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**Unzuverlässigkeit und Heterodiegeese: Überlegungen zu den
Möglichkeiten und Bedingungen unzuverlässigen Erzählens in
heterodiegetischen Texten
(Abstract)**

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It has long been insisted that there is no actual heterodiegetic unreliability, since heterodiegetic narrators first stipulate the fictive world through their speech and hence are omniscient (see Martínez-Bonati 1973, 186; Ryan 1981, 531; Jahn 1998, 101; Fludernik 2003, 213; Cohn 2000, above all 312; Petterson 2005, 73). Moreover, as a consequence of this assumption about what is meant by heterodiegesis, it has been deduced that heterodiegetic narrators cannot make false statements – for whatever reasons – about the composition of the fictive world.

In the present article, I would like to discuss the conditions which make heterodiegetic unreliability possible – with particular reference to the definition of heterodiegesis I have proposed (see Lang 2014a). First, I explain (expanding on my essay from 2014) in part one, under the heading »What Heterodiegesis Is Not«, why the concepts of »omniscience« and »auctoriality« only have possible but not necessary connections to heterodiegesis. The fundamental reason for this is that there are heterodiegetic texts whose narrative instances neither (a) are omniscient nor (b) exhibit auctorial narrative behavior. In particular, the reasons are as follows: a) Heterodiegetic texts can feature changing internal focalizations, and hence can withhold, in sections, knowledge they should in fact possess, if we consider the text as a whole. Whoever does not acknowledge that such heterodiegetic narrators are not omniscient would need to explain why it is that those narrators withhold their knowledge. However, that would only be possible on the basis of speculation. b) If, following Petersen (1993), auctoriality is understood as a narrator intervening with subjective evaluation into his or her narrative, then this can or cannot be the case as much for heterodiegetic texts as for homodiegetic texts. The refined consideration of these two terms leads, after a brief presentation of the theory of unreliable narration (2. What Is Unreliable Narration in the First Place?), according to which a two-pronged differentiation between mimetic and axiological unreliability is deemed sufficient, to the question of how these considerations can be connected to narrative unreliability and to what extent narrative stance and focalization are linked to narrative unreliability or even provide the conditions for it (3. Narrative Unreliability and Heterodiegesis). In this section, I demonstrate why both axiological and mimetic unreliability are possible in all forms of heterodiegesis. Through the strict separation of narrative standpoint (heterodiegetic or not), narrative behavior (subjectively evaluating or not) and focalization (epistemically limited or not), I argue that the parameter of narrative standpoint is mostly overestimated in the attribution of narrative unreliability. In the case of axiologically unreliable narration, the reason is that normative judgments can be passed on the behavior of both fictive and real persons and that – for reasons elaborated in the first section – these judgments (or evaluating stances) can be put forward by a homodiegetic narrator as much as by a heterodiegetic narrator. In both cases, the evaluations can either be consonant with the norms of the work as a whole, in which case the narrators are reliable, or not, in which case they are unreliable. What distinguishes heterodiegetic and homodiegetic narrators in relation to axiological unreliability, is the fact that only homodiegetic narrators can prove to be axiologically unreliable through their actions in

the narrated world, when these actions do not conform to their own norms; owing to their standpoint outside of the narrated world, this is not possible for heterodiegetic narrators. Whereas axiological unreliability in heterodiegetic texts is partly accepted in existing research, mimetic unreliability in heterodiegetic texts is much more strongly contested. It is true that not every internally focalized heterodiegetic narrative is unreliable in which information about the narrated world is withheld, marking the limited perspective of the focalized figure. Yet there are cases in which the introduction of internal focalization runs counter to the abundance of detail previously depicted and in this way amounts to a withholding of information that is not provided by a heterodiegetic narrator. He or she thereby keeps silent about the relevant information and can therefore be characterized as unreliable. Additionally, heterodiegetic narrators can also make contradictory statements, rendering them, at least temporarily, unreliable.

The reasons for rejecting a connection between unreliability and heterodiegetic narrators lie in the observation that heterodiegetic narrators are inventors of their stories, but also in the suggestion that heterodiegetic narrators are the only ones who afford access to the narrated world. Against this view, we can argue that the invention of a story also leaves open the possibility of not telling relevant facts for a sufficient understanding, in other words, of keeping silent; and, in just the same way, the privileging of a heterodiegetic narrator can be suspended.

To conclude, in the fourth section, I will use the short story »The Flight Simulator« by Christian Hardinghaus to substantiate my theoretical discussion and present a narrative that, first, is narrated heterodiegetically and, secondly, is mimetically unreliable in a twofold sense.

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