

TEXT, IMAGINATION AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF NARRATIVE
UNIVERSES IN ALI SMITH'S SHORT STORIES

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ABSTRACT

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This thesis aims to explore and analyse the connection between Ali Smith's experimental short story writing and her engagement with dialogue. The central argument is that Smith's experimental literary technique allows her to generate narratives that are composed of a dialogue between characters and between the story and the reader, hence creating multilogic narrative universes. The thesis will consider a selection of stories across three of Smith's short story collections: *The Whole Story and Other Stories* (2003), *Other Stories and Other Stories* (2004), and *The First Person and Other Stories* (2010). What this thesis observes is that Smith uses dialogue and multilogue in tandem with ambiguity to create a complex narrative space that encompasses not only the material space but also the cognitive space shared by the text and the reader. Two theoretical approaches are used in tandem to analyse the creation and behaviour of this space. Text-World Theory is used to analyse the communicative component, i.e. the dialogue. From within the field of narratology, narrative space is chosen to explore how systems of reality within stories are

constructed through narrative technique. In doing so, this thesis aims to show how Ali Smith creates multilogic narrative universes which promote dialogue within and across the ontological boundaries of the text.

Keywords: text-world, narrative universe, multilogue



ÖZ

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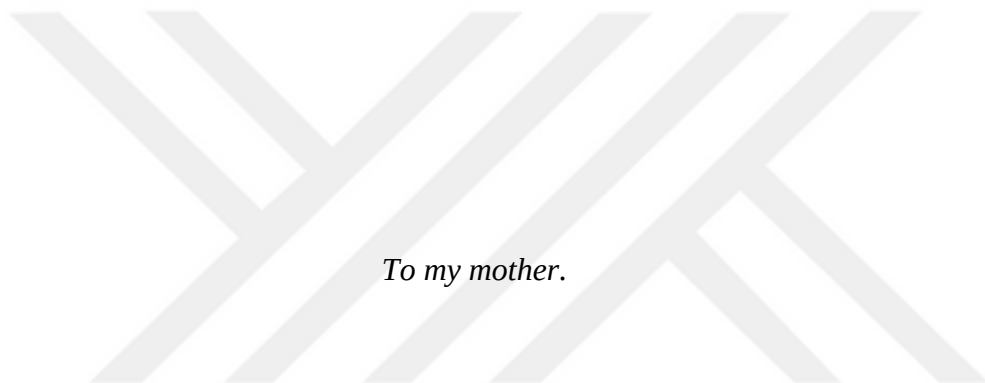
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Bu tezin amacı, Ali Smith'in deneysel kısa öykü yazımı ile diyalogla olan ilişkisi arasındaki bağlantıyı keşfetmek ve analiz etmektir. Temel agrüman, Smith'in deneysel edebi tekniğinin karakterler arasında ve hikaye ile okuyucu arasında bir diyalogdan oluşan anlatılar ürettiğidir, bunun da çok yönlü konuşmadan geçen anlatı evrenleri yaratmasına izin verdiğidir. Tez, Smith'in üç kısa hikaye derlemelerinden bir çeçkiyi ele alıyor: *The Whole Story and Other Stories* (2003), *Other Stories and Other Stories* (2004) ve *The First Person and Other Stories* (2010). Tez, Smith'in sadece maddi alanı değil, aynı zamanda metin ve okuyucu tarafından paylaşılan bilişsel alanı da kapsayan karmaşık bir anlatı alanı oluşturmak için belirsizlik, diyalog ve çok yönlü diyalog kullandığını gözlemlemektedir. Bu alanın oluşumunu ve davranışını analiz etmek için iki teorik yaklaşım birlikte kullanılmaktadır. Metin Dünya Teorisi, iletişimsel bileşeni, yani diyalogu analiz etmek için kullanılır. Anlatıbiliminden, anlatı tekniği aracılığıyla hikayeler içindeki gerçeklik sistemlerinin nasıl inşa edildiğini keşfetmek için Anlatı Alanı seçilmiştir. Tez, bunun sayesinde Ali Smith'in metnin ontolojik sınırları içerisinde ve ötesinde diyalog kurmayı teşvik eden

çok yönlü konuşmadan geçen anlatı evrenlerini nasıl yarattığını göstermeyi amaçlamaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: metin-dünya, anlatı evreni, multilog





To my mother.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

TWT	Text-World Theory
<i>FPOS</i>	<i>The First Person and Other Stories</i>
<i>FLOS</i>	<i>Free Love and Other Stories</i>
<i>OSOS</i>	<i>Other Stories and Other Stories</i>
<i>PLOS</i>	<i>Public Library and Other Stories</i>
<i>WHOS</i>	<i>The Whole Story and Other Stories</i>
EMW	Epistemic Modal World

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This thesis aims to explore and analyse the connection between Ali Smith's experimental short story writing and her engagement with dialogue. The central argument is that Smith's experimental literary technique allows her to generate narratives that are composed of a dialogue between characters and between the story and the reader, hence creating multilogic narrative universes. The thesis will consider a selection of stories across three of Smith's short story collections: *The Whole Story and Other Stories* (2003), *Other Stories and Other Stories* (2004), and *The First Person and Other Stories* (2010). What this thesis observes is that Smith uses dialogue and multilogue in tandem with ambiguity to create a complex narrative space that encompasses not only the material space but also the cognitive space shared by the text and the reader. Two theoretical approaches are used in tandem to analyse the creation and behaviour of this space. Text-World Theory is used to analyse the communicative component, i.e. the dialogue. From within the field of narratology, narrative space is chosen to explore how systems of reality within stories are constructed through narrative technique. In doing so, this thesis aims to show how Ali Smith creates multilogic narrative universes which promote dialogue within and across the ontological boundaries of the text.

Ali Smith is a novelist, playwright, journalist, academic, and short story writer. She is a prolific writer whose primary domain is novel writing, and she does not hesitate to experiment with genre conventions to achieve highly artistic results in her works. She is most well known for her work exploring gender and sexual identities, her anti-capitalist sentiments, her playful use of language, and her affection for "spectral presences" (Stephen Levin 37) in her fiction – often writing within the

Scottish Gothic tradition.¹ In 2016, she also rose to prominence as a political author upon publishing *Autumn*, the first book in her *Seasonal Quartet* series written in response to Brexit. She is known for her engagement with modernist literature, her “deliciously quirky postmodern novels” (Higginbotham 1), and her gratuitous use of puns – which are hit-and-miss. In his review of *Winter*, James Wood writes that

[Smith’s] bonhomous playfulness won’t delight everyone...The neatness of the pun, its capacity to make things rhyme, exists at the expense, perhaps, of the mess, despair, and sheer human intractability. Yet there is also something beautiful about art as play... (11)

It is this bonhomous and playful artistry that draws readers in and stays with them with every work Smith produces.

This description handily summarizes the bulk of the scholarship on Smith. Daniel Lea takes on the ambitious job of summarizing and introducing Smith,² as well as the scholarship surrounding her: “[t]o critics, [Smith] is notable largely for her lesbianism, her feminism, and her Scottishness, all tried and trusted anchors for current identity debates and yet all equally limiting to readings of Smith’s work, which stand outside the politics of otherness” (27), he writes, drawing attention to a problem within said scholarship. The current body of academic work on Smith enjoys using certain labels that are repeatedly used to define Smith and her work: feminist, lesbian, Scottish, anti-capitalist. These form the theoretical cardinal directions that are based on biographical readings of Smith. The irony, of course, is that “Smith herself has always been wary of [such] readings of her work, and has explicitly resisted categorical pigeonholing as an inevitably reductive reading of writers and their works” (Germanà and Horton 3).

Far from being pigeonholed, however, Smith scholarship enjoys a broad field of research. Smith’s Modernist and Postmodernist literary and artistic inheritance is

¹ Distinct from, or more so than, other forms of the gothic mode, the Scottish Gothic imagines a modern or urbane Scotland that is haunted by its own history. The gothic elements – landscapes, people, events, etc – carry an identity. This identity is represented by an inside voice, which is dangerously other to the English (as a dominant socio-political force) in term of representations of language, religion, and/or politics. See Kirsty MacDonald.

² Up to a certain point. *Contemporary British Voices* was published in 2017 and lacks not only Smith’s novels published in 2016 and after (most striking of them being perhaps the *Seasonal Quartet*), but also the earlier short story collections *Shire* (2013) and *Public Library and Other Stories* (2015). Lea’s research includes *How to Be Both* (2014), but nothing after. The plays are also missing. It is nonetheless an incredible body of work to have analysed and attempted to codify and is one of the most important texts the Smith scholar can read, especially of the scholar is only just starting out or is interested in finding patterns in not only Smith’s oeuvre but in twenty-first-century British Literature as a whole.

mentioned in almost every academic work and is often used as a guide, if not a point, in scholarship. Germanà and Horton, for example, claim that the “tension between modernist-postmodernist influences” and their identifications are one of the central strands in their collection of essays (6). Her engagement with the classics, Ovid especially, is also well-noted. Holly Ranger, for one, traces the influence of his *Metamorphoses* across Smith’s novels and short stories both. That said, most turn first to Katherine Mansfield (especially) and the Modernists (as a broad category) as her primary inspirations. Another frequent interest among scholars is how Smith fits into (!) the Scottish Gothic tradition. While this can be an effort to read her work through biographical and nationalistic lenses, it is clear that Smith has a particular love for ghosts, spectres, hauntings, magic, and the fantastical all the same. Scholars view these supernatural elements as tools with which Smith portrays and criticises identities. Sometimes these readings follow the aforementioned cardinal directions, but more often than not the spectral presence is taken as a manifestation of the stranger: a being whose presence forces characters out of their ordinary habits. Jorge Sacido-Romero also places Smith within a tradition and a living legacy of feminist gothic writing, once again highlighting the tendency in modern scholarship to attempt to place Smith within or without literary history (“Ghostly Visitations”). What is perhaps the most surprising is that the contents of the scholarship show that Smith does not make a major distinction between novel and short story genres when it comes to exploring themes. Much of what can and has been said about works in either genre can also be said about the other. For Smith, both use the same imaginative and literary “muscles” (Boddy 67). This, in turn, allows for a lot of comparative work between Smith’s prose and a noticeable degree of repetition of ideas and readings.

Regardless of what genre the particular academic favours, though studies on Smith’s plays are almost entirely absent from scholarship, there are certain subjects that he or she is constantly confronted with. Chief among them is Smith’s use of language. In almost every article and book chapter the issue of Smith’s literary language appears early on, either as a general note or as a matter of importance to the discussion. Playful, experimental use of language is an essential component of Smith’s literary and artistic philosophy; it is there from the very beginning of every work. Regarding Smith’s use of puns, for example, which is one of the most distinctive twists she gives to language, Wood notes that “[i]t’s not simply that she loves puns; it’s that

she thinks through and with them; her narratives move forward, develop and expand, by mobilizing them” and that “[w]ords are never stable in [her] fiction, because, as in Shakespeare, author and characters are always picking them up and turning them upside down to see what’s going on underneath” (2). Scholarship, in turn, typically focuses on the many meanings generated from one word and how those meanings direct and flow through the narrative. Closely related to this is the frequent appearance of the matter of Smith’s polyvocality. Lea claims that

[s]tylistically her writing embraces fragmentation and multi-perspectivalism to reflect the crumbling of singular, authoritarian voices in contemporary discourses ... The real point of interest is not the victory of one voice, though that is often how her characters understand it, but the profusion of various registers, *paroles*, tones, vocabularies, accents, and pitches that feed into the ambiguity inherent in speech and communication. (27, italics in original)

Maria Warner (“Foreword”), Lea, and Smith all think of this polyvocality and polyphony as a matter of Smith’s fiction being a social product. Even when the matter is not addressed directly, the researcher can still grasp that sense of social fiction because it is nonetheless implicit and ubiquitous across Smith scholarship. A third topic that is ubiquitous (if not always directly addressed) across scholarship is the ambiguity that is prevalent in Smith’s fiction. One approach Lea offers with regards to ambiguity is the importance of the open-ended story, which “works against the fixity of the novel’s characterisation by focusing on the transformative power of the evanescent and the epiphanic” (29). Joonas Sääntti turns to the ambiguous character-narrator instead, claiming that “[f]ictional narratives emphasizing the experience of unknowing can teach us something about the blind spots operating inside situated knowledges in queer, feminist, and trans theorizing of difference(s)” (30).

There is one thing that cannot be emphasized enough: Smith’s fiction is one of dialogues and meaning creation. Smith herself expresses this in her interview with Kasia Boddy:

Dialogue is absolutely life. The whole of life happens in dialogue. The self removed is the self not alive or the self not responsive. And response is the place at which we get to be our most human and playful ... Language goes beyond itself as soon as we’ve used three words. They can mean so many other words. The combination of basic responsiveness which means connection at its most human again, of playfulness, of wit, and again, of the engaged mind . . . When you’ve got two minds engaged, they open up whole worlds, incredibly vast

new worlds, and beyond that, there's a multilogue as well which is that the worlds in themselves start to connect. (73)

Here Smith expresses the importance of dialogue as a human imperative, in life and in fiction. In her view language and dialogue have generative powers that enable meanings to proliferate from them. When academics write about Smith's polyvocality or polyphony they mean this. Often, however, this is born from a more or less literal polyphony. An example of polyphony occurs during the Boddy interview when Smith is interrupted by her phone:

My phone's going crazy! Who's texting me? Oh, it's Helen Oyeyemi. She's going to Australia and she's at the airport and she's sending all of these messages saying 'And furthermore' full stop, 'Also' full stop. That's funny because we're, you and me, having our conversation and there's several other stories happening at the side of it all the time! The vibration of the 'and furthermore' text! (74)

This is exactly the kind of story that Smith is most well-known for: the "and furthermore" story that happens regardless of whether a character is – or was – involved in it personally or not, and from which many meanings proliferate. There is nothing inherently political about this incident, one must note. The "voice" is not equated with a different ethnicity, class, gender, or sexuality. The "story" is not of any groundbreaking significance, of no perspective-changing force, of no particular relevance at all. It is entirely commonplace, but that is also a deliberate choice Smith makes. Warner praises Smith for "[taking] on how people experience contemporary politics, socio-economics, and value systems. However, we are always made to see these concerns and to feel them from the inside" (ix), meaning from ordinary domestic places, through ordinary objects and common-place events, and so on. Germanà and Horton also note that in Smith's earlier works "the big issues that haunt postmodernity" pivot on apparently ordinary issues (2). This is not a quality that disappears as Smith continues her career either. As with her use of language and puns, in Smith's hands every word and event becomes charged with meaning. It seems that, according to Smith's literary philosophy, so long as the line of communication between two people³ is open, meaning is created with no need for the authorial hand

³ This is not limited to characters but expands to the line of communication between narrator and reader, (implied) author and (implied) reader, an object that represents a character and an interpreter, and so on. There are few limits to the how, who, and what of dialogue and meaning generation.

to force this creation. This leaves readers and characters a lot of leeway for interpretation – and misinterpretation.

This gives rise to a certain challenge for the Smith scholar. Dialogues – multilogues, in fact – are not only thematic and linguistic elements of Smith's fiction, they are also a directive on how to read the texts. The reader is encouraged to think of the relationship between different subject matters, class and sexuality to give an example, and to enter the dialogue(s) between them. Considering how meanings in Smith's fiction are also rather Promethean and protean, this means that studies on Smith's fiction are open to being incredibly multidisciplinary and open to a multitude of readings. It is not surprising that Smith's fiction has thus produced a varied body of academic work. It is also no surprise that there is so much that has not been said or has only been said in passing. There is much room for growth in the field, and some gaps that perhaps need to be filled.

The researcher might notice, however, that there is a slight bias in scholarship for Smith's novels. Not quantitatively, as there is a more or less even spread of studies done on both Smith's novels and her short stories, the parallels between the contents of the genres allowing some democracy in this case. However, the novels seem to be the primary source of discussion. One possible reason as to why this is so might be that the aforementioned polyphony is most prevalent in the novels. The problem seems to be a matter of genre and form – the short story places some limitations on polyphony and multiplicity. Smith herself sees this as an important distinction between the novel and short story forms:

In a way, the [short] story asks for something that is more singular of voice than the novel does – even though we've been talking about a plurality of voices and dialogue in the story. I think something about the novel form insists on a communal act, which is a social communal act. The story doesn't have to be – although it just will be social anyway by dint of existing in the world – but it doesn't have to stress its social connections, its social being, its social plurality. I think that for me is the difference between the forms – that the novel is definitely a social act. (Boddy 76)

Certainly, Smith employs only a limited number of characters in her short stories, and that accounts for some of the vocal singularity within a short story. A part of Smith's experimentalism in the short story genre, however, is the introduction and proliferation of multiple voices despite formal limitations. It is clear that character count is not the only way of creating a social, polyphonic story. One ought not to underestimate

Smith's prowess in this matter. As Warner says, her attention to detail for "the tiny parts of speech" reveal the depths of their imaginative potential (ix). It is the same prowess and attention to detail that has a transformative and generative quality in all her prose fiction. Wood points out that Smith's characters are not satisfied with "single selves; they long to expand, to duplicate and generate ... [E]xpansiveness is at the heart of Smith's work" (6). Though Smith's short stories are sparsely populated with characters, they transform as they become come in contact with each other, creating layers of meaning and an incredible textual and imaginative depth. As such, they are works of imaginative multiplicity, rather than numerical multiplicity.

This thesis is a study on the imaginative multiplicity of Ali Smith's short stories. The humblest contribution this work can offer to literature is to provide another starting point for scholars hoping to focus on Smith's short stories as opposed to her novels. My hope is that in doing so this work will slightly balance the scales of the short- versus long-prose bias. Taking my cues from the author, I have only included stories from her short story collections as opposed to individual works published elsewhere. In addition, this thesis is keenly focused on Smith's technique. It is not the only work to have this focus, though it is one of few to attempt to locate a pattern of narrative technique across a broad selection of Smith's short stories. Lea and Kostkowska have similarly panoramic works on Smith, though all three works (including this one) slightly differ in their focus. Despite her experimentalism, Smith is an author of habit; she turns repeatedly to certain themes, images, or practices, which is what allows such an approach. It is not difficult to find patterns among her work; but it is a challenge to put a name to a singular technique or stylistic choice that one can claim to be at the core of Smith's writing. It is not only an ambitious goal, but at risk of being an essentialist one: how might one assign a master key to understanding such a large body of work, especially one that has been praised for its experimentalism and for rejecting master narratives of identity? The simple answer is that one does not. However, this thesis does offer a suggestion as to how the variety of techniques and literary muscles Smith repeatedly uses might form a literary hand unique to her; it attempts to see what pattern they form. At the heart of it, this thesis is about the relationship between form and function: how does Smith's dynamic writing engage with her social and polyphonic concerns? My suggestion is that Smith's short story technique takes on the task of communicating multiplicity where literal polyphony is

not feasible – at least, not in the way it is in Smith’s novels, whose form and scale allow for many more literal voices to participate in the narratives.

This is in conversation with a few areas of research, all of which are related to Smith’s technique. The first is the aforementioned ambiguity in Smith’s work, through which meanings and thus narratives can proliferate. I take this as an imperative of the short story form and the counterpart of the breadth that the novel form can achieve. Ambiguity is where meaning creation thrives. The second area is Smith’s engagement with art as a matter of technique and style. Most academics at least mention Smith’s love for the arts outside of literature and her frequent engagement with pop-culture – which is also an entry point for discussions on Smith’s critical approach to the concept of “canonical” or “high” cultural products. This particular area has a sparse population attending it at the time when this work is being written, as the matter of placing Smith within a literary history and a canon seems to take precedence for scholars. Thematically speaking, however, Smith’s engagement with other forms of art this could easily be another topic of discussion for scholars to pursue, if only because of the abundance of materials to work with. Though this particular avenue has not yet been explored much, the relationship between the arts and Smith’s distinctive writing style has. Lea notes that “Smith’s tales are often constructed like musical scores with themes developed through repetition, counterpoint, dissonance, and harmony” (72). On Smith’s relationship with the visual arts, Milly Weaver states that “Smith’s fiction’s dialogue with visual representation plays out on a technical plane, as well as on a thematic one” (528). According to Weaver, Smith’s work “suggests some basic similarities between literary composition and other art forms” (529) and her fiction “can be understood to be – as can all language – fundamentally *about* looking” (530, italics in original). Katherine Weese similarly leans into Smith’s love of visual arts, this time that of the cinema.

Her ‘narrative presence’ is linked specifically with cinematic narratives ... Because Smith’s novel [*The Accidental*] comments self-consciously on the photographic image and the female body and also incorporates numerous film references, it invites examination through the lens of feminist film theory in addition to unnatural narrative theory. (137)⁴

⁴ Unnatural Narrative Theory is a recent development in narratology that owes much to both Cognitive Narratology and Shklovsky’s concept of defamiliarization. Säänti and Weese are the only scholars this thesis is aware of who have utilised this new methodology in conjunction with Smith scholarship. Chapter Two includes a brief explanation of Unnatural Narratology and how it pertains to this thesis.

Not only do these readings show Smith's engagement with a multitude of artistic disciplines, they also show how she employs self-reflexivity in her work, using it as an artistic and critical tool in her fiction.

The third area is Smith's relationship with space. Even though she is frequently cited as a Scottish author, that title is usually followed by "(Gothic)". The brackets are indicative of how uncertain this placement is; is Smith Scottish as a matter of biographical information, because of identity politics prevalent in academia, or because she is a part of a specific literary tradition? Currently, scholarship seems more focused on her literary position, but many works introduce her "Scottishness" as a matter of her identity. Rarely is she connected directly to Scotland – as a place – in scholarship. Lea notes that although Scotland is a prominent feature in Smith's fiction, it is more a backdrop "for the enactment of a domestic realism in which the contours of the self are mapped in shared, often private spaces" (10). A cursory look at studies done on her *Seasonal Quartet* series shows that there is a lean in scholarship towards Smith's engagement with geopolitics and history, but surprisingly this niche is not already thriving with curious scholars. Smith is an author who is incredibly conscious of her place in history. Her characters and narrators, in the short stories at least, live in a present that follows their families' history, the world's recent history,⁵ and history in the form of a "cultural background" (Smith) filled with the icons and works of the mid-to late- twentieth-century Western cultural scene. Other than Smith's engagement with the setting⁶ of twentieth-century Britain and the West, Smith also makes gratuitous use of symbolic spaces: the hotel and the dumbwaiter in *Hotel World* (2001), the Norfolk house in *The Accidental* (2005), streets, cinemas, cafes, bookshops, homes and gardens, and Greece – a favourite of Smith's – all kinds of spaces and places that show up across her oeuvre. One can even track certain kinds of narratives across certain spaces, almost categorically. Space is one of those subjects which the Smith scholar is unlikely to run out of things to say about, and certainly the matter has drawn some attention among scholars and students. At the time when this thesis is written, however, there are few published academic works which directly address Smith's use

⁵ Smith often refers to the Second World War and the period immediately after in some way in her fiction.

⁶ See the next footnote and Chapter Two.

of narrative space. Three of them are by Emily Horton, Patrik O'Donnel, and Justyna Kostkowska.

Horton's engagement with space in Smith's short stories is an ethical one. Her argument is that "Smith ... calls up the hidden psychic and affective possibilities latent within urban spaces, in this way making evident an alternative notion of imminent spatial becoming" (10). In Horton's reading, Smith's narrative spaces empower an ethical agency in the characters. In contrast to Marc Augé's supermodern spaces and their propensity to reduce identity to a kind of impotent anonymity, Smith's spaces, for all their tendency to define people by the relational roles they play, also enable people to take on ethical and moral agency and make either internal or external changes for the better. O'Donnel's approach prioritizes the "continuous succession of fortuitous and disastrous encounters with alterity" (96) Smith employs in her narratives, attributing this to the cosmopolitan nature of Smith's narrative spaces in *Hotel World* and *The Accidental*. In his view, the two novels are "a fictionalization of [Kristeva's] philosophical sketch" where "a pluralization of identity makes possible the eccentric, disturbing presence of the one whose difference makes possible the collective of the many" in a sort of utopian community (90) – as much as Kristeva believes in a utopia anyway. The global cosmopolitan world that Smith presents, O'Donnel shows, is this utopia (for lack of a better word).

Kostkowska's approach to Smith's use of narrative spaces is particularly multilayered. Her panoramic study is built on a detailed analysis of *Like* and *Hotel World* from among Smith's novels as well as a variety of her short stories. One of her central interests in her work is how narrative form and technique constitute narrative space. Kostkowska observes that one of Smith's keen interests is the disintegration of boundaries. These boundaries are authoritative, patriarchal, and anthropocentric in turns, but they can be dissolved narratively through the cooperative force of Smith's "democracy of voice" and the characters' engagement with the wider world around them. Kostkowska approaches this from an ecocritical perspective, and a part of her methodology is to seek environments or behaviours that can be considered environmentalist. This thesis and Kostkowska's work differ from each other on the point of their theoretical framework, but their arguments are in agreement with one another. How this thesis engages with Kostkowska's work is explained further in Chapter Two.

