analysis. This does not mean, as recently explored, that these areas are not connected and that several passages from each can be applied to either school, despite not being the focal point of a given author. Booth, for instance, was shown to have flirted with the concept of the implied reader, but still localized the phenomenon of unreliable narration in the implied author. However, in the afterword to the second edition of *The Rhetoric of Fiction*, he even plays briefly with a central idea for the cognitive school, claiming that what the author does not state is also relevant in determining what type of audience they expect to consume their work, as what is taken for granted that the audience will grasp implicitly is something the author considers trivial and obvious in that reader's culture (Booth, *Fiction* 433-434).

Chatman gives the implied reader greater importance, defending that they, much like the implied author, are intrinsic to the narrative, while real readers and the real author are not, even if they are indispensable in practice (150). In parallel to Booth's idea that the author makes their

reader, Chatman posits, “When I enter the fictional contract I add another self: I become an Implied reader” (150).

James Phelan introduces more clearly the concept of the authorial audience, which shares several parallels with the implied reader - the actual audience is different from the authorial one, defined by him as the group that best fits the image a real author projects of their ideal or expected reader when writing their work. The real audience clearly does not match that, being the real collective of readers that end up, in one way or another, consuming an author’s work. Alongside the real and authorial audiences, necessary for any literary work, he lists a possible narratee, whose importance to the rhetoric process is directly related to how explicitly characterized it is as an element within the text. Finally, for fictional works, there is the narrative audience, which he equated to the reader after conceding their suspension of disbelief, treating the elements in a fictional narrative as though they were real within that universe, regardless of how similar or different it may be from the real world (Phelan, *Somebody* 7).

Phelan also makes a distinction between textual and readerly dynamics, the first of which he describes as internal processes through which a narrative may progress from its beginning through to its end, while the second are the cognitive, emotional, ethical and aesthetic responses an audience can have to the text. These may be connected, according to him, by the interpretations, analyses and judgements readers make from the text, as they are basing their personal responses on the elements of said narrative (Phelan, *Somebody* 10-11).

However, as Phelan points out, authors may construct their narratives by taking into account these possible readerly dynamics (the authorial audience’s/implied reader’s reaction) to their work, and by foreseeing these, they create a more effective tale, more easily read and empathized with by these entities. He explores this idea further,

> In other words, authors often construct narrative progressions that so deeply intertwine textual and readerly dynamics that readerly dynamics become not just a consequence of

> textual dynamics but also a force that shapes them. Furthermore, this crossover effect is itself an especially strong manifestation of a phenomenon more central to the construction and reception of narrative than has previously been recognized: the mutual influence of authorial and readerly agency on the shape of narrative texts. (Phelan, *Somebody* 33-34)

Phelan places a great deal in the hands of the authorial audience, but it is Nünning who most deeply explores the relationship between the reader and the unreliable narrator. He states that the anthropomorphized entities of the unreliable narrator and the implied author circumvent the proper exploration of the cognitive processes that lead to the projection of the label of unreliability to begin with (Nünning, "Reconceptualizing" 30). To him, the determination of an unreliable narrator is more within the realm of what Phelan classifies as readerly dynamics than a textual one, working as a way to make sense of ambiguity and textual inconsistencies. As Nünning puts it,

> In other words: whether a narrator is called unreliable or not does not depend on the distance between the norms and values of the narrator and those of the implied author but between the distance that separates the narrator's view of the world from the reader's or critic's world-model and standards of normalcy, which are themselves, of course, open to challenge. ("Reconceptualizing" 40-41)

The cultural values that affect the reader's interpretation and make one question the veracity of what they are reading are the basis for Nünning's cognitive theory. Reading a narrator as unreliable is believed to be a way of naturalizing these incongruences by making them recognized as a part of the story, in a pattern befitting an overarching cultural pattern, such as madness or otherwise (Nunning, "Reconceptualizing" 46). Chatman compares this process of 'naturalization' to the idea of verisimilitude, claiming that it is through this notion that

> ... the reader 'fills in' gaps in the text, adjusts events and existents to a coherent whole, even when ordinary life expectations are called into question.

> … What constitutes ‘reality’ or ‘likelihood’ is a strictly cultural phenomenon, though authors of narrative fiction make it ‘natural’. But of course the ‘natural’ changes from one society to another, and from one era to another in the same society. (49)

Thus, what is able to be naturalized will depend on the culture the writer and reader are inserted in. Nünning postulates, “One might distinguish between textual signals such as internal inconsistencies and the verbal idiosyncrasies of the narrator, and contextual clues such as discrepancies between the world presented by a text and the reader's world knowledge and standards of normality” (“Theory, History and Signals” 95–96). He further comments that a narrator may be taken as reliable or not depending on matters such as “common sense”, general world-knowledge, standards of psychological normalcy in a given culture and general moral and ethical human standards. Any significant enough deviation of these in relation to the parameters that the reader holds, such as their referential frames and literary models (Nünning, “Reconceptualizing” 32), is, according to Nünning, exactly how one establishes a judgement upon a narrator’s unreliability (“Reconceptualizing” 47). Therefore, in his view, “Determining whether a narrator is unreliable is not just an innocent descriptive statement but a subjectively tinged value-judgment or projection governed by the normative presuppositions and moral convictions of the critic ...” (Nünning, “Reconceptualizing” 40).

This, however, ties back with a previously contested issue: is the deviation of morality enough to determine whether information divulged is mistaken, insufficient or untrue? It seems preposterous to truly believe that simply because someone is judged to be divergent to the accepted societal standards of morality, they will necessarily fail at narrating reliably. Even if their moral flaw were to be that of dishonesty, that would still not provide sufficient information to determine whether they are lying at the moment of narration. Hansen adds to the discussion, “But what this line in thinking does not grasp is that fiction is also a room for possibilities; a place where alternative ... possible worlds is being tested, illustrated, and opened for the reader. Whether or not these possible

worlds are appealing to the majority of readers has nothing to do with the narrator's reliability" (238).

What Nünning does that is novel is remind us that there is not a single moral standard, but that these are culturally-specific, but then he falls once more into the same logical fallacy that Booth did. Even worse, he dives into a maze of subjectivity, frustrating any attempt at grasping an applicable and practical theory for detecting narrative unreliability. He himself admits that,

> The trouble with seemingly self-explanatory yardsticks like 'normal moral standards' and 'basic common sense' is that no generally accepted standard of normality exists which can serve as the basis for impartial judgments. In a pluralist, postmodernist, and multicultural age like ours it has become more difficult than ever before to determine what may count as 'normal moral standards' and 'human decency'. In other words, a narrator may be perfectly reliable compared to one critic's notions of moral normality but quite unreliable in comparison to those that other people hold. (Nünning, "Reconceptualizing" 44)

When criticizing Nünning's ideas about the unreliable narrator and their localization on the reader's projections, Hansen raises a very insightful point, that hopefully has become noticeable by now: That Nünning makes a generalizing argument that is useful for analysing literature as a whole, but that fails to provide adequate support or evidence in regards to determining narrative unreliability (Hansen 239). His concepts about the reader's interpretation are deeply important to understand the communicative process, but the projections a receiver (reader) makes during the process are not a trustworthy measure by which to analyse the message (narrative) - rather, they are useful to analyse the receiver, how they interpret messages, the process itself and the types of anomalies that might occur during it. Heyd underlines that,

> While this kind of relativism has become customary in large areas of the humanities, it seems rather unsatisfactory as an actual tool for detecting and analyzing UN. Both Booth and Nünning, then, appear to be firmly grounded in the politically correct framework of their

> respective eras. Ironically, the two theories share a similar core: they both see UN as a complex communicative act with an intricate interaction pattern; at the same time, both are so much imbued with ideological agendas that they fail to give a precise heuristics for analyzing UN. It is not surprising that the case studies based on these theories often remain vague and introspection-based. (218-219)

This is the essential misconception in the detection of the unreliable narrator. Booth brings his focus to the implied author, while Nünning puts it solely on the reader. Chatman brings the concept of the implied reader, balancing out the influences of the implied author, while Phelan brings in the authorial audience in parallel, but both still overall agree with Booth. If they are trying to analyse a narrative phenomenon, looking at the author or the reader seems counterintuitive. They are not what is up for analysis. The narrative itself is. Even worse, if the phenomenon of unreliability is something that interacts with the narrative itself by misrepresenting or misinterpreting it through the bias or limited capacity of a narrator, then it exists in an entirely separate ontological level from that of the author and reader - that of the fiction itself. One cannot, by any means, claim that the narrator character exists in our reality if the story they reside in is fictional. In that same way, they cannot exist at the same ontological level as the agents in the communication of the narrative in the real world since they do not exist in the real world. Even in the case of a biography or autobiography, the versions of the narrators portrayed in the literature are not the exact same person as the author - if not for any other reason, from the experience of writing their story alone, as the author has and is aware of its creation as a conscious decision, while the narrator did not, when participating in the story, seriously presume that it might one day be turned into a narrative. It is preposterous, then, to imply that, to understand the narrator and their flaws, we must look at the vague image we construct of the author or, even worse, at our personal interpretations of the text.

Indeed, if both the implied author and the reader (in their various incarnations) are vague and subjective, one would need a more practical and reliable approach to detecting narrative unreliability.

If the readers' subjectivity is infinite in its variations and the author's image is vague and undefined, there is need for an academic or at least more methodical interpretation of the matter. Readers might argue about their feelings and projections onto the text as each may have different versions, and critics may construct different images of the same text's authors, but as with quotes, no one can question that certain words and excerpts did exist in a specific edition of a novel. It is the text, then, that should be analysed. That should be the raw material from which to determine narrative unreliability. It may be interpreted in different ways, but its precision is readily verifiable. To me, this seems the only way to analyse something academically. Moreover, there are other theorists who agree.

1.4 The Invalidity of Ontological Breaches

Following the logical fallacies exposed in the previous section, I move on to discuss the very issue of why to keep an analysis focused on a text itself and what are the benefits of doing so, utilizing Umberto Eco's *The Open Work* (1989) as my main theoretical basis.

The notion that the narrative itself must provide the clues necessary to the determination of an unreliable narrator is glimpsed even in these past theorists' works. All of them, to different degrees, mention the idea in their respective texts, before using it as an argument to support their own beliefs. In the case of James Phelan, this is most clearly seen when he differentiates intention from meaning. In an excerpt discussing the role of the implied author, he proposes to separate the real author's intention from the implied author's expressed meaning, but does so in an interesting way. He writes, "If I intend to communicate the proposition that ''The Intentional Fallacy' is itself a fallacy' but instead carelessly write ''The Intentional Fallacy' is not itself a fallacy,' then there is a contradiction between my intention and my meaning—or to be more precise, between my intention and the meaning of the sentence I chose to express that intention" (Phelan, *Somebody* 202).

This shows that the author's intention and the narrative's message may differ, even if

unwittingly. In sequence, he concludes that private authorial intention does not matter, as analysis cannot account for it. It is the publicized, textualized intentions, or the "meaning", as put in the previous quote, that matters, as it can be accessed and tested against reader response (Phelan, *Somebody* 203). It is a surprise that, following this line of thought, one would still fall back on the implied author at all, if at this moment Phelan states that critics cannot worry about authorial intent, but should rather focus on the message's meaning. He also posits that the implied author is exactly the publicized, textualized version of the author, but if that is the case, then there appears to be no need for this anthropomorphization at all - why not refer to it simply as the narrative itself, if there is virtually no difference between the text and this vague projection of the author?

Booth himself, avid defender of the implied author, elaborates on the matter, as he posits that the *work itself* must bridge the gap between the author's and the reader's value systems, and that the *work itself* must be enough to fill what is left open by the reader's suspension of disbelief (Booth, *Fiction* 112, my emphasis). In the same vein, he also argues that it is possible to find in the works themselves evidence of meanings and inferences allowed or not, and that certain categories of generic direction are put so clearly in a text no one may question them, even as they might disagree on other issues (Booth, *Fiction* 435).

When comparing a literary piece with a theatrical production, Booth says that the director of a production must do whatever they can to ensure the proper message is communicated to the audience at the showing, but that happens far before the actual presentation date. A director must work with the cast and crew to make sure every symbol is present and noticeable, whether in an auditory, visual or linguistic capacity, to clearly express their intent. This means that what is not expressed or put into the work by the author, or onto the stage by the director, will not count as a semantic symbol for that audience. As he states, "[W]e might equally well conclude from the potential ambiguity of fiction that the novelist must work harder at providing, within his work, the kind of definition of his elements that a good production gives to a play" (Booth, *Fiction* 388). It is

not a far step to conclude that, if that is true, then the best way to analyse a message is not to look at the author, but at the message itself: if the author intended it to mean something and yet failed to communicate that through the work itself, that intention is not realized in the narrative. That means that what the text actually expresses is not the author, but only what is contained within the text.

These conclusions connect very smoothly with Eco's theory, which focuses far more on the work itself and far less on the author, and, when it looks at the author, it does so through the lens of the work. What matters to Eco is not the author or their implied image, but the work itself and whether it provides enough content to minimize misinterpretation.

According to Eco, information is commonly believed to be something that can only be surmised if it is compared to the previous knowledge of a reader, but information theory allows one to quantify and qualify information according to the text itself, not relying on such subjective and variable notions (45). He states that, "Since information is a measure of order, the measure of disorder, that is to say, entropy, must be its opposite" (Eco 50), which entails that it is directly related to a message's capacity to avert misunderstanding. Messages, Eco explains, may be considered as organized systems, which, through the process of communication, suffer disturbances commonly referred to as 'noise' (50-51).

Therefore, as Eco argues, "To protect the message against consumption so that no matter how much noise interferes with its reception the gist of its meaning (of its order) will not be altered, it is necessary to 'wrap' it in a number of conventional reiterations that will increase the probability of its survival" (51). This is exactly the point where Eco differs from past theorists, or the point others have circumvented in order to arrive at their own conclusions. If there is not enough in the message itself to make sure its intention will not be misinterpreted, then the meaning it carries will be something other than what was intended by the author. Eco goes further still, even accounting for the common practice in art to purposefully create noise and entropy as a way to stimulate new interpretative practices and to question and flexibilize the rules that dictate the principles of

organization messages subscribe to (66-67).

What is more, not only must the work itself contain enough information to convey its message, a reader will also not be able to infer absolutely *any* message from every work. As subjective as literary pieces can be, they are still not open to all interpretation. There is, instead, in the communication between author and reader, a collaboration by the reader to interpret a finished text, which has already been organized structurally in its entirety with the intention for its message to rise at least somewhat unadulterated above any noise, even if this organization is flexible enough for plenty of different interpretations (Eco 11-12). Eco develops this idea,

> In other words, the author offers the interpreter, the performer, the addressee a work to be completed. He does not know the exact fashion in which his work will be concluded, but he is aware that once completed the work in question will still be his own. It will not be a different work, and, at the end of the interpretative dialogue, a form which is his form will have been organized, even though it may have been assembled by an outside party in a particular way that he could not have foreseen. (19)

This may seem at first glance to lead back to the implied author or even the real author as an important shaping force to consider in order to analyse a given text and, to a degree, it does. However, the author only gets to affect the work through the choices they make when organizing it. A message cannot be analysed by what was meant by the author if the meaning the message carries is not the very same as that; and if it needs further data from outside of it in order to be understood in the intended way, it is flawed in its organization and therefore incomplete in its meaning and insufficient as a message.

Furthermore, these messages cannot have no meaning or intention behind them, as they are not accidental or natural in their occurrence. The author, speaker or enunciator will always play a relevant role in the creation of the message because of their power over its structuring. According to Eco, these messages, these novels and narratives, "... have this latent characteristic, which

guarantees that they will always be seen as 'works' - and not just as a conglomeration of random components ready to emerge from the chaos in which they previously stood and permitted to assume any form whatsoever" (20). Because they are planned, thought of and organized by someone, intentionally, in order to be read properly, one cannot imagine they would not carry any meaning whatsoever, but they would also not imagine that they carry any possible meaning. That is how the author fits into this communicative process: as the one responsible for its organization and publication - as the one who has a meaning intended, but a meaning that can only be accurately evaluated or regarded through what was put into the message or not, disregarding what was intended originally if it does not fit the final image of the work.

Booth himself approaches this idea, mentioning people he knew who interpreted *Brave New World* as pornography or even as a straight utopia. "The fact remains that even these 'wild' variations are to some degree contained within the limitations set by a given text. Even the most eccentric reader will not take Brave New World as a detective story or as a cowboy story or as a bourgeois romance or as a sequence of love sonnets or as …" (*Fiction* 435).

In this way, one can count on the work itself to provide sufficient information for meaning to be achieved, whether that is the meaning intended by the author or an unintended meaning produced by the work. However, a reader will usually not be able to ascribe meaning to a text through symbols or clues that are not within it and, if they do, they are creating noise themselves and projecting information that cannot be found in the text and is therefore unreliable as academic or scientific evidence. The most impartial analysis of a literary piece or even of a message should not be focused on intended or implied meaning or even interpretation, but on the message itself. If a scholar wishes to research and understand an element of a given narrative, they should remain aware of the work's entropy and variety of possible different interpretations and account for them in the analysis. Booth himself points out, "Only a detailed consideration of the complete tale, with an exploration of possible modes of clarification, could tell us whether enough clues were provided" (*Fiction* 303).

Furthermore, this does not apply solely to the message, but also to specific particles of the text: the narrator, the prose, the characters, so on and so forth. In order to properly analyse an aspect of the narrative, one must explore the meanings contained in that message to fully prove and solidify the existence of the particle within the text, to only after offer a possible interpretation of these signs. If a specific message is ingrained within a work, it will not show up once or disconnectedly. As previously discussed, authors will at least ideally structure it so that their message rises above any noise in the text. Meaning, then, is not conveyed in a single sentence. It must be repeated in a pattern throughout the text - or at least throughout a section of it. Therefore, this pattern must be made clear and proven to exist within the text itself and, indeed, this is what most of the theorists try to do when analysing a text - even when they defend the implied author, or other means to be more relevant than the text itself.

This is equally true of unreliable narrators. Per Krogh Hansen compares the issue of ontological breaches with real life,

> We are constantly surrounded by 'real' unreliable narrators, but to claim that their unreliability is based on a deviation from the morals, convictions, codes or conventions of an implied author makes just about as much sense as claiming God to be responsible for our actions and doings. Our recognition of 'real' narrators' unreliability is based on our decoding of their misunderstandings and our superior knowledge, whether or not we are engaging with the narrator face-to-face or through audiovisual mediation in genres like news broadcasting, documentaries, etc. (233)

This 'superior knowledge' he mentions is not based on knowledge of something that presides over the narrator, but rather on facts and elements that exist beside them. In this way, a real unreliable narrator can be exposed through real world facts and testimonies, while a fictional one would have to be exposed through facts from their own fictional world. One cannot propose to disprove the narration of a real person through fictional facts, nor can one prove the unreliability of a

narrator in one work by using facts of another, unconnected piece. By the same measure, to base the reliability of a fictional narrator on the testimony of a real person should be regarded as dubious at best, if there are no in-fiction elements to support this. Hansen complements this argument, highlighting the importance of respecting ontological boundaries,

> In this sense, there is no fundamental difference between how we determine a narrator's unreliability whether we are working with fictitious or factual narratives. In both cases, our detection is caused by the reader's recognition of inconsistencies and contradiegetic elements within the narrator's discourse or between the narrator's telling and the story-world about which he tells and which, in large part, might only be present by implication. The interpretation of these circumstances as a matter of an intentional design by an implied author is an extradiegetical issue and, therefore, of secondary relevance in relation to the question raised here. (Hansen 234)

The unreliability of a narrator can be linked back to Eco again when he differentiates between messages with a referential or an emotive function. Messages with a referential function are based on a defined matter and are verifiable if necessary. Messages with an emotive function are supposed to evoke reactions, stimulate associations and promote responses that go beyond what is the recognition of a specific referent (Eco 29). Part of the reason why the unreliability of the narrator can be hard to detect is because it is presented as a message with a referential function while, in truth, being a message with an emotive function. Therefore, simply analysing the words or expressions used in a text is not enough by itself, as the same words within different contexts can carry wildly different meanings. He states,

> As shown, the difference between the terms "referential" and "emotive" does not concern the structure of the proposition as much as its use (and therefore the context within which it is uttered). It is possible to find a series of referential sentences that, under certain circumstances (mostly concerning the listener), will acquire an emotive value, just as it is

> possible to find a number of emotive propositions that, under certain circumstances, will acquire a referential value. (Eco 35)

It is this uncertainty, then, that one must sift through to determine the unreliability of a narrator properly: are these words, in this context, as communicated by this person, in this way, carrying an emotive or referential function? The theoretical void I am left with to properly answer this question is more than adequately filled by Theresa Heyd's and H. P. Grice's contributions.

However, one may already draw some conclusions in this section - That the author's intentions are not always conveyed perfectly in a narrative, that several factors may get in between an author's intention, a text's information and a reader's interpretation, but that the text itself is verifiable and retrievable, and that the characters exist on an entirely separate ontological level from the author or reader. Therefore, in order to properly analyse characters or diegetic issues, one should keep their analysis on diegetic factors, within the same ontological level.

1.5 The Cooperative Principle and the Pragmatic Approach

In this section, to close off the discussion on the unreliable narrator itself and the process to detect it, I will explore Heyd's pragmatic approach which is itself based on Grice's theory of the cooperation principle. Through the convergence of these theories with concepts previously discussed, I will support and detail the theory proposed in the previous section, and finally conclude on a more verifiable and academically honest method of detecting and determining unreliability.

The pragmatic approach proposed by Heyd upon which this dissertation largely bases itself revolves around the concept of the cooperative principle as it was proposed by H. P. Grice. According to the latter, conversations are essentially cooperative efforts as they require more than one person, and they also require, in order for communication to be properly established, a mutual recognition of a common purpose, variety of purposes or a general direction which the conversation may follow. Therefore, Grice establishes that the golden rule of the cooperation principle is to "Make

your conversational contribution such as is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange which you are engaged" (45).

With the goal of measuring or classifying the effectiveness of a given conversational contribution, it must satisfy four categories: Quantity, Quality, Relation and Manner. In order to be an effective communicator, one must not provide more information than is necessary for the purposes of the conversation, as they must also not provide less information than needed for a contribution to be understood in context, which ties back to the idea of the author carrying the responsibility of ingraining enough meaning within their text that it can be interpreted and understood properly (Grice 45).

To succeed at communication, one must also respect the Quality category, that is, to try to ensure that the information expressed is true, or at least that it is not be believed to be false, misleading, unverifiable or lacking in adequate supporting evidence (Grice 46).

