POSSIBLE WORLDS THEORY AND READERS' EMOTIONS: THE CONSTRUCTION OF TEXTUAL ACTUAL AND POSSIBLE WORLDS AND READERS' RESPONSES TO LITERATURE

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Thesis Summary

This thesis presents a cognitive stylistic exploration of readers' emotional experiences of literature. The study adopts Possible Worlds Theory for the formulation of a typology of textual actual and possible worlds, which is employed to facilitate stylistic analysis of some of the ways in which novels elicit readers' emotions. This thesis thus seeks to harness the rich potentiality of Possible Worlds Theory as a tool for the analysis of literature and its effects on readers. Readers' emotions are studied in the tradition of reader response research in stylistics, with empirical reader data utilised to support the stylistic analysis presented here.

Three twentieth-century novels originally written in English form the central focus of this study: *A Fine Balance* by Rohinton Mistry (2006 [1995]), *Revolutionary Road* by Richard Yates (2007 [1961]), and *The Trick is to Keep Breathing* (1999 [1989]) by Janice Galloway. These three texts were chosen firstly for their capacity to evoke emotions in readers, and secondly due to their varied thematic concerns and narrative style, thus enabling application of the typology developed for this thesis to a diverse selection of novels.

This thesis aims to offer two principal interdisciplinary and interdependent contributions. Firstly, I aim to demonstrate the capacity of Possible Worlds Theory to facilitate analysis of how fictional texts may affect readers' emotions. Secondly, this thesis offers a contribution to the burgeoning study of readers' emotions by suggesting the potential applications that Possible Worlds Theory offers to the field. Thirdly, alongside facilitating these principal contributions, the typology developed for analysis offers a framework for the exploration of how different forms of textual actual and possible worlds may interact with readers' emotions. Fourthly, the analysis presented here suggests the utility of empirical reader data in examining the effects elicited by the construction of textual actual and possible worlds.

Keywords

Possible Worlds Theory; readers' emotions; cognitive stylistics; reader response.

Acknowledgements

Contents

Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Overview

This chapter introduces the aims and contributions offered by this thesis, contextualising my research within cognitive stylistics, Possible Worlds Theory, and the study of readers' emotions. I present the core questions that underpin this research and provide an overview of the chapters contained in this thesis.

1.2 Aims, Context, and Contributions

The aim of this thesis is to contribute both to Possible Worlds Theory and to the study of readers' emotions by adopting an empirical and stylistic approach for the exploration of the ways in which the construction of textual actual and possible worlds within narratives may affect readers' emotions. Within this research, I draw on both linguistic and literary approaches in the tradition of stylistics, in order to illuminate some of the mechanisms contributing to readers' emotional responses to fictional texts. Stylistics can be traced back to the classical study of poetics and rhetoric (Burke 2014:2) but its origins as an analytical approach lie in Russian formalism, which stipulated that literature must be defined by its linguistic construction (Sotirova 2015:4). Stylistics is a broad discipline, but its central tenet is an insistence that language is fundamental to the construction of textual meaning: 'linguistic procedures' (Carter 1982:4) are key to any stylistic approach, in which language must be afforded 'primacy of place' (Simpson 2004:2). Stylistics therefore relies on using metalanguage or 'a common currency of technical terminology' (Stockwell and Whiteley 2014:5) to identify features for analysis. While stylisticians have outlined various examples of metalanguage that stylistic analysis might utilise (Jeffries and McIntyre 2010; Simpson 2012; Giovanelli and Mason 2018), there exists no single exhaustive list of features that stylisticians explore, given the inherent versatility of a discipline which draws on 'theories and models from other fields more frequently than it develops its own unique theories' (Jeffries and McIntyre 2010:3). This flexibility in approach, coupled with the attention to the construction of meaning through language that is fundamental to stylistics, renders stylistic analysis an appropriate method for exploring the linguistic construction of textual actual and possible worlds in this thesis. Despite its origins in formalism, stylistics has expanded to take account of readers' experiences, and is primarily 'an *applied* discipline' that facilitates '*productive* new ways' of viewing a text (Lambrou and Stockwell 2010:3, emphasis retained). Increasingly, stylisticians have drawn on reader response methods, which seek to support stylistic analysis by incorporating empirical data regarding readers' experiences of texts (Whiteley and Canning 2017), and this thesis is also situated within this stylistic tradition. More specifically, in

analysing how the stylistic construction of textual actual and possible worlds may affect readers emotionally, this thesis is situated within cognitive stylistics, which combines the linguistic analysis of literary texts with consideration of the 'cognitive structures and processes that underlie the production and reception of language' (Semino and Culpeper 2002:ix). Emotions are, as I detail in 3.2.2, fundamentally cognitive. Thus, any literary linguistic analysis that focuses on readers' emotions is inherently cognitively stylistic in nature.

In seeking to apply a possible worlds approach to the study of readers' emotions, the research presented in this thesis firstly offers a contribution to Possible Worlds Theory by demonstrating its capacity to facilitate analysis of some of the ways in which fictional texts may affect readers' emotions. Originating in philosophical conceptualisations of alternative possible worlds existing alongside the actual world (Leibniz 1991 [c.1675]; Kripke 1959; Lewis 1973a, 1973b), Possible Worlds Theory has been applied to the analysis of narrative and exploration of concepts of possibility in fictional texts (Pavel 1975; Eco 1979; Ryan 1985, 1991a; see Chapter 2 for a more extensive overview). Using the metaphor of text-as-world, Possible Worlds Theory suggests that readers conceptualise narratives as containing a multitude of possible worlds. As a conceptual framework, it thus 'invoke(s) our intuitive, prephilosophical belief that ''things could be different from what they are''' (Bell and Ryan 2019:3), relying on our inherent understanding of life as containing an innumerable set of possibilities. Crucially, though, whilst Possible Worlds Theory has been used to explore myriad aspects and forms of fictional texts, such as counterfactual fiction (Raghunath 2020), fantasy (Martin 2019), and digital fiction (Bell 2019), it has not previously been utilised as a specific method for analysis of the ways in which readers' emotions may be affected by the construction of possibility and actuality in literature. Yet since textual possible worlds denote the future beliefs, hopes, wishes, and intentions of characters (Eco 1979:32; Ryan 1991a:109), which are accordingly experienced by readers, they are arguably intrinsically emotional. Furthermore, since textual possible worlds 'stem from *both* a reader's inferences or expectations and a narrator's strategies' (Grishakova 2019:90, emphasis retained), Possible Worlds Theory has the capacity to facilitate analysis that considers readers' experiences – which includes their emotions – as well as the stylistic construction of narratives. Therefore, in the stylistic application of Possible Worlds Theory presented here, I aim to exemplify its potential as a tool for the exploration of the ways in which fictional texts may elicit readers' emotions.

Secondly, the research outlined here in turn contributes to the study of readers' emotions in stylistics by illustrating the potential of Possible Worlds Theory to enrich understanding of the mechanisms contributing to readers' emotional responses to narratives. Explorations of readers' emotions have focused on a range of narrative and linguistic elements (Cupchik et al. 1998; Miall 2006; Oatley and Mar 2008; Bell et al. 2019), and the study of readers' emotions spans

psychology (Mar et al. 2011), literary studies (Keen 2007; Hogan 2011) and cognitive stylistics (Stockwell 2009; Burke 2010; Whiteley 2011; Nuttall 2017). In cognitive stylistics, the role of the reader is centralised and 'grammar and experience are not separate categories' (Stockwell 2009:26). Research in stylistics has thus used empirical methods to explore readers' responses (Canning 2017; Bell et al. 2019), with some stylisticians having specifically utilised empirical methods alongside stylistic analysis to explore readers' emotions (Whiteley 2010; Fernandez-Quintanilla 2020). However, no existing research in stylistics has specifically utilised Possible Worlds Theory as a framework for exploration of the ways in which fictional texts affect readers emotionally. Yet since Possible Worlds Theory suggests that reading engenders the envisioning of possibilities which are either realised or not as readers progress through a narrative, it lends itself to an exploration of the emotional consequences of such envisioning of possibility. In my application of Possible Worlds Theory in this thesis, I therefore highlight its capacity to work as a theoretical framework facilitating analysis of factors that may help to explain the emotions experienced by readers in response to novels, and thus demonstrate its potential usefulness as a tool for the exploration of readers' emotions in stylistics.

Thirdly, to achieve these interdisciplinary contributions to Possible Worlds Theory and the study of readers' emotions, I formulate a typology of textual actual and possible worlds to frame my stylistic analysis of the emotion-causing elements of novels. Alongside enabling the contributions outlined above by facilitating the cognitive stylistic analysis presented in this thesis, this typology presents its own contribution as a flexible tool which I demonstrate can be utilised to explore the ways in which novels may elicit emotions through the construction of possibility and actuality. My typology draws on long-standing conceptions of possibility and actuality in Possible Worlds Theory (Pavel 1975; Eco 1979; Ryan 1985, 1991a) but adapts the existing broad framework of textual actual and possible worlds (Ryan 1991; Bell 2010) to formulate several sub-types within these categorisations. Applications of Possible Worlds Theory have sought to cast light on the way in which concepts of possibility and actuality are constructed, developed, and altered throughout fictional texts. Most notably, in Ryan's (1985:717-18) concept of the '*perfective process*' in which an '*actualizable domain*' is created (Ryan 1985:720) out of previously existing textual possible worlds, she suggests that as a narrative progresses, some textual possible worlds are actualised, whereas others are removed, altered, or otherwise do not come to fruition. However, while a range of typologies exist for the analysis of textual possible worlds, which I outline in 2.3-2.4, no existing typology in Possible Worlds Theory has provided a framework for the segmentation of textual actual and possible worlds according to their temporal location within narratives. In so doing, my own typology aims to render explicit the shifting nature of possibility and actuality inherent in the existence of textual actual and possible worlds, in order to facilitate

exploration of the emotional implications of the different forms of textual actual and possible worlds existing at different points within narratives.

The typology devised for the research presented here is comprised of two forms of textual actual worlds, which are the Past Textual Actual World (PTAW) and the Current Textual Actual World (CTAW), and three forms of textual possible worlds, namely Past Textual Possible Worlds (PTPWs), Counterfactual Textual Worlds (CFTWs, denoting present-tense possible worlds in which an alternative reality is envisioned), and Future Textual Possible Worlds (FTPWs). I further justify my development of this typology in 3.3.1 before defining the core qualities of each world-type in 3.3.3-7. In dividing textual actual and possible worlds into different categories according to the past, present, and future worlds of a narrative, I aim to facilitate analysis of the way narratives not only construct textual actual and possible worlds at different points, but also may alter or remove them, thus affecting readers' emotions. This typology, therefore, aligns with the capacity of Possible Worlds Theory to expose the 'ontological landscapes' that exist within fictional texts (Bell 2007:46) by demonstrating how textual possibilities and actualities may be constructed, altered, and sometimes removed. Accordingly, Possible Worlds Theory should elucidate concepts and meanings which extend 'beyond the borders of the lexical features' contained within a narrative (Martin 2004:90); the stylistic analysis applied within my typology is utilised therefore not only to examine the linguistic construction of textual actual and possible worlds and to demarcate their existence within narratives, but also as a means of casting light on the ways in which textual actual and possible worlds may affect readers' emotions. The typology is applied to three literary novels: *A Fine Balance* by Rohinton Mistry (2006 [1995]), *Revolutionary Road* by Richard Yates (2007 [1961]), and *The Trick is to Keep Breathing* (1999 [1989]) by Janice Galloway. In 4.9, I explain my rationale for selecting these three twentieth-century novels to exemplify the affordances of the typology introduced in 3.3.1 and applied in Chapters 5-10 of this thesis.

Fourthly, this research presents a contribution to Possible Worlds Theory by demonstrating the utility of empirical reader data in exemplifying some of the potential effects of the construction of textual actual and possible worlds. Previous possible worlds approaches have tended to focus on a theoretical reader (Eco 1979, Ryan 1991) rather than using empirical reader data, as the development of theoretical conceptualisations of textual actual and possible worlds has been key to the formulation of Possible Worlds Theory. I acknowledge that even stylistic approaches which rely solely on the researcher's analysis are 'indirectly empirical' (Brône and Vandaele 2009:7) since even introspective stylistic approaches rely on personal, felt experiences of texts alongside analysis of language (Stockwell 2021:166). Thus, whilst reader response methods have not tended to be used within Possible Worlds Theory, stylistic applications of Possible Worlds Theory which

do not employ reader data should not be dismissed as unempirical. However, in utilising empirical reader data to cast light on the emotions elicited by texts prior to applying the typology of textual actual and possible worlds to my analysis, I am able to acknowledge the role of the reader in co-constructing meaning and to exemplify some of the emotions provoked by narratives prior to examining textual factors potentially contributing to their construction.

Alongside these four principal contributions, the analysis presented in Chapters 5-10 within the framework of the typology formulated for this thesis also contributes to the terminology of Possible Worlds Theory by providing a set of descriptive vocabulary that can be utilised within analysis of the construction of textual actual and possible worlds. Firstly, I provide a useful term for exploring the degree of likelihood offered by a textual possible world: *attainable*. I use this term chiefly with reference to FTPWs to denote how likely or unlikely a future possible world is presented to be within a narrative, and as a means of identifying some of the ways in which readers' emotions may be linked not only to the existence or lack of existence of a possible world, but also to the degree to which such a world is presented as attainable for the characters. This therefore provides a means of exploring gradations of possibility and the potential attendant effects of these variations on the emotional implications for readers. I also suggest the term *restricted* as a means of exploring the limitations imposed on the FTPWs of characters, which I apply in 6.4 to examine the ways in which some textual possible worlds may be stylistically constructed as less attainable due to being restricted by external factors such as characters' societal positions and past experiences. Finally, when exploring the implications of the removal or disappearance of textual actual and possible worlds, I adopt the term *occlusion* from Stockwell's (2009:21) stylistic model of 'attention-resonance'. Stockwell (2009:22) uses this term to denote the textual process whereby a 'focused element comes to *occlude* the previously focused figure', thus helping to cast light on why stylistic features can elicit a '*prolonged response*' (Stockwell 2009:18; emphasis retained) in readers even after they are no longer textually present. Thus, my own use of the term enables me to identify the point at which certain textual actual and possible worlds are textually removed and thus are stylistically constructed as shifting to Past Textual Possible Worlds or Past Textual Actual Worlds. In a typology that aims to formulate a more explicitly temporal focus for the delineation of textual actual and possible worlds, the adoption of this term enables identification and exploration of the moment at which one set of textual actual and possible worlds is replaced by another. In establishing some transferable terminology for describing world-attainability as well as world-removal, I aim to formulate a linguistic resource that has the potential not only to facilitate analysis within my own application of the typology in this thesis but also to contribute to other applications of Possible Worlds Theory.

1.3 Research Questions

The aims of this thesis are encapsulated in three key questions used to guide this research:

RQ1: How are textual actual and possible worlds constructed stylistically in narratives?

RQ2: How can Possible Worlds Theory help to explain the ways that narratives might elicit emotional responses from readers?

RQ3: How does the temporally segmented typology developed for this thesis provide a useful framework for the analysis of textual actual and possible worlds?

These research questions are separated to clarify the core intentions of this study, but they should be viewed holistically rather than disparately as they are fundamentally indissociable: analysis of the construction of textual actual and possible worlds (RQ1) helps to illuminate the ways in which narratives might elicit readers' emotions (RQ2), and this in turn demonstrates the typology's capacity to provide a framework for the analysis of textual actual and possible worlds (RQ3). Throughout, these three research questions guide the key contributions presented here and are fundamental to the development of the typology outlined in Chapter 3 which shapes the stylistic analysis undertaken in Chapters 5-10.

1.4 Thesis Structure

Following this introductory chapter, I introduce Possible Worlds Theory in Chapter 2, outlining its origins in philosophy before presenting a review of the literature pertaining to some of its applications in literary studies. In Chapter 3, I review the study of readers' emotions, explaining my use of the term 'emotion' before going on to explain the development of the cognitive view of emotion that underpins the research presented in this thesis and outlining existing research relating to the study of readers' emotions. After the overview of the study of readers' emotions given in this chapter, I then present the typology developed for this research, outlining its components as a framework for stylistic analysis of textual actual and possible worlds. As well as explaining the rationale for the typology in 3.3.1 and outlining the typology in 3.3.2-7, I also detail the selection of world-types for analysis in Chapters 5-10 of this thesis and thus explain the structure of these analytical chapters in 3.3.8. In Chapter 4, I explain the methodology adopted for this research, situating my research within cognitive stylistics and demarcating the research design for the empirical aspect of this study, which utilises reader response data. I also explain my text choices and set out the ethical issues that were considered throughout the process of undertaking this research. Subsequently, in Chapters 5-10, I undertake stylistic analysis within the framework of the typology established in Chapter 3. Prior to the analysis presented in each chapter, I present a review of readers' responses to these novels using reader data obtained both from online reviews and reader interviews. This enables me to demonstrate some of the emotions experienced by readers of the focus texts before using my typology to analyse how constructions

of actuality and possibility might be partly responsible for the elicitation of readers' emotions. Finally, in Chapter 11, I provide some conclusions drawn from the stylistic analysis undertaken in Chapters 5-10 and demonstrate how the thesis addresses the research questions established in 1.3, as well as summarising its contributions to the interdisciplinary fields of cognitive stylistics and Possible Worlds Theory. I reflect on some limitations to this study that arise from analysis and conclude by suggesting potential further applications and adaptations of the research presented here.

1.5 Summary

In this chapter, I have set out the parameters for this thesis and the aims of the research presented here. I have outlined the principal contributions to knowledge that this thesis presents, both to Possible Worlds Theory and to the study of readers' emotions, suggesting that my research both works to demonstrate the capacity of Possible Worlds Theory to be adopted as a theoretical framework for the stylistic analysis of the factors contributing to the emotional effects elicited by narratives, and also indicates how Possible Worlds Theory may be usefully adopted by researchers of readers' emotions. I have explained that alongside facilitating these interdisciplinary contributions, the typology developed for this thesis offers an additional contribution to Possible Worlds Theory by providing a framework for the temporal segmentation of textual actual and possible worlds within narratives. Finally, I have suggested that the descriptive vocabulary utilised within the analysis presented in this thesis offers a further terminological contribution to Possible Worlds Theory by providing a linguistic resource for analysis of textual actual and possible worlds within the typology developed for this study. After demarcating the aims, context, and contributions of this research, I have summarised my research questions and outlined the structure of this thesis. In the next chapter, I situate my research in relation to Possible Worlds Theory by providing a review of relevant literature.

Chapter 2

Possible Worlds Theory

2.1 Overview

In this chapter, I summarise the philosophical basis of Possible Worlds Theory, including briefly outlining debates pertaining to whether possible worlds should be conceptualised as literal or metaphorical entities. I then explore the development of Possible Worlds Theory and some of its key applications to literary studies. I outline and counter some criticisms of Possible Worlds Theory and suggest its usefulness as a framework for the analysis of some of the ways in which narratives may affect readers emotionally.

2.2 The Philosophical Basis of Possible Worlds Theory

The concept of possible worlds was inspired to some extent by Leibniz's (1991 [c.1675]) metaphysical philosophy that the actual world was created by God as the best of all possible worlds from an infinite choice of many possible worlds. This 'Divine Choice Theory' of existence (Adams 1974) was adapted by Kripke (1959, 1963a, 1963b) in his theories of modal logic, in which he developed the concept of a model universe in which possible worlds revolve around the actual world. Conceptions of possible worlds have in common the notion of an alternative reality, the actuality or ontological 'real-ness' of which is a matter of debate (Menzel 1990). Most notably, in Lewis' controversial theory of modal realism (1973a, 1973b, 1979, 1986), possible worlds are conceived as concrete entities with no fundamental difference in state from the actual world. For Lewis (1979:184), the human perception of the actual world as 'real' and other worlds as 'possible' is only due to a subjective sense of being located or centred in *this* world: 'Actual is indexical, like "I" or "here" or "now"; it depends for its reference on the circumstances of an utterance, to wit the world where the utterance is located'. The concept of actuality as being informed by our own position in the world is 'particularly appealing in an age that questions the centrality of any culture or identity or even of the human race, since the notion of indexicality allows every possible world to function as an actual world, that is to say, as the centre of a particular system of reality' (Bell and Ryan 2019:7-8).

Nonetheless, many philosophers strongly object to Lewis's conception of possible worlds as alternative worlds just as ontologically real as our own. Kripke (1980:44) maintains that possible worlds are sets of counterfactual conditions which are constructed conceptually: 'Possible worlds are stipulated, not discovered by powerful telescopes'. Plantinga (1974) and Stalnaker (1976) challenge Lewis's literal ontological conception of possible worlds, instead exploring possible worlds as conceptualisations of ways the actual world could have been. Bradley and Schwartz

(1979:5) reiterate that possible worlds are 'located in conceptual space', and similarly Cresswell (1988:4) proposes that 'possible worlds are things we can talk about or imagine, suppose, believe in or wish for'. Materna (1998:15), likewise, defines a possible world as 'a collection of thinkable facts', while Rescher (1975:216) proposes that 'possibility is tantamount to conceivability'. In other words, possible worlds depend for their existence on what human beings are able to imagine. Furthermore, Rescher (1999:403) emphasises that any attempt to conceptualise possible worlds in terms of realism is 'deeply problematic' and calls instead for an 'ontologically more modest' approach in the form of conceptualism, in which possible worlds represent tools of envisioning possibility. As imaginative acts on the part of the individual, possible worlds can thus be viewed as 'anchored in prephilosophical thinking' (Loux 1979:62) and inherent to human nature. These latter more abstract, flexible philosophical conceptions of possible worlds, which enable the speculative exploration of 'what might be' or 'what might have been', can be seen as the starting point for the study of possible worlds in literary studies, as I outline below.

2.3 Possible Worlds in Literary Studies

In line with some of the latter more metaphorical philosophical conceptualisations of Possible Worlds Theory outlined in 2.2, applications of Possible Worlds Theory in literary studies have tended to view possible worlds as conceptual entities or as 'mental constructs' (Bell and Ryan 2019:6). Possible Worlds Theory can therefore be employed as a framework that casts light on the ways in which readers may conceptualise the possibilities that lie within and beyond a fictional text; for example, the potential directions a character's life might take, or possible fictional events that might or might not occur.

Pavel (1975) first utilised Possible Worlds Theory as a literary framework, suggesting that a text contains both actual and possible worlds. Whilst warning against complete separation of fictional worlds and the actual world, which would render fiction unable to provide insights about the actual world to its readers, Pavel (1975:165) argues that the theory provides a way of establishing the 'semantical autonomy of literary works', in which each text constructs its own 'ontological perspective' (Pavel 1975:175), with its own fictional world containing its own set of possibilities. Accordingly, Eco (1979) conceptualises a text as a universe of myriad potentialities, or as a 'machine for producing possible worlds' (Eco 1979:246), integrating concepts from philosophy and narrative theory. Eco categorises fictional texts into a broad typology of possible worlds: the possible world established by the author within the *fabula,* or plot; the possible worlds shaped by the characters, for example through their beliefs, intentions and wishes (also known as possible subworlds); and the possible worlds constructed by readers based on 'common' and 'intertextual frames' (Eco 1979:32). These possible worlds are developed in the mind of Eco's (1979:7) 'Model Reader', whose hopes, dreams and desires for a character will later either be confirmed

or disrupted by the progression of the plot. Eco's notion of reader-constructed frames for conceiving of possible worlds is echoed in Herman's (2002:5) narratological notion that readers build 'mental models' based on interactions with narratives. Accordingly, Doležel (1998:31) argues that possible worlds are fundamental to narrative theory, as 'the basic concept of narratology is not "story" but "narrative world", defined within a typology of possible worlds'. Echoing Ronen's (1994:51) claim that possible worlds are 'non-actualized', Doležel (1998:14) envisions fictional worlds as innumerable 'non-actualized' potential states of affairs constructed in readers' minds, with texts containing an unlimited number of 'possible worlds', which are 'human constructs', enabling us to envision alternative possibilities beyond the incomplete world of the text. Doležel (1976) also develops a modal typology of fictional worlds: 'alethic' worlds are determined by degrees of possibility, impossibility, and necessity; 'axiological' worlds centre on morality; 'deontic' worlds are governed by obligation and permission; and 'epistemic' worlds depend on knowledge and belief (Doležel 1976:7). The typology thus facilitates classification of how different modal structures can work to construct fictional worlds across entire narratives.

In Ryan's (1991a) influential system for the analysis of possible worlds, she proposes a modal universe that comprises 'three modal systems [the actual universe, the textual universe, and the referential universe], centred around three distinct actual worlds' (Ryan 1991a:24). In other words, each of these separate systems contains an 'actual world' with 'possible worlds' revolving around the central point of actuality. Thus, a fictional text itself – or the 'universe' of a text – will contain a textual actual world as well as textual possible worlds, which exist in the minds of characters, for example within their wishes, dreams, and beliefs. The 'actual universe' refers to the same system of possibility and actuality existing within the actual world of reality. The textual referential universe is the 'the world for which the text claims facts' (Ryan 1991a:vii), or the world that is established to exist by the text. Ryan (1991a:26) suggests that, in fictional texts, the textual reference world is 'interchangeable' with the textual actual world. To refer separately to the textual reference world and the textual actual world is arguably, then, unnecessary. The ontological inextricability of these worlds is reflected in Bell's (2010) development of a simplified modal universe for the analysis of hypertext fiction, which avoids the use of a separate textual reference world: the 'textual universe of fiction comprises a textual actual world and alternative possible worlds only' (Bell 2010:24). I take this simplified model as a starting point for the analysis of possible and actual worlds facilitated by the typology introduced in 3.3.2.

According to Ryan (1991a), readers undergo a process of 'recentering' in which possibilities are 'recentered around the sphere which the narrator presents as the actual world' which thus brings into being a 'new system of actuality and possibility' (Ryan 1991a:22). While Ryan does not analyse readers' emotional responses in depth, this concept of reading as 'recentering' (1991a:13-

30), in which readers locate themselves within the textual actual world, works as a theoretical frame that helps to explain readers' immersion in fictional texts. In turn, readers' immersion in the text as a world can help to explain their emotional responses to texts (Ryan 1998:143). Further to this, Ryan suggests that immersion can take place on a scale of four domains, namely concentration, imaginative involvement, entrancement, and addiction (Ryan 2016:69), and that readers may experience these different degrees of immersion depending on multiple contributing factors impacting their engagement. Ryan (1991a) also builds on Vaina's (1977) suggestion that possible worlds are created through the 'mental activity' (Ryan 1991a:4) of characters to suggest that textual possible worlds are 'story-like constructs contained in the private worlds of characters' (Ryan 1991a:156) which then exist also in the minds of readers. Ryan (1991a:19) thus categorises different forms of textual possible worlds according to the 'constructs of the mind' they relate to, suggesting that they can be formulated by dreams, hypotheticals or counterfactuals, projections, fantasy, wishes, intentions, and beliefs. These categorisations encapsulate, then, the way mental constructions of characters within texts work to create possible worlds. Arguably, by suggesting that narratives are experienced by readers as formulating a world of 'actuality and possibility' (Ryan 1991a:22), Ryan implicitly acknowledges the capacity of fiction to elicit emotions, since the process of envisioning or wishing for possible outcomes for a character (Ryan 1991a:19) suggests some degree of emotional investment in what might happen to them.

Ryan's (1980; 1991a) principle of minimal departure is key to her (1991a) model, and partly helps to explain the aforementioned process of fictional 'recentering' (Ryan 1991a:13-30) experienced by readers. This principle or 'law' (1991a:51) proposes we 'reconstrue the central world of a textual universe in the same way we reconstrue the alternate possible worlds of nonfactual statements: as conforming as far as possible to our representation of AW [the Actual World]' (1991a:51). In other words, Ryan suggests that readers construct textual actual and possible worlds based on their knowledge of the real world, and that we 'project upon these worlds everything we know about reality, and […] make only the adjustments dictated by the text' (1991a:51), thus assuming similarity between the textual actual world and their own actual world unless otherwise informed by the narrative. Ryan's principle of minimal departure casts light, then, on the process whereby readers construct the textual universe partly using their pre-existing knowledge of the actual world. Pavel (1986:93) adapts Ryan's principle to suggest that 'maximal departure' is experienced when readers are confronted with information that contradicts dramatically with their experience of the world – for instance in fantasy or science fiction novels – while Wang (2019:134) responds that the principles of minimal and maximal departure should be considered as 'two ends on the same spectrum of fictional credulity'.

An approach using Possible Worlds Theory can facilitate understanding of events that transpire within a text by casting light on the way the textual actual world, or the 'sphere regarded as real by the characters' (Ryan 1985:720), has a form of textual reality that separates it from the envisioning of textual possibility. While fictional worlds are ontologically incomplete in comparison to the actual world (Doležel 1998:14), simultaneously 'textual worlds are *finite'* (Rastier 2000:55-56) and fictional worlds are 'preserved' (Doležel 1998:16), in that once a text is finished, nothing can be altered or removed. Ryan has also called the textual actual world 'the factual domain', arguing that as states of possibility are actualised, an '*actualizable domain'* is created (Ryan 1985:720). According to Ryan (1985:717-18), if a narrative is conceptualised as 'a temporal succession of different states of affairs mediated by events' then these states of affairs have a 'truth value' which is established via the progression of events throughout a text, or by a '*perfective process'* in which certain possibilities are actualised. Further to this, Ryan (1985:718) suggests that 'as the narrative progresses, the reader considers an increasing number of propositions, both stative and active, and constantly reevaluates the stative propositions', indicating that readers' conceptualisations of textual possible and active worlds progress throughout narratives. A similar concept is echoed in Ryan's (2019:63) later suggestion that 'storyworlds' are 'totalities that encompass space, time and individuated existents that undergo transformations as the results of events'. The process of actualisation and transformation proposed by Ryan is acknowledged in the temporally grounded typology I suggest in 3.3.3-7, which aims to specify some of the alterations in the state of textual actual and textual possible worlds which take place as a narrative progresses. Similarly, Grishakova (2019:89) sets Possible Worlds Theory against the 'reductive mold' of other narrative theory, suggesting that 'fictional narratives bring to life numberless embedded alternative worlds'. She cites Morson (1994:6), who suggests that in the progress of a narrative, 'alternatives once visible disappear from view'. Again, the typology I outline in 3.2.2-7 aims to illuminate not only the construction of textual possible and actual worlds but also the way certain textual possible worlds do indeed 'disappear from view' in the course of a narrative.

In my own model of textual actual and possible worlds, they are partly 'stipulated' (Kripke 1980:44) by the fictional world created by the author, as in Doležel's (2019:56) notion that in writing a narrative, 'the author creates a fictional world that had not been available prior to this act'. However, I also conceptualise textual actual and possible worlds as co-constructed by the reader. The individual role of the reader in co-constructing possible worlds has been acknowledged in Possible Worlds Theory. Semino (2014:83-84) points out that, in possible worlds frameworks, 'what is taken as "actual" is not an absolute notion, but is dependent on historical, ideological and cultural factors', suggesting that the readers' own experiences are relevant; similarly, Fort (2016:70) notes that 'readers during their reconstruction of fictional

worlds employ […] the world of their every day, non-rationalised experience'. Both acknowledge, then, the impact of readers' own experiences. Bell's (2010) application of possible worlds to hypertext fiction focuses on exploring the ontological configuration of possible worlds, but also acknowledges the significance of the reader in literally co-constructing narrative paths by selecting from a range of choices and thus becoming aware of their active role in the fictional process. Caracciolo (2019) has linked the plot structures of texts and their possible worlds to readers' emotions, suggesting that texts tend to structurally unfold in an analogous way to real-world events and that this 'logic of unfolding' or 'the way in which a fictional narrative opens itself to its readers' (Caracciolo 2019:115) has not previously been afforded enough attention in possible worlds approaches. Arguing that the 'affective dynamics' governing fictional worlds are 'fundamentally the same' as those we experience in reality, Caracciolo (2019:126) admits that his own research is speculative and theoretical rather than grounded in analysis, but proposes that affective patterns underlie our responses to texts.

Addressing a lack of specificity regarding the cognitive processes readers use to comprehend textual possible worlds, Raghunath (2020:66) expands Ryan's (1991a:114-116) concept of characters' knowledge worlds to include 'reader knowledge worlds' or 'RK-worlds' to exemplify the pre-existing knowledge readers use to comprehend the 'counterfactual textual actual worlds' (Raghunath 2020:84) of counterfactual historical fiction. She suggests a typology of reader knowledge consisting of 'complete', 'partial', and 'zero' RK-worlds (Raghunath 2020:66), which aims to reflect the different levels of knowledge readers use to inform their understanding of texts. However, whether any reader can ever truly have 'zero' knowledge about any topic is contestable given that comprehension of narratives is partly dependent on the activation of schemata (Semino 1997:123; Burke 2010:6), and therefore to have some form of pre-existing knowledge, however incomplete, is inevitable. Nonetheless, Raghunath successfully applies this framework to the analysis of counterfactual historical fiction, in which a reader's RK-world is considered complete when they have sufficient background knowledge to identify all the historical deviations presented in the textual actual world. Raghunath (2020:77) suggests that RK-worlds are formulated in a process of 'ontological superimposition' whereby when reading a counterfactual historical fiction text, the textual actual world is superimposed on the reader's experience and knowledge of the actual world, helping them to formulate their understanding of the text. Raghunath (2020:87) posits that readers engage in a process of 'reciprocal feedback' in which they use their knowledge of the actual world we live in to interpret the counterfactual textual actual world, before using their understanding of the counterfactual textual actual world to then formulate a greater understanding of the actual world. Raghunath's research, then, acknowledges the importance of readers' prior experiences in the form of historical knowledge in the co-construction of textual meaning. This approach uses textual analysis and theoretical exploration

of RK-worlds, rather than empirical reader data; however, as I note in 4.2, a researcher's own experience of reading a text may act, in itself, as a form of reader response data.

2.4 Degrees of Possibility and Impossibility in Possible Worlds Theory

A contentious aspect of Possible Worlds Theory is 'what lies beyond the horizon of the possible' (Bell and Ryan 2019:5). Eco (1990:76) argues that impossible worlds that defy the rules of logic can be 'mentioned' but not 'constructed' – or do not exist – due to their logical incoherence and associated inconceivability in the mind of the reader. While acknowledging the logical contestability of the term 'impossible world', Ryan (2013:130) responds that 'even if logic tells us that the phrase "impossible world" is an oxymoron, I will keep using it because the readers of literary fiction have a broader sense of what is a world than logicians'. Impossible worlds have been characterised, therefore, as worlds belonging to the realm of fantasy or alternative reality. A number of the most recent applications of Possible Worlds Theory (Alber 2009, 2016, and 2019; Ryan 2013; Martin 2019; Schukneckt 2019) explore texts with an element of ontological impossibility and have continued to label these 'impossible worlds'. Accordingly, Bell and Ryan (2019:22) argue that narrative structures which suggest the existence of multiple possible worlds, for example 'counterfactual history, forking-path narratives, and many worlds cosmologies', are of particular relevance to Possible Worlds Theory. The application of Possible Worlds Theory to such alternative worlds is exemplified in the work of Bell (2010) who uses the framework to analyse the forking-path narratives of hypertext fiction. Martin (2019) argues that Possible Worlds Theory is a useful vehicle for the exploration of fantasy texts, whereas Schuknecht (2019) explores the applicability of possible worlds to utopia and dystopia, and Alber (2009:79) applies possible worlds to an analysis of 'impossible worlds', including the 'unnatural worlds' in fiction which are logically impossible but nonetheless convincing. Counterfactual fiction, as examined in Raghunath's (2020) typology, represents another form of impossible world.

This focus on fictional worlds with varying degrees of impossibility is reflected in the concept of accessibility relations, established in modal logic (Lewis 1973; Hughes and Cresswell 1968:78; Kripke 1963a; Kripke 1963b) and developed by Ryan (1991b:553-576), who suggests that the level of accessibility of a possible world within a text is determined by its degree of similarity to the actual world. Ryan (1991a:32-33, 1991b:553-4) develops a typology of accessibility relations delineating the distance a text has, or how accessible it is, from the actual world, in order to explain how the reader's sense of reality is applied in fictional worlds. Textual actual worlds are held to be accessible from the actual world (the world of the reader's reality) in several ways, to different degrees, which are:

a) Identity of properties – relating to whether objects in each world have the same properties;

b) Identity of inventory – or the similarity of objects existing in the textual actual world to those that exist in our actual world;

c) Compatibility of inventory;

d) Chronological compatibility;

e) Physical compatibility – relating to natural laws;

f) Taxonomic compatibility;

g) Logical compatibility;

h) Analytical compatibility;

i) Linguistic compatibility.

Different elements of the framework may be either rigid or relaxed depending on the genre of the text and the degree of its removal from reality. For example, in a historical or realist novel, element A (identity of properties) will remain the same but C (compatibility of inventory) will differ, as the number and type of objects within this world will extend from those experienced in the reader's actual world. Ryan (2013:131) also outlines the characteristics of five types of 'impossible worlds' which can be created in fictional texts: 'contradictions', 'ontological impossibility' (denoting metalepsis and co-presence in the same world of characters originating in different texts), 'impossible space', 'impossible time', and 'impossible texts'. Meanwhile, Maitre (1983:79) classifies fictional texts within a typology including stories depicting historical events, texts relating events that could occur, texts containing both possible and logically impossible worlds, and texts that focus wholly on states of affairs that could never exist, such as fantasy novels. The role of the reader is acknowledged in Maitre's typology (1983:81) in that she suggests readers must cross-reference their knowledge of the actual world with the fictional world as described in the text. Given these existing typologies encompassing impossible worlds and since my analysis focuses on realist texts, I avoid using the term 'impossible' within my own analysis and typology, to avoid confusion with those worlds which are, according to the logical restrictions of our own actual world, impossible. Instead, as introduced in 1.2 and as I will explain further in 3.3.7, I use the term *attainable* to denote different levels of possibility for the realisation of a textual possible world.

2.5 Debates Regarding the Application of Possible Worlds Theory to Literary Analysis

Some criticisms of Possible Worlds Theory have centred around the application of a philosophical framework that was originally grounded in modal logic to the analysis of literature. While Pavel (1975) initially used the term 'possible worlds', he later adopted the term 'fictional world', suggesting that possible worlds are too 'technically impeccable' and 'narrowly defined' (Pavel

1986:50) in their logical structures to be neatly translated to fiction. Ronen (1994:7), likewise, cautions against the use of Possible Worlds Theory as a 'diffuse metaphor' in literary studies while Habermas (1987) opposes the eradication of distinctions between literature and philosophy more generally. Defending the use of approaches originating in philosophy in literary analysis, Johansen (2002:97) suggests philosophical approaches can be productively applied to literary texts as both relate the 'actions and passions of human beings situated within a certain universe imagined to exist'. Ronen (1994:25) qualifies her criticism by stipulating that as possible worlds is a broad concept reflecting various philosophical approaches, it requires 'prior interpretation and qualification' before being applied to other conceptual frameworks. In other words, the use of Possible Worlds Theory needs to be justified and clarified wherever it is used within any approach that removes it from its philosophical origins. Bell (2010:23) supports this, suggesting that the adoption of a philosophical framework for literary analysis is fruitful as long as existing theoretical models are reflected upon and adapted for a literary context. In the typology outlined in 3.3.2-7 and applied in Chapters 5-10, I attempt to provide such an adaptation.

Walsh (2007:473), however, questions the world metaphor inherent in Possible Worlds Theory, criticising the way world theories require us to view texts as inhabiting the realm of spatial cognition as well as temporal cognition and arguing that texts are instead formed in a 'linear temporal sequence'. This argument is weakened by the fact that many fictional texts are *not* straightforwardly linear, with interweaving plotlines and the use of structural techniques such as flashback commonplace: when reading a story, we imagine the world of that story taking place in imaginary space as well as time. Arguably, then, a fictional text always contains other worlds, spaces, or possibilities running alongside it even when its structure is linear. Further to this, Caracciolo (2019:114) counters that Walsh's (2007:473) claims are further undermined by the way we use spatial metaphors to describe time. Since we even use spatial metaphors to conceptualise the world (Lakoff and Johnson 1980), to state that time and space are somehow erroneously conflated in fictional worlds theories suggests that fiction inhabits a world entirely separate from the world of our existence. Yet, while acknowledging that some texts may be less fictionally 'complete' than others, Ryan (2019:75) suggests that as readers 'relocate' themselves within the storyworld, they experience it as sharing the 'ontological status of the real world and of its inhabitants unless otherwise specified'. She suggests that storyworlds are 'essentially concrete' (Ryan 2019:64) and are 'entire universes, since they contain not only an actual world of narrative facts but a multitude of possible worlds created by the mental activity of characters' (Ryan 2019:65). Accordingly, Martin (2004:82) suggests that possible worlds can be an indispensably useful tool for linguistic analysis 'without committing us to an extravagant metaphysics'. Notions of possibility pervade fiction, and Possible Worlds Theory need not remain inextricably bound to logical philosophy and enmeshed in the intricacies of logical and

philosophical argument. If we see possible worlds not as literal but as metaphorical conceptions, then we can understand the theory as a flexible framework that recognises the integral role of the envisioning of possibility to the experience of narratives.

2.6 Alternative Conceptualisations of Worlds in Literature

Importantly, the 'text as world' metaphor is not 'indebted to PW theory' (Bell and Ryan 2019:8) as the notion of world has long been present in literary studies, even where this has been presented without definition or qualification. Readers' mental representations of texts have variously been called 'text-worlds' (Werth 1999), 'storyworlds' (Herman 2002; Ryan 2019), 'mental spaces' (Fauconnier and Turner 2002:89), 'narrative worlds' (Gerrig 1993) and 'fictional worlds' (Doležel 1998, 2019; Fort 2016). Text World Theory in particular requires exploration, as its creator Paul Werth aims to provide a text-driven 'rich model […] a way of talking about states of affairs in something like their normal richness and complexity' (Werth 1999:72) in comparison to Possible Worlds Theory, which he dismisses as a 'simplification of the idea of "situation"' (Werth 1999:79-80). Thus, my use of Possible Worlds Theory requires justification for two principal reasons: firstly, because Possible Worlds Theory is contrasted negatively to Text World Theory by Werth as outlined above, and by some subsequent stylisticians as I discuss below; and secondly, because Text World Theory can be used as a mechanism to explore the emotional effects of novels on readers (Whiteley 2011). It is necessary, therefore, to outline Text World Theory in more depth to provide justification for my use of Possible Worlds Theory.

The premise of Text World Theory is that readers process texts by constructing mental representations, with its aim being to provide tools for systematic exploration of these text worlds. According to Text World Theory, texts are produced within a 'discourse world' or the context in which the language event takes place and are processed by readers as mental representations or 'text worlds' (Werth 1999:46). Werth (1999:72) criticises the logic-based models of Possible Worlds Theory, suggesting Text World Theory as an alternative capable of taking account of the real experiences of readers when encountering a text rather than the imaginary exploration of possible worlds. Yet, arguably, implicit knowledge of textual possible words is evidenced through emotional experience, and textual possible worlds therefore do exist, both in the linguistic construction of narratives and in readers' imaginations. I will suggest in this thesis that even if textual possible worlds do not transpire in reality, the emotions experienced through readers' knowledge of alternative possible worlds – such as pain felt when contemplating what 'might have been'– are real, even if they do not form part of our ontological experience of the 'actual world' beyond the literary text. Section 3.3 of this thesis contains a more detailed exploration of the extent to which readers' emotional responses to literary texts can be viewed as 'real'.

Gavins (2001:26) acknowledges that Possible Worlds Theory 'provides [...] a metaphor' for exploration of readers' 'transportation into an alternative time and space' but argues for the superiority of Text World Theory, suggesting that Text World Theory provides a more productive text-driven mechanism for linguistically analysing the construction of the world within the text. Text World Theory accounts for possibility through its treatment of modality: Werth's (1999:216) concept of 'attitudinal sub-worlds' is reconceptualised by Gavins to form a framework of deontic, epistemic, and boulomaic modal worlds (Gavins 2005, summarised in Giovanelli 2013:55), and developed further in Giovanelli's exploration of boulomaic modality in Keats's poetry and his examination of degrees of boulomaic possibility through the development of a 'desire-dream continuum' (Giovanelli 2013:75). Gavins's (2001, 2007) notion of 'world-switches' in Text World Theory can also be used to explore aspects of possibility as it refers to the way in which the linguistic construction of a text leads to shifts in spatial and temporal locations – which might be flashbacks or flashforwards, for example – and thus requires the reader to construct a new text-world. However, Possible Worlds Theory also has rich potential to enable exploration of the way in which possibilities are either realised or do not transpire throughout the progression of a narrative. Possible Worlds Theory is an enabling framework for the exploration of the emotional effects of the construction of possibility precisely because it is *specifically* related to possibility rather than other text worlds. In her application of Possible Worlds Theory to the analysis of hypertext fiction, Bell (2007:46) counters criticisms of a lack of 'conceptual and terminological coherence and consistency' with a suggestion that the focus of the theory is on 'the ontological landscapes within fictional texts, rather than on the associated cognitive processes which build those domains in the minds of readers'. An approach that privileges analysis of the text itself does not refute the importance of the reader, but rather enables observation of patterns, overarching concepts, and commonalities within texts.

Accordingly, the broad conceptual framework of Possible Worlds Theory is an appropriate vehicle of analysis for my own research as it enables exploration of constructions of actuality and possibility across novels, whilst still facilitating flexible stylistic analysis. Stockwell (2010:425) suggests that Possible Worlds Theory takes a 'top-down' approach to the analysis of world-building that renders it potentially less useful for stylistic analysis than Text World Theory. However, my research will counter that it is possible to explore the construction of possible worlds of the text linguistically, at the micro-level, as the same time as considering the implications of textual possible and actual worlds at the macro-level in the theoretical tradition of Possible Worlds Theory, in order to demonstrate some of the ways fictional texts are constructed to achieve emotional effects. Refuting criticisms of Possible Worlds Theory as a vague metaphorical concept, Pavel (2019) reminds us of the value and usefulness of metaphors before arguing that 'a possible literary world is a simple, clear way of pointing to the location,

period, culture and context in which the story narrated and the emotions disclosed by a literary world are taking place' (Pavel 2019:317) with the term 'world' enabling consideration not only of the setting of a literary work but the characters within it along with 'their interests, feelings, actions, and interactions' (Pavel 2019:317-18). In other words, Possible Worlds Theory allows us to track these narrative constructs across entire texts, because it is 'extremely proficient at simplifying very complex ontological configurations' (Bell 2010:25). By utilising a stylistic approach, I will address accusations of conceptual vagueness or lack of specificity in Possible Worlds Theory by demonstrating its capacity to frame stylistic analysis of some of the linguistic mechanisms eliciting emotional effects in readers.

2.7 Summary

In this chapter, I have outlined the philosophical basis of Possible Worlds Theory in 2.2, before discussing its existing applications to literary studies in 2.3, as well as notions of impossibility in Possible Worlds Theory in 2.4. In 2.3 and 2.4, I outlined several existing conceptualisations and typologies of possible worlds in literature, including Ryan's (1991) influential typology and Bell's (2010) simplified typology of textual actual worlds and textual possible worlds, which I take as the starting point of my own typology outlined in 3.3.2. I also discussed additional typologies and applications of Possible Worlds Theory, including Ryan's (1991a:32, 1991b:553-4) typology of accessibility relations and Raghunath's (2020) notion of 'reader knowledge worlds' or RK-worlds, and explained Ryan's (1985) conceptualisation of the possible worlds of fictional texts as undergoing a '*perfective process*' (Ryan 1985:717-718), in which an '*actualizable domain'* is created (Ryan 1985:720) from previously existing textual possible worlds. In 2.5, I addressed some criticisms levelled at Possible Worlds Theory, including comparisons to Text World Theory. In 2.6, I discussed some alternative conceptualisations of worlds in literary studies, further justifying my use of Possible Worlds Theory as a framework. Overall, then, I have demonstrated in this chapter some of the numerous applications of Possible Worlds Theory in literary analysis but have also indicated that there is space within Possible Worlds Theory for more explicit consideration of the potential impact of the construction of textual actual and possible worlds on readers' emotions. In Chapter 3, I will provide an overview of the development of a cognitive view of emotion and the study of readers' emotions in a secondary literature review, before outlining the typology devised for this study, which works to frame an analysis of textual possible and actual worlds and thus to help to illuminate how the construction of these worlds may affect readers' emotions.

