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„Theatre on the Edge: Unnatural Narratology in Selected Plays by Martin Crimp and Caryl Churchill"

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1 Introduction

The study of unnatural narratology has been growing out its infancy in recent years and is gaining popularity in narrative theory. Within the context of so-called unnatural narratives, this thesis focuses on selected plays by Martin Crimp and Caryl Churchill, two contemporary British playwrights who confront their audience with texts in a highly unconventional manner. More precisely, the major interest of this discussion is as to what extent, or in what ways, the selected plays diverge from a classical or traditional drama pattern. In other words, the thesis is defined by the interest in what is seen as 'unnatural' in the chosen plays. These deviations shall be identified and discussed. In this regard, Barnett's wording, who aptly entitles his discussion on Crimp's *Attempts on Her Life* as "when is a play not a drama?" should serve as an overarching focus of the thesis.

The paper will be structured as follows: The opening chapter aims at giving an introductory view on the overarching theoretical framework in which the study is placed: unnatural narratology. Thus, the chapter seeks to give a general insight into the theory of unnatural narratology, its dynamics and its status in narrative theory, based primarily on the joint publications of the leading authors in this field – Alber, Iversen, Nielsen and Richardson. Furthermore, the chapter strives to elucidate how to approach so-called unnatural texts incorporating the reader's perspective or in other words, the spectatorship. As noted by Angelaki (4) who emphasises "the need to establish the spectator as the equally stable and mutable component *for* and *with* whom the performance must take place and *without* whom the text remains suspended, a potentiality on the verge, never fully materializing", the spectatorship generally plays a pivotal role throughout. The third chapter then strives to briefly argue the choice of authors, crystallizing their unnatural affinities and basically sets the scene for the fourth chapter that is fully dedicated to the primary plays selected for this thesis. Thus, in seeking to identify the unnaturalness of the plays under discussion on various levels, chapter four pursues a synoptic approach of the texts. Hence, the underlying research question can be formulated as follows: Which elements can be detected in order to indentify or classify the chosen texts as unconventional and more specifically, unnatural? The lev-

els in general comprise the stories and their discourses and thus contain considerations on the categories of plot, discourse, characters, time and space, etc. In this regard, the chapter will start off with a close-up on the unnatural beginnings of the plays providing an insight into the unnatural story-levels. As a second step, the focus will be on character constellations, since the selected plays of Crimp and Churchill do not offer standard character allocations. Subsequently, the unnaturalness on the discourse level will be investigated, since neither Crimp nor Churchill provide the audience with a conventional drama pattern. Instead, their theatrical worlds switch between dialogues, lyrics, monologues and other modes of narration. The unconventional discourses of the plays eventually also lead to highly unnatural stage directions on the part of the playwrights, giving seemingly free play to theatre makers which shall be addressed. Likewise, as with unnatural narratives, the categories of time and space no longer apply in a conventional way. Thus, this chapter also alludes to the temporal and spatial confusion that characterizes the plays under discussion. Furthermore, the power of language within these theatre plays shall be addressed detecting unnatural affinities of Crimp and Churchill. Chapter five ventures a philosophical step into a theatrical world in depicting some pivotal ideas of the French philosopher Gilles Deleuze. The last chapter but one eventually aims at closing the circle in making the audience again a subject of discussion, in confronting Crimp's and Churchill's theatrical world with a spectatorship. Eventually, the very last section then ventures an interdisciplinary step in connecting unnatural narratives – as a literary parallel – with the visual arts, primarily the impossible worlds constructed by the graphic artist M.C. Escher, since Churchill herself once drew a comparison between one of her works and the paintings by Escher.

2 Narratives – Not Necessarily Natural

In posing the question of "What's in a name?", the following chapter aims at opening the subject matter of unnatural narratology in throwing light on the term as such – focusing on the notion of unnaturalness and its significance in narrative theory.

2.1 "Unnatural Narratology" – What's in a Name?

As with Churchill's and Crimp's texts, narratives do not always appear as "natural" or realistic. That is to say that they do not solely provide mimetic reproductions of how we experience the world (see Alber 79). Since the dominating views on narratives are yet related to the actual world, the main emphasis within narrative theory is set on mimetic and "natural" texts (see Alber et al. *What Really is Un. Narrat.* 114). However, there is also a plethora of texts in the field of contemporary literature that challenge the standard conventions. On a scale from the possible to the impossible, from the plausible to the absurd, one can detect narratives that "defy, flaunt, mock, play, and experiment with some (or all) of these core assumptions about narrative" (Alber et al. 114). These texts on the edge are governed by principles of the 'unnatural' – "physically or logically impossible" (Alber 79) – and as a general rule "move beyond, extend, or challenge our knowledge of the world" (Alber et al. 115). Thus, these texts are termed *unnatural narratives*, or synonomously, *antimimetic narratives*. Whereas physically impossible denotes "impossible by the known laws governing the physical world", logically impossible scenarios are "impossible by accepted principles of logic" (Alber *Imposs. Storyworlds* 80). Thus, in the words of Alber (*Revised* 1), "[a]n unnatural narrative violates physical laws, logical principles, or standard anthropomorphic limitations of knowledge by representing storytelling scenarios, narrators, characters, temporalities, or spaces that could not exist in the actual world." Hence, unnatural narratives are also labelled as a "subset of fictional narratives" (Alber *Revision*). While "[m]imetic narratives typically try to conceal their constructedness and appear to resemble nonfictional narratives, [...] antimimetic narratives flaunt their artificiality and break the

ontological boundaries that mimetic works so carefully preserve" (Richardson *Antimimetic* 20).

The fact that these unconventional narratives have been rather neglected in narrative theory, actually traces further back than generally anticipated:

> Unnatural narratologists also point out that narrative theory has had a mimetic bias ever since the times of Aristotle and the unities of time, place, and action. And this real-world orientation has lead to the marginalization of the unnatural. (Alber and Heinze 5)

With regard to the terminology, labelling a text "unnatural" in the first instance might be accompanied with fairly negative connotations, since the word "unnatural" usually refers to something that is *deviant* from what is considered as the norm (see Alber and Heinze 1-3). Including the term in the context of narrative theories, unnatural narratologists aim at achieving quite the opposite impression, regarding various kinds of deviations as fascinating aspects to investigate (see Alber and Heinze 1-3) – going even as far as labelling the study of unnatural narratives as "one of the most exciting new paradigms in narrative theory" (Alber et al. 112). Although the leading figures in the realm of unnatural narrative theory – Alber, Iversen, Nielsen, Richardson – are providing each their own individual definition of the unnatural, they also stress that their argumentations are based on a common ground that is "an emphasis on the various ways in which certain narratives deviate from real-world frames by being highly implausible, impossible, unreal, or insistently fictional" (Alber et al. *What Really is Un. Narrat.* 104). Moreover, the authors share an interest in and a compulsion for deriving potential interpretations with regards to making meaning of these unnatural texts as well as detecting in what ways these differ from other narratives. Besides, they also distance themselves from Klauk and Köppe's claim that "technically, any departure from the actual world can be termed an impossibility" (83) since "merely counterfactual (or fictional) scenarios are not automatically unnatural" (Alber et al. *What Really is Un. Narrat.* 104). The decisive factor in order to identify a narrative as unnatural is its "actualizabilty", that is whether the events presented "*could exist*" in the actual world or not (see Alber et. al. 104). Besides, it should also be mentioned that these narratives are not considered to be entirely unnatural. That is to say that they are rather comprised of unnatural elements accompanied also by natural ones which

are drawn on real-world parameters (see Alber *Revision*). Eventually, the diction-ary of unnatural narratology – compiled and edited by the leading figures men-tioned above – provides the following definition:

> Unnatural narrative theory analyzes and theorizes the aspects of fictional narratives that transcend or violate the boundaries of conventional realism. It affirms the distinctive nature of fiction, identifies nonmimetic aspects of ostensibly realistic texts, and gravitates toward unusual and experimental works that reject the conventions of mimetic and natural narrative. (http://projects.au.dk/narrativeresearchlab/unnatural/undictionary/)

In this regard Alber and Heinze further elucidate the conceptual idea of an unnatu-ral theoretical approach:

> The aim of an unnatural theoretical approach is to approximate and concep-tualize Otherness, rather than to stigmatize or reify it; such an approach is interested in various kinds of narrative strangeness and in particular in texts that deviate from the mimetic norms of most narratological models. (Alber and Heinze 2)

Furthermore, the leading authors as they deepen their investigations, come to dif-ferentiations in terms of terminology. As Alber (*What Really is Un. Narrat.* 103) states his own distinction "between the unnatural in postmodernist narratives —a mode of unnaturalness that still strikes us as disorienting or defamiliarizing—and conventionalized instances of the unnatural in earlier narratives (such as the speaking animal in the beast fable or time travel in science fiction)—a mode that has become familiar by being interwoven with certain generic conventions", he provides Richardson's preferred terminology who "in most cases [...] would refer to these two types as, respectively, anti-mimetic (the postmodern, defamiliarizing variety) and non-mimetic (the more conventionalized variety)" (Alber et al. *What Really is Un. Narrat.* 114)

In referring to Caryl Churchill's (*Plays: One* 71) illustrative explanation that her play *Traps* "is like an impossible object, or a painting by Escher where the objects can exist like that on paper, but would be impossible in life", Alber et al. (*What Really is Un. Narrat.* 114) eventually draw the conclusion that "[i]t is this kind of narrative that we are determined to appreciate, analyze, and theorize".

Figure 1 *Waterfall* (1961) © 2014 The M. C. Escher Company – The Netherlands.
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2.2 Unnatural Narratives and Their Traces in History

Due to the tendency of associating unnatural narratives with postmodernism, there is perhaps to mention that although the majority of texts in order to illustrate the unnatural can be considered as postmodern, unnaturalness is not a mere post-modern phenomenon. There is a plethora of earlier narratives that incorporate impossible scenarios as well. When trying to place unnatural narratives in literary history, one realizes that antimimetic texts have been around for long as confirmed by Richardson (*Antimimetic* 24): "Antimimetic narratives have been around since the time of Aristophanes and Petronius, and they were common in the Middle Ages (dream visions, Rabelais' *Gargantua and Pantagruel*) and the Renaissance

(especially Shakespeare's more fanciful and self-conscious dramas such as *The Winter's Tale*)." Richardson (*Antimimetic* 24) further hints at the fact that antimimetic methods left their mark on "the entire tradition of works inspired by *Tristram Shandy*". Still, what Alber (*Revision* 11) confirms is that "postmodernist texts acquire their specificity through the concentration and radicalization of unnaturalness". Similarly, Richardson (*Antimimetic* 24) states that antimimetic strategies "are especially prominent in postmodern fiction and the theater [sic] of the absurd" something that also mirrors the choice of authors – Martin Crimp and Caryl Churchill – and their plays for this discussion. As for the question of when to mark the historical beginning of unnaturalness in literary theory, Alber (*Revised* 11) addresses it as follows: "There is no proper point at which the unnatural first enters literary history; rather, fiction always already involves the representation of impossibilities."

2.3 The Tessera in the Bigger Picture: Unnatural Narratives and Their Status in Narrative Theory

As already briefly mentioned, unnatural narratives have rather been marginalized in narrative theory. Due to the majority of approaches to narrative theory being mainly informed by mimetic premises, persistently neglecting antimimetic narratives, Richardson (*Antimimetic* 21) accuses most narrative theories of being "substantially incomplete", since they, as a consequence of neglect, also lack "comprehensive theoretical formulations capable of encompassing these works". Still, that is not to say that he criticises the versatility of a mimetic approach. Richardson (*Antimimetic* 21) explicitly states the usefulness of a mimetic approach:

> [A]ll authors striving for realism or verisimilitude will naturally try to reproduce the conditions of lived experience; thus, an author of a novel written in the first person will try to approximate as closely as possible the conventions of an autobiography. This is why the terms "true to life," "lifelike," "faithful," "realistic," and other synonyms have been terms of high praise for many fictional works.

However, it should not be forgotten that "not all narratives strive to be mimetic" (Richardson *Antimimetic* 21). And precisely these exceptional cases of unnatural or antimimetic narratives, since they have not yet been properly accounted for, are

worth being incorporated into narrative theory for notable reasons as Richardson (24-25) states emphatically:

> Such an inclusion will allow us to have a comprehensive theory of narrative rather than merely a theory of mimetic narratives; it will enable us to come to terms theoretically with some of the most interesting literature of our time: avant-garde, late modernist, and postmodern; it helps us understand and appreciate the distinctive nature of narrative fiction; and it provides a set of terms and concepts for the analysis of hypertext fiction. In addition, the inclusion of antimimetic works opens up to narrative theory a vast segment of the history of literature that has until now been largely excluded. Including unnatural narratives reconnects modern experimental literature with experimental work in other genres, especially painting, whose extreme, unnatural, antirealist, impossible, and nonrepresentational works have provided inspiration for writers of prose for over a century. Finally, the goal of narrative theory is to provide a theoretical account of all narratives. A theory of narrative that excludes antimimetic works is as incomplete as a theory of art that treated all art as representational and could not discuss abstract art. The goal of my work is to expand or re-form the categories of narrative theory so that it is able to circumscribe these playful and outrageous kinds of texts.

2.4 Illustrating the Unnatural on Two Levels – A Story and its Discourse

In the field of unnatural narratives there is not necessarily a fixed set of rules that authors attempt to follow, rather one could describe it as a spectrum of characteristics that stand out through transgressions – transgressions that vary on a scale from fairly modest to extremely radical. Tendencies, trends and incidences comprise the unnatural on the story level as well as on the discourse level – although even this distinction of story and discourse level reveals itself as problematic as shall be remarked later. Thus, this section strives to trace some general tendencies that are to be found in such narratives and which in some way or another also apply to the selected plays of Crimp and Churchill and should therefore set the scene for the investigations of the chosen primary texts that follow.

2.4.1 Breaking the Terms of the "Mimetic Contract" – Alternating Narration

In his work *Unnatural Voices*, Richardson (14) – dealing with "this neglected twentieth-century tradition of non- and anti-mimetic fiction" – aims at detecting noticeable utilizations of "voice, perspective, and narration over the past fifty years" (13). Generally, it can be said that within the field of unnatural narratives, what is taking place is a transgression of boundaries. In other words, we are facing a breaking of the terms of the "mimetic contract" – a contract that, as Richardson phrases it, "had governed conventional fiction for centuries" (*Unnat. Voices* 1). Starting off with an axiomatic topic that is the author-narrator relations, it makes sense to, in the first instance, have a closer look at the standard schemes. As Richardson, in his contribution on *Authors, Narrators, Narration* (51), elucidates:

> The author is the human being who actually puts pen to paper (or fingers to keyboard) and puts his or her royalties in the bank; the implied author is the figure or sensibility we imagine the author to be, based primarily on our reading of the work; and the narrator is the fictional person (or persons) who is responsible for transmitting the narrative.

Likewise, William Nelles (22) aptly summarizes this account as follows: "The historical author writes, the implied author means, and the narrator speaks." Richardson (51) exemplifies this standard scheme with *Huckleberry Finn*, where "the author is Samuel Clemens, the implied author or sensibility is that of 'Mark Twain', and the narrator who relates the story is Huck Finn." Now, as announced above, bridging the gap to the realm of unnatural narratives makes the facade of the defined author-narrator relations crumble, since "[p]ostmodern and other antimimetic authors, however, delight in collapsing established categories, and the triad of author, implied author, and narrator too has been a source of that delight, as the distinctions essential to modernism are exploded by postmodernism." (Richardson 52). Hence, the consequences one has to face range from "unreliable narrators to incompetent ones to delusional and then completely insane storytellers", whereas "[o]ne starts with flawed narration, goes on to more fragmented forms, and ends with the semi-coherent utterly opaque" (Richardson *Unnat. Voices* 2). In quoting Genette (244) that there is a choice of the novelist to either "have the story told by one of its 'characters', or to have it told by a narrator outside the story", Richardson (*Unnat. Voices* 5) claims that "[i]t is, however, precisely this choice that is re-

jected by so many contemporary authors". While providing several examples to illustrate his ideas, Richardson (*Unnat. Voices* 12) eventually deduces one joint logic, namely: "the nature and identity of the narrator becomes itself a miniature drama as a familiar narrating situation is established throughout the text only to be utterly transformed at the end". Richardson further subsumes the following innovations: "There is a general move away from what was thought to be 'omniscient' third person narration to limited third person narration to ever more unreliable first person narrators to new explorations of 'you', 'we', and mixed forms" (13). In this regard, a comparable tendency surfaces that is a "movement from the psychological novel to more impressionistic renderings of consciousness to the dissolution of consciousness into textuality, and a corresponding move from human-like narrators to quasi-human, non-human, and anti-human speakers, as the figure of the narrator as a recognizable human being recedes into an ever greater eclipse" (Richardson *Unnat. Voices* 13). Thus, what becomes apparent when dealing with experimental writers is a permanent infringement of the standard categories in narration of first and third person (see Richardson *Unnat. Voices* 13-14). In terms of multiperson texts, Richardson (62) identifies three main types that are: "works that move back and forth between different narrative positions, those whose narration remains fundamentally ambiguous, inclining toward, but never comfortably situated within either category, and those strange texts that employ unnatural narrational stances that are impossible in nonfictional discourse". Moreover, there might be a further contrastive distinction, namely that of "centripetal" and "centrifugal" texts: "'centripetal' texts that begin by producing a number of seemingly disparate voices and stances only to reduce them to a single narrating position at the end, and 'centrifugal' texts that continue to proliferate an irreducible galaxy of different, heterogeneous or antithetical, perspectives" (Richardson *Unnat. Voices* 62). Richardson (63) further notes that "[c]ontemporary fiction is replete with a polyphony of competing narrative voices; even where the narrator's speaking situation seems fixed, alternative voices often threaten to destabilize that situation". Eventually, Richardson (76) claims that "[t]here is one final, distinctively postmodern category of multiple narration to identify, and that is the category of 'impossible narration'" that is "metaleptic texts that contain discourse that cannot possibly be spoken or written by their purported narrators and may involve the kind of ontological framebreaking typical of postmodern works". Samuel Beckett's *The Un-*

namable might serve as an illustrative as well as outstanding example for exhausting the possibilities of extreme narration.

Richardson (79) further subsumes three outstanding and perhaps most extreme forms of agents in narration to be found on the very edge of narration that are also depicted in Crimp and Churchill's theatre which shall be elucidated at a later stage:

> 1) the figure of the interlocutor, or disembodied questioning voice, as it appears in *Ulysses* and in recent fiction, 2) denarration, in which a narrator negates or erases aspects of the world created by narration, and 3) what I call the 'permeable narrator', a speaker who says 'I' but whose narration transgresses the natural limits of the contents and perceptions of a single consciousness. (Richardson *Unnat. Voices* 79)

Thus, by the term interlocutor, Richardson describes a narrative situation in which questions – raised by disembodied voices – are to be responded by the narrative (see Richardson 79). Referring especially to postmodern authors, Richardson (86) states that it is "the death of the traditional narrator" that comprises the "essential precondition for the creation of new forms with other, disparate, decentred voices" and eventually claims that "[i]t is this rejection of the personified narrator that the figure of the interlocutor finally reveals".

Speaking of "denarration" – the second form referred to by Richardson – the audience is confronted with a more "paradoxical strategy of narration" that results in a sort of "narrative negation" (Richardson *Unnat. Voices* 87). Similarly, the dictionary of unnatural narratology elucidates that denarration "occurs when events or aspects of a fictional world are negated or cancelled". Particularly Beckett – "a master of the art of verbal negation" as Richardson (87) calls the author – provides the reader with denarration in his works. In *Worstward Ho*, for instance, Samuel Beckett implements a plethora of denarrational acts with passages consisting of denarration phrase by phrase. As for the function of denarration, Richardson (*Time, Plot* 78) claims that "[i]t points to the performative nature of fictional narrative, that is, that people and events exist by the very act of a narrator's affirming that they exist – unless or until the narrator goes on to deny their existence". Being strongly represented in postmodern texts, denarration as a "narrative construction and deconstruction" is again directed towards the "constructedness of every work of fiction, and also gestures toward the self-interested and personally motivated

aspect of all narrative composition" (Richardson *Time, Plot* 79-80). The third form of narration then – the permeable narrator – is summarized in the dictionary of unnatural narratology as "[t]he voices of different narrators that collapse into each other and merge". It is again Beckett who serves as a pivotal example for this form of narration as his novel *The Unnamable* – an extreme demonstration for unnatural narratives in general – is "composed by someone who does not know who or what he is and who cannot in fact differentiate himself from others", as Richardson (*Antimimetic* 22) aptly concludes.