Within the Relation category, one must strive to be relevant: to keep up with the topic of the conversation, not be redundant, irrelevant or unrelated to it. Finally, under the category of Manner, one must try to be clear, concise and erase vagueness, ambiguity, prolixity or confusion (Grice 46).

There are also ways, listed by Grice, in which a speaker or participant may fail to respect one of these maxims or categories. They may violate, opt out, suffer from a clash or flout a maxim. In the case of violation, the speaker is breaking a maxim willingly and surreptitiously, with the intention to mislead or manipulate. In the case of opting out, a speaker is openly addressing or expressing their failure to respect a given maxim's boundaries, for whatever reason. If they suffer from a clash, they may simply not be able to respect, due to circumstance and context, two of the maxims at once, as they may be in opposition to each other. Finally, when one flouts a maxim, they fail its fulfillment blatantly, without attempting to hide that breach, nor displaying open recognition of it. There is no other maxim causing a clash, either, and the listener needs to attempt to interpret the words mentioned within the context of what was said before or will be said later, within the

boundaries of the Cooperation Principle (referred to as CP by Heyd). In this situation, the immediate interpretation of the words seems to breach that Principle somehow, but may also be respectful of it when put into context and reinterpreted within that context. Meaning is, in this case, implied more than explicit, a process which Grice refers to as a conversational implicature. Detecting and retracing these meanings, Grice posits, occurs through several steps:

> The presence of a conversational implicature must be capable of being worked out; for even if it can in fact be intuitively grasped, unless the intuition is replaceable by an argument, the implicature (if present at all) will not count as CONVERSATIONAL implicature; it will be a CONVENTIONAL implicature. To work out that a particular conversational implicature is present, the hearer will reply on the following data: (1) the conventional meaning of the words used, together with the identity of any references that may be involved; (2) the CP and its maxims; (3) the context, linguistic or otherwise, of the utterance; (4) other items of background knowledge; and (5) the fact (or supposed fact) that all relevant items falling under the previous headings are available to both participants and both participants know or assume this to be the case. (Grice 50, emphasis in the original)

By applying these concepts to the communicative process in a narrative piece, and connecting it back to the unreliable narrator, one could consider unreliability to happen typically when the Quality and/or Manner categories are breached by a given narrator in some way. It may be a violation of the Quality category when the narrator is consciously lying or omitting information from the readers, or even a flout of the Manner category when they are purposefully being ironic or sarcastic.

Heyd explores these connections much further, and points out that, in the case of a narrative speech act, the narrator is bound to cooperative behavior far more than in an average daily conversation, as the position of speaker is irrevocably occupied by one person and a real exchange between reader and narrator, or reader and author is impossible within the work. This complements

the invalidity of ontological breaches previously discussed, as it highlights the importance of the message itself to be self-sufficient for this communication, as no requests for clarification can be made by the reader while consuming a narrative, denying the chance for fluid participation between each party involved. She specifies,

> The 'on-display' mode of narrative forbids a storyteller to make false claims, leave out salient facts, be vague or evasive, or relate only irrelevant information — in other words, to violate the Gricean maxims. And this is where we touch upon the core of [unreliable narration]. By claiming the floor to him- or herself, a narrator makes a high commitment to cooperation; but as the term suggests, a narrator who is 'unreliable' clearly deviates from this communicative 'level zero.' It can be posited that narrators become unreliable by virtue of violating the CP and its maxims. (Heyd 224-225)

Following this line of thought, Heyd defends that, to account for the variety of unreliable narrators possible and existent in fiction, one cannot say that they always violate the Gricean maxims, as in some cases the narrators themselves may be barely aware of their own breaches of the quality or Manner categories. However, whatever their motivations or their level of awareness, Heyd claims that, in most cases, they will not mean an implicature within their fictional reality, on a diegetic level. In fact, they do not even want for the breach to be noticed by their reader or narratee, and they may not even be aware of the breach themselves, so to claim for them to be flouting or violating a maxim would be difficult as well. She admits that narrators do make implicatures when they want their audiences to notice these breaches, but that concept does not apply to the unreliable narrator (referred to as UN by Heyd). Unreliability comes precisely from the lack of trust in the accuracy of their depictions, and if they claimed openly to be unable to properly depict a story, they would erase the chance to convince the reader of their version of facts, and there would be no point to the exercise of telling that story to begin with. As she concludes, "In sum, a lean but efficient definition of the mechanism of UN could be: A narrator is unreliable if he violates the CP without intending an

implicature" (Heyd 225).

Therefore, Heyd explains that pragmatics is the most reliable means for modelling, explaining, detecting and analyzing unreliable narration. For the author, the most important tools in the detection of unreliability are expressed within the fiction itself, one of which is precisely the degree of intention which the narrator has in their breaches of the Cooperative Principle. She posits,

> The scale runs from utterly intentional CP violations, which are particularly morally deviant, through semi-conscious unreliability, which is the most 'life-like' rhetorical strategy, to unintentional unreliability, which amounts to a canceling of the cooperative basis of communication. Two central parameters, then, appear to regulate the phenomenon of UN: the existence of clearly identifiable maxim breaches ... produces *unreliability* in a literary narrative; depending on the *narrator's stance*, a qualitative distinction can be made along the axis of *intentionality*. This double framework strongly suggests itself for a typology of unreliable utterances. (Heyd 233, emphasis in the original)

In this manner, the more intentional a breach is, the more it will tend to hide its partiality and mislead the reader in regards to fictional facts and occurrences. The more unintentional a breach is, the less hidden it will be as the narrator will believe it to be true and therefore will make less of an attempt to hide it, and the more it will connect to the narrator's biases and misguided perceptions (Heyd 234).

In many ways, however, even as it is less hidden, an unintentional unreliable narrator will also be harder to analyse, as the unbiased truth will be shown less often. In the case of an intentional unreliable narrator, facts may be presented in comparison to their breaches that clearly disprove their adherence to the Cooperative Principle. For unintentional unreliable narrators, even these facts which might contrast with their representation of events may themselves be misrepresented, without even the narrator themselves being aware of the process (Heyd 232-233). She offers greater insight, "Instead, their maxim breaches can be explained as deviations from fundamental cognitive and

intellectual norms: they are often marked by naivete, lack of education, or even mental illness" (231).

On this issue, Heyd remarks that it becomes hard to fault individuals in extreme cases of unintentionality for their breaches, since they may very well be doing their best to adhere to cooperative principles, with the best of intentions. However, the way she explains it is that if communication is a cooperative act, participants will need to share at least a basically rational mindset (Heyd 232). I would add to this idea that completely unintentional unreliability seems to be a breach not of the cooperation categories, but of the Cooperation Principle itself. As shown previously, Grice proposes that in order for communication to be achieved, all parties must agree, at least generally, on a direction to follow conversationally. Unintentional unreliable narrators do not agree with the very basics of how to conduct a rational or reliable report of their perceptions, and how to separate bias and perception from facts; fictional or otherwise. Therefore, it is very difficult to achieve cooperation on either side of the conversation, since at least one side makes the mistake of taking their subjectivity as objectivity, and that subjectivity cannot be reliably parsed, proven or supported by other people. This is, once more, an ontological and conceptual breach on the direction the conversation should follow, as at least one side is based on internal, subjective evidence and other participants may be focused on external, objective evidence. As these concepts do not dialogue adequately with one another, a breach of the Cooperative Principle itself occurs.

Heyd classifies these speakers as falling outside of the scope of the Cooperative Principle entirely, claiming "... they do not fulfil the felicity conditions for cooperative utterances" (232) and that the breaches of the categories in the Cooperative Principles are simply symptoms of this essential problem.

Keeping all of this in mind, however, it is still necessary to flesh out at least some general principles through which one may detect narrative unreliability in a given text, so as to not leave things solely on theoretical bases. Booth mentions a warning that leads a reader to question what is being stated by a narrator character "The warning need not be a direct statement, of course. Any

grotesque disparity between [the character's] word and word or word and deed will serve" (Booth, *Fiction* 316-317).

Greta Olson states that, in these cases, one reinterprets the utterances under a new light once they detect the incongruence between the words, they reevaluate the character of the narrator to fit this reinterpretation. She explains, "Readers attribute internal inconsistency and self-contradiction to narrators they judge to be lacking in trustworthiness. We predict that they will continue to contradict themselves and take on a reading strategy that questions and revises all that they say" (104).

This connects back to the naturalization strategy presented in section 1.3. However, as similar as this feels to that, at this point in the dissertation, it has a much clearer ontological distinction: that the unreliability must actually be located in the text itself. In this context, the idea that the reader is responsible for interpreting the text's message is also accounted for as part of the reader's area of responsibility in the communicative process. Therefore, reinterpreting an excerpt, passage or even the entire work is not a projection of the reader's values onto the text, but technique to revise the text in search of the possibility of a second interpretation, to specifically impede the reader's subjectivity to overlook or project meaning onto a given piece that is not to be found within it.

In fact, Heyd ties this importance back into the pragmatic or diegetic level by expliciting that, when breaching the Cooperative Principle, the narrator leaves somewhat identifiable evidence intratextually. When referring to these pieces of evidence, she posits that,

> They are expected to manifest themselves via factual or logical discrepancies, vagueness about issues that are salient for the narrative or simply the omission of relevant information — in other words: via tangible violations of the quantity and quality maxims. The procedure for detecting and pinpointing UN is therefore conceivably simple: one needs to identify utterances that are either manifestly false, or which explicitly correct, clarify or contradict

> utterances made earlier in the discourse, or else which belatedly convey information that would have been salient at an earlier stage in the narration. Such maxim breaches are usually quite distinct, being located on the sentence- or even sub-sentence level, which makes for a highly efficient method. (Heyd 226)

In the case of an unintentionally unreliable narrator, such as in mentally insane characters, one of the ways of detecting their unreliability comes from their insistence on performing sanity, as rarely in a work there may come an opportunity for a mentally sound character to perform sanity. Lars Bernaerts explores the issue of the *fou raisonnant*, the discourse of the mad monologist to prove their sound logic and, therefore, their sanity. These types of narrators will work hard to prove their mental acuity, but this very effort would not be required by a character whose conclusions felt natural or who, at the very least, had no reason to believe they would be misunderstood by their audience. As he puts it, "In the narrator's strained effort to be loyal to the speech objectives which govern these rhetorical modes, he blunders inevitably. On the one hand, the narrator pretends to know what he is doing with words, on the other hand the words do a lot more than he wants them to" (Bernaerts 193).

This phenomenon is named hypercorrection by Bernaerts, who classifies it as "... a form of inconsistency which can be interpreted as a sign of narrative unreliability" (194). This happens, partly, because when reading an opening statement by a character such as 'I would first like to clarify that any rumors regarding a lack of honesty on my part are unfounded', an array of information is packed into the same sentence. Even in this example sentence alone, several layers of meaning can be peeled back. First, from the use of the first person, we know that whoever is proclaiming this sentence recognizes themselves as an existing being within the same ontological level as their narrative. In other words, if this is a narrator they are most certainly also a diegetic character. In the same sentence is exposed the fact that, within this fictional reality, the character believes rumors to exist claiming them to be dishonest. The fact that this information is offered before any

other also implies that these rumors not only exist, but the character has reason to believe their audience to have heard them before. Not only that, but the sentence also conveys the idea that this character wants their audience to trust them, defending that they should do so before earning that trust in practice. If any of these pieces of information were false or incorrect, the character would have no reason to open a narrative with such a statement. They have to be a character. They need to believe rumors of their dishonesty exist. They must believe their audience may have heard them. They have to want their audience's trust. These facts could be interpreted by a reader as indicative that the character is honest, trying to rectify an unjust rumor, and therefore is reliable; or they could be interpreted that the character is dishonest, trying to manipulate their audience right at the beginning, and is therefore unreliable. The rest of the text could reinforce, prove or disprove either of those interpretations; or even offer a third alternative for it, but for this specific sentence, this is all the information reliably retrieved in an analysis.

One cannot project, at this point, the possibility that the narrator is unreliable because they are paranoid and imagine rumors where none exist. The example sentence does not impede that interpretation, but itself does not offer enough of a conclusive, verifiable basis for it. To seriously offer this hypothesis as a complete interpretation with such a low amount of evidence, simply because it is not immediately rendered impossible by the sentence, would be the same as claiming that the narrator is an ant. After all, there is nothing explicitly stating that they are not one. While interpretations such as these may offer an interesting diversion for entertainment purposes, they have no place in a committed academic setting, where our personal biases and partiality are supposed to be as suppressed as possible in order to achieve a reproducible, verifiable scientific method.

The method proposed is, utilizing the pragmatic approach posited by Heyd, to evaluate a character's reliability diegetically by comparing story elements and events to their description by the analysed character, the character's inner thoughts and other characters' points of view, taking into account the possible variations and levels of unreliability and using these textual and narrative

inconsistencies to prove the character's status from within the story itself, using clues from the same ontological level on which the character exists. This is precisely why an analysis of the narrative itself and its pragmatic, textualized possibilities and elements is the focus of the next chapter.

Chapter 2 - Textual Analysis

2.1 On the Analysis of Narrator Characters

As a final theoretical exploration leading into the textual analysis that will be conducted in this chapter, I will now explore some ideas on how to analyse narrator characters, regardless of unreliability, but still connecting back to this notion at the end of this section.

Connecting directly to the idea explored in the previous chapter of a diegetic analysis of the narrator character, Olson points out that terms such as "unreliable", "untrustworthy", "unconscious" and "fallible" are typically applied to people rather than textual concepts. In fact, when being introduced to a new character, one generally approaches them as a new acquaintance rather than as an element in a story (Olson 99). It points to the aforementioned theory for detecting narrative unreliability as it considers the ontological level of the character as reality for that character. In that level, the narrator is not a fictional character, they are a person. In other words, they are not a matter of the discourse, but an element within the story, as opposed to in the discourse (Hansen 229-230). One of the consequences of this is best expressed by Phelan, "Readers of fiction simultaneously participate in the illusion that the characters are independent agents pursuing their own ends and remain aware that the characters and their trajectories toward their fates are part of an authorial design and purpose" (*Somebody* 69).

According to Phelan, this suspension of disbelief is played with and managed by a skilled author when they write characters that feel autonomous and natural to the reader, rather than taking actions that enhance the plot but do not respect the character's established characteristics (*Somebody* 70). Chatman complements these notions, "A viable theory of character should preserve openness and treat characters as autonomous beings, not as mere plot functions" (119). The same author also explains that the very concept of a literary "character" can be read as a representation of a person through writing (107-108).

Thus, character can be considered a grouping of mental traits that separates an individual from others as recurring relevant behaviours, that persist through smaller and more ephemeral

changes: those characteristics that are reliably found in a person or character throughout periods of their lives, and are not so easily or quickly changed (Chatman 120 - 121). A trait may even be considered as an interconnected system of habits (Chatman 122) or even reactions and thoughts, as the reader forms in their mind an image of coherent thinking for a said character, accounting for possible reasons as to why they would act and react the way they do, or simply ascribing it to a pattern in their personality.

As much as Chatman pulls back onto the reader's interpretation of the text, these patterns of behaviour are to be found within the text and can be clearly and concisely connected to pinpoint valid character traits, therefore not contesting our previously established theory but rather specifying ways of using it. Traits need to be recurring and the character must repeatedly show signs of their behaviour throughout the text, thus making them retrievable and verifiable within the fiction and the text itself. Chatman explores it further,

> For narrative purposes, then, a trait may be said to be a narrative adjective out of the vernacular labeling a personal quality of a character, as it persists over part or whole of the story (its "domain"). Just as we define "event" at the story level as a narrative predicate (DO or HAPPEN), so we can define "trait" as the narrative adjective tied to the narrative copula when that replaces the normal transitive predicate. The actual verbal adjective, of course, need not (and in modernist narratives will not) appear. But whether inferred or not, it is immanent to the deep structure of the text. ... Thus the traits exist at the story level: indeed, the whole discourse is expressly designed to prompt their emergence in the reader's consciousness. (Chatman 125)

Sifting through Chatman's theoretical biases, such as the implied author and the reader focus, it is possible to arrive at the conclusion that traits are indeed helpful in the determination and defining of character, and can be verifiably analysed in the text due to their empirical nature. Characters will behave in a specific way, in modern fiction, because of who they are and what their sense of identity

presents to them as a viable, logical or natural reaction to the story events and elements they are faced with. Simultaneously, characters will, not unlike people, be affected by more transitory feelings, moods, thoughts and impulses. Just like someone who is normally calm does not become a furious person for feeling temporarily angry due to specific stimuli, a character who shows repeated patterns of behaviour over the course of a story will not have these patterns disputed by eventual exceptions to their rule. That is the essential difference between traits and more ephemeral reactions (Chatman 126).

The way to determine a character's traits is to conduct an analysis of a text in search of their actions, reactions, thoughts, feelings, moods, decisions, speech patterns, values, relationships and so on, to find naturally occurring and logical connections and patterns and therefore determine what traits the character can be identified with. Chatman comments, "This practice does not seem to differ in kind from our ordinary evaluations of human beings that we meet in the real world" (128). When a character takes an action, he posits, "We sort through the paradigm to find out which trait would account for a certain action, and, if we cannot find it, we add another trait to the list (or at least put ourselves on guard for further evidence of the one we impute)" (127).

Adding that to the previously established theory of unreliable narration, one would also search for patterns and diegetic signals that the character may be mistaken, biased, lying or otherwise incapable of relaying or perceiving that story's information accurately, as that may affect or even impede a reliable reading for the rest of a narrative. One would search for contradictions between the narrator character and other characters in the story's reactions, how they react to the world around them and to the same elements a narrator describes. One would search for disparities between the descriptions of the same elements. One would search for the story markers that would consistently point to one of the narrator character's traits to be narrative unreliability, and do so before analysing anything else, as that may taint every other aspect of the narrative. That is precisely the process I will follow in this chapter.

With the intent of conducting an appropriate analysis of Chambers' text, however, and due to the fact that every single aspect of this story is pervaded with signs of unreliability, a complete study of it would include every aspect of the story at once, which would make this analysis quite difficult to follow. Therefore, in this initial moment and for the sake of clarity, I will limit myself to a representative analysis of a few choice moments where unreliability is shown in the text, rather than exploring every single passage where it appears, as plenty of those can be discussed more appropriately later on, alongside the analysis of specific story elements such as setting and characters.

2.2 Introducing the Narrator's Unreliability

At this point, I will begin the examination of "The Repairer of Reputations", focusing specifically on the narrator's unreliability, to then, after that has been established, analyse other points of the short story, keeping in mind the ways in which he is found to be unreliable through the remainder of the analysis. As previously mentioned in chapter 1, one of the issues of narrative unreliability is that it may taint more than one aspect of a story, in more than one way. Therefore, to conduct an appropriate analysis, I will first analyse, through the pragmatic methods established in sections 1.4 and 1.5, the narrator's unreliability.

From the moment the narrator, Hildred Castaigne, introduces himself to the reader on page 3 of "The Repairer of Reputations", he makes sure to point out a few important details about his past. First, he mentions he visited a doctor named Archer for the occasional pain in the back of the head and neck due to a fall from his horse which happened four years ago at the diegetic time. Dr. Archer discharged him fully from treatment. Hildred seems annoyed, "It was hardly worth his fee to be told that; I knew it myself" (Chambers 3), yet explicits he does not mind the occurrence. In the following paragraph, however, he elaborates on his thoughts.

> What I minded was the mistake which he made at first. When they picked me up from the pavement where I lay unconscious, and somebody had mercifully sent a bullet through my horse's head, I was carried to Dr. Archer, and he, pronouncing my brain affected, placed me in his private asylum where I was obliged to endure treatment for insanity. At last he decided that I was well, and I, knowing that my mind had always been as sound as his, if not sounder, "paid my tuition" as he jokingly called it, and left. I told him, smiling, that I would get even with him for his mistake, and he laughed heartily, and asked me to call once in a while. I did so, hoping for a chance to even up accounts, but he gave me none, and I told him I would wait. (Chambers 3)

This is the first point, since the narrator makes his presence explicit, which demands a deeper analysis. First, Hildred states a mistake was made at first when talking about the doctor, a mistake which he did mind. He describes the process of being rescued from his fall, and being taken to Dr. Archer's who declared his brain affected and incarcerated him in his asylum, where he was forced into treatment for insanity. After an unspecified period of time, the doctor judged him healed and charged his fee while letting Hildred go back to his regular life, who in turn points out that his mind had always been as sound as the doctor's. This, then, is what Hildred believes to have been the mistake: that he was ever pronounced insane at all, that he was committed into the asylum and treated to begin with. He did pay the money, however, and then, smiling, told the doctor he would "get even with him for his mistake". The doctor jokes with him about the money, and takes the threat lightly as a jest between friends, which leaves a few points to consider. Namely, what could lead a Doctor to be threatened by an ex-patient and take it lightly? A few possibilities arise to answer this question, but no evidence is offered so far to support any of them other than the fact that the doctor does seem to behave in a quite friendly and informal manner around Hildred. The reasons to do so, however, are unclear, and less important than the fact that this marks the first instance of dissonance

between what the narrator feels about an issue and what other characters who are arguably more prepared to form unbiased opinions on the same topic feel about it.

Hildred insists he was never insane to begin with. In fact, he disputes the issue a couple more times throughout the short story, and makes his feelings about it quite clear. This is noticeable in the following excerpt, '"Are you going upstairs to see the lunatic again?' laughed old Hawberk. If Hawberk knew how I loathe that word 'lunatic,' he would never use it in my presence. It rouses certain feelings within me which I do not care to explain. However, I answered him quietly: 'I think I shall drop in and see Mr. Wilde for a moment or two'" (Chambers 8).

Five pages later, in fact, Hildred expresses his loathing for the word 'lunatic', as it makes him feel emotions he does not even wish to speak of. This is an interesting way of conveying powerful feelings, while still sounding reasonable enough. Here another dichotomy is visible, between what the narrator character feels and thinks and what he expresses, as he chooses to answer Hawberk quietly, instead of showing the outrage within. Knowing of the character's past within the asylum, however, these feelings come as no surprise - whether he is mentally unstable or as sane as he claims to always have been, he would arguably feel strong feelings of injustice for others' lack of belief in his mental acuity. The problem is not whether his feelings are justified or not, but that this excerpt shows his capacity to willfully conceal information from others in order to maintain an appearance. First, Hildred conceals information from his narratees as he refuses to elaborate on the feelings he has towards the word 'lunatic'. Then, he conceals information from Hawberk within the very next sentence.

Further along the narrative, a similar conversation takes place as Hildred and his cousin discuss Mr. Wilde.

"...You know yourself he's been in an asylum—"

"So have I," I interrupted calmly.