Chapter 3

The Study of Readers' Emotions and a Typology for the Stylistic Analysis of Textual Actual and Possible Worlds

3.1 Overview

Following my overview of the origins and applications of Possible Worlds Theory in Chapter 2, in this chapter I broadly review the study of readers' emotional responses to literature. In the first sub-section of this chapter, I focus on outlining approaches to studying readers' emotions. In 3.2.1, I begin by justifying my use of the term 'emotion' in the light of existing definitions and conceptualisations of emotion, before discussing, in 3.2.2, some theoretical perspectives regarding the nature of emotion and the development of a cognitive view of emotion. In 3.2.3, I provide an overview of the study of readers' emotions. However, I do not review empirical approaches to the study of readers' emotions in depth in this section, as I detail several empirical methods in 4.2 before describing my own methodology.

In the second sub-section of Chapter 3, I outline the typology formulated as a framework for the analysis of the emotional effects of textual actual and possible worlds developed for this study. In 3.3.1, I establish the function of the typology in relation to existing research by briefly categorising some of the existing typologies which were introduced in Chapter 2, before summarising my own typology in 3.3.2. I then detail the features of each world-type separately in 3.3.2-7, in order to explain the applications of this typology to stylistic analysis of how the construction of textual possible and actual worlds may affect readers' emotional responses to texts. Subsequently in 3.3.8, I explain the process of selection of world-types for analysis and the consequent structure of Chapters 5-10.

3.2.1 The Use of the Term 'Emotion'

'Emotions' are defined in this thesis as responses to stimuli which are grounded in cognition, even though they may be felt and experienced physically. This conceptualisation of emotion contrasts with popular definitions of emotion as a 'feeling […] distinguished from reasoning or knowledge' (Lexico by Oxford Dictionary 2021) or 'the part of a person's character that consists of their feelings, as opposed to their thoughts' (Collins Dictionary 2021). However, cognitive theories of emotion cast into question the notion of emotion as distinct from reason, as I discuss in 3.2.2. The definition of 'emotion' is contentious (Izard 2010; Mulligan and Scherer 2012), but it may be fruitful to use a working definition of emotion and classify something as an emotion if it adheres to certain properties, for example, being episodic – having a beginning and an end – and intentionality, meaning that it is a feeling directed towards an object (Mulligan and Scherer

2012). These elements of the experience of emotion are supported by its definition as 'a conscious mental reaction' which may be 'subjectively experienced as strong feeling usually directed toward a specific object and typically accompanied by physiological and behavioural changes in the body' (Merriam-Webster 2020). This definition is in accordance with neurological research that suggests that emotions are reactions to external stimuli: Damasio (1999:56) suggests that emotions occur either due to encountering an event directly through the senses, or through imagination or memories recalling situations or events.

'Feeling' has also been identified as distinct from 'emotion' by researchers of emotions. Miall (2006:53) suggests that feeling is more immediate and less cognitive than emotion, proposing the existence of 'feelings' with 'little to no cognitive content'. Yet, as I will outline in Section 3.2, neuroscientific research indicates that to state that feelings can have no cognitive basis is inaccurate: feelings are fundamentally cognitive, even if they are not consciously experienced. Damasio's (1999:36) research has indicated that neural patterns may indicate that individuals are experiencing feelings beyond their conscious awareness, and he has therefore suggested a distinction between feelings as the 'private, mental experience of an emotion' as compared to emotions, which he views as 'publicly observable' (Damasio 1999:42). While Damasio's research does attempt, therefore, to define 'feeling' as more visceral and intuitive than 'emotion', there remains a lack of cognitive scientific evidence indicating that what we describe as emotions and feelings are different, and therefore the terms can still be viewed as interchangeable and synonymous given our current state of knowledge. Crucially, then, while the word I use in my own analysis, coding, and even the title of this thesis is 'emotion', I accept that 'feeling' is often treated synonymously with 'emotion' and I acknowledge that readers may speak about 'feelings' or even ideas, thoughts and memories, and other ways of expressing affective responses, in the process of being asked to speak about their emotional responses.

It is, accordingly, important to acknowledge my use of the term 'emotion' rather than the more general 'affect'. 'Affect' is often regarded as a more abstract and diffuse concept than emotion, encompassing feelings, emotions, and moods (Shouse 2005) and is sometimes defined as less conscious, more immediate, and as existing on a more basic instinctual level than emotion (Russell 2003; Brennan 2004; Clore and Ortony 2008). Citing Eysenk and Keane's (1995:435) definition of emotions as 'relatively brief but intense experiences', Whiteley (2010:45-6) suggests that 'emotion' may be a more useful term than 'affect' for describing the shorter, more intense experiences that readers of fiction undergo. While the suggestion that emotions are brief has been questioned (Oatley 2010; Mulligan and Scherer 2012) and the term 'relatively brief' (Eysenk and Keane 1995:435) does not specify the parameters of brevity, emotion nonetheless has a greater degree of specificity than 'affect' despite the arguments regarding its definition. Whiteley

(2010:46) also points out the preponderance of the word 'emotion' in scholarship, which indicates that it can be used to refer to a wide range of feelings and experiences, and therefore the word lends itself to an exploration of the feelings readers experience when reading a fictional text. Furthermore, I suggest that the term 'emotion' may be preferable to 'affect' in that it can be understood easily by lay participants, thus enabling participants to engage in their own self-reporting of emotions and rendering it unnecessary for researchers to provide definitions of 'affect'. While the term 'feeling' has also been used in the study of readers' responses to literature (Miall 2006), 'emotion' is an established term in stylistic analysis (Stockwell 2005; Whiteley 2011) in which it can facilitate exploration of readers' individual experiences of specific emotions as well as enabling broader explorations of emotive effects of texts. In stylistics, the term is used to refer to readers' feelings about, or resulting from, a text. Thus, throughout this thesis, I predominantly use the single term 'emotion' in order to avoid semantic ambiguity, but do not attempt to entirely avoid the use of synonyms where pertinent. Likewise, although I encompass examination of reader empathy in this literature review as this represents a significant portion of the existing research into readers' emotions (see, for example, Nussbaum 1997, Keen 2007, and Oatley and Mar 2008, and research on character identification outlined below in 3.2.3), my own research does not focus primarily on the function of narrative empathy as a contributing factor to readers' experiences of emotion. Although I acknowledge where relevant the impact and relevance of narrative empathy, the term 'emotion' enables me to encompass a broader range of reader responses, not all of which are necessarily directly linked to empathetic identification with characters.

3.2.2 The Development of a Cognitive View of Emotion

There are myriad theoretical standpoints regarding the nature of emotion, including phenomenological, behavioural, social, and physiological theories (see Strongman 2003 for an overview). The cognitive view of emotion, however, has been most extensively applied to the contemporary study of literature in cognitive stylistics. Cognitive theories of emotion emphasise the role of thoughts in the construction and experience of emotion. In psychology, emotion has been extensively studied as a cognitive process (Roseman 1984; Oatley and Johnson-Laird 1987; Lazarus 1991). Yet this development diverges from a long-established segmentation of reason and feeling epitomised in Descartes's (1993 [1641]) seventeenth-century philosophy of mind-body dualism. The nineteenth-century peripheralist theory of emotion emphasised separation between physical and psychological experiences, suggesting that physiological arousal in response to stimuli precedes emotions, which are subsequently processed cognitively (James 1884; Lange 1922 [1885]). Conversely, later theories conceptualised emotion as initiated by a psychological impetus preceding physical sensation (Marañon 1924). More recently, the notion of mind-body dualism and segregation of cognition and emotion has been disputed by those who

view emotion as grounded in the body, with bodily perception a precursor to the cognitive experiences of emotion, such as in Bennett's (1984: 277) examination of Spinoza (1996 [1677]) and Damasio's (1999) neurological research. Analysis in cognitive linguistics supports the concept of the mind as embodied (Lakoff and Johnson 1980, 1999), undermining the mind-body distinction inherent in the history of Western philosophy.

Within cognitive theories of emotion, the question of whether bodily response or cognition comes first, or whether the relationship is simultaneous and interdependent has been contentious, with Schachter and Singer (1962) and Zajonc (1980) both arguing that there are separate anatomical structures for the processing of emotion and cognition and that therefore physiological arousal and affect can precede cognition. However, Lazarus (1990, 1991) opposes the separatist view of emotion as grounded in the body rather than the mind, arguing that while emotion is accompanied by physiological changes, we always process emotion cognitively: '*Emotion and cognition are inseparable*' (Lazarus 1990:9, emphasis retained). This is a theory of appraisal, a cognitive view of emotion first put forward by Arnold and Gasson (1954) and since echoed by multiple psychologists (Oatley and Johnson-Laird 1987; Lazarus 1991; Roseman 1991; Scherer 1993). Put simply, appraisal is 'the usual first step' of processing an emotion, and 'the recognition of an event as significant' (Oatley and Jenkins 1996:99), and entails a judgement of how a situation will affect an individual's wellbeing. Appraisal is a process which is 'instinctive and automatic' (Robinson 2010:73), or essentially subconscious – and which occurs prior to the physical response in which emotion is felt in the body and, sometimes, results in visible physical responses.

In line with Lazarus's (1990, 1991) theory of cognitive appraisal occurring prior to physical responses, Mandler (1990:23) argues that the view of affective responses as more immediate than cognitive responses – and therefore separate – is flawed, since evidence suggests affective responses are in fact slower than cognitive ones. The concept that emotion is instigated cognitively has been supported by more recent neuroscientific research, which undermines the separatist theory of emotion. While neuroscientific research has indicated the importance of separate parts of the brain for cognition and emotion – for example, the role of the amygdala in causing positive and negative emotions (Davis 2000; Murray 2007), or the prefrontal cortex in guiding decision-making and cognitive control (Koechlin et al. 2003) – this research merely demonstrates the importance of different parts of the brain in achieving different functions, rather than indicating that cognition and emotion are separate entities. Since the prefrontal and limbic brain structures are interconnected in complex neural networks (Gray et al. 2002; Salzman and Fusi 2010; Okon-Singer et al. 2015), cognition and emotion are deeply interwoven. Neuroscientific research demonstrating the activation of areas of the brain when individuals

experience emotions fortifies the argument that even if feelings are experienced bodily, they are cerebrally constructed (Kragel and LaBar 2016; Celeghin et al. 2017). Thus, while the generation of emotions may take place unconsciously (LeDoux 1996), this is nonetheless a cognitive process, and it is fundamentally inaccurate to speak of cognition and emotion as separate entities. Emotion should be viewed not as a separate domain from cognition but as a subset of cognition (Oum and Lieberman 2007).

If no binary opposition exists between thought and emotion, it is logical to explore the ways in which the experience of a fictional text, constructed in the reader's mind, affects them emotionally. Cognitive stylisticians therefore refute the segmentation of body and mind by emphasising the integration of cognitive and emotional experiences in readers' mental constructions of texts (Stockwell 2020 [2002]; Gavins 2007; Whiteley 2010; Harrison and Stockwell 2014; Giovanelli 2018). In 4.2, I explain my use of cognitive stylistics further before outlining an empirical approach incorporating the use of reader response data in line with the integrated conceptualisation of cognition and emotion applied in this study. Below, in 3.2.3, I discuss the study of readers' emotions.

3.2.3 The Study of Readers' Emotions

Twentieth-century debates concerning the value of emotion in the study of literature centre on the extent to which readers' emotions constitute a valuable object of study. Richards's (1926:91) and Rosenblatt's (1938) conceptualisations of the centrality of the reader's role in co-constructing meaning mark the inception of reader response criticism. Dewey's (1934:43) conception that the experience of reading represents an 'interaction' or, later, a 'transaction' (Dewey and Bentley 1949:69) between reader and text encapsulates the notion of reading as an emotional, transcendent, or identity-forming experience. Yet these critics' focus on the emotional centrality of literature is opposed by an antipathy towards emotional approaches to literary study in New Criticism which suggests a distinction between reason and emotion. This avoidance of the consideration of emotion in literary criticism is epitomised in Wimsatt and Beardsley's (1954) concept of 'the affective fallacy' in which the study of the emotional effects of texts on readers is viewed as impeding objective criticism.

This rejection of emotion echoes the established distinction between reason and emotion which is influential in separatist theories of emotion, as outlined above in Section 3.1. Keen (2007:55) explains that the tendency of modernist literature to favour 'eschewing sensibility and empathetic connection' by developing techniques of defamiliarisation and estrangement, typified by Brecht's (1961) *Verfremdungseffekt*, reflects the simultaneous movement away from affect in literary criticism. Yet despite these reactions against conceptualisations of reading as an emotional

experience, theories of reader response have been influential in emphasising the role of the reader in textual interpretation, and thus in implicitly suggesting the value of readers' emotions. For example, Barthes's (1977 [1967]) metaphor of the Death of the Author implicitly suggests the primacy of the reader, whilst Fish's (1970) 'affective stylistics' demonstrates how readers' expectations are established and subverted in sentence-level analysis. Rosenblatt's (1978) transactional theory of reading develops earlier research (Rosenblatt 1938) to emphasise the symbiotic relationship between reader and text inherent in the reading experience.

Researchers including Gerrig (1993), Oatley (1999, 2002, 2004) and Miall (2006) have examined the emotional experience of literature in a broadly empirical sense, exploring the causes, motivations, and consequences of the emotions felt by readers during the process of reading. Empirical studies of readers' emotions have indicated that the experience of emotions when reading is a near-universal experience (Mar et al. 2011:828). Readers' emotions have been shown to correspond to 'appraisal patterns (objective correlatives)' in texts (Mar et al. 2011:828): in other words, research has demonstrated that identifiable features of the language of narratives can elicit readers' emotions. Readers may engage in 'participatory responses' (Albritton and Gerrig 1991:603-626) in which they respond in verbal, emotion-driven ways to narrative events, and becoming immersed in a story may even incite change on a personal level (Gerrig 1993). Similarly, Oatley (1999:106) asserts that reading narrative fiction can be a profoundly emotional experience enabling the 'simulation' of emotion. This 'simulation' of emotion may even lead readers to engage in empathetic processes, thus engendering greater capacity for empathy in their own lives (Oatley and Mar 2008:173). Indeed, empathy has been a key focus in the study of readers' emotions; for instance, Nussbaum (1997:90) suggests that experiencing empathy for fictional characters allows individuals to define their moral compass and belief systems. Meanwhile, research by Kidd and Castano (2013, 2017) suggests that reading fiction can increase theory of mind, while Van Lissa et al. (2016) find that empathy is key to engagement with characters in first-person texts. In 4.3, I outline some of the different empirical methods used by researchers of reading in more depth to contextualise my own empirical methodology.

The extent to which an emotion provoked by a text can be said to be a 'true' or 'real' feeling is contentious. Walton (1990:245) deems emotional responses to texts 'quasi emotions', arguing that emotional responses to literature are lesser emotional experiences due to their lack of rational basis. Others contest this idea, suggesting that belief in the 'realness' of fictional beings is not necessary to incite emotional responses from readers (Lamarque 1994) and that 'how we feel about fictional events is how we really feel about them' (Currie 2010:111). Miall (2006:71), accordingly, explores the paradox of readers feeling 'real feelings for fictional characters or their situation' as well as the fact that readers can experience a form of pleasure in tragedy – a concept

previously established, of course, in the Aristotelian notion of catharsis and explored by Nussbaum (2001), who examines the way in which we take pleasure from reading sad stories. Research in psychology (Goldstein 2009) has also suggested that the pleasure readers can experience from encountering sorrow in fiction is partly because our experience of anxiety when reading is less acute than anxiety produced in response to personally experienced events, whereas the level of sadness felt is closer to that experienced in 'real life'. Therefore, fiction enables us to feel 'unadulterated sadness' (Goldstein 2009:232), which can represent a form of pleasure.

Arguably, we may even feel and understand emotions *better* by reading literature, as the 'simulation' effect of 'literary emotions' may allow us to more clearly understand 'their true nature and implications' (Oatley 2004:153) or even enhance existing emotions due to the progression of a narrative (Sikora et al. 1998). Miall's (2006:108) empirical research suggests that encounters with fictional texts can even alter self-understanding as the reader's sense of self begins to converge with the situation of the protagonist. Reviewing several empirical studies of readers' emotions, Mar et al. (2011:828) argue that the breadth of emotions that readers may experience during the process of reading a narrative is 'comparable to that of emotions encountered during everyday experience', again supporting the concept that responses to literary texts are indeed 'real' emotions. Stockwell (2020:183) concludes that the feelings experienced when reading are 'fundamentally the same as authentic real-world emotions'. In the cognitive stylistic tradition, then, I begin from the perspective that literary emotions can be viewed as genuinely *felt*, despite being engendered through a form of simulation.

Readers' use of metaphors to represent reading experiences may also shed light on some of the processes eliciting emotional responses. Readers frequently draw on metaphors of transportation to conceptualise experiences of reading (Gerrig 1993; Green and Brock 2002; Stockwell 2009), whilst the passive construction of various metaphors used for reading in multiple languages, such as being 'lost' in a book, encapsulates the power of narratives to deeply engage readers and thus affect their emotions (Nell 1998). This concept is also reflected in the metaphor of reading as immersion (Ryan 1991, 2001; Bell et al 2018) and reading as absorption (Braun and Cupchik 2001, Kuijpers et al 2014). Metaphors for readerly engagement can also be active, however, with Harrison and Nuttall's research (2020) demonstrating the commonality of metaphors of consumption in readers' comments in online reviews. Emotions have also been explored in light of character identification: Keen (2007:169) posits that character identification elicits narrative empathy, while Bal (1985:112) calls fictional characters 'paper people', arguing that the engagement of readers depends on the 'affective appeal' of characters. Arguably, the more richly developed a character, the more readers will be able to 'mind-model' them to 'a rich level of impersonation' (Stockwell 2020:183) and therefore these characters are likely to be the ones

towards whom we feel the strongest emotions. Accordingly, the construction of an accessible fictional world with characters who undergo recognisable emotions and experiences and are thus 'ontologically like us' (Ryan 2019:74), may contribute to our ability to identify with and to care for them.

Stylisticians in Text World Theory suggest that character identification takes place through a process of projection, which engenders emotions. Gavins (2005, 2007) argues that we project enactors of ourselves into text worlds, with such projection resulting in 'empathetic identification' (Gavins 2007:64). Adapting this concept, Whiteley (2010:121) posits that readers are able to project themselves simultaneously into multiple character roles in an act of 'mindreading' whereby readers imagine the thoughts and feelings of characters and thus experience emotional responses. Character identification may also be created via focalisation patterns, which cause readers to mentally construct characters' plans and then feel 'an emotional consequence at points of juncture in the evolution of the plan, as in real life' (Stockwell 2002:172). Through character focalisation, readers become immersed in the world of the character and may, conceivably, begin to imagine or hope for certain outcomes for that character. However, character identification is only one of the elements that contribute to readers' emotions (Oatley and Gholamain 1987); for instance, the structure of a narrative is an important factor. Hogan (2011:2) posits that emotional responses are grounded in the 'trajectories of goal pursuit' in narratives. Accordingly, Hogan (2003:5) suggests that emotions are inherently narrative-driven, whether when reading or in everyday life, since 'our affective response to a situation' results from 'the entire sequence of events in which that moment is located'. Thus, since fiction is constructed of sequences of events, textual plot is arguably central to readers' experiences of emotions.

Categorising the emotions elicited by narratives, Hogan (2010:66) also distinguishes between emotion on the level of the story and emotions on the level of discourse, while Miall (2006:108) divides narrative feelings into feelings about characters or about oneself, labelling these emotional responses to texts as either 'alter-centric' or 'ego-centric' (Miall 2006:65). Meanwhile, Nünning (2017:12) divides emotional responses into three categories: 'narrative emotions', which are emotions intimately connected to the features of narrative; 'aesthetic emotions', or emotional responses to stylistic features; and 'biographical emotions', which are feelings elicited by reminding readers of events in their own lives. However, these categorisations might also be interpreted as inextricably interrelated: conceivably, the aesthetic features of the text construct the fictional world, which in turn imparts structure to the narrative, which may then interact with readers' personal experiences of the world. From a stylistic perspective, furthermore, emotions must be grounded in the language of the text since this is fundamental to the construction of meaning (Simpson 2004:2). The narrative and stylistic construction of the text, accordingly, are

both of course formulated from language, whilst even readers' own contextually specific emotions must exist in dialectic with the language of the text. Therefore, I use the general term 'emotion' throughout my analysis, without attempting to separate emotions into pre-existing categories. Rather, I specify and label particular emotions where appropriate to the exploration of readers' emotions outlined in each analytical chapter.

3.3.1 A Typology for the Analysis of how Textual Actual and Possible Worlds Affect Readers' Emotions

Having given an overview of the study of readers' emotions, I now set out a typology for the analysis of how the construction of textual actual and possible worlds may evoke emotional responses. Since Possible Worlds Theory was developed as a way of exploring ontological configurations, 'logical debates surrounding ontology have been crucial to its implementation' (Bell 2010:22) in literary studies. This is demonstrated in many of the existing possible worlds typologies outlined in Chapter 2, which are often concerned with exploring the ontological status of worlds within texts – either in clarifying the distinction between possibility and actuality in the form of textual possible worlds and textual actual worlds (Ryan 1991a:24; Bell 2010:24), attempting to define the level of similarity between the textual actual world or textual possible world and our 'real', or actual, world (Maitre 1983:79; Ryan 1991a:32, 1991b:553-4), or with outlining different forms of possible worlds (Doležel 1976:7; Ryan 1991a:109-123; Raghunath 2020:66). The typology developed for this research engages, as with these existing typologies, in a process of ontological segmentation, by attempting to delineate several sub-types of textual actual and possible worlds. Importantly, while these worlds identified in my typology are constructed linguistically and thus partly generated by the text, they are also partly brought into being through readers' experiences of the narrative. Consequently, this model works in accordance with Ryan's (1991a:22) conceptualisation of the process of 'recentering' readers undergo whereby the textual actual world and textual possible worlds constructed by a narrative formulate a 'new system of actuality and possibility' for readers.

Moreover, the typology also aims to centralise the importance of temporality and plot to readers' experiences of emotions. Previous conceptions of possible worlds have recognised the relevance of the linear construction of narratives in the formulation of possible worlds: Eco's notion of the *fabula* and the co-construction of the narrative in the mind of the 'Model Reader' (Eco 1979:32) acknowledges the centrality of plot, as does his conception that the possible world within a narrative 'undergoes successive changes of state […] each state shifting into the next one through a lapse in time' (Eco 1979:235), depending on the progression of the plot. As outlined in 2.3, Ryan's (1985:717-18) concept of the '*perfective process*' of possible worlds, in which an '*actualizable domain*' is created (Ryan 1985:720) out of previously existing textual possible

worlds also takes account of the significance of plot development in the construction of textual actual and possible worlds. Further applications of Possible Worlds Theory to diverse texts, such as Bell's (2010) exploration of the ontological configuration of possible worlds in the forking-path narratives of hypertext fiction and Caracciolo's (2019:115) concept of the 'logic of unfolding' also demonstrate the centrality of plot to the narrative construction of possible worlds. However, while these applications of Possible Worlds Theory do acknowledge the significance of linearity, no existing typology specifically separates different forms of textual actual and possible worlds in terms of their temporal location within a narrative. Thus, in segmenting textual actual and possible worlds in terms of their status in the past, present, and future of a fictional world, I aim to illustrate how readers' emotions may be affected by the construction – and, at some points, the removal – of textual actual and possible worlds in different ways at various points within a narrative.

The development of a typology which functions as a framework for stylistic analysis also works partly to address some of the criticisms outlined in 2.5 regarding the imprecision or lack of terminological specificity levelled at Possible Worlds Theory. By delineating specific features for analysis, I aim for my exploration of different forms of textual actual and possible worlds to largely adhere to Simpson's (2014:4) call for stylistic analysis to be 'rigorous, replicable [and] retrievable'. By 'rigorous', Simpson proposes that analysis should be based on structured models of language rather than unfocused or impressionistic comments; 'retrievable' indicates that the method of analysis used to reach a particular conclusion must be able to be clearly identified; and 'replicable' means that other stylisticians should be able to apply the same criteria and obtain the same or similar results. However, it is worth noting that whilst I aim for my analytical process to be replicable, my use of readers' responses to demonstrate the emotions elicited by novels means that the degree to which *results* are fully 'replicable' may be limited to some extent by the inevitably subjective nature of the felt experience of reading.

3.3.2 Outline of Typology

The analysis of different forms of textual actual and possible worlds within this thesis takes place within a temporally segmented typology that acts as a broad framework for stylistic analysis. Each world-type functions not as a stand-alone stylistic feature, but rather an overarching categorisation within which flexible stylistic analysis is applied. As briefly summarised in 1.2, this typology segments textual actual and possible worlds into five distinct sub-types depending on the past, present, or future location of each world-type as well as whether each world is 'possible' or 'actual'. The world-types are:

- Past Textual Possible Worlds (PTPWs)

- Past Textual Actual Worlds (PTAWs)
- Current Textual Actual Worlds (CTAWs)
- Counterfactual Textual Worlds (CFTWs)
- Future Textual Possible Worlds (FTPWs)

Note that I refer to 'time' and 'temporality' rather than 'tense' when describing the rationale and functions of this typology, since the tenses in which narratives are written do not necessarily correspond with particular world-types; for instance, FTPWs are often constructed as part of a past tense or present tense narrative, as in the literary convention. As in Ryan's (1985:720) description, each textual actual world outlined here denotes the 'sphere regarded as real by the characters'. Each textual possible world, meanwhile, denotes worlds which are constructed in the minds of characters, as per Ryan's (1991a:109) conceptualisation, and accordingly experienced by readers. The typology thus proposes three forms of textual possible worlds existing in different temporal domains: Past Textual Possible Worlds, Counterfactual Textual Worlds (which exist in the present alongside the CTAW), and Future Textual Possible Worlds. It also proposes a more detailed conceptualisation of the textual actual world by segmenting this into the Past Textual Actual World and the Current Textual Actual World. There are thus two forms of textual actual worlds and three forms of textual possible worlds proposed in this typology; I do not suggest the existence of 'Future Actual Worlds' as there is no way for characters to predict with certainty, and thus for readers to infer, anything that will certainly transpire in the future. In parallel to our existence in the 'real' world, the future always remains a possibility rather than a certainty. All the world-types in this typology interact with one another, due to the shifting nature of possibility and actuality that is central both to Possible Worlds Theory and to narrative itself. I exemplify some of the ways these world-types interact both in my definitions below and also in my analysis in Chapters 5-10. In 3.3.3-3.3.7, I outline the definitions of each world-type in turn and give an overview of the key features of each. Henceforth, I refer to each world-type by its abbreviation except within chapter and section titles.

3.3.3 Past Textual Possible Worlds (PTPWs)

I define PTPWs as textual possible worlds which existed in the past, but which have not transpired and are – as such – no longer possible. Since a textual possible world denotes a world that *could* exist or *might* exist beyond the textual actual world, the concept of the PTPW simply locates this world in the past and emphasises that it is no longer a possible world. For instance, a character may have previously had hopes or intentions about a particular event or circumstance. If this has not come to fruition within the narrative, this represents a PTPW. As such, PTPWs must be conceptualised in terms of their relation to the current temporal positioning of a narrative. PTPWs

may predate, then, the entirety of the fictional world as described in a novel, or they may exist in relation to an earlier point in the narrative at which the now-PTPW still appeared to be a realisable possibility: therefore, a FTPW can become a PTPW within the progression of a narrative. To exemplify this, in the novel *Revolutionary Road*, which I analyse in Chapters 7 and 8, the character April once dreamed of becoming an actress. This is a PTPW that predates the narrative itself, in which April is a housewife, meaning that readers are aware from the first chapter that this is a world that is no longer possible. It is never, therefore, presented as a realisable FTPW. Yet a PTPW can also arise from a FTPW which shifts to a PTPW in the course of a narrative; for instance, in *A Fine Balance*, the character Ishvar dreams about his nephew marrying and having children throughout the novel. At the end, when this does not transpire, this once-FTPW becomes a PTPW according to the current temporal location of the narrative. PTPWs are thus no longer constructed as realisable possibilities within a narrative, unlike FTPWs, which I discuss in 3.3.7.

When describing the removal of PTPWs, I adopt Stockwell's (2009:21) term 'occlusion', outlined in his model of 'attention-resonance', as a term for the moment at which a textual possible world fails to transpire or to be actualised (Ryan 1985) by being replaced by a textual actual world that differs from the envisioned textual possible world. In his model, Stockwell (2009:18) attempts to explicate how textual features can elicit a '*prolonged response*' that persists after reading, thus creating an '*aura of significance*' (emphasis retained). Stockwell (2009) develops a multifaceted model of attention encompassing a set of descriptive vocabulary but, for the purposes of this possible worlds analysis, I use only the term occlusion as this denotes the end point at which a textual or narrative element disappears completely and persists in the reader's mind despite no longer being present textually. Stockwell (2009:21-22) suggests that 'occlusion can be instant for an element that is linguistically removed from the scene (for example, by negation or a verb of disappearance, death or removal), or it can be gradual, where the element simply fades away by not being mentioned for a duration of several clauses'. In the context of my application of the term, this means that whilst occlusion of PTPWs can sometimes occur via explicit linguistic construction of the end of a textual possible world in the narrative, at other times this is less explicit, with a textual possible world eroded in a more subtle or gradual manner. Either way, though, occlusion refers to the way in which a 'focused element comes to occlude the previously focused figure' (Stockwell 2009:22): with relation to PTPWs, this means that a different world-type, such as the CTAW (explored below) can *occlude* the PTPW and thus mean that it is effectively textually removed.

3.3.4 Past Textual Actual Worlds (PTAWs)

PTAWs are textual actual worlds which have been explicitly presented as existing in 'reality' within the past temporal domain of the narrative. They are thus distinct from PTPWs, which exist

only in characters' (and thus readers') minds, for instance in the form of characters' wishes, hopes, plans, dreams, or thoughts. However, PTAWs can be segmented from the CTAW (defined in 3.3.5) because whilst, like the CTAW, PTAWs transpire within the textual domain viewed as actual, they represent narrative constructions which no longer form part of a character's *current* reality at a particular point in a narrative. For example, in *Revolutionary Road,* the character Frank Wheeler fought in the war in Europe prior to meeting his wife, April. While both aspects of the narrative form part of the overarching textual actual world, Frank's previous role as a soldier can also be defined as forming part of a PTAW and can thus be separated from the CTAW, in which Frank is a husband, father, and sales associate in New York. While the PTAW and the CTAW are interrelated because characters' past experiences do form part of their present reality, the segmentation of the textual actual world into the past and present is useful as it facilitates analysis of how the CTAW experienced by characters is linked to, shaped by, or indeed different from what has come before. Any textual actual world exists in relation to the textual possible worlds that revolve around it (Ryan 1991; Bell 2010); just as, in life, our formulation of dreams, hopes, intentions, and other forms of possible worlds is inherently connected to our experience of reality, without textual actuality there can be no possibility. Therefore, in any narrative, PTPWs are inherently connected to the PTAW as they depend on it for their existence.

As with my analysis of PTPWs, I again adopt Stockwell's (2009) term *occlusion* to denote the removal of a PTAW, which can be either explicitly linguistically presented or implied by no longer being mentioned. As with PTPWs, PTAWs exist in relation to the current temporal location of the character and may either predate the entirety of the fictional world as described in the text, as in the aforementioned example of Frank's youth in *Revolutionary Road*, or become a PTAW only at a late point in a novel after having been constructed previously as a CTAW. For example, also in *Revolutionary Road*, the character April Wheeler dies towards the end of the novel. Her life thus becomes, from the vantage point of the novel's climax, a PTAW. Hence, while at times I focus explicitly on the presentation of pre-existing PTAWs which are depicted as having been occluded even before the beginning of a narrative, at other points I use this concept to illustrate a shift within a narrative from a CTAW to what then becomes a PTAW. The concept of the PTAW can thus work to demonstrate the ways in which characters' experiences of actuality may alter, and thus to enable exploration of how such alterations may affect readers' emotions.

3.3.5 Current Textual Actual Worlds (CTAWs)

This is the presently located textual actual world which forms the central 'here and now' of the narrative. As with my delineation of PTAWs, I acknowledge that Ryan's concept of the textual actual world encompasses characters' past and present experience, as this is the world that, at any

point within a text, contains the 'narrative *facts*' (Ryan 2019:65). However, the use of a specific category of the CTAW enables me to explore the textual actual world in which the narrative is currently located in relation to other textual actual and possible worlds. Most significantly, I am able to utilise the categorisations of the PTAW and CTAW together to identify shifts within the state of the textual actual world. For example, in *The Trick is to Keep Breathing,* the narrator is grieving for her mother in the CTAW, but in a PTAW located prior to the narrative she was alive. Both elements form part of the textual actual world, but the separation of the CTAW and PTAW enables me to explore the impact of the different states of life for the protagonist in the CTAW and PTAW. Secondly, as a form of textual actual world, the CTAW is a central world-type on which textual possible worlds depend for their existence. For instance, the CTAW casts light on the occlusion of PTPWs, which are only viewed as no longer possible when considered in juxtaposition with the CTAW. It coexists, too, with CFTWs, which are imaginable alternatives to the present experience of the characters, as I outline below in 3.3.6. Furthermore, FTPWs also can only exist in relation to the present world of textual reality that is represented by the CTAW. Due to its centrality to explorations of shifts in textual possibility and actuality, the CTAW is frequently referred to in this thesis within analyses which focus on other world-types, as well as forming the principal focus of Chapter 9.

3.3.6 Counterfactual Textual Worlds (CFTWs)

The idea of the counterfactual is embedded in Possible Worlds Theory, since the envisioning of alternative worlds is inherent both to its philosophical origins and in its applications in literary analysis, as outlined in 2.2 and 2.3. The CFTW denotes the textual possible world that exists *alongside* the CTAW. It is an alternative, presently located possible world that might exist under a different set of circumstances in the textual actual world. A CFTW exists, then, as a mental construction of a conceivable alternative to the present; it is a world that characters, and therefore readers, imagine could exist according to a different set of past circumstances, but which does not. For example, in *Revolutionary Road,* the character April Wheeler initially wanted to have an abortion when pregnant with her first child. Thus, a CFTW in which she might not have had any children exists alongside the CTAW, in which she is a mother of two.

CFTWs interact with the existence of other world-types in complex ways. For example, the CFTW mentioned above relies for its existence on a PTPW in which April might have had an abortion and the PTAW in which she did not. Together, these formulate the CFTW in the present, or an imaginable alternative to her current life, which then also relies for its existence on the CTAW – or the world of present reality – which acts both to show how life is for the character and to highlight how it might be otherwise. A CFTW is distinct from a PTPW, as this is a world that was viewed as possible in the past; by contrast, a CFTW is now known to be unattainable by

characters, but is a mentally constructed, present-tense alternative to the CTAW that exists alongside it. It is also distinct from a FTPW as this is a world which is still, from the temporal location of the narrative, envisioned to be possible, as I explore in 3.3.7.

Within the broader categorisation of CFTWs, I also distinguish between CFTWs of varying sizes using the notion of micro- and macro-CFTWs in the analyses I present in 5.4 and 7.4. I use the term micro-CFTWs to denote the CFTWs constructed at moments when characters take minor actions that bring into being a state of affairs that exists as an imaginable present alternative to the textual actual world – for example, they might make a minor decision such as using one particular choice of words rather than another. Macro-CFTWs, meanwhile, are counterfactual textual worlds on a grander scale, such as an alternative life for a character which the reader is aware of existing alongside the CTAW, such as the CFTW in which April in *Revolutionary Road* might not be a mother, as described above. I distinguish between micro- and macro-CFTWs where relevant to my analysis: the concept of a micro-CFTW works as a useful means of demarcating moments when an apparently minor choice between two courses of action is presented, whereas the notion of a macro-CFTW aids me in identifying a CFTW that exists alongside the CTAW for a significant portion of the narrative.

3.3.7 Future Textual Possible Worlds (FTPWs)

These are worlds which are conceptualised as existing in the possible future for characters in a narrative: they are constructions of future events that might be dreamed, imagined, wished, planned, or hoped for. FTPWs are distinct from PTPWs and CFTWs because FTPWs still have a chance of occurring within the text, and accordingly in the readers' co-construction of the narrative. While FTPWs are all depicted as logically, at least to some extent, possible, I conceptualise FTPWs as existing on a scale of attainability, with some FTPWs constructed as more attainable than others. The use of this term enables me to avoid confusion with Ryan's (1991a:32, 1991b:553-4) pre-existing notion of accessibility relations: rather than denoting the distance of a textual possible world from the reader's actual world, the term *attainability* refers to the distance of a FTPW from the CTAW of characters' existence in a novel. This enables exploration of how the level of likelihood of a FTPW being attained is constructed linguistically, as well as the way in which FTPWs of different degrees of attainability are associated with different emotional responses in readers as they envision the likelihood or improbability of a particular FTPW. In using this term, I am also able to explore the degree of likelihood of a FTPW and its attendant potential emotional effects without needing to categorise FTPWs as strictly 'possible' or 'impossible', thus avoiding confusion with those analyses of possible worlds that are logically or ontologically impossible (Alber 2009, 2016, and 2019; Ryan 2013; Martin 2019; Schukneckt 2019). At certain points, I do also use the term *unattainable* to refer to other world-

types such as PTPWs or CFTWs, but in these cases the term is used for emphasis, as PTPWs and CFTWs are by their nature unattainable. Within analysis of this world-type, I also use the term *restricted*, to denote the limitations and restrictions that might be placed on characters' FTPWs due to their social situations, roles, and past experiences. This is exemplified in particular in my analysis of *A Fine Balance* in Chapter 6, where I explore how the FTPWs available to the characters are demonstrated, through their linguistic construction, to be restricted in their attainability.

3.3.8 Selection of World-Types for Analysis

Throughout my analysis, I employ the typology delineated in 3.3.3.-7 as an overarching framework for stylistic analysis of the construction of textual actual and possible worlds. The selection of world-types to frame analysis in each chapter was informed partly by my initial review of reader data, with readers' reflections on their emotions and emotion-causing elements of the novels used to inform application of the framework. For instance, repeated reader comments focusing on the hopes and dreams of the characters Ishvar and Omprakash in *A Fine Balance* partially guided me to select the world-type of FTPWs as a framework for analysis in Chapter 6. I discuss the coding and usage of reader data in more detail in 4.7. Importantly, though, reader data was principally used to cast light on the emotions frequently experienced by readers in response to these texts and the elements of the novels inciting these emotions, rather than to facilitate selection of world-types. Predominantly, the selection of world-types was informed by my own responses to each novel, which helped me to select world-types I deemed most appropriate for stylistic analysis, with this process of 'introspection' (Stockwell 2021:166) representing a meaningful mechanism for considering the appropriateness of each element of my typology for the analysis of the construction of textual meaning. In segmenting my analysis in terms of the different forms of textual actual and possible worlds which predominate at certain points of the narrative, I aim to identify parallels in some of the emotional effects resulting from the ways in which degrees of possibility and actuality are expressed linguistically, whilst recognising that the construction of textual actual and possible worlds is only one factor influencing readers' emotions, given the implications of extratextual factors and readers' own experiences on their emotional responses to texts.

The world-types from the typology used as a framework for analysis may be applied either individually or in conjunction, because they interact in a variety of ways and, in fact, depend on one another for their existence, as I have explained in 3.3.3-7 and as I will exemplify in my analysis. Thus, whilst I broadly segment my analysis in terms of the different textual actual and possible worlds that are most pertinent within each chapter, I encompass references to any world-type where relevant. Importantly, my process of world-type selection does not attempt to explore

all world-types to an equal degree as the typology is intended as an enabling, flexible framework to facilitate focused analysis of the effect of the construction of different forms of textual actual and possible worlds, which are present to varying degrees in different texts. Accordingly, I refer to each world-type either in the singular or plural form depending on the context of analysis. For example, I may refer to both 'a CFTW' and 'CFTWs' to denote a single Counterfactual Textual World or multiple Counterfactual Textual Worlds where relevant. However, when discussing a single text, I often use the singular form to refer to the PTAW and the CTAW, since textual actual worlds can be viewed, at any point at which the narrative is located, as the *only* textual actual world which represents the state of reality for the characters. By contrast, multiple FTPWs, CFTWs, or PTPWs may be simultaneously constructed due to the infinite nature of possibility.

Three analytical chapters (5, 9, and 10) take the presentation of only one form of textual actual or possible world as their principal focus, although again, the flexible nature of the typology means that I refer to other world-types alongside the one utilised as the main focus of the chapter where relevant to stylistic analysis. For example, in Chapter 9, I encompass exploration of how the construction of the PTAW contributes to the presentation of the unhappy CTAW, even though the world-type of the CTAW provides the framework for analysis in this chapter. Three chapters explicitly take two or three world-types as their focus, as indicated in the chapter titles, but these world-types are applied individually as overarching frames for separate chapter sections, except for the world-types of PTAWs and PTPWs, which are applied holistically and together in 6.5 and 8.4. This is because these world-types are both located in the past, with the PTAW existing in tandem with PTPWs which revolve around it. A variety of world-types are considered in each chapter due to the richness of the data sourced from stylistic analysis and reader response research which suggests the usefulness of a range of world-types in helping to comprehend how the construction of different forms of textual actual and possible worlds may elicit emotional effects. Furthermore, as the typology is intended as a flexible framework, I strive to demonstrate this flexibility in my own approach to analysis, viewing the selection of world-types as an enabling tool rather than a restrictive force.

3.4 Summary

In this chapter I have explored the study of readers' emotions before outlining my typology for the analysis of textual actual and possible worlds. In 3.2.1-2, I explained my use of the term 'emotion', before outlining the development of a cognitive view of emotion and providing an overview of the research that supports the concept that emotions are always interdependent with cognition, even though they may be felt in the body. I then gave an overview of the study of readers' emotions in 3.2.3, discussing various conceptualisations of readers' emotions and situating my own research in alignment with the viewpoint that emotions caused by reading are

experienced as real by readers, despite being caused by fictional events. In the second main sub-section of this chapter, beginning at 3.2.1, I outlined the typology of textual actual and possible worlds that forms the framework underpinning my stylistic analysis. I situated my typology in relation to existing typologies and justified my development of a temporally driven typology in light of my focus on how the linguistic construction of world-types may help to explain the emotional effects reported by readers of my focus texts. Next, in 3.2.2, I outlined the typology, before delineating each world-type in 3.3.3-7, giving details of the key features, functions, and potential applications of each. In 3.3.8, I detailed the process of world-type selection undertaken in the application of this typology. I explained that stylistic analysis and empirical reader data both informed the application of the framework, from which world-types can be selected either individually or in conjunction with one another. In the next chapter, I explain the methodology adopted for this thesis, contextualising my research in relation to cognitive stylistics and empirical approaches to the study of reading, prior to outlining my own research design.

Chapter 4

Methodology

4.1 Overview

In this chapter, I firstly situate my research design in relation to cognitive stylistics in 4.2, before outlining existing empirical approaches to the study of reading in 4.3 in order to contextualise my own use of empirical methods, which I subsequently discuss in this section. In 4.4, I describe my qualitative interview design and in 4.5 I explain my use of online reviews as empirical data. In 4.6, I acknowledge the relevance of contextual and extratextual factors to readers' emotional responses to texts, before explaining the coding procedure applied to reader data in 4.7. I explain my approach to excerpt selection in 4.8 and my text choices in 4.9, before finally summarising the ethical concerns considered within this research.

4.2 Cognitive Stylistic Analysis Within a Typology of Textual Actual and Possible Worlds

As a stylistic analysis which aims to explore the textual factors affecting readers' emotions, this study sits within the field of cognitive stylistics, also known as cognitive poetics (Tsur 1992; Stockwell 2002; Gavins and Steen 2003; Harrison and Stockwell 2014). Cognitive stylistics seeks to integrate analysis of the language of a text with consideration of the cognitive effect on the reader, and this cognitive effect can also be said to be inherently emotional, as explained in 3.2.2. While cognitive stylistics encompasses analysis of linguistic frameworks and methods, like stylistics more broadly, in cognitive stylistics linguistic analysis is also 'based on theories that relate linguistic choices to cognitive structures and processes' thus enabling 'more systematic and explicit accounts of the relationship between texts on the one hand and responses and interpretations on the other' (Semino and Culpeper 2002:ix). Harrison and Stockwell (2014:218) explain that cognitive poetics draws both on cognitive psychology and cognitive linguistics, whilst insisting that 'any readerly or interpretative account must be underpinned by transparent textual evidence'. Cognitive stylistics, then, is grounded in analysis of language just as stylistics is, but also considers the importance of the cognitive processes of, and thus the emotions of, the reader. While literary studies have tended to neglect consideration of readers' experiential engagement (Stockwell 2005:144), cognitive stylistics is concerned with the felt experience of reading (Stockwell 2009) and encompasses consideration both of readers' experiences and of how texts are linguistically constructed.

The term 'cognitive stylistics' is usually treated as synonymous with 'cognitive poetics'; however, Cronquist (2004:373) proposes a difference in connotation between the two, suggesting that 'the former denotes an affiliation with a descriptive and decontextualized stylistics (or literary

linguistics) while the latter is closer to the craft of writing and practical creativity.' Cronquist's use of the word 'decontextualised' is questionable here, since by trying to describe cognitive processes which form an undeniable aspect of readers' experience, cognitive stylistics is – by its very nature – contextualised. Nonetheless, Cronquist (2004:373) acknowledges that whether we refer to 'cognitive stylistics' or 'cognitive poetics', we are engaging in a process of using linguistic procedures to 'describe what really happens when we meet the text' by examining the cognitive processes inherent in literary reading. Therefore, cognitive stylistics is inherently empirical because the position of the reader is centralised, even if the 'reader' in a stylistic analysis is only the researcher themselves engaging in an introspective process of analysis (Brône and Vandaele 2009:7; Stockwell 2021:166).

Semino and Culpeper (2002:x) suggest a tripartite checklist for classifying whether a work of literary scholarship can be viewed as cognitive stylistics. They define cognitive stylistics as demonstrating '(a) a concern for specific texts or textual phenomena, (b) the adoption of analytical approaches that explicitly relate linguistic choices to cognitive phenomena, and (c) the claim that a satisfactory account of the text or phenomenon in question can only be arrived at by means of a cognitive stylistic approach'. Each of these three conditions is met within my own work, which also adheres to their suggestion that cognitive stylistics aims to 'explain how interpretations are arrived at, rather than proposing new interpretations of texts' (Semino and Culpeper 2002:x), since my focus is on how literary texts may give rise to readers' emotions through their construction of textual actual and possible worlds, rather than aiming to develop groundbreaking interpretations of the texts themselves. As previously asserted in 3.2.2, emotions are indissociable from cognition, and thus an approach that aims to illuminate the mechanisms eliciting readers' emotions using stylistic analysis must be cognitive stylistic in nature. Semino (2014:84) argues that since some possible worlds frameworks have been critiqued as 'not concerned with the cognitive processes whereby interpreters arrive at the construction of text worlds by interacting with the language of texts', they 'need to be complemented by linguistic and cognitive approaches'. In Semino's (2014) case, this complementation comes in the form of developing an application of schema theory to texts in which she explores how readers' schemata are activated, reinforced, or refreshed through the process of reading. While my own typology does not explicitly encompass the role of the reader, by exploring readers' responses to the novels themselves and triangulating this with my possible worlds analysis I am able to account for some of the ways in which the ontological configuration of textual actual and possible worlds exists in conjunction with readers' co-construction of meaning.

Stylistic analysis can both use frameworks suggested by a text and begin with a framework which is then applied to data (Carter 1997:192). In the cognitive stylistic analysis undertaken in this

thesis within the typology outlined in Chapter 3, I use a combination of these approaches, in that the typology works as an overarching framework to be applied to the texts, but particular world-types were selected and applied to each novel only after an initial review of reader data. I avoid outlining specific linguistic features to be analysed within this broader typology or restricting analysis to set linguistic features; the use of a flexible approach to stylistic analysis within the typology facilitates a conceptually rich, text-driven exploration of the ways in which textual possibility and actuality are constructed and ensures that no linguistic features are excluded from analysis. Thus, stylistic analysis encompasses a range of elements depending on the excerpt in question – including, for example, modality, metaphor, syntax, negation, tense, and verb types. To have decided on linguistic features in advance of analysis would have limited the framework's capacity to cast light on the implications of multiple textual features. Furthermore, this lends the typology a degree of flexibility in application, meaning it has the potential to henceforth be utilised and tested by other researchers without limiting analysis to stylistic features that might not be present in every text. Consequently, the typology acknowledges the literary tradition of possible worlds approaches, which tend to focus on exploring the narrative construction of possibility, whilst still being located within the field of cognitive stylistics. The textual actual and possible worlds delineated in the typology thus formulate a flexible framework within which a panoply of linguistic methodologies can sit.