Suffice to say that narrative space is a field where the Smith scholar has the opportunity to thrive. There is an abundance of source material ready to be explored in a number of different ways and in conjunction with a number of different theories. However, there are certain difficulties the scholar has to navigate if she chooses to study space in Smith's short stories. It is not a matter of choosing a level of space⁷ to study, rather the matter of ambiguity itself. Despite her frequent use of certain kinds of spaces – domestic, communal, transitional, etc. – Smith often leaves the image of the space to the imagination of the reader, letting it develop within the ambiguity present in the story. It is an old adage at this point to claim that there is not enough room in short stories for descriptions; but the further Smith progresses in her short story career, the more she makes use of this limitation as an opportunity for experimentation. For Smith, narrative space is defined less by its in-text material reality and more by the mental space taken up by its imaginative and communicative prowess. The question ought to be amended then: What is the relationship between Ali Smith's experimental approach to multiplicity and ambiguously constructed narrative space in her short stories? My argument is that Smith's experimental literary technique allows her to generate narrative universes that are composed of a multilogue between the characters and between the story and the reader. This thesis will analyse the creation of these universes as well as their nature.

The stories analysed in this thesis have been selected from *Other Stories and Other Stories* (OSOS), *The Whole Story and Other Stories* (WHOS), and *The First Person and Other Stories* (FPOS) with the understanding that Smith develops her technique across her entire body of short stories instead of limiting it to any one collection. These stories, whose titles are always and only in lower case, are: "the second person" (FPOS), "blank card" (OSOS), "a story of love" (OSOS), and "believe me" (WHOS). In her first short story collection, *Free Love and Other Stories* (FLOS, 1995), Smith's experimentalism is more a learning tool for herself as an author than a literary project, resulting in a body of work that is not quite like anything else she went on to write. By her own admission, this collection is "much more piecemeal, strung-together, than the other collections, for sure" (Boddy 68). But, Lea writes, "many of the stories gravitate around the ideas of connection" (29). Here Smith makes a thematic discovery, and human connections – perilous, wonderful, and everything in between –

⁷ Spatial frame, setting, story space, story world, narrative universe. Explained further in Chapter Two.

become one of her most important concerns. This is equally a formal concern for Smith, “as she regards the short story as a quintessentially dramatic form that reveals the synaptic flash of connection in its structural demands” (28). In *OSOS*, Smith captures the fragility of these connections. They are painful when they snap, but more that is if they can form at all “in a toxic world of disconnections and misrecognition, where relationships are exploitative, care is prefatory, and there is always so much more to be known” (31). *WHOS* is the collection where Smith displays a mastery of her own style, incorporating dialogue, multilogue, and ambiguity into the structure of her short stories. This is where she explores the relationship between the human need for connection (fragile or no) and the human compulsion to tell stories. More than almost any other collection, *WHOS* is a body of self-reflective stories where Smith blurs the boundary between reading and talking – “[r]eading and loving”, in Lea’s words both of which “offer ways of understanding the world” (37). *FPOS* is received mixed criticism for its literariness. It bares all the hallmarks of a Smith work that makes it praiseworthy and, at the same time, a literariness that “no longer jolts from the margins; [it is] comfy and relaxed, too much at home” (Sophie Gee, qtd. in Lea 38). In a way *FPOS* is much like her first collection, somewhat piecemeal and trying to find new muscles to work with, or use them in new ways. Lea struggles to pinpoint a unifying characteristic among all the stories, but identifies a structure within the collection. That is, how most of the short stories are circular and how the collection is structured around three grammatically and thematically connected short stories (“the third person”, “the second person”, and “the first person”). Lea also acknowledges that Smith is interested in the use of voice and language to explore the themes in the collection. With the added benefit of hindsight after the publication of *Public Library and Other Stories* (2015), it is also possible to say that in *FPOS* Smith attempts to locate human connections within a wider ethical and political world. The connections she explores are a mixture of public and private, and there is an eye that looks critically upon the world where they form. In *FPOS* Smith is perhaps no longer as technically experimental as in her previous collections, but there is a shift in her theme of human connections that turns the one’s gaze towards something immediate and pervasive within the wider world.

It is important to note that one of the common characteristics of the selected stories is that the environment they feature is primarily domestic. Consistently, though

with the occasional minor deviation, the stories take place in a couple's shared home with little to say of the world beyond it. The narrator of "blank card" (*OSOS*) even closes the curtains to prevent any voyeurs from looking in and curls around a note from their partner to hide it from view despite this precaution. The attempt is to keep the outside world firmly out, and the centre of the narrative world is the inside of the domestic space. This sort of focus on the domestic space, especially the interior, is common across Smith's short stories. For Lea, and for many other critics, by the time *FPOS* is published "[t]he fantastical imaginative extrapolations of couples lying in bed and telling each other the stories of themselves have become, if not predictable, then over-familiar ..." (39). While I agree that the bedroom conversation has become a recognizable trope in the *Aliverse*, I am not certain that it is one of the devices that are "[wearing] thin" (39), especially when one thinks of the bedroom as a part of a larger domestic environment.

For Smith, a domestic environment is an intimate environment, and in these stories both the space and the intimacy are shared between two people as opposed to either of them being the product of a single person. The space is thus a reflection of the relationship, its progress, and its changes. Some examples would be the collection of objects in the parents' room in "a story of folding and unfolding" (*FLOS*), and the laminate flooring that the couple put down in their front room in "may" (*WHOS*), which is then damaged when the first narrator wants to make room for the tree she fell in love with. (Smith 53 54). Elizabeth Shove writes that this kind of personalization is "a matter of negotiation and compromise between two equal parties" (139), indicating a direct connection between the spatial and communicative, aspects of the domestic environment. This is an environment rich with not only a loving ease but with the aches and tensions of human relationship, and for Smith both are ever an opportunity for dialogue and creativity.

Chapter Two explains the theoretical framework of the thesis. This chapter describes the different layers of narrative space, the relationship between them, and explicates the concept of narrative universes. The relationship between this particular concept of space and Text-World Theory is explained. This chapter also briefly touches on Unnatural Narratology to give some perspective on the shortcomings of Text-World Theory and what needs to be kept in mind to resolve them for literary discourse. The overlaps and differences between the terms present in both colloquial

language and these theories are addressed, and the terms this thesis uses most frequently are specified. Chapter Three focuses on stories in which ambiguity lead to a strain in the domestic environment and causes the creation of hostile narrative universes. This chapter discusses the creation of narrative universes in tandem with the interplay between intimacy and ambiguity – specifically, how ambiguity’s dual role as a narrative tool and communicative hurdle can impact the intimate environment in a destructive way. Chapter Four takes a sharp turn away from hostilities and instead turns to how ambiguity can instead be a constructive force in the creation of playful narrative universes. This chapter focuses on how ambiguity invites an unknowing, which in turn facilitates dialogue and multilogue. Finally, the Conclusion turns to areas of further study for Smith’s short stories, with consideration for what has not been done in this study and how it may be expanded.

CHAPTER 2

CONCEPTS IN NARRATIVE SPACE AND TEXT-WORLD THEORY

There are several conceptual and theoretical dimensions at work within the notion of a narrative universe. The short of it is that a narrative universe is one of five basic layers of narrative space proposed by Ryan et al. to codify a broad range of spatial phenomena that can be found in narratives. However, it is a term that belongs not only to narrative space but to cognitive linguistics, specifically Text-World Theory. It is also open to interpretation due to its relationship with Unnatural Narratology. All of these fields, and hence the concept of a narrative universe, are loaded with many layers of meaning. As a result, narrative universes have far-reaching implications, and it is, therefore, an incredibly flexible tool for both creative writing and academic research. This chapter explains what a narrative universe is and the relationship it has with the academic fields named above. As such, this chapter aims to answer a series of basic questions about the terms and concepts that are in use throughout the work. What are the layers of narrative space? What are Text-World Theory and Unnatural Narratology? How do these concepts overlap or differ from each other? How do the latter two concepts impact a spatial reading of texts? In the later part of this chapter, the particular approach this thesis takes to analyse Ali Smith's short stories as social writing is introduced in terms of Kostkowska's "realityfiction" and what she calls Smith's "extended space".

The first step to answering these questions is to understand narrative space. Put simply, this is a sphere where "space, place, geography, and narrative . . . converge around four somewhat interrelated points": (1) narrative space, (2) space as context and referent for the text, (3) space taken by the text itself,⁸ and (4) the spatial form of the text (Ryan et al. 3-6). Of these, the first and the last are of particular interest to this thesis. The spatial form of the text refers to the formal arrangement of the text. As

⁸ For example, news headlines rolling along the bottom of the screen or the physical body of a book.

such, the “space” of the text in this context is mostly metaphorical as opposed to material, though a material sense of the word is still viable. Any kind of textual arrangement – semantic, thematic, phonetic – can be a part of the design of this kind of space. This notion of space “is not a system of dimensions that determines the physical position but a network of analogical relations perceived by the mind” (6). In other words, this kind of space does not have geographical bearings but is a textually directed map of ideas that is realised in the reader’s mind. This is the kind of space that, this thesis suggests, Smith predominantly leans into in her short stories. This category will be more prevalent further in the chapter.

The better-known category is the first type on the list. Buchholz and Jahn define narrative space as “the space (and the places) providing the physical environment in which the characters of narrative live and move” (qtd. in Ryan et al. 3). The brief list of spaces given in the Introduction – domestic, transitional, etc. – fall under this category. This is the most important sub-category because a physical sense of space is at the foundation of one’s understanding of narrative structure – indeed, of understanding at all. Ryan et al. note that imagination has a spatial bias that is represented in language through spatial metaphors (16). Since the material reality of space has such a strong bearing on language and imagination, it is the starting point of all discussions of and on narrative space in general. As spatial vocabulary is used broadly and colloquially without much attention to differences between words, however, terminological departure from the sub-category of narrative space has proven difficult and inconsistent across narrative theory. Some clarification and explication are therefore needed.

2.1. Semiotics and Layers of Narrative Space

In Ignasi Ribó’s semiotics, the term he uses coming closest to narrative space is “environment(s)”. He keeps the spatial use of the term environment separate from the temporal existent – “event” in his semiotics, while an existent is “simply something that exists ... in a particular world” (33) – to help understand the structure of narrative. Ribó explains that:

[i]n most narratives, environments tend to be the existents of the story that contribute more directly to worldbuilding. An environment is everything that surrounds the characters, including landscapes, trees, animals, buildings,

rooms, furniture, and any other natural or man-made objects or structures that characters may inhabit or move through. (35)

Despite the spatial emphasis, Ribó is conscious of the fact that space is not a property of narrative that can be held apart from other properties. To start, like most scholars he is careful to note that time and space are intimately connected and that separating the two is not so simple. Furthermore, he claims that environments are not limited to material dimensions and objects within a scene in a narrative. Environments are not entirely separable from the minds that inhabit them. Instead, they are defined as “the meaningful entanglements of characters with their own world, often represented in narrative as the subjective or psychological aspect of setting” (34). That last word, setting, is another spatial term that is used often indiscriminately to mean narrative space in colloquial speech. For Ribó, however, it is more than the topographical map of a fictional world. “If plot is the meaningful arrangement of the events (temporal existents) of the story, setting can be conceived as the meaningful arrangement of the story’s environments (spatial existents)” (33). The parallel Ribó draws between the plot and spatial arrangement indicates the importance of space within the story itself. Space is not tangential to narratives but is a part of the meaning-making process that is inherent to them.⁹ A setting, according to this description, is not simply a material background but an active agent within a narrative.

Ribó suggests a typology of settings based on their role and importance in narratives (irrelevant, functional, mental, and symbolic), but cautions that it is quite flexible and should only be used for orientation (39). One should also consider that Ribó’s typology is somewhat reliant on the descriptions of narrative space that are available in a text. As established in the Introduction, the short story is not a genre that has much room for descriptions, so it is at a slight disadvantage here. Furthermore, this is a typology that is rather vulnerable to the reader’s interpretation of what is and is not important. Different readings will assign different degrees and combinations of importance to narrative space, so the system is prone to some inconsistency within the readings it can produce.

Ribó’s typology is not used in this work, but the layers of narrative space suggested by Ryan et al. is. These five narrative universe are spatial phenomena found

⁹ There is a technique called “environmental storytelling” where the spatial existents, as Ribó would call them, take on the bulk of the storytelling role. It is a strong example of the meaning-making and narrative potential of narrative space.

in texts that fall under the four points of research outlined above. "Spatial frames" are the immediate (visible) surroundings of the characters, and characters can move from one frame to the other or the frame itself can undergo a change (24). Story space is composed of spatial frames "plus all the locations mentioned by the text that are not the scene of actually occurring events" (24). One of the most important qualities of the story space is that it is a combination of "selected spaces that are separated by voids" (24); it is not ontologically full, which is a characteristic that is important when discussing the last two proposed layers. The third layer is setting, which, in this model, is "a relatively stable socio-historic category that is prevalent throughout the text" (24). Neither the setting's stability nor its singularity is guaranteed, however, as geographic and temporal shifts within texts can allow for several settings to appear within a work of fiction.¹⁰ This description of setting does not have the same implications about the storytelling prowess of narrative space that Ribó's description carries. However, the connection between time (history), culture, and geography in narrative texts is much clearer.

The next layer is the storyworld, which is another term used by both Ribó and Ryan et al. For Ribó, a storyworld is an alternative world in which a set of events – the story – happens (18); literally, the world of the story. Quoting from Ryan, he explains that it is not a given that storyworlds are bound by the same physical laws as our own world.

They are alternative or possible worlds, configurations of space and time that may defy any aspect of common sense or our everyday experience... But more realistic genres, such as romance, thriller, or comedy, even nonfiction books, also create their own storyworlds through the arrangement of the different existents of the story. (35)

It is important to note that while Ribó uses these terms – alternative and possible worlds – to describe the material realities of the alternate world, they are firmly rooted in possible worlds theory:

The theory of possible worlds is a formal model developed by logicians for the purpose of defining the semantics of modal operators – primarily those of necessity and possibility, but other operators have been suggested. The theory has two concepts to propose to textual semiotics: the metaphor of "world" to describe the semantic domain projected by

¹⁰ Think, for example, of science fiction novels where characters are able to travel between alien planets and different time periods. Stories that jump between different worlds – one fantasy and one like ours, for instance – also allow for multiple settings. In more realistic texts a shift from one country to another would also do the same.

the text; and the concept of modality to describe and classify the various ways of existing of the objects, states, and events that make up the semantic domain. (Ryan 3)

A possible world – be it described as an alternative, a logically impossible, or a storyworld – is a language construction whose ontological and epistemological values are determined based on two points of reference. One, the actual world we inhabit and, two, the actual world as presented in the text from which further in-text departures may occur. The primary tool for the study of such worlds is grammatical analysis, but Ryan is careful to include figurative speech in her discussion as well. This is particularly important for the study of literature within the framework of possible worlds theory, as literary use of language does not always adhere to the logic of the actual world or the grammatical rules of codified language. Notice that possible worlds are not defined by their spatial existents – they may not refer to space at all. They are linguistic phenomena first and foremost.

Nevertheless, Ryan et al. do consider storyworld as a layer of narrative space. They define the storyworld as “the story space *completed by the reader’s imagination* on the basis of the principle of minimal departure¹¹... [In realistic texts the *storyworld*] is conceived by the imagination as a coherent, unified, ontologically full, and materially existing geographical entity” (24, italics mine). This description emphasizes the role of the reader in the cognition of narrative space. According to the principle of minimal departure, the world of the (realistic) text is conceived as the same as our actual world, with the only differences being whatever departures from our reality that the text specifies. The reconstruing of the storyworld is effectively limited by what the reader knows of the actual world. This limitation on the reader’s part extends to the other previously listed layers, too. For example, the setting for the Sherlock Holmes stories is late nineteenth century England, mostly London. Doyle does not give lengthy dissertations regarding the socio-historical landscape Holmes lives in, because it is not needed for his contemporary (British) audience. A reader who has no or a limited frame of reference for London, however, would struggle to fill the voids of the story space. The reader a century or more into the future is also at a similar disadvantage;

¹¹ “[A] law of primary importance for the phenomenology of reading. This law... states that we reconstrue the central world of a textual universe [i.e. a world that is a semantic construct] in the same way we reconstrue the alternate possible worlds of nonfactual statements: as conforming as far as possible to our representation of [our own actual world]” (Ryan 51).

for one, he or she is not guaranteed to have a thorough understanding of the historical time period. In addition, his lived experience would be different from the story's Londoner's, creating a dissonance – or a gap – between his experiential knowledge and the experience the text presents. Despite these limitations, however, the reader is not wholly dependent on his or her knowledge of the actual world to fill in the voids. Textual clues can also serve as referents for the reader's imagination. A fantasy story depicting a pre-industrial world, for example, is unlikely to have a city of steel and glass skyscrapers on its map. The reader may not know what exists beyond the story space, but the text can guide the imagination to include or exclude certain features from the landscape (24). Not only is the reader an active participant in the construction of the storyworld, he or she is open to influences from within and without the text.

The final layer that Ryan et al. define is the narrative universe, which is “the world presented as actual by the text, plus all the counterfactual worlds constructed by characters as beliefs, wishes, fears, speculations, hypothetical thinking, dreams, fantasies, and imaginative creations” (25). The system of reality the text presents and the counterfactual worlds make up the individual narrative planets within the narrative universe. Multiple diegetic levels can also be a part of the narrative universe (25). At its most simple, this means that in the same way that fictional narratives exist within our actual world, they may also exist embedded within a fictional world. Narrative universes are complex in a manner similar to storyworlds. Notice that, again, the description does not include any manner of spatial existents despite the world metaphor. The planets of the narrative universe are cognitive constructs, similar to the storyworld's ontologically full map being filled in by the reader's imagination and existing knowledge. However, while a storyworld is composed of a combination of spatial existents and cognitive constructs, a narrative universe is not defined by its spatial existents at all. In Ryan's earlier definition:

The concept of narrative universe is best defined in contrast with a larger totality: the semantic domain of the text. The semantic domain is the sum of the meanings suggested by a text, the set of all the valid inferences and interpretations. . . . Within the semantic domain, the text may outline a system of reality: an actual world, surrounded by [alternative possible worlds in a modal system¹² of reality]. (1991: 111 112)

¹² Modality is “those aspects of language which express a speaker or writer's attitude to a particular subject” (Gavins 91). Gavins outlines three modal systems: boulomaic (expressing

A narrative universe is this system of reality, which may not resemble our own reality at all. One may assume based on the principle of minimal departure that the narrative universe has a similar material reality to our actual world, or at least some material reality, but that is not an assumption that can survive contact with the full breadth of fictional works available. Neither would it be right to assume that a narrative universe is only manifest in realistic texts.

Why, then, is the narrative universe considered a spatial phenomenon if it has such a tenuous relationship with narrative space? First, because of our reliance on space and spatial language to express thought. Cognitive studies have found that our ways of thinking and expressing thought through language are “embodied”, which means that “all of our experiences, knowledge, beliefs, and wishes are involved in and expressible only through patterns of language that have their roots in our material existence” (Peter Stockwell 6). Our objective spatial reality is one of the primary knowledge structures we resort to when we want to express thought, knowledge, or understanding. Cognitive phenomena have a direct relationship with material space simply because the latter is foundational in cognition. The same is true with the cognitive turn in literary studies; narrative space and cognitive narratology are inseparable by nature. This gives rise to the second reason, which is that a narrative universe is an irreplaceable part of narrativity.

I regard [the] semantic dimension as constitutive of the narrative text. Narrativity resides in a text's ability to bring a world to life, to populate it with individuals through singular existential statements, to place this world in history through statements of events affecting its members, and to convey the feeling of its actuality, thus opposing it implicitly or explicitly to a set of merely possible worlds. (Ryan 112)

For Ryan, the generation, proliferation, and interpretation of meaning – all of them inherently cognitive acts – are an inherent part of narrativity. Notice the parallels between her exclamation and Ribó's definitions of setting and environment. Ryan's statement of the semantic imperative for narrativity mirrors both the meaningful entanglements of characters Ribó presents, as well as the ability of the arrangement of environments to tell a story. Narrative relies on the entanglement of minds, all engaged

wishes and desires), deontic (expressing obligation and duty), and epistemic (expressing various degrees of confidence in the truth of a particular subject) (110).

in creating and interpreting meaning, to come into being. The storyworld and narrative universe layers show how this entanglement is two-fold.

The concept of the storyworld is an example of the movement between narrative space and the spatial form of the text (points (1) and (4)). It shows how the text and the mind influence each other; the text guiding the reader's imagination and the reader's knowledge expanding the textual world. Admittedly, as the reader does not change the written text but rather the representation of the text in his or her mind. However, there is a kind of reader whose creative and interpretive faculties do influence the text-world directly: the character. The actual readers attempt to make sense of their own actual world, works of fiction they have read included, through the same processes as the characters makes sense of theirs. In this context, they are both, in the metaphorical sense of the word, readers of their world – of their environment(s), to use Ribó's terminology. The difference between the two is that the characters of a story are as much cognitive and semantic constructs as the world they inhabit. They do not "inhabit" it as much as they are components of it. In other words, they are elements of the spatial form of the text which the actual reader includes in his or her map of ideas. As such, the reader-character is in a unique position to influence the textual world through his or her imagination. Thanks to this influence, he or she is an active agent in the construction of the narrative universe as a spatial form. Although this thesis is interested in the construction of narrative universes in Ali Smith's short stories, it does not exclude the actual reader's entanglement with the text separate from this construction. As this chapter has thus far shown, the various layers of narrative space are interlinked and more or less encompass each other. Furthermore, Smith is a writer who draws her reader in to the story, encouraging his participation in the construction of the written text-world(s).

2.2. Text-World Theory, Its Importance, and Its Problems

Here, having largely resolved one terminological problem, we encounter another. Text-worlds, despite what their name suggests, are not fictional worlds constructed in or by texts per se, though they can be that as well. Rather, they are the cognitive phenomena at the heart of Text-World Theory (TWT). TWT separates every discourse into two broad conceptual levels. The first of these is the discourse-world, which "deals with the immediate situation which surrounds human beings as they

communicate with one another” (Gavins 9). This is generally taken as the actual world we inhabit, but within fictional or literary narratives this can also be the actual world in the system of reality a story presents. Text-worlds are the second level of conceptual activity. According to Gavins:

As the human beings in the discourse-world communicate with one another, they construct mental representations of the discourse in their minds, in which the language being produced can be conceptualised and understood... [T]hese mental representations are known as text-worlds. The second level of Text World Theory concentrates on this area of conceptual activity and provides a framework through which the precise structure and cognitive effects of individual mental representations can be examined. (10)

As with the planets of a narrative universe, text-worlds (of which there are usually many within a single discourse) are not spatial objects. In Stockwell’s words, the world – meaning simultaneously the discourse-world and text-worlds - is “a language event” (159) – which circles the matter back to the prominence of space and spatial expressions in our comprehensive and communicative skills. However, this has already been discussed and needs no further explanation at this stage.

There are a few aspects of TWT that are important for this thesis. The first is that it is not a concept that is independent of narrative universe(s). The language and terminology of TWT belongs with the study of narrative universes, and vice versa. TWT builds on the foundations that possible worlds theorists laid down. In TWT, text-worlds are formed in the same way and based on the same modal structures that alternative worlds are built in possible worlds theory. Consequently, a text-world is formed following the principles of minimal departure as well. In TWT, a text-world is what a counterfactual (or alternate possible) world is in Ryan’s terminology.¹³

Second, TWT “is concerned not just with how a particular text is constructed but how the context surrounding that text influences its production and reception” (Gavins 9). Text-worlds are intertwined with the discourse-world, which is, again, not only the physical space in which discourse takes place. It is closer to Ribó’s broader use of the term environment which includes spatial, temporal, and psychological existents and their entanglement, this entanglement producing the discourse itself.

¹³ This isn’t *vis-à-vis*; TWT is a later theory that benefits from several more years of research in cognitive sciences.

Gavins outlines several knowledge structures that roughly correlate with the constituents of the environment. Perceptual knowledge is made up of “the objects and other entities which inhabit the same physical environment” of the discourse participants, and is shared among them (22),¹⁴ which parallels the spatial and temporal existents in Ribó’s environment.

Experiential knowledge is a store of our experiences in our minds that we refer back to when we encounter new situations and concepts, which helps us negotiate novel occurrences; this personal knowledge structure is adjusted and expanded as we go ... The degree to which the participants in a discourse-world share experiential knowledge structures often correlates with the extent to which they can be recognised as sharing a common cultural identity. (22-23)

This in turn contributes to cultural knowledge structures and further still to linguistic knowledge. These structures broadly corollate with the psychological and social constituents of the environment.

Third, TWT assumes that “whenever we speak, listen, read or write, we do so in the expectation that our [discourse] co-participants are engaging with us in a mutual communicative endeavour”; however, “[m]eaning and understanding are not pre-determined or fixed in any way, they are continually evolving concepts, negotiated on-line by all those involved in the discourse-world” (20). In this way, the discourse-world is “an act of negotiation in process. And what is being negotiated between the participants in that discourse-world is the precise nature of the text-world they are constructing in their minds in order to process and understand the language at hand” (20). This is compounded by the fact that knowledge structures do not always overlap neatly, nor are they static. These structures are dynamic entities that undergo expansion, re-enforcement, and even rebuilding as we move through life – something that discourse itself mirrors and TWT acknowledges. Fourth, in TWT:

the need or desire to impart or gain some kind of knowledge is seen as the common motivating factor behind all acts of communication. Indeed, communication in general would be impossible without the human knowledge which enables both its production and comprehension. (21)

TWT has an epistemological center, which is fortuitous for the Smith scholar. One of the most quoted lines in Smith’s oeuvre is “What do you need to know about me for this story?” (“erosive” 99). Smith is a writer who is comfortable in ambiguity – thrives in it even, as scholars have shown. The reader, in turn, is encouraged to embrace this

¹⁴ Notice that this is also what Ryan et al. call spatial frames.

ambiguity – this state of not knowing and being uncertain of what one knows. Despite adjustments to knowledge structures and negotiations among discourse participants, however, TWT is not quite as comfortable with problems presented by lack of knowledge or deceptions.