2.4.2 When the Discourse Erases the Story

The classic division between the story and the discourse "perhaps constitutes the most basic of all narratological axioms" as Fludernik (*Towards* 333) phrases it. Thus, one distinguishes between "the story or *fabula* that one derives from the text and [...] the *sjuzhet*, the presentation of that story, in the order that it appears in the text" (Richardson *Time, Plot* 77). However, the general validity of this fundamental differentiation, that "a coherent and chronological fabula should underlie the *sjuzhet*" (Richardson 77), is being challenged when dealing with rather experimental literature. Within the context of denarration, as addressed beforehand, Richardson (94) mentions one major problem related to this distinction of story and discourse and thus of a relevant nature in this discussion. Namely, due to denarrated acts, the question of "how is one to separate story from discourse" (Richardson *Unnat. Voices* 94) arises. "At this point, a fundamental distinction at the foundation of modern narrative theory breaks down. Here, the usual separation between story and discourse collapses, and we are left with discourse without a retrievable story. The work's discourse is determinate; its story is inherently indeterminable." (Richardson *Unnat. Voices* 94) Investigating a text like Beckett's *Molloy*, it seems almost impossible for the reader to retrieve a story "since in this self-negating novel every putative event is suspect or called into question, and may never have occurred at all" (Richardson *Narrat. Dynamics* 52). This phenomenon of a story being erased by its discourse even seems to increase in Beckett's *The Unnamable* where events, although confirmed at an earlier stage, are denied and cancelled by the narrating subjects (see also Richardson *Narrat. Dynamics* 52).

Eventually, "the contestation" of the story–discourse distinction appears to culminate in *Worstward Ho* (Beckett 7-8) when the reader is confronted with immediate negations as soon as a statement is being made: "First the body. No. First the place. No. First both. Now either. Now the other. Sick of the either try the other. Sick of it back sick of the either. [...] Say bones. No bones but say bones. Say ground. No ground but say ground." In the words of Richardson (*Narrat. Dynamics* 52), "[i]n such texts, the discourse serves to erase the story". Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* (198) serves as another fascinating example, though of a different kind, since its narrator becomes aware that he was mistaken (see also Richardson *Narrat. Dynamics* 53): "Rereading my work, I have discovered an error in chronology. The assassination of Mahatma Gandhi occurs, in these pages, on the wrong date. But I cannot say, now, what the actual sequence of events might have been". So the narrator does not provide a correction but states that "in my India, Gandhi will continue to die at the wrong time" (198). Similar to Richardson, other theorists have been dealing with the "contestation of the opposition between story time and discourse time" (Richardson *Narrat. Dynamics* 52), such as Ruth Ronen (216) for instance, who likewise tries "to demonstrate the impossibility of divorcing the order of events from modes of telling" or Monika Fludernik (*Towards* 336) who eventually claims that "Natural Narratology [...] does not entirely reject the story vs. discourse distinction but relegates it to those parameters which depend on a realistic cognization of both the story-world and the narrational act".

2.4.3 From Elusive Beginnings to Intangible Endings

The beginnings and endings of narratives are not without reason labelled as "privileged positions" by Rabinowitz (300). As Richardson (*Time, Plot* 76) states, the beginning of narratives, for the most part, does not cause problems. However, this is no longer the case with unnatural narratives, since "as soon as we enter the larger canvas of a complex social world (or as soon as we are in the hands of an experimental writer), beginnings start to become more elusive" (Richardson *Time, Plot* 76). As for unnatural narratives, the idea or concept of a fixed beginning is something writers tend to play with or even deconstruct (see also Richardson *Time, Plot* 76). Within this context, Richardson (76) brings up the introductory

words of Raymond Federman's novel *Double or Nothing* that read as follows: "This is Not the Beginning."

When narratives already start unnaturally, it is to be expected that they also proceed and above all end in an unconventional way. Whereas endings in a conventional narrative are supposed to "wrap up the plot, reveal all the mysteries to all the relevant characters, provide some sort of poetic justice, and resolve the major problems that generated the story in the first place" (Richardson *Time, Plot* 80), that is not true for the abundance of antimimetic narratives. The endings of unnatural narratives are multiple. For Richardson (*Time, Plot* 80) these various forms of endings "include the ending that occurs but is not told to the audience [...]; the ending that returns, Ouroboros-like, to the beginning of the story [...]; the ending that negates itself and presents a second, revised ending [...]; and a multiple ending that offers different possibilities for a reader to choose from [...]".

2.4.4 Temporal Confusion: Unnatural Temporalities

"Bis morgen sind die welken Blüten frisch und schließen sich zu Knospen." (Aichinger 65)

When it comes to narrative temporality in unnatural narratives, Genette's (25) standard framework of "order, duration and frequency" that examines the correspondence between the events being told and the narrative, no longer seems possible to apply, at least not always. Instead, what extreme cases of unnatural narratives offer, is rather a variety of temporal confusion than events to be put into a Genettean category. In observing "numerous violations of realistic temporality" in recent literature, Richardson (*Narrat. Dynamics* 48) identifies six major types of temporal strategies: circular, contradictory, antinomic, differential, conflated, dual or multiple (48-51). Richardson (48) adds that his six categories are not solely restricted to recent texts but are also to be found in earlier narratives and since they are characterized through "logical contradictions, they are usually only possible in works of fiction". "Though nonmimetic, they nevertheless bear a dialectical relationship to the concept of mimesis, since it is only through that concept that we can understand its violation." (Richardson *Narrat. Dynamics* 48) The first identifica-

tion, the circular type, receives its name since this kind of narrative "instead of ending returns to its own beginning, and thus continues infinitely" (48). Richardson's second type, the self-contradictory story, is comprised of "incompatible and irreconcilable" (48) events that cannot be translated into the real life. Caryl Churchill's play *Traps*, enriched with a plethora of logically impossible events, clearly rejects the principle of noncontradiction resulting in temporal and spatial confusion. The third way – antinomic – suggests a "move backward in time" '(49) such as is the case in Ilse Aichinger's *Spiegelgeschichte* from the burial to birth of the main female protagonist providing the reader with utterances as the following*:*

> Drei Tage später wagt er nicht mehr, den Arm um deine Schultern zu legen. Wieder drei Tage später fragt er dich, wie du heißt, und du fragst ihn. Nun wisst ihr voneinander nicht einmal mehr die Namen. […] Ein Tag wird kommen, da siehst du ihn zum erstenmal. Und er sieht dich. Zum erstenmal, das heißt: nie wieder. (71)

What is happening in antinomic narration is that „both narrator and reader are moving prospectively (present tense, even future tense), though time's arrow is reversed" (49). In her *Spiegelgeschichte*, Aichinger (66) even plays with this phenomenon in writing the following (see also Richardson *Narrat. Dynamics* 49-50): "Vom Hafen heulen die Schiffe. Zur Abfahrt oder zur Ankunft? Wer soll das wissen?" Richardson's fourth temporal strategy – differential – applies to Virginia Woolf's *Orlando* as well as Caryl Churchill's *Cloud Nine*, for instance, where the aging of the protagonists is not compatible with their surrounding environment (see also Richardson *Narrat. Dynamics* 50). In Woolf's *Orlando* (68) this strategy even turns into playful language games when "metaphorical statements about time take on a literal meaning" (Richardson *Narrat. Dynamics* 50): "It would be no exaggeration to say that he would go out after breakfast a man of thirty and come home to dinner a man of fifty-five at least. Some weeks added a century to his age, others no more than three seconds at most." The conflated type of temporal construction then is summarized by Richardson (50) as "[a] distinctively contemporary construction [...] in which apparently different temporal zones fail to remain distinct, and slide or spill into one another". The last identification – dual or multiple – refers to storylines that despite of matching beginnings and endings, develop in different time spans (see Richardson 51). Eventually, Richardson (*Narrat. Dynamics* 58) clearly states that there is more research to be done with regard to these exceptional cases of narrative temporality in concluding the following: "We might also

want to reserve some additional theoretical space for still other significant types of temporal construction – I'm sure there must exist some compelling varieties that still elude the framework outlined here – as well as for innovative works that will be written in the future."

2.4.5 Spatial Confusion: Unnatural Spaces

Likewise as time, space plays a crucial role when it comes to constructing story-worlds and can result in a drama in itself, since the range of narrative worlds is a wide one. The manifold givens of space take on dimensions from one single space, as offered by Beckett in his novel *The Unnamable*, to multiple parallel worlds (see also Bridgeman 60). In addition, Bridgeman (60) claims that "[t]he scope of the world can contribute strongly to the effects of a text". As Bridgeman (56) aptly states when dealing with space as a major factor in narratives in general, "we should not neglect how useful spatial information is in keeping track of what is going in [sic]". Likewise as time, space affects "reading on different levels", since "[s]patial indicators can indicate a shift in conceptual space from the main storyworld to a sub-world (such as a protagonist's mind)" (Bridgeman 62-63). Approaches to spaces in narrative can differ dependent on the various feasible vantage points, since "we may investigate geographical, psychological, social, meta-phorical, allegorical, ideological, and self-reflexive sites and spaces" (Richardson *Narrative Worlds* 103). As for unnatural narratives or an "antimimetic approach", Richardson (103) claims that "it is the ontological nature of the fictional storyworld – that is, what exactly exists in there – that most insistently demands our attention". Furthermore, "[t]he space of the fiction is also the site where mimetic and antimimetic impulses are often engaged in a dialectical interaction" (Richardson 103). Taking a text like Beckett's *Worstward Ho*, the reader is confronted with a narrative that seems to almost have no space at all. Right away from the start the reader is provided with lines as follows: "A place. Where none. A time when try see. [...]" (11). As for Richardson (105), in *Worstward Ho* one never gains enough information "for any coherent spatial-setting to emerge". Instead, "[w]e remain, as it were, at the edge of space, looking in on opacity" (Richardson 105). It seems

that in texts like this one, the reader tends to long all the more for a somewhat "spatio-temporal stability" (Bridgeman 63):

> And although postmodern narrative worlds may become quite ragged at the edges and may lose their overall logic of either time or space (but rarely both at once), I would strongly argue that, as readers, we nevertheless continue to require spatio-temporal hooks on which to hang our interpretations. If these are not consistently provided or their uncertainty is highlighted in a given narrative, we experience disorientation and a degree of unease as an essential part of our engagement with that narrative. (Bridgeman 63)

Eventually, in asking for the purpose "of all these strange, unnatural, or impossible spaces", Richardson (106) concludes that it "points to the fabricated nature of descriptions and places set forth as real and often gestures toward the ideological pressures that inform such constructions [...]". New places emerge through verbal constructions (see Richardson 106). Ultimately, what unnatural spaces also show is "the imaginative as well as the documentary power of fictional narrative" whereas "actual spaces may be accurately depicted, or hitherto unthinkable ones may be invented" (Richardson 106).

2.5 The Reader Facing the Unnatural

2.5.1 Readerly Ingenuity

"Certain narratives—we call them unnatural narratives—urge us to create new frames or impossible blends, and this is one of the striking capabilities of fiction that we are trying to highlight when we speak of unnatural narratology."
(Alber et al. *What Really is Un. Narrat.* 107-108)

In incorporating an audience, a crucial question that arises at this stage is basically how to deal with these deviant narratives and how to make sense out of them, since our concepts of the real world can no longer be applied to these unnatural storyworlds and do no longer correspond. Also, as a reader one has the tendency to "naturalize" narratives that deviate. In this respect, Alber (see *Imposs. Storyw.* 82; Alber et al. *Response to Flud.* 376-377) provides nine "navigational tools" as options that serve the purpose to decipher various bizarre scenarios. The

nine navigational tools are basically an extended version of his originally five read-ing strategies plus the Zen way of reading in his earlier research:

(1) Blending / frame enrichment

(2) Literary genres and generic conventions

(3) Reading events as internal states (interiority)

(4) Foregrounding the thematic (themes)

(5) Reading allegorically

(6) Satire

(7) Transcendental realm

(8) "Do it yourself"

(9) The Zen way of reading

Following Monika Fludernik and Jonathan Culler, Alber (*Imposs. Storyw.* 81) states his purpose simply as trying "to make strange narratives more readable". However, he also points out that his approach differs from these authors in the sense that he focuses primarily on "extremely radical scenarios that openly defy the process of naturalization" (Alber *Imposs. Storyw.* 81).

The first reading strategy is of a relevant nature in basically every case of unnatu-ralness, whether it is a physical, logical or a human impossibility, since these inci-dences force the reader to construct new frames (see Alber et al. *Response to Flud* 376). These new frames or "impossible blends" (Alber et al. 376) come into being through the merging of prevailing frames or by "recombining, extending, or otherwise altering pre-existing cognitive parameters" (Alber et al. 376). This strat-egy can be applied when reading Caryl Churchill's *Blue Kettle*, the second part of *Blue Heart*, as suggested by Alber (*Imposs. Storyw.* 91-92) where the protagonists seem to lose control over their utterances providing the reader with dialogues in-serted by the words "kettle" and "blue":

> MRS OLIVER. Kettle I blue I'm not kettle myself clear. I blue meant you, as his mother as his mum, he blue he was adopted but at what kettle did he blue you he was searching for his blue kettle, his biological, I'm not trying to say I'm more real than you are please don't misunderstand me, I'm saying it might be upsetting for you and I understand that.
> (10.125)

Alber (*Imposs. Storyw.* 91-92) suggests that as "the storyworld is then gradually 'eaten up' by intruding lexemes [...]" might hint at "the idea that lies soon catch up

with one" which would refer to the character of Derek who intends to fool old ladies by pretending to be their son whom they offered for adoption as well as it might "also illustrate that each character has a dark side for which no expressive vocabulary exists". The second strategy suggests explaining certain unnatural events "by identifying them as belonging to particular *literary genres* and *generic conventions*" (Alber et al. 376). Thus, the application of this strategy results in a conventionalization of the unnatural (see also Alber et al.). As the unnatural is being conventionalized, it turns "into a basic cognitive frame" (Alber et al. 381). The third way of approaching unnatural texts – reading events as internal states – proposes to interpret unnatural events as dreams, imagined fantasies or resulting out of hallucinations (see Alber *Imposs. Storyw.* 82-85). In other words, certain impossible scenarios are "naturalized" "by attributing them to the *interiority* of the narrator or one of the characters" (Alber et al. 377). The fourth strategy labelled as "foregrounding the thematic" aims at deciphering incidences of unnaturalness thematically in order to make them more readable. In other words, since not every unnatural scenario can be explained satisfactorily as an internal state, Alber (85) puts forward the proposal to depict certain events "as exemplifications of themes rather than mimetically motivated occurrences". "Reading allegorically" as a fifth suggestion of approaching unnatural texts suggests – as the name says – to read specific events as an allegory on various possible topics with the aim of deducing more global messages related to the world rather than to specific individuals (see Alber *Imposs. Storyw.* 82-88). This strategy can also be applied to Martin Crimp's *Attempts on Her Life* as shall be discussed later. The sixth tool refers to the possibility that narratives make use of impossibilities in order to ridicule or make fun of particular matters, since "[t]he most important feature of *satire* is critique through exaggeration, and the grotesque images of humiliation or ridicule may occasionally merge with the unnatural" (Alber et al. 377). For his last but one strategy, Alber follows Marie-Laure Ryan (671), who suggests that "the contradictory passages in the text are offered to the readers as material for creating their own stories". Beside his own reading strategies, Alber also refers to a final alternative way of approaching unnatural texts, namely the "Zen way of reading" (83). Thus, the Zen way of reading as a "laissez-faire approach" (84) might be suitable for a reader who does not necessarily feel the need to apply a strategy in order to make sense of a narrative, but rather "accepts the strangeness of unnatural scenarios and the

feelings of discomfort, fear, or worry that they evoke in her or him" (83). Eventually, what unites all strategies is basically the underlying premise or basic idea of a coming to terms – a coming to terms with narratives that deviate. Moreover, Alber et al. (*What Really is Un. Narrat.* 108) emphasize that their "claim is not that narratives containing unnatural elements can only 'successfully' be interpreted in one specific way, but rather that such narratives give rise to readings that may challenge, change, or even transcend the interpretive protocols emerging from our everyday encounters with the real world".

2.5.2 To Make or Not to Make Sense of It

Whereas Alber clearly aims at explaining unnatural scenarios as illustrated above, this is not necessarily true of his co-authors. As for Richardson and Iversen, they share the same opinion as Porter Abbott. Abbott (448) in his article on "unreadable minds" argues against the use of reading strategies in order to make texts more readable. Rather, as for "unreadable minds" as Abbott terms them, these "work best when we allow ourselves to rest in that peculiar combination of anxiety and wonder that is aroused when an unreadable mind is accepted as unreadable". At this stage, Abbott (448) further continues in explicitly addressing Alber, since his position "is at odds with efforts to make sense of the unreadable, as, for example, Jan Alber's [...] effort to develop 'sense-making strategies' for the 'impossible storyworlds' of postmodern fiction – in effect, to make the unreadable 'readable'" (see also Alber et al. *Response to Flud.* 377). Similarly, Richardson (*What Is* 33) strives to "respect the polysemy of literary creations, and a crucial aspect of this polysemy can be the unnatural construction of recalcitrant texts".

3 Martin Crimp and Caryl Churchill: Two Authors and Their Unnatural Affinities

Since the decision of choosing playwrights for this thesis is quite a specific one, I decided to briefly argue the explicit choice of the writers and their texts. Although the initial choice was solely Martin Crimp, it did not take long to realise that Caryl

Churchill can be a suitable as well as beneficial complement. First of all, as with Crimp and Churchill, the decision lies on a category that can be termed as 'contemporary British playwrights'. Although neither of them can be considered a newcomer, their texts are more than on the pulse of current affairs. Similarly, Sierz (*Rewrit. the Nat.* 47-48) – in his book on the question of what can be considered as so-called "new writing" – sees it as follows:

> Age is less significant that the distinctive and original voice of the work. For while it is true that some playwrights do not keep up, and their writing style becomes increasingly old-fashioned, there are plenty that remain as contemporary as youngster. Think of Caryl Churchill, Martin Crimp or Mark Ravenhill.

As for Crimp, Sierz (*The Theatre of* 125) further states that "although there certainly are moments of postmodern playfulness in Crimp's text-based theatre, the main tradition that he speaks to is that of the high modernism of Ionesco, Beckett, Pinter and Churchill, a tradition of heavyweights who experiment in form and explore theatricality itself." In the words of Angelaki (5), with Crimp and Churchill the choice falls on "two of the most unapologetically unconventional playwrights of the contemporary period". Thus, it is not a rare occurrence that both names are in one utterance. Likewise, Crimp as well as Churchill play a pivotal role as illustrative examples in the research of the leading authors of the theory of unnatural narratology. The choice of texts comprises two plays of Crimp – *Attempts on Her Life* (1997) and *In the Republic of Happiness* (2012) – and the most recent play of Churchill – *Love and Information* (2012). For Luckhurst (49), *Attempts on Her Life* is "the most radically interrogative work in western mainstream theatre since Beckett". The selected plays all premiered at the Royal Court Theatre and are of a highly individual nature. The plays of Crimp are "hard work" as Aleks Sierz states in his book *The Theatre of Martin Crimp* (2) and so are the ones of Churchill. "Crimp's work is difficult. He doesn't write crowd-pleasing social comedies, gritty council-estate dramas or easy plays about 'me and my mates'." (Sierz *The Theatre of* 1-2) The texts are "experimental in form and unsettling in content" (Sierz *The Theatre of* 2) and this is also true of Churchill's *Love and Information*. In Crimp's texts one detects "politics of discomfort, criticising assumptions and questioning norms" (Sierz *The Theatre of* 142). Thus, his politics are "about questioning and understanding, rather than preaching or explaining." (Sierz *The Theatre of* 154) As for Churchill, Sierz (*Rewrit. the Nat.* 25) praises the playwright as "perhaps the

most consistently innovative playwright of the post-war era". He continues that "[i]n play after play, she has reinvented theatrical form, choosing metaphor over literalism and imagination over realism" (61). Eventually, what unites the two playwrights is their innovative way of writing and yet their individual approach. Both authors are characterized by their unique and distinctive voice. And what Sierz (50) writes about British theatre today, is definitely true of Crimp and Churchill: "Rawness, directness and punchy brevity are valued more than rhetorical speechifying or literary extravagance. Contemporary British playwriting is neither literary nor intellectual, but theatrical and practical."