4.3 Empirical Approaches to the Study of Reading

Alongside employing cognitive stylistic analysis within the typology explained in 3.2.1-8, this study also utilises empirical reader response data. In 3.2.3, I explained that researchers who have studied the emotional impact of texts on readers have used empirical methods. Whiteley (2010:83) argues that an empirical approach is 'necessary for an investigation of the emotional experience of literary discourse', since this enables identification of the emotions experienced by readers; however, as noted in 4.1, the 'first person introspection' (Brône and Vandaele 2009:6) inherent in cognitive stylistic analysis also represents a form of empirical data, since a cognitive stylistic approach enables reconciliation of 'literary meaning production' to 'principles of meaning construction' (Brône and Vandaele 2009:6). Nonetheless, those empirical studies of literary reading which draw on readers' experiences beyond that of the researcher have aimed to gather data regarding readers' responses and to use this data to develop an understanding of a myriad of different aspects of reading, not limited to the study of readers' emotions. For instance, researchers have explored the role of readers' existing memories in reading (Seilman and Larsen 1989), readers' perception of time in storyworlds (Graesser et al. 1998), spatial processing during literary reading (Zwann and van Oostendoorp 1993) and the characteristics of literary reading as compared to factual comprehension (Langer 1990). Owing to the breadth of empirical methods used to study literary reading, I concentrate in more depth below on reviewing the methodologies

of a selection of research focusing specifically on the exploration of readers' emotions, due to the relevance of this to my own research.

Empirical approaches to the study of literary reading which draw on external reader data beyond the researcher's own responses have been characterised as either 'experimental' or 'naturalistic' (Swann and Allington 2009). An experimental approach might involve the use of excerpts from texts or altered versions of original texts, whereas a naturalistic approach might involve the observation of readers in a naturalistic, everyday setting, such as within a reading group. For instance, Whiteley (2010) positions her empirical research as explicitly naturalistic due to the use of verbal reader response data collected from face-to-face and online reading group discussions. Similarly, Canning's (2017) use of a prison book group as a data source for research into readers' responses to a short story is naturalistic due to engagement with a 'real-time reading group' (Canning 2017:172). One benefit of such naturalistic approaches can be their affordance of consideration of readers' contextual and schematic experiences in informing their understanding of a text. Another emerging naturalistic method in stylistics is the use of online reviews as a source of empirical data; for instance, Nuttall (2015) uses online review data to exemplify readers' responses to Richard Matheson's *I Am Legend* before using the concept of construal adapted from Cognitive Grammar (Langacker 2008) to explore linguistic factors contributing to readers' attribution of mental states to characters. Nuttall (2017) also uses online reviews to explore readers' contrasting ethical responses, before using Text World Theory to show how these responses are text-driven. In both studies, Nuttall's purpose is therefore to glean insights from the reviews regarding readers' feelings about texts before undertaking linguistic analysis to explicate these responses.

Similarly, Giovanelli (2018) uses excerpts from online reviews to demonstrate readers' views of the narrator in the novel *The Girl on the Train,* before using Cognitive Grammar (Langacker 1991) to explore the presentation of the narrator's mind style (Fowler 1977). Use of reader reviews in stylistics may also focus on stylistic analysis of reviews themselves, providing insights into the way reading is conceptualised (Harrison and Nuttall 2020). Allington (2016) compares Amazon customer reviews with those of literary critics, using online review data to explore how customers' responses differ from those of professional reviewers. These studies have demonstrated the capacity of naturalistic approaches to yield rich and expansive datasets for qualitative analysis. One limitation of naturalistic studies is that it may be more difficult for researchers to obtain specific 'verbal data about a particular stylistic or linguistic feature' (Bell et al. 2019:243) but on the other hand, naturalistic methods do enable researchers to generate data regarding 'larger, more complex literary concepts' (Bell et al. 2019:243), thus making them a

useful tool for reader response research despite the relatively low degree of control researchers have over data generation in comparison to experimental methods.

Even in experimental studies, researchers have varied degrees of control over data generation depending on a range of factors (Whiteley and Canning 2017:74; Steen 1991:567-572) such as whether questions are open or closed. Some of the more experimental approaches to empirical research of readers' emotions have utilised control conditions such as multiple different versions of texts, or test and control groups who read different texts, to attempt to identify specific emotion-causing elements of literature. In one study into reader 'evaluations', a control group was shown versions of a story with more neutral language with the focus group given a version with what the researchers termed 'evaluation phrases' in order to study the impact of foregrounding particular features on readers' responses (Hunt and Vipond 1986). Djikic et al. (2009) used a control group who read a short story that had been altered into a documentary format alongside a test group reading the original short story in a literary format. In another study, the extent to which readers' attention is drawn to features of foregrounding such as alliteration or assonance was measured by the time taken to read and pay attention to particular textual features, due to the hypothesis that stylistic features of foregrounding attract readers' attention and therefore take more time to process (Miall and Kuiken 1994). Some experimental methods even incorporate physiological scientific approaches including measurement of heart rate (Bar-Haim et al. 2004) and neuroimaging techniques (Phan et al. 2004), but major drawbacks of these techniques are their relative expense and inaccessibility to non-medical researchers (Mar et al. 2011) as well as the fact that they only demonstrate that an emotional response is occurring, rather than casting light on the nuance of the feeling experienced by readers.

Other experimental methods include labelling post-reading emotions by sorting cards (Goetz et al. 1992), rating emotional responses on a scale (Cupchik et al. 1998), narrating emotions during reading (Andringa 1990) in what has been called the 'think-aloud' method (Kuiken and Miall 1995:1), and completing a checklist of emotions prior to and after reading a story (Djikic et al. 2009). These methods differ, then, according to the degree of immediacy with which readers can discuss their emotional responses as well as to the extent to which readers speak freely or choose emotions from pre-set lists. While selecting emotions from predetermined labels can be useful for quantitative research and identifying patterns, this approach may not allow readers to express an unlimited range of emotions, thus potentially limiting exploration of the full range of emotions incited by reading, including those not anticipated by the researcher. However, experimental approaches can be designed to account for nuance by incorporating qualitative analysis. Bell et al. (2019:258) generate data using a Likert scale 'to shed light on precisely targeted textual features', before interviewing readers and analysing their responses qualitatively. They note that

whilst experimental and naturalistic methods have often been seen as diametrically opposed, some existing approaches combine elements of both methodologies, such as the use of questionnaires to elicit data about a text that has been read naturalistically (Kuijpers et al. 2014). Another method that incorporates experimental and naturalistic influences is self-probed retrospection, in which readers note the feelings they experience whilst reading and later discuss these with researchers. First used by Seilman and Larsen (1989), it has been developed by multiple researchers (Miall and Kuiken 1994; Sikora et al. 1998; Mar et al. 2011) and enables interviewees to discuss emotions on their own terms without being directed to particular textual elements.

Given the affordances of both naturalistic and experimental approaches outlined here, my own research design incorporates two forms of reader response data sources in the form of online reviews and semi-structured reader interviews. Whether online reviewers or participants in interviews, both sets of readers were initially engaged in a process of 'solitary reading' which transformed into 'social reading' (Peplow et al. 2016:30) in their discussion of their opinions on the text either with me or in posts on online review websites. My use of online review data can broadly be categorised as a naturalistic method in that online reviews are written for the public domain without writers' prior knowledge of their future usage as research data. I discuss the ethical issues associated with this form of data sourcing in more detail in 4.10. While the use of online review data meant that, as a researcher, I could not exert control over readers' expressions of their emotional responses, the use of online reviews facilitated access to a broad dataset encompassing a wide range of readers' responses to the novels analysed in this thesis. My use of semi-structured interviews for the specific purpose of gathering data regarding readers' emotions can be viewed, meanwhile, as partially experimental in that interviews are artificially designed discussions. However, since my research involved talking to readers after they had read an entire novel rather than during the reading process, it was principally naturalistic, mirroring the way readers might reflect on their reading after completing a novel in discussions with others in everyday life. By utilising both qualitative interviewing and online review data, I was able to gain a broader set of reader responses than would have been feasible otherwise.

The paradigm adopted for this research is, then, inherently qualitative in that it uses a relatively small set of reader data to facilitate depth of understanding of the emotions experienced by readers in response to texts, rather than attempting to statistically analyse the frequency of particular emotions, and is largely naturalistic. The qualitative analysis afforded by naturalistic studies gives 'an advantage over strictly experimental approaches' in affording the researcher the opportunity to 'pay more attention to the nuance of individual response' (Bell et al. 2019:244). The qualitative approach adopted here, accordingly, allows me to demonstrate commonalities, nuances and

differences in readers' emotional responses, thereby enriching my stylistic analysis. Due to the qualitative nature of the research and due also to the ineluctably subjective nature of readers' emotions, I make no overarching claims regarding stylistic constructions that unequivocally evoke a certain effect. Rather, the purpose of the empirical data collected for this research was primarily to cast light on some of the emotions experienced by readers of the novels selected for this study, which then enabled me to focus on analysing potential reasons for the elicitation of particular emotions in the application of my typology in Chapters 5-10. Next, I detail my qualitative interview design, before turning to the research design of the online review element of my research.

4.4 Qualitative Interview Design

As a tool of knowledge production, qualitative interviews are conducted in order to 'obtain interviewees' descriptions' on events or feelings (Brinkmann 2013:22), and can either be phenomenological methods, which seek to investigate the experiences of interviewees, or 'discourse-oriented' (Brinkmann 2013:43) approaches, which focus on analysis of the language of interactions. Since my aim was to gather data regarding the self-reported emotions of participants, my interviews were phenomenological in nature as I sought to elicit information regarding interviewees' feelings rather than analyse the language in which they expressed those emotions. Individual interviews were chosen as the method of research rather than focus groups due to their capacity to facilitate 'an atmosphere of trust and discretion' (Brinkmann 2013:27). Interviews began with a two-pronged overarching question: 'Which aspects of this novel did you find emotionally affecting and why?' Therefore, interviews were semi-structured, in using an 'open-ended' question, which allows the researcher to 'ascertain what further inquiry is appropriate and often necessary' (Galletta 2013:75) during the interview. Readers were able to speak freely about their emotions and any particularly emotion-causing aspects of the texts.

In advance of interviews, interviewees were informed in writing of the focus of the interview and encouraged to note down in advance of the interviews any particular parts of the novel where they felt strong emotions, so they were prepared to speak in detail without excessive prompting. This enabled interviewees to 'answer on their own terms' (Edwards and Holland 2013:29) in the tradition of semi-structured interviews, as I was able to elicit 'descriptions' (Kvale and Brinkmann 2008:3) from interviewees regarding their own experiences, as well as harnessing some of the benefits of self-probed retrospection in allowing interviewees to discuss their personal responses (Mar et al. 2011) with one advantage of this approach being that readers are only 'minimally interrupted' (Whiteley 2010:85) during the reading experience. Furthermore, research around interviewees' memories should be conducted by asking for a relatively free narrative (Thomsen and Brinkmann 2009) rather than making questions overly specific, so the

broad nature of this question enabled readers to discuss their memories of the novel in a detailed and comparatively unstructured way, focusing on the elements of their emotional experience of the narrative that they perceived as most relevant. By asking questions relating to interviewees' memories of their emotions when reading the novel, my research also began from the epistemological assumption that meanings are already 'essentially "there"', to be articulated by the interviewee, rather than arising 'dialogically' (Brinkmann 2013:25). Nonetheless, the limitations of communication mean that readers' comments should not be interpreted as evidence of every emotion experienced during the reading process or every emotion-causing element of a text, but instead as an exemplification of some of the emotions experienced by some readers and some moments in the novels potentially giving rise to these emotions.

By providing an overarching question at the beginning of the interview and facilitating relatively unrestrained responses from readers, I sought to adhere to Brinkmann's (2013:17) recommendation that interviews should be asymmetrically structured in favour of the interviewee's comments. Limiting interviewer comments is useful in minimising 'interference' from researchers (Galletta 2013:107), and researchers working from the epistemological perspective that interview data is a resource reflecting interviewees' reality beyond the interview should work to avoid 'coloring interviewees' reports of their reality' by acting 'receptively' (Brinkmann 2013:37) and minimising their own comments. A receptive style can enable informants to feel 'a large measure of control' in the way they answer the 'relatively few and relatively open questions' posed (Wengraf 2001:155), although it is also important not to allow emergence of thematic patterns or codes to 'overwhelm the focus' (Galletta 2013:76) of the interview, and researchers therefore need to remain focused on the aim of the interview throughout. It is also sometimes important to probe for clarification to ensure accuracy of data (Galletta 2013:82). In my own responses, then, I occasionally asked additional supporting questions relevant to the main interview question posed at the beginning of the interview in order to encourage interviewees to clarify or expand on their responses, as well as occasionally making supportive comments expressing understanding of participants' emotional responses.

However, I largely allowed interviewees to shape the progression of the interview by speaking in an unrestrained manner about their own emotional responses to the novel in question. This enabled me to minimise distortion of the data and reduce my level of influence, whilst still eliciting clarifications and further descriptions of interviewees' emotions where necessary to obtain sufficient data. I also avoided directing readers to pre-chosen textual features or specifying emotions in my questioning to help facilitate discussion of a range of emotions the novels might have elicited and emotion-causing elements of the texts, in order to limit the capacity for experimental methods to 'impose structure upon the readers' verbal reports' (Whiteley 2010:86)

and thereby restrict the forms and types of emotional responses expressed by readers. Similarly, while I set a maximum time frame of 30 minutes for interviews for practical considerations including interviewee comfort, I did not set a minimum time for interviews given my desire to let interviewees speak freely, without imposing pressure to speak extensively. Therefore, the shortest interview conducted was eight minutes long and the longest 26 minutes with a median length of 18 minutes. Some interviewees chose to speak about their emotions far more extensively than others, which was an inevitable consequence of the semi-structured approach selected for this study.

Interviews were conducted only using audio technology, as audio interviews are less intrusive than videoconferencing and offer a greater degree of privacy to participants (Gionfriddo et al. 2018). Recording participants' appearances would have been unnecessary to my research aims given that readers' self-reports of their emotional responses was my focus rather than analysis of the manner in which interviewees communicated their experiences. This also enabled me to minimise the need for storage of identifying data prior to transcription. Audio technology increases researcher safety in comparison to the use of video or face-to-face interviewing (Shuy 2002:540) as well as providing access to geographically dispersed interviewees, reduced costs, and greater scheduling and logistical convenience (Drabble et al. 2016). The use of remote technology is particularly useful, too, in an era of social distancing (Lobe et al. 2020) and was an inevitable choice for my own empirical research, which was conducted during the UK nationwide lockdown in 2020, but even prior to this unfolding situation I had decided to use remote interviewing due to the geographical flexibility afforded by this method.

The use of Skype software with disabled video capability to make audio calls enabled me to harness the convenience of audio interviewing alongside making use of the software's capacity to record audio data using integrated technologies (Archibald et al. 2019). There is no 'universally correct medium' (Brinkmann 2013:30) in which interview success is guaranteed, but conducting audio interviews online enabled me to gain a broad dataset regarding a range of respondents' emotions. After interviews, I transcribed qualitative interview data myself to ensure consistency (Oliver et al. 2005) and used orthographic verbatim transcription to ensure the validity of my data. However, any form of transcription is selective according to the researcher's aims (Davison 2009) and in fact a selective approach to transcription can even be useful (Ochs 1979) for avoiding extraneous information. In the case of this research, due to my focus on eliciting data regarding readers' experiences rather than analysis of the manner in which these experiences were expressed, I used a simple set of transcription conventions outlined in Appendix A, which prioritised readers' words as the key source of data rather than phonological factors such as intonation.

Owing to the practical difficulty inherent in obtaining participants willing to invest the necessary time to reading an entire novel, up to 614 pages in length in the case of *A Fine Balance,* participants for qualitative interviewing were sourced both from existing acquaintances and via an open call for participants on social media. I placed no external constraints regarding the personal qualities or experiences of the participants I interviewed and did not require them to have experience of studying literature in a formal or academic context. In the tradition of empirical approaches to reading, my focus was on exploring the ways readers might be '*experiencing* literature rather than interpreting it' (Miall 2006:3, emphasis retained). Stockwell (2005:144) suggests that 'real' or non-academic readers may in fact demonstrate a greater focus on the affective or emotional aspects of texts in their responses. However, given that all the novels selected for this study have all been viewed in different ways as literary, my sample of readers for qualitative interviews was to some extent self-selecting, given that readers inevitably shared the characteristic of willingness to read literary texts as well as the experience in reading required to access such texts. My methodology does not preclude application to non-literary texts, however, so it might also be applied in future research to popular or genre fiction. In total, six interviews were conducted for each of *The Trick is to Keep Breathing* (1989 [1999]) and *A Fine Balance* (2006 [1995]), and seven with readers of *Revolutionary Road* (2007 [1961]), which obtained a higher level of interest in reader participation than the other two novels. Rather than exclude a willing reader and potentially illuminating data from the dataset, I chose to conduct an uneven number of reader reviews, as the nature of my qualitative research meant that numerical uniformity of the dataset was not a significant priority.

4.5 The Use of Online Reviews

As discussed in 4.3, the use of online reviews is an established tool of empirical research in cognitive stylistics. Reviews selected for this study were chosen using a concept-led process in which I selected reviews for analysis which expressed strong feelings or emotions towards each novel. By 'strong feelings or emotions', I mean that I focused on reviews that expressed any identifiable feelings or emotions such as hope, joy, disappointment, sadness, frustration, or anger regarding particular aspects of the novel rather than reviews expressing more neutral or apathetic feelings. For example, I was more likely to select a review for exploration if it used metaphors associated with emotional pain or strong feelings such as 'heartbreaking' or powerful adjectives such as 'devastating', or if the reader spoke about how a book had affected them personally. I acknowledge that, in not establishing a set of pre-analysis emotion terms, there is an element of subjectivity in the review selection process, as the reviews identified as demonstrating an emotional response were inevitably partly informed by my own perspective as a reader, as well as by features of the language used by reviewers. I also accept that this process is less systematic

and more intuitive than a corpus-based method in which key words are selected as a focus for review selection. However, the benefit of manual selection of reviews without preconditions was that I was not limited in my selection to the emotions that I as a researcher had anticipated readers to feel, and could instead include reviews expressing any emotions including those I had not explicitly foreseen. Furthermore, if I had sought out reviews using explicit terms to describe the experience of emotions, such as the verb 'feel', this could have prevented me from identifying those reviews which expressed emotions more implicitly. While I acknowledge the influence of my own positionality as a researcher on review selection, this is counterbalanced by the benefits of manual selection outlined here.

The online reviews selected for this analysis were sourced from Amazon and GoodReads, two websites on which readers can share their own personal responses to texts. I used both websites in order to access a wider number and range of reviews than would have been possible with only one source. Whilst both Amazon and GoodReads invite readers to contribute reviews, there are some key differences in the format and the purpose of reviews, even though both websites are owned by the Amazon company (Flood 2013). GoodReads is a community social cataloguing website where readers share and discuss their opinions on books they have read, whilst reviewers on Amazon have often, though not always, purchased books on the website. Any customer with an Amazon account can leave a review, with reviews of those customers who purchased the book on the website being labelled 'Verified Purchase'. I chose to include both verified and unverified Amazon reviews in my dataset for two reasons. Firstly, since there can be no external verification of whether readers have truly read a book on GoodReads, similarly to Amazon where even unverified readers may have purchased the book elsewhere, the inclusion of both verified and unverified purchases on Amazon aligned my selection of Amazon reviews with my GoodReads dataset. Secondly, whilst counterfeit Amazon reviews may occasionally be written to promote sales (He et al. 2022), my own detailed knowledge of the three novels enabled me to carefully select reviews which discussed feasible emotions experienced during the process of reading the novel and to thus ensure as far as possible that reviews were by genuine readers. A further limitation of using online reviews may be their performative element (Driscoll and Rehberg Sedo 2019), but arguably any form of verbal or written response to literature intended for any audience – even if only a single researcher – is inherently performative, since it involves the expression of one's feelings about reading to others rather than a private emotional experience. Thus, any study of readers' emotions – whether expressed in online reviews or in any other format – is in reality a study of readers' *expressions* of their emotions, given the impossibility of verifying the veracity of individuals' verbal or written communication.

For each novel, initial samples of 50 reviews each were obtained from Amazon and GoodReads websites, with 100 reviews therefore selected overall for the initial stage of review selection for each novel. This first stage of sampling was necessary due to the great number of reviews existing on each website: there are over 9,000 GoodReads reviews and over 1,200 Amazon reviews for *A Fine Balance,* for example, which would make manual selection unmanageable. An initial sample was also helpful for parity between novel selections, since there were uneven numbers of reviews for each novel available. From these initial samples, 14 reviews were then manually selected for *A Fine Balance,* 16 for *Revolutionary Road,* and 17 for *The Trick is to Keep Breathing.* This uneven review selection was partly due to the varied lengths of reviews, which meant that I required a larger number of reviews to formulate a useful dataset for the exploration of readers' emotional responses to *The Trick is to Keep Breathing* due to the comparative brevity of reviews. This is demonstrated in the fact that, collectively, the reviews of this novel which are reproduced and anonymised in Appendix G comprise 3,204 words in total, compared to 6,107 words for *Revolutionary Road,* and 7,839 words for *A Fine Balance*. Reviews of *A Fine Balance* tended to be particularly lengthy and detailed, perhaps partly due to the length and detail of the novel itself. Since my focus was not on *comparing* readers' emotional responses to different novels, but rather on utilising readers' responses to support analysis, collection of an uneven number of reviews did not affect the validity of the study, just as the varied lengths of reader interviews and different numbers of participants did not affect the validity of my interview data, as explained in 4.4. In 4.7 I detail the coding procedure utilised for the analysis of my online review dataset and for interview transcripts.

4.6 The Relevance of Context and Extratextual Factors in Empirical Studies of Readers' Emotions

Reading fiction is an inherently personal experience in which readers use experiences from their own lives to comprehend texts: emotions elicited by narratives may be partially evoked by memories relating to events in readers' lives or prior experiences (Seilman and Larsen 1989) and even the location in which reading takes place can affect interpretations (Swann and Allington 2009:262). The broad contexts of readers' lives as well as the immediate context of reading may have, therefore, a significant impact on the emotions they experience when confronted with a textual stimulus. Emotions more generally are indissociable from social and personal contexts, since emotions are the outcome of assessing the world in terms of one's own experiences (Frijda 1986) and context may encompass cultural, situational, and personal factors which influence emotions (Greenaway et al. 2018). Even broad cultural contexts may influence the internal experience of emotions (Lim 2016; De Vaus et al. 2018). Given the multitude of contextual factors beyond the text which may influence readers' experiences of texts, Caracciolo (2014:55) has called for acknowledgement of 'the experiential background' of readers, and researchers of

narrative empathy have urged caution when stating the effect of textual elements on readers' responses (Keen 2007:225; Van Lissa et al. 2016:59). Literary reading is a fundamentally 'interactive process' (Miall 2006:26) in which readers' experiences inevitably affect their feelings about texts, and readers' experiences are 'the result of the dynamic interaction between incoming textual information and the reader's prior knowledge and experiences' (Fernandez-Quintanilla 2020:141). This is acknowledged in Text World Theory in the concept of the discourse world (Werth 1999). Thus, I recognise that extratextual factors play an important role in readers' experiences of emotion and, while I suggest the implications certain stylistic constructions may have, I remain cautious throughout my analysis about making claims for direct relationships between textual devices and particular emotions.

However, as it would have been impossible to account for every element of readers' contexts and because the diversity of readers' experiences was not the focus of this study, I did not specifically direct readers in qualitative interviews to discuss particular aspects of their own experiences beyond the texts, though the semi-structured nature of reader interviews meant that readers did sometimes discuss of their own volition how their experiences influenced their emotions, and several readers in online reviews also linked their emotions to their own lives. I acknowledge the relevance of readers' experiences in my analysis where pertinent, though it is likely that readers' experiences of the texts intersect in greater depth with individual events and their personal life contexts than can be considered within the scope of this thesis. I do acknowledge particularly unusual or divergent emotions in my coding of readers' emotions introduced at the beginning of each chapter, whether in online reviews or in interviews, and I recognise that no emotional effect elicited by a text can ever be universal, but my broad focus on identifying commonalities before analysing the textual factors contributing to these emotional experiences means that some of the nuances of readers' personal experiences are not analysed in depth. While cognitive stylistics can encompass recognition of external factors influencing readers' responses, it need not focus on 'minute differences' between readings (Stockwell 2020:11).

A further specific contextual element which can be relevant to readers' emotional experiences of texts is the act of re-reading. Emotions elicited by literary texts may be related to anticipatory responses and schemata developed whilst reading (Miall 1989) and readers may sometimes construe emotion differently on second readings by attaching more importance to certain phrases due to their schematic knowledge (Miall 2006:61). However, I chose not to control for this in my selection of readers by not excluding re-readers for several reasons. Firstly, since I could not control for re-reading experiences in online reviews, as I was unaware of whether reviewers may have re-read focus novels, I chose not to control for this in my parallel use of qualitative interviewing. Secondly, while future research might consider the impact of re-reading on

experiences of textual actual and possible worlds, research suggests that knowing how a novel ends does not curtail aspects of readers' emotions such as enjoyment (Leavitt and Christenfield 2011), and that readers willingly ignore information gleaned during previous readings of a text in order to enjoy it a second time (Gerrig 1989:279). Finally, as research was conducted outside of an experimental setting, being closer to the 'naturalistic' mode (Swann and Allington 2009), it might be that in preparation for discussing the reading, readers would be likely to engage in re-reading short sections in advance of sharing their thoughts. Using my methodological approach, it would have been difficult to ensure that there was no re-reading involved at all and therefore I chose not to exclude readers who were already familiar with the focus texts from this study.

4.7 Coding of Reader Review and Interview Data

Any coding approach must be adapted depending on the 'unique needs and disciplinary concerns' (Saldaña 2012:64) of the research in question because coding is fundamentally a 'decision-making process' (Elliott 2018:2850) guided by research aims. For this study, coding was a manual process taking place with 'two levels of terms' encompassing 'codes at a primary level and categories or themes at a secondary level, which are formed from analysis of codes rather than of data' (Elliott 2018:2852). I began with a set of two broad *a priori* codes at the primary level of coding reader interview transcripts and online reviews. This enabled me to ensure that the coding procedure addressed the research questions outlined in 1.3 and furnished me with a set of data regarding readers' emotional responses to the focus texts for this study. I then utilised emergent coding at the secondary stage. The *a priori* codes selected for analysis of reader data were firstly *readers' emotions*, and secondly *elements of the novel eliciting these emotions*. After coding the data at a primary level, the inductive approach utilised for the second stage of coding was vital in rendering the data a manageable tool in pursuing research objectives (Thomas 2006) and facilitating analysis (Rapley 2011:282). By labelling and categorising readers' emotions and the emotion-causing elements of texts using emergent coding and avoiding the use of a pre-set list of potential emotions or textual features, I was able to avoid imposing my own preconceptions of readers' responses on the data and to ensure that a wide range of emotions and emotion-causing elements could be examined, even if these had not been envisaged.

Coding necessitates taking data apart before 'putting them back together in a meaningful way' (Creswell 2015:156) and therefore researchers must pay close attention to the 'steps taken from data generation to formulation of general patterns' (Brinkmann 2013:56). Thus, after applying the established codes of *readers' emotions* and *elements of the novel eliciting emotions* in the primary stage of coding, I then approached the secondary and deductive stage of coding in a two-stage process. Firstly, I labelled data with broad emotion categories. Secondly, I grouped the data again into a smaller number of categories identified as thematically prominent. While Creswell

(2015:155-6) suggests beginning with around 20 codes before reducing these to five and seven themes, there is 'no standardized or magic number' (Saldaña 2016:25). I therefore did not specify a set number of codes, which helped to facilitate a data-driven approach. Since specific phrases or words used by participants can be 'good leads' (Miles, Huberman and Saldaña 2014:74) in indicating emerging themes, I did not exclude participants' own terminology from my categorisations, but the emergent codes were descriptive rather than *in vivo.* For example, readers of *The Trick is to Keep Breathing* referred to feeling 'hopeful' and 'positive' (R3) and to feeling 'optimism' (R5). These emotions were coded in the emotion category 'hope'. The nuanced, personal nature of emotion means that any emotion categorisation must be subjective to some degree, but this procedure enabled coding to work as a form of 'data condensation' (Miles, Huberman and Saldaña 2014:73) enabling me to address the research aims of this study. Coders can approach their task as 'lumpers' or 'splitters' (Bernard 2011:379), either initially coding larger excerpts from a dataset which are later refined, or segmenting a dataset into smaller codes from the beginning of the analytical process. I utilised a 'splitting' approach in that I conducted a line-by-line analysis of datasets, since this approach can facilitate 'more nuanced analysis from the start' (Saldaña 2016:24). This enabled me to label specific emotions or emotion-causing elements of the novel relating to key words or phrases from the beginning of the coding, although these categories were gradually refined further throughout the inductive coding process in which I continually returned to the dataset as codes emerged.

The two *a priori* primary codes of *readers' emotions* and *elements of the novel eliciting emotions* were applied separately within the coding procedure, as this allowed me to cross-reference the two codes where readers did explicitly link specific emotions to emotion-causing elements of the texts. This also enabled me to identify readers' emotions when these were expressed in a more general sense without being linked to a specific part of the novel, and to identify commonalities in elements of the novels mentioned by readers as emotionally affecting even if readers did not label the emotions given. This was important in particular for the coding of online reviews as, while all reviews contained references to readers' emotions due to the process of review selection, not all reviewers explicitly linked their emotions to particular points in the narrative but sometimes expressed a more general response. For example, one online reviewer (RO2) of a *Fine Balance* suggests that it is 'probably the most depressing book' they have read. The use of the separate codes outlined above enabled me to label this element of the review with 'sadness' even though the reviewer did not explicitly link this emotion, at this point in the review, to a particular aspect of the novel. As readers in interviews were asked 'Which aspects of this novel did you find emotionally affecting and why?', as discussed in 4.4, they often did link their descriptions of their emotions to specific elements of the text, but the use of separate codes enabled me to identify commonalities and differences in the experiences of readers. For example, readers might

refer to the same narrative event or character and describe a similar emotion elicited by this, enabling me to identify parallels in readers' experiences, or they might express different emotions or refer to different textual factors, facilitating the acknowledgement of nuance.

In the analysis presented in Sections 2 and 3 of Chapters 5-10, then, the primary code *readers' emotions* takes precedence in the organisation of the data presented, with the second primary code *elements of the novel eliciting emotions* incorporated where this helps to illuminate common factors contributing to readers' emotional responses. For instance, in 5.2, I outline the repeated expression of sadness in multiple online reviews and explain the individual reasoning given by readers where relevant, with only the emergent category *sadness* within the larger code *readers' emotions* giving rise to this grouping. However, where possible, I cross-reference the two codes to cast light not only on readers' emotions but on some of the factors contributing to those emotions; for example, in 10.3, I suggest that several readers' responses in reader interviews indicate hope regarding the ending of the novel, with the category *hope* within the code *readers' emotions* and the category *ending of novel* in the code *elements of the novel eliciting emotions* facilitating this analysis.

My own positionality influenced the coding process in two ways: firstly, in labelling emotion categories, as these were necessarily selected from the emotion labels experientially and linguistically available to me as identifiable entities; and secondly, in reducing the number of initial codes to a workable number of codes, I relied partly on manual quantitative selection in terms of frequency but also partly on qualitative selection of themes or on identification of codes that seemed to be significant or interesting. Occasionally a code that appears infrequently in a dataset may be important and have the potential to generate meaning in later analysis (Saldaña 2016:25) and thus I did not exclude codes from my research if they were infrequent if these helped to address the research questions outlined in 1.3. Alongside giving rise to the exploration of commonalities and nuances in readers' emotional responses that I discuss in Sections 2 and 3 of Chapters 5-10, I also – as explained in 3.3.8 – partially utilised reader data to help support the selection of world-types alongside my own analysis, since readers' comments, alongside analysis of the texts themselves, often suggested the utility of a particular world-type from the typology. For instance, some readers' suggestions of their sympathy and sadness regarding the character Dina Dalal's life situation in *A Fine Balance* in comparison to an alternative life she might have had under different circumstances partially contributed to my decision to apply the world-type of CFTWs in Chapter 5.

4.8 Excerpt Selection

Reader data obtained for this study works predominantly to illustrate some of the emotions elicited by each text, and in my own stylistic analysis within a typology of textual actual and possible worlds, I examine some of the textual factors potentially contributing to the elicitation of these emotions. Thus, the selection of novel excerpts for analysis in Chapters 5-10 was partly guided by my own stylistic analysis within the typology introduced in 3.2.2-7. However, the coding procedure outlined in 4.7 was also useful in supporting this process of excerpt selection. Where I was able to identify discussion of aspects of each novel provoking readers' emotions as per the coding process explained above, this was used to guide me as a researcher towards the selection of certain sections of the novels for analysis. However, the flexibility of my qualitative interviewing approach and the use of existing online review data meant that in both cases readers did not always identify certain moments or incidents facilitating the experience of certain emotions. If readers did specifically refer to emotion-causing moments or incidents, I sought out relevant excerpts to attempt to explicate their emotions in my analysis. Importantly, though, even where readers did discuss specific emotion-causing elements of the novel, which I identified within the second primary coding category *elements of the novel eliciting emotions* explained in 4.7, many readers often spoke in a generalised and discursive manner about plot incidents or particular characters, rather than highlighting emotion-causing elements at sentence or paragraph level.

Therefore, my use of reader data to support excerpt selection was flexible and framed partly by my own interpretations. For example, while I did seek out specific moments or incidents that reviewers found emotionally affecting where possible, at other times if an online reviewer had written extensively about how they felt about a certain character or situation in a novel, I would then seek out a description exemplifying this even if this moment had not been explicitly identified by the reviewer. For instance, when interviewee R4 discussed their sadness regarding Joy's alcoholism in *The Trick is to Keep Breathing*, I selected a specific example of this from the novel for my analysis. Overall, then, while excerpt selection was predominantly guided by my own stylistic analysis within the typology introduced in 3.2.2-7, readers' comments on both their emotions and on emotion-causing elements of the novel were utilised to support this stage of the research where possible.

4.9 Text Choices

As stated in 1.2, the texts selected for analysis are *A Fine Balance* by Rohinton Mistry (2006 [1995]), *The Trick is to Keep Breathing* by Janice Galloway (1989 [1999]), and *Revolutionary Road* by Richard Yates (2007 [1961]). Each of these novels can be viewed as realist in that the textual actual world for each is situated in the ontological domain of reality. While Possible Worlds Theory has often lent itself to exploring texts which 'play with ontology' (Bell and Ryan

2019:25), my use of realist texts ensures that the application of my already multifaceted framework is not further complicated by consideration of the implications of the unnatural elements of texts located in 'impossible worlds' (Ryan 2013). The use of realist novels also enables me to explore moments at which certain textual possible worlds may be restricted in possibility or may become less attainable within a narrative, without complicating this with consideration of worlds that are *logically* impossible (Alber 2009, 2016, and 2019; Ryan 2013; Martin 2019; Schukneckt 2019), although application of my typology to such texts might represent a fruitful area for exploration in future research beyond the constraints of this study.

All focus texts for this study were first published in the latter half of the twentieth century in a period spanning 34 years. Each either won or was shortlisted for literary prizes. *The Trick is to Keep Breathing* was shortlisted for the Whitbread First Novel Award and the Irish Times International Fiction Prize, and won the MIND Book of the Year Award (British Council 2021). It has been studied as a set text for Scottish Higher exams and was listed in Peter Boxall's (2006) *1001 Books You Must Read Before You Die*. *A Fine Balance* was nominated for the Booker Prize in 1996 and won the 1995 Giller Prize (Mistry 2006), while *Revolutionary Road* won a National Book Award in 1962 and received critical acclaim (Ford 2000) and is suggested as an optional text on some A Level English Literature specifications (AQA 2017; OCR 2017). These various accolades, then, demonstrate that each novel has been conceptualised as 'literary'. While 'literariness' is not necessary to the application of a typology of textual actual and possible worlds, the strength of the positive critical response to each text suggested that my own enjoyment of each text, despite the sadness and tragic elements of each, was not a singular experience, and therefore that these might be appropriate novels for analysis of the ways in which the stylistic construction of textual actual and possible worlds may contribute to emotional effects. Likewise, due to the focus on the emotional effects of texts, I furthermore chose novels for which a preliminary assessment of online reader reviews demonstrated the existence of strong emotional responses in readers, such as sadness. While acknowledging the subjectivity of the reading process, I was also guided partly by my own experience as a reader of having found each of these novels to be emotionally affecting. My own emotional response to each novel therefore did guide my text selection to an extent, as well as later helping to shape stylistic analysis.

While these texts have some common factors, textual differences enable my typology to be applied to a range of novels and thus to demonstrate some versatility. The texts vary significantly in length, at 614 pages for *A Fine Balance,* 337 pages for *Revolutionary Road*, and 236 pages for *The Trick is to Keep Breathing* for the editions cited in this thesis. They also vary significantly in plot and narrative scope: *The Trick is to Keep Breathing* has a narrow focus on the depression of its narrator, whilst *Revolutionary Road* has a somewhat broader focus on the disintegrating

marriage and existential unease of its two protagonists, and *A Fine Balance* has a wider focus still on the intersecting lives of four characters living in 1970s India. The texts differ in their stylistic construction in several ways, too. *The Trick is to Keep Breathing* is written in the first person, whilst the other novels are written in the third person. The texts differ in their use of tense, with *The Trick is to Keep Breathing* written primarily in the present tense, aside from interwoven flashbacks, in contrast to *Revolutionary Road* and *A Fine Balance* which are mostly in the past tense. Conceivably, even seemingly minor factors such as the different lengths of the novels might impact emotional engagement; the length of time spent reading literature might mean it 'has greater emotional consequences than media with shorter durations of engagement' (Mar et al. 2011:822). I acknowledge that these textual differences might also be viewed as a complicating factor as well as an affordance, but my approach to analysis is not intended to be comparative. Rather, I use each text to explore different ways in which the construction of textual actual and possible worlds might have an impact on readers' emotions.

4.10 Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval for this study was sought and granted by Aston University's Research Ethics Committee. The use of readers' experiences as empirical data for this study rendered it necessary to apply critical scrutiny to my own role as a researcher to ensure a reflexive ethical approach (Mason 1996:6). An ethically reflexive approach was thus applied both to the consideration of my use of qualitative interviews and my use of online review data. I was particularly conscious of the potential for qualitative interviewing to cause harm (Guillemin and Gillam 2004:272) by eliciting painful emotions. While my focus was on the study of readers' experiences of literature rather than on events transpiring in their own lives, I was conscious that the process of reading might nonetheless cause emotional harm to readers by causing them to recall personal emotional or traumatic experiences. Participants in reader interviews were therefore fully informed of their rights and made aware that their participation in the study was entirely voluntary and that they were able to withdraw at any time. Participant information forms included brief lists of potentially upsetting themes, and readers were advised not to begin reading if these themes might be too challenging to encounter. Furthermore, participants were advised to stop reading and withdraw from the study at any time of their choosing, should they find any of the themes too distressing. As well as considering these ethical issues at the planning stage, I also paid attention to the 'ethically important moments' (Guillemin and Gillam 2004:262) which arose unexpectedly during the interview process by responding carefully and sensitively to participants who shared their emotions, and particularly to those participants who discussed how their emotional responses were affected by their personal experiences. I avoided questioning readers in intrusive ways and, as explained in 4.4, allowed participants to shape the direction of the discourse beyond the initial question with which I began each interview. I sometimes responded with supportive

comments – for example, 'that's really interesting' – but avoided pressing participants for detailed elaboration on personal experiences as this was unnecessary for the aims of this study. However, participants did often refer spontaneously to their own experiences and how these increased their emotional responses, as noted in 4.7.

Alongside remaining conscious of the 'microethics' (Komesaroff 1995:265) of the data-gathering process throughout qualitative interviews, I also recognised my ethical responsibilities beyond the interview itself. The need for secure data storage is important (Lobe et al. 2020) and therefore after completing audio calls on encrypted Skype software (Lo Iacono et al. 2016), I downloaded and encrypted anonymised audio files and deleted these after transcription. Data was therefore stored in line with national GDPR regulations on data minimisation (ICO 2018:102) and Aston University's 'Guidance on Research Ethics' (2015). Reader interviews were transcribed immediately after recording as explained in 4.4 and are reproduced in Appendices B-D with the transcription key provided in Appendix A. A numbered code was assigned to each interview participant and each online review, with abbreviations beginning 'RO' (online reviewer) and R (reader interviewee) used within the analysis presented in Chapters 5-10; for example, 'RO1' refers to online reviewer 1, while R2 refers to reader interviewee 2. I planned to redact any personal or identifying details shared by readers, but this was only necessary to do once, when redacting a reference to another reviewer's username by a reader of *A Fine Balance.*

Alongside reflecting on my ethical responsibilities prior to interviewing participants, I also considered the ethical implications of collating online reviews as research data. The internet is a valuable tool for linguistic analysis (Fletcher 2004:91), which affords confidentiality and anonymity in comparison to other qualitative methodologies (Graber and Graber 2013). The use of online reviews as empirical data can present ethical challenges as there is no existing protocol as to whether qualitative researchers should obtain informed consent for research online (Gao and Tao 2016:185). Due to the pre-published nature of online reviews and their availability in the public domain, researchers using these datasets have not typically sought permission from review writers, treating reviews analogously to any other self-published online text. It seems reasonable that seeking retrospective permission is not necessary given that, when submitting views on a text online, reviewers willingly choose to share their opinions in the public domain, usually anonymously. This does not eliminate the need for consideration of the ethics of using online data, but does mean that individual consent is not normally required for the use of data from publicly archived contributions to open-access sites (British Association for Applied Linguistics 2017). However, the aforementioned anonymisation of online reviews for this study helped to minimise the potential for ethical harm to reviewers.

Finally, my ethical responsibilities also extended to my own role in coding and analysing readers' responses. Importantly, my interpretations of the emotions shared by readers in online reviews and qualitative interviews are unavoidably affected by my own experience and positionality as a researcher. As a result, the overview of readers' emotions presented in Sections 2 and 3 of each analytical chapter must be interpreted as exploratory, as my examination of 'readers' emotions' partially relies on my own perceptions. Given the intensely personal and cognitive nature of emotion as outlined in 3.2.2 and the limitations of language, any examination of readers' emotions must be understood as, to some extent, tentative and subjective. My use of reader data works to support the application of my framework and to exemplify some of the possible emotional effects of the three focus texts, but is inescapably framed by my own subjective experience.

4.11 Summary

In this chapter, I have described the methodology utilised for this study. I firstly situated my analytical approach within cognitive stylistics in 4.2 before detailing a range of different empirical approaches to the study of readers' emotions in 4.3. In 4.4, I described the design of the qualitative interviews carried out for this study before explaining my approach to sourcing and utilising online reviews as empirical data in 4.5. Subsequently in 4.6, I acknowledged the relevance of extratextual factors in influencing readers' emotional responses to novels with reference to a range of research. In 4.7, I explained the procedure utilised for the coding of empirical reader data. I then outlined the procedure for excerpt selection in 4.8 before explaining my text choices in 4.9. Finally in 4.10, I discussed the ethical issues presented by this research and delineated the steps taken to mitigate the potential for ethical harm.

In each of the following six analytical chapters, I outline readers' emotional responses to my three chosen novels before undertaking cognitive stylistic analysis within the typology outlined in 3.2.2 in order to cast light on how the construction of textual actual and possible worlds may influence readers' emotions. Firstly, in Chapter 5, I explore the construction of CFTWs in *A Fine Balance*; then in Chapter 6, I apply the typology to the analysis of FTPWs in the same novel, before considering the presentation of the PTAW and PTPWs. In Chapter 7, I separately apply each of the world-types of CFTWs and FTPWs to an analysis of *Revolutionary Road*, before applying the world-types of PTAWs and PTPWs together in Chapter 8. In Chapter 9, I apply the typology to *The Trick is to Keep Breathing,* chiefly focusing on the construction of the CTAW. Finally in Chapter 10, I explore the presentation of FTPWs in *The Trick is to Keep Breathing.*

Chapter 5

Counterfactual Textual Worlds in *A Fine Balance*

5.1 Introduction

This chapter analyses *A Fine Balance* using the framework of Counterfactual Textual Worlds (CFTWs). In 4.9, I outlined the rationale for selecting *A Fine Balance* by Rohinton Mistry as a focus text for analysis. This novel concerns the intersecting lives of four characters: Dina Dalal, a widow whose life has been defined by the loss of her father and husband; Ishvar and Omprakash, or 'Om', an uncle and nephew attempting to escape the constraints of their *Dalit* caste; and Maneck Kohla, a lonely student from a mountain village who comes to lodge with Dina in the unnamed city where the novel is set. In 5.2 and 5.3, I outline a selection of emotions expressed by readers in online reviews of this novel and in reader interviews. In 5.4, I apply the world-type of CFTWs to analysis of this novel, utilising this element of the typology to illuminate some of the mechanisms potentially contributing to the emotional effects elicited by this novel. As outlined in 3.3.6, CFTWs refer to those textual possible worlds which might have existed under a different set of circumstances, and can thus be perceived as counterfactual, imaginable alternatives to the CTAW. While the construction of CFTWs is the central focus of this chapter, different world-types are utilised in this analysis at points where they interrelate with the construction of CFTWs. In particular, the CTAW is frequently discussed in conjunction with CFTWs, since CFTWs can be comprehended most clearly when interpreted in relation to the CTAW existing alongside them.

5.2 Reader Reviews

Multiple reader reviews of *A Fine Balance* express sadness, with the words 'sad', 'sadness' or 'saddest' sometimes explicitly used: RO1 calls the ending 'amongst the saddest work in prose you will ever read' while RO3 labels it a 'sad story', explaining that on finishing the novel they 'feel a little sad' to leave the characters. These responses, then, directly suggest the capacity of the novel to elicit sadness, with the latter review linking this partly to the intimacy established between the reader and characters. Similarly to RO1, whose use of the second-person pronoun 'you' implies a universal elicitation of sadness, RO5 calls the book 'a sad novel, heart wrenching [sic] in fact. It will make you cry (except in case of defective tear ducts)'. As well as indicating that the novel has caused sadness for this reviewer, these comments suggest a belief that it can – and indeed should – cause sadness for all its readers, to the extent of a physical, externalised reaction in the form of crying. RO14 shares a similarly physical response to the 'heartwrenching ending', explaining that they were 'actually sobbing' when they finished the novel, emphasising the capacity of the book to provoke genuine sadness.

Alongside these explicit expressions of sadness, other reviews use language that implies the emotion, calling the novel 'heart rending' (RO6) or 'probably the most depressing book I have ever read' (RO2). RO2 reiterates that the book 'left an indelible mark upon me […] it is a sad, depressing book', emphasising its capacity to wreak a lasting emotional impact. Similarly, RO9 states that they were 'touched, pained, delighted and devastated'. The four words suggest a broad spectrum of emotions, but both 'pained' and 'devastated' indicate sadness and emphasise the novel's ability to repeatedly incite these emotions. Going further than RO5's warning that the book will 'make you cry', RO8 cautions: 'Don't read it if you [sic] depressed or if there are any sharp or otherwise dangerous objects within easy reach, because this book might spell your demise'. While the suggestion that the book could precipitate readers' 'demise' seems flippant, the warning to avoid it while 'depressed' indicates belief in its potential to elicit sadness. RO11's statement, meanwhile, that 'this book is like a weight, it drags at your heart' uses the HAPPY IS UP, SAD IS DOWN (Lakoff and Johnson 1980) conceptual metaphor to evoke the novel's capacity to directly incite sadness.

Many of the reviews which imply sadness in the dataset link a range of factors to the elicitation of this emotion, including the 'full and deep' characterisation (RO3), 'heartwrenching' ending (RO14), 'matter-of-fact writing style', which contributes to the sadness of the novel by reminding the reader of 'the normality' of events described (RO2), and 'agonizing denouement' (RO1). This indicates that a variety of narrative and linguistic elements contribute to the sadness elicited by the novel. Alongside the plot, characterisation, and writing style suggested by readers as contributing to their sadness, reviewers also discuss the unfortunate life circumstances of the protagonists; RO2, who twice expresses how 'depressing' the novel is, also laments the situation of Dina who 'grows up under the thumb of her older brother, her dreams of becoming a doctor squashed by a patriarchal society'. RO2 also asks 'Why do bad things happen to good people?', a concept echoed in the suggestion of RO1 that 'if you ever need a reminder of "bad things happen to good people", this is it'. Both iterations of this expression indicate that readers' sadness is linked to a sense of unfairness or injustice regarding the characters' lives. This is also implied in the comments of RO11, who suggests the novel is characterised by 'a sense of injustice and human cruelty and desperation'. While the causes for sadness do vary, then, the commonalities in these readers' comments suggest a connection between sadness and the difficult circumstances that befall characters.

