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**Offenheit und Geschlossenheit als Funktionen des unzuverlässigen Erzählens. Mit Interpretationsbeispielen anhand von Texten von Ernst Weiß, Paul Zech und Stefan Zweig
(Abstract)**

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The paper surveys two different functions that may be ascribed to unreliable narratives. Derived from the notion of technique (Russian »priëm«, German »Verfahren«), function is a key concept of literary theory, which relates textual properties to effects. One of the functions, in recent time related to unreliable narration, is deception. In order to appreciate the literary effect of deception, the reader must finally understand that s/he has been deceived for a certain time. In other words, in order to recognize that s/he has been deceived, the reader must find out what is the case in the narrated world, i. e. fiction, and distinguish it from what was told without being the case. Another effect will be introduced. It is related to narratives in which it is impossible to find out what is true in the fiction. In those cases, readers will be perplex or helpless. In the next step, these effects – that of deception and that of helplessness – being effects of reception shall be substituted by their hermeneutic counterparts. If one is deceived by an unreliable narration, one finally finds out what is the case in the fiction (with regard to the reason for the deception); if one is left helpless by an unreliable narration, one cannot find out what is the case in the fiction (with regard to the unexplained fact that is the reason for the helplessness). The first one of these hermeneutic counterparts of the reception functions will be called the closed function of unreliability, since a gap of explanation can be closed by an interpretation; the second one will be called the open function of unreliability, since a gap of explanation is left open and cannot be closed. The remaining parts of the paper deal with literary examples which show different cases fulfilling those functions. The first two examples are taken from stories by Stefan Zweig. In »The Fowler Snared« (»Sommernovellette«, 1911), the closed function is fulfilled because the trustworthy extradiegetic narrator finally corrects the unreliable intradiegetic narrator. The next example of Zweig, »The Woman and the Landscape« (»Die Frau und die Landschaft«, 1922), lacks an explicit correction, since the narrator deceives not only the reader but also himself. A thorough interpretation, however, shows that it is more plausible to assume that the narrator's account referring to certain facts is not true than to assume that it is correct. In this case, the gap can be closed, too, although there are more assumptions required than in the first case as the second text gives no explicit trustworthy evidence. The evidence must be inferred by hermeneutic conclusions. In contrast to the closed function, the open function of unreliability is much more complicated to ascribe. The first case, the (very) short novel *The Castle of the Brothers Zанowsky* (*Das Schloß der Brüder Zанowsky*, 1933) by Paul Zech presents several contradicting versions of a fact of the fiction (narrated world). The narrator renders them without preferring one of them. He is even unable to account for, let alone to recognize the fact that these versions are contradicting each other. So, it seems impossible to determine which one of these versions is true in the fiction. The version the narrator believes to be true may be true or not. On the one hand, the narrator can be considered to be plainly unreliable; on the other hand, his unreliability is not the point of the story. It is its point that what the narrator tells us is inevitably vague; it is not its point that he lies or is not able to find out what is true in his world. – The last example stems from the novel *The Poor Squanderer* (*Der arme Verschwender*, 1936) by Ernst Weiß. In this case, the narrator's

discourse is full of single contradictions and omissions. Some of the gaps can be closed, some of them not. However, there is no explanation which accounts for the narrator's misreporting and underreporting tout court. The overall setting of the narrator's putative unreliability is left open due to the lack of self-awareness the narrator reveals in his discourse. – The paper closes with a short outlook on the literary/poetical difference between the closed and the open function of unreliable narration. Texts that close the gaps caused by the unreliability of their narrators display other literary properties than texts that leave the gaps, caused by the unreliability of their narrators, open. Additionally, the difference between texts whose open gaps are caused by unreliable narration and texts with similar gaps, which are not unreliably narrated, is hard to explain.

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