> Louis looked startled and confused for a moment, but recovered and slapped me heartily on the shoulder. "You were completely cured," he began; but I stopped him again.
>
> "I suppose you mean that I was simply acknowledged never to have been insane."
>
> "Of course that—that's what I meant," he laughed.
>
> I disliked his laugh because I knew it was forced, but I nodded gaily and asked him where he was going. (Chambers 17)

Not only does Hildred repeat once again both his insistence on never being insane in the first place, but also his behaviour of withholding information. The interesting detail, though, is how Louis reacts to the narrator's protests. When left to his own devices, he refers to Hildred as having been completely cured and, when corrected, he simply agrees, albeit hesitantly, which the narrator detects to be a forced effort, and therefore possibly disingenuous.

These first few passages are enough to establish a few points about the narrator character, seen as they are not irreconcilably refuted anywhere else in the text and, on the contrary, are further proven throughout its length. The narrator character, Hildred Castaigne, has been committed to a mental institution. He believes that happened unfairly, but every other character who knows about it does not seem to share his opinion. He is sensitive about his mental health status, and will argue with characters in its defense. He also omits feelings from both characters and his narratees, and will not argue about issues that annoy him but do not contradict him or target him directly. He obviously goes to great lengths to defend his own sanity, and these are far from the only places where he does so over the course of the narrative. However, as he does so, more meaning is communicated than originally intended (Bernaerts 193). His words do not carry only the defence of his sanity, but the very need for a defence suggests an accusation or offence along with it - one would not need to argue to convince another of anything if there was no disagreement or misunderstanding somewhere to begin with. "If the text forms a system of meanings which are consistently constructed and rejected … then the reader maintains the rejected meanings as a system of 'hovering' meanings, The

text's insistence on reintroducing them again and again is taken as indicating its 'intentions'" (Perry 356). Pettersson explores the notion further, connecting it to his own work, "Thus, Perry discusses what I would term expositional manipulation on the levels of narration, characterization and interpretation and demonstrates that even discarded meanings are part and parcel of the meaning of a fictional narrative" (Pettersson 116).

Therefore, when repeatedly defending his mental wholeness, Hildred unwittingly inserts into his message the complimentary, opposite possibility: that he might, indeed, be afflicted in some way. From the third page of this story, the narrator presents us, intentionally, with the fact that he was treated, and that other characters judge it to have been necessary, while he himself believes it to have been completely unjust, as he never felt his own reasoning had been compromised. As Hildred does not consider his overall experience to be illogical, irrational or insane, he cannot himself pinpoint his own biases, rather, considering everyone else to be wrong. Since he does not perceive himself to be mad, as has been clearly and openly stated in the narrative, he could not narrate that as fact in the telling of his own story, whether or not it is true.

This is not unheard of in real life. David Hume explores the notion of mixing imagination and memory in *A Treatise on Human Nature* (1739−40), claiming the boundaries between both concepts can be breached and blurred from either side to the other, that imagination can be confused for or affect memory and vice-versa. Even further, he argues, a strong enough belief may generate impressions and experiences from within that feel as realistic as those generated from without (Hume 81-83). It is not far off from Cain's proposition that "Thus, reality, as witnessed by an individual, could give way to illusion due to the way it was originally perceived, and archived into one's memory" (128).

These points, however, are here simply to back the possibility that Hildred could realistically be an unreliable narrator. At this point, there is only enough evidence to raise the question of reliability about Hildred's words, but not enough to actually classify him as an outright unreliable

narrator. There is a clear and essential disagreement between himself and other characters in the text, but there is not enough to prove or disprove either side of the tale. If Hildred is widely known to have been in an asylum, his protests about its validity would only serve to fuel the narrative that he is, or at least was, in fact, insane; and it is not ridiculous to imagine that several different characters, in knowing of this past, would handle him in this same way regarding their opinions on the matter, as they themselves would have no reason to believe an ex-patient over his own doctor. While there is doubt, and the certainty of unreliability is not fulfilled, I will not classify him categorically as such. The correct way to refer to him at the moment is as a narrator who has his reliability put in check.

Once more excusing the resurgence of the focus on the reader's subjectivity, I take Bernaerts words as a guideline to continue exploring the matter. "In order to decode the words and visions of the narrator, the reader will depend on the reactions of other characters" (189). I look back to the text, then, for further evidence.

Still at the start of the narrative, Hildred specifies that, "The fall from my horse had fortunately left no evil results; on the contrary it had changed my whole character for the better. From a lazy young man about town, I had become active, energetic, temperate, and above all—oh, above all else—ambitious" (Chambers 3). Hildred points out that the accident had given him only positive qualities, that he had become active, energetic, temperate and ambitious. The entire story is based on his ambitions, as his main personal motivation, and that point is easily and readily verifiable. Even his withholding of negative reactions and emotions might account for this claimed temperance that had blessed him since then. However, when looking at the other traits he assigns for himself, it is just as easy to find contradictions. For example,

> He looked at me narrowly, much as Doctor Archer used to, and I knew he thought I was mentally unsound. Perhaps it was fortunate for him that he did not use the word lunatic just then.

"No," I replied to his unspoken thought, "I am not mentally weak; my mind is as healthy as Mr. Wilde's. I do not care to explain just yet what I have on hand, but it is an investment which will pay more than mere gold, silver and precious stones. It will secure the happiness and prosperity of a continent— yes, a hemisphere!"

"Oh," said Hawberk.

"And eventually," I continued more quietly, "it will secure the happiness of the whole world."

"And incidentally your own happiness and prosperity as well as Mr. Wilde's?"

"Exactly," I smiled. But I could have throttled him for taking that tone.

He looked at me in silence for a while and then said very gently, "Why don't you give up your books and studies, Mr. Castaigne, and take a tramp among the mountains somewhere or other? You used to be fond of fishing. Take a cast or two at the trout in the Rangelys."

"I don't care for fishing any more," I answered, without a shade of annoyance in my voice.

"You used to be fond of everything," he continued; "athletics, yachting, shooting, riding—"

"I have never cared to ride since my fall," I said quietly. (Chambers 20–21)

Another pattern of behaviour Hildred exhibits, as showcased in this passage, is the constant comparison of minds. He does not state ‘I am sane’, but rather repeatedly compares himself to others, ‘as sane as I am’, ‘I was at least as sane as he is’, and variations. His ambitions are in full view here, and he believes himself to be able to bring about incredible happiness to the entire world, to which Hawberk reacts with an almost stunned awe. The most important part of this excerpt, however, is their conversation about activities. The man suggests Hildred hikes on the mountains, fishes; to which Hildred replies he is not interested in it anymore. Hawberk remarks he used to practice all manner of more active forms of recreation, and the narrator clearly states he has not

been interested in such things since his fall. He does not disagree with Hawberk that he was active before, but instead, directly contradicts himself regarding his previous statements about the benefits of his accident. In this case, there can be no equivocal miscommunication: what is exposed is not the disagreement between two characters over the truth, but rather a disagreement of the narrator with himself over the truth. This is further confirmed by Louis, who points the issue out when visiting him at his apartment. '"See here, old fellow,' he began, 'I've got something to suggest to you. It's four years now that you've shut yourself up here like an owl, never going anywhere, never taking any healthy exercise, never doing a damn thing but poring over those books up there on the mantelpiece'" (Chambers 23).

Hildred's reaction in this scene is to avoid the subject, instead focusing on the books themselves, so as not to have to talk about his change in habits at length, but these passages start to pull Hildred's sense of reliability further and further in question. In this, all characters agree upon, to the detriment of what Hildred tried to appear as earlier on in his narrative. But this is not, by far, where the contradictions end.

> Here I lunched comfortably, read the *Herald* and the *Meteor*, and finally went to the steel safe in my bedroom and set the time combination. The three and three-quarter minutes which it is necessary to wait, while the time lock is opening, are to me golden moments. From the instant I set the combination to the moment when I grasp the knobs and swing back the solid steel doors, I live in an ecstasy of expectation. Those moments must be like moments passed in Paradise. I know what I am to find at the end of the time limit. I know what the massive safe holds secure for me, for me alone, and the exquisite pleasure of waiting is hardly enhanced when the safe opens and I lift, from its velvet crown, a diadem of purest gold, blazing with diamonds. I do this every day, and yet the joy of waiting and at last touching again the diadem, only seems to increase as the days pass. It is a diadem fit for a King among kings, an Emperor among emperors. (Chambers 15)

At the first moment where the narrator introduces this diadem, he describes it as magnificent - stored within a massive timed safe, with solid steel doors, made of gold and diamonds, fit only for the cream of the crop, and by exposing the fact that the contents of the safe are meant for himself alone, he also associates himself as deserving to be called that, a King among kings, an Emperor among emperors. In another occasion, while wearing the diadem and losing himself in a kind of reverie about his own image on the mirror, Hildred is aggressive upon being awoken from it by his cousin Louis. Immediately after,

> "What is all this?" he inquired, in a gentle voice. "Are you ill?"
>
> "No," I replied. But I doubt if he heard me.
>
> "Come, come, old fellow," he cried, "take off that brass crown and toddle into the study. Are you going to a masquerade? What's all this theatrical tinsel anyway?"
>
> I was glad he thought the crown was made of brass and paste, yet I didn't like him any the better for thinking so. I let him take it from my hand, knowing it was best to humour him. He tossed the splendid diadem in the air, and catching it, turned to me smiling.
>
> "It's dear at fifty cents," he said. "What's it for?"
>
> I did not answer, but took the circlet from his hands, and placing it in the safe shut the massive steel door. The alarm ceased its infernal din at once. He watched me curiously, but did not seem to notice the sudden ceasing of the alarm. He did, however, speak of the safe as a biscuit box. (Chambers 22–23)

Louis describes the previously wondrous diadem as a trinket - not of gold and diamonds, but of brass and paste, playing with it thoughtlessly, ignoring the timed alarm completely and even referring to the massive timed safe as a biscuit box. Here, there is another case of two possible biases leading characters into disagreement - perhaps Hildred is indeed unstable enough to imagine or project his mental images onto how he sees and interacts with objects in the present as well as with issues in the past; perhaps it is Louis who is mistaken or playfully teasing him on the matter.

Even though Hildred has been seen to be contradictory about the past, and unstable in the present, it is still not fair to project onto him unreliability about an entirely different realm - that of how he relates to his surroundings at the time when the story takes place. After all, if he had been insane or not, every side agrees - including his own doctor - that he has been cured of any serious mental condition resulting from his fall.

There are, however, other points in which he contradicts himself about the physical state of things in the current time of the narrative, which can, once more, establish a pattern of behaviour for his narration. When visiting Mr. Wilde, his eccentric mentor, for the first times, Hildred describes the process of opening the door, "When he had double-locked the door and pushed a heavy chest against it, he came and sat down beside me, peering up into my face with his little light-coloured eyes" (Chambers 9). Mr. Wilde keeps his door very well locked and even barricaded. Once more, he describes the process when he leaves on that same occasion. "... Mr. Wilde clambered out of his chair and dragged the chest away from the door. … He unlocked the door and I picked up my hat and stick and stepped into the corridor" (Chambers 14).

In direct contradiction, later on, Hildred describes "I knocked and entered without ceremony. Mr. Wilde lay groaning on the floor, his face covered with blood, his clothes torn to shreds. Drops of blood were scattered about over the carpet, which had also been ripped and frayed in the evidently recent struggle" (Chambers 26). He knocked and entered, while Mr. Wilde laid on the floor. It makes no sense that a character so explicitly shown to be preoccupied with his own security or privacy would simply one day leave the door unlocked, and that Hildred would know this, as this is not mentioned anywhere else in the narrative, they do not talk about it or settle on it; and it is clearly not their usual method of dealing with one another, as he has shown to keep his door barricaded even when the narrator character is on his way. He could not have unlocked the double locks and much less moved the chest from his prone position on the floor. He says he had been attacked by his cat (Chambers 26), which he had already established to have an aggressive

relationship with, so an intruder is out of the question. Even worse, when he is dead, a similar situation happens.

> Mr. Wilde's door was open, and I entered … Mr. Wilde lay on the floor with his throat torn open. At first I thought he was dead, but as I looked, a green sparkle came into his sunken eyes, his mutilated hand trembled, and then a spasm stretched his mouth from ear to ear. For a moment my terror and despair gave place to hope, but as I bent over him his eyeballs rolled clean around in his head, and he died. (Chambers 34)

The door is seen to not only be unlocked, but outwardly open, as Mr. Wilde agonizes and takes his last breath on the floor, even further in contradiction of the man's previously-established paranoia. As much as these may be Mr. Wilde's own logical mishaps, it does provide at the very least circumstantial evidence that something may be wrong with Hildred's perception of his surroundings. Louis' presence of mind throughout the novel, however, as will be explored more thoroughly in the following sections, does set him as overall more reliable than Hildred, further tilting the scales in favour of his description of the diadem rather than Hildred's.

The most definitive evidence of his unreliability is the very last phrase of the short story. "[EDITOR'S NOTE.—Mr. Castaigne died yesterday in the Asylum for Criminal Insane]" (Chambers 35, unedited). In this moment, Hildred is not the narrator anymore, but an unnamed editor adds into his narrative a definitive note communicating of his passing in a mental asylum for the criminally insane. There is no forewarning or development after it, so anything one might take from it is vastly limited to the field of speculation. However, there is some speculation that might be safe to assume. For instance, even if he was not correctly diagnosed with insanity the first time, which seems unlikely, he was committed once more to a mental institution, this time of a far more serious kind, where he spent the rest of his days. This, paired with the teasing note found at the very beginning of the short story, "Ne raillons pas les fous; leur folie dure plus longtemps que la nôtre.... Voila toute la différence" (Chambers 1), translated freely to "Do not mock the madmen; their insanity lasts longer

than ours… Therein lies all the difference." which can only have been an introductory comment made by said unnamed editor, as Hildred would have no reason to refer to himself as insane, might be taken as proof of the fact that, at least when one assumes he narrated the story, he was justly committed to a mental facility. This can be proven as the publication offers both comments by an editor who did confirm his final state, and who, for some reason or other, decided to publish his story. This adds another layer of unreliability as who knows what may have been edited out or in from Hildred's original account, but as the editor does not show any traits whatsoever except for maybe compassion for those in Hildred's situation, if judging by the introductory quote, it is not unreasonable to assume he would be at least overall respectful of Hildred's narration. There is not enough verifiable textual evidence to believe otherwise, even if the possibility is indeed raised, and so it is fair to discard this theory, as once again, the text does not explicitly states the characters are not lizards and that does not become a serious viable possibility of interpretation because of it.

Furthermore, evidence of the narrator's instability also comes at the narrative's conclusion, as Hildred is carried away. He narrates,

> Then while I stood, transfixed with rage and despair, seeing my crown, my empire, every hope and every ambition, my very life, lying prostrate there with the dead master, they came, seized me from behind, and bound me until my veins stood out like cords, and my voice failed with the paroxysms of my frenzied screams. But I still raged, bleeding and infuriated among them, and more than one policeman felt my sharp teeth. Then when I could no longer move they came nearer; I saw old Hawberk, and behind him my cousin Louis' ghastly face, and farther away, in the corner, a woman, Constance, weeping softly.
>
> "Ah! I see it now!" I shrieked. "You have seized the throne and the empire. Woe! woe to you who are crowned with the crown of the King in Yellow!" (Chambers 34)

As the narrator finds himself excited beyond reason by emotions and sensations that cause him to completely lose composure, and he sees his own desires and ambitions die along with Mr.

Wilde, one must question whether that would be the case if they were based in fact rather than fiction. Having already revealed, at this point in the narrative, his entire plan and gathered evidence to Louis, the cousin would have easily been able to take control of all the power Hildred had been seeking throughout the text. On the contrary, not only does nothing in the text support that theory, but the moment where the narrator is carried away by policemen is reacted to with gravity, and even sorrow by Louis, Hawberk and Constance. It is not a victory, rather a disheartening failure for them, to see their friend and relative be dragged away in that manner. Hildred, however, is still unconvinced, and remains unflinching in his accusations to the very end. This, in turn, relates very well with Pettersson's diagnosis, "But there are also cases in which it is hard to decide whether the character narrator is fallible or deluded. ... Thus, to the very end he appears unaware of what he may have done and is either fallible or, if indeed in some way he is aware of it but does not face up to it, deluded or self-deceptive" (110-111).

Hildred is aware that he lost. That without Mr. Wilde, even with all the evidence supposedly found in the apartment, no one would believe him. That he will be dragged into exile once more, and he even describes the somberness on his circle's expressions as he is dragged away - they are not triumphant in their victory. However, he chooses to keep up the delusion, the self-deception. It is easier to accept an unfair defeat than his own shortcomings, flaws and errors.

The narrator character of "The Repairer of Reputations", Hildred Castaigne, then, can be safely characterized to be an unreliable narrator about his own traits, about events of the past and even about his perceptions of the present. He is undoubtedly deluded, deceiving himself to believe a version of events that fits with his biases, and assimilating even people's contradictions of his delusions as proof of his own clarity and reliability. As I move onward to more specific analyses of the narrative's contents, this idea must always be kept in mind, as the narrator's unreliability is found between the conscious and the unconscious, between an outright lie and a failure in perception. It is with this blurred notion of unreliability that I move on to the next topics.

2.3 Retro-Futuristic New York

Having the unreliability of the narrator established, I move on to analyse the setting as described and visualized by him. As part of his unreliability has been proven to be related to his perception or description of his surroundings in the diegetic present time, it is no surprise that one must approach what he describes as the novel's setting with a dose of skepticism. In fact, what is shown is that this 1920s New York is, therefore, if it may even be considered a real setting due to the narrator's thorough unreliability both as a mentally unstable man and as a proud and therefore biased citizen of his country, a complex case of a positively portrayed dystopia. The unreliable narrator firmly believes he is living in a personal utopia, but one in which darker elements seep through the narrator's delusional blindness.[3]

The narrative opens with the following quote, "Toward the end of the year 1920 the Government of the United States had practically completed the programme, adopted during the last months of President Winthrop's administration. The country was apparently tranquil. Everybody knows how the Tariff and Labour questions were settled" (Chambers 1). The passage sets the standard for how the political processes of the fictionalized America described by Hildred are specific, and yet lack any meaningful detail. The 'programme' and the 'Tariff and Labour questions' are never further specified, not unlike a nod from the narrator to the narratee, as something that they would supposedly know and easily recognise if they lived within the same diegetic universe. President Winthrop is also never addressed again, and although the text shows the specific name for the figurehead, it never even mentions whether Winthrop is still in tenure and, if not, who else is in power.

Following this pattern, a war is said to have happened against Germany for the Samoan islands, the United States being victorious and leaving without any significant scars, as Cuba and Hawaii brought a great amount of profit to the country. When the narrator gets to the army, the reader gets a much greater amount of detail, as the narrator specifies the disposition of troops and

fortifications, its organizational system, number of men enlisted in the army as well as in the reserve, not to mention the naval fleet and their operations along the stations (Chambers 1). Then, he relates,

> Everywhere good architecture was replacing bad, and even in New York, a sudden craving for decency had swept away a great portion of the existing horrors. Streets had been widened, properly paved and lighted, trees had been planted, squares laid out, elevated structures demolished and underground roads built to replace them. The new government buildings and barracks were fine bits of architecture, and the long system of stone quays which completely surrounded the island had been turned into parks which proved a god-send to the population. (Chambers 1–2)

The statement that 'good architecture replacing bad' as a 'sudden craving for decency' takes over the nation starts to raise questions, once again, as one questions what the narrator would classify as good and bad architecture. What is specified certainly seems reasonable: wider streets with proper pavement and lighting, the planting of trees, but one also records the sudden vagueness of 'squares laid out' and 'elevated structures demolished', which do not seem to show any explicit issues. The fact that this 'good architecture' is apparently focused on government buildings and barracks lends a tone of nationalistic tendencies to this society. This is followed by a clearer turn in confirmation of these ideas,

> We had profited well by the latest treaties with France and England; the exclusion of foreign-born Jews as a measure of self-preservation, the settlement of the new independent negro state of Suanee, the checking of immigration, the new laws concerning naturalization, and the gradual centralization of power in the executive all contributed to national calm and prosperity. When the Government solved the Indian problem and squadrons of Indian cavalry scouts in native costume were substituted for the pitiable organizations tacked on to the tail of skeletonized regiments by a former Secretary of War, the nation drew a long sigh of relief. When, after the colossal Congress of Religions, bigotry and intolerance were laid in

> their graves and kindness and charity began to draw warring sects together, many thought the millennium had arrived, at least in the new world which after all is a world by itself. (Chambers 2)

The irony is clear when, after listing all the means of segregation and deportation the country has established, the narrator concludes the paragraph with 'bigotry and intolerance were laid in their graves'. The separation of Jews, foreigners, people of colour and Native Americans sets a clearer picture of what may have been considered to be, previously, ‘good and bad architecture’. All these measures help paint a hygienist image of an authoritarian segregational America, where, at least in the view of the narrator (who, one must remember, is unreliable), following these ideals seems, in the narrator’s perception, to have paid off. The country seems to be strong, the economy seems to be booming, cities are being developed and the population seems to be happier. Even more so, the rest of the world is revealed to be in shambles. The United States wished to help as Europe fell to anarchy and the cruel claws of Russia, but was, alas, unable to, therefore becoming, in the narrator’s opinion, the last bastion of morality and civilization of the world (Chambers 2).

However, this pseudo-utopian image of the country painted by Hildred so far starts to incur more and more contradictions as time goes on. Not to mention the first, already pinpointed in the last quotation, the government also institutes a curious legislation after some agitation over the laws forbidding suicide, culminating in April of 1920, on the opening of the first public Lethal Chamber (Chambers 2). The Governor of the State of New York explains, in the inauguration ceremony:

> “The laws prohibiting suicide and providing punishment for any attempt at self-destruction have been repealed. The Government has seen fit to acknowledge the right of man to end an existence which may have become intolerable to him, through physical suffering or mental despair. It is believed that the community will be benefited by the removal of such people from their midst. Since the passage of this law, the number of suicides in the United States has not increased. Now the Government has determined to establish a Lethal Chamber in

> every city, town and village in the country, it remains to be seen whether or not that class of human creatures from whose desponding ranks new victims of self-destruction fall daily will accept the relief thus provided." (Chambers 5)

This confirms the eugenistic move of the narrative's government. Under the guise of respecting the precept of absolute personal freedom that guides the ideals of the United States so thoroughly, the government encourages the mentally ill to end their existence and rid society of their perceived burden, which is curiously not seen as uncomfortable by the narrator-protagonist, as he does not identify himself as a mentally ill person. Immediately after, the governor also states that the number of suicides has not increased, leaving any possibility of public ethical questions about incentivizing people's choice through enabling completely outside the realm of possibility (whether this information is diegetically true or not is an entirely different issue), and implying that those who would commit suicide are fated to, or sentenced to it either way, independently of their surroundings. Not only that, but if all that was exposed so far was to be believed, then no one would have any reason to be unhappy in this seemingly utopian, ideal America. Therefore, if a citizen is not contented and joyful, they may either be a traitor or somehow 'defective' and thus unfit to live in this 'paradisiacal' society. The governmentally mandated Lethal Chambers in every city are an invitation by the government for all those who are not fully committed to their country to remove themselves in the most definitive way possible so as to make way for the unimpeded growth of a "prosperous nation".