However, some online reviewers discuss feeling transient emotions of hope and happiness. RO10 suggests that 'the brief flickers [of] happiness' in characters' lives 'shine all the brighter' due to the 'darkness which clouds their existence', indicating that the frequent feeling of sadness

paradoxically accentuates ephemeral experiences of happiness where these do occur. Similarly, RO7 suggests that while 'liking this book makes no sense' due to the 'bleakest set of circumstances' its characters face and the 'doom and gloom' of the story, they 'still see the hope in its pages'. The reader's comments suggest that their feelings of hope exist alongside the sadness provoked by the novel. RO7 links this ambivalence to the recurrent metaphor of Dina's patchwork quilt, suggesting their mixed emotional response is reflected in the novel's message that the 'the good parts and the bad parts' of life are 'sewn together', reiterating that happiness and sadness are both incited at different points by this novel. RO3, meanwhile, states that moments where characters express 'genuine tenderness and support' are 'uplifting', even though such depictions of familial warmth are 'mixed in with the unspeakable cruelty and the selfishness of a corrupt society'. Together, then, the comments of RO3, RO7, and RO10 imply that, despite the aspects of the novel that frequently elicit sadness, happiness and hope are also sometimes felt, indicating complexity inherent in readers' emotional experiences of *A Fine Balance*.

Overall, then, in 5.2 I have explored how sadness represents the most frequently coded emotion in reader reviews, with factors eliciting this emotion linked by readers to varied causes. Readers' expressions of sadness in relation to multiple factors suggests the frequent elicitation of the emotion, with many readers' descriptions also indicating the strength of the sadness experienced. Nonetheless, hope and happiness are also expressed to some degree, with these emotions noted as particularly affecting by some readers. In 5.3, I outline a range of emotions coded in reader interviews.

5.3 Reader Interviews

As in online reviews discussed in 5.2, many responses in reader interviews also indicate sadness. This is sometimes linked by readers to specific narrative events. R4 describes how Dina's husband's death affected them: 'I cared a lot about Rustom's death'. The reader also suggests that the death 'affected' them 'a lot more' than other narrative incidents because it marks a shift from 'feeling like you had a bit of hope' to then 'knowing how vulnerable she [Dina] was'. The reader's reference to the optimism lost in Rustom's death and Dina's increased vulnerability, alongside the words 'cared' and 'affected', together suggest that the unrealised possibility of a happier alternative life for Dina intensifies her sadness. Meanwhile, R1 laments that because 'Dina's escape from her brother was powerful […] it makes her husband dying worse', suggesting that the hopeful possibility of permanent escape exacerbates the pain of Rustom's death. R1 categorises this within Dina's 'really sad' life story whereby she 'had so much promise' and 'the expectation was so high' for the future, with these expectations not realised: 'I think it's the whole catalogue of her life […] from losing her parents and then to the abuse with her brother and ending up there again with him at the end'. Thus, R1 explicitly links their sadness to inferior outcomes

for Dina as compared to promised or planned alternatives, with Dina's ultimate inability to escape from her abusive brother contributing to this emotion. Similarly, R6 describes Dina's plight as 'moving' as she is 'just trying to be independent […] even though so much in her life hasn't gone right', indicating that Dina's difficult life, as compared to a preferable alternative, elicits sadness.

Similarly, sadness can also be identified as existing in relation to readers' desires for a preferable alternative ending for the character Maneck, who takes his own life after having returned from working abroad to find that his friends Ishvar and Omprakash have become beggars. R1, R2 and R5 express counterfactual desires regarding the incident prior to Maneck's suicide, when he sees his old friends begging and pretends not to recognise them. R1's description of their sadness implies awareness of a preferable, counterfactual outcome for the character: 'it was […] so sad because obviously Maneck didn't speak to them […] I just wish he did! But you can't change the book ending, can you?' This response simultaneously indicates acceptance of the finality of the novel's ending alongside sadness grounded in wishing for an alternative. This reader also describes their 'positive emotions' about the friendship the characters develop earlier in the text and 'the little creation of like their family unit', immediately before expressing sadness regarding the ending, suggesting that their sadness regarding Maneck's emotional distance from his friends is intensified by previous instances of closeness and happiness. R5's description of feeling 'profoundly sad' regarding the 'miscommunication and misunderstanding' between Maneck, Om and Ishvar also indicates sadness linked to an event that is inferior to a happier alternative, while R2 very similarly describes the moment where the men 'don't communicate' as 'terribly sad, that missed chance'. As explained in 4.6, this study did not exclude re-readers, so it is worth noting that R2 explicitly linked their emotional response to a re-reading experience, explaining that knowing the suicide 'was going to happen […] makes it all the more sad'. While the reader's sadness about this element of the ending recalls that of R1 and R5, then, their own reflection indicates that re-reading the novel accentuates the sadness elicited by Maneck's inability to talk to his old friends, due to consciousness of the fatal consequences of this lack of connection. Furthermore, R2's comment on the significance of their experience of first reading the novel in Mumbai as 'one of the reasons' that they experience the novel as 'powerful' and 'emotional' indicates the capacity of their own schematic awareness of poverty in India to accentuate the emotional resonance of characters' circumstances.

Even the happier moments of the novel can cause sadness, as shown in R6's interpretation of the 'really moving' moment 'where [the characters] establish a nice little routine' as a rare moment of 'harmony and happiness' for the characters. R6 explains that the fact that the characters' happiness would be 'insignificant' to most people makes this more affecting, and that having this interlude of joy helps to 'highlight the horrific elements' of the rest of the novel. Their suggestion,

then, is that the simplicity and rarity of the characters' happiness is moving, as is the way it contrasts with the negative emotions elicited by other aspects of the book. This element of R6's response indicates sympathy alongside sadness for the difficult lives experienced by the characters, as does their lament that these are characters 'just trying to make a life for themselves'. R6 also describes the abuse inflicted on Dina by her brother Nusswan as 'one thing that really got to me', describing it as 'appalling [...] how horrific her life is, at that time [...] there was a lot of loneliness there, and I felt really sorry for her'. The use of the idiom 'got to me' indicates the personal impact of the violence on R6, whilst the reference to Dina's 'horrific' life and her 'loneliness' as well as feeling 'really sorry' for her clearly reiterates a sympathetic response to Dina's mistreatment. Similarly, R1 overtly describes sympathy for Dina, linking this to their own gender: 'you feel so much more sympathy as a woman because you think [...] if someone had done that to me – it's just horrible'. In contextualising their response to Dina's abuse with reference to their own life, the reader suggests that their sympathy is intensified by their own social role, with their use of the word 'horrible' emphasising their sympathetic response to the suffering Dina endures.

Overall, then, analysis of interview data indicates repeated reader experiences of sadness and sympathy, particularly in relation to the unfortunate circumstances that befall characters. Readers also sometimes explicitly linked their sadness to the existence of preferable counterfactual alternative outcomes for characters. However, while these commonalities in readers' emotional responses exist, some readers' comments also demonstrate that their emotions are accentuated by their own experiences. In 5.4, I apply the world-type of CFTWs to analysis of *A Fine Balance* in order to examine how some of the factors eliciting readers' emotions may be framed by application of the typology introduced in 3.3.2.

5.4 Counterfactual Textual Worlds in *A Fine Balance:* Analysis

In *A Fine Balance*, the character Dina Dalal is presented as a woman who has suffered several unfortunate events, as noted in 5.3 in relation to readers' expressions of sadness. The concept that chance occurrences can result in unhappiness is developed near the start of the novel, in which Mistry constructs a contrast between the CTAW and a preferable CFTW that might have existed:

> Dina Dalal seldom indulged in looking back at her life with regret or bitterness, or questioning why things had turned out the way they had, cheating her of the bright future everyone had predicted for her when she was in school, when her name was still Dina Shroff. And if she did sink into one of these rare moods, she quickly swam out of it. What was the point of repeating the story over and over and over, she asked herself – it always ended the same way; whichever corridor she took, she wound up in the same room. (15)

This description establishes the existence of a CFTW, because whilst Dina may rarely spend time 'looking back', the suggestion is that if she chose to, she could view her life in a negative way due to unrealised dreams or experiences. The notion of 'things […] cheating her of her bright future' personifies 'things' – or life – as a forceful entity that has deliberately prevented Dina from following a path once laid out for her. The presentation of the CFTW as a 'bright' place metaphorically constructs the CTAW as a dark and unhappy place in comparison to a joyful yet inaccessible alternative. Moreover, the adjective 'bright' implies this 'other' CFTW was once clearly visible despite now being difficult to discern. The orientational conceptual metaphor HAPPY IS UP, SAD IS DOWN (Lakoff and Johnson 1980) in the phrase 'sink into' also suggests that the state of mind in which Dina imagines a preferable CFTW is a negative one, emphasising that contemplation of this potentially preferable alternative life is painful, even if it is 'rare'. The insistence that such contemplations 'seldom' occur paradoxically reiterates that Dina does *sometimes* experience these thoughts, and the abstract nouns 'bitterness' and 'regret' implicitly suggest the existence of a preferable CFTW, with both words connoting a life that might have been better under different circumstances. The question 'What was the point of repeating the story over and over and over' suggests that, even as Dina attempts not to examine the past, sometimes this is inevitable; the verb 'repeat' and repetition of 'over' indicate that, despite the narrator's insistence that reflection on the past is rare, it is actually a torturously recurring experience in which Dina is haunted by the shadows of preferable CFTWs. The metaphor of multiple 'corridors' suggests the envisioning of multiple different CFTWs, contrasting with the spatial metaphor of the 'same room', which exemplifies the entrapment of Dina's situation and the finality of the CTAW. The idiom 'wound up' and stative verb 'ended' emphasise that Dina's life circumstances are immutable. Thus, Mistry establishes the notion of the CTAW as a dark, inferior, and inescapable place; it is inferior to the macro-CFTW of a happier life that might have existed, but is the only world accessible to Dina. This is reiterated later when Dina declares: 'I never like to look back at my life, my childhood, with regret or bitterness […] But sometimes, against my will, the thoughts about the past come into my head' (427). The reframing of this language through Dina's dialogue emphasises that the regretful contemplation of CFTWs forms an inescapable aspect of her outlook on life, with the use of negation emphasising her inability to forget the pain of her past.

In the first chapter, one key event renders Dina's 'bright future' impossible and leads to the establishment of an inferior CTAW as compared to a preferable CFTW: Dina's father is killed when travelling to a remote village on a medical mission which Dina's mother had asked her to persuade him to avoid. The following passages show Dina's mother's initial response to his death, followed by her later decline:

> Then Mrs Shroff continued absentmindedly, writing out the cheque. "You could have stopped him if you wanted. He would have listened to you," she said.
> Dina's sobs burst out with renewed intensity. In addition to the grief for her father, her tears now included anger towards her mother, even hatred. It would take her a few months to understand that there was no malice or accusation contained in what had been said, just a sad and simple statement of fact as seen by her mother. (17)
> […]
> Six months after Dr Shroff's death, after being the pillar that everyone could lean on, Mrs Shroff gradually began to crumble. Retreating from daily life, she took very little interest in the running of her household or in her own person. (17)

The past unreal conditional modal verbs 'could have' and 'would have' suggest alternative textual possible worlds existing beyond the CTAW: both a PTPW in which it was still possible to stop Dr Shroff from leaving, and a resultant hypothetical CFTW in which he might still be alive. The existence of this CFTW, alongside the way Dina is accorded responsibility for her father's death in the inferior CTAW, work to construct sympathy for the character. The blame placed on Dina for her inaction is emphasised in the pronoun 'You' alongside the acknowledgement of her responsibility as a 'sad and simple statement of fact', but is cast into question by the use of her first name which contrasts with the more formal 'Dr Shroff' and 'Mrs Shroff', with this nomenclature constructing proximity to Dina in comparison to her more distant parents, and also emphasising her status as a child. Sympathy for Dina, then, might be created partly by her presentation as a victim of circumstance in this unfavourable CTAW as compared to a superior CFTW, with pathos intensified by the way she accepts the blame as 'fact'. The subsequent deterioration of Dina's mother also exemplifies the inferior CTAW as compared to a preferable CFTW in which Dr Shroff had lived. The metaphor of the crumbling pillar denotes solidity turning to insubstantiality, suggesting the unfixable nature of Mrs Shroff's decline. This metaphor of transformation also means that, as the reader witnesses events in the CTAW, they may remain implicitly aware of a CFTW in which Mrs Shroff might have remained the 'pillar' she once was. The finality of Dina's loss here is emphasised by the fact that after Chapter 1, there are no further references to Dina's parents or early childhood, even though she is a major character whose inner life is frequently exposed throughout the text. This conspicuous later absence might be partly interpreted as confirmation of Dina's attempts to avoid 'repeating the story over and over and over' (15) but also reiterates that the CTAW is changed forever and that the CFTW is too painful to explicitly contemplate. However, since it is introduced in Chapter 1, the reader is continuously aware of a CFTW which exists alongside the CTAW.

The unhappiness of the CTAW at this point in the novel, as compared to the preferable CFTW that could have existed, is also extended in the depiction of the abuse of Dina by her older brother:

> There, he thrust a stick of sandalwood in her hand and whispered fiercely in her ear, "Now pray properly – ask Dadaji to make you a good girl, ask Him to make you obedient." (20)
> He slapped her. […] He slapped her again. […] He got the ruler and struck her with it flat across the palms. (23)
> He drove her to the bathroom, where he began tearing off her clothes. (24)

In the first excerpt, the dynamic verb 'thrust', adverb 'fiercely', and imperative 'Now pray properly' demonstrate Nusswan's tyrannical rule over his sister and the extent of his power and violence, which is later reiterated with the repeated use of dynamic unmodalised verb constructions, such as 'He slapped her', which grammatically position Nusswan as subject and Dina as object, thereby emphasising her lack of agency in the CTAW she now inhabits. The syntactical parallelism in the sentences beginning 'He…' foregrounds Nusswan as the active, dominating force in Dina's life and perpetrator of violence, whilst she is positioned as a powerless recipient of his violence, thus evoking sympathy for the character. The repeated use of 'her' juxtaposed with Nusswan's actions – 'slapped', 'drove', and 'tearing' – positions Dina as the passive victim of his rage whilst centralising his violence, which is reinforced by the lack of description of Dina's responses to the abuse, with the focus instead on Nusswan's tyrannical behaviour. The lack of reference to cognition here – either of Dina or of Nusswan – lends dramatic immediacy to the violence and constructs the CTAW as an inescapable place of horror. Furthermore, the lack of references to the future or past mean that Dina's world is presented as centred around the abuse of her brother in the present, with any CFTWs now unreachable even in her thoughts. While no CFTW is explicitly constructed in the language here, the fact that we have already been introduced to the notion of a 'bright future' that Dina has been prevented from accessing means that we are implicitly aware of a preferable CFTW existing alongside this miserable CTAW for Dina. Further to this, later in the narrative, Nusswan's mistreatment of Dina extends to disrupting her education and preventing her from graduating, thus stopping her from realising her potential and rendering the prospect of education an inaccessible CFTW.

Similarly, Dina is also shown to exist in a less favourable CTAW than a CFTW in which her husband Rustom had survived. At the point of Rustom's death, the couple have been happily married for three years and he has gone out to fetch ice cream before being hit by a lorry:

> "A bastard lorry driver," said the sub-inspector. "Hit and run. No chance for the poor man, I think. Head completely crushed. But ambulance has taken him to hospital anyway."
> A stray dog lapped at the thick pink puddle near the bicycle. Strawberry ice cream was in stock, thought Dina numbly. (45)

The ice cream is foregrounded here by being referenced firstly as a 'thick pink puddle' before being explicitly referred to with the 'strawberry' flavour detail, emphasising the importance of the dessert in symbolising the difference between the CTAW and a preferable CFTW in which Rustom had survived. The juxtaposition of the graphic depiction of Rustom's death with his 'crushed' head alongside the mundane detail of the stray dog licking the ice cream epitomises the contrast between a CFTW of married life for Rustom and Dina, in which strawberry ice cream might have continued only to represent an innocent pleasure if Rustom had successfully returned with it, and the reshaped CTAW in which it is now grimly associated with his death. Dina's now irrelevant thought that it was 'in stock' constructs a CFTW in which the same thought would have been experienced with contentment if Rustom had come home and life had continued as normal. This is reinforced by the adverb 'numbly' which implies that the pain of this thought is perhaps too great to yet be processed or fully understood. Alongside the passive voice construction of 'head completely crushed', which emphasises the finality of Rustom's death, the negation of 'no chance' also emphasises the destruction of hope for Rustom. The positioning of these gruesome details prior to the description of Rustom being taken to hospital 'anyway' emphasises the finality of the CTAW in which his death is irreversible and medical treatment pointless. The use of short minor sentences to describe the killing – 'A bastard lorry driver' and 'Hit and run.' – reflect the suddenness of Rustom's death and his removal from Dina's life, as well as the occlusion of a happier PTAW in which he was still alive. Thus, we see the interplay of the unhappy CTAW alongside the preferable CFTW in which Rustom might have lived, which also exist in relation to the PTAW and PTPWs which have been occluded in his death. The CFTW in which Rustom might have survived is also suggested throughout the novel in references to the elements of Dina's marriage that persist even after his death, such as Rustom's violin case that 'sat untouched upon the cupboard for five years' (61), and the fact that Dina is still referred to decades after her husband's death on the nameplate outside her building as 'Mrs Rustom K. Dalal' (8). Likewise, when Dina packs a case to stay with her brother after Rustom's death, 'it was the same one she had brought with her three years ago on her wedding night' (52). These details evoke a preferable CFTW in which these items might still have been appropriate or used for their proper purpose, reinforcing the pain inherent in Dina's now-altered life, since quotidian objects that once represented hope and joy are now associated with despair.

The emotional impact of this CFTW is also evoked in the way other characters respond to Dina and her life experience, such as when we see how her stories about the past are difficult for Maneck to hear:

> Her eyes shone, and Maneck was touched by the stories. But he couldn't understand why listening to her was making him bend once again under the familiar weight of despair, while she was delighting in her memories. (317)

While Dina finds joy in discussing memories of her marriage, Maneck's sadness is suggested in the verb 'bend' and the metaphor 'weight of despair' which work as a construction of the conceptual metaphor UP IS GOOD, BAD IS DOWN (Lakoff and Johnson 1980). This contrasts with the way Dina's eyes 'shone', with this verb evoking light and happiness. The negation and epistemic modality in the description of how Maneck 'couldn't understand' his own pain evokes the complexity inherent in the sadness of happy memories which are no longer accessible: at this point, Dina is able to enjoy the memory of her love for her husband due to the happiness of these past experiences, while Maneck's 'despair' is conceivably caused by his sense of the pain of the inferior CTAW Dina now inhabits as compared to a happier CFTW in which Rustom might still be alive. The use of the premodifier 'familiar' alongside the adverbial phrase 'once again' emphasises the recurrence of this response to Dina recounting her past, thereby indicating Maneck's frequent experience of unhappiness in response to envisioning an alternative, preferable CFTW. There are suggestions throughout the novel that Maneck has depression, and the novel ends with his suicide, so perhaps Mistry seeks to suggest that as a character, Maneck is more affected by the pain and suffering of others than some other characters; and, for Dina, the construction of a preferable CFTW in which her husband may have lived is a key aspect of her suffering. Maneck's pain in relation to knowledge of preferable CFTWs is reiterated later when he contemplates the pain of memories: 'Sorrowful ones remained sad even with the passing of time, yet happy ones could never be recreated […] It seemed so unfair: that time should render both sadness and happiness into a source of pain' (336). The concept that even 'happy' memories are painful emphasises the notion of continued happiness for all the characters as representing an inaccessible CFTW.

As noted in 5.2 and 5.3, some readers express infrequent experiences of hope and happiness elicited by *A Fine Balance*, although, as explained by R6 in 5.3, even moments of 'harmony and happiness', such as when the characters develop a friendship, have the capacity to elicit sadness due to the rarity of such incidents. One example of this developing friendship is presented when the initially aloof Dina has begun to bond with Ishvar, Omprakash, and Maneck, allowing them to cook for her:

> Dina stood savouring the fragrance of the wadas that were slowly turning mouth-watering brown in bubbling oil. She watched as the cleanup commenced with laughter and teasing, Ishvar warning the boys that if the grinding stone was not spotless he would make them lick it clean, like cats. What a change, she thought – from the saddest, dingiest room in the flat, the kitchen was transformed into a bright place of mirth and energy. (400)

The internal focalisation here (Genette 1972) facilitates an insight into the pleasure Dina takes in the altered environment: the foregrounding of her happy thought – 'What a change' – suggests her own conception of her improved life whilst the verb 'savouring' implies her appreciation of both the cooking and the newly convivial atmosphere. This is reiterated by the contrast between the negative superlatives 'saddest' and 'dingiest', which evoke the previous misery of Dina's environment and her life, and the positive abstract nouns 'mirth' and 'energy', which suggest familial warmth. The metaphor of the kitchen, which has been 'transformed' from the 'dingiest' place to one that is 'bright', represents the light which has now entered Dina's life in the form of company and friendship. The present participle verbs 'turning' and 'bubbling' both suggest action and energy with the CTAW, then, being further evoked as a dynamic and joyful place. However, this moment of conviviality in the CTAW implicitly evokes a CFTW in which such happiness might be available more frequently to the characters, thus potentially causing sadness that such moments are not experienced more often. This is reiterated by the fact that long before this moment of harmony and connection, Dina is presented as envisioning a less lonely life than her present experience:

> The kettle blurted its readiness with a healthy spout of steam. She held back for a vigorous boil, enjoying the thickening haze and the water's steady babble: the illusions of chatter, friendship, bustling life. (84)

This seemingly mundane moment encapsulates Dina's desire for greater connection, as she imagines a socially connected CFTW that is incontrovertibly different to her experience of the CTAW. As much as Mistry repeatedly emphasises that Dina 'seldom' reflects wistfully on the past, her inventing of an alternative life in this transient moment brings the CFTW of a life in which Rustom had lived to the forefront. The extended personification of the kettle which 'blurted' its 'healthy' steam alongside the 'babble' of the water reiterates the limited friendship and company in Dina's life and constructs the CTAW as lonely, while the asyndetic list 'chatter, friendship, bustling life' emphasises Dina's envisioning of a less lonely existence in a happier CFTW. The fact that it is merely the sound of the kettle's 'vigorous boil' that enables Dina to construct this 'illusion' reinforces the strength of her hidden desire for love and connection. The verb phrase 'held back' demonstrates Dina's deliberate attempt to increase the pleasure of watching the kettle boil, while the mental process verb (Halliday 2013) 'enjoying' explicitly demonstrates the way in which an experience as banal as waiting for a kettle to boil is experienced as pleasurable by Dina, thus emphasising her frequent loneliness in the CTAW. This moment is significant to the narrative in that it occurs as Dina is making tea for her new employees, Omprakash and Ishvar, with whom she will gradually develop a friendship, but thus far their relationship is professional and distant. At this point, a world of friendship and connection is

envisioned by Dina as an alternative, unreal 'illusion', or an inaccessible CFTW, thus potentially making her eventual friendship with the men more meaningful.

The CFTW of the life Dina might have had is also implicitly present at the end of the novel, when a chain of events has precipitated her loss of independence and a return to virtual imprisonment in her brother's home. While Dina often secretly hosts her friends Ishvar and Omprakash for lunch, her life is otherwise characterised by subservience to her brother. The novel ends with two sentences that capture the banality of Dina's daily life:

> She washed the two plates, returning them to the sideboard for Nusswan and Ruby to dine off at night. Then she dried her hands and decided to take a nap before starting the evening meal. (614)

In contrast to the internal focalisation in the earlier happy moment shared with her lodgers, the lack of reference here to inner contemplation – beyond the verb 'decided', which only refers to the mundane decision of taking a nap – centralises Dina's present experience of completing the housework rather than illuminating any alternative, potentially preferable CFTWs. Most verbs used to describe Dina's actions refer to prosaic, everyday actions: 'washed', 'returning', 'starting' [the meal], 'dried', 'take' [a nap]. This suggests that life revolves around monotonous obligations, which is reinforced by the contrast between Dina's role in washing the plates as compared to her brother and his wife who 'dine' from them. The external focalisation and unmodalised language here emphasise the practical structure of Dina's day, perhaps implicitly evoking Dina's acceptance of the CTAW as the inescapable state of her reality. Despite the lack of explicit consideration of CFTWs, however, previous narrative events in which Dina was able to briefly establish her own sewing business mean that readers may draw on existing textual knowledge to construct a preferable CFTW in which Dina might still be financially independent, as reflected in readers' comments regarding the sadness of Dina's life as outlined in 5.2 and 5.3. The focus on external actions rather than cognition is reminiscent of the description at the beginning of the novel of how Dina prefers not to dwell on the way her life might have been, which returns the reader to an awareness of preferable CFTWs existing alongside the unhappy CTAW, even if these are not explicitly described.

An inaccessible CFTW of connection is also evoked for the character Maneck at the end of the novel, when he pretends not to recognise his friends Ishvar and Om in the street, having learned that they are now homeless:

> Ishvar, it's me, Maneck! Don't you recognize me! The words raced uselessly inside his head, unable to find an exit. Say something, he commanded himself, say anything!

[…]
Om! Sour-lime face, my friend! Have you forgotten me!
But his words of love and sorrow and hope remained muted like stones.
The legless beggar coughed and spat.
[…]
Wait, he wanted to call out – wait for me.
[…]
He did nothing. (608)

A contrast between the CTAW and a CFTW in which Maneck might have managed to speak to the men is constructed in the direct address used to represent his internal monologue, which remains unsaid despite his desire to 'say anything'. The repeated use of the second person, such as in 'Don't you recognise me!', evokes dialogue even though the words are thought rather than spoken. This indicates that Maneck's words are almost on the point of being expressible, therefore establishing a tangible CFTW in which he might have managed to speak to his old friends. The use both of his own and his friends' names evokes a preferable CFTW of communication, emphasising his desire and concurrent inability to bridge the distance between them; consequently, we are able to imagine the conversation that the men might have had in a CFTW. The CFTW is constructed as almost palpable through the repeated exclamations, such as 'Have you forgotten me!', which facilitate us 'hearing' Maneck's words almost as dialogue even though they are unspoken. The exclamations, when combined with the brevity of the sentences, emphasise the urgency of what Maneck wishes he could say, which is developed further in the self-directed imperatives 'Say something […] say anything!', exemplifying his frustration regarding his inability to communicate. The shorter, imagined exclamations construct an unsaid CFTW, then, which is contrasted with the CTAW developed in the longer sentence 'But his words […]', which conveys lack of life and movement in its unpunctuated structure, in contrast to the vitality of the short exclamations in the CFTW of words unspoken. The urgency and energy of what Maneck wants to say, as compared to his inaction, are emphasised by the semantically contrasting metaphors of words which both 'raced' inside his mind and yet are 'muted like stones': the CTAW is constructed as a place of silence and immobility, as compared to a preferable, unrealised CFTW of communication and action.

The placing of Maneck's 'words' which 'remained muted' as the grammatical subject of this sentence also reduces his agency and implies that his speech has become separate from the character himself, indicating dissociation. Only after the chance of speaking to his friends fades in likelihood as they move away does Mistry cease using exclamation marks to punctuate Maneck's unspoken words, reflecting reduced urgency as he loses hope of communication. Loss of hope is also suggested by the shift from the initial use of the men's names to a later reference to Ishvar as 'the legless beggar': the use of the definite article creates distance from Ishvar and

objectifies him, whilst 'legless beggar' identifies him only in terms of his external appearance and socially defined role, implying Maneck's distance from his friends and that his hopes for connection are fading, as well as reiterating a sense of dissociation from reality. Further to this, Maneck's initial use of three different names for Omprakash – 'Om' 'Sour-lime face' and 'my friend' – evoke their multifaceted former friendship, and yet the fact that these words remain unspoken means that rekindling this friendship represents a CFTW. The imperative 'wait for me' emphasises Maneck's perceived helplessness in the CTAW: he is able-bodied whilst, by contrast, Om must pull Ishvar around on a handmade wooden platform used in lieu of a wheelchair, and yet he envisions himself as immobile, with communication with his friends thus constructed as an inaccessible CFTW.

The emotional resonance of this moment is intensified by the fact that Maneck has already imagined how his reunion with his friends might be, prior to seeing the reality of their lives in the CTAW:

> First he would meet all his friends: Om, happily married, and his wife, and at least two or three children by now; what would their names be? […] And Dina […] holding sway in that busy kitchen. (598)

While Mistry constructs a FTPW here which is perceived as realisable by Maneck, for the reader Maneck's dreaming represents an unattainable CFTW, since at this point in the novel, Om has suffered forced castration in an act of caste-related violence meaning that having children is impossible. Here, the epistemic modal constructions ('he would meet' 'what would?') coupled with the warmth evoked in the adverbial and adjectival phrases 'happily married' and 'busy kitchen' suggest that Maneck is vividly imagining his friends' lives, willing their happiness into existence through his imagining of a joyful FTPW. His question 'what would their names be?' conveys his unshakeable belief in the prospect of meeting Om's children, with the only question here being what the children are called rather than whether they exist. Maneck's envisioning of a fundamentally impossible FTPW consequently leads us to construct a CFTW existing alongside the CTAW in which this dream might have been a reality, even though we know it already to be impossible. The notion of a happier CFTW existing alongside the painful CTAW is reinforced by Maneck's initial refusal to relinquish the FTPW he has imagined when he learns from Dina that his old friends have become beggars:

> "That's impossible! Sounds crazy! I mean – aren't they ashamed to beg? Couldn't they do some other work, if there's no tailoring? I mean –"
> "Without knowing everything you want to judge them?" she cut him off. (606)

In contrast to his later inability to speak to the men once he has learned the horrifying story, Maneck's initial outburst with repeated exclamations suggests he is railing against the altered CTAW Ishvar and Om now inhabit, in comparison to the happier CFTW he desires for his friends. While Dina views Maneck's questions as a desire to 'judge' Omprakash and Ishvar, his exclamations and questions might in fact indicate resistance to accepting that a happier CFTW in which the men might 'do some other work' is inaccessible. This is reiterated by the connotations of the adjectives used to denote the situation, 'impossible' and 'crazy', which exemplify Maneck's shock, alongside the repeated use of the filler 'I mean'. The subsequent misunderstanding in which Dina becomes angry with Maneck and 'cut[s] him off' also prompts us to imagine a micro-CFTW in which Dina and Maneck might have been able to understand each other and rekindle their friendship, alongside the macro-CFTW of a happier life for Om and Ishvar. Dina's misunderstanding of Maneck is emphasised as the exchange continues and she describes the horrors that have befallen Ishvar and Om and which have led to their homelessness:

> While she spoke, cold like a knife sliced through his insides. He sat frozen, like one of the figurines in the glass-fronted cabinets around him.
> When she reached the end, he had still not stirred. She leaned forward to shake his knee. "Are you listening?" (606)

A miscommunication is created by the contrast between Dina's mistaking of Maneck's 'frozen' body as a sign of lack of care, while the internal focalisation of the cold that 'sliced through his insides' grants the reader access to a world Dina cannot see. The contrasting similes of the 'knife' Maneck experiences internally and the 'frozen… figurine' employ metaphorical associations of coldness to evoke external indifference and internal emotional pain. It seems, therefore, that as Maneck stops questioning Dina's news, sadness takes over his body as his mind accepts the CTAW and realises the inaccessibility of a preferable CFTW for his friends. This is exemplified not only in the description of Maneck's silence and stillness, but also in the way his emotions are described only in terms of his body without explicit reference to his cognition. This conveys distance between Maneck's mind and body, implying his inability to intellectually process his feelings due to their magnitude. Therefore, while the reader has an insight into Maneck's inner sadness, this is simultaneously conveyed as invisible to other characters. The disconnect that is linguistically constructed between Maneck's feelings and Dina's perception of them, then, constructs a CFTW in which Maneck might be able to communicate, and in which Dina might be able to understand him, thus potentially contributing to readers' sadness regarding this incident as discussed in 5.3. Again, then, we see a macro-CFTW here in which Om and Ishvar had not suffered such injustice and in which Dina had maintained her independence existing alongside a micro-CFTW in which Maneck might have been able to express his feelings and thus maintain his friendships.

Finally, the existence of CFTWs is also developed throughout the novel through the metaphor of time as a patchwork quilt, referred to explicitly by RO7 as noted in 5.2. In the following excerpt, Om momentarily expresses his desire to live in a preferable CFTW:

> "If time were a bolt of cloth," said Om, "I would cut out all the bad parts. Snip out the scary nights and stitch together the good parts, to make time bearable. Then I would wear it like a coat, always live happily." (310)

Om's use of the metaphor of time as 'cloth' emphasises his desire to control the emotional pain of his existence and his wish to be able to construct a preferable CFTW, reflecting a desire to be able to control his life just as he can manipulate materials in his job as a tailor. Simultaneously, however, his use of the subjunctive mood – 'If time were' – conveys his belief in the fundamental immutability of time, with the repeated use of the epistemic modal conditional 'would' reiterating the impossibility of changing the past. Rather than looking forward to a better future, he is only able to imagine an CFTW in which it might be possible to 'cut out all the bad parts' of his life. This also implicitly conveys Om's awareness of the way in which the pain of the past, or the PTAW, has contributed to the sadness of the CTAW that the characters now inhabit. The notion of the unattainable CFTW of a happier life is reiterated as the metaphorical construction of time-as-coat is extended as the men discuss what they would change about the past if they could:

> "I'd also like a coat like that," said Maneck. "But which parts would you cut out?"
> "The government destroying our house, for sure," said Omprakash. "And working for Dinabai."
> "Hoi-hoi," cautioned Ishvar. "Without her, where would the money come from?"
> "Okay, let's keep the paydays and throw out the rest."
> "What else?" asked Maneck.
> "Depends how far back you want to go."
> "All the way. Back to when you were born."
> "That's too much, yaar. So many things to cut, the scissors would go blunt. And there would be very little cloth left." (310-11)

Omprakash again envisions a way to erase the sadness of his life via this extended metaphor, and in contrast to the use of conditionals and the subjunctive mood towards the start of the conversation, his language here evokes increasing certainty, which suggests that the dream is becoming more real to him. He uses a future tense suggestive imperative – 'let's keep the paydays' – and responds to Maneck's question 'What else?' with an unmodalised declarative that seems to take his question seriously rather than philosophically, indicating that his desire for the CFTW grows stronger as he verbalises it. However, in his final statement, the CFTW is ultimately acknowledged as unrealisable as he realises the impossibility of reshaping his life to avoid the pain inherent in his experience of both the past and present. The conceptual metaphor LIFE IS A

JOURNEY (Lakoff and Johnson 1980), evident in both Maneck and Omprakash's references to going 'back', reflects knowledge that the CTAW hinges on the past and is thus inescapably bound to its place in time and space. Furthermore, his use of the conditional 'the scissors would go blunt […] there would be very little cloth left' continues the extended metaphor of time as a coat, but this time conveys acceptance of the impossibility of altering the past entirely by trying to 'cut out' the worst aspects of life. The metaphor of 'very little cloth left' not only conveys the unattainability of a macro-CFTW without pain, but suggests Om's recognition that his life has contained so many painful experiences that to erase them all might efface his identity. His use of the quantity phrase 'too much' also indicates that it becomes too painful to acknowledge the CFTW that might have existed without the death of his family, therefore leading him to dismiss the metaphor. While Om's final response marks a return to the epistemic modal with his repeated use of 'would', he is now referring to the likely impossibility of altering time and life, even if time were indeed 'a bolt of cloth'. Even when speaking in metaphor, then, it ultimately becomes too painful for Om to envision a macro-CFTW that represents a far preferable life to the one experienced in the CTAW.

5.5 Summary

In this chapter, I have examined readers' emotional responses to *A Fine Balance* and subsequently applied the world-type of CFTWs to explore how the elicitation of readers' emotions may be framed within an analysis of textual actual and possible worlds. In 5.2 and 5.3, I outlined reader response data from online reviews and reader interviews indicating emotions caused by reading *A Fine Balance*, with sadness and sympathy noted as frequently expressed emotions in both interviews and reviews, with these emotions linked by readers to a range of factors including the life circumstances and events that befall the characters. In 5.4, I then applied the typology to analysis of excerpts from the novel, with stylistic analysis indicating the construction of an unfavourable CTAW alongside a preferable, yet inaccessible, CFTW existing at several points throughout this novel. However, whilst I suggested that sadness is largely elicited by the construction of the CTAW as inferior to a more favourable CFTW, I also suggested that even depictions of joy in the CTAW may contribute to the elicitation of sadness, as readers can construct CFTWs relating to wishing that certain happy moments transpired more regularly or formed part of characters' everyday existence. CFTWs, then, can be constructed linguistically but also co-constructed by readers in relation to interrelating narrative elements. Readers' emotional responses to the construction of CFTWs are also inevitably partially influenced by their own experiences. My analysis engendered identification of micro-CFTWs constructed at moments when characters make decisions or take actions in the CTAW that the reader might wish were otherwise, as well as the existence of macro-CFTWs, or points at which readers are incited to envision CFTWs on a larger scale, such as an entire alternative life for a character. In the

following chapter, I explore further emotions expressed by readers in relation to this novel and then analyse firstly the construction of FTPWs in *A Fine Balance* followed by PTAWs and PTPWs, in order to illuminate some of the textual factors potentially contributing to the elicitation of readers' emotions.

Chapter 6

Future Textual Possible Worlds, Past Textual Possible Words and Past Textual Actual Worlds in *A Fine Balance*

6.1 Introduction

In Chapter 5, I analysed *A Fine Balance* using the typology delineated in 3.3.1-7, utilising stylistic analysis to demonstrate how the construction of CFTWs may have an impact on readers' emotional responses to the novel. In this chapter, I firstly extend my consideration of the emotions expressed by readers in online reviews and interviews in 6.2 and 6.3. I then focus, in the analytical portion of this chapter, firstly on the construction of FTPWs in 6.4, and subsequently on the construction of PTPWs and PTAWs in 6.5. As explained in 3.3.7, FTPWs denote worlds which are conceivable as possibilities, but which may or may not transpire within a narrative. In 6.4, I apply the concept of *restricted* FTPWs, as discussed in 3.3.7, using this to facilitate understanding of the ways in which the depiction of restrictions imposed on the FTPWs available to the protagonists may contribute to readers' emotional responses to the narrative. In 6.5, I explore the construction of the PTAW and PTPWs in relation to the characters Ishvar, Omprakash, and Maneck. I largely separate the application of the world-type of FTPWs from PTAWs and PTPWs as frames for analysis in 6.4 and 6.5, but I also consider, at relevant points, how these different world-types intersect.

6.2 Reader Reviews

In 5.2, I outlined readers' sadness in relation to a range of narrative elements including the difficult life situations of characters. Significantly, sadness was also expressed specifically in relation to feelings of hopelessness by a number of readers: RO2's summation of the novel as both 'depressing' and 'without the slightest hint of hope or redemption' indicates that their sadness is partially linked to the lack of hope presented by the novel. RO2 later suggests that 'in *A Fine Balance*, everything goes to hell. And it doesn't get better', suggesting that the erosion of happiness and hope can contribute to sadness. RO10 writes that 'the real tragedy lies in the lives of Ishvar and Om' suggesting that even though Dina and Maneck have 'difficult' lives, they nonetheless 'have the opportunity to do something with their lives […] whereas Ishvar and Om are never afforded that chance'. While the reviewer does not explicitly discuss personal sadness, the reference to 'tragedy' alongside the lack of 'chance' and 'opportunity' for Ishvar and Om indicates that sadness and hopelessness co-exist, with the hopelessness of the tailors' lives potentially contributing to this reader's emotional response. Meanwhile, RO14 writes that readers of the novel, presumably including themselves, 'desperately wish for a happy ending that he/she

knows, deep down, is not to be', suggesting hopelessness. The reviewer's labelling of the novel as 'heartwrenching' and a 'bleak tale' demonstrates the sadness caused by this lack of hope.

Significantly, RO2, RO10, and RO14 express generally favourable opinions of the novel despite their aforementioned feelings of sadness, which is echoed by RO5, who states that, while they found 'only despair' and absence of 'hope' in the novel, it is nonetheless 'mesmerizing'. RO11 similarly associates their sadness, which as noted in 5.2 is expressed using the metaphor of a 'weight', with the hopelessness of the novel: 'as the book progresses, the hope is slowly drained away'. However, the same reader declares they 'will be forever grateful to have read this novel', indicating a generally positive response despite the elicitation of sadness. Yet RO4 indicates that the novel's hopelessness detracted from their enjoyment, with the lack of any 'feeble hope for redemption' rendering it 'totally unsatisfying'. Conversely, RO2 constructs a riposte to other reviewers who express dislike regarding the sadness elicited by the novel: 'it is depressing, but I do not agree with those reviewers who find this a valid reason for panning the book. Mistry makes you feel sad for a reason.' While many readers express sadness in response to the hopelessness of the novel, then, readers clearly vary in the extent to which they approve of the sadness accordingly exerted by the narrative.

Several online reviews demonstrate sympathy specifically regarding the caste background and societal restrictions facing the protagonists. RO2 describes the depiction of Ishvar and Om 'fleeing the horrible caste system of their village and hoping to build a new life' as 'sympathetic', suggesting an emotional response partly linked to the characters' background alongside their constrained life circumstances. RO10's assessment of the book as 'not a particularly happy' one is followed by an explanation that it is Mistry's goal to 'give a voice to those who don't have any, whose stories or lives are considered worthless simply because they are women, or borne [sic] into the wrong caste', indicating a sympathetic attitude to the unfortunate life circumstances of multiple characters, including those affected by their caste. RO6 also expresses the view that the men's experiences 'at the mercy of the brutal power of the higher castes' helps to explain why people pursue a 'grim existence' in the slums of India, indicating that the novel helps them to sympathise with the lives of lower-caste people.

Alongside sadness and sympathy, several other emotions were also identified in the reviews, including shock regarding narrative events. RO12 describes the book as 'like a punch in the gut, or a hard kick to the balls […] That's how powerful it was'. The metaphors of physical pain elicited by violence used by this reader exemplify their shock in response to the narrative. Accordingly, RO11 calls the novel 'an exercise in emotional overload', explaining that they felt compelled to read 'interspersed with breaks to digest and recover […] every moment in this book

that is happy or positive is offset with ten sadnesses and cruelties that rip your breath from your body'. Again, the bodily metaphor of the physical impact of cruelty emphasises the shock that narrative events are capable of wreaking on readers. References to the oppressive force of Om and Ishvar's caste and their consequent oppression are also repeatedly made by readers, including its 'hypocrisy and inhumanity' (RO10), 'injustice' (RO3), and 'antiquated, cruel' (RO4) caste system. Together, these descriptions suggest readers' experiences of anger regarding the treatment of the protagonists.

Overall, exploration of the reviews presented here suggests that several readers experience sadness linked to a sense of hopelessness when reading *A Fine Balance*. Sympathy is also a recurrent emotion expressed in reader reviews, particularly towards the societally oppressed characters Ishvar and Omprakash. Shock and anger were also identified in several reviews, with shock expressed in relation to the pain elicited by narrative events, and anger expressed towards the oppression suffered by characters. In 6.3, I outline a further range of emotions coded in analysis of reader interview transcripts.

6.3 Reader Interviews

Analysis of reader interview transcripts reveals the expression of sadness, shock, and horror regarding the treatment of the *Dalit* protagonists Ishvar and Omprakash. Three readers articulate markedly similar responses to the violence inflicted on them and their families, with R1, R4, and R6 each discussing the murder of the men's family as a shocking and saddening element of the narrative. This is a moment when, in external analepsis, readers learn that the family was burned to death in an act of revenge for attempting to transcend caste boundaries. R1 calls this event 'so brutal' and states that it made them feel 'so sad', with their words therefore suggesting shock and horror regarding the extent of the violence alongside sadness. R4 similarly explains that this moment made them feel 'really emotional' because it 'felt really shocking', with sadness and shock seeming to co-exist in their reaction here. Meanwhile, R6 describes the 'awful' treatment of the family, discussing the 'extremes' an upper-caste landowner goes to in murdering the family in an act of retribution, both for Ishvar's brother Narayan attempting to insist on his democratic right to vote in local elections and for the family trying to transcend their preordained caste role as leatherworkers by becoming tailors. The reader contextualises their own emotions by explaining that democratic freedom is 'something that as a westerner you take so much for granted', expressing that 'the punishment […] so far outweighed' Narayan's perceived offence. A sense of injustice, then, appears to exacerbate the emotional pain felt by R6. Expressing sadness alone but not shock, unlike the aforementioned three readers, R3 states that 'the violence' committed by the higher castes along with the 'lack of human agency' of the protagonists 'emotionally affects' them, and also discusses their sadness regarding the way the men's

'Untouchable' status delimits their life experiences, with caste restricting their existence and meaning they 'don't have a choice' about their life path. The reader explicitly suggests that their response may be accentuated by their experiences as a mother: 'my children are half Indian […] the closeness I feel towards that culture maybe has an impact on my emotional response'. R3's comments thus demonstrate self-awareness regarding how their response is mediated by their own life and accentuated by their own circumstances, enabling them to envision their family in a similar situation.

Many reader interviews also demonstrate various emotions including shock, horror, and sadness in relation to the moment when, having finally earned enough money to return to their village to seek a wife for Om, the men are abducted as part of Indira Gandhi's forced sterilisation programme, Ishvar contracts an infection leading to the amputation of his legs, and Om is forcibly castrated under the orders of an upper-caste landowner as revenge for perceived disrespect. R6 explains that they found the castration 'really horrific, absolutely horrific and absolutely devastating', indicating sadness that the character suffers such a traumatic act, alongside being shocked and disturbed by this. The reader explains that finding this aspect of the novel 'emotionally affecting' partly derived from a 'brutal sort of sense that the sort of entire family line ended with Om and there was never going to be any kind of way back from this', suggesting their emotions were linked partly to the finality and irrevocability of the incident. They also lament how this 'horrific' incident happens after 'Ishvar had obviously invested so much into his nephew', indicating that the previous hope Ishvar holds for Om's future exacerbates the pain of this moment. Similarly, Ishvar's former plans for his nephew's wedding render the brutality of Om's situation more affecting for R5, who describes feeling 'profoundly affected' by the way the 'idea of another generation' builds 'hope for the future' which is then 'crushed'. The reader reflects that the previous 'build up of tragedy' made them think 'nothing worse […] can carry on happening to these two men', suggesting that the lack of a happy ending, or at least an end to the men's pain, increases the emotional impact. R1, meanwhile, describes finding 'the forced sterilisation' to be 'horrible', linking their emotions to the way for Ishvar 'marriage was […] gonna be the change […] a sort of symbol of, well, I've looked after him well enough for him to get married and start his new life', with the wording of the reader similarly creating an impression of lost hope accentuating their response to this incident.

R1 also expresses sadness in relation to the men maintaining hope even in the direst of circumstances, suggesting that the depiction of the restricted hopes of the men is emotionally affecting. R1 speaks of how 'moving' they found Om and Ishvar's 'dreaming […] trying to improve their lives', which is demonstrated throughout the novel as they attempt to construct future plans even as their dreams are thwarted. R1 categorises this as a generally 'negative'

feeling, perhaps due to the difficulty for the men in achieving happiness within the caste-driven constraints placed upon them, and the sadness elicited when their dreams do not ultimately transpire. R1 also connects their own sadness regarding another notable scene of caste-related violence – that of the rape of Ishvar's mother, Roopa, by an upper-caste landowner – to the sense of lost hope. Calling this incident an 'act of brutality' and the 'the first time [the novel] made me cry', R1 discusses the way the narrative 'almost tricks you, because it's like, I think he's gonna let her go, you know it's fine, and then it's like, oh no, you owe me', therefore linking their own emotions to transient hope that Roopa might escape unharmed. R1's suggestion that the event 'resonated' with them partly due to their own gender 'because there's so many times […] as a woman, men think you owe them something' indicates that empathetic experiences increase their sadness for the character.