4 Unnaturalness in Crimp and Churchill's Theatrical Worlds

4.1 Introducing the Plays: A Brief Outline

4.1.1 *Attempts on Her Life*

We need to feel
What we're seeing is real
It isn't just acting
it's far more exacting
than acting
We're talking reality
We're talking humanity
We're talking of a plan to be
OVERWHELMED by the sheer totality
and utterly believable three-dimensionality
THREE-DIMENSIONALITY
of all the things that Anne can be
(5.19)

Attempts on Her Life exists in a theatrical world where the unconventional and the unnatural reign, where the protagonist is not present at all and where the physically impossible complies with the standard. Thus, Crimp's project "claims its anti-conventionality both in form and its repudiation of distinct characters" (Luckhurst 49). While "the extreme fragmentation of the play's overall form gives the work its contemporary edge", as Sierz (*The Theatre of* 53) frames it, "its formal daring also

suggests a future kind of theatre in which the conventions of naturalism are subverted and reinvented". As for Sierz (*The Theatre of* 53), this is "a recipe for an avant-garde theatre which both represents reality and simultaneously deconstructs it". In deconstructing the laws of logic and common sense, Crimp "has liberated himself from the conventions of the traditional well-made play", though, "he also makes sure that the piece has a satisfyingly symmetrical form, and that its kaleidoscope of scenes is based firmly on narrative" (Sierz *The Theatre of* 52). The deviations from a classical drama-pattern – legitimating the overarching question raised by Barnett (1): "When is a play not a drama?" – can thus be perceived on various levels which shall be illustrated subsequently.

4.1.2 *In the Republic of Happiness*

> MUM. What're you doing here, Robert?
> UNCLE BOB. Well to be frank with you, I've really no idea. I thought I would just suddenly appear, so I did. I suddenly appeared. I craved your company – craved to be with you all – and here I am. I hope I'm not putting you out at all.
> (*In the Republic of Happiness* 19)

In the Republic of Happiness is Crimp's most recent play that premiered at the Royal Court Theatre in December 2012. The play is highly unconventional in the sense that Crimp again frees himself from traditional drama patterns. As shall be seen at a later stage, *In the Republic of Happiness* shares some affinities with Crimp's earlier play *Attempts on Her Life*. The play basically starts off with a family gathering at Christmas, but due to the sudden appearance of Uncle Bob, everything that seemed straightforward so far is not expected to last. As announced in the blurb of the print version: "All we can be sure of is that the world will never be the same again." Written with brutal honesty and a great deal of swearing, the play's overall tone is sharp and far from conveying a feeling of comfort for its readers.

4.1.3 *Love and Information*

Churchill's most recent play, *Love and Information*, also premiered at the Royal Court Theatre in September 2012. The author again mastered a highly experimental and unconventional drama text. The play is a kaleidoscope of scenes that gathers a momentum of its own. The playwright confronts the reader with fast-moving vignettes one after another. As for its content, these sketches of scenes are more than contemporary in picking up familiar topics. Or as Brantley phrases it in his theatre review for *The New York Times*: "The impulses behind those sentences have animated every human being who has walked this planet. And the odds are that, in some form or another, those instincts percolate throughout your waking hours every day." As for the play's overall character, Brantley uses the words "thought-churning" and "deeply poignant" and these turn out to be more than appropriate as shall be illustrated within the subsequent investigations.

4.2 A Close-Up: Unnatural Beginnings

Since beginnings claim a major status in narratives, as addressed above, this section seeks to investigate the beginnings of the plays of Crimp and Churchill in order to trace early indications of unnaturalness. In other words, the section aims at examining how these narratives start off in claiming their unnaturalness. Thus, the question being raised at this stage is whether the play's unnatural character is something that becomes obvious right from the start or whether these texts somehow slowly develop into an unnatural narrative. Are the plays unnatural at first glance or is their unconventionality somehow disguised as for the beginning? In the course of this, the section also gives an insight into the unnatural story levels.

4.2.1 The Physically Impossible Beginning of *Attempts on Her Life*

Starting off with the point of departure, Crimp confronts the audience with a physically impossible situation which is deemed to be accepted. Technically, the play comprises one major character, Anne, whose presence is engendered via the dis-

course of disembodied voices. As Barnett (16) aptly asserts in this regard, "the number of speakers is theoretically limited only by the number of dashes in any one scenario". Furthermore, the author splits the play and thus the major character of Anne, into seventeen disconnected scenarios, as indicated in the subtitle of the play. This in turn adds a certain momentum of fragmentation to the character of Anne, who Sierz (*The Theatre of* 49) grasps as an enigma: "These seventeen scenes, which vary between extreme brevity and lengthier dialogue, each explore a different aspect of a woman called Anne (also Anya, Annie, Anny, and Annushka) – who appears to be a complete enigma." Likewise, in his introductory comment to the play, Crimp discloses his textual philosophy of the scenarios: "Let each scenario in words – the dialogue – unfold against a distinct world – a design – which best exposes its irony." Overall, the physically impossible as the initial setting sets the stage for the play and its obvious unnaturalness which subsequently spreads over to the various other levels that shall be identified below.

4.2.2 Appearances Can Be Deceptive in *In the Republic of Happiness*

Bearing the promising title of *In the Republic of Happiness*, the play advertises itself as "an entertainment in three parts". The situation given in part one – entitled "Destruction of the Family" – appears far from being unnatural. The story starts off as a fairly straightforward, though highly unpleasant family Christmas – among various arguments and quarrels among the family members it also turns out that one of the girls is pregnant without knowing the father – disrupted by the sudden arrival of Uncle Bob whose motive for arriving lies in a speech full of insults on behalf of his wife Madeleine, who is waiting outside in the car. Thus, the reason for Uncles Bob arrival is simply to tell everyone present in the room why Madeleine seriously detests them.

> UNCLE BOB. Okay. Okay. It's like this.
>
>> We're on our way to the airport. Madeleine, I mean, and myself. We're leaving. We're leaving the country now. We won't be coming back. We've reached a decision and it's irreversible. Why? Don't ask. Don't even ask. We're going and that's that. You won't see us ever again. You won't see me, you won't see Madeleine. That's why she's asked me to come in now. Because basically this is the only opportunity she has – before we both leave – before we both irreversibly

> vanish – for her to tell you how much she hates you – yes hates you
> and abhors this family.
> [...]
> (22)

The family consists of the parents – Mum and Dad – their daughters Debbie and Hazel as well as the grandparents – Granddad and Granny. Although the opening part explicitly depicts the Christmas season and the play contains plenty of songs, its abrasive tone is far from being Christmassy or festive. In keeping up a pretence of normality, the natural appearance of the story level in the first third of the play is deceptive. A slight hint of unnaturalness can merely be depicted on the discourse level, expressed through interpolated lyrics that distract the seemingly natural dialogues. However, this purportedly natural outset shall not be expected to last. For as soon as the second part begins, things are becoming slightly more complicated. Sierz (theartsdesk.com) even claims in the context of an interview discussing the piece with the playwright that "[i]t reads like it's his most experimental work since his 1997 masterpiece, *Attempts on Her Life*". Interestingly, Crimp himself in the course of this interview draws a connection between these two plays when asked how it came about:

> As you know, I wrote *The City* in response to my *The Country*, which started me thinking of plays as pairs. So they were two psychological plays that formed a pair. And for years I have been trying to write a play that would go alongside *Attempts on Her Life*, which is the kind of play that sets out to create a sieve in which you could collect all the residue, all the psychic shit that flows through us all. (theartsdesk.com)

Thus, hinting at *Attempts on Her Life* as "one collection of psychic debris" leads to bridging the gap to the middle part of *In the Republic of Happiness* as "another collection of psychic debris" concluding that "it's more about a contemporary mentality than about character and plot" (Sierz theartsdesk.com). In further hinting at the "anti-naturalism of the language of the play", Crimp provides the following response to Sierz:

> I always struggle with the genre of naturalistic drama. And as soon as I start writing one I want it to fall apart. I want someone to come in and hit it with a sledge-hammer. In this play, I wanted the naturalistic world to fall apart as we watch it. Clearly, without giving too much away, when Uncle Bob arrives, he is signalling both the end of this family and the end of this play being a conventional naturalistic play. (theartsdesk.com)

The middle section – "The five essential freedoms of the individual" – clearly differs from its preceding as well as its following part due to its highly unconventional

discourse level, as shall be discussed at a later stage with regard to unnatural discourses. Any coherence that might have been developing in the course of the first third now seems to have collapsed. Still, there is more to come in the last third. The last third then, part three, actually titled as "In the Republic of Happiness", starts off with a line from Dante's *Divine Comedy* – "Tu non se' in terra, sì come tu credi" (Paradiso, I,91). With regards to the story level, Uncle Bob and his partner Madeleine seem to have arrived at their destination, the republic of happiness. This destination appears somewhat supernatural. The supernatural appearance is already alluded to in the first act (1.35) as Uncle Bob and Madeleine themselves hint at what their new life will be: "Like a pane of glass."; "Hard. Clear. Sharp. Clean." The unnaturalness continues on the story level as Madeleine in the final act reminds Bob – or Robbie as she calls him occasionally– on the lectures he has to give to their "citizens" as well as to sing their "100% happy song" which proposes that "[t]he earth – plus Mum and Dad – the bedside lamp – the state – have ... have... have burned to ash" and "yes everything's just great" (3.89). In terms of the balance of power it appears that Madeleine is pulling the strings since Uncle Bob leaves a rather helpless impression supported by his apparent forgetfulness, which somehow hints at signs of dementia.

4.2.3 *Love and Information*: Unnatural Out of the Blue

While the plays of Crimp, as for the beginning, seem to take small steps leading to unnaturalness, Churchill obviously goes without any small steps, since her play appears unnatural right away and above all out of the blue, without warning. When turning the first page of *Love and Information*, one realizes the play is a predestined case of unnaturalness since the playwright's introductory "[n]ote on the text" reads as follows:

> The sections should be played in the order given but the scenes can be played in any order within each section.

> There are random scenes, see at the end, which can happen any time.

> The characters are different in every scene. The only possible exception to this are the random Depression scenes, which could be the same two people, or the same depressed person with different others.

Since Churchill does not assign any roles in *Love and Information*, the play actually starts off as unnatural out of the blue. Thus, the reader directly enters the unnatural drama text that eventually appears like a kaleidoscope – a kaleidoscope of a plethora of scenes that mostly resemble snippets of conversations. The first section covers short scenes with captions like "secret", "census", "fan" etc.:

> **SECRET**
>
> Please please tell me
>
> no
>
> [...]
>
> but tell me
>
> no
>
> [...]
>
> all right I'm telling you.
>
> ...
>
> No
>
> yes
>
> no
>
> I warned you
>
> [...]
>
> (*Love and Information* 4)

As for the reader, searching for connections in order to establish a coherence of ideas, results in a futile attempt. However, keeping on reading the second section does not make things clearer. Instead, as section one, the second section follows the same pattern seemingly informed by arbitrariness. Eventually, this pattern runs through the whole play until the very last part titled "RANDOM".

4.3 Indeterminate Speakers

4.3.1 Puzzling Character Constellations – Or: Where is Anne?

One of the most unconventional characteristics of Crimp's play certainly is the absence of the major protagonist, or more to the point, "the presence of an absence" as Barnett (17) frames it. "Anne's contradictory character indicates that she's an

absurdist notion, an absence filled by other people's opinions and ideas." (Sierz *The Theatre of* 52) Indeed, Crimp adverts to that perspective in scenario 6, as illustrated in the extract below:

- She says she's not a real character, not a real character like you get in a book or TV, but a *lack* of character, an *absence* she calls it, doesn't she, of character.
- An absence of character, whatever *that* means ...
  (6.25)

Another crucial aspect that correlates with Anne's status of an absent character is her being silent most of the time. One can realise a denial of speech which results in Anne being a silent subject. Scenario 3 – Faith in ourselves – contains an explicit allusion to this aspect:

- And it's all there in her face.
- It's what?
- All there. All there in her face.
- In Anya's face. We don't need words. She's beyond word. Her mouth, in fact her mouth trembles but no words come.
  (3.14)

Thus, Anne or Anya in this case, is portrayed as being "beyond words", something Wetzlmayr frames as "the silent subject existing beyond the realm of the logos and of words" (54). While the focus of the content evolves around the one character of Anne, the audience is requested to unscramble the narration of the disembodied voices, something Richardson (*Voice and Narr.* 686) terms as "offstage narrative". The 'absence of character' plays a significant role in this regard, since it "makes the stage a place of narration" (Zimmermann 76): "Crimp's exhibition of the act of narration goes far beyond Brecht. The speakers are not defined by what they say, nor are they to be identified with it." (Zimmermann 76) Most of the time, the voices act like an advertising agency, or stage directors, and somehow resemble the power and influence of spin-doctors. However, as anonymous speakers, they do not impersonate characters (see Zimmermann 74). Furthermore, with regards to the audience's perception of Anne, Barnett (17) and Zimmermann (75) concur in their conception of the *images* of Anne:

> Several of the scenarios feature the imagining, rather than the reporting, of Anne's exploits and her supposed characteristics. The act of imagining, however, follows such staid and predictable lines that one is forced to ask where the trite ideas are coming from and what is informing them. (Barnett 17)

> The spectators of Crimp's play are thus presented with narratives on its central character, with *images* of Anne that refer to her absence while trying to render her present. (Zimmermann 75)

Though, Luckhurst (55) claims that "if at one level she is imagined, at another level 'Anne' is clearly an interrogative device deployed to expose misogyny and exploitation of women, both institutionally and internationally, with corporate mentalities in first world countries implicated before anyone else". In any case, the motives of the speakers with regard to the construction of Anne's identities depend on whether the result would sell. Thus, the voices search for the "basic ingredients" (Crimp 2.5-7) and express that they "need to go for the sexiest scenario" (Crimp 5.20). In this regard, the players "make visible the different ideological twists and turns that discourse and representation can take, and depict how speakers activate and choose among a set of ideological positions as they construct meaning" (Agusti 103).

4.3.2 When Dashes are the New Characters

The device of replacing character names with mere dashes is to be found throughout *Attempts on Her Life.* In *In the Republic of Happiness*, the reader does find character indications in the first and last part. However, in the middle section names are dropped and the reader is again confronted with a use of dashes that are supposed to have the following function – as mentioned within the introductory part of *In the Republic of Happiness*: "A dash before a speech – indicates change of speaker". According to Sierz (*The Theatre of* 123), it was Churchill from whom Crimp "learned the usefulness of slashes and dashes as accelerators of dialogue". They can be considered as accelerators insofar as they "create stage dialogue that quickens the dramatic action" (Sierz *The Theatre of* 123). Considering the highly dynamic nature of the dialogues, their content appears like a pitching of ideas and thoughts, complementing each other and nonetheless implying a notion of randomness or arbitrariness, which should be illustrated through the subsequent extract of scenario 17 (74-75):

- The thing, the thing, the thing, the thing/ inside of her.
- In her case, yes, let's say it *has* died. Let's say that everything she's ever worked for – her whole life – has died. (*laughter*) Let's say her life up to this point has been what? what? like a ...

- Book?
- Like a book, like a...
- Thread?
- Like a book, like a thread, like a ...
- Boat?
- Like a boat. Let's say her whole life – yes, very good – up to this point has been like a boat, like a small boat...
- Drifting.
- ...drifting quite happily across a lake. But now she feels the water...
- Coming in through the cracks?
- Creeping.
- Creeping into what?
- Her broken heart.
  Laughter.
- Her broken – exactly – yes – absolutely – heart. She feels the water of the lake creeping into her / broken heart.
- Her *work* abandoned. Her *home* abandoned by her children.
- Her*self* abandoned by her husband. Where is he now?
- Paris? Prague? / Vienna? Berlin?
- Paris? Prague? Fucking? Fucking is he someone half her age in a city of Renaissance palaces and baroque/ domes? Enacting some adolescent fantasy, while she attempts to reconstruct her life.

Revisiting the fact that the dialogues are of a highly dynamic nature implying notions of cruelty and control, Crimp provides us with the following comment: "For me, dialogue is inherently cruel. There's something inherently cruel about people talking to each other. And I don't know what that is. My parents' constant arguments as a child possibly have something to do with it." As for *Love and Information*, Churchill even frees herself from using dashes in the play. Instead, she offers plain text lines without a sign of indication. Thus, *Love and Information* exists and works without any specific character allocations at all. This eventually results in a play where "more than a hundred characters try to make sense of what they know", as stated in the blurb of the plays print version.

4.4 Unnaturalness on the Discourse Level

4.4.1 The Unsettled Discourse of *Attempts on Her Life*

Focusing on the narrative text of Crimp's play, the audience is confronted with a highly diverse and unfixed discourse level comprising the following implied forms: voice mail, dialogues, monologues, lyrics, interrogation and simultaneous strands.

Considering the modes of speech – interjections, comments, self-corrections, alternative versions (Zimmermann 76) – leads to the impression that "the text is being invented on the spot by its speakers", which in turn highlights its provisional character (Zimmermann 76). Likewise, Agusti (105) frames these instances as "slips of the tongue" that supply the play with its notion of "literary pastiche":

> [T]hey are a device to express, precisely, the fragmentation of the subject into layers of subjectification and to show that it is not an essential subject, but that it is constituted in and through language. Crimp takes these ready-mades from the field of the plastic arts and places them in the context of the theatre, introducing crises within discourse, manifesting it as a device of control, normalization and discipline. (Agusti 105)

Perceiving all speech acts of Crimp's play as fiction, Zimmermann (78) also takes up the term of mimesis in this context:

> But that which is not 'real' still exists. The collage of parodies of very different genres of text and discourse amounts to an ironic comment on mimetic processes and the mediation by which the image of reality is constructed. It does not represent reality, it is mimesis of mimesis. Its concern is mimesis itself.

Within this context, Zimmermann (74) also seizes the terminology of Elfriede Jelinek in referring to the nature of Crimp's text as "expanses of speech" – "[...] 'Sprachflächen', which make no distinction between narration, dialogue, description, expository text and stage direction". The unconventional narrative thus results in a transgression of traditional drama. The following extract of scenario 11 (50) which constitutes an instance of meta-theatricality, somehow adverts to this transgression:

> - Exactly – it becomes a kind /of theatre.
> - It's theatre – that's right – for a world in which theatre itself has died. Instead of the outmoded conventions of dialogue and so-called characters lumbering towards the embarrassing dénouements of the *theatre*, Anne is offering us a pure dialogue of objects: of leather and glass, of Vaseline and steel; of blood, saliva, and chocolate. She's offering us no less than the spectacle of her own existence [...].

Moreover, this view can also be linked to the theatre "beyond" as Crimp enunciates at the beginning: "This is a piece for a company of actors whose composition should reflect the composition of the world beyond the theatre." With respect to Crimp's dramaturgy, the author in the interview with Sierz (3), further elucidates on the origins of this particular play:

> *Can you tell me how* Attempts on Her Life *originated?*

> In the gap between *The Treatment* and *Attempts on Her Life*, I reached a point of frustration with - what you might call - the normal way of writing. I was completely bored with doing "he said" and "she said" dialogues. I was frustrated with psychological drama, and bored with so-called cutting-edge theatre. Writing is no good unless there's pleasure in it. And for a while after *The Treatment* I had been getting pleasure from writing little short stories in dialogue form. I felt a real urge to write in this way. And that's how *Attempts* came about. I kept writing pieces like this, and then I'd look at them and say, "Sorry, Martin, this isn't a play." Then, in the end, I thought, "Of course it is." I was pleased with the writing - it felt entirely like me, Martin-like - and it worked.

And apparently, it does work while "it switches back and forth from description to dialogue, from narrative to expository text, from verse to prose" (Zimmermann 76). Considering the innovative structural forms of the play visualized in each of the scenarios, the text still works in its entirety as a drama. Despite an occasional notion of arbitrariness the 17 scenarios are far from being random, since they contain both, references as well as quotations from one another, plus reoccurring motifs (Sierz 50). 'All messages deleted', for instance, comprises eleven answer phone messages where almost all of them relate to the subsequent scenarios. In other words, the voice mail at the very beginning already captures and visualizes the idea of Anne's plethora of identities, something that can be regarded as functionalizing the deviation of a non-linear narrative. Eventually, the narrative level in *Attempts on Her Life* intentionally blurs the borders between real life and art, thus reality and fiction by the vast scope of language.