Further still, if one notices the very fact that there was reported public 'agitation' over the laws prohibiting suicide, one raises the question of what may have happened to bring such a niche and dark question to the forefront of the nation's concerns during a time of peace and prosperity such as portrayed in the short story. A simple revision of the legislation would probably not cause agitation in the populace, especially agitation in favor of the flexibilization of suicide. Despite delving a bit into speculation here, it is not preposterous to presume that, for a topic such as this to be

defended so openly in the streets, something must have happened recently in the nation's past to warrant a passionate debate over the issue. Yet, this is all presented by the government and narrator under an entirely (and disturbing) positive light: the occasion is celebratory, and no one in inauguration or, afterwards, in the story, voices any type of protest against it.

> The French and Italian cafés and restaurants were torn down; the whole block was enclosed by a gilded iron railing, and converted into a lovely garden with lawns, flowers and fountains. In the centre of the garden stood a small, white building, severely classical in architecture, and surrounded by thickets of flowers. Six Ionic columns supported the roof, and the single door was of bronze. (Chambers 4)

Here we see what was meant previously. Good architecture is the return to classical and nationalistic monuments that replace foreign businesses, confirming the hygienist undertone previously hinted at. Still, once more, throughout the novel the setting is never, at any moment, described as anything disturbing. Scenery is always natural, idyllic, calming and harmonious. People are portrayed as joyful, nature coexists merrily with the urban setting, children run around, nurses wheel strollers and soldiers in uniform lend lively tones of youth and energy to scenes (Chambers 15–16). Military presence is portrayed as comforting and familiar in daily situations and there is an overall attitude of admiration from the population towards the military functions.

In the first time the Lethal Chamber is used in the story, the day is beautiful and nature is blooming,

> As I was turning carelessly away, a slight commotion in the group of curious loiterers around the gates attracted my attention. A young man had entered, and was advancing with nervous strides along the gravel path which leads to the bronze doors of the Lethal Chamber. He paused a moment before the "Fates," and as he raised his head to those three mysterious faces, the pigeon rose from its sculptured perch, circled about for a moment and wheeled to the east. The young man pressed his hand to his face, and then with an undefinable gesture

> sprang up the marble steps, the bronze doors closed behind him, and half an hour later the loiterers slouched away, and the frightened pigeon returned to its perch in the arms of Fate. (Chambers 16)

The suicidal young man is resolute, and the world stays in harmony as he ends his life. Loiterers leave as the deed is done and even the pigeon itself avoids him. The world will not miss him, seems to be the message, as the day goes on just as wonderfully as before, and even the bird retakes its perch after the deed is done. He is rejected by both nature and society alike. Despite the horrible messages and deeds being portrayed in the short story, the setting remains unchangingly lovely, harmonious and picturesque throughout. It is only towards the end of the narrative that the setting changes even slightly, as best expressed in the following passage,

> I had eaten nothing since breakfast, but I was not hungry. A wretched, halfstarved creature, who stood looking across the street at the Lethal Chamber, noticed me and came up to tell me a tale of misery. I gave him money, I don't know why, and he went away without thanking me. An hour later another outcast approached and whined his story. I had a blank bit of paper in my pocket, on which was traced the Yellow Sign, and I handed it to him. He looked at it stupidly for a moment, and then with an uncertain glance at me, folded it with what seemed to me exaggerated care and placed it in his bosom. (Chambers 29)

Two homeless people accost Hildred in the park within the period of an hour. This is strange to consider, taking into account the perfect portrait of the nation and the city the narrator painted in his tale. Economy is supposedly booming, the Labour issue has apparently been settled and at no point is homelessness or even unemployment brought up during the description of the setting. This happens suddenly, and yet Hildred handles it with the disinterest of someone used to doing so. He is annoyed, rather than scared, and bored more than anything, doing whatever he can to send the people away as fast as possible. Even moreso, the homeless are mentioned once more after this

point, on the following page, as a vague amount of them are repelled by a police officer (Chambers 30).

It is difficult to classify this retro-futuristic New York as a dystopia at first glance, since it is presented under such an overwhelmingly positive light. However, the definition of dystopia offered by George Claeys in his chapter "The origins of dystopia: Wells, Huxley and Orwell" within *The Cambridge Companion to Utopian Literature* proves useful: "'Dystopia' is often used interchangeably with 'anti-utopia' or 'negative utopia' ... to describe a fictional portrayal of a society in which evil, or negative social and political developments, have the upper hand, or as a satire of utopian aspirations which attempts to show up their fallacies ..." (107). To Hildred, this society could not be farther from negative socio-political developments, but the moral inconsistencies and issues that ironically bleed through his portrayal are undoubtedly intended to satirize the fallacies in these utopian aspirations.

Moreover, Claeys adds that "There is of course something in the argument that, just as one person's terrorist is another's freedom-fighter, so is one person's utopia another's dystopia. Indisputably, thus, whether a given text can be described as a dystopia or utopia will depend on one's perspective of the narrative outcome" (108). As such, it could be argued that the portrayal of the city is only positive because Hildred himself considers these outcomes to be utopian, whilst plenty of other people might have different opinions of it.[4] Although this is never explicitly explored in the short story, it has been proven previously that Hildred often disagrees with the people around him regarding past and present facts and opinions.

On the defining characteristics of dystopia, Claeys states, "Their common theme is the quasi-omnipotence of a monolithic, totalitarian state demanding and normally exacting complete obedience from its citizens, challenged occasionally but usually ineffectually by vestigial individualism or systemic flaws, and relying upon scientific and technological advances to ensure social control." (109) Only half of these characterizations apply to what Hildred shows us of the city, as obedience

seems less to be demanded or exacted by the government, and more happily and proudly given by the population. There is no challenge to the power, even if it is a monolithic, totalitarian state which does use scientific and technological advances to ensure social control.

Throughout the first description of the setting, the character of Hildred has not yet been introduced. In fact, the first mention of a first-person narrator at all occurs in page 3, and before that, the text details the exposition of the at-time-of-writing futuristic New York, filling the gaps in knowledge created by the lapse in time.

> In covert narration we hear a voice speaking of events, characters, and setting, but its owner remains hidden in the discoursive shadows. Unlike the "nonnarrated" story, the covertly narrated one can express a character's speech or thoughts in indirect form. Such expression implies an interpretive device or mediator qualitatively different from the simple mindreading stenographer of non narrated narratives. (Chatman 197)

Even though no narrator character is introduced, when, at page 3, Hildred finally introduces himself, he uses the word ‘I’, putting himself directly onto first-person narration. As there is no moment of transition explaining who he is from a third-person point of view, it is safe to assume that has also been his explanation overall, as later on he follows a few of the same vices he has shown during this expositional passage; mainly his tendency to refer to specific names and details which the narratee has no use for, are irrelevant for the story, and are alluded to in passing, such as every authority present in the inauguration for the Lethal Chamber and their positions within the army and governmental organs (Chambers 4-5).

It is also not unheard of, in literature around the turn of the XX century, the use of direct free speech for internal monologues, the rules of which can be quite loose, not needing any character self-reference at all, or textual markers such as quotation marks or name tags, for instance. Some of the ways to determine whether some measure of text applies for this, as posited by Chatman, are the character’s vocabulary, idioms and characteristics being respected, allusions to matters the character

knows by heart to be made with no further explanation than a character would need in their own thinking (Chatman 182-183). Pettersson, however, is the one who points out that narrators may deceive even during expositional phases of their narratives, presenting the world in specific lights that make their story more appeasing (115).

This bias in the description of the setting can also be noticed by the fact that the scenery does seem to change with Hildred's feelings. In the beginning of the narrative, his plans are stable and he is simply preparing for his attempted coup, basking in the superiority of his own perceived knowledge and cunning, the plaza is beautiful and the days are described as joyful and filled with harmony. Towards the end, when he takes the chance and actually tries to execute his plans, he is anxious, and therefore; instead of grace and peace, he finds the flowers' perfume to be troubling, the square is tiresome, the sounds that captivated him before sound dull and uninteresting, instead of sparrows and pigeons, there are bats circling the square. The military presence is not comforting and admirable in its show of strength and discipline, but rather occupied with menial tasks such as dish-washing (Chambers 29–30). The irony is also not lost on me that when Hildred had not eaten anything since breakfast, insisting he was not hungry, he describes the first homeless person who approaches him specifically as half-starved, barely a sentence later (Chambers 29).

Furthermore, it is not hard to associate this clearly militaristic empire, with a penchant for white and classic architecture and a hygienist approach to city-planning, with the content of the books Hildred held in his home. Not only do these show most of Hildred's library is composed of books about Napoleon, but he also explicitly says he values them as highly as to wish he could bind them in gold (Chambers 23-24).

The focus of Hildred's descriptions of the military forces when giving the opening exposition, with specific numbers and styles of training betrays his interests quite clearly as well, as noticeable on the following excerpt,

> The country was in a superb state of defence. Every coast city had been well supplied with land fortifications; the army under the parental eye of the General Staff, organized according to the Prussian system, had been increased to 300,000 men, with a territorial reserve of a million; and six magnificent squadrons of cruisers and battleships patrolled the six stations of the navigable seas, leaving a steam reserve amply fitted to control home waters. (Chambers 1)

Hildred specifically mentions that the army was organized according to the Prussian system, calling out the name of the victors of the Franco-Prussian war, who defeated Napoleon III, who not coincidentally was the ruler who had Paris rebuilt in a far more classical style of architecture. Hildred understands the military, either as an enthusiast or as having served, since nothing is mentioned about the circumstances over the fall of his horse except that someone put a bullet in its head, implying someone had a gun around, as well as the fact that Hildred seems to constantly meet the mounted divisions of the army - his cousin, Louis, is one of them, as the parade in which he comes into town showcases. When Hildred announces the expulsion of people of colour and Jews, he also slips in an Indian cavalry as a way of integrating the natives, causing the nation to 'draw a sigh of relief'. "The Secretary of Forestry and Game Preservation had a much easier time, thanks to the new system of National Mounted Police" (Chambers 2), pointing out the effectiveness of mounted divisions once more. Even at the final scene, along with the unsettling mood, the equine motif returns,

> Twice the mounted sentry at the gates was changed while I wandered up and down the asphalt walk. I looked at my watch. It was nearly time. The lights in the barracks went out one by one, the barred gate was closed, and every minute or two an officer passed in through the side wicket, leaving a rattle of accoutrements and a jingle of spurs on the night air. The square had become very silent. The last homeless loiterer had been driven away by the grey-coated park policeman, the car tracks along Wooster Street were deserted, and the

> only sound which broke the stillness was the stamping of the sentry's horse and the ring of his sabre against the saddle pommel. (Chambers 30)

Even if definitely not enough to conclude Hildred had been himself a member of the cavalry, or a mounted police officer, we know already that he enjoyed horse-riding at least from previous discussions. It is enough to pinpoint how, at best, strangely coincidental the world as described by Hildred seems to be about catering to his specific interests and opinions. On this, Bernaerts posits, "After all, the narrator's unreliability concerns not only how he depicts things but also what he depicts. In other words, the mad narrator can also be unreliable because the depiction of the world is falsified by delusion or hallucination" (195-196).

The process of delusion happens like that tainting of past memories by imagination and feelings as described in section 2.2. "When reality becomes unbearable, the madman represses a part of reality or substitutes it as a whole" (Bernaerts 189), and the world becomes more of a mirror of the narrator-character or a lens through which to study and understand him, a projection of himself and his feelings and values rather than an accurate depiction of his reality. Eric Cain writes about Mark Seltzer's psychological studies on serial killers, "The Serial Killer as a Type of Person" (1998), applying it to fiction regarding characters' and narrators' capacity to commit atrocities and justify them,

> A killer in a horror novel likely lives and exists within his own "mental" world; the physical world as he perceives it in his mind. Therefore, the psychological landscape of a monster includes a vastly tainted image of the realistic world, thus eliminating the typical rules of the realistic world. In this, the laws of man, the laws of morality, and even the laws of culture do not hold power, and instead, the psychological space is controlled by the character himself. (Cain 129–130)

Despite not being a fully-fledged killer, more of a failed mandatory of an assassination, Hildred does create and relate to his narratees this reality in which he lives, where he believes his

actions are justified, because he was chosen by The King in Yellow, who will soon be discussed, to take power. In this version of events, it is an injustice to stop him from conquering his imagined throne, and he feels betrayed by the end, as if he himself had been the victim of the imaginary coup he was trying to commit. His entire relationship to reality is tainted to allow him to justify his actions, not as a conscious fabrication, but as a subconscious repression of his own wickedness.

The setting is introduced through a vague, biased history of this fictional America in the 1920s, with clear eugenistic and hygienist undertones as expressed by the institution of Lethal Chambers and the segregation of minorities. There are also defined militaristic and nationalistic tendencies, as seen by the worship and constant presence of the military through the short story. America, in an international context, has also become, as perceived by the unreliable narrator, a last bastion of morality. This whole terrifying picture is presented in a very positive light as seen through the eyes of the narrator, but even so, problems such as homelessness and inequality still bleed through Hildred's utopian delusions, exposing it undoubtedly, at every level, as a dystopia despite this biased and unreliable portrayal. Due to Hildred's unreliability and delusional state, coincidences rack up to put the entire existence of the setting into question, as descriptions lean heavily on his personal interests, knowledge and mood. Thus, dismissing the entirety of the setting as another symptom of Hildred's alienated personality would seem a logical conclusion at first, but nothing is that simple in this short story. Thus, before I analyse Hildred's character more fully, I will show just how blurry the lines can get.

2.4 Blurring the Lines of Reality

Analysing Hildred's interactions with the other characters within the story, a problematic and yet more complete view of the depth of his unreliability arises. Although most of the time, the characters are somewhat safe measures with whom to compare Hildred's behaviour, there are definite moments where the limits of the narrator's insanity becomes so unclear that it is difficult to

even believe his portrayal of other people, or to stay firmly certain about his delusions. In this section, I will analyse Hildred's relationship to other characters, and go through a few of the moments where his unreliability as a narrator becomes blurred by the actions of other characters.

The main cast of the short story consists of Hildred, the narrator-character, Louis, his cousin, Hawberk, the armourer, Constance, Hawberk's daughter, and Mr. Wilde, Hildred's mentor. There are a few punctual, minor characters peppered in, but these are the ones who appear repeatedly throughout the narrative.

Out of these, Hildred's cousin, Louis, is the one most explored thus far. The narrator-character's main antagonistic force is shown to act consistently in inclusive, understanding, patient and supportive ways towards him throughout the narrative, also being presented as far too straightforward to be capable of the subtleties of manipulation. Louis invites Hildred for his wedding as his best man, and seems to be genuinely excited about the prospect in a way that is far more about the woman he is marrying than any political game Hildred believes him to be playing, despite the narrator's skepticism.

> "Just think, Hildred, to-morrow I shall be the happiest fellow that ever drew breath in this jolly world, for Constance will go with me."
>
> I offered him my hand in congratulation, and he seized and shook it like the good-natured fool he was—or pretended to be. (Chambers 24-25)

Whenever Louis offends Hildred unwittingly, he immediately retreats and corrects the issue, not questioning or insisting on his good intentions, but simply accepting his mistake and acting to change his ways. He is accommodating, welcoming and affable towards Hildred, even when his own well-being is threatened by him.

> I heard a door open but did not heed it. It was only when I saw two faces in the mirror:—it was only when another face rose over my shoulder, and two other eyes met mine. I wheeled like a flash and seized a long knife from my dressing-table, and my cousin sprang back very

pale, crying: "Hildred! for God's sake!" then as my hand fell, he said: "It is I, Louis, don't you know me?" I stood silent. I could not have spoken for my life. He walked up to me and took the knife from my hand. (Chambers 22)

As Hildred is transfixed upon his reflection, he reacts wildly to the appearance of his own cousin, raising a knife to him, only being stopped by the restraint and gentleness Louis shows in waking him from his reflective state and disarming him as well as making himself clearly non-threatening. Hildred even has trouble returning to a calmer state, standing dazed while Louis handles the outburst. The man is by far the sanest person in the narrative, and has the presence of mind to handle Hildred even in the direst situations. At the end, when the narrator confronts him at the park, he complies with his strange requests immediately by reading a series of strange and convoluted notes, even against his own interest, solely to appease his relative.

Then I unfolded a scroll marked with the Yellow Sign. He saw the sign, but he did not seem to recognize it, and I called his attention to it somewhat sharply.

"Well," he said, "I see it. What is it?"

"It is the Yellow Sign," I said angrily.

"Oh, that's it, is it?" …

"You must renounce the crown to me, do you hear, to *me*."

Louis looked at me with a startled air, but recovering himself said kindly, "Of course I renounce the—what is it I must renounce?"

"The crown," I said angrily.

"Of course," he answered, "I renounce it. Come, old chap, I'll walk back to your rooms with you."

"Don't try any of your doctor's tricks on me," I cried, trembling with fury. "Don't act as if you think I am insane."

"What nonsense," he replied. "Come, it's getting late, Hildred."

"No," I shouted, "you must listen. You cannot marry, I forbid it. Do you hear? I forbid it. You shall renounce the crown, and in reward I grant you exile, but if you refuse you shall die."

He tried to calm me, but I was roused at last, and drawing my long knife barred his way. (Chambers 31–33)

The only moment where Louis turns aggressive is when Hildred threatens Constance, drawing his gun in the passage immediately after this excerpt and following him. Until then, even as Hildred threatens his own safety, he maintains a level head. He concedes to Hildred's delusions, which only serves as further contrast to the narrator's instability. When an antagonist refuses to act as such even when given ample reason to do so, and is shown to carry far nobler and admirable traits than the narrator-character, empathy towards Hildred wanes. Through his actions and choices, we can determine that Louis is temperate, brave, caring, warm and loving to his cousin, and that this is not recognized by Hildred, due to his ambitions for the future, and the delusions that blind him to the world around him.

Louis' betrothed, Constance, is given very little attention in the narrative, having only a few lines and most of them being about Louis, but curiously, Hildred makes a point to always add an adjective that would fit the beauty and social standards for women at the time whenever he mentioned any part of her, even in passing. Her hand is "pretty" as she holds it out to him (Chambers 6), her eyelashes are "soft" as she trembles with hope (Chambers 7), her fingers are "small" as Louis kisses them (Chambers 18).

There is, however, not enough explicit evidence within the text to suggest that Hildred might have been significantly attracted to her, or that, for instance, the whole marriage ploy was a psychological justification to rationalize his feelings of affection for her and of jealousy towards Louis. He makes no significant advance at her, nor does he ever wish he was the one to be with her, or even for her to be single. As problematic as it may be in current-day light, Constance's main

characteristic was to be an ideal woman for the values of the time, polite, beautiful, elegant and innocent. Constance acts more as a motivation and source of conflict to other characters than as a character in her own right. She is a threat to Hildred, and a treasure to Louis and Hawberk.

Hawberk himself is a more fully realized character, despite his standing being more parallel to the main action in the story. He is the father of the bride, and in many ways is only tangentially related to the plot, but still occupies a big role within it, acting as foil to both Hildred in his instability and Louis in his sensibility, and a more moderate counterpart for the extreme Mr. He tries to remain neutral and acceptive to the narrator's issues, but oftentimes gets deeply involved in his speeches and beliefs. This will be more fully explored further on.

Hawberk is an armourer, an odd profession to be sure in what is supposed to be a technologically advanced, futuristic society; and if that is not strange enough, even at the time of publishing, in 1895, armors had widely been discarded in military technology, once more pointing to the anachronism of the text and Hildred's biases towards the past and the napoleonic period, when armour use had not yet been fully abandoned. Not only that, Hawberk is a true artisan, investing time, effort and resources into the completion of a suit of armour mainly for the love of his craft.

> "Did you continue the search so persistently without any certainty of the greave being still in existence?" I demanded.
>
> "Of course," he replied coolly.
>
> Then for the first time I took a personal interest in Hawberk. (Chambers 7)

Hildred is interested in those of similar behaviour to his. The ones he would refer to as focused, determined, driven and devoted; whom other people might describe as obsessive. Hildred sees in him his style of thinking - Hawberk's investigation for the location of the greaves was very conspiratory in its methods, jumping from one bit of information to the next without hesitation, following cryptic documents and dubious sources to finally unveil evidence that had gone unnoticed

to many others. These emulate exactly what Hildred does with Mr. Wilde, and when he finds an at least somewhat apparently kindred spirit in Hawberk, the narrator shows approval and interest.

Last, but not least, is Mr. Wilde himself, and this is the one least explored so far in this dissertation, and the one who will receive the biggest portion of this section of the analysis. When he is accused of insanity by Hawberk, this is how Hildred reacts:

> "No, he is not vicious, nor is he in the least demented. His mind is a wonder chamber, from which he can extract treasures that you and I would give years of our life to acquire.'"
>
> Hawberk laughed.
>
> I continued a little impatiently: "He knows history as no one else could know it. Nothing, however trivial, escapes his search, and his memory is so absolute, so precise in details, that were it known in New York that such a man existed, the people could not honour him enough." (Chambers 8)

This is in stark contrast to how the narrator reacts when his own sanity is questioned. He gets upset, but either avoids conflict or corrects the speaker quickly, whereas he is loud and assertive in defense of Mr. Wilde's honour. He not only corrects the mistake, but praises him to the utmost degree, and showcases exactly in how high a regard he puts the man. To the narrator, Mr. Wilde is more than a guide, he is a prophet. His knowledge is expansive and unquestionable, and his word is gospel. Whether this is true or not, what matters is that Hildred believes it so, and, therefore, Mr. Wilde holds tremendous influence over him.