TWT, despite its broad applications, is concentrated predominantly on real-life communications. For TWT, the primary mode of discourse is in-person, face-to-face conversation, which makes written communication a challenge to study. To begin, with the majority of written communication, discourse participants have to navigate the particular challenge of being in separate spatio-temporal locations, meaning that the discourse-world is split (26),¹⁵ which impacts, at the very least, perceptual knowledge.¹⁶ This is partially navigated by the fact that “the immediate material environment of the discourse becomes of secondary importance to the textual elements which form the main point of contact between the participants” (26). At the start of this chapter four areas within the study of narrative space were outlined. The fourth was the spatial form of the narrative text, which is more a cognitive arrangement of textual and contextual elements than it is a geographic space. In the case of written discourse, where the site of discourse moves from a geographic location to words on paper, this cognitive arrangement of (con-) textual objects replaces the material arrangement of physical objects. In TWT terms, perceptual knowledge – mostly if not wholly – surrenders its place in the negotiation of meaning to experiential, cultural, and linguistic knowledge. Or; the latter three knowledge structures take on the duties of perceptual knowledge.

Despite the fact that TWT acknowledges the differences between written and spoken discourse, in practice it can face some problems with literary discourse. TWT, like possible worlds theory, is concerned with and about the truth-value of statements and if they are verifiable by discourse participants. If there is a problem with the negotiation process or the incrementation of new knowledge, text-worlds may be damaged and hence require a world-repair through further negotiation or a re-reading of the text (142). World-repair is essentially an adjustment of the text-world following

¹⁵ As Gavins notes, a split discourse-world can also be caused by the communication being conducted over a telephone, in which case the discourse-world is split spatially but not temporally.

¹⁶ The split also impacts the negotiation process between discourse participants, slowing it down at the very least or, due to the impact on perceptual knowledge – which is no longer shared and therefore needs further negotiation and navigation.

the revelation or clarification of new knowledge and is common in all discourse. There is, however, a different course of action a discourse participant might have to take.

Gavin's analysis of *The Coma* (Alex Garland, 2004) reads:

Almost half the novel is revealed to have been a figment of a damaged mind, throwing into doubt not only the accuracy of the account which precedes the revelation of the narrator's still comatose state, but also his reliability as a focaliser of the rest of the novel to come. The damage caused to the reader's mental representation of the novel may be so extensive, in fact, that *world-replacement* may be necessary before the discourse process can continue... This rethinking involved not so much a repair of existing worlds, but their complete abandonment in favour of a new reading and new worlds. (142, italics mine)

Notice the language Gavins uses. The novel's (or, as Gavins often prefers, the author's) manipulation of the discourse is such that the reader is seemingly deceived and the trust between the two broken. Gavins reconciles this by pointing out that part of the enjoyment for most readers is the world-repair and world-replacement. Nevertheless, this representation of the novel – or narrator, or author – as deceptive somewhat misses the point of literary discourse.

It is important reiterate, however, that TWT and narrative universes are interrelated concepts – interdependent, even. This is a point that is not often acknowledged in scholarship, if it is at all. By and large, the difficulty scholarship is facing is how to embrace the universe metaphor along with the cognitivist approach in literary discourse. This has, somewhat conversely, lead to the concept of narrative universes moving away from (most forms of) literature and TWT moving a little closer to it than is perhaps expected. TWT has a foothold in literature as a part of reader-reception approaches, though it has thus far been more popular with educational sciences than literary studies. The narratological concept of a narrative universe, on the other hand, is surprisingly absent in literary studies. It mostly comes up in media studies where the universe metaphor is taken more literally. The idea of an alternative or parallel universe that is so common in science fiction, for example, is one occasion where the term makes an appearance. However, this approach is the result of the removal or dismissal of the cognitive and linguistic dimension of narrative universes. It has its merits, but it distances the concept from realistic texts. This sharp division of interests is quite peculiar. Narratives, for both Kurt Ranke and Mark Fisher, are symbolic words or actions through which humans make sense of everything that happens to them, and they are also such things that have meaning for the people who

“live, create, and interpret them” (Fisher 2). This is a familiar concept for most literary scholars who are interested in “narratives of the self”. However, what Ranke and Fisher’s claims show is that for humankind narrative is a part of its cognitive faculties, hence the emphasis on sense-making and interpretation of meaning. Fisher, in fact, claims that stories – narratives – “are the enactment of the whole mind in concert with itself” (10). The fictionality of a narrative does not disqualify it from a cognitivist approach. As a narratological and concept, a narrative universe is simply TWT in action within a work of fiction.

The difficulty in reconciling fictional narratives with cognitive studies is what causes a bind in scholarship. This is also why research into narrative universes direct the researcher into the emerging field of Unnatural Narratology, where one prime area of interest is the fantastical, impossible system of reality. It is useful to briefly turn to this field to gain better understanding of the problem and see how it may be resolved. Unnatural Narratology shares certain interests with both TWT and studies on narrative space. To start with, TWT “takes its commitment to experientialism seriously. It aims to provide a framework for the study of discourse which is fully sensitive to all the situational, social, historical and psychological factors which play a crucial role in our cognition of language” (Gavins 9). Similarly, Unnatural Narratology is a field born out of and in reaction to Monika Fludernik’s notion of “experientiality”, which:

refers to the ways in which narrative taps into readers’ familiarity with experience through the activation of ‘natural’ cognitive parameters, and particularly the embodiment of cognitive faculties, the understanding of intentional action, the perception of temporality, and the emotional evaluation of experience. (qtd. in Marco Caracciolo)

The overlap between TWT and Fludernik’s experiential, “natural” narratives is fairly clear from the parameters they present. Scholars of Unnatural Narratology, however, do not always prescribe to these parameters. The problem in the field is that the words “natural” and “unnatural” are taken to be synonymous with “physically and logically possible” or “impossible”.¹⁷ There are many approaches to this, and many scholars do take an interest in how these impossibilities are presented in linguistic and narrative form. However, this possible/realistic-impossible/unrealistic spectrum is not a part of TWT or Fludernik’s argument; this is where Unnatural Narratology truly differs.

¹⁷ See Alber et al., 2013.

Broadly speaking, in Unnatural Narratology what defines the unnaturalness of an alternative system of reality (to recycle Ryan's words) is how far it departs from our actual system of reality – a principle of maximal departure, if you will. As such, at one end of the spectrum there are fantastical systems of reality, such as is in J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy, and realistic texts on the other, like Charles Dickens' *Oliver Twist*. The latter may not count as unnatural at all, despite the improbabilities within the plot. In this conceptualization of un/natural narratives, the terms "text-world" and "alternative world" take on a more literal meaning; they become less cognitive activities and linguistic events and more firmly become narrative spaces with their own geographical dimensions. These impossible realities are a part of the study of narrative space and, more to the point, of narrative universe(s). However, this thesis does not follow the realistic-unrealistic line of thought, not the least because Ali Smith's narrative spaces are much closer to the realistic end of the spectrum. Rather, the spectrum that belies Unnatural Narratology should be taken as a point of contrast: the world as a physical system of reality versus the world as a mental, cognitive system of reality. This, again, goes back to the relationship and contrast between narrative space and the spatial form of the narrative.

There is one scholar in the field of Unnatural Narratology whose perception of the "unnaturalness" of narrative is important for this thesis. Maria Mäkelä is critical of both the cognitivist turn in literary criticism and the use of the word "unnatural" as it is used in Unnatural Narratology. According to Mäkelä the approach one takes to understand how a character's mind works cannot be the same as the approach taken to understand a real person's mind because "the mediacy brought about by literary minds is different—if not radically different—from the real-world mediating functions of consciousness" (137). She poignantly observes that:

One of the established narratological reading strategies used to humanize fictional narrators is diagnosing them as unreliable. This strategy may well provide motivation for the dissonances in [Albert Ford's "Privacy"] and turn them into either a conscious (rhetorical) or an unconscious (psychological) strategy...The thematic context of the narrative may even encourage such a diagnostic reading: the story is the first one in a collection of stories on adultery, thick with psychological undercurrents. However, condemning the narrator for unreliability—either for glossing over his "crime" or for self-denial—is, ultimately, just as unproductive an interpretation as condemning him for adultery. (135)

The fictional mind does not deviate from the normal one precisely because it is fictional. For Mäkelä both the fictional mind and narrative discourse are different from actual people and their real-life communications. “The cognitive trick lies in the fact that in literary representation, telling, experiencing, and the construction of the fictional world and its agents all happen on the same level—that of narrative discourse” (138). More to the point, the reader and the fictional mind are a part of literary discourse, which requires the reader to engage in knowledge structures that are unique to literature. “[E]ven the slightest deviances from cognitive verisimilitude generated by the textuality and narrative determination of fictional minds will inevitably call for reading strategies different from those applied in real-world social navigation” (139).

For Mäkelä, narrative (literary) textuality is by its very nature unnatural in comparison to daily-life communication. There is no need to attempt to “naturalize” it through cognitivist approaches nor to put it on a spectrum of fantastical-realistic. She even finds the cognitivist approach dangerous for literary studies. “[It] may lead to reductive views on fictional consciousness representation” (130). Her two primary concerns on the matter are that:

[f]irst, ... by reducing fictional minds to exempla of actual human cognition we miss the essential dynamics between verbal art and real-life experientiality. Second, if we assume that reading literary fiction requires the use of exactly the same cognitive frames we use when coping with our everyday lives, we will suffer serious literary-theoretical losses. (130)

Literary experientiality is peculiar and constructed; it is “unnatural” in its literariness. That does not mean, however, that cognitive studies do not have a place in literary studies. It can be adapted for and adopted into literary studies just as semiotics, linguistics, and psychoanalysis has been – all of which share some interests with cognitive studies. TWT is particularly adaptable to literary studies, despite both Gavins and Mäkelä’s misgivings, precisely because of its emphasis on language and discourse.

The primary challenge in reconciling TWT and literary studies is the matter of the ontological status of the discourse participants:

Discourse-world entities are real people, belonging to the same domain of existence as we do. In face-to-face communication, we are able to ask questions of other discourse-world entities, clarify information and negotiate the contents of our text-worlds openly. In the discourse-worlds of written communication, where we are unable to question and clarify directly, we nevertheless understand our co-participant to be a

real person. Although that real person may not share our spatial or temporal co-ordinates, he or she still exists in the same ontological domain as we do. (76)

For Gavins, the reader's discourse partner is either the author or the implied author, who is a projection of the actual author. The first is human and the second is almost as human as the reader, and either can be taken as willing discourse participants who are actively, if remotely, a part of the communication process. In the case of literary narratives, however, the discourse participants are ontologically different than we are: they belong to their own alternative (text-) world separate from our actual one. These ontologically different beings are called "enactors", colloquially known as characters. "The text-worlds created by text-world enactors *who do not occupy the discourse-world as well* are processed differently... In Text World Theory terms, these worlds are only enactor-accessible text-worlds" (77, italics mine). This ontological boundary between discourse- and text-worlds as well as the boundary between participant and enactor, exists in all discourses. However, as Gavin emphasizes, the boundary between the two worlds is not absolute and it does not constrain all discourses in the same way. "[I]t is equally important to note that when a boundary is transcended this invariably has an effect of some sort on the participants' experiences of the discourse" (83). Gavins also points out that this transcendence is particularly common in literary fiction – and hence, literary discourse.

2.3. Expanded Space and Realityfiction

One of the hallmarks of Ali Smith's short stories is their propensity to cross the ontological boundary between text and reality. Repeatedly, characters seem to reach out of the text and pull the reader into the story, hence becoming more active discourse participants. Even more than her use of language, her literariness forms alternative worlds within her narrative, creating a narrative universe with an extended space that encourages the reader to participate in narrative discourse. This, Justyna Kostkowska argues, is characteristic of Smith's realityfiction. She coins this term for Smith's work – her short stories in particular – "not only because [Smith] consistently deconstructs the boundaries of the text, but because she sees fiction as having... transformative power" (162) in the actual world the reader inhabits.

[I]nstead of letting us settle happily into a safe, processed, and contained fictional 'reality,' Smith's text also insists on becoming part of our own. The

illusion of fictional safety is broken: we are reminded that the ‘real’ world still exists, that in our act of reading we are still surrounded by something larger to which we, as well as the text, belong. (159)

Kostkowska reminds the reader of the feminist mantra that if we change the story, we change the world (6). Smith is one such writer who uses language and the transformative power of art to rewrite the world. The extended space of the text is a part of this transformative realityfiction project. Kostkowska observes that a key characteristic of Smith’s ontological transgression is her metafictional writing. Across her prose fiction, the stories “[call] attention to the space between the text and the reader by addressing the reader and making references to the story/the book and the process of their creation” (121). Far from being an insurmountable schism, this space is a shared site of discourse (discourse-world in TWT terms) between reader and the text.

Kostkowska’s analyses are invaluable to this study because they show the connection between the theoretical concepts explained here with great detail and care, though they do not actively make use of the theories themselves. The connection between narrative space and the spatial form of the text is well-analysed and the importance of language and the crossing of ontological borders is present throughout her three chapters in the concept of the text’s extended space and the term realityfiction. This thesis adopts both of these terms. Crucially, Kostkowska makes an argument about *Hotel World* that resonates throughout her analyses:

I argue that Smith’s novel portrays such a “field of care”¹⁸ by bringing in the rest of the book’s world inside each narrator’s chapter and revealing the interdependence of the narrated “worlds.” Her project, like Virginia Woolf’s, is to bridge the gap between language and reality, to reestablish connections between our isolated linguistic selves, and between ourselves and the environment around us. The novel’s multiple and complexly constructed points of view help to manifest these connections and overcome the characters’ isolation as the reader recognizes other familiar characters, events, and settings as belonging to the same world. (115)

For Kostkowska, as well as this thesis, Smith’s multilogue is present in her narrative technique and in the construction of her narrative space. The multiplicity of narrators, the non-linear chronologies, the self-reflexive writing, and – as is this thesis’

¹⁸ A term used by Neil Evernden and Danne Polk: “A symbiotic understanding of difference expands the notion of body into a relational, interactive field of concerns which transcends the boundaries of the skin” (qtd. in Kostkowska, 114).

contribution – the text-worlds the narrators themselves create are all a part of a narrative universe which extends out of the boundaries of the text to include the reader in the discourse. The narrative universe is an extended space that demands the reader's participation to come into being – it is inherently multilogic.

For Kostkowska, this social writing is ecological: the symbiotic relationship between narrative worlds writes against isolation and self-interest. Instead, the “ecological thought” that drives this narrative style sees the world as a series of symbiotic relationships between human and non-human beings. As such, it also calls for a kind of democracy among humans and the disintegration of boundaries such as class, gender, and sexuality – all areas where Smith's “democracy of voice” shines. This thesis follows along a similar line of thought. The formation of the extended narrative universe is of primary interest. Though the importance placed on language and semantics is repeated here, this thesis takes Mäkelä's warning about the naturalization of literary discourse seriously. Hence, the analyses look for non-verbal techniques of forming narrative worlds in addition to use of language. Instead of an ecocritical perspective, however, this world-formation is taken to be a part of a dialogue – indeed a multilogue.

2.4. Terminology

One of the primary challenges of this thesis is keeping track of the terminology. The ubiquitous nature of spatial vocabulary, especially, is a hurdle of its own when studying narrative space in conjunction with TWT. To simplify, however, from here onwards this thesis uses Ribó's broader definition of environment; Ryan et al.'s notions of the layers of narrative space, and favours alternative worlds as opposed to possible worlds. The term text-world will be making some appearances still, but it will be substituted for a related term, epistemic modal world, in Chapter Three. That leaves the matter of dialogue and multilogue – whose differences are not immediately obvious, ambiguity, intimacy, and unknowing – all of which are terms that are active throughout this thesis and need to be defined here.

2.4.1. Dialogue and Multilogue

Although Smith has chosen to differentiate between “dialogue” and multilogue”, it is unclear what the difference is. Multilogue is a relatively new word

that does not seem to have a clear definition that sets it apart from dialogue. Götz Schwab describes it as “interaction including more than two participants” (3). Although the distinction between two-member and more-than-two-member discussions is helpful, in literary studies this is often not a differentiation that sets one manner of discourse apart from another. Therefore, this definitions is not sufficient. The clearest and most distinct definition that is available seems to be:

[a] conversation described as *many-to-many*. The term is commonly used to describe the nature of conversations and interactions using *social media and collaborative tools*, such as social networking, online video, widgets for syndication, wikis, message boards, forums, etc. (“Multilogue”, italics mine)

Tentatively, then, multilogue can be defined as a discourse that happens between many participants who retain their individual positions instead of forming two distinct bodies and undertake this discourse in a multidirectional manner as a result. The problem here is that even when individual participants speak for themselves, they may not be able to differentiate themselves from a body of participants who are of the same mind as them. This is not a problem that can be untangled in this thesis, but the usage of the word can provide further direction. Social media and digital collaborative tools act as a common ground between discourse participants. These are not physical sites of discourse, but digital ones. They are much like a like a real-life, extended space, with the difference that, with the number of collaborators being seemingly limitless, they much more multidirectional for every participant than they are for a reader reading a book. There are surely many more differences between discourse taking place in a cognitive-literary extended space and a digital platform, but that, too, falls beyond the scope of this work. This thesis takes multilogue to mean a multidirectional discourse that is taking place within a cognitive-literary extended space. This discourse involves the characters and the reader, forming a multilogic character-character-text-reader square. Allusions to literary texts, however, imply the participation of more people.

2.4.2. Intimacy

Intimacy, in the colloquial sense of the word, presents itself in many ways throughout Smith’s oeuvre, such as sexual, romantic, familial, and platonic. It seems Smith enjoys the affective and narrative possibilities of intimacy and what challenges it presents or is faced with. What this thesis observes is that intimacy has three more dimensions. First, in the more spatial sense of the word, the closer the characters are

physically the more intimate they are. The short stories chosen for discussion predominantly take place in a partially enclosed and partially isolated domestic space shared by a couple. The domestic space is a narrative space in which characters are intimate in the sense that they are able to get up close and personal, literally. The reader, in a way, is also made to enter this limited space to similarly get close to the characters. This leads to the second dimension, which is the dialogic, or broadly more communicative sense of the word. In the long term the domestic space changes to suit the particular people co-habiting the space, becoming more personal for them as a unit. Elizabeth Shove writes that this kind of personalization is “a matter of negotiation and compromise between two equal parties” (139). The shared domestic space is a place of conversation, where lives and minds become entangled in a collaborative project that requires communication. It should be noted that this means domestic space, when talking of this communicative dimension, is ultimately a domestic *environment*. Third, intimacy has an epistemological dimension. In many cases intimacy is familiarity with someone or something, in the sense of someone having in-depth knowledge on a person or a matter. It is possible to be intimately familiar (as the phrase is used) with a space, an environment, a person, etc., and therefore to be able to make the claim “I know this about so and so.” This, of course, is also true for knowledge of oneself. That is to say, it is possible to make an assertion of truth about oneself, such as “I know this about myself”. This epistemological dimension is often a silent force acting upon the communicative dimension of intimacy, and, as Chapter Three shows, it can easily cause problems. This work approaches intimacy primarily from the communicative and epistemological dimensions, and uses it as a counterpoint to ambiguity.

2.4.3. Ambiguity

It was indicated in the Introduction that ambiguity is one of the most active tools in Smith’s fiction. As such, it appears in many different ways in her work. While the specific positions and functions of ambiguity in Smith’s short stories is in question throughout this thesis, there has to be some clarity as to the use of the term. In the first place, what is, or causes ambiguity? How is it to be categorised? The word ambiguous is itself ambiguous, Adam Sennet claims, with several obscurities in meaning colloquially being compiled under the single title “ambiguous”. As such, ambiguity does not only refer to the possibility of multiple interpretations, but something that

causes doubt and uncertainty regarding the localisation of a truth. Broadly speaking, then, any narrative technique that causes such uncertainty, any obscurity or concealment of truths, can be labelled as a kind of ambiguity. But what of ambiguity's role in communication? To reiterate Lea, the point of interest in Smith's fiction is the proliferation of many idiosyncratic voices "that feed into the ambiguity inherent in speech and communication" (27). Ambiguity, then, is a natural and self-assertive part of communication. It is simply unavoidable in a dialogue, much less in a multilogue. However, the specific role ambiguity has in the dialogues and multilogues observed in this thesis needs to be explored through a different term.

2.4.4. Unknowing

Intimacy and ambiguity share a tense relationship due to their differing epistemological positions. This tension permeates the domestic environment, and a part of the challenge of the environment is to navigate this tension. One method for such navigation is to attempt to resolve ambiguities, which is natural part of communication. TWT assumes that the first choice for resolving ambiguities is to directly address them and to negotiate knowledge structures to settle on a shared, or matching, knowledge structure. This, however, is where TWT encounters a problem. Whereas TWT assumes that the minds of enactors are much the same as the minds of real people, Mäkelä points out the fact that characters are fictional minds. While in-text dialogues can resemble the communicative processes of real minds, the multilogue between characters and the reader, especially, is much different – which is one point where an adjustment to TWT has to be considered. If ambiguity is a part of the narrative identity of a story, it follows that it is an indispensable part of the characters and their interactions. In the short stories analysed in this thesis, especially, ambiguity is one of the driving forces of the events – which, it must be noted, are composed almost entirely of a mixture of dialogue and multilogue. As such, ambiguity as a communicative tool in these short stories has a distinctive role in navigating the epistemological tension that does not entirely follow the aims of real-life negotiation.

There is a kind of narrative negotiation at work that allows discourse participants – characters and the reader – to communicate. Joonas Sääntti's approach to reading ambiguity in Smith's oeuvre provides some direction in this matter. Sääntti writes that "[t]o focus on ambiguity means reading the texts against the naming and

localizing of known subjects, against the easy equivalence of ‘issues’ in the real world and the potentialities engendered by the textual universe” (30). This is in line with ambiguity’s function as something that prevents the localisation of a truth – in light of Lea’s words, that is an authoritative, subjective truth. To that effect, the negotiation in the multilogic communication in the selected short stories do not aim to diambiguate and settle into the comfort of known subjects. Rather, this form of negotiation aims to trigger or encourage an “unknowing”. Sääntti claims that “[f]ictional narratives emphasizing the experience of unknowing can teach us something about the blind spots operating inside situated knowledges in ... theorizing of difference(s)” (30). Unknowing is the term this thesis accepts as the particular form of negotiation in the multilogues. At the heart of this form of negotiation is an unsettling of boundaries and limits that keep minds in an accepted or expected order. As a part of multilogic communication, a part of this boundary-crossing is an ontological leap into an extended space, which is an important way in which it differs from real-life negotiation. That said, the importance of unknowing, in line with its core of ambiguity, is the challenge it presents to the codification of knowledge and knowledge of codification. It aims to disrupt knowledge structures so that no one authoritative truth can reign supreme.

CHAPTER 3

HOSTILE NARRATIVE UNIVERSES

This chapter aims to analyse the multi-directional relationship Smith builds between unknowing, intimacy, and ambiguity, and how this relationship impacts the creation and nature of hostile narrative universes in Ali Smith's short stories "the second person" (*FPOS*) and "blank card" (*OSOS*). As a negotiation method, unknowing aims to create a shared extended space between people, but its disruptive nature does not always facilitate this aim. As with all communicative endeavors, narrative communication can fail or negotiations can misfire. Accordingly, the disruption caused by unknowing can turn the extended space as well as the intimate environment into a site of conflict. It follows that the narrative universes that form naturally during communication process may turn hostile. It will be argued that ambiguity has a dual role in this process as both a narrative device and a communicative hurdle, the combination of which results in the creation of hostile narrative universes.