The extent of the emotional impact of the caste violence elsewhere in the novel, too, is inevitably partly influenced by readers' experiences: R3 describes how the 'enforced sterilisation' in which a 'basic human right is being denied' to the men had a 'strong resonance' with them due to their role as a mother. Accordingly, socio-political awareness also contributed to some readers' emotional responses to this incident. R2 reflects that this element of the novel is 'all the sadder' because this situation was a reality for many due to the 'oppressive government', while R5 indicates that being 'profoundly affected' by this event was caused by 'something […] so tragic [happening] to them personally' alongside 'this state-sanctioned programme to control population'. The comments of both readers suggest, then, that the personal suffering of the men alongside their sense of wider societal injustices contributes to their emotions. However, other readers describe experiencing different responses to this event, with R4 feeling 'desensitised' by previous narrative events, which led them to feel 'like you're not allowed any hope […] you begin to pick up the pattern that everything's going to end badly'. Therefore, whilst the repeated tragedies inflicted on characters seem to cause sadness for many readers, this is not a universally felt response, with the magnitude of the suffering throughout the novel decreasing this reader's capacity to feel emotionally affected by the incident.

Accordingly, R4 expresses dissatisfaction in relation to Maneck's suicide, calling it 'a bit cheap […] it didn't affect me emotionally enough'. Expanding on this, R4 explains that the 'shutting down of that character' made them 'annoyed'. For this reader, their perception of the suddenness and underdevelopment of the ending potentially precludes sadness. This contrasts with the responses of other readers: R2 emphasises the sadness and resonance of this moment, suggesting that they will 'never ever forget' the suicide, while R5 describes feeling 'profoundly sad' on finishing the novel, commenting on how Maneck responds 'in a very final way' to the pain inflicted by the boundaries drawn between different castes. Notably, whilst obviously being

unaware of other interviewees' responses to Maneck's death, R4 critiques their own response, suggesting 'maybe I'm just emotionally closed off' and joking that this makes them 'feel quite heartless'. Stockwell (2013:269) argues that texts have an 'encoded, text-driven preferred response' and that readers can be conscious both of the 'preferred' and 'dispreferred responses' a text elicits. In this case, then, R4 exhibits awareness of a preferred response by which readers of *A Fine Balance* might be expected to feel sadness, in comparison to their own feelings. Readers' emotions, then, inevitably vary due to the inherently personal nature of emotion, as well as a panoply of potential contextual influences and idiosyncratic responses to the narrative, despite the commonalities that can also be identified.

In summary, despite the individual differences in readers' emotional responses that do exist, such as in R4's 'dispreferred response' (Stockwell 2013:269), analysis of interviews suggests that many readers experience sadness, and in some cases shock and horror, regarding the inhumane treatment and caste-related violence experienced by the protagonists. Some readers express sadness in relation to the hope that characters attempt to maintain in the direst circumstances, whilst others discuss their sadness regarding hope lost at certain plot points, such as in the castration inflicted on Om and Maneck's death. In 6.4 and 6.5, I analyse *A Fine Balance* using the world-types of FTPWs, PTPWs and PTAWs as a framework to explore how readers' emotional responses to the novel may be partly illuminated by an examination of the novel's construction of textual actual and possible worlds.

6.4 Future Textual Possible Worlds in *A Fine Balance*: Analysis

As Ishvar and Omprakash move from their rural home to find work as tailors in the city at the beginning of this novel, their attempt to seek a more hopeful FTPW is fundamental to the narrative. Before we have been introduced to the protagonists on their train journey, the depiction of the passengers as a group centralises the concept of human beings seeking to construct FTPWs in challenging circumstances:

> The morning express bloated with passengers slowed to a crawl, then lurched forward suddenly, as though to resume full speed. The train's brief deception jolted its riders. The bulge of humans hanging out of the doorway distended perilously, like a soap bubble at its limit. (1)

A FTPW is initially constructed here with the symbol of the train on its journey, which marks the starting point of Ishvar and Om's much-desired new life in the city. The personification of the 'crawl' of this 'bloated' train which tricks passengers with its 'deception' emphasises the importance and magnitude of the train, whilst the collective noun 'bulge' used to describe the human beings alongside the adverb 'perilously' portrays them as a single passive object at the

mercy of the vehicle. The apparent agency of the train is reiterated by the fact that it is described with finer granularity than the passengers as 'the morning express' which 'lurched forward', 'slowed', and 'jolted its riders'. By contrast, the simile 'like a soap bubble at its limit' positions the reader to envision the crowd as a singular object rather than as individuals, as well as evoking a short-lived and insubstantial object, thus symbolising the fragility of human life. The agency afforded to the vehicle begins to construct a FTPW in which the train will bring its passengers to its destination and also highlights the precariousness of life for the travellers. The passengers are given prominence as the figure against the ground of the train, however, and therefore form part of the FTPW constructed in the description of the train by 'clinging' to it as it continues its journey. By the time Ishvar and Omprakash are introduced, the notion of individuals constructing a FTPW by making their way to a new destination has already been evoked, with the instability of these FTPWs suggested in the collective depiction of the travellers. Shortly after the reader is introduced to Ishvar and Om, the characters' hopes and dreams for a preferable FTPW are highlighted when they meet Maneck Kohla on the train:

> "We have also come for a short time only," said Ishvar. "To earn some money, then go back to our village. What is the use of such a big city? Noise and crowds, no place to live, water scarce, garbage everywhere. Terrible."
> "Our village is far from here," said Omprakash. "Takes a whole day by train – morning till night – to reach it."
> "And reach it, we will," said Ishvar. "Nothing is as fine as one's native place."
> […]
> "A river runs near our village," said Ishvar. "You can see it shining, and hear it sing. It's a beautiful place." (7)

The different ways in which Ishvar and his nephew describe their village suggests a contrasting degree of hopefulness in their constructions of the FTPW of returning home. Omprakash's focus on both distance and time in the tautological 'whole day […] morning till night' implies his consciousness of the restrictions that will make returning to their village practically difficult, thus establishing that a safe return to their village is a restricted, rather than an easily realisable, FTPW. By contrast, Ishvar's speech suggests his perception of the beauty of the village and the likelihood of a safe return. His riposte to Om's comment about the distance suggests that he conceives of returning home as an attainable FTPW: 'And reach it, we will'. The atypical syntax of the clause foregrounds both the verbs 'reach' and 'will', thus centralising his idealistic certainty in the prospect of returning home. The plan to return is also expressed as concrete in the declarative, unmodalised sentence 'We have also come for a short time only', which suggests certainty in the prospect of returning. This indicates, then, that FTPWs can be constructed with differing levels of attainability for different characters. Furthermore, Ishvar's use of the second person and epistemic modal verb 'can' in the assertion 'You can see it shining, and hear it sing' convey immediacy, in contrast to the distance implied by Omprakash, which is supported by the multi-

sensory imagery evoking the beauty of the river. When juxtaposed with the short, minimally modified noun phrases Ishvar uses to describe the city with its 'noise and crowds' 'no place to live' and 'garbage everywhere', the more distant FTPW of returning home is emphasised as preferable to the closer FTPW of working in the city. However, the hyperbolic personification of the river that can be heard to 'sing' evokes the dreamlike quality of memory and imagination, implying that the beauty of home might exist largely in Ishvar's mind rather than in reality.

The disparity between Ishvar and Om's conception of the attainability of this hopeful FTPW is also exemplified later in the narrative as they seek work in the city:

> "Patience, Om. There is lots of opportunity in the city, you can make your dreams come true."
> "I am sick of the city. Nothing but misery ever since we came. I wish I had died in our village. I wish I had burned to death like the rest of my family."
> Ishvar's face clouded, his disfigured cheek quivering with his nephew's pain. He put his arm around his shoulder. "It will get better, Om," he pleaded. 'Believe me, it will get better. And we'll soon go back to our village." (91)

Ishvar's use of the epistemic modal verb 'can' and material process verb 'make' suggest his envisioning of an attainable FTPW that can be consciously formulated with hard work. This is reinforced by the repetition of the epistemic modal verb phrase 'it will get better', which conveys certainty and a belief in the viability of the dream to earn money in the city and ultimately return home. His direction 'Patience, Om' lacks a verb, meaning that the abstract noun works as an imperative but the quality of patience itself is foregrounded, emphasising Ishvar's belief in the capacity of this virtue to bring realisation of his FTPW. Furthermore, Ishvar's construction of a preferable FTPW spans both his description of the city of 'opportunity' and 'dreams', and their village which they will soon 'go back to', evoking the realisation of happier FTPWs in both places. Conversely, Om's view of the city as causing 'nothing but misery' suggests a conception of restricted FTPWs, with the present tense declarative 'I am sick' reiterating his ongoing experience of unhappiness in the CTAW. His reference to 'misery' not only in the present but in the past, too, in the phrase 'since we came' indicates that his ability to conceive of a happier FTPW is also restricted by the unhappy experiences he has suffered in the PTAW. The metaphorical connotations of sickness as being elicited by a toxin or disease existing beyond oneself contrasts with Ishvar's positive construction of FTPWs; Om instead implies that toxic experiences have corrupted his experience of the present, alongside preventing the envisioning of any hopeful FTPWs. This idiomatic bodily metaphor for emotional distress works with the abstract noun 'misery' to encapsulate the extent of Om's hopelessness in the CTAW. Paradoxically, the repeated boulomaic modal verb phrase 'I wish I had' demonstrates despair and lack of hope for any preferable FTPW, since Om can envision no joy or possibility in the future

but only wishes to alter the past so that the CTAW might be erased. The horrifying event to which he refers also conveys the restrictions on his FTPWs wrought by traumatic past experiences, which I detail further in 6.5. Despite Ishvar's greater optimism, though, we might wonder whether he is attempting to convince himself of the attainability of the FTPW he describes, since we see its construction through his dialogue rather than his thoughts. The verb 'pleaded' not only indicates that he is begging Om to believe in this FTPW, but also might imply that he is imploring him not to disrupt his own fragile FTPW construction – suggesting that even if Ishvar verbally constructs this FTPW as attainable, he may not truly believe in its future realisation.

As discussed in 6.2 and 6.3, sadness, and sometimes also shock and horror, were frequently expressed by readers in relation to the depiction of caste in the novel. Caste is depicted as a restrictive force which places limitations on the FTPWs available to Ishvar and Om by frustrating their choices and opportunities. This is exemplified in the description of Ishvar's childhood:

> At an appropriate age, Dukhi began teaching his sons the skills of the trade to which they were born shackled. Ishvar was seven when he was taken to his first dead animal. (101-102)

The implication of imprisonment in the metaphor 'born shackled' demonstrates that Ishvar and his brother Narayan were only ever given access to a restricted range of FTPWs. The verb 'shackled' emphasises the expectation to remain tied to their role as leatherworkers, suggesting that FTPWs beyond this pre-determined one are unattainable. The premodifier 'appropriate' reiterates the inevitability of this work, indicating that from the moment of birth the men have been destined for only one FTPW. Likewise, the possessive determiner 'his' suggests the carcass belongs to Ishvar, and as such represents his destiny, whilst the adjective 'first' evidently reiterates that this is only the beginning of an intended lifetime of similar work. The fact that Ishvar's childhood is described in external analepsis, after readers have already been shown his adult life in which he and his nephew must attempt to find work in the city, also emphasises the inextricability of his experiences in the PTAW from the restricted FTPWs available to the men in the present day. The restricting influence of caste on the FTPWs accessible to Ishvar and Om from birth onwards is also demonstrated in the description of Ishvar's attitude towards their underpaid work in the city, expressed when Omprakash protests the low payment given to the men in their new jobs:

> "We will do it," said Ishvar. "To kick at wages is sinful." (84)

In contrast to Omprakash, Ishvar accepts his status in life and the restrictions placed upon him, with the epistemic modal verb 'will' suggesting that he is quickly constructing a FTPW in which

the wage is acceptable, even though his dreams for life in the city were initially more ambitious. The dynamic verb 'kick' animalises both the men by representing them as beasts of labour rather than human beings capable of voicing protest, thus indicating Ishvar's acceptance of his subjugation. Meanwhile, the religious connotations of 'sinful' indicate underlying acceptance of his oppression: if it is sinful to ask for more, then it must conversely be right to accept one's situation in life. Ishvar has constructed, then, a restricted set of FTPWs adhering to the societal role he is expected to perform. Mistry therefore establishes the idea that some FTPWs are constrained in attainability due to characters' caste and poverty. Perhaps for Ishvar, his older age and life experiences have led to deeper internalisation of his status and thus a greater awareness of such restrictions. The men's lack of choice is also demonstrated in their discussion with their new friend Maneck about ordering a drink:

> Omprakash broke the silence by pointing out a watermelon-sherbet stand. "Wouldn't that be nice, on such a hot day."
> […]
> "Let's have some," said Maneck. "It looks delicious."
> "Not for us," said Ishvar quickly. "We had a big breakfast this morning," and Omprakash erased the longing from his face.
> "Okay," said Maneck doubtfully, ordering one large glass. He studied the tailors who stood with eyes averted, not looking at the tempting tub or his frosted glass. (7)

Here, the boulomaic modal verb 'wouldn't' indicates that Om does not mean to express a serious intention to buy a drink; its consumption is a distant, dreamlike desire rather than an attainable FTPW. In contrast to the hortative 'Let's have some', which suggests Maneck's imagining of an attainable FTPW of consuming the drink, the negation in Ishvar's hasty response 'Not for us' indicates an inability to conceive of the frozen drink as an attainable FTPW, reiterating the practical restrictions of poverty. The verb 'averted' suggests shame regarding such a restriction and demonstrates the men's inability to comprehend the world of the comparatively wealthy for whom 'watermelon-sherbet' is an everyday occurrence rather than an unattainable FTPW. The generality of the plural noun 'tailors' alongside the verb of cognition 'studied' suggests a shift in focalisation to Maneck, so the poverty of the men is presented from an external vantage point, yet with the verb 'erased' we glimpse Om's deliberate attempt to conceal his feelings, implying that he momentarily forgets and then remembers the unattainability of such a FTPW due to the limitations imposed by his own poverty. Thus, we see that the FTPWs for these men are restricted by their life circumstances, despite their attempts to deny their poverty.

Accordingly, the inescapability of caste is also evoked in the description of the horrors of the men's past, such as in the murder of their family:

> What the ages had put together, Dukhi had dared to break asunder; he had turned cobblers into tailors, distorting society's timeless balance. Crossing the line of caste had to be punished with the utmost severity, said the Thakur. (147)

This excerpt exemplifies the restricting force of caste on the attainability of a happier FTPW for the family. Mistry focalises the Thakur's viewpoint by using the verb 'dared' to describe Dukhi's actions as rebellious and insubordinate, while the declarative sentences in which his viewpoints on caste are expressed as fact demonstrate how the tyranny of the system is tolerated by most of the villagers as an immutable element of life. The archaic adverb 'asunder', as well as the foregrounding of temporality established in the references to 'the ages' and the 'timeless balance', together reinforce the sense of caste as an absolute, historically legitimised force restricting the FTPWs available to the family. The unusual nature of the archaic adverb highlights Dukhi's determination to break the robust chains of caste, while the existential process verb 'turned […] into' illustrates his desire to precipitate a permanent change in role and thus open up new FTPWs for his children. However, the plural nouns 'cobblers' and 'tailors' exemplify the Thakur's perception of individuals as defined by their occupation and societal role, with caste background intertwined with their identity. The passive voice construction of 'had to be punished' suggests, too, the Thakur's view of his violence as righteous. Thus, Mistry guides us to question this viewpoint through the simultaneous expression of both the landowner's perception as well as Dukhi's actions. Simultaneously, though, the positioning of his thought processes regarding Dukhi's actions prior to their framing as indirect speech means that the reader may not immediately realise that these are his words, thus reflecting the way the restrictions of caste are accepted as an inescapable part of life. The presentation of the oppressive force of caste alongside Dukhi's attempt to escape his family's subjugation evokes, then, the inherently restricted set of FTPWs available to the family within the cruel constraints of the caste system. The depiction of the Thakur's plan for the family to be 'punished' here also foreshadows their murder and thus foretells the occlusion of the PTPW in which Ishvar's father dreamed of a better life for his sons. I analyse the presentation of PTPWs and PTAWs in 6.5.

6.5 Past Textual Actual Worlds and Past Textual Possible Worlds in *A Fine Balance*: Analysis

As noted in 6.2 and 6.3, the cruel treatment of the 'Untouchable' characters in *A Fine Balance* was frequently mentioned by readers in their descriptions of their emotions of shock, horror, and sadness regarding this novel. The brutal murder of Ishvar and Omprakash's family occludes a PTAW in which the family were alive, as well a PTPW in which they still might have attempted to break free from the restrictions of their caste:

> The light tore away the benevolent cloak of darkness. The naked corpse's face was a burnt and broken blur. Only by the red birthmark on his chest could they recognize Narayan.
> A long howl broke from Radha. But the sound of grief soon mingled with the family's death agony; the house was set alight. The first flames licked at the bound flesh. The dry winds, furiously fanning the fire, showed the only spark of mercy during this night. The blaze swiftly enfolded all six of them. (147)

Here, Mistry graduates between nouns of different levels of size – from 'flames' to 'fire' and finally 'blaze' – to suggest the fire's rapid progress, thus evoking its swift growth and destructive ability to easily obliterate the PTAW of the family and, accordingly, extinguish all PTPWs that had been available to them. The evil of the murder and its destructive force is also suggested by Mistry's subversion of the usual metaphorical associations of light with hope and goodness: here, the light, which 'tore' away darkness, becomes a devastating and personified agent of force, whilst darkness provides a transient 'benevolent' protection from the sight of Narayan's dead and mutilated body. This metaphorical subversion reiterates that life as it should have been has been altered: the 'benevolent' PTAW has been occluded and a new horrific CTAW has taken its place, and so too has the PTPW of the better life the family might have achieved. The horror of the altered CTAW and the occlusion of a happier PTPW are emphasised by the paradoxical personification of the wind as merciful in its fanning of the flames, and the gentle connotations of 'enfolded', which conveys swaddling and envelopment; the pain inflicted by humanity has become so great that death is now preferable to life, which indicates the family's lack of agency and the occlusion of any alternative possible worlds for them. This is reiterated by the extended personification of the natural world – flames that 'licked', light that 'tore', and, as previously mentioned, 'benevolent' darkness – which contrasts with the lack of agency afforded to the human beings. Likewise, Mistry suggests that Narayan's wife has been reduced to an animalistic entity by grief: 'A long howl broke from Radha'. The verb 'broke' suggests an uncontrolled, instinctive response, emphasising the pain of the occluded PTAW and PTPWs the family had dreamed of. Similarly, despite the references to the family's pain, there is a lack of internal focalisation as their 'death agony' is referred to collectively rather than individually, with a focus on the sound they make rather than their cognition. Conceivably, this forces the reader to observe their pain from a distance, reinforcing the family's isolation and helplessness. Lack of agency is emphasised, too, in the synecdoche of 'the bound flesh' which recalls the treatment of livestock intended for slaughter, and also foreshadows death by evoking the separation of body from mind. The reference to Narayan's dead body as 'the naked corpse' similarly depersonalises him, as well as suggesting the dissociation experienced by his family, who do not initially recognise him. The metaphor of his face as 'a burnt and broken blur' also reinforces the irrevocability of both Narayan's death and the occlusion of the PTAW in which he lived.

The occlusion of the PTAW and PTPWs is also exemplified in the excerpts below, which show the aftermath of the murder:

> By the time Ishvar and Omprakash heard the news in town, the ashes had cooled, and the charred bodies were broken and dispersed into the river. (147)

> On the third day, Ishvar asked him to open up the shop, and they began sewing again. (148)

In this account of the protagonists receiving the terrible news, a sense of finality is established, with the past perfect tense used to describe the ashes which 'had cooled', alongside the temporal marker 'by the time', which together emphasise the irrevocable occlusion of the PTAW in which the family was still alive. The description of their loved ones as 'charred bodies' reinforces the horror of their death and the brutal shift from the PTAW to a new CTAW, emphasising that the possibility of the family escaping oppression has been literally and metaphorically incinerated. The plural noun 'bodies' emphasises the separation of the body and mind in death, thus exemplifying the distance that can now never be bridged between Om and Ishvar and their family. The CTAW is therefore presented as a place of irrevocable grief and loss, where the PTAW of the family's life has been occluded in a horrific manner alongside the PTPWs of a better existence that they had been striving for. This contrasts, then, with the men's acceptance of the new CTAW as they 'began sewing again' three days after the murder. The lack of reference to cognition or emotion, and instead the focus on their actions, paradoxically conveys the magnitude of the murder's impact on them both, as the horror of the event seems too great to be repeated in dialogue. The lexical simplicity of this sentence with its simple, unemotive vocabulary choices and lack of imagery suggests acceptance of the occluded PTAW, and therefore renders the pain more acute by suggesting that such painful losses are unsurprising within the contexts of their difficult lives. Accordingly, the infinitive verb 'to open up' and verb phrase 'began sewing again' signify the characters' attempts to construct a new FTPW despite the PTAW and PTPWs that have now been occluded by the new CTAW, as well as suggesting that there is no opportunity in their life to stop working. This demonstrates, then, not only the horror of the occlusion of these past worlds but also the way in which any FTPWs envisioned and constructed by the men will now be restricted by the events of their past.

The rape of Ishvar's mother Roopa is a further incident which can be interpreted as demonstrating the occlusion of a PTAW and PTPWs. The excerpt below describes the aftermath of this rape:

> Dukhi pretended to be asleep as she entered the hut. He heard her muffled sobs several times during the night, and knew, from her smell, what had happened to her while she was gone. He felt the urge to go to her, speak to her, comfort her. But he did not know what words to use, and he also felt afraid of learning too much.

> He wept silently, venting his shame, anger, humiliation in tears; he wished he
> would die that night.
> In the morning Roopa behaved as if nothing had occurred. So Dukhi said nothing,
> and they ate the oranges. (99)

The 'muffled sobs' of Roopa here encapsulate the pain of the altered CTAW which has occluded the PTAW of life prior to the rape, as well as suggesting – alongside the 'silently' weeping response of her husband – that the horror of the incident is so great that it must be repressed and not acknowledged openly. This is also demonstrated through the repeated use of verbs relating to cognition and emotion, as well as past tense verbs relating to perceiving, such as 'pretended', 'heard', 'knew', 'felt', and 'wished', which evoke incomplete actions and thus suggest the powerlessness of the family against the actions of the upper caste, which even extends to Dukhi's inability to comfort his wife. By contrast, the use of infinitive forms for the actions that Dukhi cannot perform – 'to go', 'speak', 'comfort' – suggest a gulf between his imagined and actual responses. The magnitude of the PTAW which has been occluded here is represented, then, in Dukhi's internal turmoil existing alongside an outward lack of action, emphasising the impossibility of altering the events that have transpired. Since the oranges represent the reason for Roopa's rape – she was raped by a nightwatchman when stealing fruit to feed her children – the banal verb phrases 'Dukhi said nothing' and 'they ate the oranges' work in parallel to convey the way the couple attempt to repress their pain beneath the routines of everyday existence. While earlier we see Roopa 'filling her sack with oranges' (98) and the fruit therefore represents a source of nourishment, the reference to 'oranges' after the rape constructs an occluded PTAW in which Roopa had not yet suffered this trauma. The prepositional temporal phrase 'In the morning' also indicates that the practical considerations of daily life must continue despite the emotional pain Roopa must feel. Similarly to the description of the aftermath of the murder explored above in which Ishvar and Om must continue with their work, this evokes characters' lack of choice in adapting to the most horrific of circumstances. Paradoxically, too, by highlighting the traumatic changes in Roopa's life, the occluded PTAW is brought to the fore, as the ordinary aspects of life which have *not* changed, such as the need to eat, highlight the elements of the past which have conversely been forever destroyed. We see, then, the occlusion of the PTAW prior to the rape existing alongside the way that the characters must continue to exist within a reshaped, unfavourable CTAW.

Perhaps the most horrific moment of caste violence in the novel is the one which marks the end of Om and Ishvar's attempts to build a new life by finding a wife in their village for Om to marry, as outlined as eliciting sadness for several readers in 6.3. This is the forced castration inflicted on Om in a deliberately botched government-mandated vasectomy. Even prior to this horrifying act,

the PTPW of Om having a family is occluded as he awaits the forced vasectomy, and we see the destruction of Ishvar's hopes for his nephew to have children:

> The baby stopped crying. They exchanged triumphant looks. Minutes later, tears were rolling down Ishvar's cheeks. Om turned away. He did not need to ask the reason. (533)

Here, the 'baby' the men manage to soothe symbolises the PTPW in which Om might have had his own child, thus evoking the pain of this now-occluded PTPW. The momentary experience of happiness demonstrated in the adjective 'triumphant' reflects the men's attempt to survive within the altered CTAW and to continue to help others despite the pain they are suffering, but the subsequent temporal deixis 'Minutes later' indicates that the grief of the occluded PTAW can only be fleetingly repressed. Furthermore, the 'tears' on Ishvar's cheeks act as an external marker of the grief elicited by the occluded PTPW, while the present participle verb phrase 'rolling down' indicates the continual, irrepressible nature of his sadness despite his wordlessness. The silence of Om, too, whose inability to express his emotions is represented in the verb phrase 'turned away', suggest that the pain of this occluded PTPW is too great to confront directly in speech. Alongside this, the negation 'did not need to ask' emphasises the magnitude of the sadness caused by the pain of this occluded PTPW, since Ishvar's crying does not need to be directly explained. Later, after Om is deliberately castrated under the orders of the Thakur, Ishvar's language as he attempts to report the crime to the police again emphasises the occlusion of a PTPW in which he might have had children: '"My nephew was turned into a eunuch," said Ishvar, unable to control a sob as he spoke the word' (539). In describing his nephew using the indefinite article and noun in the phrase 'a eunuch' rather than in terms of the trauma inflicted on him, Ishvar emphasises the fixed nature of Om's altered identity and suggests the irreversible occlusion of a PTPW of continuing the family line. Further to this, the passive voice and lack of reference to the agent of the crime centralises Om as the victim here by emphasising his powerlessness, whilst the material process verb 'turned into' exemplifies Ishvar's perception of the irreversible nature of Om's new identity and thus the painful occlusion of a preferable PTPW.

As outlined in 6.3, several readers expressed sadness in relation to Maneck's suicide. Here again, the world-types of the PTAW and PTPW can be utilised to cast light on some of the emotional significance of this incident to the narrative:

> He stared at the rails. How they glinted, like the promise of life itself, stretching endlessly in both directions, silver ribbons skimming over the gravel bed, knitting together the blackened, worn-out wood of the railway ties. (611)

> When the first compartment had entered the station, he stepped off the platform and onto the gleaming silver tracks. (612)

Since a train journey also marks the beginning of the tailors' and Maneck's journey into the city, by ending Maneck's life with a train Mistry evokes the occlusion of the PTPW of a new life in the city that once seemed attainable. The semantic field of beauty and light here in the words 'gleaming', 'glinted', and 'silver' contrasts with the description of the 'blackened, worn-out wood', conveying darkness and decline. This symbolises the occlusion of the PTPW in which Maneck still dreamed of a better life for both himself and his friends; the references to light are evocative of the PTPWs which once seemed attainable but have now been occluded by a darker, corrupted CTAW exemplified in the 'blackened' wood. The 'worn-out […] railway ties' which lie beneath the 'silver' train tracks are perhaps symbolic of the darkness of events in the CTAW that have occluded happier PTPWs that have previously been envisioned. This is reinforced by the explicit simile 'like the promise of life itself', which clearly recalls the PTPW once imaginable for Maneck – the loss of which has brought him pain and unhappiness – and evokes the LIFE IS A JOURNEY (Lakoff and Johnson 1980) metaphor, suggesting the subversion of the possibilities of happiness that life once held. Alongside this, the utilitarian connotations of the 'gravel bed' suggest the coarse reality of the CTAW. The material solidity and linearity of the train tracks casts doubt on the notion of the 'promise of life' leading in multiple directions and as having myriad possible worlds; instead, the image evokes the idea of life as ultimately leading in one direction, and perhaps towards a terrible fate when viewed in conjunction with Maneck's subsequent suicide. The granularity of the description of the train tracks not only conveys Maneck's singular focus on notions of life and death, but also contrasts with the description of the death, which focuses only on Maneck's external action of 'stepped off' rather than his suicidal intentions or inner feelings, thus evoking the simplicity of his decision in contrast to the complex feelings he seems to experience in relation to his awareness of PTPWs that are now lost. The juxtaposition of the metaphor of the train tracks which symbolise the promise of life with the subsequent suicide of Maneck creates a contrast between the beauty of the PTPW as compared to the horror of the CTAW. The internal focalisation of the character's specific ruminations on 'the promise of life' prior to his suicide also emphasises the occlusion of PTPWs throughout the narrative, with unattained PTPWs constructed here as a key factor leading Maneck to end his life, thus causing his own existence to shift into a PTAW within the narrative. Conceivably, then, the sadness wrought by this narrative event for several readers may be partly understood in the light of how hopeful PTAW and PTPWs are occluded here by an inferior CTAW.

6.6 Summary

In this chapter, I have analysed *A Fine Balance* by applying the world-types of FTPWs, PTAWs and PTPWs in order to develop my consideration of how the emotional effects of this text may be understood through analysis of textual actual and possible worlds. In 6.2 and 6.3, I outlined several emotions coded in online reviews and reader interview transcripts further to those

explored in 5.2 and 5.3. In 6.2, I explored the sadness expressed by many readers in relation to a sense of hopelessness, as well as sympathy, shock, and anger, and in 6.3, I discussed readers' expressions of sadness, especially regarding the oppressive treatment of Ishvar and Om, and sadness regarding Maneck's suicide, as well as outlining some readers' expressions of shock and horror regarding the treatment of the lower-caste protagonists. In 6.3, I identified that, despite commonalities in some readers' responses, one reader's emotional responses could be categorised as 'dispreferred' responses (Stockwell 2013:269), with this reader's comments suggesting consciousness of how their emotions diverged from those perhaps intended by the narrative. In 6.4, I suggested that some FTPWs in this novel are constructed as FTPWs which are restricted by societal and caste-related limitations, thus potentially contributing to the sadness wrought by Ishvar and Om's struggle to survive. In 6.5, I applied the world-type of PTAW and PTPWs together. I analysed how the occlusion of a preferable PTAW and PTPWs by an inferior CTAW may elicit sadness, and also suggested that the occlusion of some PTAWs and PTPWs may mean that characters' constructions of FTPWs are constrained by their experiences in the past. In the following two chapters, I demonstrate the broader applicability and usefulness of my typology by applying it to analysis of *Revolutionary Road*.

Chapter 7

Counterfactual Textual Worlds and Future Textual Possible Worlds in
Revolutionary Road

7.1 Introduction

In Chapters 5 and 6, I demonstrated the applicability of the typology established for this study by using it to analyse a range of textual factors which may partly help to explain some of the emotional responses expressed by readers of *A Fine Balance*. In this chapter, I apply the world-types of CFTWs and FTPWs to *Revolutionary Road*. In 4.9, I discussed the rationale for selecting this novel as a focus text. One of the key themes of *Revolutionary Road* is the flawed American Dream (Daly 2017), with its plot centring on two middle-class protagonists who feel trapped in their suburban existence. Frank and April have a tempestuous marriage characterised by frequent disagreement, with their temporarily shared dream of emigrating to Europe providing only brief respite from a largely unhappy relationship. April's unplanned pregnancy with the couple's third child leads to the abandonment of this dream and her eventual attempted self-induced abortion and resulting death. The book is, like *A Fine Balance*, written in the past tense and third person. In contrast to the shifting internal focalisation employed in *A Fine Balance*, Frank's thought processes are focalised for most of this novel with occasional internal focalisation of April. In 7.2 and 7.3, I outline several emotions coded in online reviews and reader interview responses respectively. Subsequently, I apply the world-type of CFTWs to *Revolutionary Road* in 7.4, before applying the world-type of FTPWs in 7.5. As with the application of world-types throughout this thesis, this selection is informed by reader responses alongside my own stylistic analysis.

7.2 Reader Reviews

Analysis of 16 reviews of *Revolutionary Road* indicates readers' anger and dislike towards characters, particularly towards Frank. RO10 states they 'couldn't stand the selfish Frank' whilst three other reviewers (RO4, RO5, RO14) use the word 'hate' to describe their feelings towards either Frank alone, or both Frank and April as a couple. RO14 describes hating the character 'possibly more than I've hated anyone in real life', demonstrating the capacity of this character to incite strongly felt, genuine emotions. Similarly, RO11 refers to the authenticity of their anger: 'I get into a quite real rage against Frank Wheeler', linking this anger to 'his fictional psychological bullying of his wife, trampling her dreams with his feet as hard as he could'. The magnitude of RO11's anger is demonstrated through their stressing of the 'rage' as 'quite real', with the metaphor of Frank 'trampling' on April's dreams suggesting a tyrannical interpretation of him. However, the suggestion that April is the victim of Frank's 'bullying' indicates that RO11 feels

sympathy towards this character. The same reviewer laments that April is 'fighting for her right to develop and grow out of the conformity prison that Frank wants to keep her in', again suggesting sympathy for April's situation compared to Frank's role as metaphorical prison guard.

RO5 describes a broader sense of dislike of the characters, finding them all 'detestable' and explaining that they 'hated everyone' including Frank and April who are viewed as 'quite possibly the most aggressively horrible couple to have ever lived'. For this reader, the capacity of this novel to elicit an emotion of dislike and even 'hate' towards the characters exists alongside a perception of the novel as a 'great read', suggesting that the unlikability of the characters does not necessarily detract from – and may even enhance – their enjoyment of the reading experience. RO5's exasperated comment, too, that the Wheelers are not as intellectual as they believe but are 'so snobby you easily let them carry on with their little delusion' also conveys a sense of strong dislike and disparagement of the characters' personalities. Other reviewers, too, refer to specific aspects of the Wheelers' dispositions that they dislike, such as Frank's 'insufferably high opinion of himself' and April's 'spoilt and self-important' personality (RO2) or the way in which the characters are 'whiny […] and have no gumption to make their own happiness' (RO4). RO9, who suggests that 'none of the characters are likable', expresses that they 'just wanted to slap all of the characters involved to make them wake up' with their comments suggesting dislike grounded in frustration with the characters' behaviour and actions.

Alongside dislike, many reviews suggest readers' doubt regarding the hopes and dreams of the protagonists, whose plan to move to Paris never comes to fruition. RO8 suggests that 'they really wouldn't be happier elsewhere, but this is the mythology they believe in', indicating a divergence between the couple's dreams and this reader's knowledge, and RO16 states that 'they were never on the road to greatness in the first place', signifying a belief that escape is ultimately impossible. The same reader believes that 'April's harebrained idea about moving to Paris is just an excuse to avoid the real issue' – that of their relationship troubles – with the contrast between the reviewer's opinion and the plan of the character demonstrating their doubt and disbelief in the attainability of this plan. RO7, meanwhile, states that while Frank and April appear to be a 'golden couple with the world at its feet', this is just 'promise' rather than reality, whilst RO12 expresses frustration rather than sympathy towards Frank and April's disillusionment and desire to move away: 'I have such a hard time with characters whose "grass is always greener" approach to life ultimately leads to their demise', indicating distance between the reviewer's perspective and the characters' dreams. RO10 similarly makes a negative judgement of April's perception of the capacity of moving to Paris to improve her life: 'thinking that moving to Paris is going to fix everything that's making her unhappy isn't very realistic'. Accordingly, comments from RO2 that the story is a 'crushing portrait of a crumbling marriage' imply doubt in the capability of the

Wheelers to escape their current situation, and thus in the viability of their dream. RO1 also articulates doubt in the attainability of the Wheelers' dream, but seems to view their behaviour with more sympathy than many readers, and perhaps a degree of empathy, viewing it as symbolic of wider societal attitudes: 'We make our decisions based on what we think will bring us the most happiness'. The reader's use of 'we' here suggests a perception of April and Frank's continual dreaming for an alternative future life as emblematic of the human condition rather than as unique.

Overall, then, comments from reader reviews presented here suggest recurrent themes of dislike, as well as occasional frustration and annoyance, towards both protagonists. Frank, however, is a particular focus of many readers' dislike, with some expressing greater sympathy towards April. Many reviewers also express doubt regarding the likelihood of the couple escaping their mundane suburban lives, indicating disbelief in the capacity of Frank and April to achieve their dream. In 7.3, I outline further emotions expressed in reader interviews.

7.3 Reader Interviews

As with the reader reviews discussed in 7.2, analysis of reader interviews also reveals dislike or anger towards the characters expressed by several readers. R5 voices strong dislike towards Frank in particular: 'most of the time I just felt contempt and disgust towards Frank […] his thoughts on women […] it disgusts me'. Alongside mentioning Frank's attitude to women as eliciting dislike, this reader specifically links their dislike to the insight that we are afforded into Frank's mind, explaining 'we are in his head', therefore rendering his problematic thoughts accessible to the reader. R5 also cites other aspects of his behaviour that provoke dislike, such as his 'always trying to pose' or his treatment of April: 'I hated the moment when he tries to persuade her that she's crazy. It just made me feel really empathetic towards her'. The reader's broad dislike for Frank and his behaviour, then, seems to contribute to feelings of empathy towards April, with their aversion to this character so strongly felt that it even stimulates identification with another. R5's dislike of Frank may also derive partly from what they call the 'restrained violence' of the couple's arguments, which causes the reader to feel 'apprehensive' and 'scared that they're going to hit each other, mainly Frank', implying a belief in the characters' capacity for violence. Similarly, the same reader describes being 'struck' by the moment when Frank declares his wish that April had had an abortion, explaining that 'it was horrible to hear for April', expressing empathy towards April's feelings in comparison to the actions of Frank. R4, however, expresses dislike towards both protagonists, explaining they 'thought they [the characters] were all horrible people, especially April'. R4 refers to the argument between Frank and April that occurs after her performance at the start of the novel, explaining their own childhood as a 'theatre kid' led them to find April's reaction to the play's failure 'completely overblown, just ridiculous […] it tainted the rest of my reading because all I could think was, I don't like you'. The reader contextualises

their dislike with their own childhood experience, then, using this to explain their perception of the character. This demonstrates the nuanced way in which experiences which parallel those of characters in a novel may interact with readers' emotions, since R4's own experience of acting does not elicit empathy, but rather induces a comparison of April's behaviour with responses to failure that are viewed as more reasonable and proportionate. R3, meanwhile, expresses 'irritation' with both protagonists due to 'their sense of their exceptionalism, that they are above the ordinary lives of suburban people', with their annoyance seemingly prompted by the Wheelers' self-perception in comparison to the reader's perception of the couple.

However, as with online reviews, dislike for characters is not expressed by all readers. R1 describes feeling 'so sad that […] he's this dreamer' despite the 'crushing reality' of his workplace, indicating sympathy elicited by Frank's experience of work and his concurrent desire to escape it. In contrast to R3's irritation with the couple's 'exceptionalism', R2 empathises overtly with the couple's desire to escape their suburban lives, speaking of their own 'disillusionment' or 'realisation that the things that you once prized […] and built your life around […] suddenly seem to be pointless'. Whilst R2 does mention the couple's 'arrogance', her empathy seems to moderate her response, which expresses understanding towards Frank and April's disenchantment with their middle-class existence. R6 similarly describes the 'suburban context' as 'anathema' to them, relating the Wheelers' sense of constriction to their own desire to move away from the suburbs, and characterises the couple as constrained by a society of 'loneliness and isolation'. R6's own feelings about suburbia, then, indicate some degree of empathy towards the couple's situation and the way it contributes to their behaviour. Whilst not precluding some implied dislike for April, whose affair in the novel R6 refers to as 'in keeping with her narcissism', empathy for the Wheelers' situation is evident in their comment that the suburban community 'takes ordinary people and pushes […] until they […] snap'. Thus, both readers' own life experiences clearly influence their emotions towards the characters and their struggles throughout the novel.

A further emotion coded in the dataset was discomfort, expressed by R7 and R5. R5 twice describes feeling 'uncomfortable' whilst reading, including in relation to the entire book: 'the whole novel made me really uncomfortable'. R7 similarly states that reading the novel overall 'really felt uncomfortable'. When detailing the reasons for this, R7 explains that characters in the novel engage in 'building up these mental structures and mental stories that they tell themselves, and they're obviously not true'. R7's discomfort, then, seems partly to arise from a conception of the difference between characters' perceptions and what this reader sees as the truth, which was also highlighted in similar comments on the 'mismatch between reality and perception' that the reader identifies in the novel. R7's complex feelings of unease are encapsulated in their

description of feeling a 'kind of awkwardness, almost embarrassment' when 'witnessing' the arguments of Frank and April, contextualising this discomfort by comparing it to observing relationship difficulties in everyday life: 'you know like when you're at a dinner party or something and you know something is going on between the host and his or her partner […] you are feeling awkward, like something is going to happen'. This comment indicates that R7's discomfort arises partly from anticipating unhappiness, which is reiterated in a further comment that witnessing the argument feels – both in life and in the novel – like seeing two people 'on a collision course and you feel bad for them'. To some extent, R7's use of a recognisable scenario to explain their own emotional response might partially work as an attempt to convey their complex emotions in a relatable way, but the use of the comparison also suggests that the familiarity of Frank and April's mutual misunderstanding strengthens its emotional impact. R7 also contextualises these feelings by referring to arguments with their own husband and previous partners as causing 'a kind of frustration' because 'they were not really getting what you were on about', indicating some degree of empathy with the couple's misunderstanding of one another, alongside feelings of discomfort as an observer. R7 describes feeling 'part spectator' and 'part protagonist', with these astute descriptions evoking a shifting sense of empathy and closeness with the characters' situations. The empathy of this reader is shown, too, in their repeated linking of their own unease with the way the protagonists are 'inhabiting two different worlds' or 'speaking two different languages'. The use of metaphors suggesting distance and mutual misunderstanding indicates familiarity with the experience, potentially accentuating the reader's feelings of discomfort.

In summary, coding of reader interviews of *Revolutionary Road* indicates dislike, sometimes to the point of anger, felt towards characters and, as in reviews discussed in 7.2, this dislike is most frequently felt towards Frank, to whose thoughts the reader is most frequently granted access, although April is also disliked by some readers. Some readers, however, express sympathy towards the characters, and in some cases empathy, such as R2 in their empathetic response to the couple's 'disillusionment'. Notably, a sense of discomfort or unease, while coded in only two interview transcripts, is discussed extensively by R7. In 7.4 and 7.5, I utilise the world-types of CFTWs and FTPWs to analyse some of the textual factors potentially contributing to the emotional responses elicited by this novel.

7.4 Counterfactual Textual Worlds in *Revolutionary Road*: Analysis

As outlined in 3.3.6 and exemplified in my analysis in 5.4, since CFTWs refer to those textual possible worlds which might exist under a different set of circumstances, they must be analysed in relation to the CTAW on which they depend for their existence. In *Revolutionary Road*, the

reader is shown a range of potential CFTWs existing alongside the CTAW. In the following excerpt, we see Frank mentally rehearsing a conversation with April after having watched her performance in an amateur play, before choosing to make an alternative comment to the one he had planned:

> He closed the door and started toward her with the corners of his mouth stretched tight in a look that he hoped would be full of love and humour and compassion; what he planned to do was bend down and kiss her and say "Listen: you were wonderful." But an almost imperceptible recoil of her shoulders told him that she didn't want to be touched, which left him uncertain what to do with his hands, and that was when it occurred to him that "You were wonderful" might be exactly the wrong thing to say – condescending, or at the very least naive and sentimental, and much too serious.
> "Well," he said instead. "I guess it wasn't exactly a triumph or anything, was it?"
> (15)

Here, we see the construction of the CTAW followed by a subsequent construction of a CFTW. Frank's initial decisiveness is exemplified in the dynamic verbs 'closed' and 'started', which denote his movement towards April in the CTAW, but the subsequent boulomaic modal verb 'hoped' and verb of cognition 'planned' focalise his thoughts and evoke his consideration of multiple potential choices for his interaction with his wife. Uncertainty regarding different courses of action is further demonstrated in the modal 'might be' later used to demonstrate Frank's analytical reflection on a planned compliment. The fact that Frank's imaginary words – 'Listen: you were wonderful' – are framed as direct speech means that they may inhabit, in the reader's mind, an almost equally 'real' position as the speech that does transpire in his disparaging comment 'I guess it wasn't exactly a triumph or anything'. The prior syntactic parallelism in 'bend down and kiss her and say' means that each element of Frank's imagined actions is outlined in turn, thus constructing this alternative course of action as a vivid, comprehensive CFTW, potentially making it more frustrating for the reader when this does not transpire. The depiction of Frank's mouth 'stretched tight' contrasts with his desire to convey a loving expression and thus conveys the tension inherent in his effort, emphasising his inability to congratulate his wife in the CTAW as compared to the envisioned CFTW. Furthermore, the polysyndetic list of emotions he hopes to convey – 'love and humour and compassion' – delineates each feeling separately and therefore contrasts with the CTAW that does transpire. The contrast between the CFTW and the CTAW is not only emphasised in the unkind comment that Frank makes as compared to the initially planned compliment, but also in the way his comment ends with the tag question 'was it?' as compared to the imperative 'Listen' in his imagined speech. Consequently, we see Frank as incapable of decisive action in the CTAW, seeking April's reassurance regarding his assessment even as he insults her. Readers may therefore simultaneously conceive of a CFTW in which he could have simply complimented her performance, notwithstanding the perceived

inadequacies of the play. Thus, the reader is exposed to a preferable CFTW whilst having to witness his unwise decisions in the CTAW. This excerpt, then, demonstrates the beginning of a pattern which will continue throughout the text – that of Frank contemplating two courses of action, with his decision in the CTAW often constructed as inferior to an alternative one envisioned in a CFTW.

Accordingly, when Frank and April are later driving back from the play, an emotional and physical distance is established between the couple. Not only does this distance arise partly due to Frank's previous actions – so the reader is already aware of a preferable CFTW existing here in which Frank might have said his initially planned words to April – but Yates also then establishes a further CFTW as the argument continues:

> He had hoped she would sit close to him in the car – he wanted to hold her shoulders while he drove – but she made herself very small and pressed against the passenger's door, turning away to watch the passing lights and shadows of the road. This caused his eyes to grow round and his mouth solemn as he steered and shifted gears, until finally, licking his lips, he thought of something to say.
> "You know something? You were the only person in that whole play. No kidding, April. I mean it."
> "All right," she said. "Thank you."
> "It's just that we never should've let you get mixed up in the damned thing, is all."
> (19)

The reader is again exposed to Frank's thought process in the boulomaic modal verbs 'hoped' and 'wanted', which construct a CFTW in which the argument might have been resolved if April had indeed sat closer to her husband. This CFTW is reduced in attainability by the past perfect tense 'had hoped', which implies that the desire for April to be close has already been rendered impossible. At the same time, we see the contrast between Frank's envisioning of April sitting 'close' in a position in which he could 'hold her shoulders' in the CFTW as compared to the emphasis on her 'turning away' and being 'pressed against the passenger's door' in the CTAW, in a position that places April at a maximum possible distance from her husband. In the CTAW, then, we see a physical gap between the couple demonstrating the emotional chasm between them, which works alongside Frank's imagining of an inaccessible CFTW to suggest the inescapability of the couple's mutual lack of understanding. Frank does attempt to alter the CTAW and foster closeness with April again with his eventual compliment regarding her performance, which is reinforced in his emphatic statements 'no kidding' and 'I mean it', but the attempt to redress the emotional harm of his previous unkindness is swiftly undermined by retrospective deontic modality – 'we never should've…'. When combined with the force of the mild expletive 'damned', this evokes Frank's perception of April's participation in the play as an irreparable mistake which cannot be altered in the CTAW, as compared to a preferable CFTW.

The use of the inclusive pronoun 'we' alongside the verb 'let' implies mutual responsibility for April's involvement, and while seeming to accord shared blame to Frank, in fact works as a criticism of April for the status of the CTAW as compared to a CFTW in which she might have refrained from acting, since she is, of course, the person who performed in the play. The fact that this CFTW is constructed through Frank's dialogue rather than April's suggests that he is seeking to envisage a CFTW for both of them, and reiterates the distance between the couple since April does not voice her opinion. Here, then, the imagining of a closer, more loving interaction between the couple works to elicit one CFTW whilst Frank's conception of a world in which April had not acted in this play constructs a further CFTW, therefore indicating that both characters inhabit a CTAW which is less favourable or enjoyable than alternative CFTWs.