Mr. Wilde is described as heavily deformed, wearing prosthetic ears, being a little person or similar, fingerless in his left hand and of a yellowish skin, as well as being covered in scratches from the cat he loved to torment. Hildred states, when describing him for the first time, "I thought I had never seen him so hideously fascinating" (Chambers 9), which complements the previous notion of empathizing with Hawberk leading to interest in him. Hildred is also attracted to those who look strange and unconventional. "Still, the most remarkable thing about Mr. Wilde was that a man of his

marvellous intelligence and knowledge should have such a head. It was flat and pointed, like the heads of many of those unfortunates whom people imprison in asylums for the weak-minded. “Many called him insane, but I knew him to be as sane as I was” (Chambers 10). If Hildred delights in strange fascination for the grotesque, he certainly feels enormous empathy towards those who had been in mental asylums, and finding some amount of companionship in this experience, immediately latches onto them by the comparison, projecting his own experiences onto them: “he is as sane as I.” Moreover, by referring to people who had been put in asylums as ‘unfortunates’, Hildred implies that the entire class may be unjustly imprisoned, and all, or at least a good portion of them, have simply reached a truth beyond what others can see.

Mr. Wilde certainly knows of the power he exerts over Hildred. When speaking of his own prowess, he says,

> His colourless eyes sought mine, "I only wanted to demonstrate that I was correct. You said it was impossible to succeed as a Repairer of Reputations; that even if I did succeed in certain cases it would cost me more than I would gain by it. To-day I have five hundred men in my employ, who are poorly paid, but who pursue the work with an enthusiasm which possibly may be born of fear. These men enter every shade and grade of society; some even are pillars of the most exclusive social temples; others are the prop and pride of the financial world; still others, hold undisputed sway among the 'Fancy and the Talent.' I choose them at my leisure from those who reply to my advertisements. It is easy enough, they are all cowards. I could treble the number in twenty days if I wished. So you see, those who have in their keeping the reputations of their fellow-citizens, I have in my pay."
>
> "They may turn on you," I suggested.
>
> He rubbed his thumb over his cropped ears, and adjusted the wax substitutes. "I think not," he murmured thoughtfully, "I seldom have to apply the whip, and then only once. Besides they like their wages." (Chambers 11)

Mr. Wilde is clearly making a show of his power, showing off to Hildred what he can do and how much control over society he has. Hildred believes him fully at his word, seeking no proof or evidence to support his claims. Wilde's speech, however, is fraught with strange inconsistencies. He claims to control members of the cream of the crop in society, yet says they may be scared of him. He says he pays them poorly, but that they like their wages, which contrasts even more with their supposed influence and renown. One would imagine people of this social standing would not need low amounts of money, much less enjoy it. Indeed, some of his minions, as he claims, are part of the 'prop and pride of the financial world'. Information given by Mr. Wilde is seldom supported, and when it is, it is circumstantially so. Hildred, of course, questions none of it. Perhaps Mr. Wilde wishes to point out how much money he has, by saying that a quantity others may think is large, to him is nothing but spare change, but this is verging on the realm of speculation.

It is Mr. Wilde who guides Hildred into his main delusion, and the reason for the entire plot of the short story. Hildred believes, due to a manuscript made by Mr. Wilde and references to lost documents, to be part of a long-forgotten Imperial Dynasty of America, and thus to have a claim for the throne, if his cousin, who comes before him in the line of succession, does not marry (Chambers 13).

In addition to this, two pages after mentioning five hundred men in his employ, and within the exact same scene, Mr. Wilde makes the bewildering statement that, '"We are now in communication with ten thousand men,' he muttered. 'We can count on one hundred thousand within the first twenty-eight hours, and in forty-eight hours the state will rise en masse.'" (Chambers 13). Notably, he does mention he is in communication with ten thousand and employs five hundred, which may be different concepts, but a difference of a number two-hundredth fold bigger than the first mention within the span of two pages is certainly suspicious at least, which Hildred once again takes at face-value.

When engaging the third madman they enlist in their company, Vance, Mr. Wilde makes a speech which gives us insight into how exactly he may have ensorcelled Hildred into his cause,

> Mr. Wilde explained the manuscript, using several volumes on Heraldry, to substantiate the result of his researches. He mentioned the establishment of the Dynasty in Carcosa, the lakes which connected Hastur, Aldebaran and the mystery of the Hyades. He spoke of Cassilda and Camilla, and sounded the cloudy depths of Demhe, and the Lake of Hali. "The scolloped tatters of the King in Yellow must hide Yhtill forever," he muttered, but I do not believe Vance heard him. Then by degrees he led Vance along the ramifications of the Imperial family, to Uoht and Thale, from Naotalba and Phantom of Truth, to Aldones, and then tossing aside his manuscript and notes, he began the wonderful story of the Last King. Fascinated and thrilled I watched him. He threw up his head, his long arms were stretched out in a magnificent gesture of pride and power, and his eyes blazed deep in their sockets like two emeralds. Vance listened stupefied. As for me, when at last Mr. Wilde had finished, and pointing to me, cried, "The cousin of the King!" my head swam with excitement. (Chambers 28)

If nothing else, Wilde is a talented orator, adept at making grandiose speeches and boosting others' egoes, peppering his speech with so much specific, hermetic and detailed information and speaking with such confidence that anyone might have been tempted to believe he sounded like he knew exactly what he was talking about. To imagine, further, that he would make such a speech specifically about similar experiences and knowledges to Hildred, painting him as the chosen successor of the throne, it is not unlikely to think he may have had an easy time convincing Hildred of subscribing to his mentorship.

These are, then, the relationships between the characters. Louis acts as a counterpoint to Hildred. Where the narrator is paranoid and manipulative, Louis is caring and open. Constance is a motivator for the main conflict of the narrative, and at least to some degree admired by Hildred.

Hawberk is a middle ground between every player in the story. Mr. Wilde is the catalyst for the entire plot. To Hildred, Louis is a fool in his path, Constance is a threat, Hawberk is a problematic interest and Mr. Wilde is the bearer of truth. Hildred deliberately pushes away from people considered to be more common and instead allows himself only to connect to people who share his own views and beliefs. Despite mingling with others at points, they hold little to no influence over him, as he sees himself superior, and they are merely obstacles in the path of his great vision.

It would be simple to conclude, from here, Hildred's insanity is as clear-cut as it can be. However, the narrative never lets notions be that discernible. If Hildred imagines the world around him, then why do other characters react to it as well? "Constance asked me if I had seen the ceremonies at the Lethal Chamber" (Chambers 7). One may point out that because of the indirect speech, Hildred may be paraphrasing what Constance may have actually said, showing instead what the narrator interpreted of her speech.

In similar fashion, when walking the riverside with Hawberk, Constance and Louis, Hildred is caught in reverie when looking at the ships.

> Brigs, schooners, yachts, clumsy ferry-boats, their decks swarming with people, railroad transports carrying lines of brown, blue and white freight cars, stately sound steamers, déclassé tramp steamers, coasters, dredgers, scows, and everywhere pervading the entire bay impudent little tugs puffing and whistling officiously;—these were the craft which churned the sunlight waters as far as the eye could reach. In calm contrast to the hurry of sailing vessel and steamer a silent fleet of white warships lay motionless in midstream.
>
> Constance's merry laugh aroused me from my reverie.
>
> "What are you staring at?" she inquired.
>
> "Nothing—the fleet," I smiled.
>
> Then Louis told us what the vessels were, pointing out each by its relative position to the old Red Fort on Governor's Island. (Chambers 18)

The ‘silent fleet of white warships’ sticks out from the rest of the descriptions, contrasting with the rest even by Hildred’s standards. When Constance catches him looking into the distance, she asks the ambiguous ‘What are you staring at?’, which might be simply a harmless question to make small conversation, or a genuine one. If this fleet stood out even to Hildred, it is hard to conceive Constance would not have spotted them herself. If she did not see the white warships herself, it is possible that they were a figment of Hildred’s imagination. His dismissive, vague answer, seems to try to make nothing of it. Certainly, an imaginary and beautiful war fleet described as calm and tranquil would fit perfectly with Hildred’s illusory anachronistic America, where military presence is a reassuring sight. But then, what follows immediately after is Louis describing the fleet and thus confirming Hildred’s description, thus lending credibility to his narrative.

Later on, however, following one of Mr. Wilde’s leads, Hawberk ends up finding a missing piece of armour that had been sought after by a collector.

> "Mr. Wilde was right," he said. "I have found the missing tassets and left cuissard of the 'Prince's Emblazoned,' in a vile old junk garret in Pell Street."
>
> "998?" I inquired, with a smile.
>
> "Yes."
>
> "Mr. Wilde is a very intelligent man," I observed.
>
> "I want to give him the credit of this most important discovery," continued Hawberk. "And I intend it shall be known that he is entitled to the fame of it."
>
> "He won't thank you for that," I answered sharply; "please say nothing about it."
>
> "Do you know what it is worth?" said Hawberk.
>
> "No, fifty dollars, perhaps."
>
> "It is valued at five hundred, but the owner of the 'Prince's Emblazoned' will give two thousand dollars to the person who completes his suit; that reward also belongs to Mr. Wilde."

"He doesn't want it! He refuses it!" I answered angrily. "What do you know about Mr. Wilde? He doesn't need the money. He is rich—or will be—richer than any living man except myself. What will we care for money then—what will we care, he and I, when—when—" (Chambers 20–21)

This puts some weight to Mr. Wilde's claims. If he was able to, through his information, discover the actual location of a physical object that is being confirmed by a separate character from Hildred, this puts more validity to his skills and research. It is odd, however, that Hildred seems to know what Wilde wants or not, decides for him and acts as an interloper through this entire transaction. In fact, he seems downright offended, or even threatened by the notion of a reward.

Even before this moment, there is another occasion that blurs the reach of Mr. Wilde's knowledge. Hildred implies an accusation of Hawberk and Constance being foreign nobles in refuge.

"Is this nonsense too?" I asked pleasantly, "is it nonsense when Mr. Wilde continually speaks of you as the Marquis of Avonshire and of Miss Constance—"

I did not finish, for Constance had started to her feet with terror written on every feature. Hawberk looked at me and slowly smoothed his leathern apron.

"That is impossible," he observed, "Mr. Wilde may know a great many things—"

"About armour, for instance, and the 'Prince's Emblazoned,'" I interposed, smiling.

"Yes," he continued, slowly, "about armour also—may be—but he is wrong in regard to the Marquis of Avonshire, who, as you know, killed his wife's traducer years ago, and went to Australia where he did not long survive his wife."

"Mr. Wilde is wrong," murmured Constance. Her lips were blanched, but her voice was sweet and calm.

"Let us agree, if you please, that in this one circumstance Mr. Wilde is wrong," I said. (Chambers 9)

Constance and Hawberk's reactions may easily be read as confirmation of Hildred's accusation. That, once more, validates Wilde's knowledge further, and lends some veracity to the possibility that Louis and Constance's marriage might lend him greater political power. However, it does not outright prove anything else. The imperial succession, the plot, everything, at the end, still falls flat, and all the analysis previously conducted still holds true. It is also possible, although admittedly less probable, that Hawberk and Constance's reactions are not those of people who were caught in a lie, but those of people shocked by an outrageous, illogical statement made by a trustworthy friend whom they knew to have been in an asylum. Whatever the reason, it does bring more doubt to the narrative than clarity.

When other characters validate Hildred's and Wilde's competences and judgements, they also blur the lines of reality. It becomes increasingly difficult to pinpoint where Hildred's delusions end and reality begins. One possible interpretation is that Hildred's narrative may be consciously deceptive at times, and in order to support his delusions, he lies about events and interactions that never happened. It is also possible to believe these events did happen, but were tainted by Hildred's delusions in order to fit within his self-deception and thus support his claims. Maybe Constance referred to something else, and, whatever it was, Hildred interpreted it as the Lethal Chamber. Or Louis' explanation on the ships was originally aimed at something else. Maybe the war fleet was there indeed, but that also does not prove by itself the veracity of the introductory exposition, nor does it nullify all the moments Hildred contradicts himself or the fact that this futuristic America is fraught with inconsistencies and eerily fitting to the narrator's quite specific worldview, a narrator who was established as delusional in regards to events in the past, to himself and to both events and the description of physical objects in his present. It is also possible the initial exposition is entirely earnest diegetically and America is indeed an authoritarian-totalitarian military superpower in the 1920s, portrayed by a mentally unstable, yet satisfied militaristic and power-hungry narrator. In this case, the supposedly diegetically real dystopian society is only portrayed positively because of the

biases of the narrator, who clearly believes, if not in his own country, on the effectiveness of the principles that stand behind its government and military presence. The fact, however, that the narrator's main beliefs (his supposedly noble lineage, his patronage by the supernatural King in Yellow) are consistently and readily proven to be completely delusional diegetically lends strength to the undermining of his other beliefs, and puts any other values, if not any objective statements, defended by the character under an, at best, suspicious light.

Not only that, but the difficulty in separating delusion from reality in the text makes it an even more faithful portrayal of the delusional mindset, as the narrator himself would conceivably face the same issue. The reader, or audience, is granted only enough to question Hildred's narration, but not nearly enough to read past his unreliability. As Kellermeyer puts it,

> Ultimately any probe into the reality of Hildred Castaigne's narrative is a hopeless bound into speculation. Virtually nothing he tells us can be trusted without question. …
>
> … What IS true, however, is that Hildred believes what he sees and it is THIS which has meaning: Hawberk may be a hallucination, but in Hildred's world he has a place; the suicide booths may be daydreams, but in Hildred's mind they have a purpose; Wilde and his cat may be fabrications (or just a rotting body and a feral stray going unnoticed), but in Hildred's universe they are significant. (Kellermeyer, "Two Minute Analysis", emphasis in the original)

As impossible as it is to analyse Hildred's reality, I point out once again that this is not the purpose of this analysis. No matter what the truth is, it is still verifiable that there are irreconcilable lies and contradictions within the text. The focus, then, is not to uncover the truth behind Hildred's misconceptions, but to analyse what they mean for Hildred himself.

One may still reliably recognize that Hildred at the behest of Mr. Wilde is the driving force of ill-intention in this narrative, and that Louis is a far more heroic anti-antagonist than Hildred may ever hope to be as a protagonist. Constance can still verifiably be seen as a catalyst for the tensions

between the men more than as fully-realized character (which matches previous criticisms over Chambers' inability to write female characters), and Hawberk offers a middle point to add nuance to every aspect of the story, while Mr. Wilde cannot be believed to be speaking verifiable truth as he contradicts himself on several occasions and so does Hildred. Regardless of the points that may cast doubts over Hildred and Mr. Wilde's degree of unreliability, it is still clear that they are unreliable. Thus, I retreat from the discussion in which the focus is determining the truth behind Hildred's delusions, as it was never my main focal point to begin with. From the start, my focus has been on Hildred's character and the psychological processes through which he becomes unreliable. It is no surprise, then, that this will be enough as a point for the conclusion of this chapter.

2.5 The Issue of Identity and Hildred Castaigne

The final factor to consider for the analysis of Hildred Castaigne's mental process is the fictional play *"The King in Yellow"* and how it fits within his story and sense of identity. In this final section of Chapter 2, I will discuss the character's relationship with the play, the effects it has on his psyche and how that shapes his sense of identity by revisiting some theories by Mark Seltzer, Eric Cain, Liliana Meira and Tiago Ferreira. Finally, I will explore how one's sense of identity relates to reality to then analyse how this all comes together to shape Hildred's character, his unreliability and the narrative he creates.

During his recovery from the fall from his horse, still suffering from the after-effects of a head injury, Hildred reads the play, which is infamous for its corrupting influence (Chambers 3). The play had been censored throughout the world, even among the most forward-thinking literary scholars, as even though the quality of its art was definite and undeniable, the effect it had on the human mind was equally so. Those who read it suffered greatly, and the consensus was that it was simply incompatible with human nature (Chambers 4).

The play and its elements are, however, never revealed, so I will not attempt to analyse it or what it contains, but the effects it produces on Hildred. These are incredibly similar to trauma. According to the American Psychiatric Association (APA), "The essential feature of posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is the development of characteristic symptoms following exposure to one or more traumatic events" (274). Out of the diagnostic criteria presented in the disorder's section, there are several that fit perfectly with Hildred's behaviour. These include: repetitive intrusive distressing memories of elements of the event, dissociative reactions to exposure to aspects connected to the event, efforts to avoid feelings experienced during the event, inability to remember aspects of the event, persistent negative beliefs about others and the world, notably diminished interest in participation of significant activities, feelings of estrangement from others, irritable behaviour and poorer anger management skills typically experienced as aggression, hypervigilance, excessive startle response, recurrent experiences of depersonalization (in which the individual feels detached or separated from their body or life experience) and derealization (in which the individual experiences the world as unreal or hallucinates) (APA 271-272).

Some of the symptoms listed have already been explored in this analysis, and some will still be explored by the end of this chapter. For instance, one of the possibilities of dissociation is anachronism, an eschewed sense of time or delusions regarding the progression of time. This would fit with the strangely retrofuturistic New York of the 1920s described by Hildred. The hypervigilance for threats can be witnessed in Hildred's paranoia and conspiracy theories about others trying to paint him as insane, as well as in his political conspiracy theories regarding his cousin's marriage, which he believes to have nefarious purposes. This also fits within the estrangement from others, as he is unable to connect truthfully to any other character that does not feed into his obsession.

One may question whether the reading of a play, fictional or not, could be considered a traumatic event, but Kai Erikson argues that what constitutes trauma is not the event itself, rather the

reaction a person has to it (455-456). It is therefore more apt to classify a person as traumatized rather than an event as traumatic.

This reaction is wildly violent in Hildred's case, as he describes the emotions he felt while reading the book,

> If I had not caught a glimpse of the opening words in the second act I should never have finished it, but as I stooped to pick it up, my eyes became riveted to the open page, and with a cry of terror, or perhaps it was of joy so poignant that I suffered in every nerve, I snatched the thing out of the coals and crept shaking to my bedroom, where I read it and reread it, and wept and laughed and trembled with a horror which at times assails me yet. (Chambers 3)

Not only does Hildred experience obsessive, repetitive behaviour, reading and rereading the text over and over, but also extreme reactions to its contents as he goes from one end of the intense emotional spectrum to the other, mixing words such as "joy" and "suffered" in the same sentence to describe the same feeling. Moreover, he cannot describe or perhaps recall the contents of what he read fully, as he never, at any point, explains them in any logical depth or sense, giving about as many details about the content of the book as he does about the New York setting.

This complements the notion that Piątek posits that,

> … by definition trauma is an event so extreme that it cannot be properly registered by consciousness, therefore it remains unassimilated and does not submit to the normal processes of memory storage or recall, nor can it be forgotten. … The fact that the experience remains unassimilated is manifested through its return in the form of unbidden memories: flashbacks, hallucinations and nightmares. (32)

In fact, still in between pages 3 and 4 of "The Repairer of Reputations", Hildred declares he cannot forget the elements of the book, describing its setting and how the image of certain symbols will be forever in his memory (Chambers 3–4).

The most important characteristic of trauma, however, is that the event "… will be converted into an enduring state of mind, and the traumatized mind will hold on to it and relive it over and over again" (Piątek 33). The delusional world Hildred constructs around himself and the power conspiracy based on elements that originated from within the pages of the play (the Lake of Hali, Hastur, Carcosa, etc., all mentioned as the origins of his lineage) constitute this enduring state of mind. Hildred also relives the traumatizing event constantly, perhaps more explicitly when wearing the diadem,

> One morning early in May I stood before the steel safe in my bedroom, trying on the golden jewelled crown. The diamonds flashed fire as I turned to the mirror, and the heavy beaten gold burned like a halo about my head. I remembered Camilla's agonized scream and the awful words echoing through the dim streets of Carcosa. They were the last lines in the first act, and I dared not think of what followed—dared not, even in the spring sunshine, there in my own room, surrounded with familiar objects, reassured by the bustle from the street and the voices of the servants in the hallway outside. (Chambers 22)

Hildred is accosted by visions and memories involuntarily, and even if they are supposed to give him power in the reality he constructed for himself, they still terrorize him, and cause him discomfort. It may be surprising to consider Hildred's mind would put a trauma it is theoretically trying to avoid consciously as a central piece in the dissociative delusion that it is using to do so. However, this is a completely natural psychological process. In "Beyond the Pleasure Principle", when analysing a child's play as a coping mechanism, Sigmund Freud points out it is possible to wish to relive a disconcerting event under controlled conditions, which are empowering to the individual when the event was not, since they are under the individual's control (15-16).

By making the traumatizing event as a source of power within his constructed reality, Hildred ensured in his mind the paradigm related to his trauma would feel empowering rather than overpowering. If he was not in control when he was reading the play at his weakest, he certainly is in

control when the very same play shows him all the potential he has to become the emperor of America. This is clear when the narrator describes his aspirations, "The city, the state, the whole land, were ready to rise and tremble before the Pallid Mask. The time had come, the people should know the son of Hastur, and the whole world bow to the black stars which hang in the sky over Carcosa" (Chambers 28).

In one fell swoop, Hildred's mind was able to reconcile not only his main trauma but also every other moment in which he felt threatened or diminished. In his mind, Dr. Archer, the doctor who first took his agency by forcing him to be interned into the asylum against his will was a villain whose only purpose was to stop him from finding his legacy (Chambers 32). Hildred mentions having 'dealt with him' several times towards the end of the story, however this moment is never described in the story, and the truth about it is left as dubious as most other aspects regarding his narrative: if Hildred did kill him, it is hard to imagine such a moment of supposed triumph and climax would be left out of the narrative. Then again, if he did not, the charges under which he is incarcerated in the end become fuzzier as well.

Keeping the trauma topic in mind, we get a better understanding of Hildred's inner workings. I do not believe, necessarily, that it is his trauma that makes him unreliable, but that his coping and defense mechanisms are unhealthy and he is unwilling to change them. His personal beliefs and inability to adapt them to the reality he finds himself in are what make him unreliable: that he fell from his horse and read a mind-breaking play; that he is human and vulnerable and fragile as such, are, rather, what causes him to enter a denial state so strong that he slips into delusion. Seltzer points out that they exist in a space where their personal beliefs and the reality of the world coincide, and they interact with the world in a way that is incapable of discerning one thing from the other (103). I do not know whether Hildred killed anyone in the short story, or in any moment left out of it, but I do know that his mental process seems to follow the same pattern.

Seltzer goes further, classifying serial killers as "... the kind of person who traumatically experiences himself as nothing 'deeper' than a social construction" (99). Rather than any possible supernatural force at work here that might lend some truth to Hildred and Wilde's ploy, I believe that the narrator-character simply read a play so subversive it made him question the nature of his own relationship with society, especially when read in a moment when he believed himself to be wrongly incarcerated, and may even have, up to that point, been correct in that assumption. If the play is said to question the very nature of society and human existence, and has clear traumatic effects on its reader who is already dissatisfied with society and questioning his own power and powerlessness, then believing that Hildred ends up seeing himself as a conjunction of social constructions others put onto him, and violently reacting to that notion that makes him feel completely powerless, does not seem far-fetched. Hildred, then, searches for a new way of relating to the world, and to reinvent himself, as identity is not constructed by biological or scientific facts, but by emotional and social factors (Cain 124).