The chapter is split into two sections. The first one provides an analysis of "the second person" (*FPOS*). This section focuses on one of the most ubiquitous elements in Smith's short stories: the second-person narrative voice. The analysis shows that while this narrative voice is technically an ideal tool for the creation of an extended space, it poses some problems for the intimacy of dialogues and multilogues – as well as for the intimacy of the domestic environment. The second section divides "blank card" into three acts and focuses on the first of these acts. This section especially focuses on Smith's use of a narrative red herring as a defamiliarizing tool and its impact on the narrative universe as a black hole. Both of these stories are important because they provide a template of concerns regarding human connection and communication as Smith sees and depicts them. Smith's short fiction the I-narrative – and its corollary, the second-person narrative – is typically used to obscure the

characters' identities to create a sense of immediacy and universality of the human experience. In theory, this narrative voice is therefore the perfect device to trigger an unknowing and turn the text into an active discourse participant. The defamiliarizing tool similarly "takes advantage of the permeability of the ontological boundaries of narration" (Giuseppe De Riso 29), leading to a collapse of these boundaries. This device refuses to let readers settle into the ease of habitual reading patterns and instead "urges [them] to engage with the text and collaborate in the creation of meaning" (Ranger 410). While these narrative devices are incredibly useful for facilitating both dialogue and multilogue, however, the individual short stories use them as near-diagnostic tools. In both of these short stories these devices either cause or point towards a problem with communication. In Smith's (short) fiction, people always remain at least a little obscured to each other – always a little hard to understand, and unaware that one's own self is similarly obscured to others. Connection is not without the effort – and struggle – of seeing and being seen. This is the concern of several in short stories similar to the ones in this chapter, such as "College" (*FLOS*), "To the cinema" (*FLOS*), "okay so far" (*OSOS*), "more than one story" (*OSOS*), "virtual" (*OSOS*), "small deaths" (*OSOS*), "being quick" (*WHOS*), "erosive" (*WHOS*), "present" (*FPOS*), "the third person" (*FPOS*), and "last" (*PLOS*). In many of Smith's short stories, including the ones listed here and analysed in this chapter, this effort is not without success or reward. Before there can be a joyful, loving, intimate connection, however, there often has to be an unknowing – a painful breakdown of the boundaries that have kept things in order but have also prevented people from forming (deeper) connections.

3.1. Epistemic Modal Worlds and Blended Worlds

Like the overwhelming majority of Smith's short stories, "the second person" is composed mostly of dialogue and told in a mixture of first- and second-person narrative. A split couple try to explain to each other how they both perceive the other through the use of a hypothetical, indeed allegorical, situation where they imagine the other person going to a music shop. Though they both intend their own version of the allegory to mean something positive, the dialogue rapidly turns into an argument filled with accusations due to misinterpretations of the allegory. In this short story, one of the driving forces behind the creation of the narrative universe is the disruption of

boundaries prevalent in the process of unknowing, specifically ontological boundaries. This can be analysed in two steps: the creation of the extended space through literary technique, and the miscommunication that arises from failed unknowing.

As a general rule, the cognitive processes involved in reading stories involve a kind of mental boundary crossing, be it temporal, spatial, or ontological. Regardless of its perspective – first, third, omniscient, etc. – the narrative voice can cross such boundaries through a process called projection.

Whenever a discourse participant constructs a remote text-world, one which does not correspond to the spatial and temporal parameters of the discourse-world, their co-participant is required to conceptualise a new deictic structure in which the origo has shifted away from their sense of the here and now. In Cognitive Psychology this process is known as projection. (Gavins 40)

In deictic theory, *origo* is the “zero reference point of subjectivity (*I, here, now*)” (36, italics in original). *Deixis*, on the other hand, is the capacity language has to anchor meaning to context (Stockwell 49). Origo is typically accepted as the central point of deixis; meaning the discourse participant’s sense of “I, here, and now” forms the basis of context for speech.¹⁹ When a reader is immersed in a text, he or she undergoes a (deictic) projection where the origo shifts to, as it were, get into the mind of the characters, adopting their origo instead. This happens regardless of if the narrative is in the first-person or not (Gavins 46). In self-reflexive literature like Smith’s short stories, indeed in her realityfiction, this means that as the narrator reaches out into the extended space to become a discourse participant in the actual world, the reader reaches in to become an enactor in the alternative world of the text. The two (or more) discourse participants therefore take on a similar ontology to each other. As such, the extended space is created when both enactors – frequently the narrator – and readers simultaneously undergo an ontological transcendence.

Though deictic projection does not differentiate between different narrative voices, these voices nonetheless impact the creation of the extended space and the multilogue that follows. In “the second person”, the extended space is created when

¹⁹ Stockwell lists six categories of deixis: perceptual, spatial, temporal, social, textual, and compositional. He also caveats that this separation is mostly for analytical practicality and that there is overlap between these categories and can be grouped together under different labels (54 55). Stockwell presents this list specifically with the narrative text in mind, so the discourse participants, from the actual reader’s position, are enactors – i.e. characters within a text. That said, Stockwell also presents his work as an introductory textbook and aims to provide his reader with concepts found in various cognitive studies. There is no conflict with the information Gavins presents, only a need for consideration for which deictic categories are most useful for analysis.

the boundary between fiction and reality is broken as quickly as it forms thanks to the combination of first- and second-person narrative voice. The story begins with the claim: “You’re something else. You really are” (*FPOS* n.p.). This kind of opening line is fairly common in Smith’s short stories. “may”, for example, opens with an “I tell you” (*WHOS* 45) and “erosive” asks “[w]hat do you need to know about me for this story?” (99). From the very beginning, then, the narrative voice exceeds the boundaries of the text and enters a multilogue with the reader within its extended space. The nature of this multilogue is determined in part by the tantalizing ambiguity of the narrating voice. Sântti claims that “[b]ecause first-person narrators are typically not described from the outside, the perceivable differences relating to feminine, masculine or genderbending looks and behaviour can only become represented less directly” (21). It is not only the gender which is left ambiguous, however. The I-narrator does not impart any clues as to his or her identity. Class, ethnicity, age, nationality, and other such identifiers are absent from the narrator’s address, giving little to no clues about the speaker. Through the narrating I’s refusal to be identified – i.e. placed into an epistemological category – the text demands the reader to reconsider his or her text-worlds and expectations of the narrative itself. Smith’s use of “I” narratives, then, is one way in which texts “[insist] on becoming part of our own [reality]” (Kostkowska 159). They ask for an unknowing of the reader’s codified knowledge, therefore pulling the reader into the multilogue and forcing him or her to move from a passive observer position to becoming an active discourse participant.

While the transcendence of ontological boundaries is mostly observed through the narrating I in scholarship, it should not be forgotten that Smith’s narrators are not isolated, monologuing beings but a part of a multilogue. Hence, it is important to consider the co-participant “you”, and how the second person address can equally destabilize boundaries. At the start of “the second person” the narrator²⁰ addresses “you”, who at this point may be the reader or the not yet textually visible partner. In much the same way as the narrator, the addressee is ambiguous and a nomadic subjectivity that crosses the ontological boundary between fiction and reality, being both an enactor and an actual person outside of the text. Certainly, this is an almost

²⁰ This thesis uses female pronouns for the narrators and male pronouns for the partners, unless the text indicates otherwise. This is a largely arbitrary choice, as Smith often does not indicate the gender of the characters. The choice of pronouns, therefore, is for the convenience of reading and writing this work.

exact reiteration of the paragraphs above; so it may seem redundant to consider what differences there might be between first- and second-person narratives when it comes to the creation of extended spaces. In “the second person”, however, miscommunication and the construction of the narrative universe pivot around the problematic epistemological and narrative quality of this kind of address.

Each usage of the second-person narrative itself creates, or perhaps reveals, a narrative planet within the universe of “the second person”. To explain the statement that her partner is “something else”, the narrator comes up with an imagined scenario told in the second-person narration. “This is the kind of thing you’d do. Say you were standing outside a music shop. You’d go into that shop and just buy an accordion ... You would buy this accordion precisely because you can’t play the accordion” (*FPOS* n.p.). The narrator thus creates a detailed alternative world where the partner buys the accordion seemingly on a whim. Then, unable to bear the thought of the accordion being lonely, he purchases a second accordion. As per TWT and possible worlds theory, the switch²¹ to an imagined scenario creates one of the planets in the narrative universe. The purpose of this allegorical world is to reaffirm the intimacy of the participants. On an emotional level, this is done by expressing the narrator’s admiration for her partner. On an epistemological level, the method is to make an assertion of truth – in a narrative format – that the partner agrees with. If the allegorical world matches the partner’s understanding of himself, then it is a successful attempt at unknowing and strengthens the couple’s intimacy. To this effect, the allegorical world communicates the narrator’s own epistemic modal word (EMW). An EMW is formed when a discourse participant conveys his or her “commitment to the truth of a proposition, or their knowledge of it” (Stockwell 164).²² Utterances like “I believe” or “it is evident that” can signify such knowledge of the truth, but such cues are not strictly necessary. In fiction, modal worlds may also be discerned from the actions and thoughts of characters. In this case, the narrator is unable to explain the nature of her belief (that the partner is something else) except without the use of an allegorical

²¹ In TWT a deictic “world-switch” occurs whenever the focus of attention is changed along the spatial, temporal, or spatio-temporal parameters (Stockwell 163, Gavins 48). It is not clear if moving between modal worlds is the same as a world-switch. If the two are considered separate, however, keeping Mäkelä’s warning in mind, the differentiation can be ignored when studying fiction.

²² Text-worlds and EMWs overlap considerably. In literature, where boundaries between in-text truth and perception of truth blur often, these terms may be used interchangeably, or with preference for EMW, as in the rest of this thesis.

world. The narrator thus creates two planets at once: once by creating her EMW, and then by attempting to use unknowing in order to explain the nature of this world.

This negotiation backfires as the partner strongly disagrees with the representation the narrator creates in her allegorical world, leading to miscommunication and a failed attempt at unknowing. He claims that the person the narrator depicts is nothing like him. The narrator attempts to re-negotiate, stating that she “didn’t mean it in a horrible way. [She] meant it in a nice way” (*FPOS* n.p.), but this does not soothe the partner. Instead, he criticizes the narrator and, indirectly, the use of second-person narrative voice.

What amazes me about you ... is that after all these years, all the years of dialogue between us, you think you’ve got the right to just decide, like you’re God, who I am and who I’m not and what I’m like and what I’m not and what I’d do and what I wouldn’t. Well, you don’t. Just because you’ve got, you know, a new life and a new love and a whole new day and dawn and dusk and everything new and shiny like in some glorious pop song, it doesn’t make me a fiction you can play with or some well-known old used-up song you can choose not to listen to or choose to keep on repeat in your ears whenever you like just so you can feel better about yourself. (*FPOS* n.p.)

The partner diagnoses the problem of this particular narrative technique, which is the control an outside narrator can have over another person’s self-narrative. The second-person narration is “a narrative mode in which a narrator tells a story to a (sometimes undefined, shifting, and/or hypothetical) narratee—delineated by you— who is also the (sometimes undefined, shifting, and/or hypothetical) principal actant in that story”²³ (Matt DelConte 207). As the narratee and the protagonist are one and the same, “we encounter an inevitable overlap of second-person with either first- or third-person because second-person is always also either first- or third-person” (204). When the narrator uses this narrative mode, she bars her partner from becoming the narrator of his own narrative. The overlapping first-person – the narrator – seizes control over the addressee protagonist’s narrative and assumes a god-like position over the addressee. The narrator thus withholds full access to a narrative that is true to reality for the partner, simultaneously producing conflicting EMWs.

Due to this conflict, the second-person narrative mode also threatens intimacy when it is understood as interiority – an intimacy with the self, in other words. Sylvie Gambaudo observes that narrative has a particular connection to this kind of intimacy.

²³ Notice that in this description the narratee-protagonist itself is ambiguous.

According to Gambaudo, things that are intimate “reveal the unique character of individual experience”, and “any attempt at mirroring, copying, or repeating ... narratives of self [that are not intimate] are ... markers of personal sabotage and thus a form of ‘madness’” (69). As such, narratives have the ability to reveal interiority, but outside narratives – narratives received from people other than the protagonist – can also be unaccommodating of intimacy and make parts of the self unintelligible (58). It is possible that narratives can prevent intimacy, as a shared epistemological state of being, if they are not true to the interiority they attempt to address. This is true for both the intimacy of the self and the intimacy of the domestic environment. The narrator’s allegory attempts to produce a copy of the partner’s (narrative) self, but it clashes with the partner’s own narrative of self and is viewed as a fictional creation instead of a true-to-life representation. This, once again, is a clash of EMWs. As a result, the narrator’s attempt at unknowing sabotages the intimacy it tries to establish.

Conversely, this narrative technique could increase the intimacy of the domestic environment. One possible interpretation of text-worlds, or EMWs in the case of fiction, is that each one is a map of an individual’s psyche. Following that, it is possible that in revealing (a portion of) her EMW the narrator indirectly expresses her own interiority. What is more, if this narrative world corresponds to the addressee’s own EMW, or the idea of it, then the blurring of ontological boundaries between narrator and addressee only show how strong the intimacy between the two is. Unknowing, in this case, would help to communicate how well the narrator knows and understands the partner. This would serve as an affirmation of the intimacy of the domestic environment. What is more, the blurring of ontological boundaries between enactors and the reader can also promote intimacy. Kostkowska writes that for *Like* (1997) “the extended space that the presence of the reader creates is the only space in which the characters’ present intimacy becomes real” (139). As the reader and the character(s) share similar positions – a position of confusion in Kostkowska’s analysis (135) - they also have similar demands of the narrator’s allegorical narrative. The allegory, by virtue of being ambiguous, “always encourages a next reading. Instead of objectifying the not quite fully transparent text and alienating ourselves from it, we seek to get closer to it on each reading” (136). As the character is the reader and the text is also the character due to their shared ontology, this means that through the

reader's (re-) reading the characters are able to become more intimate, or reaffirm their intimacy.

The problem, however, is that the allegorical world is an indirect revelation of the narrator's text-world. What is more, it is a heavily ambiguous narrative world, which makes the meaning the narrator tries to convey unintelligible. This can be analysed from the perspective of "blended worlds". In TWT, this is a world that can be created as part of the negotiation process. "Blended worlds occur in discourse as the result of the conceptual merger of two otherwise independent text-worlds" (Gavins 149). In other words, blended worlds occur when discourse participants create a shared text-world that combines their independent knowledge structures and EMWs.²⁴ In "the second person" the allegorical world which tries to combine the narrator and her partner's EMWs is an example of a blended world. However, the allegory is not clear on what particular knowledge – of the other²⁵ or of the self – the narrator is trying to integrate into a shared world. The effect of this ambiguity is only exacerbated by the fact that the domestic environment is no longer shared or intimate for the split couple. The partner reveals that the narrator has a new life, and there are signs that the partner does, too.

I notice there's something out of place on what was our window ledge. There's what looks like a piece of wood I've never seen before. It's new, like the new mirror in the bathroom, the clothes in the kitchen by the washing machine that's not really your style, the slight trace in the air of what was our house of the scent of something or someone else. (*FPOS* n.p.)

Whatever intimacy the domestic environment held is no longer the same. The couple have drifted apart, found new partners, and have built, or are building, new lives with these new loves. The effect of the separation is that the differences in their EMWs and their knowledge structures are no longer negotiable through ambiguous narratives, the modal worlds simply cannot blend into a unified world. The attempt to do so results in miscommunication and conflict instead.

It is hard to say if the couple in "the second person" intend to hurt each other in the ensuing argument, or if a genuine attempt at unknowing repeatedly fails in a

²⁴ In TWT, the primary example of a blended world is a metaphor.

²⁵ Not to be confused with the subaltern or similar meanings of "Other" across literary and political theory, this thesis assumes that "other" refers to anyone who is not the natural, primary origo of one's own deixis

way that causes them emotional harm. Regardless, when the partner attempts to create a similar allegorical world he is interrupted by the narrator, who creates a *hypothetical* allegorical world in which she is demanding and destructive – or, that is how she thinks her partner perceives her.

I bet I know, I say. I bet I push open the door and go really peremptorily to the counter and I ask to see every stringed instrument in the shop ... And when [the assistant] goes to get the next [guitar] I take a pair of pliers out of my bag. And I take the first string on the guitar ... and then I cut it so it snaps. And then I cut the next string ... And the next, until I've done all the strings and I'm ready for the guitar. Is that what happens? And then do I cut every string on every stringed thing in the shop? And do I take particular pleasure in cutting the many strings of the pretty harp that was in the window? Is that what happens? Is that what I'm like? (*FPOS* n.p.)

The partner denies this, to which the narrator responds that even if that is not the events of the allegorical world it is exemplary of what the partner thinks about her – creating, in turn, another EMW where the partner thinks ill of the narrator. What follows is the creation of the partner's festive allegorical world, the narrator's misinterpretation of the allegory, and the subsequent creation of a counterfactual world where the partner views the narrator as a know-it-all supercilious solipsistic self-dramatist, to list a few of the “smarting adjectives” (*FPOS* n.p.) associated with the narrator. This misunderstanding continues, each protesting to the EMW they think the other has created about them. The result is a crowded and increasingly hostile narrative universe filled with planets that are in constant conflict with each other.

Here, one might identify the reason for the hostility as presuppositional ambiguity. According to Sennet “[a]mbiguity can be found at the level of the presupposition”, where “a presupposition is a linguistic phenomenon” (Ryszard Zuber 448), and specifically found in written language. Sennet, taking his cues from Kent Bach, claims that the word “too” is instructive for understanding how this kind of ambiguity works.²⁶

22. I love you too.

This can mean (at least) one of four distinct things:

23. I love you (just like you love me)

24. I love you (just like someone else does)

²⁶ As far as this thesis is aware, studies on ambiguity as a linguistic phenomenon analyse claims and assertions individually, as with the quote here. Sentences chosen for case studies are presented outside of any context, and this lack of context is a chief constituent of the sentence's ambiguity. This methodology is perhaps ill-fitting for literary studies, but Bach's example is a clear example regardless of the methodology.

25. I love you (and I love someone else)
26. I love you (as well as bearing some other relationship (i.e. admiring to you). (Sennet)

In this example, the word “too” presupposes the truth of at least one of four assertions. Accepting the first interpretation, the sentence “I love you too” can be expanded to read: “I know that you love me, and I assert that I love you in return”. From this, it becomes clearer how presuppositional ambiguity presents itself in “the second person”. The irony throughout the clash of planets is that the couple think positively, even highly, of each other, but presuppose that the other holds the opposite opinion. The partner claims that the narrator “suggested [he is] wasteful and whimsical. [She] suggested ... that [the partner is] completely ridiculous and laughable” (Smith). The narrator, meanwhile, “bet[s]” (*FPOS* n.p.) she knows what the partner thinks of her. The pair also presuppose that they are intimate with each other’s EMWs, which lends surety and force to their protests and accusations. However, this surety stands in stark contrast to both their complementary intentions – as it produces counterfactual planets – and the inherent ambiguity of the allegories. The attempt at unknowing fails to address this series of presuppositional ambiguity, which goes against the purpose of unknowing. This failure to address presuppositions combines with the ambiguity of the allegory and thus exacerbates the hostile clash of planets.

Despite this hostility there is one planet in this universe that exists peacefully. At the end of the story the narrator receives a package from the partner: an accordion whose role in the first allegorical world triggers the misunderstandings. The narrator knows that neither of them

... will have the first idea how to play one, never mind even open and close one properly. It’ll take some learning. [She opens] the note that came with it instead. [She] presume[s] ... that it’ll tell [her] this is one of a pair and that if [she is] looking for the other one it’s over at [the partner’s home]. (*FPOS* n.p.)

The note, in fact, is a repetition of the claim the narrator makes at the start of the story. This circular ending,²⁷ much like the allegory, is somewhat ambiguous itself. That said, what it accomplishes is a truce and a reconciliation of the hostile planets. In embracing the allegory, the partner shows a willingness to accept that he misunderstood the narrator, and that there are positive interpretations of the allegory possible. The narrator’s response to the accordion is to imagine a possible future –

²⁷ Another highly common feature in Smith’s short stories.

another planet – where the couple learn how to play the accordion together. This is a planet where the blended world achieves its negotiative purpose. That is to say, the ambiguity is resolved enough that the gap between EMWs no longer separates the couple so violently. Instead, the blended world behaves as an extended space between the narrator and her partner where they can interact peacefully, perhaps even lovingly. Ambiguity's role is complex and multilayered, which is also visible in "blank card" (*OSOS*).

3.2. Black holes

It is possible to divide "blank card" into three "acts". The first act begins with the inciting incident, which is the delivery of a bouquet to the narrator. The narrator is charmed by the flowers, thinking they are from her partner, but once the partner gets home he says that he did not send the bouquet. The flowers lose their charm immediately and quickly become a source of contention when the identity of the sender cannot be resolved – the accompanying card being left blank except for the image of a flower. This act is charged with tension from the couple's need and subsequent inability to identify the flowers' sender. In the second act the tension is partially resolved when the narrator throws the flowers away and the couple have sex. The partner's approach to identifying the sender becomes less hostile and accusatory of the narrator, and instead he starts to suggest possibilities. The narrator, on the other hand, enjoys the mystery and does not care to know. She is far from unconcerned, however, as she at first imagines that the sender might be a stalker and a voyeur, who might be watching her at that moment as she is getting dressed. This comes to a head when the narrator wakes up from a nightmare where she chokes on the flowers. She cannot bear the thought of being seen by the voyeur, nor can she imagine seeing herself as she might be seen. This state of fear and discomfort bleeds into the third act where the narrator tries to avoid being seen by keeping the curtains closed. However, the tension shifts to something more sensual, indeed sexual, when the partner's note instigates a narrative game between the couple. This game breaks the hostility caused by the mystery of the sender's identity and transforms it into something positive and playful. The story has a circular ending where the narrator sends a bouquet with a blank card to her partner.

Starting from the first act, ambiguity is placed at the thematic and communicative center of “blank card”. Two sections strongly exemplify this. The first is the beginning itself where the narrator opens the door to an old man carrying flowers, who says the narrator’s name “like it [has] a question mark after it” (*OSOS* n.p.). The second follows soon after, when the narrator retrieves the unopened envelope that comes with the bouquet from the rubbish, but the card inside does not include a name. “Except for the printed illustration of a flower, it [is] blank” (*OSOS* n.p.). It is possible to see the beginnings of presuppositional ambiguity in this act, as the narrator assumes that the sender is (not might be or could be, but certainly is) her partner. The blank card certainly does not give enough – any, in fact – information on the matter. It might therefore be more accurate to say that this ambiguity is born from under-specification or under-determination. While these types of ambiguity are a constant undercurrent in the story, their categorization is of secondary importance compared to how, in these acts especially, ambiguity and intimacy share a tense connection.

The story uses two interrelated tactics to build this connection. First, ambiguity is presented as a quality intrinsic to the notion of self. Notice the specific phrasing the narrator uses to describe the arrival of the mailman. “When I opened the door [the mailman carrying flowers] said my name like it had a question mark after it” (*OSOS* n.p.). She does not directly say that he asks if the narrator is the person he is talking to. Instead, she turns to the written representation of the question. In the same way people specify how their names are spelled, the narrator includes the question mark in the spelling of the narrator’s name. Subsequently, the ambiguity that questions try to address becomes subsumed in the narrator’s identity, as with the attempt to disambiguate. To briefly return to Gambaudo, this question-identification shows that ambiguity is a part of a person’s interiority and their narrative of self. That said, the story suggests that this intimate ambiguity is not something that can be easily perceived by self-observation. The second tactic, therefore, is to place inside- and outside-perspectives side by side. In doing so Smith shows that inherent ambiguities are revealed by an encounter with the other that reflects one’s ambiguities back at oneself. The inherent question mark is unveiled, as it were, thanks to an outside perspective. In this case, when the narrator opens her home’s door to the outside world where the mailman half states, half asks the narrator’s name.

Another being that is both ambiguous and reflective is the combined flowers-and-card, and it is important to understand this being's narrative role. Throughout the story there are occasions when the flowers appear to be more than mere plants. The narrator's descriptions like "big-tongued lilies" (OSOS n.p.) and "eyeless open-mouthed heads" (OSOS n.p.) give the impression that the flowers are human-like beings who have the ability to speak and communicate. The flowers thus form the physical body of the ambiguous and reflective being, while the card, under normal circumstances, would contain the text²⁸ that is to be communicated. The blank card – a metonym for this being – thus undergoes an Ovidian metamorphosis and transgression of boundaries between human and plant (and paper). This is in keeping with the unsettling of boundaries that unknowing perpetuates, with the implication that the flowers hold a position similar to the enactors or readers. That is, they are a part of the boundary-crossing communicative endeavor unknowing demands. In addition, the blank card is a variation of a common technique in Smith's novels that Ulrike Tancke calls "[t]he plot device of the cataclysmic intrusion" (76). This is where an event or a character brings knowledge of or causes a breakdown in the knowledge one assumes they have of oneself and the other, whatever that other might present itself as. In the card's case, this is by introducing ambiguity into the intimate environment as well as forcing the couple to confront some measure of ambiguity that already exists within that environment. As Tancke observes, however, the cataclysmic intruder is a "narrative red herring" (76) that tricks the reader "into believing that we are dealing with a clear-cut narrative set up of cause and effect" (77). The trickery starts to come undone when the intruder does not retain much – or any – agency over the development of the plot.²⁹ Ultimately the cataclysmic red herring intruder is there to direct the reader's attention to the reader's own reading habits and expectations of the story and to "the [story's] genuine concerns, while the disruptive events at its core merely signals that we are invited to look further than the superficial level of plot" (78). In other words, the intruder, if it is successful in its mission, is a tool that defamiliarizes the concept of a story itself for the reader and encourages a conscientious reading of the story that prioritizes unknowing. This echoes both Kostkowska's analysis of the reader

²⁸ Here, in addition to written words, "text" refers to knowledge, message, or meaning.

²⁹ This ought to be taken with a grain of salt for Smith's short stories to which the novelistic sense of plot does not transfer *vis-à-vis*.

being encouraged to re-read the text to get closer to it and Sääntti's call to embrace an undoing of what the reader knows of stories and characters.