The CTAW is also more broadly constructed as inferior to a preferable, overarching CFTW of a better marriage and life for Frank and April. As their argument continues, we are introduced to a key CFTW for April that is returned to at several points throughout the narrative:

> "Number one, it's not my fault the play was lousy. Number two, it's sure as hell not my fault you didn't turn out to be an actress, and the sooner you get over *that* little piece of soap opera the better off we're all going to be." (25)

Frank's words reveal a macro-CFTW in which April could be living an alternative life as an actress. While Frank presents this as an unlikely, fantastical proposition, the explicit reference to a CFTW which did not transpire suggests its emotional importance for April. The idiom 'you didn't turn out to be' suggests irrevocability, indicating that April's life path is already set, with the dream of being an actress an unrealistic CFTW in Frank's view. This is reinforced in his sarcastic dismissal of the CFTW as '*that* little piece of soap opera', with the choice of a theatrical metaphor working to ridicule any suggestion of April living in another world beyond the CTAW. The italicised, deictic 'that' distances this CFTW from the CTAW and emphasises the perceived contrast between the CFTW and April's reality, as well as implying it is her invention, while the premodifier 'little' works to further deride the dream, constructing the CTAW as irrevocable. His numbering 'Number one […] Number two' communicates an authoritative tone, suggesting his attempt to construct reality for both himself and his wife, whilst the repeated negation of 'not my fault' similarly suggests certainty in the events of the CTAW as compared to the nebulous CFTW. Frank's use of the future conditional in his declaration 'the sooner […] the better off' constructs a preferable FTPW that depends for its existence on April relinquishing her envisioning of a CFTW of becoming an actress, although, importantly, it is Frank who is describing this CFTW, and thus we may wonder whether it is really he who is envisioning it rather than April. The declarative statement 'the play was lousy' suggests a categorical denouncement of the events of the CTAW, with the lack of hedging devices and references to cognition or emotion suggesting

the absolutism of Frank's perception, working to reiterate the failure of the play as compared to a CFTW of success, which works as a micro-CFTW existing alongside the macro-CFTW of April's once-imagined career. Meanwhile, the harshness of Frank's language – such as using the then-offensive idiom 'sure as hell' alongside the insulting adjective 'lousy' – suggests the toxicity of their relationship in the CTAW. This emphasises the unhappiness of the CTAW in comparison to the preferable CFTW in which April might have been an actress, even if this is a CFTW that Frank dismisses as unrealisable and as negatively affecting their marriage.

The sense of the CTAW as inferior to the CFTW is enhanced when characters contemplate alternatives to their current experience, such as April's wishful imagining of a CFTW in which the argument had never taken place, shortly before it becomes more vicious:

> "Oh God, if only you'd stayed home tonight."
> […]
> Then the fight went out of control. It quivered their arms and legs and wrenched their faces into shapes of hatred, it urged them harder and deeper into each other's weakest points, showing them cunning ways around each other's strongholds and quick chances to switch tactics, feint, and strike again. In the space of a gasp for breath it sent their memories racing back over the years for old weapons to rip the scabs off old wounds; it went on and on. (27)

April's explicit reference to a CFTW in which Frank had never attended the play is exemplified in the past conditional 'if only', which suggests the pain of the CTAW as compared to this preferable CFTW. This is intensified by her exclamatory 'Oh God', emphasising the strength of her desire to have avoided this argument. This also implies that extended arguments are a typical element of the CTAW for Frank and April, because April's wish for an alternative CFTW indicates a belief the argument will inevitably get worse without the possibility of reconciliation. Furthermore, the existence of a CFTW of Frank having 'stayed home' accentuates the tension created by the subsequent argument, since an alternative world exists in which this might not have occurred. An underlying sense of violence in the CTAW is created with the use of the dynamic verbs 'quivered', 'wrenched', and 'strike', and reinforced in the way in which the fight is given agency as an independent being capable of 'showing them' how to hurt each other. The extended personification of the fight, such as in the way it 'urged them' to harm each other, suggests that the characters' emotions have become powerful malevolent forces in control of their actions. This is emphasised, too, by the boxing metaphor – 'switch tactics, feint and strike again' – which transforms into a broader ARGUMENT IS WAR (Lakoff and Johnson 1980) conceptual metaphor in the juxtaposed references to 'wounds' and 'weapons', therefore suggesting the increasing ability of the fight to cause genuine pain and the mutual capacity of Frank and April to exert injury on one another. The conflation of physical and psychological pain established in

the boxing metaphor is reinforced in the reference to a literal, bodily response to psychological injury – 'in the space of a gasp for breath' – and in the way in which their 'arms' and 'legs' are 'quivered' by the fight whilst their 'faces' are transformed into 'shapes of hatred': emotions are represented in their totality as affecting both mind and body, suggesting their inescapability. Furthermore, the repetition 'on and on' emphasises the interminability of the argument, indicating that the pain of this fight has become all-encompassing. The extended focus on physicality lends urgency to the depiction of the argument, thus emphasising its tangibility in the CTAW as compared to the intangible CFTW that might have existed if Frank had 'stayed home'. The corporeal metaphor of the couple seeking to 'rip the scabs off old wounds' simultaneously exemplifies both the rawness and recurrence of their mutually inflicted pain, with the dynamic verb 'rip' evoking the fresh violence of their words, whilst the premodifier 'old' indicates that this argument is merely one in a catalogue of many. This suggests, then, that the worst elements of the CTAW extend backwards in time, as reiterated by the metaphor of the 'memories racing back'. This, then, emphasises the inescapable pain of the unhappy CTAW compared both to a micro-CFTW in which this particular argument might not be occurring, and a macro-CFTW of a happier marriage in which these multiple emotional wounds might not be inflicted.

April's first pregnancy is also described as precipitating a CTAW which may be less favourable than a preferable CFTW, even though it led to the birth of their first child. This might be also seen as a macro-CFTW since it underpins a significant portion of the novel, in which the Wheelers frequently lament their suburban existence and the banality of domesticity. April's first pregnancy is described here:

> And one big thing went wrong right away. According to their plan, which called
> for an eventual family of four, her first pregnancy came seven years too soon. (48)

The depiction of the destruction of the 'plan' constructs a preferable CFTW existing alongside the CTAW. Agency is afforded to the plan which 'called for' the couple to have a family at a later date, thus lending importance to it, whilst the idiomatic verb phrase 'went wrong' implies irrevocability, emphasising that this led to a CTAW existing alongside a now-inaccessible CFTW. The adverbial temporal phrase 'too soon' reinforces the unfavourable CTAW compared to the alternative, temporally preferable CFTW of a pregnancy occurring 'seven years' later. By describing April's pregnancy with the abstract noun 'thing', Yates depersonalises and objectifies the pregnancy to encapsulate its negative effects, and emphasises its role in keeping the protagonists unhappily confined to suburbia. The reader sees, then, that the first pregnancy has led to an inferior CTAW to that which might exist otherwise, meaning that from early in the novel the reader is given the impression that everything wrong in Frank and April's life has cascaded

from that point. The sense of a life without having had children so young as representing a preferable CFTW is later conveyed in Frank's reflection: 'Wasn't it true, then, that everything in his life from that point on had been a succession of things he hadn't really wanted to do?' (53). This emphasises Frank's conception of the pregnancy as eliciting a CTAW inferior to a preferable CFTW, with the temporal deixis 'from that point on' indicating the definitive consequences of this event in shaping the world that he now inhabits. The indefinite pronoun 'everything' and noun phrase 'a succession of things' together reiterate the perceived all-encompassing difficulty of the CTAW, although the phrasing of Frank's thoughts here as a question simultaneously suggests the ultimate impossibility of ever knowing whether a CFTW would truly be preferable. Since it was Frank who dissuaded April from attempting to abort their first child, his later occasional regret regarding the CTAW also implicitly suggests the difficulty of choosing between different paths.

Later in the novel, having persuaded April not to abort her third pregnancy in an event that closely mirrors the aforementioned first pregnancy, Frank invokes a CFTW in which April might have in fact done so:

> "Why the hell *didn't* you get rid of it, when you had the chance? Because listen. Listen: I got news for you." The great pressure that began to be eased inside him now, as he slowly and quietly intoned his next words, made it seem that this was a cleaner breakthrough into truth than any he had ever made before: "I wish to God you'd done it." (291)

Frank's use of boulomaic modality in 'I wish' creates a supposedly preferable CFTW that might have existed if April had aborted the pregnancy, which is intensified by his invocation 'to God', thus evoking a preferable CFTW in which the couple's dream of going to Paris – as explored in more detail in 7.5 – might still have transpired. The statement is lent force by the syntactical contrast between Frank's final statement here and the lengthy sentence that precedes it, as well as by the metaphor of these words as allowing a 'great pressure' in Frank to be 'eased', which implies a sense of release in speaking them aloud. Frank's repetition of the imperative verb 'listen' initially appears to emphasise the veracity of his desire for this CFTW and his authoritative emphasis on the CTAW as inferior to it, which is also emphasised by the notion of this being a 'breakthrough into truth'. However, this is contradicted by the verb 'seem', which reveals that, in fact, this is *not* the truth for Frank. As Frank has previously put April under great pressure to continue the pregnancy, we also might infer that Frank's insistence on the 'truth' of his words in fact acts as an attempt to verbally construct a newly-envisioned CFTW or indeed as a tool simply to hurt April rather than to share the existence of a CFTW which he has previously truly desired. The adverbs 'slowly' and 'quietly' used to describe his speech, along with the verb

'intoned', together indicate a sense of purpose and deliberation in this CFTW construction. The notion that Frank deliberately discusses this CFTW in order to hurt April here is reinforced in his repeated use of the second-person pronoun 'you', direct questioning of April – 'Why' – and the intensifier 'the hell', which all work to evoke his anger and attempt to place blame on April for the state of the CTAW. Meanwhile, the dysphemism 'get rid of it' used to denote abortion works to denigrate the CTAW in which April is now heavily pregnant and depicts the CFTW as preferable. The temporal deixis 'when you had' coupled with the noun 'chance' also marks out the possibility of aborting the pregnancy as a now-inaccessible CFTW which has resulted in the existence of an unfavourable CTAW. The sharp contrast between Frank earlier urging April not to abort the pregnancy and this rapidly constructed CFTW suggest an attempt to escape the reality of the CTAW at a time of emotional distress. Even though readers may doubt in the veracity of this CFTW for Frank since it contradicts his previous actions, this nevertheless reinforces the sense of the couple being trapped in a CTAW which is somehow inferior to a CFTW.

7.5 Future Textual Possible Worlds in *Revolutionary Road*

Frank and April's plan to move to Paris is constructed as a key FTPW in the narrative, as it is conceived as an opportunity that will bring happiness and a reprieve from the suburban America in which both Frank and April claim to feel trapped. In 7.2, I discussed how several readers expressed feelings of doubt regarding the attainability of this dream. The following excerpt illustrates the hope felt by Frank after he has agreed to April's proposition to move:

> There now began a time of such joyous derangement, of such exultant carelessness,
> that Frank Wheeler could never afterwards remember how long it lasted. (119)

Although the couple have only just begun to plan their move here, Yates suggests that merely envisioning a hopeful FTPW renders life immediately happier and more carefree, as demonstrated in the syntactical parallelism in the phrases 'of such joyous derangement, of such exultant carelessness'. Similarly, the use of two premodifiers denoting extreme happiness, 'joyous' and 'exultant', suggests the FTPW of going to Paris is conceptualised as attainable by the Wheelers, in that they are already experiencing happiness simply by imagining moving. This suggests, therefore, the characters' confidence that this FTPW will remove the difficulties of their lives, releasing them from their mundane existence. However, the abstract noun 'derangement' implies dissociation from reality, insinuating doubt in Frank and April's rationality, whilst 'carelessness' evokes precarity. So, while the couple's excited envisioning of a FTPW conveys *their* belief in its attainability, the presentation of their extreme joy and faith in this FTPW is constructed as irrational. The singular temporal reference 'a time' also suggests that this part of their lives is now over, thus instilling doubt in the realisation of this FTPW even as we witness its construction,

with the use of the indefinite article helping to reinforce the exceptionality of this time. Furthermore, the temporal phrase 'how long it lasted' and adverb 'afterwards' reiterate its eventual loss, again suggesting that the FTPW constructed by the Wheelers will be ultimately unattainable. The negation in the description that Frank could 'never afterwards' remember how long this period lasted also suggests that he might frequently, in later years, reflect on this time to try to understand it more clearly, again establishing doubt in the attainability of this FTPW.

As explored in 7.2 and 7.3, while many readers dislike Frank and others doubt in the capacity of moving away to resolve the couple's problems, some do feel sympathy towards their disillusionment with the trappings of middle-class existence. In this excerpt, Frank envisions a FTPW of escaping from his office, viewing work as a toxic entity that will be eradicated by moving to Paris:

> All of it—lights, glass partitions, chattering typewriters—the whole slow, dry agony of this place would be cut away from his life like a tumor from his brain; and good riddance. (125)

An extended metaphor of the office as causing physical sickness is created with the noun 'agony' alongside the simile of work as a brain tumour, which together convey extreme pain. Alongside this corporeal metaphor evoking Frank's perception of the awfulness of his current existence, the suggestion that leaving the office means this would be 'cut away' suggests that he envisions the FTPW, conversely, as a preferable place of freedom from the pain of existence. This is reinforced by the idiom 'good riddance', which encapsulates relief at the prospect of escaping the mundanity of the CTAW, and is lent additional emphasis by its positioning as an independent clause preceded by the indefinite article at the end of the sentence. The quantifier 'all of it' reiterates that Frank sees every aspect of his work life as painful in comparison to the preferable CTAW existing in his imagination. Yet even though Frank's unhappiness is expressed so viscerally, the juxtaposition of references to pain and dislike with an asyndetic list of the seemingly benign aspects of office life – 'lights', 'partitions', and 'typewriters' – may elicit doubt as to whether the removal of these objects will truly improve Frank's life. The construction of the joyful FTPW alongside this subjective depiction of the ostensible horror of the CTAW, then, may cause readers to question whether the couple's dream truly represents escape from their disillusionment. While moving to Paris might at first seem to present an attainable FTPW for Frank and April, the idea that the move will transform their lives subsequently comes to be presented an unattainable, unrealistic FTPW, with the unhappy elements of their marriage already established in the narrative also reiterating doubt in this idealised FTPW.

The uncertain attainability of the FTPW envisioned by Frank and April is also demonstrated in the way the couple are described as viewing themselves as entirely transformed, and particularly in the depiction of Frank's perception of the way he immediately and dramatically changes after the couple formulate their plan. The self-perceived transformation of the couple and of Frank individually is exemplified below:

> The very substance of their talk, after all, the message and the rhyme of it, whatever else they might be saying, was that they were going to be new and better people from now on. (126)

> And Frank was modestly aware that something of the same kind of change was taking place in himself. He knew for one thing that he had developed a new way of talking, slower and more deliberate than usual, deeper in tone and more fluent […] he could glare at the window and see the brave beginnings of a personage. (127)

In the first excerpt, the joint imagining of a new FTPW by the characters is portrayed as capable of inciting immediate positive change. The temporal deixis 'from now on' implies both that the change has already begun and that it is irrevocable, which is reiterated by the strength of the premodifiers 'new' and 'better', which emphasises the Wheelers' abandonment of their past selves as they embrace a better future. The juxtaposition of the hyperbolic depiction of becoming 'new' and 'better' people by jointly planning this move with the fact that it is 'talk' rather than 'action', however, may lead readers to doubt in the possibility that life will really change for Frank and April. While the abstract noun 'substance', intensified by the premodifier 'very', initially seems to suggest a level of tangibility inherent to their conversation, the subsequent nouns 'the message and the rhyme' work together to suggest that the couple's conversations are a kind of communicative performance. This is also suggested in the determiner 'whatever', which conveys the generic meaninglessness of the content of their talk – and therefore perhaps its implausibility – as compared to the message both characters seek to communicate. A contrast between the content of their 'talk' and the reality of the relationship is also demonstrated earlier in the text when April momentarily doubts the realisation of the FTPW of moving to Paris: '"Darling? We really are going to do it, aren't we? I mean it hasn't just been a lot of talk or anything, has it?"' (116). The use of the adverb 'just' along with the earlier reference to 'talk' suggests the possibility that Frank and April are indeed discussing FTPWs which will not ultimately transpire. Furthermore, the repeated questions here, which even extend to the term of endearment used by April, evoke latent insecurity regarding whether the FTPW will occur, with the questions themselves potentially causing the reader to ask the same questions and to wonder if this FTPW is uncertain, even as Frank affirms that it will happen.

Additionally, the change in Frank is depicted as immediate and comprehensive, but also as surface-level. Echoing the 'new […] people' the couple show they are 'going to be' through their 'talk' in the first excerpt, here the adjective 'new' premodifies 'way of talking' and thus reiterates that this 'new' self is a form of verbal performance. Similarly, while the noun phrase 'brave beginnings' initially seems to represent renewal and change, the fact that it is only by looking at his reflection that Frank can 'see' the emergence of a new 'personage' indicates that he is deliberately working to create an external character, implying that his transformation is both deliberate and superficial. This is reinforced by the associations of the noun 'personage' with dramatic or fictional characters, emphasising that Frank's change rests on his outer appearance rather than his inner self. Even though Frank's awareness of the 'change […] in himself' is moderated with the adverb 'modestly', the fact that he does perceive this change suggests that he is engaged in a detailed, externally driven examination of himself in light of the new FTPW of moving to Paris. Yet the depiction of Frank's transformation as largely externally conceptualised, rather than felt internally, may cast doubt as to its veracity and potential longevity: there is a distinct lack, here, of references to internal emotions relating to Frank's inner life, with the only verb of cognition – 'knew' – used to demonstrate only Frank's perception of the change in the way he *talks*, and therefore a reflection on the way he might be perceived by others. While the past continuous verb phrase 'change was taking place' would seem to suggest that Frank's transformation simply occurs, rather than being driven by him, the adjective 'deliberate' emphasises Frank's focus on external appearance and suggests that this new way of speaking is a conscious choice that he revels in, even as he pretends – perhaps even to himself – that the change takes place organically. This is further demonstrated in the other comparatives used to describe his new mode of speech: 'more fluent' connotes learning to speak a foreign language, and thus again evokes an external and intentional process rather than a natural one, whilst the 'slower' and 'deeper' voice he develops suggests artificiality in this externally driven transformation. Frank and April's construction of the transformational FTPW of moving to Paris and improving their lives, therefore, is depicted as a joyous reprieve from the misery of their marriage and suburban existence, but as ultimately false and unattainable.

7.6 Summary

In this chapter, I have analysed the construction of CFTWs and FTPWs in *Revolutionary Road* in order to examine how stylistic features of the text may contribute to the emotions experienced by readers. In 7.2 and 7.3, I first outlined a range of emotions expressed by readers of this novel. In 7.2, I identified readers' frequent expressions of dislike towards characters, as well as emotions of doubt expressed in relation to Frank and April's dream. In 7.3, I again identified dislike towards characters, but acknowledged some readers' expressions of empathy, too, towards Frank and April's situation, as well as discussing the discomfort expressed by some readers. As throughout

this thesis, I acknowledged that, despite some commonalities in readers' emotions, extratextual factors inevitably also influence the nuanced nature of responses. In 7.4 and 7.5, I analysed the text using the world-types of CFTWs and FTPWs respectively. Analysis of the construction of CFTWs in 7.4 indicated that explicit envisioning of different potential courses of action characterises Frank's approach to communicating with his wife, with access to his thought processes and arguably inferior decisions constructing preferable CFTWs existing alongside the CTAW, potentially contributing therefore to the dislike felt by many readers towards this character. Alongside such micro-CFTWs, I analysed the existence of macro-CFTWs, which are constructed as states of affairs existing alongside the CTAW, and which stem from incidents or decisions that might have significantly altered the course of characters' lives. The construction of CFTWs which are superior to the CTAW experienced by the characters might then work to elicit emotional responses in readers, by compelling them to view characters' current existence as unfavourable. In 7.5, analysis indicated that many of the FTPWs constructed in this novel and envisioned by the protagonists are portrayed as ultimately unlikely, potentially contributing to readers' doubts in Frank and April's inability to achieve their dream. FTPWs, then, may be constructed with different degrees of attainability, and readers' perceptions of the attainability of FTPWs might differ from their construction in the minds of certain characters. In Chapter 8, I develop my exploration of the emotions elicited by this novel and extend my exploration of the construction of textual actual and possible worlds in *Revolutionary Road* by applying the world-types of PTPWs and PTAWs to my analysis.

Chapter 8

Past Textual Actual Worlds and Past Textual Possible Worlds in *Revolutionary Road*

8.1 Introduction

In Chapter 7, I analysed *Revolutionary Road* using the world-types of CFTWs and FTPWs and suggested that stylistic analysis within this framework may help to cast light on some of the mechanisms whereby the novel elicits emotional effects. In this chapter, I extend my analysis of *Revolutionary Road.* In 8.2 and 8.3, I firstly outline emotional responses to the text further to those discussed in Chapter 7. I then apply the world-types of PTAWs and PTPWs drawn from the typology delineated in 3.3.3-7 to the analysis of a further range of excerpts drawn from the novel to further illuminate some of the ways in which the construction of the novel may affect readers' emotions. As explained in 3.3.3-4 and exemplified in my analysis in 6.5, PTPWs and PTAWs are often presented simultaneously or in ways that interlink, and thus I apply both world-types in 8.4. As throughout the analysis presented in Chapters 5-10, references to other world-types beyond the principal world-types applied are incorporated where relevant to analysis in 8.4.

8.2 Reader Reviews

In 7.2, I outlined how several readers in online reviews expressed dislike and anger towards characters in *Revolutionary Road*, particularly towards Frank. However, several reviews were also coded with sadness regarding April and Frank's marriage as well as sympathy expressed towards various characters. Two reviews describe finding the novel 'depressing' (RO4 and RO10) whilst the couple's arguments are viewed as 'painfully realistic and bitter' by RO16 and 'tangibly miserable' by RO5, with these comments all suggesting the capacity of the couple's unhappiness to elicit sadness. Despite initially disliking Frank, RO7 explains that they 'ended up with more compassion', due to the way 'his pose of superiority' is caused by his 'desperate fear of ending up like his wilted, used-up working stiff of a father'. These comments suggest that the reader's understanding of Frank increases as the novel progresses, and that encountering descriptions of Frank's past enable the development of sympathy.

Where sympathy and sorrow for April, Frank, or other characters is present in online reviews, it often co-exists with empathy. Expressing sympathy for the rarely focalised children in the novel rather than their parents, R8 calls the novel 'a heart-rending, sometimes almost painful read, especially as a parent (my heart wept for the kids)'. Here, the reviewer's reference to their own role as a parent increasing their emotional response suggests that their positionality and resulting ability to empathise with some elements of the narrative may exacerbate their emotional response,

even to the extent of determining the characters for whom sympathy is generated. RO16, accordingly, writes of the couple's 'harrowing predicament', with their word choice suggesting sympathy for the situation faced by April and Frank, and writes especially sympathetically about April, referring to her 'heartbreaking lament about the validation she hoped to find' and her 'desperate desire for a loving family'. Since RO16 also suggests that 'scene after scene crackles with familiarity' and that the couple embody 'the most human of weaknesses: self-rationalization', perhaps identification with the characters and a certain degree of empathy helps this reader to formulate a more sympathetic response to the character than that expressed by some readers, as explored in 7.2.

Correspondingly, RO9, who declares that this novel 'breaks [their] heart', describes their own experiences as reminiscent of those in the novel which give 'a sense of deja [sic] vu'. Empathy for the characters, then, often seems to correlate with a sense of sadness or sympathy, indicating that empathetic responses might increase readers' feelings of sadness when unfortunate events befall characters. Similarly, RO6 describes even the humour in the novel as 'heart breaking', indicating sympathy, but also demonstrates an empathetic response to the couple's situation: 'No relationship is perfect or "holy" […] Their regrets and longings can be found in many of us'. Again, then, arguably this reader's empathetic identification with the couple helps them to care about what happens to them. RO3 views the couple particularly sympathetically, suggesting how they felt they were 'helplessly […] reading about their hapless lives' and the 'painful realities' of their existence, despite wanting to 'be their mediator, counselor, or friend'. Their comments suggest a sense of disempowerment alongside sympathy. Further to this, the reader's declaration that everyone 'know[s] at least one couple' like the Wheelers and that their 'good intentions and love were so obvious to me' suggests that empathy exists alongside other emotions.

Overall, then, comments from reader reviews presented here suggest sympathy and sadness, particularly towards the couple's marital discord, as well as towards individual characters including Frank, April, and their children. This differs, then, from the dislike explored in 7.2 and demonstrates the varied emotions felt by readers. Analysis of reader reviews also suggests that empathetic responses often co-exist with sympathy and sadness, suggesting that the experience of empathy might interact with other emotions experienced while reading *Revolutionary Road.* In 8.3, I outline further emotions expressed in reader interviews.

8.3 Reader Interviews

In 7.3, I briefly explored some examples of empathetic responses to April and Frank in *Revolutionary Road* in relation to their plan to escape their middle-class suburban environment. Empathy was also expressed by readers in relation to the sad ending of the novel and often existed

alongside sympathy for characters, and particularly for April. R1 expresses empathy with April, suggesting 'Frank never really seemed to grasp […] the whole way through […] how devastating she found those pregnancies and how much I thought she didn't want it to happen'. The reader uses a comparison to Frank, who does *not* empathise with April's pain, to illustrate their own empathy, which is evident in their comment about their own understanding of April not wanting the pregnancy 'to happen'. They also demonstrate sympathy in their comment about how 'devastating' the pregnancies were, and later discuss April's undertaking of a self-induced illegal abortion as the only instance of 'agency' for the character, indicating empathy for April's lack of power existing alongside sympathy for the character. This female reader's extensive discussion of the depiction of 'female struggle', too, suggests an attempt to empathise with the position of April and the way this contributes to her pain.

R5, too, explicitly details feeling 'really empathetic' towards April at the end of the novel and also expresses empathy towards her failing performance at the beginning, suggesting that 'you can feel the shame that she feels', in contrast to R4 who – as explored in 7.3 – expresses strong dislike towards the character partly based on her reaction to the play's failure. R6, similarly to R5, feels sympathy regarding the performance, calling the 'gap between her ability and her ambition […] cringeworthy' and describing feeling 'sort of sorry for her'. Analysis of R3's responses, however, reveals empathy towards Frank's father, Earl, a minor character, regarding an account of a dinner attended by Frank, his father, and his father's boss Oat Fields. The event is presented as disappointing due to Frank's dislike of Oat, whom he had been expecting to admire. In suggesting that this moment was 'so moving' due to the revelation of Earl's 'fallibility as a father' in a 'rite of passage that goes awry', the reader suggests that sadness is elicited by the incident, whilst their explanation that 'as the parent of a child […] I could imagine myself in Earl's position' indicates that personal experiences of parenthood work to help them feel empathy for Earl. While this is a relatively minor plot point, R3's empathetic identification with Earl conceivably works to accentuate the sadness wrought by the moment in which Frank's faith in his father is damaged.

Analysis of reader interview data also indicates that readers experienced sadness relating to the ending of the novel, with R1 and R7 calling it 'tragic'. R1 reflects that the 'sad' and 'memorably upsetting' nature of the ending was linked to the novel's 'structure' which means 'you're kind of always anticipating that this is where things are gonna end […] there's a kind of car crash inevitability'. R7 describes feeling 'general sadness […] when she dies', and similarly to R1, suggests that this seemed 'inevitable'. Both readers' comments suggest that the anticipation of April's death may increase the sadness elicited by this part of the novel in which death begins to seem the only route of escape. R5, whilst not labelling a specific emotion, similarly discusses the

ending of the novel as eliciting strong emotions and links this to the fact that they 'knew she [April] would die'. While the sense of inevitability might be partly created through the earlier references to April's desperation for an abortion and unhappiness in her marriage, the reader also refers to the foreshadowing whereby the marital bed is referred to as 'Frank's bed', thus grounding their own sense of the inevitability of April's death in a textual feature. R1, on reflecting on why they find the ending 'so sad' and April 'lonely', highlights the way in which April's planning for the abortion is described in a 'mundane' way that draws attention to the 'everyday' aspects of life. However, alongside sadness, various other emotions were expressed by readers. R5 describes feeling 'relief mixed with sadness, because you realise they can't go on like that', suggesting a complex emotional response based on awareness that April's death also means the end of the couple's painful life together. R4, whose negative perception of April was outlined in 7.3, explains that their acute dislike of the character means that they felt 'kind of pleased when she got […] her grim end which […] sounds awful now'. The reader's retrospective reflection on the 'awful' nature of feeling happy about a character's death suggests an awareness of this as a 'dispreferred response' (Stockwell 2013:269), which potentially contrasts with the emotional effect intended by the author.

Two readers express sadness regarding the character of Mrs Givings, Frank and April's neighbour, which is notable in that Mrs Givings is a relatively minor character. R5 and R7 refer specifically to a moment when Mrs Givings looks at her feet and cries, having momentarily expected to see young feet before being confronted with the reality of age. She has also recently been upset to learn that the Wheelers are planning to move to Paris and that her plan for helping her son John, who resides in a psychiatric hospital, to develop a friendship with Frank Wheeler is unlikely to be successful. R5 explicitly uses the word 'sadness' to describe their feelings regarding this incident whilst R7 describes the 'profound sense of sadness' caused by this moment, explaining this further by suggesting that 'whenever there was truth [in the novel] there was despair' and that this moment in particular was one in which 'reality becomes apparent' for the character. R3, meanwhile, expresses empathy for the character when they discuss the incident prior to the moment described by other readers, when Mrs Givings takes her son to the Wheelers' house for lunch. R3 links their own emotional response to their personal experience of having a disabled son: 'I totally related to the way Mrs Givings kind of has a projection of how it's going to be and […] it doesn't quite go the way you want it to go and you're so desperate for it to go well'. The sense of empathy expressed by the reader here is extended in their explanation that they 'really felt for' the character, despite being unsure if 'you're meant to feel for Mrs Givings'. R3's uncertainty regarding whether one is 'meant to feel' empathetic towards this character implies awareness of the ways in which the reader's personal response might, due to the impact of their own life experiences, diverge from what is perceived as a 'preferred response' (Stockwell

2013:269) to characterisation in the novel. However, in contrast to the responses of R3, R5, and R7, R4 formulates a more negative perception of Mrs Givings and expresses sympathy for her son John as a 'tragic' character who is 'completely misunderstood by his probably quite insane mother'. R4 also makes a comparison between John's 'very direct' nature and that of their own fiancé, contextualising their emotional response with reference to personal life experiences. Thus, whilst, as I will demonstrate in 8.4, linguistic features of the text contribute to the evocation of emotional effects, emotions experienced by readers also vary significantly due to their different, self-professed life experiences.

Overall, then, analysis of reader interviews reveals emotions of empathy towards different characters, even sometimes more minor characters, with readers' own life experiences seeming to contribute to their ability to empathise with different characters. Readers also frequently express sadness regarding the ending and sympathy for characters at some points of the novel. As in reader reviews outlined in 8.2, empathy often coincided with the expression of other emotions such as sadness, sympathy, and even relief regarding the sad ending of the novel. In 8.4, I apply the typology devised for this study to analyse some of the ways in which these emotions are textually constructed.

8.4 Past Textual Actual Worlds and Past Textual Possible Worlds in *Revolutionary Road*: Analysis

As discussed in 8.3, April's failed performance is an incident that elicits, for several readers, sympathy and sometimes empathy. Before the performance, a FTPW is constructed in which the play will be a success, which conceivably means that when the play goes badly, this becomes a PTPW as we witness April's embarrassment. This is exemplified in the excerpts below:

> The main thing, though, was not the play itself but the company – the brave idea of it, the healthy, hopeful sound of it: the birth of a really good community theater right here, among themselves […] it was what held them hushed and tense in readiness for pleasure as the house lights dimmed. (7)

> She was working alone, and visibly weakening with every line. Before the end of the first act the audience could tell as well as the Players that she'd lost her grip, and soon they were all embarrassed for her. She had begun to alternate between false theatrical gestures and a white-knuckled immobility; she was carrying her shoulders high and square, and despite her heavy make-up you could see the warmth of humiliation rising in her face and neck. (9)

The personification of both the 'brave idea' and 'healthy, hopeful' prospect of the theatre company encapsulates the actors' optimism in bringing the performance to life, while the metaphor of the 'birth' of the theatre conveys a new beginning. By emphasising that the

'company' of actors is the 'main thing' exciting the audience, Yates evokes the prospect of more potential plays in the future, and thus when the play is subsequently unsuccessful, arguably renders this more of a loss than it might be otherwise. The metaphor of the audience being 'held' by the 'idea' of the company emphasises the power of even the expectation of the performance to enrapture them, which is reiterated by the adjectives 'tense' and 'hushed', which suggest the importance afforded to this community performance. This is developed further in the description of the audience 'in readiness for pleasure', which demonstrates certainty felt in the FTPW of experiencing joy. Prior to this description, a sense of hope has already been constructed in the description of April as 'lovely' when she comes on stage (7) and in the reference to her once attending 'one of the leading dramatic schools of New York' (8). Thus, the success of the play is temporarily constructed as a hopeful FTPW, but this shifts to a PTPW as the play goes badly. The present participle verb 'working' contrasts with the previous abstract noun 'pleasure' and earlier sense of optimism in the description of the community's hopes for the theatre, suggesting that the joy of the performance has been lost and the prospect of rescuing it has become an arduous endeavour. Additionally, the adverb 'alone' contrasts with the collective nouns 'company' and 'community' in the first excerpt, implying that the prospect of a successful communal enterprise has been occluded and thus has become a PTPW as April attempts, unsuccessfully, to carry the performance alone.

Furthermore, the verb phrase 'visibly weakening' is striking as the adverb 'visibly' implies the role of the audience in witnessing April's embarrassment, and thus reinforces that the 'pleasure' they had anticipated has now become a PTPW. Meanwhile, the present participle 'weakening' implies continuation and consequently indicates that the PTPW of a successful performance has been occluded. We are witnessing, therefore, a FTPW shifting towards a PTPW, which is emphasised further in the phrase 'with every line', which suggests that the PTPW of a successful performance becomes ever further away as the play continues. The temporal phrase 'Before the end of the first act' along with the metaphor of April having 'lost her grip' both imply finality, and thus work together to evoke the irrevocable occlusion of a PTPW of a successful play. Additionally, the use of the corporeal metaphor of April having 'lost her grip' suggests that something once tenuously held has now been physically lost, with the expression also working to emphasise how irretrievably adrift and hopeless April now feels. The past perfect tense 'she'd lost' additionally exemplifies the occlusion of a PTPW in which the play might have been a success, had April managed to retain this 'grip'.

Furthermore, the external focalisation here means April's humiliation is depicted through physical signs of embarrassment such as her 'high and square' shoulders and her 'white-knuckled immobility', emphasising the perspective of the audience who are 'all embarrassed for her', in

contrast to the PTPW in which they anticipated 'pleasure'. The emphasis on the tension of April's body constructs the CTAW as an uncomfortable space, as compared to the PTPW, which was imagined to be very different. Additionally, the physicality of the description of the 'warmth of humiliation rising in her face and neck' is striking in its evocation both of April's inner emotions and the audience's perspective: the reference to the way her blush is 'rising' as well as the corporeal nouns 'face and neck' focalise the audience's perspective on the embarrassed actor, but the noun 'humiliation' reveals April's inner feelings while 'warmth' conveys the individual physical sensation associated with embarrassment. Simultaneously, therefore, we can imagine both the feelings of the audience witnessing the play as well as April's acute humiliation, potentially therefore enhancing the embarrassment elicited by this incident. It is likely, then, that the capacity of this incident to elicit sympathy for some readers, as discussed in 8.3, may partly derive from the way the play is built up as a joyful, exciting event, but then this PTPW is occluded as we witness the disastrous performance and April's humiliation.

PTPWs are constructed not only as central plot points, but also as smaller instances in which characters are shown to plan, wish, or hope for a particular outcome: once-FTPWs can become PTPWs as hopes and dreams fade and a FTPW is replaced by the reality of the CTAW. One such example occurs when the Wheelers' neighbour Mrs Givings plans to bring her son – who usually resides in a psychiatric hospital – to their house for a social visit. The construction of a FTPW in Mrs Givings's imagining of the event is shown in the first excerpt below, while in the second excerpt, we see that this FTPW does not transpire in reality and becomes, from this vantage point in the narrative, a PTPW:

> This would be no ordinary visit to the Wheelers'; it would, in fact, be the first careful step in fulfilling a plan that had come to her in a kind of vision, weeks and weeks ago.
> […]
> She could see John smile, composed and courteous, begging to differ with Frank on some minor point of politics or books or baseball […] (158)

> And this dreadful rudeness! And why was Howard always, always so useless at times like this? Sitting there smiling and blinking in the corner like an old– oh God, why didn't he *help*? (186)

The first excerpt demonstrates the importance that Mrs Givings has afforded to a successful visit and thus the weight placed on this FTPW. The depiction of the plan as requiring a 'first careful step' indicates the fragility and significance of this FTPW, in showing that each stage is planned in turn by Mrs Givings, while the repetition of 'weeks' foregrounds the temporal longevity of the plan and therefore emphasises its importance. Furthermore, the fact that it is a 'kind of vision' implies the vivid conceptualisation of this FTPW in her imagination, which is later emphasised

in the verb 'see' used to describe her imagining of the visit, suggesting the construction of this event as an attainable FTPW. The fine granularity of the description of John's imagined communication with Frank, to the extent of his imagined 'smile' and the content of their conversational topics, reiterates the perceived attainability of this FTPW. The repetition of 'would be', used here as the past simple form of 'will be' and thus expressing certainty, exemplifies Mrs Givings's faith in her plan to facilitate this significant moment of recovery for her son. By contrast, the second excerpt, when we see Mrs Givings react to her son behaving in a manner perceived as rude on the day in question, demonstrates the occlusion of the FTPW that has been previously imagined and that has thus shifted to a PTPW in which her hopes for the events have been dashed. The exclamatory sentence 'And this dreadful rudeness!' emphasises her internal humiliation and distress as she observes her son at the Wheelers' house. The shortness of the exclamation also contrasts the temporal extension of the PTPW which had been envisioned for weeks, as demonstrated in the first excerpt, emphasising the rapidity with which this has been occluded by the reality of the event in the CTAW. The repeated rhetorical questions 'And why was Howard…' and 'why didn't he…' internally directed towards her husband exemplify the pain of this once richly envisioned PTPW not transpiring, while the unsaid exclamation 'oh God' and italicised '*help*' together emphasise the psychological pain that her son's behaviour exerts on her.

Meanwhile, Mrs Givings's blaming of her husband shown in the repetition 'always, always' demonstrates her pain regarding this incident and also, by indicating that similarly painful incidents have in fact happened before, occludes the PTPW earlier constructed in her imagining that this would be 'no ordinary visit'. Subsequently, when she finally verbalises her embarrassment, we see the emotional pain she is experiencing in the CTAW: 'her next words came as a shock, addressed to the picture window and spoken in a wretchedly tight, moist whimper: "Oh John, please stop."' (188). The description of her verbal response using the noun 'whimper', which evokes both weakness and an animalistic reaction to pain, demonstrates the extent to which she feels personally hurt by this unattained PTPW due to what she sees as the embarrassing behaviour of her son. Similarly, the premodifier 'tight' suggests difficulty in verbalising the pain of the occluded PTPW, while the exclamation 'Oh John' echoes her previous exclamation 'oh God' and reiterates her distress. Her direct request 'please stop' also reflects the pain felt in seeing the hopeful PTPW previously constructed as attainable now occluded by a less favourable CTAW that replaces her envisioning of a successful event. The acute emotional distress presented in the occlusion of this PTPW might help to explain the significance of this moment for those readers who specifically discussed this event as evoking empathy and sympathy, as discussed in 8.3, even though the character with whom readers identified differed, partly due to their own differing experiences.

The depiction of occluded PTPWs and PTAWs can also work to convey a contrast between the more distant past and the present, thus evoking destroyed hopes or dreams, such as in the description of Mrs Givings's feet, which was – as discussed in 8.3 – described as eliciting sadness by two readers. The following excerpts illustrate the contrast between the PTAW and the CTAW:

> But the real shock came when she sat on the bed to take off her stockings, because she had expected her feet to be slim and white with light blue veins and straight, fragile bones. Instead, splayed on the carpet like two toads, they were tough and knuckled with bunions, curling to hide their corneous toenails.
> […]
> She cried because she'd had such high, high hopes about the Wheelers tonight and now she was terribly, terribly, terribly disappointed. She cried because she was fifty-six years old and her feet were ugly and swollen and horrible […] (165)

In the first excerpt, Yates evokes a contrast between the PTAW of Mrs Givings's younger, ostensibly more beautiful body and her body in the CTAW: Mrs Givings's erroneous, temporary expectation to see her younger body has been undermined by the sight of her ageing feet, which emphasises that her youthful beauty belonged to a now-occluded PTAW. The syndetic listing of the previous attributes of her feet reinforces their attractiveness and youthfulness by separating their positive qualities, with the feet utilised synecdochally here to represent her entire body and self and thus suggesting that the PTAW of youth has been lost. The feminine connotations of the adjectives 'slim', 'white', and 'fragile' are contrasted with the subsequent reference to 'splayed […] toads', which evoke fairy-tale witches. A lexical field of toughness is created in the use of 'bunions', 'tough', and 'knuckled', which contrasts not only with the physical fragility of Mrs Givings's body in the PTAW but also with her emotional fragility in the CTAW. Furthermore, the zoomorphic simile 'like two toads […] curling to hide their corneous toenails' symbolises her shame in ageing, as well as affording agency to her feet and thus emphasising their capacity to cause emotional pain. Thus, perhaps the sadness elicited for some readers by this excerpt rests partly on the depiction of the CTAW, which is inferior to the now-occluded PTAW, as Mrs Givings confronts her awareness of her own age.

Meanwhile, in the second excerpt, we see that her pain is not only due to the occlusion of the PTAW and the young woman she once was, but also to the PTPW of a successful dinner with the Wheelers that has not been realised. The repetition of the adjectives 'high' and 'terribly' emphasises the contrast between the PTPW and the CTAW, with the first adjective emphasising the possibilities of hope and the second reiterating the pain of disappointment. The two instances of 'high' as opposed to three instances of 'terribly' indicate that the pain of her disappointment is even greater than the excitement she had for the evening. The parallelism of 'she cried because'

reinforces the extent of her sorrow, and perhaps implies that the emotions elicited by the sight of her feet are aligned with those elicited by her dashed hopes for facilitating a longer-term connection between the Wheelers and John Givings. Therefore, we might infer that the occlusion of this PTPW principally causes Mrs Givings to cry, with the sight of her feet perhaps also implicitly recalling the hopes and promise of youth as compared to the reality of her life. Mrs Givings's feet in this excerpt, then, represent both the PTAW and also the PTPW of youth, before her current life – in which her son resides in a psychiatric hospital – failed to fulfil its middle-class promise. Both the PTAW and the PTPW are shown to be immensely preferable to the CTAW for Mrs Givings, therefore helping to explain the emotional impact of this moment.

Similarly, in the dinner between Frank, his father, and his father's boss Oat Fields, referred to as 'so moving' by R3, we see Frank's expectations becoming a PTPW as his admiration for Oat Fields from afar as a powerful and remarkable figure is ruined:

> Mr. Oat Fields – a man remarkable not only in his size ("One of the biggest men in the Home Office") but in his intellectual astuteness. (70)

> [Frank] would never forget the instantaneous revulsion he felt in the presence of Mr. Oat Fields, who if not the biggest was certainly the fattest man he had ever seen.
> […]
> The worst part of him was his mouth, which was so wet that a dozen shining strands of spittle clung and trembled between his moving lips […] Oat Fields's mouth did not close while chewing and it left white streaks of food on the rim of his water glass. (72)

> […] it was his memory's vision of Oat Fields's eating mouth that made the spasms of vomiting come again and again. (73)

While this man is first imagined to be 'remarkable' by Frank, the second excerpt constructs a PTPW in which Frank is confronted with the reality of his father's boss. The semantic shift in the superlative 'biggest' used to describe Oat Fields represents a larger shift in the character's previous perception of his father's opinions as infallible. This is reiterated by the removal of the title 'Mr.' when describing the character in the later excerpts, which emphasises the way Oat – and accordingly Frank's father, who had spoken so highly of him – have been reduced in stature and importance. This is accentuated, too, by the contrast between the description of his 'intellectual astuteness', with both words suggesting intelligence and sharpness, and the later description of Oat only in terms of physicality. His mouth, in particular, is foregrounded via corporeal, base details such as 'chewing', 'lips', and 'spittle', along with repetition of the noun 'mouth' itself. The mouth is also afforded agency and described as if it were separate from the man himself – 'Oat Fields's mouth did not close' – which is reinforced in the way the memory

of it 'made' Frank later vomit. The repellent detail of the 'strands of spittle' is highlighted by the premodifier 'shining' which, as it is more usually associated with beauty or visual appeal, lends additional emphasis to the disgust felt by Frank by implicitly suggesting that his eyes are inescapably drawn to the 'spittle'. As both Frank and his father had been excitedly anticipating this lunch, which was also an opportunity to discuss his father's previously promised promotion, the evocation of disgust and dissatisfaction during the event creates a sense of hopes and dreams being lost. This, then, evokes the occlusion of a PTPW of Frank's dreams about his father's role and the importance of this businessman through the depiction of a PTPW in which Oat was seen as special and important, and accordingly so was Frank's father, followed by an altered CTAW in which Frank is disgusted by his father's boss. This incident can also, of course, be viewed as a metaphor for the way in which Frank is trapped within a corporate environment in which the reality of the CTAW is different from PTPWs that might have been envisioned, potentially therefore contributing to R3's sense of the moment as 'claustrophobic'; it not only evokes the ending of one PTPW, but also reflects the loss of PTPWs and an unfavourable subsequent CTAW more broadly. As discussed in 8.3, the same reader also refers to this specific event as moving for her as a parent in demonstrating Earl's 'fallibility', as Frank notices on the journey home how old and tired his father looks:

> In the bleak light of the trainshed, as they stood waiting for the gates to open, he stared unnoticed at the physical exhaustion and moral defeat in his father's face, which looked loose and porous and very old. (73)

The 'bleak light' here may be viewed as a metaphor for the emerging reality of his father to Frank, and thus a shift from a PTPW in which Earl was viewed as a great man to the CTAW in which his standing in his son's eyes has been diminished. The juxtaposition of Earl's 'physical exhaustion' and 'moral defeat' implies his father has been affected both physically and emotionally by the loss of a PTPW in which the dinner might have gone to plan and he might have received his promotion. As well as the representation of the lost promise of the occasion itself as an occluded PTPW here, the emphasis on Earl's physical appearance to Frank also indicates that his previous admiration for his father now exists as a PTAW, as a new CTAW in which he views him as old and unsuccessful comes into view. The syndetic list of the aged features of Earl's face suggests that Frank's attention is being drawn to each in turn as he sees his father in a new light, both literally and figuratively, with the placement of 'very old' at the end of the sentence suggesting that his age is the most prominent aspect of his appearance to Frank. Again, the inclusion of this moment in Frank's past as external analepsis also exemplifies Frank's emotions about his own life, as the reader is aware of the fact that Frank, too, dislikes his job – and therefore an emotional identification with Frank as well as Earl may be elicited for some readers as we witness the occlusion of PTPWs and PTAWs for both characters.

As noted in 8.2 and 8.3, the ending of the novel, and particularly April's death, was cited as eliciting sadness and sympathy for several readers. A sense of the impending occlusion of PTPWs and PTAWs is elicited by the linguistic construction of the approaching ending:

> But she needed no more advice and no more instruction. She was calm and quiet now with knowing what she had always known, what neither her parents nor Aunt Claire nor Frank nor anyone else had ever had to teach her: that if you wanted to do something absolutely honest, something true, it always turned out to be a thing that had to be done alone. (311)

The parallelism of the 'no more' negation here emphasises that April is turning away from the consideration of multiple courses of action or PTPWs in the form of 'advice' or 'instruction', in favour of only one option. The repeated negation also helps to create the sense of April's determination, also inferred by R1 who discussed how 'resolute' April is in this moment. The semantic cohesion of the adjectives 'calm' and 'quiet' is also significant and suggests an ending of one world and a shift to another, as we have previously known April as a character who has frequently been depicted as experiencing extremes of emotion. Similarly, the cohesion of the adjectives 'honest' and 'true' to describe her forthcoming actions creates a sense of dramatic change in that she is reaching for her inner self, which contrasts with the elements of April's personality that have previously been described as theatrical – such as 'her curtain-call smile' (15), or – according to Frank – her 'soap-opera picture' (112) of herself as an actress. The repeated negation 'neither her parents…' alongside the insistence that this was 'a thing that had to be done alone' emphasises April's solitude and therefore indicates that she will, at this point, no longer have to dissemble her feelings or hide her desires. April's certainty in this newfound sense of truth and the inevitability of her actions is echoed in the repetition of the verb of cognition – 'knowing' and 'known' – while the adverb 'always' is also repeated here and indicates that she is returning to an inner truth, and abandoning elements of her previous life which had, from her perspective, perhaps been untrue and dishonest. This, therefore, implicitly suggests the occlusion of the PTPWs of moving to Paris and continuing the pregnancy, as well as perhaps foreshadowing the occlusion of the PTAW of April's life as the book reaches its conclusion.