If the theory for character is similar to how one perceives and analyses human beings, as explained in section 2.1, then the way one perceives and analyses human beings is also similar to how one does so for characters. In fact, the very existence of a name for a trait itself may completely change the way one relates to themselves and others. Historically, as culture and society change, language adapts to better relate to its new realities. Therefore, the names and words we have for traits and what they embody are culturally coded as well. In fact, words change meaning to better reflect more relevant aspects of current society. "There is … a second influence determining our lexicon of trait-names, namely the tendency of each social epoch to characterize human qualities in the light of standards and interests peculiar to the times. Historically, the introduction of trait-names can be seen to follow this principle of cultural (not psychological) determination to a striking degree." (Allport and Odbert 2). While in the medieval age the word 'Goth' reflected a ethnical group that was important to identify due to their warring culture, after the XIX century, due to the use of gothic

castles as setting for many of the early gothic horror styled novels, it became much more associated with supernatural horror. Then, when a social group inspired themselves in that literary period to build an aesthetic, the same word became more relevantly used as a title for a countercultural aesthetic movement. Nowadays, it is, on most occasions, far more relevant to know the latest definition of "goth" or "gothic" rather than the original one. Whether a person displayed traits that could be considered as 'romantic' or not before the artistic period of romanticism, those would certainly be referred to as something else or even be overlooked in favor of more culturally-relevant traits. Therefore, the images one has of themselves and of others are determined by the history and culture they are raised into.

In fact, human beings often build their sense of self and identity through similarly narrative means. Dan P. McAdams argues that throughout their lives, individuals will reorganize their memories in specific ways as to connect to their presents and attempt rational predictions of their futures in the form of a 'self-narrative' that attempts to make sense of their lived experience. These stories are based on biographical facts, but are also tainted by internal bias, emotion, and even rationalization attempts; not to mention societal and cultural values and conditions as well as one's own editorialization of their self-image (101).

In this way, the narrative one tells themselves about their life becomes a parameter from which to draw traits much in the same way one would analyse a character, and these culturally defined and personally accessible traits determine how one sees themselves. If an individual knows about the original meaning of 'goth', for instance, they have one more parameter to apply to themselves than the individual who does not know that meaning. The difference is that culturally-relevant meanings are more readily and easily accessible by a greater part of a culture's population, and so more reliably found as identifiable traits throughout that culture's individuals.

Through this self-narrative, one creates an organizing principle for the self (Meira and Ferreira 293), from which to create an identity. However, according to Hermans and Kempen (qtd.

in Meira and Ferreira 293), it is not only the self who creates narratives about the world, but others, and even different versions of one's self do so as well. Others create stories about themselves that may complement or conflict with stories we create about them. At the same time, they may create stories about us, which may complement or conflict with the stories we create about ourselves (Hermans 5-6). Meira and Ferreira add to the discussion that when someone shares stories about themselves or about us with us, that story becomes part of our story, and enters our personal realm of accessible information, which may then be integrated or rejected as misconception, but not typically denied as events that have happened within our stories (Meira and Ferreira 293-294).[5] At the same time, when we tell the stories about others, we only have access to our own pool of information about them and the events that happened to or around them. Therefore, when others appear in our stories, they are tainted by our own conceptions and information. Healthily and ideally, one recognizes these limitations to a degree and accepts the need for adaptation of their own value-judgements, constantly correcting and changing them to fit new information and different perspectives. The problem with Hildred Castaigne is that he does not.

Hildred bars any possibility of true dialogue with others by painting them all as unreliable narrators of his own experience, reminiscing of the breach of the cooperation principle enacted by unreliable narrators as explored in section 1.5 - that they do not agree on a general direction to follow with a conversation, and base their arguments and processing of information on personal bias rather than on verifiable reality. Because they base their understanding of reality on personal bias, anything that goes against such emotions, feelings and preconceived notions must be a lie or wrong, and no amount of evidence on verifiable reality can convince them otherwise, as they do not base their judgement on this parameter.

In this way, most other characters believe Hildred to be insane, and he does not feel insane. This, to him, means they are all biased, ill-intended, mistaken or insane themselves. Characters that do not view him as such have a much better grasp on the dialogical aspect of his identity. In this way,

those who share his experience and validate and support him to some degree are the ones whose opinions he does not dismiss immediately. Further still, by basing a major part of his identity on deeply specific information, namely the experience of reading *The King in Yellow* and its diegetically fictional lore, considering the book's reputation, he immediately separates those with access to similar enough information pools to his into a limited fraction of the population; and those who have not read it into uninformed and thus unable to dialogue with him on a reliable level. They do not know what he knows, therefore they cannot understand his motives and any image they have of him can be considered a misinterpretation. One of the factors that turns Hildred into an unreliable narrator is his self-isolation from others and inflexibility to change and adapt: new information is necessarily integrated into his already immutable belief system or immediately discarded as a misconception.

Through this process of self-narration and editorialization of others, Hildred creates his own identity, which is very hard to refute or alter in any significant way. As his identity also includes his view of the world and how he relates to it, that view is also immutable in the same way. When Hildred interprets his story in a specific way that goes directly against how most other people may even be capable of interpreting his story and firms himself in that version of events, he alienates himself and others, constructing an individual reality where his narrative makes sense.

Following this line of thought, we may reach a conclusion best expressed by Cain's hypothesis, "One first adopts an identity, then forms a self-constructed reality about the features of that identity, which then lends itself to a greater structure, that of existence and purpose" (129). Hildred's purpose in this new identity is to become an all-powerful ruler, a much more interesting narrative to him than a man struggling to recover from trauma. Tying back to Seltzer's notion of the blurring between psychological and physical spaces that happens for serial killers (102-105), we then understand that by creating his own reality, Hildred also discards what he considers to be the limited and misguided rules and understandings of a rejected reality. About this, Cain adds that "In

this liminal space, the world exists outside the typical rules of our physical and social reality, instead founding itself upon a conception of identity and a perspective of a self-constructed reality, which again does not adhere to an objective reality of the physical and psychological worlds" (130).

In his delusional reality murder is justifiable, an authoritarian government that enforces segregation is comforting and even legally allowed suicide is positive news. War results in costless victory, heroism and strength; a fire allows for a better reconstruction of Chicago. There is no catastrophe, there is no tragedy, there is no pain. Even the elements that appear to be negative eventually result only in the further strengthening of his imaginary nation. This can be seen in parallel to his interpretation of his own internment and the trauma acquired from reading the accursed play. Even when some personal tragedy happens, he perceives himself to only be drawn closer to the truth and, in fact, when his plans are ultimately foiled, he paints himself as a victim of treacherous conspiracy rather than as a violent and unstable madman. Even in defeat, he considers himself to be closer to the truth than the entire rest of the world. A practical defeat is infuriating, but in his mind he will always have won for knowing what he assumes to be the truth, that no one else understands but him.

As mentioned before, even if one may not be able to determine from Hildred's narration exactly where reality ends and delusion begins, one receives a very detailed portrait of the narrator-character's own sense of identity. Finally, then, I attempt to analyse what one may learn of Hildred by the narrative he offers.

If a delusion is a defense or coping mechanism, then the first question to be asked is what that delusion is defending the narrator from. As previously stated, Hildred is terrified of his own limitations and vulnerability as a human being. He is first faced with the frailty of his body and maybe even with his own mortality in the event of the fall from his horse, to then experience a loss of agency when he is interned against his wishes. Finally, he reads a traumatic book that puts a subversive twist to society and his very existence. Every level of his previous identity is attacked and, frightened by

the experience, he takes it as a revelation that his vulnerabilities must be wrong. Instead of accepting his limitations, he interprets them as undeserved injustices. Events that were inflicted upon him because he was powerless to stop them. The correction he finds to this powerlessness is, unsurprisingly, power and control. If he will not be considered sane by others, then they are the ones who are wrong. If he is not respected, then with enough power and the fear it brings, he might be able to control other people. If he has no social status, then he will rise to the very top of the social order so as to never be questioned or threatened again.

The authoritarian government is comforting for Hildred because it embodies the strength and control he wishes to have, and due to the belief that he will eventually lead them, they are seen as a tool for his protection. The USA is not only portrayed as a strong military power, but effectively the only functioning country in the world, the last bastion of morality, much like Hildred feels in relation to his peers: only he understands, only he sees the truth. He stands alone against a world of injustice. Not even other countries might pose a threat to Hildred, once he takes control, as they are all degenerating into shells of their former selves. The world is wrong, and it is up to Hildred to fix it, as he mentions his plans will ensure the happiness of the entire world (Chambers 19–21). No other position could more thoroughly reassure him that his agency would be enforced, that his mortality would be protected, that society would be fixed and that his existence had purpose. According to his narrative, he was born into an imagined imperial dynasty, and had the means and knowledge to take absolute control as the emperor and king of an authoritarian militaristic government, with the strength and perceived morality to eventually shape the entire world into his ideals. Even *The King in Yellow*, his trauma, would eventually serve him, and although his relationship to the fictional lore of the play seems to be of subservience, it is a subservience that gives him meaning, power and purpose. As Kellermeyer eloquently puts it, "Ultimately this new Messiah – this King of Kings – would be the ultimate repairer of reputations: he would invest the wealthy and happy with terror,

bringing anarchy to the world and delight to the madmen who had been banished from it" (Kellermeyer, "Two Minute Analysis").

Thus, the name of the story. It is not only Mr. Wilde who worked as a Repairer of Reputations, catering to those who thought to have been wrongfully diagnosed with insanity to bring them purpose and a sense of agency and societal respect once again, but also The King in Yellow himself would eventually act in the same way: a supernatural entity to back Hildred's wishes, to enact his justice onto the world and capacitate him to take power and control of his image, his retribution, and eventually, of the world itself.

Chapter 3 - Connections to Society

3.1 Narrative and Society

Having established a more thorough analysis of Hildred's character throughout the second chapter, it now seems appropriate to take a step back and assess "The Repairer of Reputations" and its narrator-character through a broader lens: how he and the text relate to real life concepts and ideas and may be used to exemplify those as specific possible case studies. This posited connection between fiction and real life is a widely debated topic in sociology, psychology, pedagogy and literary studies. This section explores the validity of that connection much like I introduced past chapters with theoretical debates on which to base my analyses.

In his book, Mariano Longo (2015) explores the matter thoroughly. The main problem being none other than the obvious one, the fictionality of the narrative itself making the usage of literary narratives as data to be considered as unreliable or even as completely disconnected from real data, due to their status as fictive (Longo 4-5).

The matter of how literature relates to reality, history and society, or even whether it can be related to such topics at all is a complex one, which can be traced back to Raymond Williams' work and his contributions to the sociology of literature. Despite Longo offering an excellent analysis of it, I will not limit myself to simply repeating his theory here, but rather offer connections with other theorists from literature, sociology, culture, and my own insights, to complement the work he has already conducted so effectively. Therefore, if Longo's book is the main sociological theory I will use in this section, Hans Robert Jauss' *Toward an Aesthetic of Reception* (1982) will cover the more literary side of my exploration.

According to Jauss, in order to approach the social relevance of a piece of art or literature, one must consider the relationship between its production and its audience's reception. He states, "Put another way: literature and art only obtain a history that has the character of a process when the succession of works is mediated not only through the producing subject but also through the consuming subject - through the interaction of author and public" (Jauss 15).

At first glance, this may seem contradictory to the literary theories already explored in chapters 1 and 2, where I denied considering the external influence of authors and readers on the analysis of a text. This, however, works in the current context. It is a simple matter of ontological levels. When trying to analyse what a text says itself, its contents and diegetic elements in an academic or scientific context, one should try not to project real-life elements onto it, and attempt to conduct a more objective dissection of the text itself, what it says and its possible interpretations rather than concern oneself with what the author may have meant to express or not, or what a single reader's personal interpretation of it may be. This is because the reader, the author and real life exist on a completely different ontological level from the diegetic universe of the work.

First, then, I determined what the work expressed about its narrator-character. What follows, however, is a proposition to how what was determined in that analysis may be relevant to real-life. In this step, the ontological level shifts. In order to compare the meanings found in Chapter 2 to reality, it becomes relevant to consider the ontological level in which reality itself exists when before it was not so. In this way, Jauss affirms that the relationship between an author's creation and their audience's reception is a valid point of concern to exemplify how a work is connected to reality. I will not specifically explore the connections between *The King in Yellow* and its contemporary audience, as that has already been glossed over in the Introduction, and falls outside the focal point of this dissertation. I will, however, use Jauss' proposed theory as complimentary proof of the connection between fictional literary production and real sociological concepts.

An important part of this theory is the knowledge that literary works are not produced in a vacuum. They are immersed in a culture which already has typical signals, symbols and characteristics, and even previous works that will inform how an author might create a narrative and how a reader might read it. The collective imagination created by the symbols of contemporary and earlier texts forms, in the mind of an audience, a horizon of expectations, patterns and tropes that they will come to expect when reading a novel. Jauss develops the idea further, "The new text

evokes for the reader … the horizon of expectations and rules familiar from earlier texts, which are then varied, corrected, altered, or even just reproduced" (23).

Not only that, but in order to even be intelligible at all, all fictional texts need a certain degree of mimesis with reality. If one used solely concepts and objects that are completely nonexistent in the real world, such as materials, words and colors that do not exist, or that do not relate to established cultural knowledges and concepts, a text would be unreadable. By using language itself, a text is ascribing to realistic cultural symbols already, and even in cases where new words and neologisms are created for the text, those need to be relatable to something in experience. As such, Hansen states "By implication, it is possible for the text to postulate a clear resemblance with this factual object-world and thereby borrow a behavioral pattern, a situation, or an object from here, leaving it to the reader to complete its existence in the text" (243).

This relationship of mimesis, however, is not established as a simple objective mirror of reality. György Lukács exemplifies this relationship quite succinctly, pointing out that what is represented is not reality itself but the author's relationship with that reality, and their personal interpretation of it. He posits, "In its experience of nature, the subject, which alone is real, dissolves the whole outside world in mood, and itself becomes mood by virtue of the inexorable identity of essence between the contemplative subject and its object" (65). It is this 'mood' of what life and the world feels like to the author that is most reliably mimetic about the work of art. This notion connects back to McAdams' theory of the life story, approached in section 2.5; as they know what it feels like to construct a self-narrative, and therefore can construct a fictional one that respects the authenticity of that process.

This process is natural since the author is, before their status as a writer, a person who lives in culture, and who consumes it as well. It is impossible to create a self-narrative without being affected by one's culture (McAdams 101). The author does base their creative process in their experience of reality, as mediated through the cultural signs and patterns they are immersed in, but

subjected to a judging and evaluating process (Longo 13), as narrative may punish or praise those who commit what the author considers to be right or wrong, in order to create a variety of different meanings and conclusions. In an explanation of a specific type of psychological interview called "Thematic Apperception Test", Aron defines the phenomenon:

> The theory behind the present technique assumes that the particular stories that the subject tells represent his fantasied environment and fantasied way of dealing with that environment. … Any person in the story with whose actions the subject concerns himself … represents a medium through whom the subject expresses his own inner tendencies, and the actions themselves are indicative of the nature of these tendencies. …
>
> When we speak of underlying desires or "needs," we do not refer -to instinctual impulses nor do we wish to imply that these desires are innate. Rather, we refer to tendencies within the personality that result from the developmental pattern—from influences of the environment upon the basic psychic structure. We use the term "underlying" to refer especially to those tendencies which are not ordinarily allowed expression. (489-490)

It is not the point to state that every author's creativity is therefore limited to be a conscious expression of themselves, but rather that the only manner in which they may relate to the world is through themselves, and therefore, as they attempt to create a narrative or world that feels truthful or realistic, aspects of that relationship or that interpretation they have to the world will, necessarily and unconsciously, seep in. An attempt at removing one's self from absolute subjectivity is certainly made, or at least at allowing a text to relate to a greater group of individuals, since texts are created to be read, and especially literary texts, to be read by others, usually, a greater audience. This process can also be further explained using Longo,

> Thus, fictional texts are constructed by implicitly referring to what is commonly known about the real, which accounts for their capacity to construct an imagined yet credible world; that is, a world which draws heavily upon the reader's stock of knowledge. A literary text selects

> elements of the referential world and although their meaning is transformed in the process of fictionalization, the selected aspects (whether historical, social, literary or cultural) depend on their original meaning as sedimented in our shared stock of knowledge. (Longo 140)

In this manner, a text does not exist or come about in a vacuum, as a ready-made product entirely conceived by a genius artist. It is written drawing inspiration from a relative infinity of other sources which the author has encountered, that complement, contest, contrast and oppose the author's values, feelings and ideas; and their final creation. Any given text (and here I do not limit myself to simply the verbal variety of text) exists in relation to many other texts to which the author has been the reader or consumer. The author is, in this way, not the central and most essential piece of the puzzle, nor the final gatekeeper and judge for the interpretative meaning of their productions (Barthes 148). Rather, they play an important part in the creative process, but not the central one, as Roland Barthes explicits, "It is not that the Author may not 'come back' in the Text, in his text, but he then does so as a 'guest'. If he is a novelist, he is inscribed in the novel like one of his characters, figured in the carpet; no longer privileged, paternal, aletheological, his inscription is ludic" (Barthes 161).

As previously explored in Chapter 1, the author does not get to fully determine how a text will be read, and the most they can do is to fill their texts with symbols that may communicate or support the reading of meaning they intend on, and limit or discard certain others, but the text will remain, ultimately, open to interpretation. Even when discussing theatre and the performing arts, Jacques Rancière offers a fantastic interpretation of the consumer of artistic practices in general, which can easily be applied to literature, in *The Emancipated Spectator* (2009). According to him, the reader will commonly find meanings which are demonstrably and consistently retrievable from a text that were not originally intended by the author. The reader may discover knowledges that are valid within the text that were never consciously put there by the author (Rancière 13-14), as the text is a third factor to consider within this relationship, relatively detached from both sides. Rancière

states, “It is the third thing that is owned by no one, whose meaning is owned by no one, but which subsists between them excluding any uniform transmission, any identity of cause and effect” (15).

Rancière is an avid defender of the equal measure of intelligences, and of the fact that even if the author supposedly holds more information about their creation, that does not mean they possess more intelligence capable of connecting signs and discovering patterns: that skill is shared equally throughout all of humanity, from the ignorant who is learning language to the scientist that creates hypotheses (Rancière 10).

It is through this individual capacity for interpretation that the audience’s power as an evaluating force exists. The shared intellectual ability to associate and dissociate meaning from signs in a given text is what emancipates the reader (or spectator) as a critical consumer of creative productions (Rancière 16-17). Yet, even as critical consumers, they are not at all unbiased. As they consume the work, they will create their own universe of possibilities for the direction of the plot in mind, they will expect and demand certain patterns, and create others. He summarizes, “This is a crucial point: spectators see, feel and understand something in as much as they compose their own poem, as in their way, do actors or playwrights, directors, dancers or performers” (Rancière 13).

This naturally happens, as Jauss points out, because of the aforementioned horizon of expectations, and the rules by which we, as consumers, know literature functions. Literature, he posits, functions almost through a syntax or grammar of genres, modes of expression and figures; as well as culturally relevant topics, symbols and metaphors (Jauss 38). These rules and the innate understanding humans have of them are insightfully represented by the work of another theatre theorist, Keith Johnstone, in his book *Impro for Storytellers* (1999), in which he recounts, through parables and stories drawn from personal experience from teaching improvisation classes for over 40 years, the patterns and insights he has found on the subject of narrative structure, and what audiences expect of a narrative.

Johnstone detects, in fact, the same phenomenon posited by Rancière about the audience's projection of expectations onto a narrative: "The spectators create a 'shadow story' that exists alongside the improvisers' story. Storytelling goes well when there's a close match between the players' stories and the spectators' shadow stories" (Johnstone 79). This is not to say that a good narrative is one that the readers may predict in its entirety, but one that respects the diegetic logic of the created world, and genre. If one starts a gritty story about survival in a desert, a sudden shift to a romance in Italy will feel jarring, unrealistic and nonsensical to the reader unless connected back to the initial setting, at least through metaphor. Instead, what one expects when reading a gritty story about survival in a desert is for the characters to handle dehydration, temperature changes, paranoia, et cetera. These associations are automatic, as they are made as soon as the reader understands the world in which a story exists (Johnstone 79-80). Any break or shift in genre or setting within a work must be handled carefully and gradually, so as to allow for the circle of possibilities in the mind of the reader to adapt to its new parameters, or to reconnect past hints that might have indicated this shift in some way prior to its execution.

This leads to the next rule Johnstone derives from his experiences, the one for the necessity of recurrence. If a story starts with the peeling of a potato, then that peeling must have significance, if not for the plot, for the mood and setting of the story. If nothing connects back to symbols and ideas previously introduced in a story, then it is not a narrative, but a simple list of actions and objects (Johnstone 81). Thus, if that gritty desert section is abandoned and is not connected in any way once again to the rest of the book following a couple's romantic adventures in Italy, it will feel (and be) unnecessary to that story, and would be better off discarded. By the same measure, if a strange element is added that does not logically connect to a story, the reader will lend a storyteller their attention as a loan, as they assume this break will be reconnected in a satisfying way, and may even start creating a circle of possibilities for how that will happen in the future (Johnstone 82). A reader

will attempt to justify new information in contrast to previously given information and possible future information. As Johnstone puts it, “Such justification is never-ending, effortless and automatic” (81).

Yet another way in which readers can understand this grammar of literature is by the establishment and subsequent breaking of routines. This is what is commonly referred to as ‘conflict’. A story in which a man walks to a store, buys milk, goes home, eats cereal, rests and goes to work the next day is very poor unless on the next day, he finds out he is being fired, or getting a promotion, or that he is sick due to the expired cereal, or that aliens are invading. Again, once a routine is started, attention is loaned in the expectation that the routine will be broken, interrupted or challenged in some way (Johnstone 89).

By innately understanding this ‘grammar’ of narrative, the rules that constitute storytelling, and being critical in its reception such as Rancière postulates, the reader will not only create a story of their own, but evaluate the one they are reading, at least partially, by basing it on that story. The spectator wants to be surprised, but in a way that they feel they could have been able to predict what would happen. They want to see their 'shadow story' be only slightly wrong, or even completely right (depending on the genre of the story). If a 'shadow story' is completely wrong, it should be because it did not account for established details in the story (e.g,: the spectator did not notice the relevance of one of the clues of the murder), not because new elements keep being added out of the blue, with no possibility for prediction (Johnstone 79-84).