The blank card dangles an obvious question in front of the reader and the characters: who sent the flowers? This is never answered in the story, and it would be pointless on the reader's part to speculate on it, especially upon second reading and beyond. That said, the reader is not the only one caught up in the intruder's defamiliarizing mission. The narrator herself is also subject to the unknowing readers are encouraged to undergo. In the second act the narrator tries to disambiguate the matter by imagining that the sender might be a voyeur "who decided seeing [her] was enough, that he or she had some right to [her] because of it" (OSOS n.p.). While this is a frightening possibility for the narrator, she cannot help but be intrigued by the possibility of being the object that is seen. She thus tries to "see herself", first in the mirror while getting ready, then, up against the mirror, in the reflection of her own eyes. The following day (act three), however, when the fear of the mysterious maybe-voyeur catches up to her, she keeps the curtains closed, preventing anyone from seeing in, and she is unable to imagine seeing herself going through actions as she does them. This parallels the blankness of the card, which, one should keep in mind, is devoid not only of the name of the sender but also lacks the name of the addressee. As the ambiguous sender evades the narrator's sight, so she evades her own. The self and the other are equally ambiguous to the narrator. It can't be said that the narrator is fully aware of this double-ambiguity, and strictly speaking it does not matter. The card-come-voyeur nevertheless achieves its role as the red-herring intruder by making the narrator literally look at herself and try to imagine seeing herself not as she knows she is, but as some other eyes might see her. The narrator thus answers the invitation to go through an unknowing³⁰ of her intimate self and the intimate environment by shifting her origo to an imaginary other. The fact that she is only partially successful is not a problem. Afterall, despite Smith's prowess in narrative techniques, the intruder device can only do so much to force an unknowing. Much of the work falls on the reader – or in this case the narrator – to break out of habituated patterns of thinking and knowing, with no guarantee or rubric of success. The attempt is all.

³⁰ As the card-come-voyeur is still a narrative device, the narrator's attempt at unknowing is an example of classically Smith narrative self-reflexivity.

The question remains: how does the blank card, as an ambiguous being and a trigger for unknowing, impact the communication between the couple and the creation of the narrative universe? In keeping with the universe metaphor, one might think of the card as a black hole. In 2019 the Event Horizon Telescope Collaboration released the first image of a black hole. The object itself cannot be seen because light cannot escape it. However, one can observe the events surrounding a black hole, which is the “hot gas swirling around it under the influence of strong gravity near its event horizon” (“First Image of a Black Hole”). In terms of both TWT and narrative universes, the black hole is a useful metaphor for analysing how blank spots in EMWs can impact communication, particularly because of how it is comprehended through its perceived absence or “negation”. When the narrator thinks the flowers are from her partner, she wonders what she had done “to make [the partner] want to send them” (Smith n.p.). The narrator does not imagine that the flowers may be from another person, taking it for granted that the sender is her partner. She is not yet aware of the gaps in her EMW, namely that it is based on the presupposition of a truth. Only when the partner negates the presupposition does she become aware of these gaps.

There are two ways to interpret this in terms of narrative universes and TWT. The first is that the narrator’s initial EMW is the system of reality that the text presents as true. In the beginning of the first act, neither the narrator nor the reader has a reason to doubt that the flowers are from the partner, so the truth, or reality, of the narrative world is that the bouquet is from the partner. The second interpretation is that the system of reality is that an unknown person has sent the flowers, and that what was assumed to be true is in fact an alternative world built on the (in this case, false) belief that the flowers are from the partner. In other words, the narrator’s belief is an EMW while the matrix-world is revealed later. In TWT, the matrix-world is “[t]he main text-world mostly in operation in a text” (Stockwell 163).³¹ Logically, and in accordance with Stockwell’s definition, this second interpretation is the correct one. One should pay attention, however, to the order in which the planets of this narrative universe are presented. Instead of establishing a baseline of reality to deviate from, Smith presents a reality as it is perceived, and then the textual reality as it is. In an echo of the re-

³¹ One might interpret this as the revelation of the blackhole, and consequently make the claim that the matrix world is a black hole. Though an interesting analysis, this thesis would have to diverge from its goal to pursue this topic.

spelling of the narrator's name with a question mark at the end of it, what the narrator – and, with her, the reader – assumes she knows is put in question.

An argument can be made that the unveiling of the black hole through negation is not as important as the existence of the black hole itself, and certainly many narratives thrive on the continued invisibility of the black hole – so long as it is still visible to the reader. Irony is a good example of this, as are narratives with multiple focalisers that prove each other to be unreliable narrators. According to Sääntti “[i]t is possible to argue, that the ambiguity of the narratorial gender only becomes noticeable and relevant if the story or the narrating discourse draws attention to it” (21). One can make a similar argument for mystery narratives³² where the existence of the mystery is tied with the *realisation* that something – some truth – is not known or is otherwise unknowable. Detective stories are driven by this tension of knowing only enough of the truth to understand that there is something more to be known. “blank card”, at least in part, is one such mystery narrative. As such, the unveiling of the black hole is something that has a profound impact on the narrative and thus the narrative universe.

In “blank card”, as soon as the partner denies having sent the flowers the couple attempt to disambiguate the identity of the sender. In the first act this is a one-sided endeavor where the narrator is the one who bears the brunt of the task, which is entirely unfruitful.

I can't think of a single person they could be from. They could be from anybody. There's nobody they could be from. I don't know who they're from. I said this several times. You said several times how I must have some idea, and each time we said something, whatever I said sounded more like a lie and whatever you said sounded more incredulous. (OSOS n.p.)

Each of the narrator's claims show the blank spots in her EMW(s), further reinforcing the force of the black hole, and simultaneously creating more EMWs. In TWT, each negation creates a text-world separate from the system of reality in which the negation has been expressed (Gavins 102, Stockwell 162). It follows that the partner's claims to the opposite also create more text-worlds, while simultaneously revealing the corresponding blank spots in his or her knowledge structures as well. These alternative worlds stand in opposition to each other, clashing as the narrative universe expands in a manner all too similar to the universe of “the second person”. The more this

³² It is also important to note that a mystery, as an obfuscation of truth, falls under the umbrella of ambiguity.

expansion and conflict continues, the more the narrator is put on the defensive as her claims sound deliberately deceptive instead of born from genuine ignorance. Thus, for the majority of act one presuppositional ambiguity works in concert with under-specification of the sender's identity, exacerbating the hostility of the universe. Unfortunately for the couple disambiguation is not possible, not when, as the narrative red-herring, the black hole is not meant to be illuminated. This means that there is no means to conduct a world-repair or a world-replacement, and thus differing EMWs are not reconcilable. The couple thus face a series of problems, the sender and his or her intentions are unclear, the narrator, especially, is now uncertain of her EMWs, her partner appears suspicious of her, and both are now confronted with the realisation that there are problems or ambiguities in their relationship - which have gone unrecognized until this moment. The domestic environment is now overwhelmed by the ambiguity of a series of black holes that cannot be illuminated. exist in the domestic environment are. The reader, at least, has some clues to understand the nature of the black hole.

In keeping with the mystery narrative, as the narrative universe expands due to the couple's inability to solve the mystery, the flowers take on a corpse-like appearance. Increasingly the kitchen starts to resemble a crime scene, showing the mounting unease and hostility in the couple's communication. "The card and the torn envelope [are] on the mantelpiece in the front room, evidence, though neither of [the partners can] say what of" (Smith). Smith includes a pun in the crime scene. As the flowers begin to rot the kitchen fills with "the collision of their different scents" (OSOS n.p.). The word "scents" is much like a cut-off from "sentence", as though the longer word has been decapitated. The pun shows that the couple's dialogue is troubled and strained, if not outright hostile. Some things are either not said, cannot be said, or are not accepted as the truth; or at least the narrator feels like that is the case (a belief that generates another modal world itself). This indicates that the problem and the ambiguity are likely of a communicative nature. When the partner lets on that the couple have not had much sex in the past few months it becomes clear that this strain on the intimacy of the relationship has been an ongoing problem. The couple's tradition of leaving affectionate notes, the narrator reveals, has also taken a decline at the same time as their sexual relationship. The two are not communicating, or at least not engaging in meaningful dialogue that can resolve or mitigate the destructive impact of inherent ambiguities. The intruder thus draws the couple's attention to the need to communicate

and address whatever ambiguities there are within the domestic environment. This triggers a negotiation process involving the disambiguation of the sender's identity, perhaps in hopes that it proves that the narrator was not unfaithful to her partner, but the process fails to settle the problem. Hence, instead of being able to settle on one matrix-world or agree on a truth, the negotiation unsettles their individual EMWs and creates a hostile narrative universe.

The temporary solution to the problem of the mystery and clashing modal worlds is, at first, to throw away the cataclysmic intruder that has revealed the gaps and contradictions in the couple's EMWs. Tim Putnam, like Shove, observes that negotiation is a part of a joint life project for couples sharing a domestic – intimate – space. However, he also notes that this negotiation may actually be “partners [swallowing] potential conflicts arising from the clash of received expectations”, with the result that “differing rationales may be accommodated in a shared result” (148). What the couple display in the first act of “blank card” is a failure to address differing rationales at all until the lack, or stagnation, of negotiation causes a necrosis in the relationship. Unable to resolve the conflict they find themselves in they swallow it instead. This is an unsatisfying solution, but it does relieve the tension and hostility. What the intruder accomplishes is that it reveals the necessity for a negotiation of EMWs. The way things are, the intimacy of the domestic environment is in danger of being overtaken by ambiguities. Across both “the second person” and the first act of “blank card”, in fact, the respective couples take it for granted that they have overlapping EMWs. They are not actively communicating with each other to address the differences in their EMWs. This leads to miscommunication and hostility in the face of the unknown. And yet, in “blank card” it is exactly the revelation of the unknown – as in, the realisation that it is not known – that triggers a process of unknowing between the couple. This is where the process' unsettling nature begins to show its constructive power. It is possible that instead of hostility, one can be moved – unsettled – into narrative play.

3.3. Conclusion

Ambiguity has multiple roles in “the second person” and “blank card”. As a narrative device it empowers the central conflict in these short stories and continues this function as a part of the couples' strained communication. In “a story of love”, the

ambiguity of the allegorical world, coupled with the characters' presuppositions, leads to misunderstandings and an argument, creating a hostile narrative universe. In "blank card", the unresolvable ambiguity of the identity of the flowers' sender triggers the creation of a similarly hostile universe. While characters attempt to negotiate their conflicting EMWs, the unsettling nature of unknowing fails to reassert the intimacy of the domestic environment for as long as this ambiguity is the driving force of not only the troubled communication but also attempts at negotiation.

It is important to underscore that disambiguation of either the allegory in "the second person" or the mystery of the sender in "blank card" is not necessarily the solution to the hostility among the couples. In both short stories the attempt at unknowing reveals that ambiguity is already present in the intimate environment. The use of the second-person narrative shows that the EMWs the partners have of each other, especially regarding how they think one perceives the other, are clashing. The "I know that you think this of me" assertion both characters make not only obscures the intimate narrative of self, but it is also simply a counterfactual EMW. The ambiguity of the allegory used in unknowing reveals that the codified knowledge the partners have of each other, with regards to how they think they are viewed by the other, is simply false, and the EMWs that both sides are sure of need either a world-repair or a world-replacement. The second-person narrative form is wholly unsuited for successful unknowing, as an unknowing has to occur within the first-person – the natural origo – rather than in the second-person. "blank card" demands a similar look inwards. The card gives no information as to the identity of the sender, and that information is not important. Rather, the mystery of the sender is a narrative device that challenges both the characters and its readers to confront their habitual thinking. For the characters these are habits of relying on accepted assertions, while for the reader these are habits of reading. Unknowing demands that both characters and the reader turn to the limits of their EMWs. The hope, though not the guaranteed result, is that when a pre-existing ambiguity is revealed this revelation will trigger an unknowing. In the process, the revelation of the ambiguity also shows that the intimacy of the domestic space is more tenuous than what is assumed.

In both stories ambiguity has a dual nature. It is both a narrative and a communicative tool. It is both already present in the couples' relationship, if obscured, and it is something that can be revealed through the introduction of a new ambiguity.

Most importantly, however, ambiguity is a double-edged communicative tool. Though it is at the heart of miscommunication and the primary reason as to why the narrative universes in these stories are hostile in nature, ambiguity also presents the opportunity for reconciliation and a positive change in knowledge structures and EMWs. The circularity of the narratives encourages both the reader and the characters to take on the challenge of ambiguity and unknowing to become more intimate with every reading. In this chapter, the emphasis was on the unsettling power of ambiguity and unknowing and their position as black holes within the narrative universe. The next chapter, however, shows that much the same process that generates hostile narrative universes can form intimate and playful universes in turn.



CHAPTER 4

PLAYFUL NARRATIVE UNIVERSES

While the focus of the previous chapter is on hostile narrative universes, this chapter aims to analyse the creation and nature of playful universes. This chapter continues the analysis of “blank card” (OSOS) and then turns to “a story of love” (OSOS) and “believe me” (WHOS). This chapter observes a strong relationship between narrative games as a form of multilogue and the nature of playful narrative universes. In these short stories, Smith uses narrative games as a method for creating narrative universes that cross and blur the boundaries that between people, bringing them together into close(r) proximity and enhancing the intimacy of the domestic and multilogic environment.

The previous chapter has already shown that intimacy, ambiguity, and unknowing are far from one-dimensional concepts. Ambiguity, especially, can cause miscommunication and generate hostile narrative universes, but that does not mean that it is an obstacle to successful unknowing. Neither does unknowing have to be divisive or destructive to intimacy. Instead, both can be a component of playfulness, which enhances intimacy. Ranke acknowledges the close relationship between narrative and play in his metaphor of *homo narrans*, which he constructs on the basis of Johan Huizinga’s argument that “all the great primal activities of human society are interwoven with play” (Ranke 2).³³ Playfulness is a part of language itself, and subsequently it is a part of myth and narrative.

The spirit which creates language springs playfully again and again beyond the concrete world to the world of thought. Behind every single abstract expression stands a metaphor, and in each metaphor a play-on-words lies embedded. Thus, in devising terms which describe its own existence, humanity continually creates for itself a second, invented world alongside the world of nature. Or consider myth, which is also a symbolic representation of existence, though on a slightly more abstract level than individual words are ... In each of the

³³ Huizinga’s own metaphor is *homo ludens*: Man the Player.

ever-changing fantasies in which myth clothes the everyday world, an inventive spirit plays on the border between humor and high-seriousness. (2)

This claim echoes the many observations made on Smith's oeuvre, as well as the world-generation phenomenon at the center of TWT. It follows that play and playfulness have their own role in Smith's narratives of multilogues. It must be acknowledged early on that though tone and the intentions of the couples have a strong impact on the behaviour of the stories' narrative universes, it would be erroneous to claim that these alone define the characteristics of a playful universe. The defining feature is the playfulness that Ranke outlines, one that is inventive, generative, and transformative. It follows that a playful narrative universe is born from a kind of dialogue that carries these qualities, and that dialogue is a narrative game.

This chapter is split into four sections. In the first section, the discussion picks up where the previous chapter left off, completing the analysis of the second and third acts of "blank card." This section analyses how the couple engage in a boundary-crossing narrative game that re-establishes the intimacy of the domestic environment. The chapter then turns to "a story of love" and "believe me", analysing them simultaneously, based on their shared characteristics. The second section establishes a strong bond between narrative space and the cosmology of narrative universes, analysing the impact of the couples-in-bed trope in detail. The third section introduces the idea of citational enthusiasm and the impact citation has on the nature of narrative universes. The final section turns to the broad, ethical implications of citation, how it impacts the narrative universes, and what it says about Smith's own values.

It is perhaps curious that "blank card" features across two chapters, but that, arguably, speaks more for Smith's interest in how people are able to reconcile. Smith's circular endings often realign the tonal trajectory of her short stories, and throw the traditional sense of the completion of a narrative into disarray. Other times, as is seen in the two additional short stories in this chapter, circularity creates a sense of the continuity of human relationships – which deepen with each re-reading. What is unusual in "blank card" is the role of technology and how it impacts the said relationship. This is an admittedly uncommon concern in Smith's short fiction, but her short story collections, read chronologically, capture a change in technology as time passes. Starting from *FLOS* and all the way to *PLOS*, the collections feature the changes in transportation and communication technologies. Short stories like "Scary"

(*FLOS*), “being quick” (*WHOS*), “the true short story” (*FPOS*), “fidelio and bess” and “last” (*PLOS*) are all impacted by the presence of technology. The discussion on “blank card” offers one suggestion as to what that impact may be.

“a story of love” (*OSOS*) and “believe me” (*WHOS*) feature an aesthetic and thematic interest that is ceaseless in Smith’s fiction: the use and effect of voice. In the second section, the focus is on the interaction between voice and narrative space – specifically, the “material backflow” of voice and how that constitutes narrative space. This connection between material space and voice is important for the majority of Smith’s fiction, but perhaps more so for her short stories where exceedingly few physical descriptors are to be found. Relatedly, another matter of importance is the limited space itself. Though there are relatively few short stories in Smith’s oeuvre that focus on the couples conversing in bed, there are quite a few that feature a shared, but small and private spatial frame. “A story of folding and unfolding” (*FLOS*), for example, zooms in on an old couple’s bedroom, right after the death of the wife. “no exit” (*FPOS*) creates a private space tucked away within a public building where couples can enjoy a moment of physical intimacy. Interestingly, “fidelio and bess” features an illicit affair taking place within the privacy of a car, while traversing the exceedingly public roads. In all of these stories Smith plays with the relationship between voice and materiality from within an incredibly paired down narrative space.

This brings the matter to the couples-in-bed trope which Smith uses with some frequency and variation. What is of interest here is not how often this trope appears, but how it alludes to John Donne’s “The Sun Rising”. Specifically, what is important is the very fact that the trope is an allusion. Smith enjoys citation – allusions, direct references, even reinterpretations – and she cites an immense collection and variety of art throughout her oeuvre. Every citation brings something different to her work, thematically speaking, but each citation also displays Smith’s belief that art, in all its forms, can connect people. In fact, it is this connection that Smith tries to capture again and again. For example, her ghost stories, such as “hanging girl” (*OSOS*), “scottish love songs” (*WHOS*), “writ” (*FPOS*), and “the good voice” (*PLOS*) cite history – personal or global – for a connection with people past. “and so on” (*PLOS*) is a series of citations, carrying the narrative from one person to another in a never-ending story-chain. *PLOS*, in fact, is explicitly concerned with human connection and spaces of connection (hence, *public* library). The paratext features excerpts from Smith’s

conversations with various people on how the public library system was crucial for the connections people were able to build and observe. In general, Smith views people as beings who have an intrinsic need to engage with all forms of narrative and to carry conversations through and about narratives. People, according to Smith, are able to connect through the narratives they create and transmit.

This does lead to the matter of the circulation of ethical and political interests, however. Smith is consistently, but more intensely as time passes, concerned with the morality of people. She is critical of the impact media has on people's sensitivity towards and comprehension of violence in "to the cinema" (*FLOS*) and "the hanging girl", for example. In "gothic" (*WHOS*) and "no exit", she displays an interest in the ethical duties one has towards themselves and others – of which Emily Horton's article provides a compelling analysis. The matter of morality and ethics is an overwhelming subject, however, and exceeds the limitations of this work. Hence, the last section provides only a question and a suggestion on how the matter might be approached.

4.1. Wormholes and Sensual Narrative Universes

In "blank card" the narrator throwing the flowers away in the second act signals a turn in the story as well as a shift the couple's relationship. This can largely be attributed to a shift from an accusatory and defensive tone in communication to an exploratory one. Once the hostility is resolved, however unsatisfactorily, the mystery of the sender and their intentions becomes a matter of curiosity and interest, sparking the couple's imagination. Instead of pushing the narrator to put a name to an indeterminate and ambiguous "someone" or "anybody", the partner attempts to identify who the sender might be, as though it is a guessing game. "Do you think, you were saying, they might be someone at your work? Could they be a client, or a company? like a bribe? Do you think they're maybe from your mother, or your sister, and the card maybe didn't get written on by mistake?" (*OSOS* n.p.). The partner imagines several possible scenarios, some more likely than others, and each guess at the sender's identity and his or her intentions creates an alternative narrative world. Unlike the hostile back-and-forth earlier, however, these worlds are not generated by a bifurcated environment. The narrator and her partner do not stand on opposing lines of presuppositional ambiguity where one side must be responsible for the resolution of the mystery and the other cannot possibly contribute to the resolution. Instead, the

alternative worlds are grounded in questions that invite the narrator to collaborate with the partner in their creation – and their repair or replacement, as the case may be. In other words, the inherent question mark in these worlds provide room for another mind to contribute to their being. In contrast to the first act, the narrator does not try to resolve the question – does not try to swap the question mark for another, finalizing punctuation. Instead, she simply responds with a “Don’t know” (OSOS n.p.), deciding “it [is] more romantic and exciting if [she does not] know whom [the flowers] were from” (OSOS n.p.). Ambiguity is no longer threatening for the intimacy of the domestic environment. Rather, it is a tool that excites and enables the couple’s imagination, triggering a game of narratives. The creation of alternative worlds that are born from imagining the sender’s identity is a game that the couple come up with spontaneously. It is clearly enjoyable, but the couple do not linger on it for long. Instead, with the ice broken, they restart a different game the next day.

Following the rekindling of their sexual intimacy, the gestures of affection between the couple are also revitalized in and through narrative play. The day after the flowers arrive and are thrown away (act three), the narrator notices that the partner has left her a note. The narrator thinks that it is the most passionate note either has left the other for a long time, “possibly as long as several years, several summers; I couldn’t remember when the last time was that we’d prowled around our house, alert and waiting, leaving each other notes like this one” (OSOS n.p.). Similar to the Ovidian metamorphoses the intruder undergoes, then, the couple have a game where they transform into animal-like beings, hunting for such notes or being hunted by them. The notes, like the blank card, are the transformed bodies of the narrator or the partner. The metamorphosis creates an alternative play-world, one which sets the tone (sexual) and goal for the rest of the narrative game, which is to make each other transgress boundaries in some titillating way. The note is the partner’s opening move in the game.

Imagine me round you, at you all day, ... gently pushing and grazing at you like a cat wiping the scent from its soft black mouth on to the budded tips of the branches of a tree whose roots are covered with its own fallen blossom, surrounded in a ring of sheer petalled whiteness. (OSOS n.p., italics in original)

Building up on the play-world where the couple metamorphose into hunters looking for notes, which are like animal tracks, the note invites the narrator – and , once again, the reader – to partake in the creation of another alternative world. This time the partner directs the narrative world such that the couple metamorphose into an amorous cat and

a tree. The partner in “blank card” exerts control over the narrative in a manner similar to that which was analysed in “the second person”, with the exception that the relationship between the first- and second-person is much more of a partnership than a power struggle. The narrative game is effectively a re-enactment of the sexual intimacy the couple share. The play-world, then, becomes a reflection of the now intimate domestic environment.

The narrator plans out her own move, imagining things to say to her partner that would make him or her transgress the physical boundary between them in a world-switch.

I began thinking up similar urgent and moving things I could say to you if I phoned you at work; things so private that when I said them low, down the receiver into your ear, the space between you and whatever you were working on, and you and the other voices I could always hear around you, all those other people who were always in the room with you, would zone and thicken away into a perfect glassy distance. (OSOS n.p.)

The disintegration of the geographical boundary between the couple, albeit cognitive rather than physical in “blank card”, is similar to what Kostkowska observes for Amy and Ash in *Like*.

The largest ‘bridge’ between the book’s two sections is the physical environment within it; significantly, the geographical place as well as smaller elements of the physical world permeate and cross over from one main section to the other, in defiance of the overt separation between Ash and Amy’s chapters ... Physical and geographical location simultaneously symbolizes their journey towards each other and the rift between them when they keep missing each other. We can rely on Smith to configure the outside space to reflect their emotional relationship. (132)

In “blank card” the locus of intimacy is the domestic space, and hence the domestic environment is somewhat limited to an enclosed geography. The larger geography of the outside, public world is not conducive to sustained intimacy – much less sexual intimacy. However, by conducting the narrative game over the phone the geographical boundary between the couple is diminished, the phone line forms a kind of shared space, acting much like an extended space, where the two can continue their game. To reach this extended space, either the narrator or the partner, or both, have to transgress a physio-cognitive boundary, therefore undergoing a kind of world-switch. In this way, the phone-line extended space acts as another planet in the narrative universe.

The introduction of the extended space-come-planet provides a leaping board for the creation of a sensual – and sexual – narrative universe as the couple continue

their game. This universe teases the participants with the physical distance that has to be crossed to be realised; the narrator is in the intimate and private domestic environment, currently completely cut off from the public outside world. The partner, on the other hand, is in the highly public work environment. The narrator's goal is to create a planet or planets that can draw the partner into a sense of privacy. When she calls her partner, however, she becomes as the blank card and is unable to so much as say hello, much less verbalize the worlds she created earlier. Unlike with the blank card, however, the partner immediately knows the identity of the caller and seizes control of the game:

You began to whisper down the phone...into my silence you poured a sensualism so potent, so unexpected and so very much like you that it made me cough, laugh out loud, and I had to cover the receiver and hang up so you wouldn't hear me choking on my own delight. (OSOS n.p.)