4.4.2 *In the Republic of Happiness*: Three Parts – Unnatural to the Power of Three

As already mentioned, appearances are deceptive in *In the Republic of Happiness*. Focusing on the discourse level of the play, it is part two that comprises the core of unnaturalness. While parts one and three follow a rather conventional drama pattern as for their discourse, without any drastic realizations of unnaturalness, part two excels in terms of how things are being told. Bearing the title "The five essential freedoms of the individual" the middle part abandons the plot and drops the assigned characters. Instead, the audience receives "interwoven speeches on the fixations, frustrations and fervent belief in self that pervade life in

the 21st century", as Billington phrases it in his theatre review. The five essential freedoms are divided as follows:

I The freedom to write the script of my own life

2 The freedom to separate my legs (it's nothing political)

3 The freedom to experience horrid trauma

4 The freedom to put it all behind me and move on

5 The freedom to look good & live for ever

This format is based on, and supported by, the introductory instructions of assigning the roles that read as follows: "*In Parts One and Three* roles are assigned in the usual way."; "*In Part Two* there are no assigned parts, and the whole company should participate." Thus, the second part - comprising the five essential freedoms of the individual – offers free play with eight actors merely assigned with descriptions such as "Old Man", "Middle-Aged Woman", "Teenage Girl I" etc. Due to its unconventional structure, part two perhaps mirrors most what Crimp created in *Attempts on Her Life*. Likewise, Haydon draws this connection between the plays in his review in stating the following: "And again, in another way this is pure Crimpland. This time, the Crimpland of *Fewer Emergencies* and *Attempts on Her Life*. Indeed, this section feels like the much-needed update to many of the sections in *Attempts* which through no fault of their own became irreversibly dated by 9/11." Besides, as for the discourse level in general, Crimp also provides the reader with simultaneous conversations especially towards the end of part one – "The destruction of the family"; likewise, he also inserts lyrics as well as overlapping lines – all devices reminding of the erratic discourse level of *Attempts on Her Life*. It is also the lyrics that seem to function as first hints that things are not necessarily as natural as they appear within the fairly conventional first impression made by the structure of the first part. These lyrics are simply integrated into the dialogues, such as is the case for the following example sung by the character of Madeleine towards the end of part one:

She sings:

I don't need a woman to unzip my zip
or a man with a white arse cracking the whip
or some kind of what? Fixed human relationship?

Some people you lose
Some people you keep:
Yes I'm a family friend

> But I don't go deep
> (no I never go deep)
> (In the Republic of Happiness 36)

4.4.3 Randomness Reigns: The Kaleidoscopic Discourse Level of *Love and Information*:

Composed of seven numbered sections plus one extra section labelled "RANDOM", unnaturalness can be considered as the keynote of *Love and Information*. Each of the seven sections comprises a plethora of self-contained scenes – 57 in total – that are titled with a topic and varying in length. Thus the overall architecture of Churchill's play – its macrostructure – can be seen as a kaleidoscope of one concise scene after another. These scenes, however, have no identified speakers nor do they have dashes. Simply, they are lines of texts resulting in dialogues. Eventually, the very last scene of the last, thus seventh section is also marked as "Last Scene" (70). The Subtitle reads "facts" and basically describes its content, since the scene is structured as a strict question-answer format on arbitrary facts as illustrated below:

> Who was president of Coca-Cola from nineteen twenty-five to seven?
> HB Jones.
> What is the smallest village in Central Asia?
> Quat.
> Where would you see a huish?
> In a gnu's fur.
> How many diamonds were mined in 1957?
> Sixty thousand four hundred and twenty-eight.
> [...]
> (*Love and Information* 70)

The closing section titled "random" (73) starts off with a further note: "*These things can happen in any section*. DEPRESSION *is an essential part of the play. The other random items are optional.*" Hence, Churchill seems to renounce a chronological order of scenes which, as for the sequencing of scenes, appears like shuffling a deck of cards, regardless of any order to be obeyed – likewise as in the middle section of Crimp's *In the Republic of Happiness*. This in turn, allows free play for theatre makers, which shall be elucidated subsequently.

4.5 Creating Freedom for Theatre Makers: Unnatural Stage Directions

Both, Crimp and Churchill create a sort of openness in their texts which opens up a certain freedom for the theatre-makers. As for Crimp, "writing for the theatre means making a steel wire strong enough and tense enough for the actors to balance on. They must be afraid but at the same time free (like the writer)." (qtd. in Sierz *The Theatre of* 161) In contrast to Beckett, whose plays are rather "'closed' stage directions", Crimp made *Attempts on Her Life* a "completely 'open' text" (Sierz *The Theatre of* 164). Thus, Crimp decided for a form that "liberates directors and actors" (Sierz *The Theatre of* 164). Similar to Sierz, Rebellato (15) comments on the "playwriterly withdrawal" when remarking shifts that started to take place in British theatre from the mid-1990's onwards. These shifts manifest themselves in writers "abdicating from aspects of their plays that they formerly may have been expected to control" (Rebellato 15). In doing so, they are creating a "new kind of openness" (Rebellato 15). Since the text itself of *Attempts on Her Life* offers no specific indications on space, time or actors, "Crimp has, in effect, transferred these decisions from the playwright to the production team" (Rebellato 15). However, as Sierz (*The Theatre of* 164) further elaborates on the textual openness of *Attempts on Her Life*, "although it seems that the play permits them to do anything they like – a parody of postmodernism's 'anything goes' – in practice this total freedom is usually curtailed, because the text still directs, as it were, its own production: directors and actors find that Crimp's words push them in certain directions". Still, Rebellato (27) further claims that "[i]n the case of a play like *Attempts on Her Life*, it is simply implausible to imagine that there ever could be a definitive production. The experience [...] will always be provisional [...]". Likewise, with *Love and Information*, Churchill provides a play that is characterized through a high level of flexibility, since the multitude of scenes within their respective sections need not follow a specific order above all not the scenes to be found at the very end of the play which can be incorporated into the performance at any time and any place (see also Rebellato 15). Eventually, due to the high flexibility of the play, Churchill gives the theatre makers carte blanche. Already in an earlier play, *Far Away*, Churchill puts down a similar haphazard note on the number of actors that

should engage for a specific scene *The Parade*: "five is too few and twenty better than ten. A hundred?" (Churchill *Plays Four* 132) *In the Republic of Happiness* too, provides one distinct part – part two – where nothing is assigned "and the whole company should participate", as stated within the introductory section on characters. Eventually, what Rebellato (24) concludes for *Attempts on Her Life*, also applies to *In the Republic of Happiness* and Churchill's *Love and Information*, namely, that the playwrights do "indeed offer a considerable degree of freedom to theatremakers [sic]".

4.6 The Frustrating Search for Temporal and Spatial Indicators

As it seems, neither in Crimp's nor in Churchill's plays one can expect a linear framework of time and space. Waiting for coherent temporal and spatial indicators in the course of watching eventually results in a futile attempt. As for *Attempts on Her Life*, the audience is confronted with multiple worlds, which inevitably results in pure puzzlement. As Barnett (16) elucidates: "The world of the play is highly compressed with temporal and spatial confusion impinging upon several of the scenarios, giving a sense of dislocation and of how unreal the experience of place can be in the contemporary world. Crimp's 'distinct world' is one that is no longer able to be apprehended." Thus, the nonlinearity continues also at a geographical range, assigning the text to a global backdrop which covers various continents. Although *In the Republic of Happiness* starts off as fairly natural with a defined time and space – "Daylight. Christmas." – this reality is entirely dropped in the second part, where there is no temporal or spatial information given. The third part then appears chronologically plausible, since Uncle Bob and Madeleine announced that they are leaving in the first part. Still, as for where they are, things appear rather puzzling and mysterious. The place seems like a utopian world or parallel universe, in any case completely alien to our real-world parameters. While Crimp at least offers some kind of temporal and spatial clues for the audience to get one's bearings, Churchill's *Love and Information* entirely relinquishes information on time and space. She even goes one step further in abandoning a chronological order as for which scenes when to appear.

4.7 Language Seizes Power in the Realm of Unnaturalness

4.7.1 A Shift in Power: The Protagonist's Absence Enhances the Presence of Language

In *Attempts on Her Life* it is the absence of the main protagonist – the lack of character – that one would think challenges the whole theatrical concept and stage-managing. However, quite the contrary takes place: In having no present main protagonist on stage, the theatre is challenged to go one step further: Language takes over and becomes a dominating tool throughout the play. Thus, as Angel-Perez (83) phrases it, "nothing takes place onstage but language". In this regard, "Anne's absence is therefore metatheatrically replicated by an absence of 'drama' (action in Greek) to the benefit of narrative" (Angel-Perez 83). Still, the play succeeds – or perhaps succeeds all the more – in yielding a performance, something theatre is assumed to produce: a performance as a certain kind of 'a doing'. In this regard, Crimp's play, in seemingly giving carte blanche to the stage directors, highlights theatre's ability of leveraging the potential of minor literature. Correspondingly, Barnett (17) claims that "language itself is the focal point in *Attempts* because of its explicit lack of context. However, that it is eminently recognizable generates something akin to Brecht's idea of *Verfremdung*, of making the familiar strange." What happens to Anne at this stage is that her real identity is reduced "to that of a linguistic artifice, with no external 'reality' or fixed subject position" (Agusti *Short Circ.* 105). This in turn, confirms and corresponds to the perception of language as "a tool for domination" (Agusti *Short Circ.* 105).

4.7.2 Writing with Constraints

When it comes to the process of writing, Sierz (*The Theatre of* 162) states that "Crimp has always set himself creative constraints". As Crimp himself says in an interview: "I'm just always looking for new rules, I'm looking for constraints, looking for constraints all the time, and it's the constraints which will let the material be created by me. It's the constraints that I need." (Cavendish) What the playwright is hinting at is the "paradox that too much freedom leads to creative impotence"

(Sierz *The Theatre of* 162). Since in these days somehow anything is possible, "there is an absence of the prohibitions, the inhibitions and constraints that once gave writers something to kick against", as Sierz (*The Theatre of* 162) remarks. As for Sierz (*The Theatre of* 163), "[t]he shape of Crimp's career has been determined by his desire to synchronise both form and content, without repeating himself, and his restless experiments in form have perhaps made his work seem more difficult than it really is". In this respect, Angel-Perez (79) states that "[a]mong the most innovative experimental dramaturgies of the turn of the millennium are those resorting to constrained writing: 'verbatim theatre', composed of a montage of straight-from-life declarations or political speeches [...], which certainly ranks as one of the major attempts at redynamizing political theatre". In this regard, being "based on language games", Angel-Perez (79) considers Crimp and Churchill's plays as "particularly stimulating and inventive". In *Attempts on Her Life*, the most prominent constraint that Crimp resorts to in writing this play is that of having an absent protagonist. Thus, the variations of Anne's identities "all abide by the same constraint" of never staging her (Angel-Perez 82). After all, "Anne remains the Mallarméan '*absente de tout bouquet*', the ideal flower forever absent from the bouquet" (Angel-Perez 82). In this regard, what happens to theatre is that insofar as it comprises a locality informed by "disappearance and void" rather than disclosure, it turns into a "blind spot", thus "the contrary of the expected spectacle", as Angel-Perez (83) phrases it. In this regard, "Crimp traces the contours of a new post-Beckettian theatre of absence concerned with not-seeing, a new place where nothing takes place" and yet, "here is the paradox inherent in this type of literary constraint – 'void' breeds wholeness; the empty generates the full" (Angel-Perez 83-84). The same is true of Churchill, who "loves systems, grids, figures and constraints". Her aforementioned play *Blue Kettle* serves as an outstanding example for constraints at the microstructure of the play, when "kettle" and "blue" in replacing certain words, make utterances hollow (see also Angel-Perez 89-92). Thus, "Churchill proposes to our ears words that are only summoned to vainly and imperfectly encode a world – a world doomed to disappear as soon as it is uttered" (Angel-Perez 92). Angel-Perez (92) further claims that Churchill's experimental ways of writing "resolutely inscribe her work in what I would call a theatre of the impossible narrative: a theatre doomed to stuttering and to endless repetition, a theatre of 'the eternal return'". As for *Love and Information*, the play is experimen-

tal in form and content. The playwright "matches style and content so closely that they become inseparable" (Brantley). To conclude, what constrained writing does, is summarized by Angel-Perez (92) as follows:

> Constrained writing aims at making us aware of the end of a system: the 'linguistic era', to put it in Steiner's words, has reached a conclusion and the pact with the spectator needs to be renegotiated. Language has failed and the position of the reader-spectator can no longer be that of a gaping and respectful admirer in front of a sacred object: the text no longer contains its own truth, it becomes somehow contingent therefore prone to being manipulated. However, by an ultimate ironical twist, constrained theatre (or literature, in fact) never reveals the nature of the constraint in the first place. The constraint remains enigmatic and the spectator is busy trying to work it out throughout the play.

4.7.3 Repetition, Denarration and Pauses

Both, Crimp and Churchill, in the course of time, seem to have compiled a sort of linguistic toolkit of which they make use throughout their plays. This toolkit also shows several similarities, as shall be illustrated below. Thematizing possible influences of Crimp, Sierz (*The Theatre of* 161) claims that "[a]ll have gone into Crimp's theatre toolbox, which includes devices on loan from Ionesco, Beckett, Pinter, Mamet and Churchill, and these have served him well for the past two decades and more". As for the selected plays under discussion in this thesis, one of the most prominent devices is the one of repetition as well as the already aforementioned device of denarration. As for repetition, it needs to be mentioned that the way Crimp uses it, can be considered as a sharpened form of the highly common literary device of repetition that has been around for long. As Sierz (*The Theatre of* 113) states, "[r]epetition is never just repetition. In stage dialogue, it's a device to convey intensity or comic effect, to describe an insecure character or to indicate unsettled emotion. From the beginning, Crimp understood the uses of repetition." The following extract from *In the Republic of Happiness* (61-62) even merges the two devices of repetition and denarration:

- I was trapped. I was boxed-in. I was hurt. I was fearful. I was angry. I was ashamed.
- I was hurt. I was silent. I was closed off. I was ugly.
- I was guilty. I was trapped.
- I was boxed in by my boss.
- I was ugly, I was fat.

- I was fat, I was too thin, I was too hurt.
- I was blocked, I was trapped, I was too ashamed.
- I was angry.
- I was angry.

Similarly, the subsequent passage is clearly marked by an explicit act of denarration with regard to the colour of socks:

- I ate my own sick then sicked my sick up again over my socks. My socks were pink. My socks were dark blue. I was wearing thick orange socks. I couldn't sleep.
  (In the Republic of Happiness 63)

Besides, Barnett (17) claims that the rhetorical device of repetition prompts the audience "to question the originality of an utterance or a discourse that seemingly emanated from an individual, and to relocate the instance of language in a more networked context". Addressing the realm of music that plays a pivotal role in Crimp's plays, Sierz (*The theatre of* 113-114) further claims that "[r]epetition, especially repetition with variation, also creates a musical verbal texture, a reminder of Crimp's musicality." Also *Attempts on Her Life* (17.78) contains various notions of denarration as the following extract of scenario 17 illustrates:

- So. What? She doesn't work?
- She *does* work.
- She *has* worked.
- She *can* work.
- She *will* work.
- She *won't* work.

Pauses comprise a further common feature in the theatres of Crimp and Churchill. For Sierz (*The theatre of* 114), referring to Crimp's plays, "[p]auses or hesitations are clear signs of something else happening": "Pauses show characters stopped short by their own ungoverned thoughts, or trying to conceal their real emotions, or simply silent in front of a void. Pauses can be disconcerting, or just hesitant." (Sierz *The Theatre of* 114) As far as Churchill is concerned, in *Love and Information* (77) she even provides one vignette labelled "SILENCE" within the "RANDOM" section. The keyword "silence" is accompanied with the following further instruction: "*This can happen more than once, for different lengths of time.*" (77)

4.7.4 Unnatural Semantic Fields

4.7.4.1 Language, Art and Images in *Attempts on Her Life*

Discussing *Attempts on Her Life*, Zimmermann, in elaborating further on language (76-77) uses the linguistic field of art in taking up the image of a "collage" as a metaphor. Thus, the image of a collage can be decoded as the play's highlighting "the material of these fragments, i.e., language, through the use of *ready-mades*". Drawing a parallel to visual arts, "the material transports the meaning": "It bears the trace of the authentic which distinguishes it from representation, it is a witness of the 'real' world." (Zimmermann 77) Another art-related image that emerges within *Attempts on Her Life* is that of the photograph. However, eventually not even photographs prove reliable, since Anne's mother does not succeed in recognising her daughter on the photograph. Within this context, the metaphor on photographs further develops in scenario 6 (6.21):

- We see them close to, so close you can make out the little dots. Funny, isn't it, how everything at a certain point turns into just these little dots – even her smile.

This notion of the little dots also suits the dismemberment of Anne's personality. Similarly, Zimmermann (78) comments on this image as follows:

> Moreover, when looked at close up, realism of photographic and electronic images dissolves into dots and pixels. The circumstantial evidence of the documents, testimonials and objects is not only fragmentary but also irremediably contradictory and unreliable.

In this respect, scenario 6 (24) contains a further image in relation to the absence of character, the image of a screen:

> - Some of the strange things she says to her Mum and Dad as a child: 'I feel like a screen.'
> -She's lying there, isn't she, with the tube in her poor thin arm, looking terribly pale, whiter in fact than / the *pillow*.
> - 'Like a TV screen', she says, 'where everything from the front looks real and alive, but round the back there's just dust and a few wires.'

Thus, the metaphor of the screen directly addressed here in the text also functions as an overall figurative comparison on the speakers' relationship to Anne who construct her sellable identities. Besides, within the context of art, scenario 11 – Untitled (100 Words) – becomes of a special interest, since "Anne's ritual performance erases the border between life and art" (Zimmermann 82). The

scenario topicalizes "the artist's attempts to kill herself" (11.45) as an installation which "secures traces of her existence and her suicide attempt" (Zimmermann 82). The installation shows several personal objects associated with Anne's suicide attempt. Thus, the relation of these objects and their materiality is stressed. These objects in turn "suggest authenticity and 'real-ness'" since they "bear meaning related to her person, evoking her memory" (Zimmermann 82). However, Zimmermann (82) remarks the following at this stage:

> This has little in common with Crimp's ironical constructions of images of Anne through language, his parody of discourses and genres and the social criticism they imply. Rather his collage of scenarios constitutes a theatre in search of an elusive, absent reality, a theatre that ironically refers to other texts and media and that clearly bears the stam of 'work'.

Eventually, through the conversion into a media-simulation, Anne's "suicide ritual" (Zimmermann 82) contains a performative notion which mirrors the play of absence and presence (see Zimmermann 82).

4.7.4.2 The Computer Controlled Language of *In the Republic of Happiness*

In *In the Republic of Happiness*, Crimp explicitly plays with a seemingly computer-controlled semantic field that results in dialogues that read as follows:

- You think my life doesn't make sense? You think I've what? I've forgotten my own password?
- You seriously think I can't open the document of my own life? –
- [...]
- You seriously think I can't delete my own parents or alter the way I look? You seriously think I can't make changes to my own body and save them?
- [...]
  You think I don't know how to click on trauma and drag it into the document of my own life? You think I don't know where to insert the space rocket?
  (In the Republic of Happiness 44-45)

As becomes apparent when looking at the dialogue, seemingly real-life speech is being merged with typically computer-related vocabulary, when a speaker talks about opening the document of his or her own life which makes the dialogue as such rather unnatural with regard to actual real-life speech. One could also interpret the strategy that Crimp is making use of in this play, as a constraint he set himself as a playwright – as elaborated beforehand within the context of writing with constraints. It appears that the influence of technology on our lives is not a

mere influence anymore but much rather technology is taking over the lead, since the life of the speaker is being treated as a computer-controlled one that enables you to "delete" parents or "alter" your outer appearance.

5 A Philosophical Step into a Theatrical World

5.1 Deleuze and Language in a State of Perpetual Disequilibrium

Deleuze's acknowledging of minor literature, primarily his meticulous analysis of the works of Samuel Beckett, have led to the suggestion that the philosopher's approach is also a plausible strategy to engage with so called unnatural narratives, and in particular Martin Crimp's play *Attempts on Her Life*. Moreover, it is argued that Deleuze's line of investigation might reach a different level in Crimp's work, since in *Attempts on Her Life*, the playwright confronts his audience with the absence of the main protagonist, who is only rendered present via the discourse of disembodied voices. While Beckett's characters are still identifiable, at least at the starting point, as confirmed by Blanchot (211) – "But as irregular as the view we are given of him is, Molloy remains an identifiable character, a definite name who protects us from a yet more troubling menace" – the main protagonist in Martin Crimp's *Attempts on Her Life* starts off as a complete enigma and remains an absent presence. In depicting two major notions within Deleuze's philosophy – minor literature and the idea of identity – eventually lead to three overarching claims relating to the realm of theatre and minor literature:
- Theatre gains a significant importance in leveraging the potential of minor literature
- If the writer becomes the other, so does the spectator
- Fragmentation is essential in order to establish a new entity

Since the transitions among the three claims are often blurred or relate to each other, the following chapter pursues an overall, synoptic picture rather than obeys strict distinctions between the individual aspects.