By the same measure, a work may be interpreted in many different ways, but it may not be interpreted in every possible conceivable way, as it is limited by each sign inserted into the work. Eco concludes that, “Therefore, to sum up, we can say that the ‘work in movement’ is the possibility of numerous different personal interventions, but it is not an amorphous invitation to indiscriminate participation“ (19). In the desert survival story, if it never shifts to the Italian romance, there will not be a possibility for interpretation of it as such.

If in the last paragraphs I have explored the 'grammar' of narratives by which readers judge a story, now I turn to the means of how spectators may judge the themes and contents of a story, which have already been glimpsed previously at the mention of the Thematic Apperception Test. It is no surprise that a reader's values will be, inevitably to some degree, culturally determined. The reading of a text is a linguistic act, but the mental construction of the themes of a work is itself also an act of language, and therefore, even though the intelligence and capacity for such is natural such as pointed out by Rancière, the practice of it is culturally determined and influenced. Longo supports this by claiming that:

> We live in a world which is endowed with culturally defined meanings, which we adopt to give order to our experiences, within a complex process by which socially and personal sedimented experiences come to terms with the livid experience of the actual situation … [It] is always mediated by culturally defined meanings, which, although adapted by our personal experience, condition how and what we perceive of reality. Narrative is one of the instruments given to the social actor to construct the world by giving sense to it. (34)

Therefore, the interpretation of a text or narrative does not exist by itself inside the mind of a reader either, rather it finds connection to other texts and meanings, symbolic interpretations and referents which the reader has already acquired throughout their lifetime (Jauss 20). The values and connections people typically hold in vogue for art at a given era could be considered to represent that 'horizon of expectations' described by Jauss, which works very similarly, in a more collective and cultural context, to the 'circle of possibilities' explored by Johnstone. This is why Jauss posits, "The coherence of literature as an event is primarily mediated in the horizon of expectations of the literary experience of contemporary and later readers, critics, and authors" (Jauss 22).

Yet, this horizon changes as new works subvert it and advance it, forming new horizons which will once more be subverted and expanded by, ideally, evoking the horizon so as to connect easily with the reader to then, at some point, increment it, subvert it or question it in some way (Jauss

23-24). This distance, in fact, between the horizon of expectations of a given age and a work created in that age, is exactly the factor Jauss uses to analyse a text's 'aesthetic value'. The idea he defends is precisely that this distance, if properly executed, will itself be seen as innovative in a positive sense, and thus become part of a new horizon of expectations, which, with time, may itself become common sense (Jauss 25). At the same time, with the nonlinearity of the progression of culture, works that have been met with little interest originally may find themselves being reexamined for connecting (or subverting) more thoroughly with the horizon of expectations of a different generation. Perhaps obviously, this process does not happen by itself. In order to become socially relevant in this way, a work must successfully integrate its subjective meanings with the current horizon of expectations, or circle of possibility of its audience. Longo explores this matter further,

> In this process, the meaning of fiction is achieved by integrating its implicit information into the stock of shared social knowledge. So, the world of fiction is never totally self-sufficient: it needs the active intervention of the reader who makes recourse to his social competences and culturally determined knowledge in order to make a narrative interpretable. Since the reference to common sense is a prerequisite to understand the fictional message, the gap between the fictional world and the real world is not dramatic: what is described in fictional terms is generally compatible with what we know about reality. (Longo 41)

In this way, when a particular work resonates more deeply with a reader, it is not too much to assume this is because it not only passed their critical test of 'narrative grammar', but also because it connected to the reader on a deeper level through its themes, symbols and patterns. It is through this cultural, psychological or emotional connection that a work becomes particularly interesting to a reader (Longo 30). Once more, what a reader expects and the relationship they will have to reality will also depend on the cultural values in which they are immersed. In fact, it is posited in the introduction to *The Authoritarian Personality* (1950), a book which will inform most of

section 3.2, “What people say and, to a lesser degree, what they really think depends very largely upon the climate of opinion in which they are living …” (Adorno et al., “Introduction” 4).

If a work becomes widely regarded as being of good quality or any other number of positive and vague words critics and populations alike might use to describe a piece that expands their catalogue of signs and connects with them culturally and emotionally, it may either be because it has broken through the current horizon of expectation or because it has conformed to that horizon in positive ways. Either way, this does not mean that it has passed the test of a vague, massless, faceless entity called ‘the readership’. Once again, it is the individual’s capacity to critically evaluate a piece that gives the process power. When a work connects, surprises or even disappoints a great number of critical individuals who, all, live ingrained within their societies and form values that also confirm or refute the values of that society, it is because each of those individuals has compared that work to the horizon of expectation, to other works being produced simultaneously, to their own knowledge and experience of life, and found not only aesthetic quality, but an expression of truthfulness. A work of art or literature may not relate directly to factual elements to society, but if it connects so thoroughly to so many societal agents, and is created as well by a societal agent, who, all individually, judge it to express truthfully some aspect of existence, then claiming that fiction does not in any way represent society or reality is simply unreasonable.

Certainly, such a work of fiction does not necessarily accurately represent scientific and quantitative data within society, but it does represent qualitatively part of the experience of living in it, or otherwise relating to it. As Longo puts it, “What matters is the process by which a narrative text, rooted within a cultural and symbolic system, may produce a plausible representation of human action and the motives and goals driving it, which may be then understood and interpreted as meaningful by the reading public or the audience.” (46)

Furthermore, the fictional aspect of literature loses further importance when it is regarded as a possible set of clues to socially accepted and supported representations of a given reality or

experience of life (Longo 141). It is not only the expression itself that is valid, but the fact that this expression is somehow validated by an audience within that context which matters as well. This phenomenon, in fact, happens in social reality and day to day culture, even being quantifiable to a certain degree.

It is a phenomenon thoroughly ingrained in society and culture, from the moment of conception to the moment of its reception, and Longo posits that, "So, telling a story is not simply a form of sociality, it is one of the ways whereby social reality is reproduced, value systems strengthened and behavioural standards confirmed. And the former holds true both for everyday and literary narratives" (6). Everyday narratives which, it is relevant to point out, have always been regarded as qualitative data for sociological research. The point is precisely that fictional narratives and everyday narratives (such as those told by regular people in interviews to researchers) are both comparatively valid as sources of qualitative data. (Longo 8). They may not express the objective entirety of reality, but they do express an individual or a culture's possibility of relation to it (Longo 2-3).

Even as an individual's everyday narrative may be biased, a fictional narrative must also be regarded with some awareness of caution, but not outright dismissed due to its fictional content. If it was produced by and connects to real people, who are living in social realities, who are conditioned to use cultural values as means of relating to the world, it does express some amount of truthfulness, even if artificially agreed upon (or related to) by all these societal agents. What must be accounted for, then, is that it is not an exact mirror of reality, but a mirror of a feeling groups of people have over aspects of it. Indeed, one must be reminded that these represent a world that is interpreted rather than definite, but that symbolism and metaphor may be precisely what succeeds in representing the impressions experienced by these groups of readers in manners other social studies may fail to do (Young 3).

Therefore, it can be concluded that fictional narratives, and especially fictional narratives that have in some sense or another achieved success with the public and the critics can be used as qualitative expressions of what it feels like (or what it could possibly feel like) to experience events such as those which happen in the narrative. By having been tried and tested by a large group of individuals against their own perceptions of reality and of narratives that feel true to their experiences of culture, society, fellow humans and of emotion, these narratives can be said to have expressed or captured truthfulness about the experience of life of a large group of people. It is not a substitute for research and hard data, but it may be a complement or an emotional, qualitative measure of what it feels like to live in the era or generation that has shown approval of such a narrative.

3.2 Hildred, the Authoritarian Personality and Totalitarianism

In Chapter 2 and specifically in sections 2.2 and 2.5, I strived to conduct an analysis of Hildred's personality traits, and to explore, within the text, how these traits are established, how his character is explored and how it affects the portrayal of the rest of the narrative. Using the theory lastly presented in section 3.1, I will now attempt to connect Hildred's character and personality traits, his story and the information we have about his past and diegetical present, to specific real-life phenomena that I believe to be interconnected. As explicited before, I do not intend to use Hildred as a basis for studying real-life societal issues, but as a possible representation that can be seen as truthful and life-like of what a person who exhibits these traits in real-life could possibly be like, or what following these phenomena could possibly entail.

In order to debate said phenomena I will use two books which delve into sociological questions.. The first, and arguably main one, is *The Authoritarian Personality*, where Theodor W. Adorno, Else Frenkel-Brunswik, Daniel J. Levinson and R. Nevitt Sanford study, through both qualitative and quantitative research in sociology and psychology, the aspects and traits that

compose the titular personality type (Adorno et al., "Introduction" 1), (or personality deviation, as it is implied) its causes and origins, and its complexities.

The second book is Hannah Arendt's *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (1951), which analyses the ideological and sociological structures upon which totalitarianism builds itself, which connects to the authoritarian personality as its ultimate and most extreme consequence. Both books are certainly somewhat outdated, and much criticism and analysis has been made about each of them. There may be methodological issues, and the authors (more specifically Arendt) may incur less-than-popular opinions from today's sociological academic background. I am not here to defend these books as the prime studies on the subject or their authors as better than others. However, both books rang true with what has been seen in real-life in the rise of fascist policies and ideologies that have been witnessed throughout the world in the past few years (a fact that will be connected to more up-to-date theory in this dissertation's Conclusion). Moreover, they seem to complement each other very well, in ways that will hopefully be made clear through this section, and, most importantly, both seemed to list personality traits which mirror Hildred's personality almost completely, therefore proving themselves useful for the purposes of this specific chapter, seen as my objective is to, once more, explore a life-like possible way of being, not to conduct a factual end-all be-all full-blown analysis on the subject.

Similarly, it is also relevant to point out that the fact I have compared Hildred's trauma with PTSD does not mean that he is a representation of every person who suffers from the disorder, or that people who suffer from it are fated to become authoritarians. Rather, it is how the trauma is mishandled by him and how he gives into unhealthy coping mechanisms that, in his case, lead him to parallel this personality.

With these disclaimers, I follow along to the actual comparative part of this section, where I will retrace Hildred's backstory and personality traits as previously discussed in the last chapter, comparing his established traits to those described in both books.

What is known of Hildred's story starts at the horse riding accident, as it was already explored in 2.2. Why he was riding is unknown and how the accident happened is also an enigma, but his horse was immediately put down, and he had to be carried to the doctor, which implies some sort of severe fall (Chambers 3).

At this point, it is unknown whether Hildred's sanity truly became affected, but Doctor Archer declared it so and he was put under his care, against his wishes. He had been confronted with a severe accident, so some amount of trauma is to be expected, as it is not too ridiculous to assume he was faced with the vulnerability of his human body and even with his own sense of mortality. Justly or unjustly, he was committed to treatment for insanity and, even if against his own wishes, this treatment was concluded, and he was pronounced cured. This notion packs more than one might think at a first glance.

The implication that he underwent full treatment against his wishes is not only a loss of agency, it is a proof of some amount of compliance. There is no way to prove whether Hildred was contrarian to treatment in the beginning, or even if he tried to escape. One may assume that he expressed his opposition to it from the beginning, but there is no proof of that either. There is proof, however, that either throughout the treatment or towards the end of it, he behaved so well as to be pronounced effectively cured. Another point that may be raised is that Hildred was, very obviously, not cured at all when that pronouncement was made, and therefore, it can be interpreted that he acted as stable as possible and complied so fully to treatment that he was able to fool a doctor. It is also not an impossibility that Dr. Archer was not fantastic at his job, but that verges once again on the realm of speculation.

Either way, the point is that, truthfully or not, Hildred learned to mimic compliance, and to do it well enough to be granted freedom by a professional. Performance of compliance, while feeling opposite feelings is what characterized Hildred's stay at the clinic, at the very least, towards its end. This combination is also mentioned throughout *The Authoritarian Personality* as a defining factor

of development for authoritarians. In the study, not only fear of parents, but a lack of genuine connection with them was what characterized the type of discipline the authoritarian was brought up around, causing this performative compliance, as further explored by Frenkel-Brunswik:

> The type of discipline used seems to prevent a genuine incorporation and assimilation of social values. The child had to renounce instinctual and other pleasures for an exchange of love which was given him only sparingly, inconsistently, and conditionally. Since the moral requirements, must have appeared to the child overwhelming and unintelligible and the reward small, submission to them had to be reinforced by fear of, and pressure from, external agencies. This need for permanent reinforcement persisted, to become a constant state of affairs in the adult. ("Dynamic and Cognitive"455)

This would lead to a mistrust and insecurity about one's own mind and opinions, as the child is punished and disapproved of when exhibiting natural behaviours that are not supported by the parents, and receives punishments which may be disproportionate to the perceived importance of the offence. Furthermore, it would lead to learning that the performance of a behaviour was more important than its sincerity, as when the child performed in the expected ways, it would be praised despite still feeling disconnected from the principles defended by the parents. In this way, a child would learn to hide or omit any questionings over the parental procedures, and simply resign themselves to performing what was required (Frenkel-Brunswik, "Sex, People and Self" 423). Therefore, an authoritarian would eventually come to externalize their capacity for self-judgement, since their personal feelings about the subject are not to be trusted, onto their environment, or specific elements of it, such as people or institutions (Frenkel-Brunswik, "Dynamic and Cognitive" 454).

Naturally, Dr. Archer is not Hildred's father. In fact, in Hildred's case the role of 'parents' as in the original factors which affect his sense of identity are divided between Archer and The King in Yellow. This is because of the aforementioned need for an external guide, which leads one to always

search for a figure to be submitted to, a set of rules to be able to evaluate one's self with, an ideology to perform without connection. The authors agree that, "One solution which such an individual often achieves is that of alignment with power figures, an arrangement by which he is able to gratify both his need for power and his need to submit. He hopes that by submitting to power he can participate in it" (Adorno et al., "Antidemocratic Trends" 238).

The important part is that Hildred learned how to behave again from both Archer and the play, in a moment when the power relationship between them and himself was indeed very similar to that of a parent and a child. Simultaneously, no deep personal connection was established between the patient and the doctor.

However, a couple of points do not add up. If Dr. Archer represents a parental figure and, according to *The Authoritarian Personality*, "Fear and dependency seem to discourage the [authoritarian] child from conscious criticism of the parents" (Frenkel-Brunswik, "Summary" 482), then why is Hildred able to openly criticize and question Dr. Archer?

It is essential to point out that what can be possibly considered as Hildred's greatest trauma is not the commitment to the institution and Dr. Archer himself, but rather the moment he reads the accursed play, as explored in section 2.5 (Chambers 3). Although he learns to behave and perform stability from Dr. Archer, the revelation of The King in Yellow as a new guide from which to derive meaning redirects Hildred's feelings of submission. This is noticeable in the authoritarian as well, as since they do not connect to their own ideologies deeply, but only to the performance of conventionality, changing and adapting leads them to not believe they are betraying these ideologies once they adopt new practices to perform, as explained by Frenkel-Brunswik:

> … Fear of punishment by external authorities rather than self- chosen and ego-assimilated principles continue to be the primary determinant of their behavior. At the same time there is resentment against these authorities which are mainly experienced as restricting and punishing. Readiness to exchange these authorities mainly in the direction of a better bargain

> is one of the consequences of these attitudes. The preferred authority is the one who promises most in terms of material goods and backing to some release from restrictions which seem intolerable. Such persons have a longing to overthrow the troublesome moral restraints and to live fully according to the pleasure principle. The repressed, unsublimated, and unmodified tendencies are ready to break through and to flood the tenuously maintained social superstructure ("Dynamic and Cognitive", 455).

The play is said to be extremely subversive, and to question every aspect of human condition, existence, social structure and so on. Feeling abandoned by the social structure that forced him to feel so completely oppressed under the care of Dr. Archer, his voice unheard, his will infringed upon, Hildred finds in The King in Yellow a theory that expresses, in its most extreme terms, the revolt against all that is rational, social and real. His trauma is also described as joy, as revelation, as a break-through in his mode of thinking, "I pray God will curse the writer, as the writer has cursed the world with this beautiful, stupendous creation, terrible in its simplicity, irresistible in its truth—a world which now trembles before the King in Yellow" (Chambers 4). Having learned how to submit, Hildred now chose who to submit to, and aligns himself with ideas that work to dismantle his diegetic contemporary society to a degree which makes every country, and even more extreme social movements denounce this play as too subversive to be allowed to be read in society (Chambers 4). This process frees Hildred from the control of Dr. Archer, allowing him to denounce it as oppression while aligning himself to a new oppressive force. Arendt diagnoses this process when speaking of extreme political activists that predated what would turn into totalitarian movements, "Activism, moreover, seemed to provide new answers to the old and troublesome question, 'Who am I?' which always appears with redoubled persistence in times of crisis" (331). The questioning of social issues which made the authoritarian uncomfortable is explored, validating their previously ignored feelings of inadequacy for their lack of connection, while they maintain a need to submit and thus simply exchange leaders for preferred ones.

Through these new values, while stuck in the habit of submission adopted from Dr. Archer, Hildred starts altering the way he sees and views the world. In section 2.5, I explored how his identity stops allowing anyone who does not already agree with him to affect it at all, and how Hildred destroys the possibility for true connection with those who have not read his sacred book or gone through similar experiences to his. Hildred, as seen through the book, connects more with those of conspiratorial thinking, those who have been at a mental institution, those who have read or who reference The King in Yellow. Others, however, are blocked from affecting Hildred's opinions, as they are judged to be misinformed, mistaken or ill-intended at best, and therefore not qualified to be considered as a valid opinion.

This also happens in authoritarians, as they tend to distort the views of the world, of others and of themselves based on these visible performances of adherence to what they believe is the correct way to be. As Levinson puts it,

> A distinction is made between ingroups (those groups with which the individual identifies himself) and outgroups (with which he does not have a sense of belonging and which are regarded as antithetical to the ingroups). Outgroups are the objects of negative opinions and hostile attitudes; ingroups are the objects of positive opinions and uncritically supportive attitudes; and it is considered that outgroups should be socially subordinate to ingroups. (104)

Ingroups are what the research names as those whom the authoritarian individual associates with, while outgroups are those they do not. These are, however, not purely sociological concepts. What matters here is who they associate and identify with, not their real sociological condition, as individuals may identify with groups they do not belong to (Levinson 146). This phenomenon does not limit itself to simply separate, but also to generate aggression. By projecting their self-judgement onto the world, they externalize the self, as explored in section 2.2 and defended by Seltzer (101), experiencing the dissolution between private and social lives, and relating to the world as part of their

own mentality as opposed to something independent from it. Therefore, any deviation of performance feels like an attack or an attempt at corruption of their own identity. Levinson posits,

> It is as if the [authoritarian] feels threatened by most of the groups to which he does not have a sense of belonging; if he cannot identify, he must oppose; if a group is not "acceptable," it is "alien." The ingroup-outgroup distinction thus becomes the basis for most of his social thinking, and people are categorized primarily according to the groups to which they belong. (147)

Therein lies the greatest logical fallacy and moral failure in the authoritarian's mind. Despite an outwards conservative or conventional presentation, they only know how to perform as such, but not how to internalize such values. To them, conventionality is not about maintaining tradition or ascribing to a 'live and let live' ideology, as what is important is the performance of conventionality. Therefore, anyone who fails at performing conventionality is morally wrong, and must be punished, stopped, segregated or destroyed (Adorno et al., "Antidemocratic Trends" 230). Much like what they experienced growing up, failure to perform needs, in their minds, to result in punishment. Not education or reform, but immediate and disproportionate punishment.

This can be seen most clearly on the expositional section of the short story, as explored in section 2.3, as Hildred's mind creates, in his delusional reality (or projects in his authoritarian government in case the setting is real), a feeling of utopia even where none exists, simply by removing all outgroups. The segregation of people of colour, Jews, native americans and so on (Chambers 2) confirms this thought process, as they are further away from Hildred than others who share some ingroups with him: white, socially accepted, middle-class people (the majority of the characters in the short story). Even those who are mentally insane are offered a Lethal Chamber as an exit, which points to how Hildred does not consider himself mentally unstable, and therefore in his mind only those who feel themselves to have been unjustly treated for insanity, not the ones truly suffering from mental conditions (to which he assumes there is a distinction) are his ingroup. The

ones suffering from serious mental diseases are considered to be a burden on society, and approvingly to be removed from it. Again, one needs not belong to a group in order to identify themselves with it. In the same way, one may belong to a group without identifying themselves as such. Levinson writes,

> It seems, then, that the individual who has a pseudopatriotic conception of America in relation to other nations actually regards most of America as an outgroup: various religions, non-whites, "the masses," too-educated people and too-uneducated people, criminals, radicals, and so on, tend largely to fall in the outgroup category (148).

Not only so, but ingroups are considered to be justly dominant and outgroups as justly subordinate (Levinson 150). In Hildred's case, even though his innermost group (those who believe to have been unjustly diagnosed with madness) is not currently dominant, to him they ought to be, and so the plot of the short story is precisely about correcting this issue: taking power and giving it to the group it should have always rightfully belonged to in his view, or, as the authoritarian would put it, "my own" (whichever one that happens to be).

This distance between how Hildred sees himself (an unjustly discredited successor to the Imperial Dynasty of America) and who he most likely is (a mentally unstable, aggressive, paranoid madman who is unable to connect to others and the world), can also be seen paralleled by the authoritarian. Frenkel-Brunswik offers a focus for comparison,

> There is reason to believe that a certain lack of personal identity is compensated for by a wish to "belong," and to conceive of oneself as *average and therefore all right*, with attempted denial or "forgetting" of deviations, may these deviations be past or present … . However, as has been mentioned before, this kind of belonging to a group is something quite different from genuine identification with other individuals and society. For [authoritarians], then, the greater the deviation, the more stress must be laid on denying its existence. ("Sex, People and Self" 429-430)

Hildred's stay at the mental asylum is a great deviation from the norm indeed, and even though he constructs an ingroup based around that experience, he still finds a psychological way to also deny his own madness and the validity of his internment: he simply was never insane to begin with. As Frenkel-Brunswik points out, whatever deviations are admitted at all are usually rationalized and explained away as accidental, uncontrollable or hereditary factors rather than any personal failure or flaw ("Sex, People and Self" 432-433).