The narrator is unable to bring the intimacy of the domestic environment into the public space, but as the partner's voice filters in mixed with the sounds of the office space he brings an exhibitionistic thrill to the domestic environment instead.³⁴ At the core of this narrative game is a world-switch, even a more literal world-blend, caused by the crossing of spatial and social boundaries. In effect, the extended space created by the phone line acts much like a wormhole, blurring and bypassing the boundaries between public and private environments, allowing the creation of a sensual narrative universe that exists in a shared in-between place. Narrative play and playfulness become an intrinsic part of negotiating the space that exists between the narrator and her partner.

"blank card" ends on a circular note with the narrator sending her partner flowers with a blank card, knowing that the partner will know who they are from. This reconciliatory gift, resembling the end of "the second person", shows that the couple are once again on steady ground and their intimacy has been reaffirmed. The cataclysmic black hole has been integrated into their narrative universe as a force that moves the two to play. Such reconciliation is common in Smith's short stories, but there are many stories that do not, as it were, require it.

³⁴ This exhibitionism is the more welcome counterpart to the imagined voyeur.

4.2. The Cosmology of the Bedroom and Half-Story Multilogues

In “a story of love” (*OSOS*) and “believe me” (*WHOS*) narrative play does not require any trigger other than a playful mood on the characters’ part. In both of these stories, each story the characters tell, adjust, or dismiss in disbelief creates a narrative planet in their respective narrative universe. The mechanics of the creation of a universe are therefore much the same as in “the second person” (*FPOS*) and “believe me” (*WHOS*). However, it would be an oversimplification to claim that the only difference these universes have to the ones observed in “the second person” and “blank card” is the positive intention behind the creation of said universes. Instead, there are two interrelated differences that set these stories apart. The first is their cosmology, and second is the central role unknowing and enthusiasm have in the behaviour of these universes.

“a story of love” takes place in the couple’s bedroom, and more specifically in their bed. One night in November the narrator asks her partner to tell her a love story. The partner obliges, but his storytelling skills prove to be lacking and the narrator herself is a little over-eager with her questions about the (non-) developing plot. There are multiple false-starts, some frustration, and an unsatisfying conclusion to the partner’s story, which ultimately leads to a need for more, and hopefully better stories. For full a year the couple come up with love stories they share with each other, none of them particularly well-crafted or even complete. Both of them try to keep the other hooked to the stories, until “a story of love” ends with another seemingly incomplete story the narrator tells her partner, and the two fall asleep.

In “believe me” there is a similar dialogue between the couple, again in bed together, this time centered around a single made-up story. The narrator claims to be having a long-standing affair with someone called Eric, and that she in fact has a whole second life with him going on at the same time as her equally long-standing relationship with her partner. In a mixture of amusement and bemusement the partner rejects this at first, but warms up to the story, asking questions and encouraging the narrator to build a more and more detailed storyworld. Eventually the partner breaks the immersion because he finds the story far too “unradical” (*WHOS* 122). In good humour, he points out how even in this made-up world the narrator chose to give herself a completely normal life. When the narrator is undeterred, however, he decides

to insert himself into the world, reconfiguring its plot.³⁵ The partner re-directs the story to the real world³⁶ and his love for the narrator and, soon after, the story is abandoned in favour of making love. “believe me” has a circular ending with repeated claims, and similar to “a story of love” it turns to the circularity of seasons at the end. The narrator directs the reader’s attention to the world that can be seen out the window, where the leaves are beginning to change colours and the swallows will be “here for another month or so before they [leave] for the south before they [return] again next summer” (127).

The near-identical narrative space in these stories forms the basis of their equally identical cosmology. Both “a story of love” and “believe me” are good examples of the couples-in-bed trope that Lea has misgivings about. In both of these stories the domestic environment is physically limited to the spatial frame the bedroom provides. The narrative space is dominated by the bed – the bedroom being more an implication – and the outside world is barely visible through small glimpses to the changing natural elements, such as flowers, or shifting temperatures. Far from being oppressive or claustrophobic, however, the bed is at the center of the narrative universe, overlooking the cosmos as its point of genesis in both stories. One way to approach the effect of the limited narrative space on the narrative universe is to think of it as a textual space that is formed not through spatial existents, but through voice and dialogue. In an interview with Gillian Beer, Smith claims that in her fiction:

[P]lace produces itself. And I feel like I have lived in all of those houses I wrote about, even though they don’t exist, none of them exist. But when a voice comes with a story, that’s the imagination, it usually brings with it a place, ... It’s a matter of listening properly and seeing what the atmosphere around the voice is, because that dictates the shell, if you like, that dictates the structure from which the voice came and where it will go. So I have in my head a lot of clear places that just don’t exist, ... [but] they really are as material as the houses we live in, and every voice comes accompanied by a materialist backflow of stuff... Maybe we walk about all the time with our houses on our backs. (143)

One can say that the bed is the heart of not only the house, as a spatial existent, but the domestic environment that the characters carry with them; it forms the core of the

³⁵ Insofar as there is a plot.

³⁶ The system of reality for “believe me”, not the reader’s world. The matrix-world for “believe me” could be either this system of reality or the narrator’s imaginary world with her second life, as both are equally active in the story.

narrative space and the spatial form of the text. The bed is a spatial existent in the narrative space, but it is also formed by the voices of the couple(s) occupying it. From this genesis point, the dialogue between the couple creates the rest of the narrative space through its material backflow without need for description. At the same time, the bedroom acts as a physical container for the narrative universe the narrative game generates. That is to say, it acts as a binding narrative tool for the narrative planets. Much like an extended space, the bedroom is a shared place between storyteller and audience that has the quality of bringing two separate minds together on a shared diegetic plane – much like how, according to DelConte, the second-person narrative voice does (210). In keeping with the universe metaphor, the bedroom can be seen as an attractive force that holds the universe “in shape”, keeping the planets in orbit of one another. Simultaneously, by holding the speakers, who are narrative powerhouses, in close proximity together, the bedroom also acts like nebula in which narrative planets are formed.

It should be noted that in both “a story of love” and “believe me” the dialogue, in the form of a narrative game, is the story itself. Consequently, voice and dialogue, more than any other component of the environment, have the ability to dictate how the storyworld appears in the imagination of the reader. However, one must also consider how the intimacy of the bedroom, the center of the domestic environment and observed in part thanks to the material backflow, plays against the unknowing that occurs in these two stories as part of the narrative game. In “a story of love” the narrator is dissatisfied with her partner’s initial attempt at telling a love story, and says she wants “a story that is a story ... [a] proper story” (OSOS n.p.). As the partner’s first love story – after the adjustment to the protagonist’s gender – of a girl wishing she had a dog ends with the girl still wishing she had a dog with little else in between, the reader might be compelled to feel the same. The partner in “believe me” experiences a similar frustration when the narrator constructs a second secret life for herself, but that life is entirely normal.

I’m disappointed in you, you said sitting up. You’re so unradical.

...

You could have been anyone, you said, anyone in the world. You could have been a, a superheroine. You could have worked for the MI5, or the government. What? Me, tell lies? I said.

You could have been a cat burglar, or someone who ran away and joined a circus and trained elephants to put their feet on beach balls, or, I don’t know, a

friend and confidante of the rich and famous who helped Kim Basinger out of jail and into drug rehabilitation –

...

But no. A husband. Three children. A mother-in-law, for God's sake. (*WHOS* 122-123)

Here, as with the cataclysmic intruder, the narrator of “a story of love” and the partner in “believe me” draw attention to the reader's reading habits. Specifically, what he expects to constitute a story is put into question. With “a story of love”, the expectation is that a story must be complete.³⁷ In “believe me”, the partner expects a story to be extraordinary compared to one's own life. These expectations show a familiarity – an intimacy, in other words - with narrative conventions, which is then subverted. Intimacy with the story that is a story, whatever the standard for that is, is met with narratives that ask the discourse participants to undergo an unknowing of that same intimacy. Unknowing asks the reader-audience to rethink and undo their expectations of what a story is so that they can participate in the playful multilogue.

Unknowing and ambiguity are key parts of the narrative game because they pose a rousing challenge that draws the reader-audience into the playful multilogue. Despite her dissatisfaction with the lack of a proper story, the narrator of “a story of love” says “[t]he half-stories [haunt her]. [She wants] more of them” (*OSOS* n.p.). Indeed, there appears to be something captivating about the stories that demand an unknowing, because the narrative game that started in November is still on-going when the narrator makes this claim in March. The partner, too, is drawn in by the challenge. Perhaps offended at the insinuation that his stories are unsatisfying, he prompts the narrator to contribute to the narrative game; “You can tell the next story. The whole story. A proper story. Come on. I'm waiting” (*OSOS* n.p.). The narrator obliges, switching roles with her partner. When the narrator completes (?) her own story, her partner demands more.

But that can't be the end ... Were they really brother and sister? Why wouldn't he help her? Why couldn't she tell him? How can two people love each other so much but not know it? How can two people love and hate each other so much at the same time? How can two people have so much experience in common, and then nothing? What happened when they got older? Did they see each other? Did it ever stop being like that? (*OSOS* n.p.)

³⁷ What completion means, however, is unclear.

This is similar to the reaction the narrator had to her partner's story about the girl who wants a dog. They are both filled with questions, and the only person who has the answers is their fellow discourse participant – each other. The role-reversal allows the couple to experience two different sides to the ambiguity that the half-stories have. On the one hand, the audience is left wanting to know and to hear more of the story and characters. On the other hand, the storyteller experiences the thrill of a captive audience. As the narrator tells her first story “[she realises] how exciting it could be to know more about a story than [her partner] knew. [She] hadn't really understood how exhilarating it could be to hold [his or her] attention like that” (OSOS n.p.). There is some tension between these two positions, but it is constructive rather than disruptive.

The ambiguity of the half-stories, affecting both the storyteller and the audience, can be recontextualized in terms of unknowing. Both sides have to negotiate what they know and expect of proper stories, what they do not know of the story the story-teller is making up, and – conversely – the teller has to strategically withhold information, which they expect the audience to not have. All discourse participants of the multilogue thus have to meet in an extended space where their preconceived understandings of what a story is must be left behind. The multilogue can only proceed from there. The rule, the partner in “a story of love” says, is that the audience must not disregard or abandon the story. “Listen, you said. Either I tell you a story or I don't. Make up your mind. And you have to promise here and now *to take that story on its own terms*” (OSOS n.p., italics mine). In other words, the audience has to be willing to undergo the unknowing prompted by ambiguity, unsettling EMWs and knowledge structures in order to engage with the story at all, let alone enjoy it. The questions they ask are the sign of an ongoing unknowing where discourse participants are engaged with the challenging, playful, multilogue that the half-stories prompt. Unknowing thus asks the discourse participants to get comfortable with ambiguity, but ambiguity itself constantly unsettles them and draws them further into the game, making sure that the multilogue continues. As such, in the narrative universe of “a story of love”, ambiguity is a narrative and communicative tool that creates opportunity for dialogue, and hence universe creation.

Dialogue born from this kind of unknowing can, and does, reaffirm the intimacy of the domestic environment. This can be observed in the circularity of both “a story of love” and “believe me”. To reiterate Kostkowska, the circularity of re-

reading, or in this came coming (almost) full circle in every reading is one way in which the characters can become more intimate. By writing a circular dialogue and tying the narrative game to the circularity of seasons, Smith makes the couples in these stories go through a similar, continuous, attempt at getting closer to each other through this dialogue-via-unknowing. The narrator of “believe me” conceptualizes this through a double book and music metaphor that exemplifies this circularity (and creates a blended world in the narrative universe):

I can read you like a book and because the thing about a beloved book, if it’s a good one, is that it shifts like music; you think you know it, you’ve read it so many times, of course you know it, of course the pleasure of it is in how well you know it, but then you hear, in the background the thing you’ve never heard in it before, and with the turn of a page you see a combination of words you’ve never seen before, you thought you knew this book but it also dazzles you with the different book it is, yet again, and not just that but the different person you have become, the different person you are now, reading it again, both together, which takes some talent with rhythm, but luckily we are quite talented at reading each other. (*WHOS* 127)

The metaphor shows that the intimacy of knowing someone, and of loving them for all the things one knows about this someone, is occasionally teased by an unknowing. That which is not known is revealed, and that which is known becomes new and different as time passes. Intimacy, both cognitive and emotional, is reaffirmed when the partners rise to the challenge of the unknowing to re-read each other. This is not something done only once before negotiation settles ambiguity back into intimacy, but rather a circular process that reinforces intimacy at each cycle.

4.3. The Multilogic Multiverse

The discussion thus far has underscored the importance of unknowing and how it impacts the creation of a multilogic narrative universe. A narrative game, the short stories show, is a form of multilogue, however this kind of multilogue is not limited to the confines of the bedroom either as a spatial existent or as a form of extended space. an exchange of words between a couple in their shared space. It is certainly important, but unsatisfactory by itself for a discussion on how playful narrative universes. It is therefore important to consider how a different kind of multilogue, a more expansive one, impacts the cosmology and nature of these stories’ universes. To this effect, it is important to consider how allusions draw other texts into the multilogue and define

the, as it were, extended cosmology and enthusiastic nature of the short stories' universes.

Smith's couples-in-bed trope is an allusion to John Donne's "The Sun Rising". In this poem the speaker chides the sun for being a "busy old fool" (Donne) and looking in through the window into the lovers' bedroom, signaling, naturally, that it is time for them to wake up and leave the room. In the final verse of the poem, the speaker claims:

She's all states, and all princes, I,
Nothing else is.
[...]
Thou, sun, art half as happy as we,
In that the world's contracted thus.
Thine age asks ease, and since thy duties be
To warm the world, that's done in warming us.
Shine here to us, and thou art everywhere;
This bed thy center is, these walls, thy sphere. (ll. 22-23, 26-31)

In this verse, Donne reconfigures the geocentric model of the universe such that the lovers encompass and embody the world within themselves. They thus become the center of the universe, and the confines of the room (the spatial frame) become the sun's orbit. In "a story of love" and "believe me", the world is similarly contracted – the storyworld (as Ribó would describe it) is almost entirely limited to the bedroom, and the outside world is hardly of concern to the couples. The seasons turn and days go by, but the rest of the universe seemingly revolves around the couples and their shared bed. While this allusion is further reason to think of the couples in bed as the center of the story's narrative universe, it does more than creating a rudimentary map of the universe. The allusion places the narrative universe of these stories within a wider multiverse, bringing different universes together in a multilogue. This can be discussed in the context of the multi-faceted concept of enthusiasm.

According to Rebecca Pohl, enthusiasm is "crucial to a reading of Smith's work because [it] is one of the key coordinates of Smith's position in contemporary literature" (696). Enthusiasm is not limited to tone of voice or the positive sentiment Smith carries in and throughout her fiction, though these are a component of it. Enthusiasm, as Pohl conceptualizes it, is also citation in its many forms, "shifting from direct quotation through translation and paraphrase to allusion" (703). Citation, in turn, is the transmission and circulation of ideas and values, and it is "futurity—the sense

of the project³⁸ going on and on” (700). Citational enthusiasm³⁹ is also intricately tied to voice, which “in Smith’s work promises to establish a relationship between speaker and listener, or writer and reader, and that relationship is one of intimacy and connection” (700). Citational enthusiasm is thus a network of voices, a dialogue or a multilogue. This dialogue is a form of narrative engagement that crosses not only ontological boundaries but also spatio-temporal ones, participating in “the ‘unending conversation’ that is going on in history when we are born” (Kenneth Burke, qtd. in Fisher 6). It also follows that narrative engagement of this sort is not only the practice of crossing boundaries but also building connections across those boundaries. The question is, then, how does citational enthusiasm, as a unique form of multilogue, impact the narrative universes in “a story of love” and “believe me”? What impact does it have on the universes’ cosmology and their nature?

One way to answer this question is to think of the relationship between unknowing and citational enthusiasm. Smith’s allusion to “The Sun Rising” makes an indirect appeal to the reader and his or her knowledge structures, encouraging the reader to consider how “a story of love”, “believe me”, and any text using the same or similar trope may stand inside or outside of the boundaries of these structures. Should the reader interpret or recognize the trope as an allusion, which he or she admittedly may not, then the text is immediately placed in direct relation to a literary and narrative tradition. The allusion to “The Sun Rising” situates the text within and next to a pre-existing narrative universe, one that exists in the reader’s system of reality. As such, the stories’ universes enter a dialogue with other existing universes. In this case, thanks to how the text draws attention to these universes and their ongoing conversation, citational enthusiasm and unknowing work in tandem to create a narrative multiverse. The caveat is that for a text to form this kind of multiverse the reader has to be aware of the allusion. Any citation or reference can meet the same hurdle of the reader’s potentially unaccommodating knowledge structures. Nevertheless, in so far as the couples-in-bed trope is an allusion, the stories that make the same allusion are always a part of a real-life narrative universe where the narrative planets and universes are in conversation with each other, creating a multiverse of boundary-crossing dialogue.

³⁸ What this project is depends on what is being cited.

³⁹ This adjustment is made to the term to distinguish the specific function of enthusiasm that is relevant to the thesis.

Another answer approaches the question from an in-text angle. That is to say, by observing how the characters participate in or display citational enthusiasm when, within their own system of reality, they are not citations. Instead, citational enthusiasm manifests as the narrative game the couples play, which is especially prevalent in “a story of love”. It was explained previously that each time the partners tell or adjust a story they create a narrative planet. It is important to add now that this playful universe displays some of the key characteristics of citational enthusiasm. One such characteristic is how each story transmits and circulates the value love has. This is seen in the nature of the stories themselves. At the start of the story the narrator asks her partner to tell her a story, then specifies that she wants to hear a love story. The partner obliges:

“Okay, you said. There was once a boy who really wanted to own a dog.
A boy and a dog, I said. Does it have to be a boy? It’s always stories of boys
and dogs. Can’t it be a girl?
Yes, you said, it can be a girl; true love stories are always interchangeable.”
(OSOS n.p.)

As the narrator points out, plenty of stories follow the boy-and-dog formula, sharing much of the same world-building elements. These elements are “the background against which the foreground events of the text will take place. They include an orientation in time and place, and they create characters and other objects that furnish the text- world available for reference” (Stockwell 160). When the partner begins with the same formula, he produces a citation of many existing stories that are similar. When he adjusts the story he produces a narrative planet that deviates from the formula, but nevertheless cites a body of “true love stories” for which the world-building elements are interchangeable. It can be said that interchangeability is born from the ambiguity of details while the core of the matter – of the narrative – stays the same. This ambiguity invites an unknowing, allowing discourse participants old and new to take part in the creation and citation of narratives without getting caught up in a net of world-building elements.

This idea of interchangeability shows itself in various stories in Smith’s oeuvre, such as “the universal story” (*WHOS*) where the narrator frequently and near-constantly adjusts her story, changing wording, characters, the (implied) setting, and focalizers. The implication is that no matter how many components change, stories retain a certain universality, as evidenced by the title of the story. In “a story of love”,

the claim that true love stories are always interchangeable speaks of the same universal quality, in this case because love, for Smith, is universal.⁴⁰ This places love as the binding, attractive force that holds the narrative universe (or multiverse) together, forming the core of the multilogue they contribute to. Each time a love story is told it immediately cites other love stories within this universe, therefore circulating or, in David Herd's terms, transmitting their shared idea or value. According to Herd, enthusiasts are people "who [keep] ideas and values moving... [V]arious writers [have taken] responsibility for that transmission, whether within their writing or in their cultural activism'" (qtd. in Pohl 695 696). The love story, in its citational enthusiasm, then, transmits the value its author has placed on love. Its universality and its grip on the cosmology of various narrative universes is transmitted from Donne to Smith, and many others in between. As such, the narrative universes in both "a story of love" and "believe me", show how multilogue between texts, in the form of allusions and similar citations, display a continuity of ideas and values regarding love.

This relationship between unknowing, citational enthusiasm, and ambiguity can be observed in what the narrator of "a story of love" calls half-stories. These half-stories encourage the audience, whether that is the actual reader or a character, to undergo an unknowing of what he or she expects of a story, and simultaneously encourage the audience to take an active role in the creation of the narrative universe. In "believe me", however, this encouragement takes on a more linguistic, indeed more vocal form. The story begins with the narrator's claim "I'm having an affair, I said" (*WHOS* 119). Her partner disagrees, to which the narrator responds "I am [...] Don't you believe me?" (119).⁴¹ This rhetorical question is a reiteration of the title of the story. The imperative to believe the narrator asks the audience to suspend their disbelief in the face of what is bound to be an unbelievable story — that is to say, a story that perhaps does not qualify as a proper story. This kind of imperative can be found across Smith's oeuvre in many places. Pohl makes the observation that:

["good voice" (*PLOS*)] makes use of similar rhetorical strategies to the ones that characterize Smith's preface to *The Book Lover* [sic.]. Both narrate

⁴⁰ The universality of love, it should be noted, is a concept that Smith firmly stands behind. It is a near-constant thematic interest – and one of the hardest to pin down in scholarship in any comprehensive way.

⁴¹ This is, incidentally, another example of a hostile narrative universe, in the sense that the negations create new narrative planets that clash with the planets that the narrator creates. The emotional hostility that was observed in the discussion in the first section is absent.

conversations in which the first-person narrator is a speaker and both include the imperative to "Listen" in reported speech as well as repeatedly emphasizing the spokenness of certain passages: "I say" ("Good Voice" 24). (700)

Yet another example is "may", in which the narrator begins her story with the claim "I tell you. I fell in love with a tree" (*WHOS* 45). Not only do these imperatives reach into the extended space of the text and forcefully pull the reader in, they demand that the reader suspend their disbelief and, as the partner in "a story of love" says, take the story on its own terms. This is a linguistic variation on the red herring that makes the reader turn to his or her own reading habits. (Notice, also, the vocality of these imperatives. To listen, to tell, or to say are acts that are rooted in spoken communication. In "believe me", the imperative in the title of the story is woven into the spoken dialogue structure – it can even be read as the first line of the story.) Whatever the expectations those habits generate, the imperative calls for their suspension, or even abandonment.

Initially, this is a task that the partner in "believe me" does not take on, and even when he does it is done with some reluctance. However, he humours the narrator and starts questioning the unbelievable story she is telling. One line of questioning regards how the narrator in her imaginary second life could carry three pregnancies without her partner ever finding out. The narrator claims she was very discreet, to which her partner responds: "You can't be discreet with pregnancy, you said. How did you keep three pregnancies hidden?" (*WHOS* 121). The narrator responds that's among other things she used her travels for work as a cover to hide the pregnancies and the births. One such fake work trip, the narrator claims, was a trip to Hawaii. Still encouraging the progress of this unbelievable story, the partner does not linger on the probability of such an event and instead asks: "[B]ut what about that T-shirt you brought me back that says 'I love Honolulu'?" (*WHOS* 122). A vast majority of the story is composed of this ongoing dialogue where the narrator elaborates on the improbabilities of this imagined second life while her partner humours and encourages her with probing questions. Although the partner is unimpressed by the normalcy of the narrator's imagined second life, he nonetheless participates in the creation of this alternative world by (partially) suspending his disbelief. In doing so he becomes a

participant in the playful dialogue – that is, the narrative game – that creates this alternative world and therefore the narrative universe of the story.⁴²

The last characteristic to consider is how citational enthusiasm promotes intimacy – and, following that, there is also the matter of how intimacy in this context impacts the narrative universes in “a story of love” and “believe me”. Citation promotes intimacy in both stories when the voices that generate these narrative universes are brought into close(r) proximity. Through citation – and consequently multilogue – they form an intimate connection. In this kind of intimacy the emphasis is on voice, both in the sense that it is a part of dialogue (and multilogue) and in the sense that it is a form of breath. Pohl writes that “[b]reath and communicability are both central to the history of the term enthusiasm. It derives from the Greek *enthusiasmos*, which can be translated as ‘inspiration’ (literally ‘to breathe in’) (Clark 3)” (701, italics in original) and that enthusiasm can be interpreted as “breathlessness tied to an effect of immediacy—a sense of proximity to the speaker” (701). In “a story of love”, this intimacy of voices in close proximity can be seen when the narrator “curls [herself] around [her partner’s] voice” (OSOS n.p.) as he tells the half-stories. The narrator thus curls herself around a multitude of voices that her partner transmits through these stories.

In “believe me”, the breathlessness of intimacy is more literal. When the couple make love the first time in the story it pauses the narrative game, and the narrator only continues once she is “breathing evenly again” (WHOS 122). At the end of the story, after the partner adjusts the narrator’s story to include himself and his love for her, the partner catches the narrator “by surprise and [stops her] in mid-sentence, [she] breathes in” (127), and the physical intimacy follows on the heels of this breathless enthusiasm. That said, this intimacy is still citational. The narrative planet that the couple construct is not that different than their own life, and it is similar to the lives of many other ordinary people. The unradical love story cites the very real, equally unradical love stories of people the world over, across time and space. Minor differences notwithstanding, the core of the story remains the same. Ordinary people, therefore, are brought into closer proximity. Much like the bedroom itself, citation brings voices together in a narrative nebula where they may generate yet more narratives. Thus, just as voice is a part of the cosmology and formation of the short stories’ narrative

⁴² It is an admittedly small universe, but size is not the defining characteristic of a narrative universe.

universes, it is also a defining feature of its nature. Voices, and their interactions, make the universes intimate.