5.2 Crimp Seems to Stutter Too

- So. What? She doesn't work?
- She *does* work.
- She *has* worked.
- She *can* work.
- She *will* work.
- She *won't* work.
  (Crimp 17.78)

In his essay *He Stuttered*, Deleuze (23) suggests that besides attributing voice modulations to the characters – which can be done in two ways, either in actually doing it or leaving it up to the reader in simply indicating the change by means of discourse markers – there is also a third option with regards to language as such, leaving characters aside, namely "the performative". Hence, as Deleuze (23) claims, "it is no longer the individual who stutters in his speech, it is the writer who *stutters in the language system (langue).* At this stage, however, Deleuze (24) raises the question whether this is possible at all without mistaking the language system as such with speech. Accordingly, the author provides a solution based on the way we perceive language as such, either as a "homogeneous system in equilibrium, or near equilibrium" or as a system in "perpetual disequilibrium", respectively. Taking the latter understanding, the perpetual disequilibrium, a system that "bifurcates", entails that "language itself will begin to vibrate and to stutter and will not be confused with speech, which always assumes only one variable position among others and follows only one direction" (Deleuze 24). Within this context, bridging the gap to Samuel Beckett, Deleuze (25) eventually claims that great writers somehow invent their own language and, eventually, become foreigners in it: "[...] what they do is invent a *minor use* for the major language within which they express themselves completely: they *minorize* language, as in music, where the minor mode refers to dynamic combinations in a state of perpetual disequilibrium". Thus, in alluding to Proust, Deleuze (25) states that in becoming "a foreigner in his own language", the writer "shapes and sculpts a foreign language that does not pre-exist *within* his own language". Hence, the core issue is "to make language cry, make it stutter, mumble or whisper". Up to the moment when the system of language exhausts itself or, as Deleuze (28) phrases it, "overstrains itself", that is the point of departure when language is losing its balance:

It is when the language system overstrains itself that it begins to stutter, to murmur, or to mumble; then the entire language reaches the limit that sketches the outside and confronts silence. When the language system is so much strained, language suffers a pressure that delivers it to silence. Style – the foreign language system inside language – is made by these two operations; or shall we rather speak, with Proust, of a nonstyle, that is, of "elements of a style to come which do not yet exist"? Style is the parsimony of language. Face to face, or face to back, to cause language to stutter, and at the same time to bring language to its limit, to its outside, and to its silence – all this will be like the boom and the bust. (Deleuze 28)

Hence, Deleuze's essay leads to the conclusion that Crimp too invents his own language.

5.3 The Writer Becomes the Other – And so Does the Spectator?

Blanchot goes even one step further than Deleuze in assessing the writer's relationship to the piece of work he or she has created. In his essay "*Where Now? Who Now?"* Blanchot (215-216) states the following:

The work demands that the man who writes it sacrifice himself for the work, become other – not other than the living man he was, the writer with his duties, his satisfactions, and his interests, but he must become no one, the empty and animated space where the call of the work resounds.

At this stage, the focus pans in directing the attention from the writer to the reader, the audience. Hence, the writer becomes the other, but does the spectator become "the other" as well? The writer's transformation seems plausible for the moment or from the point of departure, however, since the literary text also addresses an audience, leads to the suggestion that the question about the reader should be raised. Thus, it can be argued that although as a first step naturally the writer is becoming the other, in order to create the text, eventually also the reader's transformation becomes significant. Since the theatre performance in this case establishes a connection between the text and the audience, it would seem reasonable to suggest that the audience also becomes the other, which is even of greater importance in order to render an approach towards minor literature possible. Thus, we as the audience have to free ourselves from our views related to the actual world in order to allow to perceive language as a perpetual disequilibrium.

5.4 Fragmentation

The aspect of fragmentation also appears in Deleuze's essay *The Exhausted*. As Deleuze (14-15) alludes within the context of "any-space-whatever", also in reference to Robert Bresson, fragmentation forms an essential aspect in the sense that the disconnection facilitates a new connection, or as Bresson (95-96) frames it: "Isolate the parts. Make them independent as a way of giving them a new interdependence." Hence, with regard to *Attempts on Her Life*, an agreement with Bresson and Deleuze seems reasonable at this point, since the fragmentary character of Crimp's text and its isolated scenes, also allow a new entity. Thus, it can be argued that the device of fragmentation is of crucial importance, since it comprises an essential component for receiving an overall picture. In other words, what happens in the play is that it is the fragmentary aspect of the entire text that makes the audience recognize it as a whole, eventually.

A further thought that becomes interesting at this stage, has been proposed by Sarah Gendron (51) with regards to Samuel Beckett, claiming that Beckett's subjects offer a significant similarity with what Deleuze calls the "virtual object", "an entity that escapes determination, and in particular humanization" (Gendron 51). Thus, it can be argued that Gendron's elaborations on this issue also gain great importance for Crimp's play:

> This is the status of the majority of Beckett's characters: If they *are*, what they *are* is "not quite there". This lack of pure presence in the subject comes in a variety of forms. Some of his characters are literally absent in one way or another. [...] (Gendron 49)

The author continues in agreeing with Deleuze's thoughts (51):

> They are [...] never *quite there*. Never fully present, they are also never entirely absent. They have the property of "being and not being where they , wherever they go" (Deleuze 102, emphasis in the original). For Deleuze, the most salient quality of the virtual object is that it "lacks its own identity" (101). This is primarily because it can never, like "Mouth" and "Auditor" of *Not I*, be anything more than a "fragment of itself".

These two quotations are essential since they point to the following consideration: At this stage, the apt formulation of "Never fully present, they are also never entirely absent.", leads to the observation that perhaps exactly the wavering, vacillating existence of Anne also brings her as a character into a state of perpetual dis-

equilibrium. This idea goes hand in hand with the aspect of the reader becoming the other. Hence, it seems reasonable to suggest that it is not only the system of language that eventually finds itself in a state of disequilibrium, but also the character of Anne herself and finally also the audience is required to be drawn in to an imbalance. This in turn provides the key to these texts of minor literature. Eventually, in the sense that Blanchot (213) claims that "[t]he Unnamable is condemned to exhaust infinity [...]", *Attempts on Her Life* appears to exhaust its main protagonist.

6   The Spectator's Role

6.1   The Spectator's Perception

6.1.1   *Attempts on Her Life*

6.1.1.1   Reading *Attempts on Her Life* Allegorically

The most prominent way of naturalizing this particular, unconventional narrative might be the strategy suggested by Jan Alber: reading allegorically. In order to facilitate naturalisation, Alber (*Imposs. Storyw.* 82) proposes as with readers to "see impossible elements as parts of allegories that say something about the world in general rather than particular individuals". Thus, applying this strategy to Crimp's text suggests decoding the play as "an allegory about the various ways of subjecting the female self in societal discourse" (Alber 82). More specifically, the allegory in this particular case would function as a criticism on the subjection and objectification of the female self (Alber 89). Taking into account Crimp's previous plays as well as *Attempts on Her Life*, Luckhurst (53) identifies a general interest of the author in the representation of "women as victims of patriarchy, as misunderstood, sexually exploited, emotionally abused, marginalised or silenced in some way". As with regard to *Attempts on Her Life*, this interest is settled from the very beginning. The messages on the answering machine embed a number of disembodied voices, all "in search of the object of desire, all speak into a monologic emptiness, and all mark the start of the hunt" (Luckhurst 55). However,

"the hunt is never-ending because the prey is imagined" (Luckhurst 55). In this regard, Luckhurst (55) further elucidates the following:

> The fact of 'Anne's' non-existence accounts for her fabricators obsessive engagement with attempting to narrate her: only in narration can 'Anne' be imagined to be real and only through repeated attempts to resolve the irresolvable, that is – to summon her presence – can the idea of 'Anne' be sustained.

Above all, the two lyrics in Crimp's play – scenario 5 (The Camera loves you) and scenario 14 (The Girl Next Door) – which Luckhurst (55) describes as "Brechtian in the way they refer to other scenarios", clearly illustrate that paradox (see Luckhurst 55):

> We're talking of a plan to be
> OVERWHELMED by the sheer totality
> and utterly believable three-dimensionality
> THREE-DIMENSIONALITY
> of all the things that Anne can be
> ALL THE THINGS THAT ANNE CAN BE
> (5.19)

Regarding the text in its entirety, the disembodied voices construct "a contemporary subjectivity" (Agustí 116). An interesting issue raised by Edgar (31) at this stage is that "Crimp's purpose is not only to question whether we can truly know another human being, but whether we can regard other people as existing at all independent of the models we construct of them". Moreover, Zimmermann refers to Anne's oscillating between subject and object at this stage and concludes that Anne as an "emblem of the condition of the self [...] personifies the dialectics of being different and being the same, of being absent as a subject and yet present as an object through her representations in the media, of being the subject and the object of these – endlessly performing the vanishing act of the postmodern subject" (80). Zimmermann (80) also compares Anne with a gallery of mirrors considering the play as a satirical reflection on the "multitude of contradictory images of postmodern woman". However, it needs to be said that the objectification reaches a different level in Crimp's text, since Anne eventually becomes an object of herself as adverted in scenario 11 (51):

- An object in other words. A *religious* object.
- An object, yes. But not the object of *others*, the object of *herself. That's* the scenario / she offers.

Another aspect that becomes relevant within the context of the objectification of the female self is Jacques Lacan's notion of the gaze, and in this context primarily the male gaze, since the constructed identities of Anne generally illustrate a male perspective (see Zimmermann 81). Bridging the gap to the notions of activity and passivity, Zimmermann claims that "the voyeurist male gaze transforms woman into a passive object put there to be seen, a body, a commodity, a fetish" (81). This notion is even increased in scenario 7 that identifies Anne with a make of car which symbolizes the "instrumentalisation of the female body and female sexuality in advertising" (Zimmermann 81). Zimmermann further elucidates on this aspect as follows: "The personification of a commodity as a woman in order to eroticise it for the gaze of the male customer reifies woman and reduces her to commodity status." (81)

6.1.1.2 Identities – Options or Force?

The seventeen scenarios are not only characterized by disconnection themselves, but at the same time generate the different identities of Anne. Accordingly, Anne assumes several more or less conventional roles, something Sierz (*The Theatre of* 49) aptly summarizes as follows:

> She is the recipient of a variety of telephone messages, the heroine of a film, the victim of civil war, a typical consumer, a megastar, a tourist guide, a make of car, a physicist, an international terrorist, an American survivalist, an artist, a refugee's dead child, a victim of aliens, the girl next door, the object of a police investigation, a porn star, and the subject of a conversation among friends. (Sierz *The Theatre of* 49)

This device of diverging identities is underpinned through the various names assigned to Anne, Anny, Anya, Annie, Annushka, Anna etc. within the individual scenarios. Moreover, as applies to the alteration in geographical terms, "her age fluctuates between teenage and forty; she's both a single woman and a mother" (Sierz *The Theatre of* 49). In this regard, as Sierz (*The Theatre of* 49) aptly detects, in the scenario 'Girl Next Door', "the idea of her fluid identity reaches a hilarious climax when she is described as everything from 'a cheap cigarette' to 'a dyke with a *femme*'. One question that evolves at this stage might be whether these identities are rather presented as options or force. Considering the play in its entirety - its tone, its character constellations and their unbalanced dynamics of power - leads

to the interpretation that there is a notion of enforcement accompanied with Anne's identities. Likewise, Luckhurst (51) metaphorically elucidates in her article on the appearance of the voices:

> They conceive numerous versions of 'Anne', getting off on each others' ideas and relishing their individual control to turn 'Anne' into anything they want: like children pulling the wings and legs off an insect 'Anne' is tormented or destroyed at a whim, physically abused, tortured or sexually exploited or in moments of magnanimity imagined to be an authority herself.

The diversification of identities seems to face no limitations, since Anne is equated even with the perhaps most unnatural identity in this text, a make of a car. Within an interview by Sierz (3) on *Attempts on Her Life*, Crimp referred to Anne as a make of car ("The New Anny": 7.30-35) in his respond to the question of whether there was a point when he realised that form and content was becoming one:

> *But was there a point when you realised that the form and content was becoming one?*
> Oh yes. The moment that Anne or Anny became a car. It's one of those moments when you sit there, smiling to yourself and you realise that although you have invented this structure which appears at first glance limiting, it is actually limitless. It can be opened out in any direction. If Anny can be a car, she can be anything. And I'm free.

It is the word "limitless" that somehow seems to function as a key word in Crimp's utterance, and generally applies to the genre of unnatural narratives and should thus be revisited subsequently within regard to the discourse level. Similarly, Sierz (*The Theatre of* 52) comments on this issue of Anne being a make of car that "as the scenario [...] makes clear, Anne is a vehicle. Like a metaphor, she carries meanings that aren't literal."

6.1.1.3 "What's the Point?"

As with all unnatural storyworlds, the play eventually prompts the question of what is the point. The perhaps most obvious response to this issue can be found in the text itself, scenario 11, as illustrated via this specific extract:

> - Yes, but exactly, that's surely the very point she's attempting to make: *Where* are the boundaries? *What* is acceptable? ...
> - ... because it's pure / self-indulgence.
> - ... Where does the 'life' – literally in this case – end, and the 'work' begin?

> - With respect to you I think she'd find the whole concept of 'making a point' ludicrously outmoded. If *any* point is being made at all it's *surely* the point that the point that's being made is *not* the point and never has in fact *been* the point. It's surely the point that a search for a point is pointless and that the whole point of the exercise – i.e. these attempts on her own life – *points* to that. It makes me think of the Chinese proverb: the darkest place is always under the lamp.
> (11.46)

What can be depicted at this stage is simply the "negation of the possibility of making meaning and arriving at a final point or conclusion that is the result of this process" (Wetzlmayr 60). Despite the fact that some scenarios seem to offer explicit responses with regards to the hidden meaning of these attempts, they still remain possible options:

> - What it's not – and this perhaps how it differs from those previous attempts – what it's not is a cry for help.
> (6.23)

However, what can be depicted are references among those various scenarios to each other which imply a notion of coherence within a complete non-linearity. In an interview with Sierz (*The Theatre of* 103) on the question of what would be the "moral foundation" of the piece, Crimp responded the following: "You can't ask me to tell you what *Attempts* is all about. All I can say is that it's trying to come to terms with contradictory things in the world and also contradictory things about writing about the world. Maybe that's why it's so symmetrical: it's trying to balance these contradictions." The various attempts remain mere attempts which results in the impossibility to translate these into a fixed and constant scheme (see Wetzlmayr 60). Likewise, once the audience is offered a more or less coherent answer, as illustrated via another extract of scenario 11, this is likely to be rejected in another scenario:

> - Isn't Anne actually anticipating the terrifying consequences of that argument and asking us what 'help' actually means? Isn't she saying, 'I don't want your help'? Isn't she saying, 'Your help oppresses me'? Isn't she saying the only way to avoid being a victim of the patriarchal structures of late twentieth-century capitalism is to *become her own victim?*
> Isn't that the true meaning of these attempts on her life?
> (11.49)

Thus, it seems to be an unfeasible objective to derive a definite meaning from the text, since the play, similar to Anne's identities, is characterized through constant change which reminds of an aphorism by the Greek philosopher Heraclitus: "Nothing endures but change." As Sierz (*The Theatre of* 49) aptly states, "the play is the

culmination of Crimp's quest to marry form and content". In doing so, the main pro-
tagonist seems to remain ungraspable, which leads to the assumption that indeed
this notion of ungraspability might serve as a major theme of the play. Thus, as
already stated, Anne best of all constitutes the perhaps most ungraspable element
in this entire work. Michael Billington in his review on a stage production of 2007
aptly addresses the issue of what is the point as follows: "Since the play is an at-
tack on limiting definitions, it is hard to pin any single meaning on it." However,
referring to the dismemberment of the protagonist, Billington links Crimp's play to a
significant person and forerunner in the context of the theatre beyond the theatre,
the Sicilian writer Luigi Pirandello (Biasin). Thus, according to Billington, *Attempts
on Her Life* "partly pursues the Pirandellian idea that coherent identity is a myth".
Eventually, since the play and its own status cannot be forced into a scheme there
is no definite answer to the question raised here which at the same time contrib-
utes to the benefits of the play in offering "carte blanche" (Billington) to its stage
directors.

6.1.2 *In the Republic of Happiness*

6.1.2.1 Three Parts – Three Kinds of Theatre?

On closer inspection, the three-part structure, the global architecture of the text,
arouses suspicion. The fact that the three parts of the play differ significantly in
their entire nature, makes Crimp's utterance in an interview with *Aesthetica* – that
they are "in fact three different kinds of theatre" – a pivotal point of view. In his blog
Postcards from the Gods, Andrew Haydon, in a review of *In the Republic of Hap-
piness,* suggests a threefold title in reference to Billington: "I'm told Michael Billing-
ton opted for *Heaven, Hell* and *Purgatorio* [...], and it's true Crimp does preface the
third and final part of *Republic* with a quote from Dante. But Past, Present and Fu-
ture, like Dickens's *A Christmas Carol* would be an equally possible version. Or:
Point-of-Departure, Travel, Destination another." Indeed, the successive order of
the three parts seems to make sense, since it has a certain progress inherent that
is primarily Uncle Bob and Madeleine moving to what they were hinting at in the
beginning when Madeleine offers a lyrical outlook that reads as follows (37):

I've booked my ticket. I'm flying first class
to a cool place thin as a pane of glass
where I just have to swipe a security pass
to swim in the milk of thick white stars.

It's a new kind of world
and it doesn't come cheap
and you'll only survive
if you don't go deep
(so I never
no I never
no I never go deep)

The first part can primarily be seen as physically and logically possible since the scenario fits into a real-world frame. However, as Crimp (Sierz *theartsdesk.com*) himself remarks, Uncle Bob – accompanied by Madeleine – functions as the initiator who instigates the contestation of the seemingly naturalistic play. Thus, while the first third seems generally natural on the story level as well as on the discourse level, the second part without warning transfers the reader into a collection of unnatural discourse and interrupts the story level. So as for the story, the reader is confronted with a sudden temporary stoppage. The last part then appears like a utopian world isolated and disconnected from the seemingly real-world in part one. Still, as for the story level, the last third closes the circle and does connect to the announcements the reader was informed in the beginning. Somehow the reader is presented with three worlds and thus three kinds of theatre that each require different approaches in order to grasp the global span of Crimp's text.

6.1.2.2 The Five Essential Freedoms of the Individual – Story Level Interrupted

The core of the play, part two, since most unnatural, may cause the biggest trouble when trying to deduce meaning. Generally, as already addressed above, one has to accept that the story is being interrupted, at least temporarily. Instead, the audience is presented with a sort of stream of consciousness as for the narrative mode. As Hutton phrases it, "[t]he five topics [...] all hark to buzzwords of the early twenty-first century, with its fetish for the individual." With regard to the content one encounters brutal insights such as the subsequent extract illustrates:

- The deeper I medicate my own child, the safer we both feel. I have a right to identify the molecule.
- I have human right – yes – to identify the molecule that makes my child unhappy or stops my child concentrating or that makes him scream.
- Oh look at my child run round the airport screaming!
- Oh sweet!
- If my child runs round the airport screaming, I give him the medication. If he coughs – if he fails to concentrate.
- [...]
- I pin my child down: I give him the pink syrup – I feed him the yellow capsule.
- [...]
- - yes how calm he is now after the pink syrup – how intelligent after the one-hundred-milligram capsule – *plus* he's began to read –
  (*In the Republic of Happiness* 50-51)

As for Crimp, "he says that he has been thinking about the changes in society after the Second World War, and that his play, and in particular its savagely satirical central section, is partly a criticism of the myths of upward social mobility in post-war Britain, and in particular the myth of individualism which, in our culture, so quickly becomes narcissism" (Sierz *theartsdesk.com*). Drawing a connection to the visual arts, Crimp, in referring to Warhol, states the following: "Andy Warhol, who was so prescient, said that 'In the future everybody will be free to think exactly what they like — and they will all think the same.' This is exactly what the central part of the play is attempting to dramatise." (Sierz *theartsdesk.com*) So the play's surreal heart also comprises a satirical notion with regards to the freedoms of the individual, as elucidated by the playwright: "And of course individualism suits the world we are living in very well because we are constantly told that we are free to make choices and somehow the politicians and the leaders of large corporations — who make all the important choices — are allowed to step back and say, 'Actually it's nothing to do with us. It's all choices by our customers.' And it's all a lie." (Sierz *theartsdesk.com*) Still, there is to mention on the part of Crimp that it is not exclusively satirical, but "the fact is that people do experience real psychological distress, eating disorders and obsession with their own personal traumas" (Sierz *theartsdesk.com*).