In fact, this tendency to ignore or omit whatever may be considered bad in themselves is seen recurrently in authoritarians. Hildred is seen to do so repeatedly through the short story, talking about himself as sane, denying any affectation of his mind even when exhibiting irrational and erratic behaviour, such as almost attacking his cousin from being awoken from an obsessive reverie (Chambers 22). He talks about himself as more active, energetic and capable since his eyes were opened by The King in Yellow, even though this is disproved by himself and other characters, as explored in section 2.2. He considers himself smarter and sharper than any of his perceived opponents, and sees himself as able to manipulate them easily, even though his plans all fail by the end of the narrative. Even when referring to the trauma of reading The King in Yellow, he expresses it as a silly little thing, that he should not have been troubled by (Chambers 3). Frenkel-Brunswik detects the same pattern on the authoritarian, "However, there is evidence that the repeated assertions of independence are a defense against strong feelings of dependence, passivity, helplessness, and sometimes even self-contempt. These feelings are but rarely recognized or accepted as such without making an attempt at self-justification" ("Dynamic and Cognitive" 440). Hildred needs guidance from Mr. Wilde. Without him, he sees his entire plan going up in smoke, regardless of all the evidence he believed he had on his side. Hildred does not decide much in the story, he is simply ordered around by Wilde repeatedly. He waits, observes and gets his validation, and repeats, until Wilde tells him to do something else. Hildred is entirely dependent on Mr. Wilde and completely incapable of action or the decisiveness he ascribes to himself.

Precisely because they are unable to realize their own shortcomings, and by method of projection, those of their selected leaders, authoritarians are left with an immense amount of internal frustration for never feeling entirely like that which they perform. The frustration about being repressed by their leaders, and terrified of unjust punishment, also finds an escape point in aggressiveness towards outgroups (Frenkel-Brunswik, "Summary" 482). This frustration caused by this performance forced upon them builds up, but is unable to be expressed due to fear, and so is displaced or projected onto those, on the outside, who exhibit the tendencies most like the authoritarian's own shortcomings, and who practice that which the authoritarian can only interpret as 'corruptive' behaviour (Adorno et al., "Antidemocratic Trends" 233). Because of this, it is no surprise that they cannot conceive of equality, since any attempt of an outgroup to improve social condition is perceived as an attack, and an encroachment on the authoritarian's social space (Levinson 149). Frenkel-Brunswik explores the problem further, "Projection of one's inner impulses, particularly of aggression, onto others will naturally lead to a conception of a dangerous and hostile world and consequently to a general suspiciousness of others" ("Sex, People and Self" 411).

In Hildred this can be most easily noticed in his paranoia over his cousin and Constance's intentions towards each other. Unable to truly connect to most other humans and accustomed to seeing interpersonal relations as ways to gain or work towards social power, Hildred sees marriage as a political move, and nothing more. Frenkel-Brunswik writes about the authoritarian, "In their relations to the opposite sex as in other interpersonal relationships, [authoritarians] tend toward an exploitive-manipulative type of power orientation" ("Sex, People and Self" 400). He therefore perceives his cousin as cunning and manipulative, when throughout the short story he is always open and inclusive towards Hildred, as explored in section 2.4. As the group of authors put it in *The Authoritarian Personality*,

> If the antidemocratic individual is disposed to see in the outer world impulses which are suppressed in himself, and we wish to know what these impulses are, then something may be

> learned by noting what attributes he most readily, but unrealistically, ascribes to the world around him. If an individual insists that someone has hostile designs on him, and we can find no evidence that this is true, we have good reason to suspect that our subject himself has aggressive intentions and is seeking by means of projection to justify them. (Adorno et al., "Antidemocratic Trends" 240)

It is easily verifiable that, throughout "The Repairer of Reputations", the narrator character has been the one with aggressive and manipulative impulses towards others, actively working towards the pursuit of social power and to remove, or even murder those who stand in his way. In order to do so, however, these feelings need to be justified, and they are; through these accusations of manipulations and ill-intentions in others. This paranoia leads to the perception of a world that is filled with danger and betrayal at every turn - not seen in America, at least not by Hildred, but in the rest of the world, which is dying and corrupted, and whose last bastion of safety and morality is the narrator's own country. This delusion of threats imagined and real leads Hildred to look to protect himself, as explored in section 2.5, attempting to give himself enough power to never feel vulnerable again. Frenkel-Brunswik detects this pattern on the authoritarian as well, "The persecutory ideas about threats in the environment apparently reinforce the wish to be strong; such power is to be obtained by falling in line with what is seen as the general pattern of social relationships, that is, by associating with those who have power" ("Sex, People and Self" 420). Indeed, Hildred aims to not only be strong, not only to have power, but to become the most powerful, the leader of an idealized country with a great military strength with which he can associate to enforce his values and thoughts throughout the world.

This ties back to the notion of Hildred's lost hobbies of horse-riding, fishing, and others. As paranoid and obsessed with power, unable to connect on a deeper level with himself or others, a reduction also occurs on the value of passive pleasures that do not somehow connect to the idea of accruing power of some sort (Frenkel-Brunswik, "Summary" 475). Authoritarians, being unable to

connect to others truthfully by basing their entire identity around social performances, end up relating to others as possible tools for personal growth or for the upkeep of their social standings, which seems, in turn, to only very rarely produce effective results, rather leading to strained interpersonal relations (Frenkel-Brunswik, "Summary" 478-479), easily observable by the end of the short story in Hildred's case, as he ends up alone, arrested and hopeless.

This easily complements Arendt's diagnosis of the totalitarian movement being based on lonely, isolated individuals, who find a sense of belonging within a mass of other equally isolated and alienated individuals, who are all dissatisfied with society as it is because of said inability to find identity within it (Arendt 317), much like Hildred finds in his ingroup. As she puts it,

> Totalitarian movements are mass organizations of atomized, isolated individuals. Compared with all other parties and movements, their most conspicuous external characteristic is their demand for total, unrestricted, unconditional, and unalterable loyalty of the individual member. … Such loyalty can be expected only from the completely isolated human being who, without any other social ties to family, friends, comrades, or even mere acquaintances, derives his sense of having a place in the world only from his belonging to a movement, his membership in the party. (Arendt 323-324)

In order to do so, the movements themselves are organized in layered degrees of access to information to keep their members separate from social reality and delusional as needed to maintain and upkeep this sense of alienation, so they keep on being only able to connect to one another, and to those who already think like them (Arendt 366). This has been explored in Hildred's case in section 2.5, who seems to be self-sufficient in this regard. This is also due to Mr. Wilde's influence on him, his chosen representative and connector to the 'truth' found in The King in Yellow, his main prophet and the repairer of his reputation. By controlling the narrative, discrediting outside influences and self-aggrandizing repeatedly, displaying his predictive skills and power of persuasion, Mr. Wilde ensures Hildred's unfailing, unquestioning and unflinching loyalty, as explored in section 2.4.

Because of this learned distrust of the outside world and all the outgroups which compose it, an instinct is developed on the totalitarian follower, that of conspiratorial thinking. If all that is open and public and verified works against their beliefs, then by the same measure, everything that is potentially hidden or denied by the overall populace must be true, otherwise the evil outgroups would not spend their time and energy in denying and hiding it (Arendt 351). The whole world, in their understanding, works based on their delusional feelings of who agrees with them and who does not, how close outsiders are to their ingroups or not, how much they perform their adopted values or not. Morality, civility, societal thinking, and even utilitarian issues such as the economy and the nation's actual development, everything comes second to the performance and appearance of power and development, just like it was taught in the authoritarian's childhood. It follows through with Hildred as well: anyone who believes for a second that either he or Mr. Wilde would be good leaders for their country is as delusional as they are. They show no capacity for scientific thinking, economic planning, management skills or any other of the many traits necessary for the appropriate leadership of a country. Mr. Wilde is a great orator, but that is only enough to get people to follow you, and therein lies the danger. Hildred, on the other hand, seems to be a bit more learned and intellectual, but is unable to break from these socially-constructed anxieties about others and himself. The authors of *The Authoritarian Personality* approach the issue,

> It might be hypothesized that one reason why people in modern society—even those who are otherwise "intelligent" or "informed"—resort to primitive, oversimplified explanations of human events is that so many of the ideas and observations needed for an adequate account are not allowed to enter into the calculations: because they are affect-laden and potentially anxiety-producing, the weak ego cannot include them within its scheme of things (Adorno et al., "Antidemocratic Trends" 236).

By denying the capacity for considering general issues about the world, as they cause discomfort, the authoritarian sets themselves further along a path of delusion. Frenkel-Brunswik

completes this notion when she states that this is often solved, in the authoritarian's mind, by the creation of a simple ideology to which every social issue can be applied, usually some outgroups who can be blamed by every issue that exists, while keeping judgement off of every ingroup possible responsibility. Once again, this obviously does not fix the issues, but allows for a clearing of the conscience, and the transferral of guilt or responsibility always to another outgroup, reassuring and comforting the underdeveloped authoritarian mentality that they are following the right path and denying any questioning of their performance (Frenkel-Brunswik, "Summary" 480 - 481).

To Hildred and the authoritarian individual, therefore, the rewriting of history and the manipulation of facts does not sound bothersome, but simply like a correction which better expresses and supports their views, while questioning and disrupting that established narrative that they already hate. This is why random evidence collection and connection without any commitment to scientific thinking is the basis for their ideology (Frenkel-Brunswik, "Dynamic and Cognitive" 464), and why Hildred so readily believes Mr. Wilde's speech on his blessed lineage, as explored in section 2.4. The fact that it supports what he already believes is far more important than whether it has any reliable or verifiable connection to reality whatsoever (Arendt 332-333).

It all seems to connect back to this isolation and alienation of the individual, and their lack of ability to connect through any other means but performance. As Arendt puts it,

> The masses' escape from reality is a verdict against the world in which they are forced to live and in which they cannot exist, since coincidence has become its supreme master and human beings need the constant transformation of chaotic and accidental conditions into a man-made pattern of relative consistency. ... In their situation of spiritual and social homelessness, a measured insight into the interdependence of the arbitrary and the planned, the accidental and the necessary, could no longer operate. Totalitarian propaganda can outrageously insult common sense only where common sense has lost its validity (352).

If one cannot connect to the common, then one cannot connect to common sense, only to the desperate need to protect the self from scrutiny, the desperate need to be accepted for their correct performance of the correct values. Arendt goes further,

> Before they seize power and establish a world according to their doctrines, totalitarian movements conjure up a lying world of consistency which is more adequate to the needs of the human mind than reality itself; in which, through sheer imagination, uprooted masses can feel at home and are spared the never-ending shocks which real life and real experiences deal to human beings and their expectations. (353)

The entirety of the totalitarian movement is based on the idea of protecting the individual from the shocks of reality, by dominating and destroying reality and paving a way to complete and utter delusion and alienation. In order to do so, totalitarian dictators can adopt traits from many other political ideologies to use as masks to their true objective (Arendt 361-362), which is absolute ignorant bliss, not too unlike what Hildred seems to do in his utopian description of his dystopian country, as explored in section 2.3. These other ideologies are usually those that complement or support individualistic thinking and self-sufficiency, and therefore isolation and the erasure of vulnerability, conventionality for the sake of conventionality as performance but with no specific deeper meaning; or the militaristic power-accruing that seems to fit so well with the paranoia of an evil and corrupted world which these individuals believe to be inserted in, and which thus calls for strength and protection. This is supported by the dismantling of measuring institutions or manipulation of numbers usually seen in totalitarian governments, “In a totally fictitious world, failures need not be recorded, admitted, and remembered” (Arendt 388), much like how in Hildred’s delusion no harm or tragedy can exist that does not result in ultimate benefit for America and himself.

By promising change and development in the far future, totalitarian governments are also freed from being held accountable by the existence of immediate problems. “Their art consists in using, and at the same time transcending, the elements of reality, of verifiable experiences, in the

chosen fiction, and in generalizing them into regions which then are definitely removed from all possible control by individual experience" (Arendt 362). Hildred and Mr. Wilde follow this to the letter, using vague notions of improvement in the future to reassure one another (and their associate, Vance) of their capacity and even destiny to rule. This idea of a vague goal that "'... will secure the happiness of the whole world.'" (Chambers 20) without any structured planning or foresight other than the acquisition of power, as if that in and of itself is enough to secure this happiness, is a very totalitarian mode of thinking, which not only projects the deadline of the ruler's decisions onto the future, but also voids them of the responsibility of attaining any specific goals or solving any problems in the short to mid-term future (Arendt 324).

Hildred is promised rulership over America, but is unable to take it or maintain it without Mr. Wilde, to whom he submits unquestioningly, and would likely continue to do so into his imagined rulership. What Hildred is offered is, then, to be a representative, but not the de facto leader of the nation - which would be ruled by Mr. Wilde, from the shadows, even if Hildred may not see it to be so. Hildred, therefore, does not fit the Leader in a comparison with Arendt's work, but the elite, as she puts it, "The outstanding negative quality of the totalitarian elite is that it never stops to think about the world as it really is and never compares the lies with reality. Its most cherished virtue, correspondingly, is loyalty to the Leader, who, like a talisman, assures the ultimate victory of lie and fiction over truth and reality" (385).

In fact, as Frenkel-Brunswik points out, unlike the sociopath or psychopath described by Seltzer, the authoritarian's aggression depends entirely on the blessing of external authority and or of its ingroups, which causes them to seek to align with those who incentivize aggression as an excuse to act on their impulses, but may also be easily held in check when aligned to more productive influences ("Dynamic and Cognitive" 456). This is seen in Hildred being unable or unwilling to determine when to attempt his imaginary coup, unless expressly permitted to do so by Mr. Wilde.

Another phenomenon pointed by Arendt is the fact that these totalitarian Leaders tend to have failed in other fields prior to their political careers. This, instead of taking away from their reliability, validates the frustrated authoritarian who feels, deep down, they have failed to assimilate whatever convention they try to perform, and who creates excuses to never accept or admit their own shortcomings - in a failed Leader, they see someone who may be more lenient, and who understands their struggles (Arendt 327). Hildred's relationship with Mr. Wilde fits this phenomenon perfectly, as they both share the frustration of considering themselves sane and having been committed to an asylum, and Hildred trusts him most of all for being part of that ingroup, that of discredited and discarded people whose reputations would never recover under normal societal lights (Chambers 10).

Finally, Arendt's conclusion about the totalitarian government and its lack of concern with utilitarian development or the improvement of their nation's conditions seems to other people a baffling state of affairs (411). It needs to be understood, however, as Adorno posits, not as a political movement, but as an externalized, psychological attempt at denial and protection of a great part of a countries' population's fragilized and underdeveloped self-images. The authors add that,

> Since by its very nature it favors the few at the expense of the many, it cannot possibly demonstrate that it will so improve the situation of most people that their real interests will be served. It must therefore make its major appeal, not to rational self-interest, but to emotional needs—often to the most primitive and irrational wishes and fears. (Adorno et al., "Introduction" 10)

It is more akin to a country collectively throwing a temper tantrum, albeit a very large, scary and insidious one, than it is to an actual political movement. It is collective delusion and political suicide, the damning of one's country and people, the degeneration of any content of true, flexible, living ideology. It is the denial of science and method, the self-expression of an agonized and lost people who barely have the capacity to function independently, who are unable to adhere to society

truly because they only know how to perform, and therefore hold resentment towards it. It is the delegation of power to the denial of reality, it is the destruction of the productive collective, it is the emptying of morality and tradition as much as it is the silencing of individuality and diversity. It is an enemy to be combated regardless of political and economic views, as it is the absolute devolution of a country into aggressive toddler mentality, and it has the potential to corrupt the values from all sides of the political spectrum. It is the establishment of an empire of delusion, where even the most avid supporters suffer in the inability to break from their pre-established patterns, and find themselves satisfied not due to their freedom from what troubles them, but by the subjection of all others to the same inner torment, externalized. Finally, when their inner turmoil is as externalized as their self-judgement, they feel properly vindicated, and repeat unto others the cycle of oppression from which they suffered so much, but this time from a position of active participation, where their personal safety is guaranteed as, even as they suffer from it, they do so from a willing, active perspective which feels much less traumatic.

Hildred, therefore, represents a perfect prototypical example of the authoritarian personality, which is especially interesting when one considers he was developed as a character before both World Wars, and before the rise of totalitarian government. I do not, once more, presume to say that Roger W. Chambers intended him as a representation of such concepts that did not even really have a name to them at the time, rather that, with the information contained within the short story, he can, under current day parameters, be verifiably read as such.

Conclusion

Throughout this dissertation, I have analysed "The Repairer of Reputations", its main character's psychology and compared it to the thought-processes behind authoritarianism. The character construction of Hildred Castaigne as narrator of the analysed text, I have argued, is a true-to-life representation of how such an individual thinks and operates, exemplifying many of the traits and archetypes found by sociological and psychological research on the subject.

The first step taken to do so was to prepare the theoretical basis with which to construct my analysis. By reviewing the established theory on detecting narrative unreliability, and basing myself on Theresa Heyd's pragmatic approach, Paul Grice's theory of the cooperation principle and Umberto Eco's *The Open Work*, I have found that an essential and often overlooked part of the analysis of narrative unreliability is the invalidity of ontological breaches. If narratives are a specific type of communication between an author and a reader, then one must take into account all the noise that might get in the way of that communication and analyse the message through a method that accounts for that noise and is reliably verifiable by any who come in contact with it. One must endeavor to conduct an analysis of the message itself, regardless of intentions of the author and avoiding as much as possible any projections from the self. In a narrative, this means conducting a diegetic analysis of the text in order to establish character traits that may only be constructed diegetically.

With this methodology, I was able to look into the narrator character in "The Repairer of Reputations", Hildred Castaigne, and determine that he is unreliable to a degree where it becomes simply impossible to analyse his diegetic reality: the lines between his delusional thinking and his reality are so blurry that one is incapable of concluding whether the nationalistic, militaristic and eugenistic dystopia he biasedly portrays in a positive light even exists or not. What I have determined, however, is that he is thoroughly unreliable, constructing a delusional story of paranoia, power and murder. At the same time, no verifiably definitive evidence can be produced to support

any of his claims about belonging to an alleged Imperial Dynasty of America. Most political threats he perceives around him are simple misreadings of other people's ordinary lives.

Finally, I validated the use of canonical fictional narratives through the theories of Hans Robert Jauss, Mariano Longo and Jacques Rancière as viable and emotionally truthful qualitative data on the experience of life a group of readers may have. Then, following the idea behind this conclusion, I used the traits and parameters previously established about Hildred to compare with those listed in Theodor Adorno et al.'s *The Authoritarian Personality* and Hannah Arendt's *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, establishing the character as presented in the text as an archetypal example of the traits attributed to authoritarians and a totalitarian government, namely: alienation, denial, delusion, submission, paranoia, hierarchical thinking and power-obsession. These traits are shared equally by all three parties.

Therefore, this dissertation uses "The Repairer of Reputations" to paint a vivid portrait of the authoritarian mode of thinking, how it perverts and corrupts textual interpretation with personal bias, and how it leads to extreme circumstances and threatens the values of democracy and progress by curtailing true communication, regardless of economic-political orientation. This process, itself, represents precisely the titular issue of alienation from others, from self and from reality; leading inevitably to an incapacity for any amount of detachment from personal bias and therefore to unreliability in an individual's mode of thinking and ability for communication. By connecting two major studies on the topic, this dissertation fully illustrates the issue. While finding a representation of this problem, it does leave a question open on how to deal with such an authoritarian individual, or with such an agglomeration of individuals.

Future studies in psychology and sociology could go further than the present dissertation, which is, after all, a literary analysis. By understanding this personality type, others may be able to detect ways to handle them, while connecting these to more current day theories. Wendy Brown, for instance, in *In the Ruins of Neoliberalism: The Rise of Antidemocratic Policies in the West*

(2019) and the essay "American Nightmare Neoliberalism, Neoconservatism, and De-Democratization" (2006) details more ideologies that have been used to push for the same values that create a fertile ground for fanatical and fascist thinking. Neoliberalism individualizes citizens to the point of isolation, neo-conservatism veils it with the upkeep of the performance of traditional values, and both contribute to a general sense of alienation. The phenomenon of digital social media, in which data collection creates bubbles of echo-chambers as well as the massive chain of fake news in campaigns to discredit science and manipulate information all over the world are also factors that I would point out as relevant. These issues need consideration, as they contribute to the phenomenon of delusion, alienation and overall, generalized radicalization. These are urgently relevant topics that need to be understood and for which a solution must be reached, but which fall outside of the jurisdiction of this dissertation, which is supposed to be a literary analysis.

Still, as such, by studying the ontological levels of fiction and narrative (and, to a certain degree, of communication), and delving deeper into the methodology and theory behind detecting unreliable narrators, this dissertation hopes to contribute to the practices of critical, close reading, hopefully aiding in the detection of real-life unreliable narration. By offering an example of a delusional, authoritarian personality, connecting literature to sociology and applying two incredibly pertinent sociological theories to the current day sociopolitical context, it revitalizes the importance of revisiting these studies as they may still offer reliable insight into the world today, despite their shortcomings.

What this dissertation aims to be is an example. An example of how to critically analyse a text, of the continued importance of close reading and of how a person may go into alienation, denial, delusion and fanaticism. With this example clear in mind it is my hope that discussions regarding the topic of authoritarianism and delusion will become more definite and graspable and, thus, more easily explorable and studied in academia. It is a small step, but, I hope, a relevant one.

Note

1. Por ser falante nativo da variante brasileira do português, o resumo em português desta dissertação ainda pode apresentar construções e vocabulários típicos desta variante.

2. An example would be Thomas More's *Utopia* from 1516, whose narrator can be classified as unreliable.

3. Section 2.3 is heavily informed and inspired by an unpublished essay I had previously written in my master's programme, under guidance from Prof. Dr. Adelaide Meira Serras, titled "An Empire of Delusion: An Analysis of the Setting as Portrayed by the Unreliable Narrator in Robert W. Chambers' 'The Repairer of Reputations", in 2020. This essay, much more limited by word count and focused on the interplay between the unreliability of the narrator and the manner in which he presents the setting, is what would eventually inspire me to choose the short story as the central text to this dissertation. Section 2.3, however, is the only part where its influence is enough to be noted and therefore elicit a comment.

4. For more information, read Fátima Vieira's "The Concept of Utopia", from Cambridge University's Press' 2010 edition of *The Cambridge Companion to Utopian Literature*, where, specifically, the concept of euchronia seems relevant to this dissertation's study.

5. Liliana Meira and Tiago Ferreira cite examples of studies that the reader might find relevant when exploring these concepts in their work, including "The Promoter Sign: Developmental transformation within the subject of dialogical self", Jaan Valsiner's paper presented in the symposium Developmental aspects of the dialogical self, at the 2nd International Conference on the Dialogical Self, in July of 2004 in Ghent, Belgium.

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