“believe me” turns its gaze back to the short story’s system of reality at the end. The partner, tired of how unradical the narrator’s story is, takes initiative to rewrite the story, or in any case give it a new trajectory. Coming nearly full circle, the partner says “I’ve got something to tell you ... I’m having an affair ... With a man called Eric⁴³, ... I’m pretty sure from your description that it’s the same Eric” (125). Similar to the partner at the beginning of the story the narrator protests, incredulous that her partner “is taking over [her] other life” (125). Undeterred, the partner spins his own version of the story where he or she is in love with Eric’s wife – who is the narrator herself. “She’s so beautiful, you said. She’s so lovely. To be honest, I’m hopelessly in love with his wife. I always stay close to [Eric] so I can stay close to her. She’s a woman full of potential. I’m sure she’s a person capable of so many other things” (126). The partner not so much seizes control of the narrative, however, as much as he creates a new narrative planet that is the emotional counterpart to reality within the narrative universe. This is similar to the voyeur’s and then the narrator’s gaze in “blank card”, where the gaze encourages the viewer to see the environment anew and to be open to changing how one sees this environment. In this case, however, the partner turning the narrative gaze back to the couple does not cause discomfort. Rather, the re-narration of their loving relationship enhances their intimacy, creating an internal circulation and echo of their love within the domestic environment.

Citational enthusiasm, then, creates bridge-like extended spaces where there is a constant foot-traffic of authors, thinkers, artists, etc., as well as ordinary people and their audience, all of which are engaged in a multilogue where they transmit ideas and values. In this way, anyone who participates in the multilogue of citational enthusiasm does so by way of an unknowing, entering the extended space of any similar text or narrative universe that transmits such values. In “a story of love” and “believe me”, the narrative game the couples play brings them into one such extended space while they simultaneously create their own narrative universes. Citational enthusiasm, which is the foundation of their narrative game, connects the narrative universe of these short stories to a larger multiverse of love stories. In effect, the new universe enters a multilogue with other similar universes in their extended space – in the extended

⁴³ The narrator’s imaginary husband from her made-up second life.

universe, as it were. In doing so, citational enthusiasm creates and reinforces the intimacy of not only the domestic environment, but of the larger multilogic environment in which minds from across space and time become entangled.

4.4. Binary Star Systems and Deontic Modal Worlds

It is important to acknowledge that bringing the voices of the past closer to the (voices of the) present through citation is not done indiscriminately. While citation is a form of dialogue and that, for Smith, is a positive and inherently democratic use of voice, citation is also a political project. Pohl makes a critical observation on citational enthusiasm:

Enthusiasm is one way in which that which is available (for discussion, for encountering, and for sale) can be altered by choosing what to cite and which preface to write, thus putting new objects into circulation. Enthusiasm is also a way in which networks can be forged, and these can be mobilized for political purposes: ... Enthusiasm is a double-edged sword: what can seem generous and enabling can also seem uncritical and proselytizing. Moreover, enthusiasm sits uneasily between passionate abandon and rational position-taking. Smith's stories about reading and writing, her work with literary institutions, and the particular way her texts and persona have been framed help to elucidate the ambivalent workings of enthusiasm in the field of contemporary literature. (710)

This ambivalence is especially prevalent in Smith's approach to recent history. Scholars who have taken an interest in Smith's engagement with politics and societal issues, of whom there are many, have noticed that Smith is heavily critical towards the political and ethical shortcomings of her own times – late twentieth and (currently) early twenty-first century. She is also keenly aware that the twentieth century was marked with the horrors and atrocities of two World Wars that necessitate the evaluation of what values, if any, from the century past should be transmitted and be put or kept in circulation. Sacido-Romero, for example, writes that “the hanging girl” (*OSOS*):

establishes a historical connection between the destructive advance of the Nazi army in the eastern front ... and the progress of late capitalism, in which a mortifying and unstoppable process of production ... transforms everything, even the most painful experiences, into Baudrillardian simulacra ready for consumers. (95)

One might argue that in citing the destructive mindset of the Second World War, Smith is inadvertently transmitting the ethics – or lack thereof – that generated them forward.

However, such an argument would confuse actions born from lack of ethical considerations (put broadly and mildly) with the sensation of horror they produce. One must question if what the citation is trying to transmit (and therefore mobilize people around) is ethical poverty, or if such poverty has survived the “source” that is cited and what Smith is trying to transmit is the sensation of horror that should follow it. It has been noted by many scholars and critics that Smith has a propensity for citation. Her multifarious body of work that cites other works of art and literature, as well as her significant collection of ghost stories, may thus generate similar arguments on what ideas and values are being transmitted or put (back) into circulation.

The question, of course, is what is the impact of transmission and circulation of values on narrative universes? The simple answer is that the citation of values creates deontic modal worlds. In TWT, “the deontic modal system is that which we use to express our notions of duty through language. These notions range from permission, through to obligation and, most strongly, to requirement” (Gavins 98-99). Stockwell says that deontic modals also express moral and ethical imperatives (164). If citations necessitate the transmission of ethical values and philosophies, a narrative game that cites other narratives (and narrative universes) necessarily enters a multilogue with these deontic modal worlds as well. As such, the citation of any narrative universe or narrative planet means that there is simultaneously a conversation with a deontic modal world as well. The relationship between text-worlds or EMWs and deontic modal worlds can be thought of as binary star systems. The statement “I believe this is right” can be read simultaneously through the lens of epistemic and deontic modality. As Stockwell says, deontic modalities “are also ontological alterations of worlds. What ‘ought’ to be is not what is” (164), but the two impact each other, especially when realityfiction has the capacity to impact the actual world as much as in-text systems of reality. The blurred line between modalities in cases like this means that epistemic and deontic modal worlds are impacted by each other’s gravitational force, the two circling each other.

The narrative universes seen in “a story of love” and “believe me” are universes that have such binary star systems and are also in dialogue with other narrative universes that have similar systems. In both stories, citation and dialogue indicate a binary star system where narrative planets share an orbit with a deontic modal world. This begs the question of what the nature of this deontic planet is. What is the value

or idea that is being kept in circulation? In these stories, as well as any story that similarly uses the couples-in-bed trope, one idea that is transmitted is the importance and enduring quality of love. Or, more simply, love itself. This is one of the most consistent values Smith returns to throughout her fiction, and it is no surprise that it is something that she keeps in circulation through citation and dialogue. Other things that Smith values may gain more value through citation in these stories, such as dialogue and playfulness, but love, above all else, is held in high-esteem.

4.5. Conclusion

In “blank card”, “a story of love”, and “believe me”, Smith creates playful narrative universes that reinforce intimacy by bringing together ambiguity and citational enthusiasm in a narrative game. These universes are simultaneously unique constructs that form within a shared, intimate environment as well as a part of a larger narrative universe – indeed, a narrative multiverse. What these short stories show is that narrative games are multilogues that endeavor to reinforce intimacy. These multilogues create collaborative narrative universes, indeed multiverses, that invite discourse participants to join in their creation. Furthermore, this invitation extends to the circulation of values, especially love, across time, space, and the boundary between fiction and reality.

A crucial aspect of this narrative game is the role ambiguity and unknowing play in communication. In “blank card,” for example, ambiguity triggers a shift in the dynamics between the couple, acting as a reinvigorating force for the couple’s intimacy and their tradition of constructing intimate narrative universes. Similarly, in “a story of love” and “believe me,” ambiguity challenges the reader-audience to suspend their expectations of what a proper story is and undergo an unknowing of their reading habits. Ambiguity thus creates a space for all discourse participants to actively take part in the multilogue and encourages them to cross the boundaries of preconceived notions of narrative. Unknowing itself is by and large a requirement for the reader-audience’s participation in the narrative game. The suspension — if not a complete re-evaluation — of reading and storytelling conventions is necessary for the creation of the narrative universe – indeed the multiverse. It is also necessary for the reinforcement of the intimacy of the shared environment, whether that is the domestic environment, the extended space, or the extended narrative universe. In this way,

ambiguity and unknowing are constructive forces that fuel the continuity and futurity of the narrative. These elements are essential for crafting a playful narrative universe that constantly invites more voices to join the collaborative narrative project and places them in close proximity. In doing so, the narrative multiverse continuously re-creates itself, keeping values and narratives in circulation.

Multilogue, with its ability to bridge spatio-temporal gaps and create intimate connections, is at the heart of these short stories. Citations, in particular, are indispensable for the creation of these bridges and the transition of values. This, however, necessitates the existence of an ethical dimension to these dialogic narrative universes. The universes these stories contain, as well as the multiverse they are a part of, are filled with binary star systems where a deontic modal world always follows in the wake of other narrative planets. Citation is an ethical project, and therefore necessitates discussion on what deontic modalities are being transmitted. In “a story of love” and “believe me”, however, there is no question as to what value is being transmitted. Smith joins in a dialogue that transmits and circulates the value of love not only between her characters and her oeuvre, but also through the broader literary traditions her work is a part of. Regardless of whether the social, affective, or epistemological sense of the word intimacy is the most active, she posits love as the driving force behind intimacy. Love, it seems, is the foundation of all these narrative games, and gives direction and purpose to not only these games, but any form of communication.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

At the Introduction, this thesis questioned the relationship between ambiguity and multiplicity in Alice Smith's short fiction. The discussions show that ambiguity is itself a flexible narrative and communicative tool, but it also works in tandem with other narrative techniques and devices in Smith narrative toolbox. By bringing ambiguity together with other narrative techniques in her short stories, Smith creates multilogic narrative universes that are open to the participation of many discourse participants. These participants all bring something new to the narrative universe, be it through re- or misinterpretation of narratives or through their own unique narratives. Ambiguity's contact with different narrative techniques and aesthetic interests creates a variety of effects. As such, how ambiguity impacts the creation of multilogic universes differs, at least slightly, between short stories.

In "the second person" (*FPOS*) ambiguity can be observed in three positions: as an inherent part of the allegorical world, as a part of the process of unknowing, and as an obstacle to successful unknowing when it appears as presuppositional ambiguity. In this short story, ambiguity presents itself in two ways. First, it is a part of the allegory through which the couple attempts to communicate, and second, it is a communicative hurdle due to the use of the second-person narrative voice. Ambiguity is intrinsically a part of the unknowing process, and in a narrative context it should therefore be able to aid communication. However, in contact with these two narrative techniques, ambiguity obstructs communication instead. In conjunction with the second person narrative voice, ambiguity obscures meaning and makes the discourse participants' narratives of their selves unintelligible. In doing so, this narrative technique creates EMWs that are counterfactual for discourse partners sense of self. In addition, the presupposition of assertions of truth exacerbates the obscurity of meaning in the allegory. These presuppositions also create counterfactual EMWs. In all, the combination of ambiguity, allegory, and the second-person narrative voice

creates conflicting narrative planets which clash within the hostile narrative universe of the short story.

A similar problem is observed in “blank card” (*WHOS*). In the first act of this short story, ambiguity can be observed in three different positions. The first is as an intrinsic part of the self which can only – or, more easily – be revealed through an outside perspective. Second, ambiguity can be observed as an already-existing part of the domestic environment and the couple’s relationship. Much like the ambiguity of the self, the ambiguity of the environment is somewhat concealed from the inhabitants and requires an outside force to reveal it. This brings the matter to the third position, which is where ambiguity is present in the mystery of the sender of the flowers and card. The combined gift is a variation of the common narrative device in Smith’s oeuvre, the cataclysmic intruder and the narrative red herring. Ambiguity is a part of this intruder’s function - that is to say, while the intruder itself remains ambiguous it draws attention to that which has escaped notice and has therefore remained ambiguous until the introduction of the intruder. In this short story, the matter that has remained obscure until the arrival of the blank card is the slow death of the couple’s intimate connection. In the first act of “blank card”, then, ambiguity has two roles. The first is as an invisible force that impacts the environment without anyone being aware of it. In the second role, as something that cannot be disambiguated, it forces the discourse participants into a constant state of questioning. The intention behind this questioning is to trigger an unknowing, with the hope that it will encourage the participants to turn their questioning gaze on to their own expectation of the answer. As such, ambiguity is a part of the defamiliarization mission of the cataclysmic intruder.

In both of these short stories (although only in a part of the short story in the case of “blank card”) ambiguity triggers problems within the couple’s communication, effectively sabotaging the unknowing process’ goal of connection and causing a breakdown in the intimacy of the domestic environment. In conjunction with a series of other narrative techniques and devices, ambiguity enables the creation conflicting EMWs, the obstruction or breakdown of intimacy, and the revelation of a black hole in narrative universe that acts as an invisible, destructive force on the intimate environment. As such, ambiguity becomes the chief cause in the creation of hostile narrative universes. Even so, this combination of narrative techniques and devices are

able to create an extended space. Within this extended space the characters, the text, and the reader are able to come in contact and engage in a multilogue in which expectations and preexisting epistemic structures are put into question. The circularity of the stories, in which the tone shifts to something more hopeful and reconciliatory, shows that despite the hostility of the narrative universes the continued conversation can nonetheless turn positive and constructive.

This thesis also observes that the same mechanical processes that create hostile narrative universes can create playful universes instead. This is seen in the second and third acts of “blank card” where ambiguity comes in contact with Smith’s interest in metamorphoses and dialogue. Here, ambiguity takes up a new position as a narrative tool that arouses interest in the narrative game. This game itself is a form of dialogue – or, in the case of reader participation, a multilogue. In this particular short story, the narrative game allows the black hole in the couple’s relationship and in the narrative universe to be integrated back into the environment as a constructive force. Here ambiguity works in tandem with unknowing – that is to say, it works as it should in the unknowing process – and aids in the creation of a shared extended space between the characters, the text, and the reader. This not only reaffirms the intimacy of the domestic environment, but it also facilitates the creation of a playful narrative universe.

In “a story of love” (OSOS) and “believe me” (WHOS), ambiguity is used in tandem with some of Smith’s most famous aesthetic interests and narrative techniques: dialogue, self-reflectivity, and allusion. Ambiguity can be observed in a number of positions in these stories. It is a part of the half stories, the interchangeability of “true love stories”, the narrative space itself, and in the spoken imperative to believe the narrator in “believe me”. In both of these short stories, ambiguity acts fully, though not singularly, as part of the unknowing that the texts call for. Ambiguity allows the character’s voices to fill up and define the physical space while also calling for the reader-audience to participate in the multilogue taking place within the extended space. This multilogue reaches what is indeed the extended narrative universe that is created when Smith cites other texts. In these short stories, narrative universes – the narrative multiverse, even – are the product of a playful exchange between discourse participants. During this exchange, participants tease each other with the ambiguity of the stories they share and with the request, or encouragement, to suspend their

expectations of what a proper story is. The resulting playful narrative universe is by nature only accessible through the act of unknowing. Once it is accessed, however, participation in the discourse is ceaseless, stretching across boundaries of time, space, fiction, and reality.

What these discussions show regarding ambiguity is that it is, within itself, a flexible narrative tool, but it also works in tandem with other narrative techniques and devices in Ali Smith's narrative toolkit. Ambiguity is also a communicative tool—and a communicative hurdle, as the case may be. The intersection of ambiguity's role as a narrative and communicative device can create either hostile or playful narrative universes. More often than not, ambiguity wears multiple hats and fills multiple roles at once in Smith's short stories. These roles can be collected under four general points. One, ambiguity is disruptive to the intimate environment because it has adverse effects on the character's dialogue, but it is also a way to adjust EMWs in such a way that intimacy can be enhanced. Two, ambiguity can be divisive, but it can also be titillating, therefore drawing discourse participants into a narrative game that exists within a multilogic environment. Three, ambiguity can exist as an invisible force, but it can also be observed through the effect it has on the short stories and their narrative universe. Four, ambiguity is something that can direct the discourse participants' gaze towards themselves; that is, their reading habits, their presuppositions, what they value, etc. In this way, ambiguity is a part of Smith's realityfiction project whereby the connection between fiction and reality is strong enough for the two to have a tangible impact on each other.

While this thesis acts as a *tour de force* of Smith's literary techniques that are prevalent in her short story collections, it is also a work that reveals a portion of Smith's literary project and her literary philosophy. A major part of this project is to get minds – people – to engage in a multilogue. It is important to realise that, according to this philosophy, people are also already a part of a multilogue. A multilogue occurs when people come in contact and have a conversation with many people at once while crossing an ontological, cognitive, spatial, temporal, or other such boundary. These boundaries categorize people in ways that make each other, themselves, and their place in the world understandable. However, this categorization can also needlessly isolates people. There are three major implications of this multilogic philosophy. The first is that isolation from others, whatever it is that distinguishes them as a form of other, is

not possible. The barriers that separate one person from another are fairly porous, even when those barriers are of an ontological nature. The second implication is that to engage in a multilogue necessitates that participants undergo an unknowing. Every so often one should question what they think they know for certain and try to re-evaluate their habitual ways of thinking. On a more personal level, this may aid in keeping relationships healthy, loving, and intimate. On a more public, even civic level, however, such an unknowing means being conscious of one's place in society as a social, political, ethical being. If total isolation from others is not possible, it might be prudent to consider how habitual ways of thinking and behaving ultimately impact other people. To make the best of human communication and connection, being open to an unknowing is beneficial. Finally, on a more literary level the multilogic project shows that literature itself is impossible to isolate from reality, hence the term realityfiction. Literature is the product of human minds, and as such it is capable of being a discourse participant within a multilogue. It is important to keep in mind, however, that the fictional mind is always different than an actual mind. How fiction participates in discourse is naturally different, and such a difference requires consideration. Choosing the term "unknowing" instead of "negotiation", for example, is one way in which this difference can be accommodated for – even if, by the very nature of realityfiction, unknowing has its own place and impact in the real world.

Ultimately, an exploration of how Smith constructs narrative universes in her short stories is an exploration of how Smith depicts the entanglement of minds. Multilogic narrative universes capture the difficulties, beauties, and in a way the requirements of this entanglement. For the most part, "the second person", "blank card", "a story of love" and "believe me" explore this entanglement in the context of how people who are already intimate with each other can encounter these difficulties and joys. As is seen from Smith's use of citation and its ethical implication, however, this particular manner of human entanglement does not necessarily indicate a complete division of private and public. While this thesis provides a template for how multilogic narrative universes are constructed within a very limited narrative environment, it only touches upon the impact of a more expansive entanglement of minds. From the very beginning of her writing career, Smith has shown a profound interest in the relationship and individual has with the wider world. For Smith, the world is filled with not only familiar and much-loved people, but also strangers who challenge the

way we think, feel, and live. Human existence cannot be carried out in isolation from time, space, or other people. All of these, and more, have an impact on the stories we tell ourselves and other people. Her short stories are reflections of this challenging relationship we have with each other, whether that challenge is hostile, playful, intriguing, or something else. Each short story – and every story elsewhere in the world – is a reminder of the connections we share with each other and keeps those connections alive in a way only fiction can.



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APPENDICES

A. TURKISH SUMMARY / TRKE ZET

Bu tez, Ali Smith'in kısa yklerinden bir sekisinde okluęa deneysel yaklařımı ve belirsiz bir řekilde inřa edilmiř anlatı alanı arasındaki iliřkiyi arařtırmaktadır. Bu seki, "the second person" (*The First Person and Other Stories*), "blank card" (*Other Stories and Other Stories*), "a story of love" (*Other Stories and Other Stories*) ve "believe me" (*The Whole Story and Other Stories*) olmak zere drt hikayeden oluřmaktadır. Smith'in eserlerinde okluk, mutlaka karakterlerin sayıca okluęu anlamına gelmez. Daha ziyade okluk, dil ve edebiyatın anlam yaratma kabiliyetine tekabl eder. Bu nedenle okluk, doęası gereęi okseslilik, iletiřim ve anlatı teknięi ile yakın iliřkileri olan yaratıcı ve iletiřimsel bir konudur. Belirsizlik ise Smith'in eřitli etkiler yaratmak iin sıklıkla kullandıęı bir anlatı teknięidir. Bu teknięin kendini gsterdięi bir yol, Smith'in kısa yklerindeki anlatı alanının belirsizlięidir. Bu eserlerde anlatı alanı nadiren mekansal betimlemeler aracılıęıyla tanımlanır, ancak muazzam bir biliřsel alan yaratır ve kaplar. Bu biliřsel alan ierisinde bolca anlam, anlatı ve karřılıklı iletiřim bulunur. Bunlar da birbirleriyle oynar ve bylece oęalırlar. Bu srete kısa hikayeler kurgu, gereklik, zaman ve mekan arasındaki sınırları ařar ve konuřma katılımcılarını konuřmaya katılabilmeleri iin kendi biliřsel sınırlarını ařmaya teřvik eder. Buna baęlı olarak bu tez, Ali Smith'in deneysel edebi teknięinin, karakterler arasında ve hikaye ile okuyucu arasında oklu bir diyalog, yani multilogdan oluřan anlatı evrenleri oluřturmasına izin verdięini savunur.

Bu tez, anlatıbilimsel ve biliřsel olmak zere iki kuramsal yaklařımı birleřtirerek seilmiř kısa hikayelerdeki anlatı evrenlerinin yaratılıřını ve doęasını analiz eder. Anlatı evrenleri, anlatıbilimsel bir yaklařım olan anlatı alanındaki alıřmalar ile biliřsel dilbilimin bir parası olan Metin-Dnya Kuramı'nın kesiřim noktasında yer almaktadır. İsimlerinin aksine ne anlatı evrenleri ne de metin-dnyaları,

metinlerde veya metinler tarafından inşa edilmiş fiziksel nesnelerdir. Bunlar, bilişsel olgulardır. Metin-Dünya Kuramı her söylemi iki geniş kavramsal düzeye ayırır. Bunlardan ilki, genellikle yaşadığımız gerçek dünya olarak kabul edilen diskur dünyası ve bizi çerveyeleyen anlık durumdur. Kurgusal metinlerde bu bir hikayenin sunduğu gerçeklik sistemi içerisindeki gerçek dünya da olabilir. Metin-dünyaları, kavramsal etkinliğin ikinci seviyesidir ve dilsel olgulardır. Metin-dünyaları, gerçek dünyaya tekabül eden, insan zihninde var olan ve dil kullanımıyla yaratılan, üstünde ayarlamalar yapılan ve yok edilen temsili dünyalardır. Bu dünyalar, ifade edilen yöntem türlerine göre kategorize edilir. Üç çeşit kip-dünya vardır: bilgisel, isteksel ve yükümlülük. Bunların yanı sıra mecazlar, ayrı metin-dünyalarını birleştiren harmanlanmış bir dünya olarak tanımlanır. Metin-dünyaları sadece metinlerin nasıl oluşturulduğuna değil, aynı zamanda üretimlerini ve alımlamalarını etkileyen koşullara da bağlı olarak gelişir. Bu dünyalar, birleşik olarak mekansal, zamansal ve sosyo - psikolojik varoluşlarıyla tanımlanan bir alan olan diskur dünyasıyla iç içedir. Metin-Dünya Kuramı, Smith alimi için şanslı olarak bilgisel bir merkeze sahiptir. Smith, okuyucunun bir hikayenin kim, ne, ne zaman ve benzerleri tanımlayıcılarını bilme ihtiyacını sürekli olarak sorgular, bu şekilde de okuyucu için epistemolojik bir sorun yaratır. Smith, belirsizlikle rahat olan bir yazardır – hatta araştırmaların gösterdiği üzere bu konuda başarılıdır. Okuyucu da bu belirsizliği, yani kişinin bilmeme ve bildiğinden emin olmama durumunu, benimsemeye teşvik edilir.

Metin-Dünya Kuramı ile ilgili sorunlardan biri, edebi çalışmalara olduğu gibi kolayca katkıda bulunamamasıdır. Bilişsel çalışmaların bir parçası olarak, kurgusal zihinlerin “doğadışı” ve gerçek insanların zihinlerinden farklı olmaları noktasında zorluk çeker. Hem kurgusal zihin hem de anlatı diskuru, gerçek insanlardan ve onların gerçek hayattaki iletişimlerinden farklıdır. Bu nedenle bir karakterin zihninin nasıl çalıştığını anlamak için kullanılan yaklaşım, gerçek bir kişinin zihnini anlamak için kullanılan yaklaşımla aynı olamaz. Gerçek insanlar ve karakterler arasındaki ontolojik fark, Metin-Dünya Kuramı için bir zorluk teşkil etmektedir. Kuram, katılımcı ve sahneleyici (gerçek bir kişinin metin-dünyası karşılığı ve kurgudaki bir karakter) arasında olmanın yanı sıra diskur ve metin-dünyaları arasında da olan ontolojik sınırın tüm söylemlerde var olduğunu kabul eder. Ancak bu kuram, iki dünya arasındaki sınırın mutlak olmadığını ve tüm diskurların aynı şekilde kısıtlamadığını da kabul

etmektedir. İkisi arasında aşkınlık mümkündür ve özellikle edebi kurguda ve dolayısıyla edebi diskurda yaygındır.