As noted in 8.3, R1 specifically refers to how their own sadness regarding this section of the novel is accentuated by how 'lonely' this experience is for April and the 'mundane' description. April's lonely preparations for the highly dangerous self-induced late-term abortion is exemplified in this excerpt:

> In the kitchen she took down her largest stewing pot, filled it with water and set it on the stove to boil. From storage cartons in the cellar she got out the other

> necessary pieces of equipment: the tongs that had once been used for sterilizing formula bottles, and the blue drugstore box containing the two parts of the syringe, rubber bulb and long plastic nozzle. She dropped these things in the stewing pot, which was just beginning to steam. (310)

April's planning of the abortion is described largely using granular details of the banal preparations without explicit reference to what she is about to do. The 'mundane' description noted by R1 is partly evoked in the dynamic verbs, such as 'took down', 'got out', and 'dropped', which foreground April's actions rather than thoughts, suggesting calmness and decisiveness. This, then, evokes inevitability and April's sense of this dangerous self-induced procedure as her only option. This is reinforced by the syntactical parallelism in 'took down', 'filled in', and 'set it', which emphasises April's methodical, decisive actions, alongside the detailing of everyday household objects such as 'formula bottles' and 'tongs' normally used for innocuous domestic purposes. An element of sadness may also be created here by the fact that the 'tongs' are described with reference to their former usage before being applied to their new role; the description of the tongs in the past perfect tense, 'had once been used', recalls past experiences in April's role as a mother, with the adverb 'once' intensifying the distance of this time in the PTAW from the temporal location of the CTAW, thus emphasising that they are now to be used for a very different purpose. Alongside this, the reference to the 'tongs' reinforces the claustrophobia of April's existence by demonstrating the way her role as wife and mother has overtaken her life. The sense of April's life in the CTAW as an inescapable prison is encapsulated in the focus on her practical actions within the domestic space of the kitchen, as she is frequently depicted as inhabiting this setting, particularly at unhappy moments in the narrative: 'she bent over a sinkful of suds' (55); 'she had finished at the sink and hung up the dish towel' (230). Even in her absence after an argument, her presence is intuited by Frank by the state of the kitchen: 'the rest of the kitchen gleamed to an industrial perfection of cleanliness' (40). Thus, the prosaic location of these preparations evokes the frustration and loneliness of April's existence, by reinforcing how intensely her life has been constricted. Simultaneously, the focus on the ordinary, unremarkable aspects of her life also emphasises the everyday elements of April's life, which will soon in itself become a PTAW after her death; thus the 'tragic' element of this scene also may be partly intuited in retrospect.

Similarly, prior to the description of April's preparations, we see the seemingly ordinary task of tidying the home and making the bed, which was specifically mentioned by R5 in 8.3 as a moment eliciting sadness:

> When she'd straightened up the desk and made Frank's bed, with fresh sheets, she carried the wastebasket outdoors and around to the back yard. It was an autumnal day, warm but with a light sharp breeze that scudded stray leaves over the grass

and reminded her of all the brave beginnings of childhood, of the apples and pencils and new woolen clothes of the last few days before school. (305)

Here, the marital bed is referred to jarringly as 'Frank's' bed – as noted by R5 – contrasting with its earlier reference as 'the bed' (34). This foreshadows April's death, then, in which the CTAW will become a PTAW. This is enhanced by the fact that April's actions are focalised here, therefore suggesting that the idea of the bed as 'Frank's' rather than the shared marital bed might reflect April's thought processes and thus suggest her withdrawal from her marriage and perhaps even pre-empt her withdrawal from life itself. Other elements of the description also work to convey a sense of the occlusion of PTAWs, such as the polysyndetic list of April's memories of childhood, which emphasise the idea of a distant past. This suggests, then, that the replacement of the CTAW is also irrevocable: just as the PTAW of April's childhood came to an end, so too will this phase of her life. The description of autumn as a time still 'warm' but with a 'sharp breeze' evokes the schematic associations of the season as a time of both death and renewal, as also emphasised in the contrasting references to the 'last few days before school' juxtaposed with 'new clothes' and 'beginnings'. This emphasises again, therefore, the occlusion of the PTAW, and also foreshadows a further shift from the CTAW to PTAW that will shortly take place as the novel draws to a close. By focalising the idea of the 'brave beginnings' of the school term in April's childhood, a contrast is also created between the CTAW of despair and a previous time of hope when there was a greater range of FTPWs still open to her, which have now become inaccessible PTPWs. Before April's plan, then, has been made explicit, the existence of PTPWs and a different PTAW are already foregrounded, thus foreshadowing the ending of the CTAW – and accordingly, any preferable FTPWs – in April's death. This might also work to reinforce the inevitability of April's death as suggested by R1 and R7, as well as contributing to the sadness of the ending.

The occlusion of the PTAW and shift to an altered CTAW is also exemplified at the very end of the novel as Frank returns to the house after April dies in the hospital. At this moment, Frank at first feels as though he can hear April speaking to him as he wanders through the house, but after being interrupted by his neighbour Shep Campbell, he can no longer hear her voice:

> How could she be dead when the house was alive with the sound of her and the sense of her? (324)

> But after that interruption, April's voice no longer spoke to him. He tried for hours to recapture it, whispering words for it to say, going back to the closet time and again and into the drawers of her dressing table and into the kitchen, where he thought the pantry shelves and the racked plates and coffee cups would surely contain the ghost of her, but it was gone. (325)

Frank's disbelief – shown in the rhetorical 'How could she be dead…?' – demonstrates the dramatic nature of the shift from the occluded PTAW to the altered CTAW, as the difference between each world-type is depicted as so great as to be incomprehensible. The binary opposition of the adjectives 'alive' to describe the house and 'dead' to describe April also reinforces the occlusion of the PTAW in which April too was alive. However, the fact that Frank temporarily hears her voice, experiencing both 'the sound of her and the sense of her', suggests a persistence of some elements of the PTAW as Frank struggles to assimilate his loss; the memory of April as alive is so vivid as to still impinge on the CTAW. In the first excerpt, therefore, we may infer an element of liminality between the PTAW and CTAW as Frank initially refuses to accept April's death: her voice is there and yet she is not there, meaning that she inhabits both the PTAW and the CTAW. In the second excerpt, however, we see that April's voice – which can be interpreted as a meronym for April herself – has become an inaccessible, occluded element of the PTAW, and that the CTAW is more clearly delineated after the interruption. Frank's desperate attempt to 'recapture' April's voice reiterates, then, that any return to the PTAW of her life is impossible. This is emphasised in the way even 'the ghost' of April is now inaccessible to Frank and therefore belongs to a PTAW that stands apart from the CTAW. The verb phrase 'tried for hours' followed by descriptions of Frank's actions also might be interpreted as encapsulating his fruitless attempt to return and alter the PTPW that might have existed if he had acted differently in the past, and which would therefore have resulted in a different CTAW. This is developed in the locative 'going back' which might metaphorically suggest the futile desire to return to the past and to missed chances or opportunities to put things right within their marriage; while April's death is the end of one PTAW, it also marks the end of a panoply of PTPWs, such as a PTPW in which the couple may have managed to reconcile. The juxtaposition of the prosaic details of domestic life such as 'racked plates' and 'coffee cups' alongside the distressing fact of April's death emphasises that April's life is over and consigned to a PTAW even as other elements of the past persist in the CTAW. Additionally, Frank's belief that 'the pantry shelves […] would surely contain the ghost of her' reiterates his continual misunderstanding of his wife who, in life, often wanted to escape domesticity. The fact that this chapter ends with the verb 'gone', before moving on to a description of Frank's life after April's death in the next one, demonstrates the occlusion of the PTAW and that a new CTAW has been established and will thus continue for Frank even as April's life will not. Significantly, the sadness evoked by the ending despite the earlier pain of Frank and April's life might indicate that PTAWs and PTPWs do not have to be constructed as wholly hopeful or positive for their occlusion to be experienced as saddening; they simply need to be more hopeful and positive than the new CTAW. Despite the PTAW and PTPW often being depicted as painful, the new CTAW of April's death due to undertaking a self-induced abortion alone is so horrifying as to be experienced by many readers as sad, marking the end of any world in which the characters might reconcile, and of course in which April might live.

8.5 Summary

In this chapter, I have applied the world-types of PTAWs and PTPWs to stylistic analysis of *Revolutionary Road*, alongside other intersecting world-types where relevant, in order to explore how the construction of textual actual and possible worlds in the narrative may contribute to the emotional effects experienced by readers. In 8.2 and 8.3, I outlined a range of readers' emotions, further to those outlined in the previous chapter. In 8.2, I explained that readers in online reviews often discuss their sympathy and sadness towards the characters, and that empathy may sometimes exist alongside these expressions of sympathy and sadness. In 8.3, I outlined how readers in interviews express empathy and sympathy towards different characters, and sadness regarding the ending of *Revolutionary Road*. I also discussed how, despite commonalities in some readers' responses grounded in textual factors, extratextual factors inevitably influence readers' emotional responses, with one reader discussing how their own feelings about the character of April might diverge from the 'preferred response' (Stockwell 2013:269) that the novel might be intended to elicit. In the stylistic analysis presented in 8.4, I applied the world-types of PTPWs and PTAWs to analyse the presentation of the occlusion of textual actual and possible worlds. Some PTAWs and PTPWs analysed predated the temporal location of the narrative, whilst others were constructed initially as attainable FTPWs which later become PTPWs.

My analysis suggests that the occlusion of PTAWs and PTPWs, especially if these worlds have been previously constructed as more favourable than the CTAWs which replace them, may contribute to the elicitation of emotions such as sadness or sympathy. As noted throughout this thesis, however, no emotional response can be universal. In the final two analytical chapters of this thesis, I further demonstrate the utility of my typology by applying it to *The Trick is to Keep Breathing*, beginning by analysing the construction of the CTAW in this novel in Chapter 9.

Chapter 9

The Current Textual Actual World in *The Trick is to Keep Breathing*

9.1 Introduction

This chapter applies the world-type of CTAW to analysis of *The Trick is to Keep Breathing.* In 4.9, I outlined the rationale for selecting this novel as a focus text. The first-person, largely present tense narrative focuses on the severe depression of a drama teacher, ironically named Joy, whose partner and mother have both recently died. In 9.2 and 9.3, I outline some of the prominent emotions identified in readers' responses to Galloway's novel. In 9.4, I go on to apply the world-type of the CTAW to facilitate analysis of the presentation of Joy's restricted worldview which reflects her experience of depression in the novel. While I use the CTAW as an overarching framework, exploration of other world-types as they intersect with the CTAW allows me to exemplify some of the ways in which different world-types may interact and thereby elicit emotional effects. In particular, I explore how the presentation of the PTAW interacts with the construction of a painful and restricted CTAW, and I also explore both the presence and absence of other textual possible worlds using the typology delineated in 3.3.3-7.

9.2 Reader Reviews

Analysis of online reviews of *The Trick is to Keep Breathing* indicates the capacity of the novel to elicit sadness. RO1 states: 'This isn't a book you'd read if you're feeling down or in winter, it is bleak and even the rare moments of hope are pretty subdued'. The reader's use of the metaphor 'feeling down' suggests a belief in the capacity of the novel to cause sadness and therefore potentially exacerbate existing depression, whilst their caution not to read the book 'in winter' might suggest an association of the winter months with feeling depressed, such as in individuals suffering with Seasonal Affective Disorder (NHS 2018c). The reader, then, conceptualises the novel as one that could make readers feel depressed themselves, particularly if their own context reflects that of the protagonist. The fact that the reader immediately follows their description of the novel's hopelessness with a reference to their own 'empathy' towards the character as well as a warning regarding the content of the novel indicates a perception of the ability of the portrayal of the protagonist's depression to affect readers and elicit further unhappiness. Also expressing sadness, RO16 cautions: 'If you are looking for a fun lighthearted read or just have enough of your own depression to deal with, this may not be the book for you. As for me, I'm off to eat some chocolate in hopes of cheering up a bit'. As well as this reader's comments indicating that the depiction of the protagonist's depression might exacerbate other readers' 'own depression', their comment that they are now in need of 'cheering up' indicates that the novel has elicited sadness for them. RO14's description of the novel as 'depressing and painful' and RO2's

description of the novel as 'devastating' were also both coded with 'sadness', while RO12 suggests that a 'great book, for me, is one that leaves me devastated and slightly depressed for a short time', with their response therefore indicating an impression both of the sadness of the novel existing alongside a sense of approval regarding the novel's capacity to wreak such sadness.

Two reviewers of *The Trick is to Keep Breathing* comment negatively on their feelings about being confined to the protagonist's worldview, an emotion I coded as feeling 'claustrophobic': RO10 refers metaphorically to being 'trapped inside Joy's bleak vision, with little sense of what life is really like outside it' and reflects that 'the main problem for me was that we were so trapped in Joy's head that a lot of the world around her remained hazy'. As well as using the metaphor 'trapped' twice to denote the claustrophobic feelings experienced when reading the novel, the reader also specifically uses the term 'claustrophobic' in the review, suggesting the novel was 'horribly claustrophobic' although acknowledging that 'I suppose this is inevitable, bearing in mind how claustrophobic depression can be'. Rather than finding this to be a strength of the novel, however, the reader uses this to exemplify why they were not 'so keen' on the novel and found it 'not a particularly satisfactory' one, indicating that emotional responses may cause feelings of dislike towards the text. The word 'claustrophobic' is also used by RO8 who finds the book to be 'claustrophobic and hopeless – regardless of the ending'. While this word was used to describe the novel itself rather than the reader's specific emotions, unlike RO10, RO8's subsequent discussion of their dislike of the novel suggests a similar sense of feeling claustrophobic: 'This book is horrendous […] 4/5 stars for the consuming and unusual narrative style, and accurate portrayal of mental illness at its worst. 1/5 stars for how terrible this made me feel about life'. The use of 'horrendous', 'unusual', and feeling 'terrible […] about life' work together with 'claustrophobic' to suggest a sense of feeling trapped within the pain of the novel. Evidently, RO8 appreciates the technical skill evident in Galloway's writing but finds it difficult to cope emotionally with the strength of the novel's impact, to the extent that this limits their reading enjoyment. Similarly, RO16 details that 'this woman's head is NOT a fun place to be. […] I thought I had dealt with depression before, turns out, my head is practically a Disney movie by comparison', indicating a lack of enjoyment inherent in reading this novel. This reader's explanation that they felt inside 'this woman's head' evokes the conceptual metaphor READING IS TRANSPORTATION (Gerrig 1993; Stockwell 2009), implying that they feel restricted to Joy's experience by being transported inside her 'head', and thus implicitly evoking a sense of claustrophobia associated with witnessing Joy's depression at close range.

Finally, several reviews were coded with 'empathy', which frequently co-existed with other emotions identified in readers' reviews. For example, RO8's sense of feeling 'trapped' in the narrator's head was also coded with empathy, as this metaphor indicates an ability both to feel

the pain of the protagonist and to experience this as an uncomfortable emotion. The word 'empathy' is explicitly used by RO1 as they compare Joy's experiences to their own suffering: 'I found the central character a person I have huge sympathy and empathy for, a lot of her brain numbing and frustrating conversations with medical "experts" ring very true for me, I often think of her as I grate [sic] my teeth speaking with doctors'. As well as the explicit use of 'empathy', the reviewer's description of conversations about Joy's depression that 'ring true' also evokes an empathetic response. Not only does this reader's empathetic response suggest that they relate to Joy's experience, but their reference to thinking of the character during their conversations with doctors indicates that the novel has had an impact on subsequent interactions and experiences. Empathy is also expressed implicitly by RO17, who comments that 'Galloway seamlessly depicts the virtual impossibility of functioning while grieving; how it creeps into every facet of your life and renders you a shell of yourself'. The familiarity suggested in the reader's reference to the 'impossibility of functioning', alongside the description of the power of grief to overtake 'your' life, indicates an empathetic response to Joy's pain perhaps partly grounded in personal experience.

The corporeal metaphors some readers use to describe their experience of reading the novel also evoke an empathetic response to Joy's pain. RO12 comments that 'Joy Stone, the main character, ripped my guts out and took my heart along the way and it was indeed hard to breathe at many points in the book'. The use of physical imagery enables this reviewer to draw parallels between their own experience of reading the book and the depiction of Joy's depression: by stating that it became 'hard to breathe', RO12 implies that reading the book enabled them to experience Joy's suffering. Furthermore, the implication of emotions being felt in the 'guts' and 'heart' reflects the portrayal of Joy's own depression as physically all-consuming, as demonstrated in the novel when she describes her inability to eat and her difficulty in performing everyday tasks. Similarly, R6 states that 'the fierceness of [Joy's] pain feels like a knife in the gut'. This simile evokes the physical experience of emotion associated with personal sadness, whilst also implying a favourable opinion of the novel in that the ability to 'feel' the narrator's pain demonstrates its power. Likewise, RO15 feels 'intimately involved in Joy's life', while RO3 explains that Joy's 'mental collapse [was] intimate, and their situation familiar. It also hurts my brain', suggesting a physical identification with Joy's pain by using bodily imagery to describe the psychological pain wrought by empathising with the narrator. Readers' responses here, then, indicate an empathetic response to the ways in which the CTAW is constructed as painful, to the degree that readers are able to physically 'feel', to some extent, the narrator's emotions. Even RO11, who 'didn't enjoy' the novel suggests this is a 'heavy book to get through' in which 'you do feel as though you are wading through deep water right along with the MC [main character]'. The metaphor of 'wading through deep water' might conceivably suggest an empathetic response to the protagonist's

depression, in which the reader experiences some of Joy's feelings during the process of reading. However, others respond positively to the richly detailed depiction of the psychological pain of Joy's existence: 'I was intimately involved in 'Joy's life and I felt it would have been disrespectful to her to rush through all of her pain as though it really didn't matter' (RO15). This reader's comments suggest a sense of empathy to the degree that Joy is treated by this reader similarly to a real person whose 'pain' must be respected and understood. Some readers relate Joy's depression to their own experiences: RO14 suggests that 'we've all felt the way Joy feels at some time or another', indicating personal experience alongside an assumption of shared experience. Meanwhile, RO7 explains that Joy is 'so relatable […] the character is incredibly, worryingly familiar […] I've also lived off black coffee and baking for other people. I've also lived alone, with my friends very far away'. The reader's comments, therefore, suggest feelings of empathy provoked not only by the text itself but also by their own personal experiences, some of which are specifically echoed in the novel.

Overall, then, analysis of reader reviews suggests that many readers experience sadness when reading this novel. Some express a sense of claustrophobia and restriction regarding being confined to the protagonist's worldview, and others discuss their empathy for the narrator, particularly in relation to her experience of depression. In 9.3, I outline a further set of emotions identified in analysis of reader interviews.

9.3 Reader Interviews

Several reader interviews were coded with sadness and sympathy in relation to Joy's depression. R4 describes sadness linked to Joy's past experiences arising in the revelation of 'horrible things that have happened' to her in the past, as well as a 'general sadness' regarding her ongoing experience of depression in the novel, linking their sadness to moments when the protagonist is 'sitting alone' experiencing 'complete loneliness'. This reader's sadness, then, is elicited partly by the depiction of Joy's isolation, which is a feeling echoed somewhat in the sympathy expressed by R2, who states that the book caused them to 'feel really bad for Joy'. R2's comments suggest that their sympathy is caused by how trapped Joy feels inside her own head: 'she doesn't want to feel so bad but […] she can't get out of this place that she's in'. The metaphor of Joy being located in a physical 'place' exemplifies the way her depression is presented as all-encompassing, which causes this reader to feel 'emotional' despite the fact that they also share that they haven't 'personally […] experienced depression', suggesting that empathy is not a prerequisite for feeling sadness and sympathy towards Joy. R2 also comments on the hopelessness of the depiction of Joy's depression, suggesting that – even though the novel rarely explicitly references suicide – they were 'almost expecting her to kill herself at any moment because there's no […] hope really',

with these stark comments potentially indicating that the lack of hope in the presentation of Joy's life contributes to the reader's sympathy.

Alongside sadness elicited by depictions of Joy's depression throughout the novel, other readers expressed sadness particularly in relation to specific narrative incidents. R1 refers to finding the revelation of how Joy's lover Michael died to be 'sort of devastating and quite horrifying when you find out what actually happened', indicating horror and shock alongside sadness provoked by this moment. The reader explains that as well as affecting her as a moment that 'stays with' her, the flashbacks helped her to understand Joy as a character, to 'understand the grief [and] trauma'. This indicates that for this reader, then, developing an understanding of the way Joy's past restricts and harms her life in the present forms an emotionally powerful element of the reading experience. Meanwhile, R6 describes the moment when it is revealed that Joy's elder sister Myra had abused her as a child as 'powerful' because 'you realise how fragile she is and how fearful she is'. R6's comments on Joy's fragility here indicate a degree of sympathy towards the character's feelings, and suggest an emotional response accentuated by implicit awareness of the way in which the protagonist's experience of horrific events in the past continues to damage her life. This is extended further in R6's suggestion that 'it's awful […] because there's supposed to be love in a family' and that the abuse must have 'destroyed her childhood'. R6's contrasting of Joy's experiences with their own perceptions of how families are 'supposed' to be indicates a deviation from their own schema for family life, helping to explain why they find this moment so 'powerful' in explaining Joy's vulnerability and thus eliciting sympathy.

Two readers also refer to the incident when Joy reveals her depression to her doctor as provoking sympathy. R1 calls the moment 'quite powerful and quite moving'; the description of the moment as 'moving' suggests sadness and sympathy, whilst 'powerful' emphasises its capacity to cause strong emotions. The reader contextualises their emotional response with reference to their own understanding of depression, suggesting that Joy seeking help as a last resort is an example of 'what happens, often, to people in that situation […] people kind of get to a point where they […] can't do anything else', implying therefore that personal knowledge of people with depression may have accentuated R1's emotional response. Accordingly, R1 reflects on this as a moment of 'resignation […] there's nothing hopeful in it really […] she's just at the end of the road'. Both comments, then, suggest recognition of the emotional pain that has led Joy to this point, and indicate that perhaps the lack of hope that Joy feels contributes to the sadness that the reader experiences. Whilst Joy is indeed finally seeking out help from her doctor here, the extent of her depression as demonstrated thus far within the novel, as well as the sadness expressed by Joy, might contribute to this reader's perception of there being 'nothing hopeful' in this conversation. Similarly, R2 expresses strong emotions regarding this moment of the novel, sharing that it 'made

me feel […] bad for her and want to help her', and thus indicating a sense of sympathy towards Joy. R2 also refers specifically to a moment where Joy 'says she's scared no one will ever love her' which 'made my heart ache […] thinking about anyone really having […] such a horrible feeling'. Therefore, for this reader, the explicit depiction of Joy's depression within this dialogue provokes feelings of sadness and sympathy.

In summary, analysis of reader interviews demonstrates emotions of sadness regarding Joy's situation and sympathy towards the character felt by readers. These emotions were linked by readers to various aspects of the narrative, including Joy's depression, her grief and trauma, and elements of her past. In 9.4, I will analyse the construction of the CTAW in this novel, alongside – where relevant – the construction of other world-types in order to illuminate some of the ways in which the construction of textual actual and possible worlds may contribute to the emotional effects elicited by this novel.

9.4 The Current Textual Actual World in *The Trick is to Keep Breathing:* Analysis

At the start of the novel, the CTAW is constructed as a restricted space, with limited access to hopeful alternative worlds beyond the present. This is demonstrated when we see Joy sitting alone in her house:

> I watch myself from the corner of the room
> sitting in the armchair, at the foot of the stairwell. A small white moon shows over the fencing outside. No matter how dark the room gets I can always see. It looks emptier when I put the lights on so I don't do it if I can help it. Brightness disagrees with me: it hurts my eyes, wastes electricity and encourages moths, all sorts of things. I sit in the dark for a number of reasons. (7)

Here, Galloway's use of language anchors the reader in the unhappy CTAW of the narrator by presenting her life as dark, small, and with limited possibilities for escape to happier textual possible worlds. There is an implicit reference to alternative worlds beyond the CTAW in the negation 'No matter how dark the room gets', but this simply works to construct different FTPWs in which the room, and therefore the narrator within it, exists in various degrees of darkness. While there is an implicit construction of a CFTW of a brighter room in the reference to a world which 'looks emptier' with the lights on, this world is depicted as even less hopeful than the present, dark CTAW in its emptiness. This evokes both the CTAW and any alternative textual possible worlds as equally miserable: the CTAW is dark, and thus seems to be a desolate place due to the connotations of darkness and lack of hope, but even a brighter room would seem even 'emptier', with both prospects suggesting loneliness and unhappiness. Joy's pain is also emphasised in the way even light itself is constructed as a harmful force for the narrator which 'hurts my eyes' and 'disagrees with me'. The construction of both the CTAW and any alternative

textual possible worlds as unhappy conveys the totality of Joy's depression and inability to see beyond her experience of the present. This is reinforced, too, by the fact that, as minuscule details of the protagonist's decision-making process regarding sitting in the dark are revealed, the reader becomes aware that this is a character who is spending a great deal of time reflecting and perhaps even obsessing over the smallest elements of their present existence to the extent that even the decision to leave the light off is justified.

Alongside the insight into Joy's state of mind that this level of detail creates, a sense of dissociation is also evoked here with the verb phrase 'I watch myself'. The unusual structural placement of 'I watch myself from the corner of the room', which is followed by a line break, highlights the importance of this action of self-observation and indicates a fragmented sense of identity. In positioning the narrator's mind as separate from her body, the locative adverbial phrase constructs the CTAW as a disturbing and unreal space, and, in suggesting that her perceptive faculties are operating from 'the corner' of this space, reinforces her desire to retreat from the world. The spatial detail of Joy's location in 'the corner' in the 'armchair' at 'the foot of the stairwell' also emphasises the overpowering nature of her present experience in the CTAW and suggests that the mundane details of her surroundings are her principal focus, thus restricting our viewpoint to the present moment and environment. The repeated use of the simple present tense in 'I sit', 'I put', 'I can', and 'I watch' portrays Joy's existence as centralised around her banal actions in the CTAW, thus creating an impression of the CTAW as restricted in size and thus, perhaps, as having limited potential for escape. The sense of unreality and constriction constructed at the start of the novel, then, alongside the fact that even explicit references to alternative textual possible worlds are presented as lacking in hope, constructs a CTAW that is oppressive and limited in scope. This, then, suggests the unhappiness of Joy's worldview by evoking a restricted life with restricted possibilities for happiness, and thus conveys the depression that she is experiencing.

In the following excerpt, the narrator begins to plan to go to work, giving a glimpse of life beyond this room, but even this FTPW is constructed as a bleak and depressing contemplation:

> The green numbers on the stereo flash 03.25. But it goes fast. I know perfectly well it doesn't matter what the real time is. This is all beside the point. The fact remains it's so late it's early and I have to move. I have to go upstairs. I have work tomorrow and I have to go upstairs. (7)

The CTAW is constructed as a space of confusion and contradictions here, with the time initially emphasised as important with the reference to the specific minute '03.25' and the detail of the 'green numbers' which 'flash', and the active voice here lending agency and thus importance to

the clock and to time passing. However, this is immediately negated by the assertion that time 'doesn't matter'. This declaration also indicates that an entity as fundamental to life as time has become meaningless, perhaps emphasising the fact that all actual and possible worlds available to Joy are equally unhappy. However, since after stating that the time is not important, the narrator again strongly contradicts herself by declaring that she must 'move' and 'go upstairs', we might infer that time does indeed matter, at least from a practical perspective. Joy's admittance of the importance of time is reiterated in the paradoxical statement 'it's so late it's early', which emphasises Joy's realisation of her obligations. Since holding two contradictory beliefs at once, or cognitive dissonance, causes psychological discomfort (Elliot and Devine 1994), the depiction of Joy's self-contradiction here in declaring that the time 'doesn't matter', and yet immediately revealing that it *does* in fact matter, enriches the construction of the CTAW as an uncomfortable place. The repeated use of deontic modality here – 'have to' – highlights the importance of time and creates an unfavourable, unwanted FTPW of going to work the next day. Thus, Galloway makes it clear that not only is Joy's present situation in the CTAW uncomfortable, but so too is her contemplation of the future. The repeated present tense construction 'I have to' and the way in which each planned action is separately outlined, such as in the statements 'I have to go upstairs' and 'I have to move', suggests that preparations for work present a miserable, enforced FTPW. The sense of both the CTAW and FTPW as unhappy is similarly demonstrated in the following extract, in which the narrator describes watching television whilst she drinks tea in the morning:

> There are interviews with junior ministers while I make tea. Always tea in the morning unless I've eaten the night before: then, it's black coffee. Bad mornings, I have only hot water. But I drink something, as much as I can. It helps the headache and the dryness: the weight of fluid is calming. (10-11)

The present tense description of the events of Joy's morning initially seems to refer only to the immediate CTAW of that day, as she listens to the radio 'while' she prepares her tea. However, the foregrounding of Joy's daily routine in the verbless phrases 'Always tea' and 'Bad mornings' indicates that this mundane morning routine is ongoing rather than transient, and therefore a monotonous aspect of her life. The elision of more typical subject and verb constructions removes agency from Joy as the events of the morning seem to be inflicted upon her, rather than actively chosen, as she follows the restrictive pattern set on previous days. Further to this, the use of the premodifier 'bad' without any explicit reference to cognition or emotion suggests that these mornings are categorically bad, rather than just momentarily perceived as such, and thus emphasises that Joy is trapped within the CTAW. The evaluative adjective in the phrase 'Bad mornings' also works to construct a CFTW beyond the immediate present that is even worse than the CTAW, as this is a world in which Joy would only drink 'hot water'. Thus, even though the CTAW itself is presented a dark and depressing space, the reader is made aware that life is

sometimes even worse than this. Similarly, the irrealis 'unless I've eaten the night before' suggests CFTWs that might exist beyond Joy's experience of the current morning, and yet this is an alternative world in which the only difference in Joy's morning routine would be the consumption of 'black coffee' rather than 'tea', and in which she would still not manage to eat anything. Thus, here we see again the linguistic construction of an unhappy CTAW alongside a limited spectrum of alternative textual possible worlds which are depicted as even more miserable than the CTAW, evoking Joy's inability to escape her depression.

Alongside this, Joy explains that she drinks as much liquid as possible to help with 'the headache' and 'the dryness'. By introducing both physical symptoms with the definite article, Galloway evokes both physical states as pre-existing, continuous aspects of Joy's existence rather than transient experiences, thus conveying the pain of the CTAW as an ongoing rather than momentary discomfort. Therefore, when we are told that 'the weight of fluid is calming' we can infer that it is not only a single moment in which Joy feels in need of 'calming' but that this is a daily experience. In describing the drink as 'calming' and as helping 'the headache and the dryness', Galloway depicts Joy's psychological and physical malaise as intertwined, thus reiterating the multifaceted discomfort experienced in the CTAW. The metaphor of the calming 'weight' of fluid indicates the extent to which she feels, in contrast to the liquid, adrift and ungrounded, therefore helping to develop a sense of unreality. The notion of the tea as 'calming' implicitly emphasises the extent of Joy's anxiety, which means she needs external entities to bring her back to reality, but it is notable that the specific features of her pain are not delineated, and her depression must be inferred from the depiction of her interaction with her surroundings. The frequent use of material process verbs such as 'have', 'eaten', 'make' and 'drink' to denote practical actions also creates a sense of distance from cognitive and emotional processes, potentially suggesting that the narrator may be experiencing the feelings of numbness or emptiness often associated with depression (Mind 2019). The detailing of the banal elements of this morning routine also temporally extends this event, whilst restricting our perspective of the space beyond the house, helping to evoke the monotony of the present and therefore reinforcing the lack of opportunity for psychological escape from the darkness of the CTAW. This creates a sense of oppression and constriction as our perspective is limited to a constrained view only of Joy's present – perhaps reflecting the way she is, in her depressed state, merely existing in the moment as she struggles to survive each day.

A similar sense of restriction of the CTAW is created when Joy describes the next stage of her morning, and details the process of preparing to leave the house:

> When I'm ready, I rinse the cup, mop the sink dry and lift my coat. My mouth is
> still dry as I lock the back door. My mouth is always dry. (11)

There is again a lack of mental process verbs here, with material process verbs such as 'rinse', 'mop', 'lift', and 'lock' depicting the banality of the daily routine and thus locating the narrative firmly in the monotonous processes of the CTAW without any explicit reference to FTPWs. The tedious tasks of the morning are foregrounded through the syntactical parallelism of 'rinse the cup, mop the sink dry and lift my coat' here, perhaps reflecting the concentration required to undertake ordinary tasks in a clinically depressed state alongside constructing a sense of mundanity, while the repeated use of the present tense active voice creates a sense of constriction to the CTAW. The detail of Joy's 'dry' mouth is foregrounded here, both due to repetition and the preceding adverbs 'still' and 'always'. This extends understanding of the 'dryness' (11) established in the previous excerpt, with the emphasis on this element of physical discomfort again conveying her emotional state. A dry mouth can be a symptom of anxiety (NHS 2018a) and a side effect of medications for depression (NHS 2018b) but even readers without this knowledge will still be aware that emotions are felt and experienced physically as well as mentally, meaning that the emphasis on an uncomfortable bodily sensation implicitly suggests unhappiness. Furthermore, when considered alongside the emphasis on drinking tea in the previous excerpt as an attempt to help the 'dryness' and also for its calming effect, the fact that Joy's mouth is 'still dry' may indicate that both her physical and mental discomfort – or her depression – feel ultimately unfixable. Again, the reference to physical sensation rather than explicit linguistic references to cognition or emotion evokes numbness and an inability to process emotions, establishing the CTAW as a restricted place in which emotions cannot be easily defined or expressed.

This focus on physicality as a representation of cognition is also demonstrated in the following excerpt in which the physical consequences of Joy crying are foregrounded in the first-person narrative, rather than her inner thoughts or feelings, and both the CTAW and FTPW are presented as unfavourable:

> Blisters. Little moon craters on the smooth paper. I push the magazine aside and
> let the tears drip onto the rug until I'm ready to move to the kitchen for some paper
> towels. My nose fills and drips too, my face will be bloated. (27-28)

The emphasis on Joy's physical actions here, such as the 'tears' that 'drip', creates a sense of external focalisation which suggests that she is acting as a witness to her own pain, and has become dissociated from cognitive comprehension of her emotions. By describing the immediate results of crying in metaphorical terms that evoke their physical impact – 'blisters' that form

'moon craters' on the paper – rather than in terms of the narrator's feelings, Galloway implies that Joy is observing herself from a distance, indicating her inability to express or fully conceptualise her emotions. Furthermore, the emphasis on the physical consequences of crying with details such as Joy's 'face', 'tears', and 'nose' that 'drips' works to separate her body into discrete parts, thus conveying a sense of fragmented identity and dissociation, which is reiterated by the fact that the word 'crying' is not used at all here. The agency afforded, too, to the tears which create 'moon craters' and the nose which 'fills and drips', creates a contrasting impression of Joy's passivity as a narrator who withstands and endures the crying. This is reiterated when she moves the magazine so that the tears fall 'onto the rug' which suggests that while Joy can choose where the tears land, she cannot prevent them from falling. Again, then, the narrator's body and mind are presented as separate as she observes the results of her crying and her physical symptoms, indicating an inability to psychologically process her feelings. This constructs the CTAW as a deeply painful place, with a lack of possibility for mental escape.

The only explicit references to alternative textual possible worlds here are upsetting, unfavourable future events which are as unhappy as the present experience of crying; for example, the preposition 'until' merely introduces a world in which Joy will be 'ready to move into the kitchen for some paper towels', therefore constructing a FTPW in which she will respond with a practical solution to her crying, but not one in which her emotional pain will dissipate. Similarly, whilst she imagines a FTPW in which 'my face will be bloated', again Joy is envisioning a future in which she will have to suffer the consequences of her crying. Not only is the FTPW here constructed as even more desolate, perhaps, than the CTAW, but the focus on this physical detail also develops Joy's lack of care for herself, as her principal concern is how she will appear to the outside world, rather than how she feels. Therefore, the protagonist's depression is presented as granting access only to a limited, restricted range of alternative FTPWs which are equally as unhappy as the CTAW.

The CTAW is also depicted as a space of restriction and pain when Joy describes her depression to her doctor, which was highlighted by two interview participants as emotionally affecting, as outlined in 9.3. Joy's lack of ability to envision anything beyond the present and the pain of the restriction of the CTAW is demonstrated here, but it is also a moment in which Joy is finally honest with another person about her emotions:

> I'm starting to hate things. I hate where I work. I see small things about too many small people and it makes me bitter. I don't want to be bitter. Bitterness hurts. I'm lonely. I'm afraid I'll go sour and nobody will love me any more. Something about me kills people. I'm losing days and drinking too much. I'm not a proper woman. I no longer menstruate. Sometimes I think I don't exist. I keep looking for the

reasons and never find them, waiting all the time but I don't know what for. I always do the wrong thing. (105)

The repeated use of simple present tense verbs emphasises the ongoing pain of Joy's experience of the CTAW, with multiple explicit references to both feeling and cognition embedded in the verbs 'hate', 'want', waiting', 'looking', 'hurts', and 'think', as well as in the adjectives 'afraid' and 'lonely' and the abstract noun 'bitterness', meaning that this moment represents a form of release from Joy's previous inability to express her emotions. However, the frequency adverbs 'never' and 'always' suggest that Joy still views her depression as categorical and definite, suggesting the imposition of firmly defined parameters on the CTAW and a sense of inescapability in which her depression leaves her struggling to visualise alternative possibilities. The inflexible nature of Joy's thinking is also constructed in the declarative grammatical structure of each sentence here, such as 'I'm not a proper woman' and 'I always do the wrong thing', thus framing her emotions factually rather than perceptually. Similarly, despite the references to cognition in this excerpt, some of Joy's thoughts and feelings are framed factually without explicit use of mental process verbs, consequently implying that her depression is an immersive state which is impossible to escape from. The statements 'I'm lonely', 'Bitterness hurts', and 'Something about me kills people' are formulated without temporal parameters, hence indicating that Joy perceives her depression as an irrevocable condition rather than a temporary feeling. Consequently, whilst readers may develop some hope here in that she is at last seeking help from a medical professional, there is still a sense of confinement to the unhappy CTAW of Joy's depression in which her unhappiness and identity are intertwined.

An exception to this seemingly factual, categorical construction of Joy's pain lies in the statement 'Sometimes I think I don't exist', which includes the mental process verb 'think'; however, whilst the grammatical construction of the sentence indicates the cognitive subjectivity of Joy's experience, the semantic implications of the statement emphasise the extent of her loss of rationality and sense of identity amid the pain of depression. Overall, then, Joy's outburst to her doctor suggests that her thoughts have become her inescapable reality, and her depression undermines her ability to think beyond subjective assessments of herself and her own self-worth. This is reinforced by the lack of hedging devices here and the predominance of stative verbs, which together suggest the absolutism of Joy's worldview and a lack of mental escape available to alternative possible worlds. Moreover, the semantic associations of 'bitterness', 'bitter', 'sour', 'kills', and 'hate' with death and toxicity reiterate the corrosive, ongoing impact of Joy's depression on her life.

Alongside the construction of the CTAW as painful, the negation 'I don't want to be bitter' here does construct a hopeful FTPW in which Joy might be able to escape from her depression with medical help. However, the subsequent use of the simple present tense 'Bitterness hurts' emphasises the extent of Joy's psychological discomfort in the CTAW. A FTPW of even worse pain than the CTAW is also constructed in the statement 'I'm afraid I'll go sour': the metaphor of going 'sour' works in conjunction with Joy's already existent 'bitterness' to construct a steadily worsening, frightening FTPW, which is then developed further in the negation 'and nobody will love me any more'. We can also, perhaps, infer the development of an implicit FTPW of recovery, since Joy is finally seeking help even though this request is not explicitly outlined. For example, while the use of the present participle in 'losing days' and 'drinking too much' evokes an ongoing experience of pain, the expression of these statements to the doctor conveys an implicit suggestion that there might possibly be a way for the pain of the CTAW to end. Hopeful FTPWs are also briefly constructed twice in this excerpt before being swiftly extinguished when Joy says 'I keep looking for the reasons but I never find them' and then, in syntactically parallel phrasing, explains she is 'waiting all the time but I don't know what for'. The FTPW developed in the phrasal verb 'looking for' initially constructs a sense of possibility but then the negation of 'never find them' emphasises the limitations placed on this FTPW. Similarly, the verb 'waiting' suggests expectation but is immediately contradicted with the negation of 'I don't know what for', which evokes a nebulous, impalpable FTPW which does not represent a way out from the misery and hopelessness of the CTAW. Both unrealised FTPWs here, then, reinforce rather than detract from the inescapability of the CTAW.

In the following excerpt, in which Joy has just lied to her health visitor that a friend will visit her that evening, we again see the construction of a hopeless CTAW. This time, the CTAW is presented alongside a contrasting portrayal of the PTAW to convey Joy's unhappiness in the present:

> No one is visiting tonight. Or tomorrow night. They did once but not now. I told a lie. I tell lies all the time. (25)

Here, the use of repeated negation in 'No one is visiting tonight', 'Or tomorrow night', and 'but not now' emphasises the extent of Joy's loneliness in the CTAW. The subsequent declarative 'They did once' suggests that company and friendship belong for Joy to an occluded PTAW that is inaccessible from the CTAW. The sense of loss of the PTAW is reiterated in the future temporal marker 'tomorrow night', which emphasises the permanence of Joy's loneliness, and conveys a FTPW that only continues the misery of the CTAW rather than containing any hopeful possibility. While there is a relative lack of explicit references to cognition and emotion here in relation to

how Joy feels about her lie, the syntactic parallelism of 'I told a lie' and 'I tell lies' emphasises the significance of Joy's denial of her solitude and indicates that she may be reflecting on the reasons for her own mendacity. This also conveys the extent of her own discomfort with her loneliness in that she has felt the need to invent visitors, therefore working to reinforce that the occlusion of a previous PTAW in which visitors 'did once' come to her home impinges negatively on the CTAW. The sense of an occluded PTAW in which Joy might indeed have been able to connect with others and express her pain thus reinforces the darkness and restriction of the CTAW, which, as well as allowing few glimpses of a hopeful future, is also inferior to the past.

The PTAW is also shown to interact with the CTAW in the depiction of Joy's abusive sister who comes to visit her, as mentioned by R6 as an emotionally affecting element of the novel. Here, we see a PTAW which continues to directly encroach on the present, with Joy's fear of Myra both having been experienced in the past but also continuing in the CTAW:

> I've been afraid of Myra ever since I remember. […]
> Myra's baby died. I didn't. Maybe that was why she hit me so much. I don't know.
> Hands like shovels. Myra left marks. None of them show. (59)

The use of the present perfect tense – 'I've been afraid' – indicates that while Myra's abuse of Joy began long in the past, her fear persists in the present. This suggests, then, that the abuse in the PTAW continues to restrict the CTAW by still limiting Joy's ability to live free from fear. Likewise, whilst other past incidents such as 'she hit me' and 'Myra's baby died' are also expressed in the simple past tense, the present tense 'I don't know' reinforces that thoughts about this trauma and abuse continue to affect Joy's life in the CTAW, by suggesting that Joy still reflects now on potential causes for the abuse she suffered. Further to this, the minor sentence 'Hands like shovels' is notable for its lack of verbs, and therefore fails to locate Myra's 'hands' in a particular point in time. This suggests, therefore, that fear of Myra's physical violence and of what her hands can do remains an ongoing element of the narrator's present rather than just a memory. The unusual syntax also foregrounds the hands as an instrument of violence, working to dehumanise Myra and therefore evoke an image of her as a terrifying, monstrous figure. Whilst the simple past tense construction 'Myra left marks' appears to imply that the abuse belongs to a now-defunct PTAW, this is contrasted by the present tense 'None of them show', which indicates that while the marks are not visible, they nonetheless still exist. This indicates, then, the 'marks' represent the psychological trauma left by the physical abuse which continues to hurt Joy in the CTAW.

Throughout the novel, Galloway also incorporates the PTAW with the use of flashbacks to the death of Joy's lover in a drowning accident. These flashbacks take the form of italicised, truncated

descriptions in irregularly indented lines which gradually build a picture of the traumatic event as the novel progresses, as demonstrated here:

> *terrible sound of*
> *thudding in my chest and someone*
>
> *screaming*
> *screaming*
> *scream* (49)

> *jesus*
> *jesus*
> *on a grey table, eyes wide to the white light.*
> *His chest slack with yellow bruises where they tried*
> *to make the heart*
>
> *neck chain filled with water like fish eyes*
> *fingers tinged with blue* (184)

As these flashbacks are introduced without exposition, they intrude on the otherwise linear narrative and therefore reflect the imposition of the events of the PTAW on the CTAW, hence evoking unresolved trauma. The lack of punctuation and atypical graphological structure, furthermore, evoke the distress wrought for the protagonist by her fragmented and disturbing recollections. In the first excerpt, the present participle verbs 'screaming' and 'thudding' work to locate Joy's past trauma partially in the CTAW despite its occurrence in the past. The lack of reference to temporality here and any beginning or end point to the memory reinforce the suggestion that the PTAW impinges on Joy's existence in the CTAW. The singular placement of 'screaming', 'screaming' and 'scream' and the repetition of the morpheme 'scream', too, work to encapsulate the horror of Joy's trauma and her endless, ongoing pain. In both excerpts, meanwhile, the omission of determiners in the noun phrases 'fingers tinged with blue', 'neck chain filled with water', and 'terrible sound' means that the stark depiction of these harrowing images reflects the way in which they encroach unbidden on Joy's daily life.

Accordingly, the reference to colours in the second excerpt – 'blue', 'yellow', 'white', and 'grey' – evokes the vividness of the memory, with the depiction of the 'white light' particularly emphasising the clarity of this recollection for Joy. It is unclear, here, whether the word 'jesus' – which is lent additional force due not only to its singular placement but also due to its structural indentation – is a present tense exclamation regarding the horror of the memory or a reference to the appearance of Michael in death, with this ambiguity therefore suggesting an indistinct boundary between past trauma and present pain. Despite the clarity and horror of some aspects of the protagonist's memory evoked by the flashbacks, the unfinished sentences also suggest

incomplete, partially inaccessible thoughts or memories, perhaps indicating repression of this past trauma. However, since the brief glimpses of this event are so horrifying, the partial revelation merely reinforces the power of the PTAW to exert its grip on the CTAW, and thus to restrict the possibility of happiness in the present. One verb that is omitted seems particularly significant: we hear about the medics who tried to 'make the heart'. Since the missing verb is likely to be 'start' or a synonym of this, its exclusion suggests a desire to repress the acute pain and horror inherent in recalling the memory of Michael's death. The fact that the flashbacks are constructed so differently to the rest of the novel, then, underscores the notion that Joy is ordinarily unable to directly confront the emotional pain of the past within the depths of her depression, yet the PTAW is nonetheless irrepressible and exerts an unrelenting influence on the CTAW. Therefore, rather than being presented as occluded and thus now-inaccessible PTAWs, these flashbacks construct the past as a persistent element of the present which restrict the CTAW by preventing Joy from feeling happiness and from escaping her grief.

9.5 Summary

In this chapter, I have analysed some of the ways in which the presentation of the CTAW in *The Trick is to Keep Breathing* may elicit emotional effects. In 9.2, I outlined emotions expressed by online reviewers, including sadness, empathy towards the protagonist, and a sense of claustrophobia, and in 9.3, I discussed how readers in interviews frequently expressed sadness in relation to multiple elements of the narrative. Alongside outlining these commonalities, I also acknowledged the nuanced implications of extratextual factors, with readers sometimes explicitly acknowledging how their own experiences affected their emotional responses to the novel. In 9.4, I analysed how the psychological pain of the narrator is evoked in the construction of the CTAW as a restricted and painful space. I explored how this presentation of the CTAW alongside the limited construction of more hopeful alternative textual possible worlds evokes the pain of the narrator's depression, thus helping to explain why several readers express sadness and empathy for Joy and why others describe feeling claustrophobically confined to her worldview. I also explored some of the ways in which the depiction of the PTAW may work to restrict the CTAW: firstly, I suggested that the loss of the PTAW may work to evoke a sense of the CTAW as a painful, restricted space if the PTAW is constructed as more favourable than the CTAW; and secondly, my analysis also indicated that a negative or unfavourable PTAW may also work to affect the CTAW, in that it continues to prevent happiness for Joy in the CTAW by persisting psychologically and thus impinging on the present. Overall, then, in this chapter I have demonstrated the applicability of the typology developed for this study to analysis of *The Trick is to Keep Breathing,* and have illustrated that an examination of the construction of the CTAW alongside its interactions with other world-types can help to illuminate some aspects of the novel which affect readers emotionally.