6.1.2.3 Addressing Other Contemporary Phenomena: Dementia and a Lack of Memory

As fairly soon becomes obvious within *In the Republic of Happiness*, among various themes picked up in the text, also dementia plays a major role. As Crimp himself confirms in the interview with Sierz (*theartsdesk.com*), as for dementia being present as a theme "that did come from personal experience seeing one of my parents suffering from dementia. It's a very present part of the world now as people are living longer. Of course, it's also in the culture – have you seen that beautiful film by Michael Haneke [*Amour*]?" As for *In the Republic of Happiness*, it is clearly the character of Uncle Bob suffering from dementia. Thus, although never mentioned explicitly, as reader one can piece together the jigsaw puzzle when encountering passages from the text that read as follows:

> MADELEINE. I was having a sandwich.
> UNCLE BOB. Was it nice?
> MADELEINE. Yes. It was chicken. I enjoyed it.
> Where did you find it?
> MADELEINE. Find it? I made it. I made it with chicken.
> UNCLE BOB. Oh?
> MADELEINE. Yes.
> UNCLE BOB. Where did you find the chicken?
> MADELEINE. Where did I find the chicken? Well it was in the sandwich. It
>   was delicious. I enjoyed it. Would you like one?
> UNCLE BOB. Would I ...?
> [...]
> (77-78)

Besides, Crimp also mentions that it is not merely dementia being addressed:

> But also there's something going on in the play about a lack of memory: the past is retreating at speed and people wanting to live in a perpetual present. And, maybe this is just about getting older, but I feel that the past is being undervalued. I realise how close my date of birth [1956] is to the end of the war. And I know that there is a generation of people who have no idea about that history. (*Sierz theartsdesk.com*)

6.1.3 *Love and Information*

6.1.3.1 Is Brevity the Soul of Wit?

> **KEYS**
>
> You don't know where I put the car keys, do you?
>
> (*Love and Information* 76)

What becomes clear at a fairly early stage of the play is the fact that all these scenes are characterized by extreme brevity. It seems that Churchill is not keen on giving long spiels of explanations. Still, the playwright knows how to capture the substance of a conversation so that it is a striking result, or as *The Economist* in response to the very first scene "SECRET" phrases it: "But for all its brevity, the scene packs a wallop. Who are these people? What has happened?" Likewise, Green, in a review on the play, discerns that "[a]nd where drama is very brief it may be commensurately deep". And indeed, the concise style Churchill is confronting the audience with here, is anything but shallow since the snippets of conversations, although mere snippets, actually bring along an entire drama of their own. In this respect, Fitzgerald aptly remarks that "[t]he performers must evoke, in as little as 30 seconds, entire relationships, sometimes with deep personal histories and other times between strangers, but in each case teasing us with complete dramatic worlds we're never allowed to fully enter." The shortest lines are above all to be found in the rubric titled "DEPRESSION" (74) placed at the end of the play accompanied by the following instructions: "*Each of these is a separate random item. Each is said by one person to another who doesn't respond. The characters can be the same each time, or the depressed person can be the same and the others different, or they can all be different.*" (74) This rubric provides the audience with mere one-liners such as "the difficulty of getting the Israelis and Palestinians to" (74). Considering Churchill's other plays, Green states the following: "With *Love and Information* the playwright seems to be atomizing her style even further. And yet, at any magnification, the writing remains ripe with the recognizable Churchillian qualities of wit and paradox, astringency and forgiveness." Taking up the brevity of these scenes, Brantley in his review for *The New York Times* goes

one step further in seeing in there the "splintered attention span" of our society these days: "Leave it to Ms. Churchill to come up with a work that so ingeniously and exhaustively mirrors our age of the splintered attention span." The following scene "MANIC" comprises an outstanding example of a highly dense dialogue – almost monologue – brimful with information but at the same time characterized by a splintered attention span, since within this overload of information the speaker runs with enormous speed from one topic to another idea without a pause or a possibility to pant for air.

MANIC

My god, look at that flower, thank you so much, have you ever seen such a red, red is blood and bullfights and seeing red is anger but red is joyful, red is celebration,

yes, I like it

in China red is lucky how lucky we are to have red flowers,

shall I get a vase?

in China white is death and here black is death but ghosts are white of course so a chessboard is death against death, and blood of course could be death but it's lifeblood isn't it, if you look at the flower it's so astounding

yes

it means so much to me that you gave me red flowers because red is so significant don't you think? it means stop and of course it means go because it's the colour of energy and red cars have the most accidents because people are excited by red or people who are already excited like to have red, I'd like to have red, I'll buy a red car this afternoon and we can go for a drive, we can go right up through the whole country don't you think, we can go to Scotland we can go to John o' Groats, did he eat a lot of porridge do you think? but we don't have to start from Land's End or Land's Beginning we should say if we start from there but we won't we'll start from here because here is always the place we start from, isn't that funny, and I need to drive along all the roads in the country because I have to see to the traffic because there are too many cars as everyone knows but our car won't be one too many you'll be quite safe, we'll make sure it's all flowing smoothly in every direction because cars do go in every direction possible and everything goes in every possible direction, so we'll find a vase for the flowers,

yes

I think a green vase because of the primary colours and if they were blue I'd put them in an orange vase and if they were yellow I'd put them in a purple vase, yellow and purple is Easter of course so that's why crocuses, and red

and green is Christmas which isn't right now of course it's the wrong time of year, I might have to sort that out when I've got a minute.
(62-63)

6.1.3.2 Summing up the Snippets

In drawing a parallel to Michael Haneke's film *71 Fragments of a Chronology of Chance* released in 1994, Megson (51) aptly observes that non-linear narratives, since characterized by disruption, force the audience "to hunt for connections between fragmented and apparently unrelated scenes". This is especially challenging for Churchill's *Love and Information* when one is urged to sum up the multitude of snippets of conversations that "keep any Homo sapiens's head in full spin. Especially now, when the distribution and consumption of data have assumed the proportions of a Tower of Babel that seems ready to topple at any moment" (Brantley). Thus, taking a step back in order to globally subsume what is at stake in these snippets, it is knowledge in any shape that is the underlying cause for various happenings. Revisiting the very first scene "SECRET" we find two speakers, one having a secret with the intention of not sharing it. The second speaker desperately wants to hear this secret and by all means keeps begging and trying the other's patience to the utmost. Not completely convinced whether it is a good idea, the person eventually relays the secret in whispering without the reader being privy to what it is all about. Eventually, it immediately becomes obvious that the passed on information has an enormous impact on the relationship of the speakers or as Brantley phrases it: "But there's no question that what the woman has said has effected a chemical change in their relationship. That's what knowledge does." Thus, "each of this work's self-contained segments [...] deals with the ways we lust for, process and reject knowledge" as Brantley aptly subsumes it. Hence, one has to ask if we want to know everything, can we also *handle* knowing everything. Another vignette titled "SHRINK" (51) portrays a different pair of speakers somehow not concurring on the topic of psychoanalysis. Their conversation ends as follows:

> You spoil it. You completely spoil everything. You always do.
> That must be painful for you. You can take it to your analyst and have it turned into meaning.
> (52)

As Fitzgerald phrases it, "[e]ach of these is a scenario in which knowledge shakes people up, spins them around, forces them to confront the world and themselves in ways they never imagined". So although we enter each single snippet of conversation as it were a new play (see also Fitzgerald), as for what all these vignettes have in common is that "all of them raise subtle questions about how information is revealed or withheld, pursued or misplaced—and consider what this does to relationships" (The Economist). Eventually, "[e]very scene promises a revelation, a moment of intimacy. Every conversation feels like a frail bridge across a great distance" (The Economist).

6.2 Promising Titles

Since first and foremost it is the very titles that above all attract the spectator's attention as well as they usually comprise clues for deriving meaning out of a narrative, this section seeks "to privilege titles", in the words of Rabinowitz (303), in order to deduce hints for an interpretation. As confirmed by Rabinowitz (302), "[t]itles not only guide our reading process by telling us where to concentrate; they also provide a core around which to organize an interpretation". Thus, as a reader one has the overall tendency of approaching a text "with the expectation that we should formulate an interpretation to which the title is in fact appropriate" (Rabinowitz 302). With regard to the selected plays of Crimp and Churchill, they all are provided with promising and tempting titles as shall be investigated subsequently.

6.2.1 An "Attempt" and its Ambiguity

Investigating the title and its implied pun, the audience is offered a Janus-like perspective, since the title serves as both mission statement and admonishment. On the one hand, one can perceive "attempts" on Anne's life as a trying in the sense of a search for identity. On the other hand, bearing in mind the unbalanced character constellation, one could understand the attempts as wilful attacks, inflicting damage on Anne's life. While the former association includes a notion of self-determination, the latter obviously implies a lack of autonomy regarding the pro-

tagonist. Considering the play in its entirety, the latter connotation appears to be more feasible, since the disembodied voices turn Anne into a heteronomous character. In this context, Barnett (19) indicates that the title of Crimp's play cautions us against a rigid perception or meaning. Similarly clarifying the title's ambiguity as a "series of experiments to apprehend Anne and to kill her", leads Barnett (19) to the conclusion that the second notion comprises further impacts in biographical terms:

> If biography is the act of representing a life, then what it leaves behind is a lifeless corpse, secured in and by language. Representation has the function of fixing information and turning it into knowledge. By resisting representation, the biographer does not try to pin Anne down but to allow her a plenitude of meanings which are equally valid throughout the play.

Eventually, the very title somehow mirrors the overall connotation of the play and every individual scenario, namely ambiguity and the almost impossible aim of gaining a fixed meaning. Or as Angel-Perez (83) sees it: "In this play that hinges on the dialectical opposition between construction and destruction – the word 'Attempts' in the title implies both trying hard and committing violence – the character is reduced to fragments and the pieces, in both senses of the term, have to be put back together by a puzzled spectator."

6.2.2 *In the Republic of Happiness*: A Political Play?

The very title of the play – a conundrum at first – eventually serves as the heading for the final part. Thus, the title keeps the audience in suspense until one reaches the last part of the play. The suspense is even intensified by the promising introductory line of the last third, a reference to Dante's *Divine Comedy* – which shall be addressed later with regard to intertextuality. Due to the choice of words in the title it seems axiomatic that Crimp is providing the audience with a political allusion. As for Sierz (*theartsdesk.com*), the title, as well as the captions of the three parts, "seem to refer to mighty moments in political history from the late 1960s: "The Destruction of the Family", "The Five Essential Freedoms of the Individual" and "In the Republic of Happiness" seem all very Generation 68ish". Crimp confirms Sierz's observation in this interview and elaborates on the choice of titles as follows: "They did come from a thought that I wanted to write a political play that

was very far removed from 'a political play' and so that means writing a political play which is about disengagement from politics." (Sierz *theartsdesk.com*) In this regard Sierz further summarizes Crimp's thoughts that as for today, "power lies not with politicians but with the vast amounts of money made by enormous corporations, which governments have become increasingly frightened of meddling with". Hence, considering the titles, Crimp eventually thinks that "the titles of my play are a reference to this fact. It's an attempt, if you like, at writing a political play. So 'The Destruction of the Family' sounds like a piece of radical psychology or echoes the title of a piece by Louise Bourgeois entitled *The Destruction of the Father*" (Sierz *theartsdesk.com*)

6.2.3 "Information and also Love.": The Title in the Continuous Text

While reading the full panoply of snippets of conversations that at times appear deliberately disorienting, one naturally keeps an eye out for anything suspicious that alludes to the title or vice versa. And indeed, Churchill provides the reader with a pun alluding to the very title of the play. It takes until the fifth section that the reader detects the keywords of love and information in a scene titled "SEX" (49). Two people hold a conversation whereas one speaker tells that actually sex is "essentially the transferring of genetic information" (Fitzgerald). The scene reads as follows:

> **SEX**
>
> What sex evolved to do is get information from two sets of genes so you get offspring that's not identical to you. Otherwise you just keep getting the same thing over and over again like hydra or starfish. So sex essentially is information.
>
> You don't think that while we're doing it do you?
>
> It doesn't hurt to know it. Information and also love.
>
> If you're lucky.
>
> (49)

With regard to this scene, Brantley focuses on the last utterance and states the following: "'If you're lucky,' adds the young man. That postscript sums up this sharp-minded, tenderhearted play's embrace of an ultimately random universe."

As for Billington, "Churchill suggests, with compassionate urgency, that our insatiable appetite for knowledge needs to be informed by our capacity for love". Likewise, Brantley hints at the fact that with regard to the title, one should not forget love is prefixed to information, so "love comes first". Thus, Brantley considers *Love and Information* as Churchill's perhaps most emotional of all her plays, since the vignettes are "all about individuals trying to connect with and understand one another — ultimately in vain perhaps, but that's just what makes such daily struggles heroic". Angelaki (74) goes one step further and bridges the gap to all the plays of the 2000's and 2010's, stating that Churchill's *Love and Information* actually captures the point that all these plays are making, namely that "with love and information does not always come understanding, and certainly not a shared narrative".

6.3 The Unnatural Habits of Crimp and Churchill

6.3.1 "Upsetting Expectations"

As for the spectator, what makes it so difficult to establish links is the fact that both, Crimp and Churchill, continuously upset expectations. Likewise, Sierz (*The Theatre of* 162) comments on Crimp's approach to drama as follows: "He practices the drama of denial, denying audiences the usual easy identification with characters, easy plot resolutions or conventional situations. His studied satire, irony and ambiguity are deliberately aimed at upsetting expectations." And it is true, both plays of Crimp master the discipline of upsetting expectations. *Attempts on Her Life* contains multiple incidences where the audience's possible assumptions and links are simply upset, out of the blue. Inevitably, feelings of puzzlement due to bizarre situations emerge. The following extract of scenario 6 (Mum and Dad) exemplifies a highly creative notion of bizarreness, since the speakers give the impression of their utterances being completely logical although the actual content that is being uttered appears randomly:

- She wants her own little room and a gun and a list of names.
- 'Targets.'
- A list – that's right – of so-called targets and their photographs. She wants to kill one a week then come back to the little room and drink Earl Grey tea.
- That's right – it has to be Earl Grey tea – and it has to be one a week.
- Her poor Mum and Dad are / *horrified.*

- They absolutely don't know how to take this.
- They have never bought Earl Grey tea / in their *lives*.
  (6.25)

As a spectator or reader, as soon as one is of the opinion to make meaning out of these dialogues, this feeling is ruined in the next instant by the insertion of unexpected trivial references such as the issue of the Earl Grey tea. As for the audience identifying with characters, this soon becomes of a problematical nature when dealing with *Attempts on Her Life*, for instance. It seems highly unlikely for the spectator to identify with a character like Anne. Nevertheless, it is not only *Attempts on Her Life* that turns the identification with characters into a challenge. In *In the Republic of Happiness* too, there is a predestined case where an approach to characters on the part of the audience is a rather uninviting one. In *Love and Information* there are no constant, reliable characters and thus hardly any opportunity to identify with one of these when looking at the global structure of the play. However, within the kaleidoscope of scenes, Churchill sketches topics that do relate to our real-world. Hence, these dense dialogues actually enable the reader to feel involved.

6.3.2 Prescience

A second tendency that the authors share is that their plays are in some way prescient. In *In the Republic of Happiness* Crimp introduces a family constellation that needs to be further investigated at this point. When Sierz (theartsdesk.com) asks the playwright in an interview on *In the Republic of Happiness*, to comment on "this unfestive family", Crimp answered the following:

> I do have some clear ideas about them [...] and they are present within the text, and when you analyse it — as we have to do in the rehearsal room — we can see there's something quite specific there. We know that the father in the family processes planning applications so he has a reasonably middle-class profession. We know that his mother, the grandmother on stage, talks about her time as a GP. And grandad talks about the fact that he's run a number of businesses, or enterprises, which have failed.

Within this comment, Crimp provides an outline of the family constellation. Still, it needs to be asked for the message of this specific construction of a family. Within this article, Sierz confirms that "Crimp isn't keen on explicating meaning, but he

has a clear idea of this family". This idea, the playwright further illustrates as follows:

> I suppose that in my mind they are suffering from generational entropy, if you like. So the grandparents are the wealthy middle class, who both had good professional standing and a steady income, but their children have moved down the social scale, either because they have chosen to rebel against their parents, or simply because that's how life has turned out. And we don't really know how their children, the newest generation, will turn out. But the signs are not particularly good. One of the girls is already pregnant at a young age.
> (theartsdesk.com)

In this regard, Sierz concludes that "[i]nstinctively he's tapping into a phenomenon that even sociologists haven't quite grasped: reverse social mobility – that future generations will be poorer than we are". Crimp further elaborates that as for social entropy, it is "a downward social mobility, and the opposite of the idea of upward social mobility, and the opposite of my own trajectory [...] [b]ut I don't want the audience to condescend towards my family so I think that the mother and father should be normal people, which the audience might recognise as themselves".

As for Churchill, her play *Far Away* – premiered in 2000 – turned out to be quite visionary and was praised as "the strongest theatrical response to 9/11" by the English playwright Simon Stephens within a debate on *New Writing* hosted by Sierz (see also Sierz *Rewrit. the nat.* 75). Considering that the play came out before 9/11, makes it uncannily prescient. Stephens further tells that he first read Churchill's play the year it premiered, so in 2000, and though positively impressed he thought of it as somehow absurdist, however after the tragedy of 9/11 this play appeared like social realism to him (see also Sierz *Rewrit. the nat.* 75). Within her latest play we detect a further issue of current affairs. In *Love and Information* we encounter one snippet of a conversation that reminds of the movie *Her* by Spike Jonze that came out in 2013. The scenario Churchill illustrates in the seventh section reads as follows (67-69):

VIRTUAL

I don't care what you say
No but listen
I've never felt like this
that's not the point what you feel
it's the only
because she doesn't exist

[...]
she's not a real
so?
so you admit she's not
she exists she still exists
fine all right she exists but so does your shoe or a can of
you're saying she's no different than a shoe?
she's got no more feelings than
what do you know about
she's a thing she's a thing.
[...]
but she's virtual
[...]
I can't believe just because someone's not flesh and blood you'd
she's just information
and what are you if you're not
yes I know we're
so we're information our genes our
yes but she hasn't
what?
hasn't got an inside to her mind she's not conscious she can't
[...]

Thus, similar to the movie *Her*, the content evolves around someone who imagines having a relationship with a virtual object. What appears real to the speaker and the main protagonist, respectively, turns out to be an artificially constructed reality.

6.3.3 Intertextuality

When considering intertextuality in Crimp and Churchill's plays, one realizes that as for when and where these intertextual incidences or clues are placed in the text is as deliberately unnatural as the entire play itself. In *Attempts on Her Life*, the reader encounters a reference to Shakespeare's *Hamlet* – "What's Hecuba to her and she to Hecuba?" – within the lyrics of the fifth scene titled "The camera loves you" (19-20):

The camera *loves* you
The camera *loves* you
The camera *loves* you

We *need* to sympathize
We *need* to empathize
We *need* to advertise
We *need* to realize

We are the good guys
We are the good guys

We need to feel
what we're seeing is real
It isn't just acting
it's far more exacting
than acting
We're talking reality
We're talking humanity
We're talking of a plan to be
OVERWHELMED by the sheer totality
and utterly believable three-dimensionality
THREE_DIMENSIONALITY
of all the things that Anne can be
ALL THE THINGS THAT ANNE CAN BE

What's Hecuba to him or he to Hecuba?"
A Megastar
A MEGASTAR

The camera *loves* you
The camera *loves* you
The camera *loves* you

We *need* to fantasize
We *need* to improvise
We *need* to synthesize
We *need* to advertise that
We are the good guys
We are the good guys

We need to go
for the sexiest scenario
It isn't just writing
it's much more exciting
than writing
We're talking actuality
We're talking contemporary
We're saying that we want to be
OVERWHELMED by the sheer quantity
YES BY THE SHEER QUANTITY
of all the things that Anne can be
ALL THE THINGS THAT ANNE CAN BE

What's Hecuba to her or she to Hecuba?
A megastar
(A megastar? The fuck you are)

The camera loves you
The camera loves you
The camera the camera
the camera the camera
the camera the camera

For the play "The murder of Gonzago", Hamlet in distributing the roles, asks one player to take the part of Hecuba, who expresses her grief at the death of King Priam. When the player's eyes fill with tears, Hamlet asks "What is Hecuba to him, or he to Hecuba, that he should weep for her?" (Shakespeare 233). Shakespeare's scenario demonstrates Hamlet "reflecting on his own inability to cry or to, as Crimp puts it, 'sympathize' and 'empathize' with his father's death" (Agustí 137). Agustí further concludes as follows: "By invoking this Shakespearean moment, Crimp prompts the audience to reflect on the inability of individuals to fully empathize with others in the context of the 'society of spectacle', where true empathy is replaced by the illusion and simulation of contact through diverse media technologies." (Agustí 137)

In *In the Republic of Happiness*, Crimp introduces the last third equally titled as "In the Republic of Happiness" with the enigmatic line of Dante's *Divine Comedy* as already mentioned before:

> Tu non se' in terra, sì come tu credi
>
> > *Paradiso*, I, 9I

Billington, surprised by Crimp quoting Dante, states the impact of this reference and eventually concludes the following:

> It is significant that Crimp's play text prefaces the final section with a quote from Dante that translates as: "You are not on the Earth as you believe." It suddenly hit me that the whole play is Crimp's attempt at a modern Divine Comedy. After the Inferno of family relationships we then see the Purgatory of self-preoccupation before we get a glimpse of Paradise in which Bob and Madeleine become a modern Dante and Beatrice.