Ali Smith'in kısa öykülerinin ayırt edici özelliklerinden biri, metin ve gerçeklik arasındaki ontolojik sınırı geçme eğilimleridir. Karakterler defaatle metnin dışına çıkıyor ve okuyucuyu hikayenin içine çekiyor, böylece daha aktif konuşma katılımcıları haline geliyorlar. Smith, edebi teknikleri sayesinde gerçek hayattaki söylem katılımcılarını ortak bir anlatı evreninin yaratılmasına dahil edebilir. Justyna Kostkowska, bunun Smith'in "gerçeklik kurgusunun" özelliği olduğunu savunuyor. Bu, Smith'in metin ve gerçeklik arasındaki sınırı yıkma yeteneğini yansıtan bir terimdir. Bu sınırların yıkılması sayesinde kurgu, söz konusu gerçeklik üzerinde dönüştürücü bir etkiye sahiptir. Gerçeklik kurgusu, okuyucunun kurgusal gerçekliğin rahat sınırları ardına yerleşmesini engelleyerek onu rahatsız eder. Metin bu sınırı aşmakta ısrar ettikçe, okuyucuya hem kendisinin hem de metnin her ikisini de çevreleyen daha büyük bir gerçekliğin parçası olduğunu hatırlatır. Metin ve okuyucu arasındaki bu etkileşimler, Kostkowska'nın "metnin genişletilmiş alanı" olarak adlandırdığı alanda gerçekleşir. Bu, Smith'in özdüşünsel anlatım teknikleri ve okuyucunun varlığı sayesinde oluşan bilişsel bir alandır. Aşılmaz bir uçurum olmaktan uzak olan bu alan, okuyucu ve metin arasında paylaşılan bir diskur (Metin-Dünya Kuramı terimleriyle diskur dünyası) ve bir bağ kurma alanıdır. Smith'in multiloğa olan ilgisi, anlatı tekniğinde ve bu özgün anlatı alanının inşasında mevcuttur. Anlatıcıların çokluğu, doğrusal olmayan zamandizinleri, özdüşünsel yazı biçimi ve – bu tezin katkısı – anlatıcıların kendi yarattıkları metin-dünyaları, okuyucuyu söyleme dahil etmek için metnin sınırlarının dışına uzanan bir anlatı evreninin bir parçasıdır. Anlatı evreni, okuyucunun katılımının gerçekleşmesini talep eden genişletilmiş bir alandır – doğası gereği multilojiktir.

Ali Smith'in kısa öykülerinde multilojik anlatı evrenlerinin yaratılmasını analiz etmek ve anlamak için bazı terminolojik açıklamalara ihtiyaç vardır. Öncelikli olarak, bu tez diyalog ve multilog arasında ayrım yapmaktadır. Multilog teriminin kullanımı ve tanımı ile ilgili bazı belirsizlikler vardır. Terim, iki ayrı gövde oluşturmak yerine bireysel konumlarını koruyan ve bunun sonucunda bu konuşmayı çok yönlü bir şekilde üstlenen birçok katılımcı arasında gerçekleşen bir konuşma olarak tanımlanabilir. Bu çalışmada multilog, bilişsel-edebi genişletilmiş bir alanda gerçekleşen çok yönlü bir diskur anlamına gelmektedir. Bu diskur, multilojik bir karakter - karakter - metin -

okuyucu karesi oluşturur, ancak daha fazla katılımcıyı da içine lacak şekilde genişleyebilir. Bir diğer terminolojik kaygı, mekansal kelime dağarcığının seçilmesidir. Genişletilmiş alan terimi, metin ve okuyucu arasındaki ilişkiyi tanımlamak için kabul edilir. Buna ek olarak, bu tez Ignasi Ribó'nun “mekansal varlıklar” ve “ortam” olarak adlandırdığı kavramlar arasındaki farkı vurgulamaktadır. İlk terim, fiziksel bir alan içinde eşit derecede fiziksel bir varlığı olan bir nesneyi ifade eder. Ribó, bir anlatı unsuru olarak mekanın diğer anlatı unsurlarından ayrı tutulabilecek bir şey olmadığını bilincindedir. Ribó, öncelikli olarak çoğu akademisyen gibi zaman ve mekanın yakından bağlantılı olduğunu ve ikisini ayırmanın basit olmadığını gerçekliğine dikkat eder. Ayrıca ortamların, anlatıda bir mekanın maddi boyutlarıyla ve içindeki nesnelerle sınırlı olmadığını iddia etmektedir. Ortamlar, içinde yaşayan zihinlerden tamamen ayrılamaz. Bunun yerine ortamlar, zihinlerin farklı mekansal, zamansal ve sosyal bağlamlar içinde anlamlı bir şekilde dolanmasıyla tanımlanır, bu dolaşıklık da diskurun kendisini üretir. Bu, Metin-Dünya Kuramının vurguladığı bağlama bağımlılığı yansıtmaktadır.

Belirsizlik terimi ise sadece çoklu yorumlama olasılığı olarak tanımlanamayacak çeşitli rollere sahiptir. Bu çalışmada belirsizlik, bir gerçeğin yerleştirilmesi konusunda şüpheye ve belirsizliğe neden olan her şeydir. Genel olarak, gerçeklerin belirsizliği veya gizlenmesi yoluyla bu tür bir belirsizliğe neden olan herhangi bir anlatı aracı veya tekniği, bir tür belirsizlik olarak etiketlenebilir. Bu tez aynı zamanda epistemolojik ve iletişimsel açıdan yakınlığın (*intimacy*), belirsizliğin karşıt noktası olduğunu kabul eder. Bu çalışmadaki önemli bir gözlem, belirsizliğin iletişimin doğal ve kendini pekiştiren bir parçası olduğudur. Bu, yalnız multilogda değil, diyalogda dahi kaçınılmazdır. Bununla birlikte, bu tezde gözlemlenen diyaloglarda ve multiloglarda belirsizliğin kendine özgü bir rolü olması, bu rol için farklı bir terimin kullanılmasını gerektirmektedir.

Metin-Dünya Kuramı, iletişimsel eylemlerde bulunduğumuzda, eylemlerimizin ortak bir iletişimsel çabada karşılık bulması beklentisiyle bunu yaptığımızı varsayar. Bununla beraber bu çabada karşılaştığımız bir zorluk, anlamın ve anlayışın önceden belirlenmiş sonuçlar olmadığıdır. Bunlar, iletişim devam ederken konuşma katılımcıları arasında müzakere edilmesi gereken dinamik ve sürekli gelişen kavramlardır. Bu şekilde, diskur dünyası sürekli dönen bir müzakere eylemi ile tanımlanır ve müzakerenin konusu, katılımcıların zihinlerinde inşa ettikleri metin

dünyasının kesin doğasıdır. Bu tezin, Metin-Dünya Kuramını edebi diskur için daha erişilebilir hale getirmek için kuramda yaptığı bir uyarlama bu müzakere hakkındadır. Gerçek hayattaki müzakereler metin-dünyalarını inşa etmek için belirsizlikleri çözmeyi amaçladığı halde seçilen kısa hikayelerdeki multilojik iletişimdeki müzakere, bilinen konuların rahatına dalmayı ve yerleşmeyi amaçlamaz. Bunun yerine, bu müzakere biçimi, konuşmalarda doğal olarak var olan ve Smith'in kurgusu üzerinde derin bir etkiye sahip olan belirsizlikleri benimser. Bu müzakere biçimi, Joonas Sääntti'ye göre birçok yönden bilinen konuların yerelleştirilmesine karşı yapılan okumalarda *unknowing*, yani bilinenin terk edilişini tetiklemeyi veya teşvik etmeyi amaçlamaktadır. Böylece bu terk ediş, insanlara hem bilinmeyenler hem de yerleşik bilgi yapılarının içinde işleyen kör noktalar hakkında bir şeyler öğretebilir. Tez, seçilen kısa öykülerde gözlemlenen multiloglarda geçen özgün müzakere biçimi olarak *unknow* veya *unknowing* terimlerini kullanır. Bu müzakere biçiminin merkezinde, zihinleri benimsenmiş veya alışıldık bir düzende tutan sınırların ve kısıtlamaların aşılması yatar. Multilojik iletişimin bir parçası olarak bu sınır aşışının bir parçası, genişletilmiş bir alana yapılan ontolojik sıçramadır. Böylece de *unknowing* gerçek yaşamdaki müzakerelerden önemli bir şekilde fark gösterir. Bununla birlikte *unknowing*'in önemi, belirsizliğin özü doğrultusunda bilginin tedvin edilmesine ve tedvin etme bilgisine sunduğu zorluktur. *Unknowing*, hiçbir otoriter gerçeğin hüküm sürmemesi için bilgi yapılarını bozmayı amaçlar.

Tez, hikayeleri yarattıkları anlatı evrenlerinin oluşumuna ve doğasına göre analiz ediyor. İlk bölümün ilgi odağı, “the second person” ve “blank card” eserlerinde *unknowing*, belirsizlik ve diğer anlatı teknikleri ve araçlarının bir kombinasyonu yoluyla nasıl dövüşken anlatı evrenleri yarattığıdır. “the second person” eserinde belirsizliği üç rol üstlendiği gözlemlenebilir: alegorik dünyanın doğal bir parçası olarak, bilmeme sürecinin bir parçası olarak ve varsayımsal belirsizlik olarak görüldüğünde başarılı bir şekilde *unknowing* önünde bir engel olarak. Bu rolleri üstlenirken, belirsizlik iki biçimde kendini gösterir. Birinci olarak belirsizlik, çiftin sayesinde iletişim kurmaya çalıştığı alegorinin bir parçasıdır ve ikincisi, ikinci şahıs anlatı tekniğinin kullanılması nedeniyle iletişimsel bir engeldir. Belirsizlik, doğası gereği *unknowing* sürecinin bir parçasıdır ve bu nedenle anlatı bağlamında iletişime yardımcı olabilmelidir. Buna rağmen bu iki anlatı tekniğiyle temas halindeyken belirsizlik, iletişimi engelleyici bir unsur olarak belirir. İkinci şahıs anlatı tekniğiyle

bağlantılı olan belirsizlik, anlamı gizler ve diskur katılımcılarının benliklerinin anlatılarını anlaşılmaz hale getirir. Bu anlatı tekniği böylece, diskur ortaklarının benlik algısına karşıt olan bilgisel kip dünyaları (*epistemic modal worlds*) yaratır. Buna ek olarak, gerçeklik iddialarının varsayımı, alegorideki anlamın belirsizliğini güçlendirir. Bu varsayımlar aynı zamanda karşıt bilgisel kip dünyaları yaratır. Sonuç olarak, belirsizlik, alegori ve ikinci şahıs anlatı tekniğinin birleşimi, eserin dövüşken anlatı evreninde çatışan ve çelişkili anlatı gezegenleri yaratır.

Benzer bir sorun “blank card” eserinde de görülmektedir. Bu eser analiz için üç bölüme ayrılır. Bu bölümlerin ilkinde belirsizlik, üç farklı pozisyonda gözlemlenebilir. Birincisi, benliğin içsel ama sadece dışarıdan gelen bir gözlem yordamıyla ortaya çıkarılabilen (veya daha kolay bir şekilde ortaya çıkarılabilen) bir parçasıdır. İkincisi, belirsizlik, ev ortamının ve çiftin ilişkisinin zaten var olan bir parçası olarak gözlemlenebilir. Benliğin belirsizliği gibi, ortamın belirsizliği de sakinlerden bir şekilde gizlidir ve onu ortaya çıkarmak için dış bir güç gerektirir. Buna bağlı olarak, konuyu çiçek ve boş kartı gönderen kişinin gizeminde var olan belirsizliktir üçüncü konumdadır. Bu birleşik hediye, Smith'in eserindeki sıkça kullanılan bir anlatı aracı olan yıkıcı davetsiz misafirin ve kırmızı ringasının bir çeşididir. Belirsizlik, bu davetsiz misafirin işlevinin bir parçasıdır. Yani, davetsiz misafirin kendisi belirsiz kalırken, dikkatten kaçan ve bu nedenle davetsiz misafirin hikayedeki tanıtımına kadar belirsiz kalan şeye dikkat çeker. Bu eserde, boş kartın gelmesine kadar belirsiz kalan konu, çiftin yakın ilişkisinin yavaş ölümüdür. Eserin ilk bölümünde belirsizliğin iki rolü vardır. Birincisi, kimsenin farkında olmadan ortamı etkileyen görünmez bir güçtür. İkincisi, belirsizliği giderilemeyen bir şey olarak, diskur katılımcılarını sürekli bir sorgulama durumuna zorlar. Bu sorgulamanın ardındaki niyet, katılımcıları sorgulayıcı bakışlarını kendi cevap beklentilerine çevirmeye teşvik edeceği umuduyla, bir *unknowing* tetiklemeaktır. Haliyle belirsizlik, yıkıcı davetsiz misafirin yabancılaştırma misyonunun bir parçasıdır.

Bu kısa hikayelerin her ikisinde de belirsizlik, çiftin iletişimde sorunları tetikler, böylelikle hedefine ulaşmasını engelleyecek şekilde *unknowing* sürecini sabote eder ve ev ortamının yakınlığında bir bozulmaya neden olur. Belirsizlik, bir dizi diğer anlatı tekniği ve aracıyla birlikte, çatışan bilgisel kip dünyalarının yaratılmasını, yakınlığın kurulmasının engellenmesini veya yakınlığın parçalanmasını, bunların yanı sıra da yakınlık ortamı üzerinde görünmez, yıkıcı bir güç olarak etki eden bir

karadeliğin anlatı evreninde ortaya çıkmasına neden olur. Bu nedenle, belirsizlik, dövüşken anlatı evrenlerinin yaratılmasında başlıca neden haline gelir. Bunlara rağmen anlatı tekniklerinin ve araçlarının bu bileşkesi genişletilmiş bir alan yaratabilme kabiliyetine sahiptir. Bu genişletilmiş alan içerisinde karakterler, metin ve okuyucu temas kurabilir ve beklentilerin ve önceden var olan epistemik yapıların sorgulandığı bir multiloğa girebilir. Anlatıların döngüsellığı, üslubun daha umutlu ve uzlaşmacı bir hale dönüşmesiyle beraber, anlatı evrenlerinin dövüşkenliğine rağmen devam eden konuşmanın yine de olumlu ve yapıcı hale gelebileceğini göstermektedir.

Bu tez dövüşken anlatı evrenleri yaratan aynı mekanik süreçlerin aynı zamanda oyunbaz evrenler de yaratabileceğini gözlemlemektedir. Bu, belirsizliğin Smith'in metamorfozlara ve diyaloga olan ilgisiyle temas ettiği, “blank card” eserinin ikinci ve üçüncü bölümlerinde görülmektedir. Burada belirsizlik, hikaye oyununa ilgi uyandıran bir anlatı aracı olarak yeni bir konuma bürünür. Bu oyunun kendisi bir diyalog biçimidir, okuyucu katılımı da söz konusu olduğunda da bir multilogdur. Bu eserde anlatı oyunu, çiftin ilişkisindeki ve anlatı evrenindeki kara deliğin yapıcı bir güç olarak ortamla geri bütünleşmesine yol açar. Bu noktada belirsizlik, *unknowing* süreciyle birlikte çalışır. Yani belirsizlik, *unknowing* sürecinde olması gerektiği gibi çalışır ve böylece karakterler, metin ve okuyucu arasında ortak bir geniş alan yaratılmasına yardımcı olur. Bu sadece ev ortamının yakınlığını teyit etmekle kalmaz, aynı zamanda oyunbaz bir anlatı evreninin yaratılmasını da kolaylaştırır.

“a story of love” ve “believe me” eserlerinde belirsizlik, Smith'in en iyi bilinen estetik ilgi alanları ve anlatı tekniklerinden bazılarıyla birlikte kullanılır: diyalog, özdeşimsellik ve kinaye. Bu hikayelerde belirsizlik bir takım pozisyonlarda gözlemlenebilir. “Yarım hikayelerin” bir parçasıdır, gerçek aşk hikayelerinin birbirinin yerine geçebilirliğinin bir özelliğidir, anlatı alanının kendisinin bir parçasıdır ve “believe me” eserinde anlatıcıya inanmak için sözlü bir şart koşmadır. Bu kısa hikayelerin her ikisinde de belirsizlik, tekil olarak olmasa da tam olarak metinlerin gerektirdiği *unknowing* sürecinin bir parçası olarak davranır. Belirsizlik, karakterin seslerinin fiziksel alanı doldurmasına ve tanımlamasına izin verirken, aynı zamanda okuyucu-izleyiciyi genişletilmiş alanda gerçekleşen multiloğa katılmaya çağırır. Bu multilog, Smith başka metinlerden alıntı yaptığında yaratılan genişletilmiş anlatı evrenine de ulaşır. Bu eserlerde anlatı evrenleri – hatta anlatı çoklu evreni – diskur katılımcıları arasındaki oyunbaz bir alışverişin ürünüdür. Bu alışveriş sırasında

katılımcılar, paylaştıkları hikayelerin belirsizliği ve uygun bir hikayenin ne olduğuna dair beklentilerini askıya alma ricası veya teşviki ile birbirlerine takılırlar. Ortaya çıkan oyunbaz anlatı evreni, doğası gereği yalnızca *unknowing* eylemi yoluyla erişilebilir. Bununla beraber bir kez erişildikten sonra, zaman, mekan, kurgu ve gerçeklik sınırlarını aşan diskurlara katılım durmaksızın devam eder.

Belirsizlikle ilgili bu tartışmaların gösterdiği şey, belirsizliğin kendi içinde esnek bir anlatı aracı olduğu, ancak Ali Smith'in anlatı aracı çantasındaki diğer anlatı teknikleri ve araçlarıyla birlikte çalıştığıdır. Belirsizlik aynı zamanda iletişimsel bir araçtır ve duruma göre iletişimsel bir engel de olabilir. Belirsizliğin bir anlatı ve iletişim aracı olarak rollerinin kesişimi, dövüşken veya oyunbaz anlatı evrenleri yaratabilir. Çoğu zaman, belirsizlik birden fazla şapka takar ve Smith'in kısa hikayelerinde aynı anda birden fazla işlevi yerine getirir. Bu işlevler dört genel açıklama altında toplanabilir. Birincisi, belirsizlik samimi ortam için yıkıcıdır, çünkü karakterlerin diyalogu üzerinde olumsuz etkileri vardır, ancak aynı zamanda bilgisel kip dünyaları üzerinde samimiyetin geliştirilebilmesine yardımcı olacak uyarlamaların yapılabilmesine yol açabilir. İkincisi, belirsizlik bölücü olabilir, ancak aynı zamanda iç güldürücü de olabilir, bu sayede diskur katılımcılarını multilojik bir ortamda gerçekleşen bir anlatı oyununa çekebilir. Üçüncüsü, belirsizlik görünmez bir güç olarak var olabilir, ancak kısa hikayeler ve anlatı evrenleri üzerindeki etkisi ile de gözlemlenebilir. Dördüncüsü, belirsizlik, diskur katılımcılarının bakışlarını kendilerine yönlendirebilecek bir şeydir. Yani okuma alışkanlıkları, varsayımları, neye değer verdikleri vb. alışkanlık ve özelliklerin sorguya çekilmesine yol açabilir. Bu şekilde belirsizlik, Smith'in kurgu ve gerçeklik arasındaki bağlantının, ikisinin birbirleri üzerinde somut bir etkiye sahip olması için yeterince güçlü olduğu gerçeklik kurgusu projesinin bir parçasıdır.

Bu tezin en önemli katkılarından biri, Ali Smith'e birkısa öykü yazarı olarak odaklanmasıdır. Her bölüm, Smith'in eserlerinde yaygın olan bir dizi estetik ve teknik ilgi alanına odaklanmaktadır. Bu çalışmada analiz edilen eserlerin sayıca sınırlı olmasına rağmen her bölüm ve analiz, Smith'in kısa hikayeleri hakkında daha başka tartışmalar için bir sıçrama tahtası sağlar. Aslında bu tez, bir dizi anlatı tekniği ve cihazının belirli etkileri hakkında derinlemesine tartışmalar sağlarken olası araştırma alanlarının bir listesini de sunmaktadır. Bu tez, Smith'in kısa öykü derlemelerinde yaygın olan edebi tekniklerinin bir turu görevi görürken, aynı zamanda Smith'in edebi

projesinin ve edebi felsefesinin bir kısmını ortaya koyan bir eserdir. Smith'in bu projesinin önemli bir kısmı, zihinleri, yani insanları, bir multiloğa dahir etmektir. Bu felsefeye göre ise, insanların da zaten bir multiloğun bir parçası olduğunun farkına varmak önemlidir. Multilog, insanlar ontolojik, bilişsel, mekansal, zamansal veya benzeri bir sınırı geçerken aynı anda birçok insanla temas kurduğunda ve onlarla iletişim kurduğunda ortaya çıkar. Bu sınırlar insanları birbirlerini, kendilerini ve dünyadaki yerlerini anlaşılır kılmasını sağlayacak şekilde vasıflandırır. Bununla beraber bu vasıflandırış insanları gereksiz yere yalnızlaştırabilir. Bu multilojik felsefenin üç ana neticesi vardır. Birincisi, insanları ötekinin bir biçimi olarak tanımlayan her ne olursa olsun, bu ötekilerden tamami bir ayırımın mümkün olmamasıdır. Bir kişiyi diğerinden ayıran sınırlar ontolojik nitelikte dahi olsalar oldukça gözeneklidir. İkinci netice, bir multiloğa katılmanın gerekçesinin katılımcıların bir bilineni terk etme sürecinden geçmesinidir. Kişiler, bazen kesin olarak bildiklerini düşündükleri şeyleri sorgulamalı ve alışılmış düşünme biçimlerini yeniden değerlendirmeye çalışmalıdırlar. Daha kişisel bir düzeyde bu, ilişkileri sağlıklı, sevgi dolu ve samimi tutmaya yardımcı olabilir. Bununla birlikte daha kamusal, hatta sivil düzeyde, böylece bir bilgiyi terk ediş, kişinin sosyal, politik, etik varlıklar olarak toplumdaki yerinin bilincinde olması anlamına gelir. Başkalarından tamamen izole olmak mümkün değilse, alışılmış düşünme ve davranış biçimlerinin nihayetinde diğer insanları nasıl etkilediğini düşünmek ihtiyatlı bir davranış olabilir. İnsan iletişimini ve bağlantısını en iyi şekilde değerlendirmek için, bilineni terk etmeye açık olmak faydalıdır. Son olarak daha edebi bir düzeye bakıldığında multilojik proje, edebiyatın kendisinin gerçeklikten tamamen ayrılmasının imkansız olduğunu gösterir. Gerçeklik kurgusu terimi de bunu açıklar zaten. Edebiyat, insan zihninin ürünüdür ve bu nedenle bir multilog içerisinde bir diskur katılımcısı olabilir. Bununla birlikte, kurgusal zihnin her zaman gerçek bir zihinden farklı olduğunu akılda tutmak önemlidir. Kurgunun diskura katılımı doğal olarak farklıdır ve böyle bir farklılık dikkate alınmalıdır. Örneğin, gerçeklik kurgusunun doğası gereği, terimin gerçek dünyada kendi yeri ve etkisine sahip olsa bile, “müzakere” yerine “*unknowing*” terimini seçmek, bu farkın karşılanabilmesi için bir yoldur.

Smith'in kısa hikayelerinde anlatı evrenlerini nasıl inşa ettiğine dair bir inceleme, nihayetinde Smith'in zihinlerin dolanıklığını nasıl tasvir ettiğine dair bir incelemedir. Multilojik anlatı evrenleri, bu dolanıklığın zorluklarını, güzelliklerini ve

bir bakıma gerekliliklerini yakalar. “the second person”, “blanc card”, “a story of love” ve “believe me” bu dolanıklığı, çoğunlukla birbirleriyle zaten samimi olan insanların bu zorluklarla ve sevinçlerle nasıl karşılaşabilecekleri bağlamında inceler. Bununla birlikte, Smith'in alıntı kullanımından ve etik çıkarımından görüldüğü üzere, bu insan dolanıklığının bu biçimi, özel ve kamusalın tam bir bölünmesini göstermez. Bu tez, multilojik anlatı evrenlerinin çok sınırlı bir anlatı ortamında nasıl inşa edildiğine dair bir şablon sunarken, zihinlerin daha geniş bir şekilde birbirine dolanmasının etkisine sadece kısaca değinmektedir. Halbuki Smith, yazarlık kariyerinin en başından beri bireyin daha geniş dünyayla olan ilişkisine ve ilişkisine derin bir ilgi göstermiştir. Smith'e göre dünya sadece tanıdık ve çok sevilen insanlarla değil, aynı zamanda düşünme, hissetme ve yaşama şeklimize meydan okuyan yabancılarla da doludur. İnsan, varlığını zaman, mekan veya diğer insanlardan ayrı olarak tecrübe edemez. Tüm bunlar ve daha fazlası, kendimize ve diğer insanlara anlattığımız hikayeler üzerinde bir etkiye sahiptir. Smith'in kısa hikayeleri, bu zorluk dövuşken, oyunbaz, ilgi çekici veya başka bir şey olsun, birbirimizle olan bu zorlu ilişkimizin yansımalarıdır. Her kısa hikaye, ve dünyanın başka yerlerindeki her hikaye, birbirimizle paylaştığımız bağlantıların bir hatırlatıcısıdır ve bu bağlantıları yalnızca kurgunun yapabileceği şekilde canlı tutar.

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