For sure, Billington's interpretation remains an option. As Crimp himself does not comment on this reference to Dante, it is eventually up to the spectator how to interpret it.

6.3.4 A Split Audience

As Barker stated in an interview: "A good play puts the audience through a certain ordeal" (Costa), and Crimp and Churchill risk doing that too. Due to the unnaturalness that informs their plays, they often leave their audience in puzzlement. Thus,

the playwrights also risk having a split audience. Sierz comments on this fact as follows: "Different audience members experience the same play in different ways; in the best plays, the audience is split – there is a conflict of feeling, and a feeling of conflict, in the stalls. And in the bar afterwards." (Sierz *Rewrit. the Nat.*7) Since the playwrights call into question several standard norms, their results, thus their drama texts are not light fare and far from being easy to digest. In this regard, Sierz (*The Theatre of* 161) legitimately asks: "If what makes Crimp unpopular is his difficulty, where does that come from?". Sierz (*The Theatre of* 161-162) addresses the question in remarking that "[f]rom the start, he has avoided easy naturalism, the default position of most British new plays [...] he chose forms that called into question the usual conventions of storytelling and representation". In this regard, Agustí (140) argues in reference to *Attempts on Her Life* that "by asking spectators to focus on the poetic, indeterminate, de-contextualized fragments of language, the play encourages them to *experience* society's contradictions, instead of simply being told about them". In doing so, Crimp's but also Churchill's plays provoke and arouse conflict, since the plays rarely provide definite and unambiguous meanings. As for Sierz, "[m]eaning comes across by means of both form and content. Similarly, the discussion of the play's message is the play's message. Conflict over what a play is saying is what it's actually saying." (Sierz *Rewrit. the Nat.*7)

6.3.5 Behind the Scenes: Crimp and the Theatre of the Absurd

> "If I had a world of my own, everything would be nonsense. Nothing would
> be what it is, because everything would be what it isn't. And contrary wise,
> what is, it wouldn't be. And what it wouldn't be, it would. You see?"
> (*Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*)

Crimp's plays are primarily characterised by their provocation and boldness. In this regard, Sierz (*The Theatre of* 2) states that as for Crimp, his work "is characterized by a vision of society as a place of social decline, moral bad faith and imminent violence, with the result that it offers audiences neither a sense of consoling optimism nor a feelgood high. Instead, they get moral ambiguity and riddles about motivation". Likewise, as for the playwright's subjects, these are not supposed to be

"of light entertainment": "he's tackled a fistful of cruel situations, from abduction to child abuse; his characters are often unpleasant people; his political targets range from media manipulation to consumer culture; he's deconstructed gender and he's criticised the War on Terror". (Sierz *The Theatre of* 2) Thus, considering the boldness of Crimp's theatrical worlds, eventually the question of how to categorize the dramatist emerges which in general leads critics to label dramatists and their work. As mentioned above, Beckett can be considered as a main influence of Crimp's writing. Likewise, Sierz (*The Theatre of* 10) states as follows:

> Clearly, Beckett, the arch-modernist, ranks high on Crimp's artistic agenda. But although Crimp started out as a modernist, the cultural context in which he wrote was one in which postmodernism loomed large. When, during the Thatcher decade, postmodernism became a buzzword, it generally referred to the philosophical criticism of absolute truths or unchanging identities or grand narratives. And it usually meant a style that was eclectic, using pastiche, parody, different voices. Its sensibility seemed to be cool irony, a knowing detachment and a dive into subjectivity.

Still, there is to be mentioned that "as many commentators have pointed out, all these are also the characteristics of modernism" (Sierz *The Theatre of* 10). In this respect, Sierz (*The Theatre of* 10) further elaborates that "despite its name, postmodernism not only comes after modernism, but also coexists with it: different attitudes to the contemporary". Eventually, Sierz (*The Theatre of* 10) poses the question of "whether Crimp really is a stern modernist – or just a postmodern prankster". In this regard, since "[o]ne corner of theatre modernism is occupied by absurdism", as Sierz (*The Theatre of* 10) puts it, a close-up on the so-called Theatre of the Absurd seems to be reasonable. In clarifying the term of absurdism, Sierz (*The Theatre of* 10) states that "[a] good definition of absurdism would be: the show is over". As for Sierz (*The Theatre of* 10), there is "a nihilistic side to the absurd". As for its beginnings, one could place the Theatre of the Absurd – including "such experimentalists as Beckett, Ionesco, Genet, Friedrich Dürrenmatt, Arthur Adamov and Fernando Arrabal" – right after World War Two (see Sierz *The Theatre of* 11) With regard to its origin, Sierz states as follows:

> The Theatre of the Absurd derives from Albert Camus's notion of humankind looking for meaning in a senseless universe. It emphasises the absurdity of human existence by employing disjointed, repetitive and meaningless dialogue, purposeless and confusing situations, and plots that lack realistic or logical development. Absurdism freed theatre from the prison house of naturalism, realism and rationality, its purpose being to criticise the ideology of reason that dominates the machine age. Alienation is conveyed through

surreal comedy which parodies conventional mores. Language breaks down, accelerating, repeating itself, non-starting. (Sierz *The Theatre of* 11)

Martin Esslin, who actually coined the term of The Theatre of the Absurd with his book of the same title, describes the context in which The Theatre of the Absurd developed in reasoning this "sense of disillusionment" and "collapse of all previously held firm beliefs" as follows:

> The social and spiritual reasons for such a sense of loss of meaning are manifold and complex: the waning of religious faith that had started with the Enlightenment and led Nietzsche to speak of the 'death of God' by the eighteen-eighties; the breakdown of the liberal faith in inevitable social progress in the wake of the First World War; the disillusionment with the hopes of radical social revolution as predicted by Marx after Stalin had turned the Soviet Union into a totalitarian tyranny; the relapse into barbarism, mass murder, and genocide in the course of Hitler's brief rule over Europe during the Second World War; and, in the aftermath of that war, the spread of spiritual emptiness in the outwardly prosperous and affluent societies of Western Europe and the United States. There can be no doubt: for many intelligent and sensitive human beings the world of the mid twentieth century *has* lost its meaning and has simply ceased to make sense. Previously held certainties have dissolved, the firmest foundations for hope and optimism have collapsed. Suddenly man sees himself faced with a universe that is both frightening and illogical - in a word, absurd. (Esslin *Introduction*)

As for the philosophical movement of this time, it needs to be mentioned that, although Camus did not see himself in the tradition of existentialism, he was often associated with it since the philosophy of the absurd does have points of agreement with the philosophical movement and thinking of existentialism that evolved at the same time as well as it shares thoughts with nihilism. In this respect, Esslin claims the following:

> And equally, in its emphasis on the basic absurdity of the human condition, on the bankruptcy of all closed systems of thought with claims to provide a total explanation of reality, the Theatre of the Absurd has much in common with the existential philosophy of Heidegger, Sartre, and Camus. (It was in fact Camus who coined the concept of the Absurd in the sense in which it is used here.) This is not to say that the dramatists of the Absurd are trying to translate contemporary philosophy into drama. It is merely that philosophers and dramatists respond to the same cultural and spiritual situation and reflect the same preoccupations. (Esslin *Introduction*)

As for existentialist thinking confronted with religion, there is also to be differentiated between subdivisions referring to atheistic existentialism and monotheistic existentialism. However, a more detailed elaboration on this philosophical movement would exceed the limitations of this thesis. Moreover, it needs to be mentioned that as Esslin (*Introduction*) states, the Theatre of the Absurd was not a

complete novelty, rather it "can best be understood as a new combination of a number of ancient, even archaic, traditions of literature and drama. It is surprising and shocking merely because of the unusual nature of the combination and the increased emphasis on aspects of drama that, while present in all plays, rarely emerge into the foreground".

In the 1990's then, Sierz coined the term of the so-called "In-Yer-Face Theatre", attributing it to a group of playwrights such as Sarah Kane and Mark Ravenhill, whose works often happen to be compared to Crimp in fact. Sierz (*In-Yer-Face* 5) elaborates on the characteristics of an in-yer-face play that "[t]he language is usually filthy, characters talk about unmentionable subjects, take their clothes off, have sex, humiliate each other, experience unpleasant emotions, become suddenly violent" as well as that "this kind of theatre is so powerful, so visceral, that it forces audiences to react". As for the violence of these plays – a violence that is also recognizable in some of Crimp's texts – Sierz (*In-Yer-Face* 240) argues that "behind the violence of these plays, lies anger and confusion – a typical response to the difficulties of living in a post-Christian, post-Marxist, postfeminist and post-modern society". Globally seen, the Theatre of the Absurd shows similarities with the In-Yer-Face theatre, partly also because the respective authors fall back on similar sources as for their studies. In his article engaging with "dramatists under a label", Zarhy-Levo aims at comparing Esslin's *The Theatre of the Absurd* and Sierz' *In-Yer-Face Theatre*. In this regard Zarhy-Levo (323) claims that "while Esslin discusses a theatrical development still in the making, Sierz refers to a theatrical style that had come to dominate the decade of the 1990s."

Eventually, while Esslin (*Introduction*) claims about absurdist plays that these "flout all the standards by which drama has been judged for many centuries; they must therefore appear as a provocation to people who have come into the theatre expecting to find what they would recognize as a well-made play", he also admits that "[a]nd yet, strangely enough, these plays have *worked*, they have had an effect, they have exercised a fascination of their own in the theatre". This insight actually also applies to Crimp and Churchill's texts. As for Crimp, it can be stated that within his work, traces of both, the Theatre of the Absurd as well as the In-Yer-Face Theatre, can be found, although the dramatist himself – as various other

playwrights – tends to avoid being labelled, something that has been similarly confirmed by Zarhy-Levo (316) in his discussion on Esslin's and Sierz' work: "Notably, in both studies, written four decades apart, none of the dramatists grouped under the particular label considered themselves as belonging to a movement."

7 "Like a Painting by Escher...": An Interdisciplinary Venture

As already alluded to at an earlier stage, Churchill once drew a comparison between her plays and the paintings by M.C. Escher (see Churchill *Plays: One* 71). Taking this connection as a point of departure, leads to the suggestion that the visual arts do indeed offer a promising complement for unnatural and impossible narratives. The Dutch graphic artist, Maurits Cornelis Escher is renowned for so-called "impossible constructions". Escher above all produced "impossible or paradoxical images, as well as ambiguities, tessellations, and images that are just downright strange" (Mortensen et al.). Thus, especially Escher's "impossible images" become of an interesting nature when dealing with unnatural narratives and eventually drawing a parallel to the latter. As for Ernst (66), when dealing with the works of M.C. Escher, as a literary parallel he suggests primarily the genre of a crime or mystery novel, since in a crime novel there is usually not merely a riddle being posed but, equally, it is the surprising solution to the puzzle that makes sense of the latter. However, it seems reasonable to suggest that apart from the genre of crime novels, unnatural narratives might also function as a literary parallel. Both, Escher's works as well as unnatural narratives construct impossible worlds. What distinguishes Escher's work from a surrealist artist like René Magritte according to Ernst (65-66), is that whereas Magritte's works surprise and enchant with delight, Escher's paintings surprise all the more since he found a means – "eine absolute schlüssige Bildlogik" as Ernst puts it – to make the impossible possible (see Ernst 66). As for Escher, Ernst (66) concludes as follows: "Escher ist kein Surrealist, der uns eine Fata Morgana vorzaubert. Er ist ein Erbauer unmöglicher Welten." As for Escher's work, not only the final result is revealed but

also the system or the way it is constructed (see Ernst 66). Bridging the gap to unnatural narratives, Ernst's remark also applies to these texts on the edge, since the overall unnaturalness of the play is being composed or constructed of various levels. In this regard, Ernst (66) further elucidates as follows: "Eschers unmögliche Welten sind Entdeckungen; ihre Glaubwürdigkeit steht und fällt mit der Entdeckung eines Konstruktionssystems, das Escher gewöhnlich in der Mathematik fand." Still, as for *Attempts on Her Life*, there are some of Magritte's paintings that could serve as visual counterparts for the fragmentary play. His paintings "The Eternal Evidence" (Figure 2) as well as "Delusions of Grandeur" (Figure 3) can be used as frames of reference that mirror the fragmentary nature of the play and its protagonist.

Figure 2 *The Eternal Evidence* (1930) René Magritte Copyright © 2009-Present www.ReneMagritte.org. All Rights Reserved.
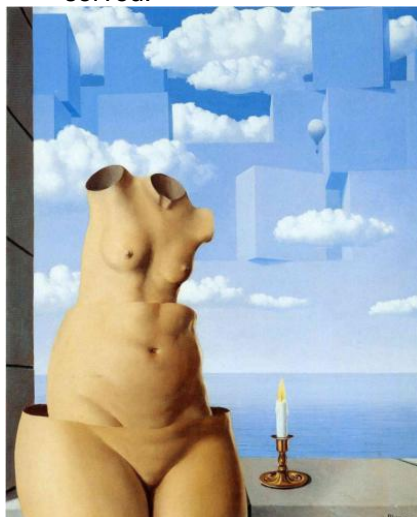

Figure 3 *Delusions of Grandeur* (1948) René Magritte Copyright © 2009-Present www.ReneMagritte.org. All Rights Reserved.

Similarly, Magritte's "Collective Invention" (Figure 4) showing a female body whose upper half merges into a fish, reflects the inventiveness of the character of Anne that eventually even turns into a make of car. Eventually, Magritte's "Attempting the Impossible" (Figure 5) perhaps best captures Crimp's play, since it not only depicts the very title but above all demonstrates the artist painting a female body into the air which captures the overall idea of the drama text, Anne being constructed by the disembodied voices.

Figure 4 *Collective Invention* (1934) René Magritte Copyright © 2009-Present www.ReneMagritte.org. All Rights Reserved.
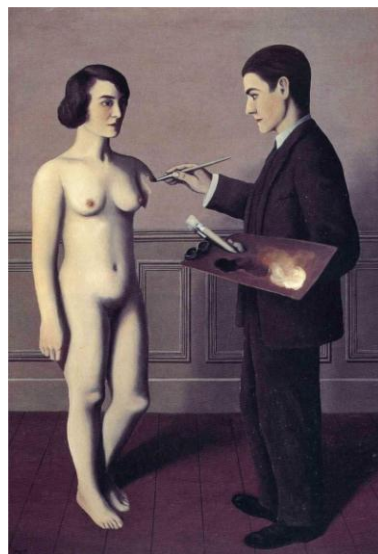

Figure 5 *Attempting the Impossible* (1928) René Magritte Copyright © 2009-Present www.ReneMagritte.org. All Rights Reserved.

On the other hand, intensifying the fact that the character of Anne takes up a multitude of identities all at once as well as the notion of ambiguity that is inherent in an attempt and its meanings, appears like Escher's "Concave and Convex" (Figure 6), where the artist demonstrates the spectator that a thing can be both at the same time, concave and convex (see also Ernst 66).

Figure 6 *Concave and Convex* (1955). © 2014 The M. C. Escher Company – The Netherlands. All rights reserved. www.mcescher.com

In asking "what is impossible", MacGillavry (123) aptly responds that not the drawings of Escher are impossible, because they of course exist, since Escher "not only thought them out but also executed them". Still, as for the pictures and images being evoked by these prints and drawings – as well as intended by the artist to do so – within the beholder's mind, there are several issues that are conceived as impossible since they are unthinkable to exist (see MacGillavry 123). MacGillavry (123) further elaborates on the distinctiveness that characterizes Escher's work namely that first "every print or drawing is composed of items (animals, plants, fragments of buildings, etc.) which are reproduced with academic, "lifelike", precision so that the spectator can immediately identify each separate object as something known from everyday experience". Eventually, "these details tend to distract the mind from Escher's intentions with the print as a whole, when he combines the conceivable fragments into an 'impossible' whole" (MacGillavry 123). In further claiming that Escher's work primarily appeals to the "intellect rather than to our aesthetic or emotional receptiveness", MacGillavry (123) explains that as for emotions, they "although composed of different and conflicting tendencies, overwhelm us instantaneously, whereas the intellect works step by step". This claim she illustrates in comparing Escher's "Convex and Concave" (Figure 6) with Picasso's "Guernica":

Picasso's "Guernica", also composed of many individually recognizable details, evokes an immediate image of the horrors of war. Escher's "Concave and convex" [...], full of details like "Guernica", at first sight only evokes bewilderment. Something does not fit, but what? The worst thing happens in the lower middle of the print: a floor on which a man sits dozing (left side) changes towards the right into a ceiling, from which a lamp hangs. At this point a spectator either turns away in disgust, or tries to understand what has been in Escher's mind.
(MacGillavry 123)

It appears that what is stated about the spectator of the image is also true of the reader of unnatural narratives – turning away or trying to understand (see MacGillavry 123). Similar to unnatural narratives, these paintings are informed by impossible content (see Mortensen et al. 426). With regard to content, there is to be differentiated between the various "modalities of content" that are "specifically (at least) *verbal* content and *visual* or *spatial* content" (Mortensen et al. 426). By discerning the various distinctions "among inconsistent 3D spatial contents", Mortensen et al. (427) aim at demonstrating that "*the inconsistent has rich structure*". The same is true of unnatural narratives, since the inconsistency or non-linearity of the texts under debate does also have a rich structure as the discussion has revealed. In this regard, as Escher's paintings are comprised of "systematic visual discrepancies" (Mortensen et al. 427), so are unnatural narratives informed by systematic discrepancies. Reconsidering *In the Republic of Happiness*, various works of Escher appear as a suitable counterpart. Escher's "Three Worlds" (Figure7) for instance, illustrating leaves floating on water, serves as a first example.

Figure 7 *Three Worlds* (1955) © 2014 The M. C. Escher Company – The Netherlands. All rights reserved. www.mcescher.com

At a closer look, the image captures three worlds in one painting: The floating leaves on the water represent the immediate world, whereas the fish illustrates the world to be found under water and everything above is mirrored on the surface of the water (see Ernst 77). Interestingly, as Ernst (77) points out, these worlds are interwoven in such a natural way that it is the very title that urges the spectator to a closer look. Likewise, Crimp provides the audience with one drama text that actually captures three worlds. In a different way, Escher's famous lithograph "Print Gallery" (Figure 8) serves as an interesting impulse with regards to *In the Republic of Happiness*. As for Mortensen et al. (433), this lithograph print is "one of Escher's strangest", since it starts out as a 2D image that transforms into a 3D one:

> Its content has a boy *outside* of a 2D picture that he is looking at. This 2D picture becomes the 3D town. The transition is cleverly obscured behind window frames. This is in line with Escher's theme of a transition in the same image between 2D and 3D. Moreover, as Escher surely knew, the town contains the print gallery itself (and the prints on the walls are Escher's prints). So the boy is *inside* the 3D print gallery. If the 2D picture is identical with the 3D town, as the image suggests, then the boy is both inside and outside the town and the gallery. (Mortensen et al. 433)

It somehow illustrates the givens in *In the Republic of Happiness*, where Uncle Bob and Madeleine start out when interrupting the family Christmas and announce their departure for a remote destination with which the audience is confronted eventually in the third part of the play, whereas the transition in the image from 2D to 3D mirrors the highly unnatural middle section of Crimp's play.

Figure 8 *Print Gallery* (1956) © 2014 The M. C. Escher Company – The Netherlands. All rights reserved. www.mcescher.com

Besides, Escher's "Relativity" (Figure 9) or "Belvedere" (Figure 10) also provide interesting analogies. As for the lithograph print "Relativity", the spectator encounters three entirely different worlds that are merged into one integrated whole (see Ernst 47). Thus, the image brings out the following: "There are three main staircases, at angles to one another. They lead to three separate outsides, also at angles to one another." (Mortensen et al. 432) Ernst (47) further elucidates that the figures to be found within the image can be divided into three groups –uprights, figures leaning to the left and figures leaning to the right – each inhabiting one of the three worlds. "Für jede Gruppe ist alles, was auf dem Druck vorkommt, ihre Welt; nur sie empfinden die Dinge anders und geben ihnen verschiedene Namen. Was für eine Gruppe eine Decke ist, ist für die andere eine Wand; was für die eine Gemeinschaft eine Tür ist, ist für die andere eine Luke im Fußboden." (Ernst 47) Thus, the construction leads to three points of view (see also Mortensen et al. 432): "All the same, there is something impossible about seeing the same thing simultaneously from different points of view. After all, our point of view at a single time is from just the one spatio-temporal position that we are in. It would be impossible for one of us to have the tripled-up experience as part of the ordinary perception of our environment." (Mortensen et al. 432)
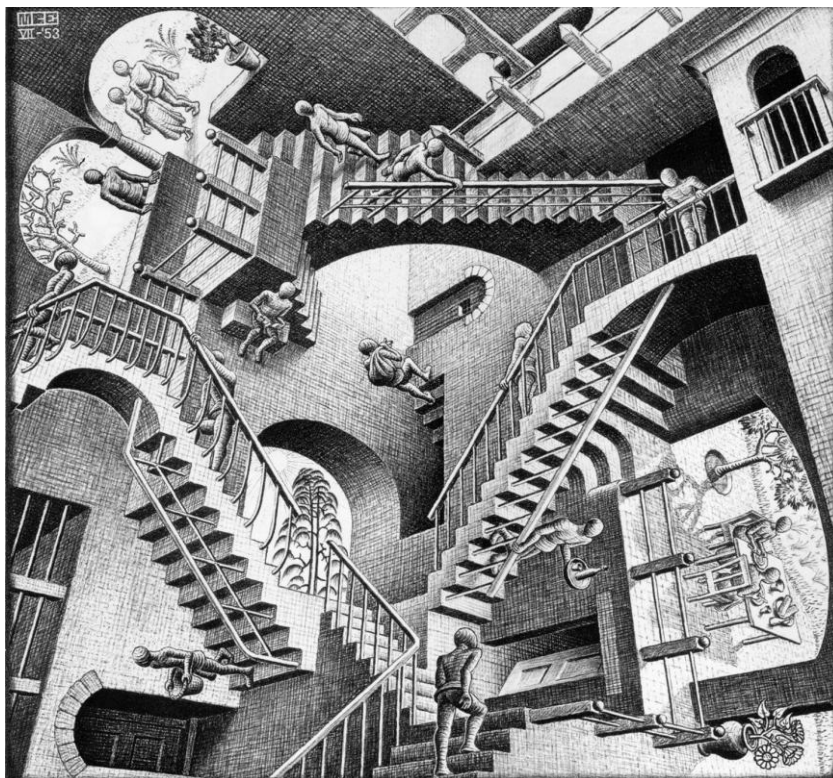

Figure 9 *Relativity* (1953) © 2014 The M. C. Escher Company – The Netherlands. All rights reserved. www.mcescher.com

As for the impossible building "Belvedere", Mortensen et al. (435) consider it as "Escher's greatest masterpiece", since it "contains a genuinely new paradox" that is the small cube which the figure at the very bottom on the left-hand side is holding in his hands. The cube functions as the leitmotif of the image and thus the key to the print (see Ernst 86). The middle reveals the bizarre result of the construction: "eine gerade Leiter, die in dem Gebäude steht und gleichzeitig gegen ihre Außenmauer lehnt" (Ernst 86). Ernst (87) further points out: "Wenn wir das Bild in der Mitte horizontal durchschneiden, dann werden wir finden, daß [sic] beide Hälften völlig normal sind. Es ist einfach die Kombination beider Teile, die eine Unmöglichkeit bildet." After all, it becomes clear that the architecture of "Belvedere" remains simply impossible. Although it appears like the projected image of a building, the existence of such a building is impossible (see Ernst 86-87).

Figure 10 *Belvedere* (1958) © 2014 The M. C. Escher Company – The Netherlands. All rights reserved. www.mcescher.com

Moreover, there is to be mentioned that various other unnatural narratives evoke potential affinities with the visual arts, such as Gabriel Josipovici's *Mobius the Stripper* or John Barth's *Lost in the Funhouse*, for instance. In depicting the mathematical model of a Möbius strip not only Josipovici and Barth but also Escher demonstrate that it functions as a device for narratives in literature – as a variant of circular temporality (see also Richardson *Narrat. Dynamics* 48) – as well as a device for the visual arts, respectively. Escher's woodcut "Horseman", for instance, pictures a Möbius strip (Figure 10) which in turn illustrates the narrative structure chosen by Josipovici and Barth.
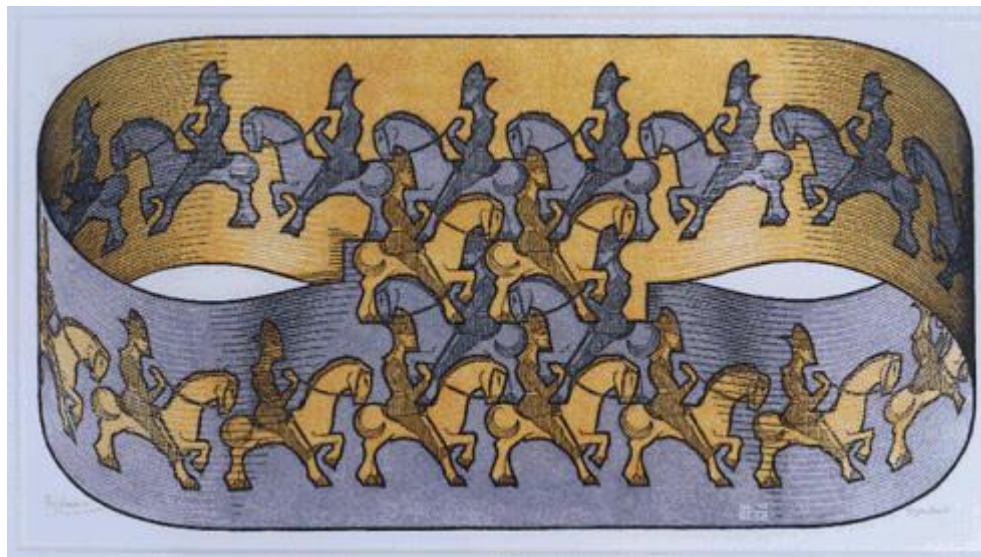

Figure 11 *Horseman* (1946) © 2014 The M. C. Escher Company – The Netherlands. All rights reserved. www.mcescher.com

Eventually, as Crimp and Churchill (but also other writers of unnatural narratives) wrote their drama texts with constraints, Escher constructed impossible worlds with mathematical constraints. In doing so, neither the playwrights nor the artist hide anything in their works. Hence, "nothing is falsely believed" (Mortensen et al. 427), since nothing is hidden from the audience or the spectator. The impossible of Escher's works is there to be investigated, and so is the unnatural of Crimp and Churchill's theatre texts.

8 Conclusion

In entering the realm of "unnatural narratology", tackling the joint research of the leading authors of unnatural narrative theory – Alber, Iversen, Nielsen, Richardson – the focus of the thesis lay on narratives in drama that do not reproduce the world as we know it, but deviate from our real-world parameters. These unnatural or antimimetic narratives, appear to be on the edge, off the track and off-kilter insofar as they do not only refuse to follow conventional drama patterns but they also deny "the idea of fixed identity or linear narrative" (Billington). As Richardson (*Narrat. Values* 180) phrases it, unnatural narratives "provide an interrogation of the basic elements of narrative, a critique of overused narrative conventions, a challenge to official public narratives, an original vehicle for the self-representation of the oppressed, an exceptional way to express extraordinary events, and a different, challenging kind of aesthetic experience".

In selecting two heavyweights of contemporary British theatre, Martin Crimp and Caryl Churchill, the choice of playwrights to bring into dialogue with unnatural narratology, was one of two very distinct voices. The discussion of several of their plays – *Attempts on Her Life*, *In the Republic of Happiness*, *Love and Information* – has served the purpose of analysing the texts as unnatural narratives, since in these plays, according to Sierz "common sense flies out the window, paradox rules okay." (Sierz *Rewrit. the Nat.* 26) In this regard, the main interest was to grasp the unnaturalness of the plays. In approaching the plays on various levels, the thesis aimed at illustrating several deviations from a traditional drama pattern. To conclude, on the basis of the selected plays the primary interest of the thesis lay in establishing mutual unnatural categories. In other words, the investigation aimed at detecting and illustrating the use of unnaturalness in any shape on the discourse as well as on the story level. In this regard, it has turned out that with extreme cases of unnatural narratives, this fundamental dichotomy of a story and its discourse begins to crumble when one, due to acts of denarration, can no longer distinguish a story from its discourse. As for the discourse level, it has been revealed that a play despite of its highly erratic and nimble discourse – changing from dialogue to monologue to prose to lyrics and back to dialogue – still works in its entirety as a drama

text. And as Crimp stated in an interview with John Whitely, for him "the text is what's most important to respect – that is what makes a play". Likewise, both, Crimp as well as Churchill's plays, show that fragmentation can eventually also result in a new entity. Furthermore, it has been illustrated what happens when there are suddenly no allocated characters anymore – from indeterminate speakers via mere dashes to an absent presence. In this regard, the power of language has been considered along with various unnatural shapes that language can take on.

Moreover, as the selected plays showed, Crimp and Churchill, though similar insofar as both reject conventional drama patterns and experiment with language, they still manage to provide us with theatre plays of a highly individual and innovative nature. Thus, their theatre plays remain unpredictable and exciting. Neither of them repeats him- or herself. What Billington states about Churchill – "[w]hat is extraordinary about Churchill is her capacity as a dramatist to go on reinventing the wheel" – is also true of Crimp. Both playwrights know how to subvert the fundamental premise of drama. And although the selected plays resemble anything but a traditional drama, they still work as theatre texts. Overall, since the thesis aimed at illustrating the unnatural on various levels, these plethora of levels and possibilities at the same time demonstrated the diversity of so called unnatural or antimimetic narratives. In addition, the thesis also ventured to link the theatre to the realm of philosophy. This venture comprised the attempt of approaching Crimp's theatre text, *Attempts on Her Life*, by applying Deleuze's thoughts on "minor literature" and his notion of identity as something fragmentary and heterogeneous. Hence, the investigation aimed at highlighting the significance of the drama within the realm of "minor literature" and its ability to leverage the potential of the latter. In this regard, the protagonist's absent presence as a theatrical device and its effects on character constellations, identity constructions, the politics of language in the play and the audience have served the purpose of illustrating that it is not only the author or playwright who becomes the other, but eventually the spectator as well. Furthermore, the aspect of fragmentation has been taken up and its relevance to establish a new connection. Like in the connection with the realm of philosophy, a second interdisciplinary approach has been ventured, by linking "unnatural narratives" in drama to the visual arts, particularly the impossible construc-

tions of the graphic artist M.C. Escher whose paintings and lithograph prints turned out to be pertinent visual counterparts.

Besides, as stated in the introduction, the spectator/reader plays a pivotal role, since unnatural narratives only become interesting and relevant when confronted with an audience. As for Richardson, "[r]eaders who value creation, variation, and innovation will be drawn toward and rewarded by the more successful antimimetic narratives." (Richardson *Narrat. Values* 180) As for the reader/audience it takes a high level of tolerance and flexibility as one has to dissociate oneself from preconceived ideas or concepts of reality. Furthermore, as a spectator one has to accept that expectations as soon as they evolve in the course of reading are very likely to be upset – sooner or later. On the other hand, as soon as one has freed oneself from various fixed ideas or assumptions, one can enter a strange but highly fascinating world of theatre – a theatre that tests borders and provokes traditional values and expectations. In other words, as the playwrights seemingly liberate themselves from various standard conventions of drama, and in doing so, the audience is expected to liberate him- or herself from standard conventions. In this respect, the thesis aimed at approaching the texts in order to grasp their unnaturalness rather than providing definite answers to their potential meanings. In this regard, this thesis can be concluded with a statement by Sierz (53) that aptly captures this idea: "Wisely, Crimp refuses to finally offer a comfortable explanation." Richardson, however provides an apt outlook:

> The larger implications of the trajectory of recent literary practice should be clear: the extreme narrators and acts of narration in contemporary fiction have continued to move ever further beyond the established boundaries of realism, humanism, and conventional representation, and these new works pose severe problems for narratological models that are solely based on mimetic works. After the death of the conventional, humanist narrator, everything becomes possible – except theorizing narration in the earlier, conventional manner." (Richardson *Unnat. Voices* 138)

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11 Appendix

11.1 Abstract

The study of unnatural narratology has been growing out its infancy in recent years and is gaining popularity in narrative theory. An insight of the overall theoretical framework of unnatural narratology and its dynamics and status in narrative theory, based on the joint research of the leading authors – Alber, Iversen, Nielsen and Richardson – should serve as theoretical background where the further explorations of this thesis are based on. Thus, within the context of so-called unnatural narratives, this thesis focuses on selected plays by Martin Crimp and Caryl Churchill, two contemporary British playwrights, who confront their audience with texts in a highly unconventional manner. More precisely, the major interest of this discussion is as to what extent, or in what ways, the selected plays – that are *Attempts on Her Life*, *In the Republic of Happiness* and *Love and Information* – diverge from a classical or traditional drama pattern. In other words, the thesis is defined by the interest in what is seen as 'unnatural' in the chosen plays. In identifying these deviations, Barnett's wording, who aptly entitles his discussion on Crimp's *Attempts on Her Life* as "when is a play not a drama?" serves as an overarching focus of the thesis. Since the reader or the audience, respectively, play a pivotal role when being confronted with unnatural narratives, their perspective is of a relevant nature throughout the discussion. The primary aim is to identify the unnaturalness of the plays under discussion on various levels, whereas story and discourse comprise the two basic levels. In this respect, considerations on the categories of plot, discourse, characters, time and space, etc. are being thematized. A close-up on the unnatural beginnings of the drama texts provides an insight into their unnatural story-levels. Furthermore, a focus on character constellations deals with indeterminate speakers and mere dashes as character indicators. Temporal and spatial confusion comprises a further level of investigation, since these texts on the edge rarely follow linear concepts of time or space. Moreover, the unconventional discourse level comprises a major role, since neither Crimp nor Churchill provide the audience with a conventional drama pattern. Instead, their theatrical worlds switch between dialogues, lyrics, monologues and other modes

of narration. The unconventional discourses of the plays eventually also lead to highly unnatural stage directions on the part of the playwrights, giving seemingly free play to theatre makers. Due to the subversion of various conventional concepts, language gains power in these unnatural narratives. Besides, the thesis ventures to link the theatre to the realm of philosophy in applying Deleuze's thoughts on "minor literature" and his notion of identity as something fragmentary and heterogeneous to Crimp's *Attempts on Her Life*. A second interdisciplinary approach comprises the venture of linking "unnatural narratives" in drama to the visual arts, particularly the impossible constructions of the graphic artist M.C. Escher whose paintings and lithograph prints have turned out to be pertinent visual counterparts. Eventually, it is the spectator that plays a pivotal role. Thus, in confronting Crimp and Churchill's theatrical world with a spectatorship, the audience's perspective, when encountering unnatural narratives, is being elucidated.

11.2 Zusammenfassung

Die vorliegende Diplomarbeit beschäftigt sich mit dem Themenbereich einer soge-
nannten „unnatürlichen Narratologie" (unnatural narratology), basierend auf den
Forschungen der Hauptvertreter – Alber, Iversen, Nielsen und Richardson – dieser
allgemein doch sehr jungen Erzähltheorie. „Unnatürliche Narratologie" meint somit
eine Erzähltheorie, welche sich mit sogenannten "unnatürlichen Erzählungen" (un-
natural narratives) auseinandersetzt, wobei Richardson diesbezüglich auch den
Begriff „antimimetische Erzählungen" (antimimetic narratives) verwendet. Diese
„unnatürlichen Erzählungen" zeichnen sich vor allem durch ihre Abweichungen
von traditionellen, natürlichen Erzählformen aus. Hierbei ist grundsätzlich festzu-
halten, dass sämtliche Abweichungen keinerlei negative Konnotationen mit sich
bringen, sondern vielmehr auf das Gegenteil hinweisen. Alber zufolge definieren
sich „unnatürliche Erzählwelten" dadurch, dass diese physisch und logisch unmög-
lich sind. In dieser Hinsicht zeichnen sich diese „unnatürlichen Erzählungen" durch
einen Bruch mit bisher etablierten narrativen Konventionen aus. Für den Leser
beziehungsweise für das Publikum solcher unmöglicher Erzählwelten ergeben
sich letztendlich zwei Optionen, wobei eine Option wäre, anhand verschiedener
Lesestrategien einen Sinn in diesen Erzählungen zu finden, um so zu einer Inter-
pretation zu gelangen (Alber's reading strategies). Die zweite Option hingegen
besteht darin, diese „unnatürlichen Erzählungen" in all ihrer Unnatürlichkeit
schlicht und einfach anzunehmen. Vor diesem Hintergrund, versucht die vorlie-
gende Arbeit anhand auserwählter Theatertexte der beiden zeitgenössischen briti-
schen Dramatiker – Martin Crimp und Caryl Churchill – sämtliche Abweichungen
beziehungsweise Unnatürlichkeiten zu identifizieren und zu beschreiben. Diesbe-
züglich wurden folgende Theaterstücke ausgewählt: *Attempts on Her Life* (1997),
In the Republic of Happiness (2012) und *Love and Information* (2012). In anderen
Worten gilt es in erster Linie, das Unnatürliche greifbar zu machen. Dies geschieht
sowohl auf der inhaltlichen Ebene als auch auf der diskursiven Ebene der jeweili-
gen Theaterstücke. Somit liegt der Fokus auf „dem Unnatürlichen", das erzählt
wird, als auch auf der „unnatürlichen" Weise *wie* der jeweilige Inhalt erzählt wird.
In diesem Sinne werden zunächst die unnatürlichen Anfänge der Texte näher be-
trachtet, welche gleichzeitig einen Überblick der unnatürlichen Inhalte (story level)

verschaffen. Des Weiteren folgt eine Analyse der Charakterkonstellationen, die in den auserwählten Stücken zu finden sind, wobei diese von unbestimmten Sprechern bis hin zu bloßen Gedankenstrichen variieren. Da man sich in „unnatürlichen Erzählungen" auch nicht auf klare Entwürfe von Raum und Zeit verlassen kann, wird in einem nächsten Schritt eine unvermeidbare räumliche als auch zeitliche Verwirrung innerhalb dieser Texte thematisiert. Überdies wird, wie bereits erwähnt, die diskursive Ebene der Werke näher beleuchtet, da weder Crimp noch Churchill ihren Zuschauern eine konventionelle dramatische Struktur bieten. Vielmehr findet man als Leser, beziehungsweise Zuschauer, einen sehr launenhaften Diskurs, welcher von Prosa zu Dialogen über Monologen bis hin zu Liedtexte führt. Allerdings ist an dieser Stelle festzuhalten, dass die Theatertexte trotz ihrer unbeständigen Diskurse dennoch als Dramen glücken. Weiters führen die unkonventionellen Diskurse zu unnatürlichen Bühnenanweisungen seitens der Theaterautoren. Diese äußern sich dadurch, dass den Bühnenregisseuren ein beachtlicher Spielraum gegeben wird. Weiters wird deutlich, dass aufgrund des Umsturzes sämtlicher traditioneller literarischer Konzepte, Sprache an Bedeutung gewinnt in diesen „unnatürlichen Erzählungen". Überdies beinhaltet die vorliegende Arbeit zwei Versuche interdisziplinärer Ansätze. Zum einen wird eine Verbindung der Theaterwelt und dem Bereich der Philosophie hergestellt, indem Deleuzes Gedanken bezüglich sogenannter „minor literature" als auch seine Auffassungen von Identität als etwas Fragmentarisches angeknüpft werden an Crimps *Attempts on Her Life*. Einen zweiten interdisziplinären Ansatz bildet die Verknüpfung von „unnatürlichen Erzählungen" in den auserwählten Dramen mit dem Bereich der bildenden Künste. Diesbezüglich sind es vor allem Werke des grafischen Künstlers M.C. Escher, welcher mit seinen konstruierten „unmöglichen Welten" aufschlussreiche Pendants zu den hier thematisierten „unnatürlichen Erzählungen" geschaffen hat. Schlussendlich schließt sich die Diskussion indem erneut der Fokus auf dem Publikum liegt. Somit wird die Perspektive des Zuschauers im Aufeinandertreffen mit den jeweiligen Theaterstücken von Crimp und Churchill beleuchtet.

11.3 Curriculum Vitae

Name	Romana DORNHACKL

Education and training

Dates	September 2012 – June 2013
Name and type of organisation providing education and training	**KU Leuven** (Belgium)
Principal subjects/occupational skills covered	Erasmus exchange programme: Faculty of Theology and Religious Education
Dates	March 2008 until now
Name and type of organisation providing education and training	**University of Vienna**
Principal subjects/occupational skills covered	Teacher accreditation programme: English; Catholic Religious Education
Dates	October 2007 – January 2008
Name and type of organisation providing education and training	**University of Vienna**
Principal subjects/occupational skills covered	International Development
Dates	September 2003 – June 2007
Name and type of organisation providing education and training	**Grammar School „Bundesgymnasium Horn"** Graduation in June 2007, passed A-Level (Matura) with good success

Languages

Mother tongue	**German**	
Other languages	**English**	fluent in written and spoken form
	French	basic knowledge (CLT Leuven Certificate waystage A2)
	Dutch	B 1
	Latin	basic knowledge