Chapter 10

Future Textual Possible Worlds in *The Trick is to Keep Breathing*

10.1 Introduction

In Chapter 9, I examined the construction of the CTAW in *The Trick is to Keep Breathing* in order to explore how the emotional effects experienced by readers of this novel may be partly explained through analysis of the novel's construction of textual actual and possible worlds. In this chapter, as with Chapters 5-9, I begin in 10.2 and 10.3 by outlining several emotions expressed by readers in online reviews and reader interviews. In 10.4, I then explore the way in which FTPWs of varying degrees of hopefulness and attainability are constructed throughout the narrative in order to cast light on some of the ways in which this novel elicits readers' emotions.

10.2 Reader Reviews

Several online reviewers express worry and concern regarding the actions of the protagonist, particularly regarding dangerous or addictive behaviours. RO13 describes how the narrator's 'solitary drinking' and alcoholic behaviours create 'a real sense of danger and pangs of concern in the reader', with their comments suggesting awareness of the risks of Joy's alcoholism, as well as genuine care regarding what happens to her. Describing their reading experience, RO12 writes 'I couldn't stop once I started', with these comments implicitly suggesting a desire to find out what happens to the main character, and that they found it 'hard to breathe at many points in the book', indicating concern regarding what might befall Joy. This is further supported by RO12's reflection that Joy's experience 'was scarily close something that happened to a good friend', which indicates concern alongside suggesting that the reader's experiences have increased their emotional response. RO7 similarly refers to the speed of their reading experience: 'I read it in two days, because you can't take too long over a book like this, even if you try to'. Whilst the reader does not explicitly link the reading speed to worry for Joy, the assertion that readers 'can't' read the novel slowly implies an assumption that the narrative elicits universal concern or at least extreme interest in what might happen to the narrator, since every element of this narrative focuses on her first-person experience of depression. RO8's assertion that the novel 'accurately depict[s] a spiral into all-consuming grief and depression' partly due to its 'consuming and unusual narrative style' indicates immersion in the narrative that interlinks with a sense of sympathy and concern towards Joy's 'all-consuming' pain.

At the end of this novel, we see Joy beginning to emerge from her depression. Despite the sadness expressed by many readers regarding the presentation of Joy throughout the novel, as outlined in 9.2, several readers also express feelings of hope and happiness regarding the hopeful ending of

the narrative. RO14 states that whilst most of the novel is 'depressing and painful', the 'ending is uplifting', with the comparison suggesting a sense of hope and happiness in comparison to the sadness elicited by the earlier narrative. While RO13 does not explicitly express happiness, they describe finding 'the conclusion of the novel to be bold and refreshing' in that the 'character's salvation comes not from a new relationship, a new city, new job, or some other bullshit throwaway plot device, but rather, it begins when she directs more of her energy outwards towards others in a positive way, instead of negatively inwards'. The reader's comments, then, suggest approval of Joy's 'salvation' or moral growth, as well as a sense of positivity regarding the change that Joy makes in her life. The same reviewer also reiterates how they 'love the scene' at the end of the novel where Joy begins to take positive actions to improve her life, again indicating both happiness regarding the outcome for Joy existing alongside a wider sense of approval regarding the narrative decisions of the author.

Accordingly, RO11, who generally dislikes the 'heavy' nature of *The Trick is to Keep Breathing*, also suggests that the 'ending redeemed the book somewhat', indicating a perceived contrast between the ending and the rest of the novel. While not necessarily explicitly suggesting happiness, the comment that the ending 'redeemed' the book suggests relief from the tension of witnessing Joy's pain throughout the narrative, and indicates approval for the ending as compared to general dislike of the misery of the rest of the novel. Significantly, however, not all readers express feeling happiness or hope for Joy at the end of the book: RO16 sardonically recommends that 'if you want an in depth, front row look into one woman's free-fall into depression, eating disorders, alcoholism, and what was sure to be an eventual suicide had the book gone any longer, than [sic] you'll want to pick this up'. RO16's comment, then, conveys a belief that the book ends without hope, and that the 'front-row look' that the novel affords of Joy's depression produces an unenjoyable reading experience throughout.

To summarise, in addition to emotions outlined in 9.2, reader reviews were coded with sympathy and concern for Joy, particularly regarding her depression and addictive behaviours. Emotions of hope and happiness were coded in some reviews in relation to the ending of the novel, although not all readers perceived the ending as a happy one. In 10.3, I outline a further selection of emotions identified in analysis of reader interview transcripts.

10.3 Reader Interviews

Alongside expressing sympathy, as I outlined in 9.3, multiple interviewees also express a specific sense of worry or concern for the character in relation to aspects of Joy's mental health and behaviour, including her attitude to food, problematic relationships, and apparent alcohol dependence. Reflecting on Joy's reliance on substances, which are used in an attempt to alleviate

her sadness, R4 describes feeling 'most emotional at those moments when […] she's looking for these ways to feel better, but they don't work. I just felt so sorry for […] Joy'. Extending their explanation of the sympathy they feel as being partly grounded in Joy's reliance on 'ways to feel better', R4 utilises their own schematic associations of how individuals seek to navigate difficult experiences to contextualise Joy's problematic relationship with alcohol and food, explaining that the novel evokes 'those times when you are low and there's nothing that will work' as well as reminding them of 'the song "The Drugs Don't Work" […] the things she uses to try to feel better are things that actually do make it worse'. R4's use of the deictic 'those' along with the second-person pronoun to describe experiences of feeling 'low' perhaps suggests some personal familiarity with such experiences, indicating that empathy for Joy may therefore accentuate their sympathetic response. Their comparison of Joy's difficulties to the lyrics of this song also suggests that R4's sympathy for Joy partly derives from the character's inability to find relief from pain. R4 also compares their own knowledge regarding what might be beneficial for Joy to the character's own subjective perception, suggesting alcohol is 'all she feels like she's got' when in fact 'it just makes things worse', indicating sympathy regarding Joy's addictive behaviours. R5, meanwhile, expresses both sympathy and sadness regarding Joy's affair with a 17-year-old former student, expressing that they 'felt extremely sad that this weird affair is the only happy thing in her life', indicating sadness provoked by Joy deriving sporadic happiness only from a problematic relationship. R5's explanation that they 'felt sorry for her that it was […] straight after her mother died that she started it' suggests sympathy based on the grief-induced nature of Joy's behaviour. However, R5 also reflects on the morally dubious nature of this relationship: 'I should be judging you right now because you're a teacher'. As well as implying concern, the use of 'should' suggests that R5 is engaging in ethical self-examination of their own sympathy here. R6, meanwhile, expresses great concern for Joy regarding her eating disorder, indicating that they found it 'really disturbing' when her bulimia was revealed alongside experiencing 'desperation' to understand the reason for her pain.

Accordingly, in keeping with this desire to discover what was 'wrong' with Joy, R6 describes feeling frustration with the character, stating that even when learning about the deaths which precipitated Joy's depression, they assumed 'it must be something else' causing the magnitude of Joy's pain because 'a lot of people have tragedies', implying an emotional response partly mediated by contextualisation of Joy's pain in comparison with their own experiences and expectations. Alongside frustration caused by the protagonist's behaviour, R6 also finds the narrative style frustrating, describing it as 'disjointed' and 'fragmented', and says of the plot itself: 'I find frustrating […] that you never really get to understand what the underlying problem is'. Similarly, the comments of R3 suggest frustration alongside a lack of sympathy that develops as the novel continues, with the reader stating that, despite feeling 'sorry for her a bit' at the start,

they began to find Joy's 'journey of self-punishment' to be 'annoying' because 'it's all sort of brought upon herself […] although I should feel sympathy for her, I felt annoyed with her'. R3's use of 'should' here suggests that annoyance towards the protagonist exists alongside awareness of an alternative 'preferred response' (Stockwell 2013:269) of sympathy that the novel may be intended to elicit. R3 also expresses acute discomfort and anger towards Joy's two affairs – one with a married man and one with a student – discussing how Joy's behaviour 'really annoyed' them because 'it's almost like she's got a self-destruct button she was pressing'. Expanding on their decreasing level of sympathy for Joy, R3 suggests that the character is 'morally defunct […] if she hadn't done all that, I probably would have felt less angry towards her I think, maybe more sorry for her'. This indicates, then, that experiencing the emotion of disapproval may reduce the reader's capacity to feel sympathy for Joy. Notably, R3 critiques their own response, describing feeling 'surprised' by their reaction and that it was 'uncomfortable' to realise their sympathy depended so significantly on the character's morality, again indicating perhaps an awareness of their own response as a 'dispreferred' one (Stockwell 2013:269). So, sympathy for Joy is not a unanimously felt emotion, despite being coded in several interviews: readers' responses are inevitably linked partly to their own experiences, personal viewpoints, and expectations.

Several interview transcripts, however, were coded with happiness or a sense of hope experienced at the end of this novel. In contrast to their previous annoyance, R3 describes finding the ending to be 'happier' and 'hopeful' because 'it's a new beginning […] she's cleaning the house and buying tree lights, making lists'. R3's awareness of the way their own emotions perhaps constitute a 'dispreferred response' (Stockwell 2013:269) is extended in their reflection on 'suddenly' feeling 'an inkling of warmth' towards Joy at the end: 'I'd like to think I'm not somebody who thinks "pull yourself together and then I've got some empathy for you" […] but weirdly I found myself pleased with her even though I've got it firmly set in my head I don't like her'. Thus, the hopeful ending reduces this reader's dislike for the protagonist and conceivably helps them to feel greater empathy, even though the reader comments self-critically on their own feelings here. The use of the phrasing 'pleased *with*' the character perhaps also indicates that moral approval of Joy's actions has increased the warmth of R3's feelings towards Joy, thus increasing their happiness regarding the ending, in contrast to the earlier moral disapproval that elicited dislike. R3 also likes 'the fact that she says "I forgive you" to herself at the end […] maybe it's because I think she's going to go on a new path so maybe it makes me feel quite hopeful at the end for her', indicating that hope is created through the suggestion of Joy developing new plans and patterns of behaviour, as compared to the self-destructive behaviours lamented in their earlier comments.

Similarly, R5 also expresses finding the ending 'positive' since Joy is 'planning things and she's looking ahead', meaning there is more 'optimism' compared to the rest of the novel that made her feel 'relieved' for Joy. However, R5's comments are qualified with some doubts regarding the likelihood of a full recovery for Joy: 'part of you is wondering if it can last or if […] she's just going to go back again to the depression'. This indicates, then, a sense of hopefulness accompanied by some uncertainty regarding Joy's future. Similarly, R6 describes the 'moving' ending when the narrator explains that, whilst she has never learned to swim, she decides that 'she can do it', inferring from this that the message of the novel is that 'you've got to keep going, you've got to keep your head above the water'. The reader recognises, then, and is moved by the way that Joy has accepted that she must move forwards in order to survive. However, R6's interpretation of the hopeful message of the ending is qualified with a suggestion that the novel is 'bleak', indicating that sadness persists, for this reader, alongside the glimmer of hope revealed at the ending of the novel. Readers' feelings of ambivalence regarding the ending might be partly due to schematic awareness of clinical depression as a chronic condition, or perhaps this might also be partly because the ending is not, as R3 phrases it, 'overly excited' or a 'Disney' ending where 'the heroine is really happy at the end'.

Overall, then, further to the emotions outlined in 9.3, analysis of reader responses presented here suggests emotions of worry and concern regarding Joy's addictive and self-destructive behaviour, with this emotion expressed alongside sympathy by some readers. Others, however, describe feeling frustration and even anger towards Joy, with one reader's disapproval of her actions working partly to reduce their sympathy towards the character. Several readers express happiness or hopefulness regarding the ending, although this is tempered by doubt and uncertainty for some. In 10.4, I apply the world-type of FTPWs to facilitate stylistic analysis of some of the textual mechanisms contributing to the emotions elicited by this novel.

10.4 Future Textual Actual Worlds in *The Trick is to Keep Breathing*: Analysis
As noted in 10.3, Joy's futile envisioning of food as a means of temporary escape from her depression provokes sadness and sympathy towards the character for some readers. The transient promise of happiness presented by food is exemplified in this description of Joy's trip to the supermarket, in which TESCO is constructed as a space in which multiple FTPWs are held:

> There isn't time to change. I get my coat and run like hell for the stop.
>
> TESCOs. Red neon all the way to the other end of the precinct, pointing the way to lights, rows of pretty boxes, pastels and primaries, tinsel colours; tins, sealed packets, silver polythene skins begging to be burst. I get dry and warm just thinking about the supermarket. It makes me feel rich and I don't need to think. […] The adrenalin smell of coffee drifts and draws towards the delicatessen, the wedges of

Edam, Stilton and Danish Blue. But never too long in one place. I don't encourage buying. Sometimes, I get baking things: sugar and flour, dried fruit and tubs of fat, maybe cherries, ginger and peel. Mixed spice, cinnamon, eggs. Or I go to the drinks aisle and read the labels over and over, teasing myself with which one I'll buy. It's always the same one in the end. (24)

The hopeful FTPW represented for Joy by TESCO is first constructed when we see the protagonist decide to rush for the bus so she can reach the supermarket on time: the idiomatic simile 'run like hell' encapsulates Joy's desperation to reach this place of promise, whilst the use of negation in 'isn't time' emphasises her urgency. The subsequent introduction of the supermarket simply with the minor sentence 'TESCOs' highlights its importance, which is then reiterated by Joy's detailed imagining of its contents. The metaphor 'I get dry and warm just thinking about the supermarket' indicates that Joy is mentally constructing the pleasures that lie within this space before she has even arrived. Paradoxically, the pleasure evoked in this metaphor might increase our sense of Joy's depression, as the fact that it is a supermarket rather than friendship or connection that brings Joy warmth and solace from pain emphasises her isolation. Even though the present tense is used here, a FTPW is constructed in the detailed, sensory descriptions of food which suggest the potential the supermarket holds as means of relief from sadness. The metaphor of the neon sign 'pointing the way' to the interior also affords agency to the supermarket's exterior, suggesting its capacity to lead the narrator towards the FTPWs that lie within.

Furthermore, the asyndetic lists of foods and packaging contain repeated references to colours, such as 'pastels and primaries, tinsel colours' evoking the pleasure Joy takes in imagining the experience of shopping, while the references to 'lights' and 'neon' suggest the supermarket is a bright space in contrast to Joy's everyday existence in which we see her sitting 'in the dark' (7). A FTPW of consumption is implicitly created through the repeated references to foods which are in containers ready to be opened – 'packets', 'tins', 'boxes', and 'bottles' – indicating that each mundane food item contains the promise of transient distraction from emotional pain. Meanwhile, the personification of 'silver polythene skins begging to be burst' affords agency to the items, with the alliterative verb phrase working to construct a FTPW in which the narrator might indeed 'burst' the packaging. Similarly, the smell of coffee which 'draws towards the delicatessen' grants agency to the drink, constructing a FTPW of a pleasurable visit to that section of the supermarket. The notion of the supermarket promising genuine happiness is undermined, however, in the negation 'But never too long in one place', which indicates that the power lies in the FTPWs it allows Joy to imagine rather than to truly experience. Accordingly, while Joy is 'teasing' herself with various drink options, even the FTPW of choosing a new type of alcohol is ephemeral here as she ultimately always buys 'the same one in the end', returning us to the CTAW in which Joy drinks gin every night alone in her home in a fruitless attempt to feel better. The idiom 'in the

end' underscores the finality of the decision and emphasises that no preferable FTPW is available to Joy, with her depression only facilitating a constrained set of choices. This restriction is also demonstrated when the narrator states 'I don't encourage buying'. The unusual lexical choice of 'encourage' here, usually used to denote behaviour towards others rather than oneself, reinforces the dissociation established in earlier depictions of Joy's depression, as discussed in 9.4, while the fact that she will buy few items undermines the idea of the supermarket promising genuine pleasure. Accordingly, Joy's construction of the supermarket as holding hopeful FTPWs is also later contradicted when we learn that she is bulimic. Thus, food does not truly represent a FTPW of pleasure for Joy, but instead a FTPW of only ephemeral distraction. Whilst readers are not aware of Joy's bulimia at this point in the novel, her lack of eating has already been introduced, for example in the line 'Always tea in the morning unless I've eaten the night before' (10), as discussed in 9.4. Consequently, the FTPW is constructed as one which is only hopeful on the surface and which, in fact, paradoxically reveals the extent of Joy's despair and the impossibility of escape from the CTAW of her depression.

Food is again constructed as a FTPW that brings Joy temporary solace in the excerpt below, in which Joy bakes several items:

> I read the ingredients and the method out loud for the beautiful sound of the words. In two hours there will be a Dundee cake, Ginger squares, Oatmeal scones and Fresh Orange Tarts. After that I might make preserves. A good wife going to waste. (41)

Although Joy's reading of the ingredients and method form part of the CTAW here, a reader also might infer the implicit existence of a FTPW due to schematic awareness of the way in which ingredients and method combine to precipitate a concrete future event that will transpire if a recipe is followed correctly. The notion of the recipe having a 'beautiful sound' foregrounds the transient pleasure that Joy takes in the promise of food, similarly to the excitement she takes in her supermarket visits. This is developed further in the temporal deixis 'in two hours' and 'after that', which constructs a tangible FTPW in which the food will be ready. Similarly, the epistemic modal constructions 'will be' and 'might make' together work to evoke possibility and opportunity, implying Joy is free to choose how to spend her evening and thus to actively construct a FTPW, which is reinforced by the material process verb 'make', which suggests her capacity to shape the world around her. The use of the temporal deictic 'there will be' also emphasises the certainty of the FTPW of creating food, with the list of baked goods lending tangibility to this FTPW as Joy imagines each item which is soon to exist. Moreover, the unusual capitalisation of the 'Fresh Orange Tarts', 'Ginger squares' and 'Oatmeal scones' transforms these items into proper nouns, thus reinforcing their importance to Joy and their representation of

vividly envisioned FTPWs prior to their creation. However, the transient glimpse of this hopeful, productive FTPW is quickly undermined by Joy's comment that she is a 'good wife going to waste'. While this verges on a satirical, wry reflection on her baking hobby, there is also pathos in this mocking reference to an alternative CFTW in which her partner might still be alive as compared to the CTAW in which he is not. This conveys, then, the limited spectrum of FTPWs that are available to her, due to the constraints placed on the CTAW. Furthermore, while baking may enable Joy to temporarily envision a FTPW, the emphasis on the process of Joy beginning this activity and imagining its completion – rather than the end result of the activity – suggests that this FTPW does not deliver true happiness: Joy finds a shallow, temporary peace here, but returns to the discomfort of the CTAW soon afterwards. Again, Joy's eating disorder also undermines her creation of baked goods as a means of constructing a hopeful FTPW, since only the baking process rather than the consumption of the food brings relief. The weight of Joy's pain, therefore, is only temporarily lifted by the construction of this FTPW, with the short-lived happiness found in envisioning the results of baking ultimately only reiterating the difficulty of escape from depression, perhaps helping to explain why several readers – as noted in 10.2 and 10.3 – express emotions of concern and worry towards the protagonist.

Accordingly, as also outlined in 10.3, Joy's affair with a former student is one element of the narrative that is viewed with concern as well as sympathy by R5, whilst R3 expresses discomfort verging on anger towards this behaviour. In the following excerpt, Joy anticipates David visiting her at home, and we again see the construction of another FTPW of transient happiness:

> This Sunday night he's coming round. Maybe I will be embraced, entered, made
> to exist. The physical self is precarious. (46)

Here, a hopeful FTPW is constructed through the epistemic modality of the verb 'will' and adverb 'maybe', as well as the deictic 'coming', which denotes a spatial path from the narrator's occasional lover towards herself and thus indicates the capacity of David to fleetingly make Joy feel better. The temporal reference 'Sunday night' emphasises the importance of this moment in the future, with the deictic 'this' working to convey immediacy, alongside the present tense construction 'he's coming round', which conveys certainty in this future event soon transpiring. The syntactical parallelism of 'embraced', 'entered', and 'made to exist' indicates the capacity of physical affection and sexual intercourse to engender a sense of identity for Joy, thus suggesting that connection with David might bring respite from her dissociation. However, whilst the dynamic verb 'embraced' has positive connotations, the stative verb 'exist' implies that it is not necessarily true happiness that Joy experiences with David, but simply a moment of feeling alive through this transitory connection. The passive construction 'be […] made to exist' also

exemplifies Joy's sense of powerlessness, with her sense of self dependent on external entities. Meanwhile, the adjective 'precarious' suggests uncertainty regarding whether David's visit will truly bring relief and whether this will be long-lasting, with this word also objectifying Joy and evoking her fragile identity, since it is usually used to describe objects or situations rather than human beings. This is emphasised, too, by the definite article and third person in 'the physical self', which conveys fragmentation of mind and body, along with the premodifier 'physical', which reiterates this separation. So, despite the potentially hopeful FTPW constructed here, we may intuit the transient nature of this moment of escape due to the way Joy's identity is presented as fragile and fractured. Also, the fact that it is again a physical act in which Joy seeks comfort reinforces that she can envision hopeful FTPWs only when these involve concrete, external experiences, similarly to her rituals of shopping, consuming gin, and baking, as well as indicating that Joy can find relief only in dangerous or problematic activities which promise escape from everyday life. The morally and ethically problematic nature of this relationship, as explored in 10.3, also might cause readers to doubt the extent to which this FTPW will truly bring happiness for Joy.

Similarly to the way her affairs provide a false promise of a superior FTPW, Joy uses alcohol to provide transitory respite from her thoughts. As discussed in 10.2 and 10.3, Joy's relationship with alcohol is a source of sadness and concern for some readers. This excerpt demonstrates the construction of alcohol consumption as a FTPW:

> Opening a new bottle can't be rushed. It takes most of my Saturday pay: all those tedious hours of smoke and other people's cash, going home reeking of coins and nicotine. I take my time breaking the seal, feeling it crack and snap under my hand, twisting the metal. So thin you can feel the thread of the glass ripple through. The pink tissue is pretty. The gin comes out with an animal sound, like something lapping up milk. (76)

A FTPW is first constructed here with the verb 'opening', which implies the unveiling of new possibilities. The act of 'opening' the bottle is foregrounded due to the syntactic placement of the verb, along with the indefinite article 'a', which introduces the bottle and thus suggests the entry of a new entity into Joy's life. The epistemic modal negation 'can't be rushed' suggests Joy's perception that time must be deliberately extended in this moment of opening the gin to increase the pleasure of anticipating the FTPW of drinking. This is contrasted by the temporal reference to the 'tedious hours' of Joy's job in a betting shop, which conversely indicates time going too slowly. The temporal extension is also rendered in the detailed stages of preparation described here, indicating that time is spent appreciating each aspect of the bottle. The declarative sentence 'I take my time' explicitly suggests that this bottle presents a FTPW that Joy wants to linger over and enjoy, which is developed in the references to the minor details of the 'pretty' tissue paper

and 'thin' metal, which convey the importance of the alcohol to Joy. The glass of the bottle is afforded agency in the unusual use of the verb 'ripple', which constructs it as an active entity, while the emphasis on the multisensory experience of opening the bottle and making a drink, with its onomatopoeic 'crack' and 'snap', sensation of 'twisting' and 'animal sound' of pouring gin, underscores the value of the alcohol to Joy and thus suggests that the bottle contains a hopeful FTPW. The verb phrase 'breaking the seal' semantically echoes the earlier verb 'opening' and therefore reiterates the emergence of a FTPW in which the gin will transform from liquid in a bottle to a drink in a glass. The spatially deictic 'comes out with an animal sound' marks the final, much-anticipated moment of the gin exiting the bottle, while the zoomorphic simile of the sound of the pouring gin 'like something lapping up milk' suggests that the alcohol brings comfort and the illusion of company. The fact that Joy envisions the alcohol as evoking the presence of another creature here, however, underscores her lonely existence, and therefore may work to cast doubt on the capacity of the FTPW constructed here to truly provide happiness. The reverent depiction of the bottle of gin may construct a hopeful FTPW existing in the mind of the protagonist, but it also casts light on Joy's problematic relationship with alcohol and thus is unlikely to be perceived by readers as presenting hope.

Unsurprisingly, the imagined FTPW in which alcohol makes Joy feel better does not transpire, as the substance provides only fleeting numbing of pain. On the next page, we see Joy again alone in her living room, this time listening to disturbing sounds from next door: 'I pour another drink and turn up the TV. The wall thumps and my neighbour's little girl screams' (77). The mundane description of Joy's actions and the subsequent suggestion of possible violence work together to suggest the constraints placed on the CTAW and reiterate that the illusory FTPW promised by alcohol has brought only another miserable night alone. The consumption of alcohol is therefore constructed as a FTPW that, in keeping with the nature of addiction, contains the promise of pleasure but does not deliver on it and provides only momentary relief from pain. This helps to explain, then, why this aspect of the narrative was viewed with concern and sympathy by some readers.

As outlined in 10.2 and 10.3, emotions of hope, happiness, and optimism were expressed by multiple readers regarding the ending of the novel. As Joy seems to begin to emerge from her depression, she starts to envision the future, with her thoughts newly focused on cleaning and renovating her home:

> I can always clean the worst of the visible damage, strip and wash the walls, open
> the doors to let winter air refresh. I can leave all the windows open as well: there's
> nothing anyone would come in and steal. I can paint the window frames white

again, lift the carpet tile in the hall with a scarf over my nose and mouth. I'll make lists. Things that need to be done for the next week or so. The week after that.

After that.

Tomorrow.
David will come. I may visit Ellen. (234)

Epistemic modality frames Joy's planned actions in the repeated use of 'can' and auxiliary verbs 'will' and 'may', exemplifying a more positive mental state and thus constructing an attainable, hopeful FTPW. The parallelism of 'I can' and the subsequent dynamic verb in each sentence emphasise Joy's agency: the verbs 'clean', 'leave', and 'paint' outline the specific details of renovating the house and therefore indicate that Joy is now conceptualising her environment as a malleable place capable of being physically improved in an attainable FTPW. In comparison to previous depictions of Joy's life analysed in 9.4 in which simple physical actions are temporally extended, here the large quantity of actions described in a single paragraph indicate her increasing ability to visualise a FTPW of accomplishment and energy. This sense of agency and positive action is reinforced by the repeated use of the personal pronoun 'I', which emphasises Joy's power to transform her life as she begins to formulate a positive FTPW in which she can reshape the world around her. Moreover, the specification of the minute details of the planned cleaning and decorating, with even the way Joy will 'lift the carpet tile' with a 'scarf' covering her face outlined, means that this FTPW is richly constructed as concrete and thus attainable. Furthermore, the explicit temporal references 'The week after that', 'After that', and 'Tomorrow' together construct a hopeful FTPW. The repetition of 'After that' emphasises that Joy is now able to envision a FTPW that is further away, particularly when compared to her previous ability to plan only for near-future events such as shopping or drinking alcohol, and the unusual structural placement of the phrase as a single line paragraph suggests the importance of the envisioning of this FTPW to Joy's recovery, as well as perhaps indicating the surprise experienced by the narrator herself in her newfound ability to see so far ahead. The subsequent single-word placing of 'Tomorrow' – a future event with greater temporal proximity than 'the week after that' – indicates Joy's capacity to see multiple hopeful FTPWs existing at various points in the future. Similarly, the explicit references to planning in the plural nouns 'lists' and 'things' to do indicate the narrator's ability to conceptualise a FTPW in terms of concrete goals and activities as her depression begins to lift. The semantic field of cleanliness developed in the words 'white', 'clean', 'wash', and 'refresh' reiterates that a brighter FTPW is becoming attainable, and Joy's repeated desire to 'open' both the doors and windows suggests an attempt to let clean air and light into her life, metaphorically suggesting a desire for life and growth. The omission of a direct object in the verb phrase 'let winter air refresh' means that the entity being 'refreshed' is ambiguous, working to imply that Joy herself as well as the house is capable of renewal. The

FTPWs constructed here, then, are far more hopeful than those constructed previously, conveying that rather than attempting to self-destruct, Joy is now looking ahead to a world of improvement and regeneration.

The sense of hope at the end of the novel is further developed when Joy envisions learning to swim:

> Maybe
>
> Maybe I could learn to swim.
>
> […] I'm gawky, not a natural swimmer. But I can read up a little, take advice. I read somewhere the trick is to keep breathing, make out it's not unnatural at all. They say it comes with practice. (235)

The act of swimming is firstly constructed as a FTPW with the epistemic modal adverb 'Maybe'. While the first 'Maybe' in its single line placement initially suggests the tentative formulation of a plan, the repetition of the adverb along with the first-person pronoun and epistemic modal verb 'could' conveys the increasing attainability of the FTPW of positive action that is formulating in Joy's mind. Similarly, while the declarative statement 'I'm gawky, not a natural swimmer' might seem to place limitations on the FTPW of learning to swim, the conjunction 'But', which is lent additional force by its placement at the start of the subsequent sentence, works to contradict this statement and suggests that Joy's initial self-perception of incompetence is surmountable. The epistemic modal 'I can read up a little' introduces a future, productive action and frames the skill as achievable, therefore reinforcing the construction of swimming as an attainable FTPW. The protagonist's initially negative assertion of identity in the adjective 'gawky' is also contradicted with the verb phrases 'keep breathing', 'make out', and 'it comes', which assert a malleable FTPW in which swimming can be learned. The idiomatic phrase 'They say it comes with practice' also marks out an external environment with alternative perspectives due to the third-person pronoun, suggesting that Joy is reaching beyond herself for knowledge and therefore reiterating that she is now capable of finding meaning in the world beyond her own depression. The fact that swimming is usually associated either with pleasure or exercise, rather than obligation, works to reiterate the hopefulness of this FTPW. The titular metaphor also finds its source here, as Galloway suggests that if Joy keeps metaphorically 'breathing' – surviving, in other words, through her depression – new, attainable FTPWs will ultimately reveal themselves. A growing sense of hope is encapsulated in the progression here from the conditional epistemic modal 'could' to the present tense epistemic 'can', and finally the unmodalised present tense 'it comes', suggesting an increasing level of certainty. The importance of the FTPW of learning to swim here is enhanced by the fact that references to swimming elsewhere exist in the context of Joy's

traumatic memories of her lover, who drowned in a swimming accident. Thus, the envisioned FTPW of being able to 'learn' to swim symbolises the extent of the narrator's hope and recovery, as she is now able to associate the idea of swimming with life and, both literally and metaphorically, with 'breathing' rather than death and trauma.

A hopeful FTPW is also constructed at the end of the novel in Joy's moment of forgiveness as she listens to Debussy on her Walkman:

> Waves rippling through the headphones. And something else.
> The human voice.
>
> […]
>
> The voice is still there.
>   I forgive you.
> I hear it quite distinctly, my own voice in the empty house.
>   I forgive you. (235)

The metaphor of classical music as 'waves rippling' indicates that beauty can now be found in everyday experiences, and again suggests that Joy is now capable of seeing the possibility of happiness in the world, in contrast to the restricted CTAW constructed earlier in the novel and analysed in 9.4. Subsequently, we see Joy hearing a voice expressing forgiveness, which she then realises to be her own, and while the person she is forgiving is not made explicit, the presentation of behaviour that might be inferred as self-punishment throughout the novel – such as sitting in the dark, binging, not eating, and alcohol abuse – mean that these words can be interpreted as marking an act of self-forgiveness. The description of Joy's voice here is constructed as growing in familiarity as she begins to realise that it is indeed herself speaking: the generality of the pronoun 'something' initially used to describe the voice indicates unfamiliarity, which then graduates to the more specific 'the human voice', before shifting to the use of the definite article alone in the phrase 'the voice', which suggests a growing familiarity and ease with the sound of her own voice, with the familiarity reiterated in the adverb 'still'. Finally, the shift from the definite article to the final use of the determiner 'my' indicates complete familiarity with and ownership over her voice, which is further emphasised of course by the premodifier 'own'. This four-stage shift from unfamiliarity to familiarity encapsulates Joy's movement from the depression and dissociation evoked throughout most of the novel towards a more cohesive identity and self-acceptance. The repetition of the phrase 'I forgive you' also emphasises the importance of Joy's act of self-forgiveness in enabling her to heal. Whilst in its first iteration this phrase seems to come to Joy as if appearing from elsewhere and therefore beyond her control, as something she can 'hear […] quite distinctly', its repetition suggests that she has chosen to speak the words a second time, indicating her growing agency. The mental process verb 'forgive'

implies a positive shift in Joy's thinking and connotes agency, since forgiveness – while a cognitive process – is also associated with an active, conscious decision to release resentment and anger. Thus, by speaking to herself 'in the empty house', Joy is both engaging in a positive action and finally freeing herself from pain. Thus, despite its present tense formulation, the repetition of the phrase 'I forgive you' therefore works to construct a new FTPW as we can infer that Joy's words of self-forgiveness create new possibilities for improvement in her life and may help her to see light existing beyond the darkness of her depression.

This FTPW is developed further in the final lines of the novel as the music ends. Joy continues to sit alone in her living room, but in contrast to the dark, restricted CTAW developed at the start of the novel and discussed in Chapter 9, the language used continues to construct a more hopeful FTPW:

> The tape winds on into empty space. Inside the headphones I hear the rise and fall, the surf beating in my lungs. Reach for the bottle. Watch the lights. (237)

The metaphor of the sea first developed in the description of music in the previous excerpt is extended here, as the sound of the 'surf' continues even after the track has come to the 'empty space' of the end of the tape, thereby working to imply that beauty and hope can now persist for Joy beyond transient experiences of pleasure. The contrast between the 'end' of the music and the 'rise' of the metaphorical 'sea' that Joy can still hear within the headphones indicates, too, that perhaps the possibility of happiness can now be found in her own mind rather than only in external entities. The magnitude of the sound that Joy imagines is also significant here: the sea is colossal in comparison to the minute elements of Joy's immediate environment, which are detailed in the presentation of the restricted CTAW in which she experiences depression, as explored in 9.4, and the extended water metaphor itself has also increased in size, from Joy's initial consideration of learning to swim, which then graduated to the representation of the music as 'waves', and then finally to the depiction of the 'rise and fall' of the 'surf' represented in this extract. The increasing size works to evoke growth and development, implying that Joy is beginning to construct an ever-larger and more hopeful FTPW in which she can psychologically cope with the world around her – or 'keep breathing' – with an increasing degree of success. This is developed further with the verb 'beating' with its connotations of strength, whilst the development of the metaphor of the 'surf' to imply sea air that Joy breathes into her 'lungs' suggests internalisation of nature, and that not only can she 'keep breathing' but she can breathe in the cleanest and most natural of air, thus extending our sense of her recovery. As in the metaphor of remembering to 'keep breathing' when swimming, the metaphor of the 'surf' in Joy's 'lungs' also merges the two elements of air and water, developing a metaphor of survival within

difficult circumstances. The metaphor, then, constructs a FTPW of recovery and hope, suggesting that Joy may finally be able to escape the torturous mindset to which she has been confined throughout the novel. This is reinforced by the fact that she is listening to music and looking at her new Christmas lights, and thus using her senses to interact positively with her environment, which explicitly contrasts with the beginning of the novel, as analysed in 9.4, when she sits 'in the dark' avoiding 'brightness' and watching only herself 'from the corner of the room' (7). At the end of the novel, Joy is looking outwards rather than inwards, and towards light rather than darkness. Galloway draws on schematic associations of light, then, to evoke newfound hope, thereby constructing a positive FTPW for Joy. The syntactic parallelism of 'Reach for the bottle.' and 'Watch the lights.' foregrounds the imperative verbs in each sentence, emphasising Joy's agency as an active participant in her life. We see, then, that the protagonist is now able to envision and plan the continuation of her evening, thus constructing a more hopeful FTPW in the near future, alongside the broader FTPW constructed in her plans to swim, clean her house, and also in her ability to imagine the wider natural world beyond the immediate environment. Admittedly, Joy is still undertaking a harmful activity here by drinking alcohol, which might help to explain why, as outlined in 10.2 and 10.3, not all readers experience a sense of happiness or hope at the ending of the novel, and some doubt in the longevity of this change for Joy. Nonetheless, Joy is clearly taking pleasure from her surroundings as well as the drink, here, and is finally able to construct a hopeful FTPW beyond the room in which she sits, thus evoking the possibility of happiness existing both beyond the worst depths of Joy's depression and beyond the closing sentence of the novel.

10.5 Summary

In this chapter, I have analysed the construction of FTPWs in *The Trick is to Keep Breathing* in order to demonstrate how the emotional effects elicited for readers of this novel may be partly understood through application of a framework of textual actual and possible worlds. In 10.2, I outlined several emotions expressed in reader reviews further to those discussed in Chapter 9, including concern for the protagonist, and hope and happiness regarding the ending of the novel. In 10.3, I discussed emotions expressed in reader interviews, varying from worry, concern, and sympathy regarding Joy's behaviour to feelings of frustration and anger, and happiness and hope regarding the novel's ending. As in readers' responses to *A Fine Balance* and *Revolutionary Road* discussed in 6.3 and 8.3, I discussed how one reader expressed a 'dispreferred' (Stockwell 2013:269) response to the narrative, with extratextual factors relating to their own morality preventing sympathy for the narrator. In 10.4, I applied the world-type of FTPWs. My analysis indicated that even FTPWs linguistically constructed as hopeful might be construed as troubling by readers if they are presented as relating to addictive or problematic behaviours, or as representing only a transient reprieve from pain. However, I showed how in contrast to the

problematic, temporary FTPWs constructed earlier in the narrative, the happier ending of the novel may arise partly from the construction of a broader, more genuinely hopeful FTPW of recovery, which works to suggest that the narrator is progressing towards a place of healing, and that future glimpses of light may exist beyond the darkness of her depression.

Chapter 11

Conclusions

11.1 Overview

In this concluding chapter, I summarise the findings drawn from the analytical chapters of this thesis. I review the thesis aims in 11.2 before discussing in 11.3 the analysis presented within the typology of textual actual and possible worlds applied in Chapters 5-10. I examine each world-type taken from the typology and utilised to frame analysis in this thesis in turn, and suggest some conclusions pertinent to each. In 11.4, I suggest some broader conclusions deriving from the analysis presented here, and consider some potential implications for Possible Worlds Theory and the study of readers' emotions. Finally in 11.5, I discuss the limitations of this study and suggest some potential future directions presented by this research.

11.2 Review of Thesis Aims

The overarching focus of this thesis has been an exploration of how the emotions expressed by readers in response to novels may be partly explained by an application of Possible Worlds Theory as a framework for textual analysis. The approach taken in this thesis has thus built on existing concepts of possibility and actuality in Possible Worlds Theory (Pavel 1975; Eco 1979; Ryan 1985, 1991) by framing textual actual worlds and textual possible worlds (Ryan 1991; Bell 2010) in a temporally segmented typology. In so doing, I have sought to exemplify how these worlds are stylistically constructed at different points of a narrative and thus to demonstrate the capacity of Possible Worlds Theory to encompass, and indeed enable, stylistic analysis of some of the textual factors that may contribute to novels' elicitation of readers' emotions. This study has thus endeavoured to offer interdisciplinary contributions to both Possible Worlds Theory and to the study of readers' emotions by suggesting the rich potential that lies in triangulating these two approaches to literary analysis. As I will demonstrate below in my exploration of the conclusions drawn from the application of the typology, the research presented here has fulfilled these aims, as the analysis presented in Chapters 5-10 within the typology formulated for this study casts light on several textual factors potentially contributing to the emotional responses reported by readers of my focus novels. This analysis also works to exemplify the contribution offered by the five-part typology developed for this thesis, since its application to three novels and the analysis of the construction of each world-type demonstrates its utility as an analytical tool. In also using empirical data for this study, I have been able to explore the emotions elicited by the three focus novels to support my own stylistic analysis, but in so doing have also offered a fourth contribution by suggesting the utility of empirical reader data in a study using Possible Worlds Theory as a framework. Furthermore, my suggestion of the terms *attainable* and

restricted to denote different degrees of possibility for the envisioning of FTPWs, as well as my adoption and adaptation of the term *occlusion* (Stockwell 2009:21) to describe the disappearance or removal of a PTPW or PTAW, has contributed to the terminology of Possible Worlds Theory in offering a set of descriptive vocabulary for enriching analysis of the construction of textual actual and possible worlds within the broader framework of the typology.

The interrelated aims of this thesis were discussed in 1.2 and epitomised in the research questions given in 1.3, which are reproduced here:

RQ1: How are textual actual and possible worlds constructed stylistically in narratives?

RQ2: How can Possible Worlds Theory help to explain the ways that narratives might elicit emotional responses from readers?

RQ3: How does the temporally segmented typology developed for this thesis provide a useful framework for the analysis of textual actual and possible worlds?

As stated in 1.3, these research questions were addressed holistically, since the aim of analysis was to elucidate some of the ways in which stylistic construction of textual actual and possible worlds may affect readers' emotional responses to narratives. The analysis undertaken within the typology applied in Chapters 5-10 elicits several significant findings in relation to these questions, as well as providing the contributions offered by this thesis. Therefore, in 11.3, I consider each world-type in turn to clarify my findings in relation to these research questions, considering links and commonalities between the analyses as well as differences in order to suggest some conclusions arising from the application of the typology. As PTAWs and PTPWs were considered together within the analytical chapters, as explained in 3.2.3-4, I summarise the findings from the exploration of these world-types together, before discussing each other world-type individually. As emphasised throughout my analysis, however, all the world-types can interact with each other to differing extents and in a multiplicity of ways.

11.3 Implications of the Typology Applied in Chapters 5-10 of this Thesis

PTPWs and PTAWs: These world-types were largely explored together in this thesis, as explained in 3.2.3-4, with analysis casting light on how these worlds are constructed as well as how they are occluded. My analysis considered PTPWs and PTAWs as any worlds existing in the past from the current vantage point of the narrative, meaning that these could be constructed at any point within the text. Analysis of *A Fine Balance* in 6.5 and *Revolutionary Road* in 8.4 suggested that, in the novels chosen for this study, PTAWs and PTPWs are often – though not always – constructed as happier or more favourable than the CTAW in which the characters are now located. Conceivably, where this is the case, this conveys that the current world inhabited by

characters is worse than a preferable past life with its associated happier times and hopeful possibilities, therefore working to elicit emotions of unhappiness or dissatisfaction regarding the state of the CTAW. This may partly help to explain, therefore, why aspects of these novels are frequently conceptualised as sad or unhappy by readers, as discussed in 6.2-3 and 8.2-3. In the examples analysed in this thesis, where such preferable PTAWs and PTPWs are presented as predating the narrative, such as when Ishvar and Om's family was still alive in *A Fine Balance,* this might contribute to a sense of the CTAW as being unfavourable throughout. However, I also explored moments at which readers are exposed not only to the occluded PTAWs and PTPWs which predate the narrative but also witness the occlusion of PTPWs previously constructed as hopeful FTPWs, such as the dream of Omprakash marrying in *A Fine Balance*, which later becomes a PTPW*,* or the depiction of Mrs Givings's plan for a successful evening in *Revolutionary Road* examined in 8.4, which, while initially presented as a hopeful FTPW, is then occluded by an unfavourable CTAW and thus becomes a PTPW. Since readers of both *A Fine Balance* and *Revolutionary Road* discussed their sadness regarding these incidents, conceivably, witnessing the occlusion of PTPWs within the course of a narrative which were first constructed as FTPWs may contribute to readers' emotional responses to texts, as they experience the construction of hope but also its demise. Thus, application of the typology of textual actual and possible worlds constructed for this thesis demonstrates that a Possible Worlds framework can help to explain the emotions expressed by readers in response to narratives.

My stylistic analysis also suggested that even the construction of unhappy PTAWs, such as April's life in *Revolutionary Road* when viewed from the vantage point of her death*,* may work to elicit sadness if the altered CTAW is presented as even less favourable than the occluded PTAW and associated PTPWs. While I suggest that the occlusion of preferable PTAWs and PTPWs may partly work to incite sadness or unhappiness in those readers who experienced these emotional responses, though, it is important to acknowledge that not all readers expressed these emotions. This indicates that various extratextual factors influence readers' responses alongside the narrative itself, with their emotional responses to the text co-constructed by their experiences, which I discuss further with reference to Stockwell's (2013:269) notion of 'preferred' and 'dispreferred' responses below in 11.4.

In Chapter 5, my analysis also briefly encompassed consideration of how the construction of the occlusion of PTAWs and PTPWs may partly contribute to a sense of restricted FTPWs available to characters; in other words, FTPWs might be constrained by characters' past experiences in the form of PTAWs and their past wishes, hopes, or dreams in the form of PTPWs. Furthermore, in Chapter 9, PTAWs and PTPWs were not applied as an overarching frame for analysis but I incorporated exploration of the way in which these world-types may impinge on the CTAW.

Analysis in this chapter indicated that the construction of the PTAW as affecting the CTAW works to evoke how the narrator's past trauma dominates her current life, and thus contributes to the sense of the protagonist's unhappiness conveyed by *The Trick is to Keep Breathing,* which was experienced by several readers as upsetting or saddening, as discussed in 9.2-3. These applications of PTAWs and PTPWs demonstrate some of the complex interactions of the world-types presented here: not only do the world-types from this typology benefit from being applied as a framework for stylistic analysis in themselves, but they can also work alongside other world-types to facilitate analysis.

The CTAW: This world-type was discussed to varying extents in all chapters because the CTAW must exist alongside all other world-types, even if this is implicit. As the 'here and now' of the narrative, the CTAW is inevitably preceded by PTPWs and PTAWs, and exists alongside CFTWs, with FTPWs branching from it. This world-type, then, was useful for the analysis presented in each chapter due to its capacity to highlight the existence of other worlds. However, my analysis in Chapter 9 demonstrated that this world-type can also form a principal frame for analysis. In my analysis of the CTAW in *The Trick is to Keep Breathing*, I explored how the CTAW is constructed as a dark, constricted, and unhappy space, thus creating a sense of restriction to the mind of the narrator and her depressed world-view. As well as using the world-type of the CTAW as a frame, I also incorporated exploration of other world-types where relevant in this chapter, with my analysis suggesting that even the FTPWs presented alongside the unhappy CTAW are often constructed as dark and hopeless in this novel. The analysis presented in this chapter helps, then, to explain some of the responses of readers who expressed a range of emotions including empathy, sadness, and a sense of claustrophobia or feeling trapped whilst reading the novel. As acknowledged in the summaries of readers' responses presented throughout this thesis, however, whilst emotional commonalities do exist, readers' responses are nonetheless also affected by extratextual factors, with several online reviewers and interviewees discussed in Chapter 9, for example, contextualising their feelings with reference to personal experiences of depression. Overall, however, the similarities expressed in a number of readers' reviews and interviews meant that I was able to utilise analysis of the CTAW to exemplify some of the ways in which the stylistic construction of this novel may contribute to the emotional effects wrought on readers.

CFTWs: This world-type was used to frame stylistic analysis in Chapters 5 and 7, where I demonstrated some of the ways in which CFTWs can be stylistically constructed as preferable alternatives to a less favourable CTAW, with my analysis also suggesting that such construction of CFTWs may contribute to the emotions experienced by readers. In Chapter 5, after discussing the emotions of sadness and sympathy expressed by many readers of *A Fine Balance*, my analysis

indicated that happier CFTWs are constructed in this novel as unrealisable, unattainable alternatives to the CTAW, with their existence working to highlight the unhappiness of characters' existence as compared to a preferable life that might have existed in an alternative CFTW. In Chapter 7, prior to my analysis of *Revolutionary Road*, I discussed a range of emotions expressed by readers including anger towards characters and dislike, particularly of Frank, as well as sadness, sympathy, and discomfort. The analysis presented in 7.4 again suggested the frequent construction of CFTWs in this novel, which are depicted as superior to the CTAW experienced by the characters. Analysis in both chapters, therefore, indicates that such construction of preferable CFTWs alongside the unfavourable CTAW may help to explain the emotional responses reported by readers of each novel.

Stylistic analysis in 5.4 and 7.4 also suggested that CFTWs can exist on different scales, with analysis indicating the existence of macro-CFTWs, or points at which readers are incited to envision an entire alternative life for a character existing alongside the CTAW. For example, analysis in 5.4 revealed that the character Dina in *A Fine Balance* is presented as living in an inferior CTAW in comparison to the preferable CFTW in which her father and husband might have lived. This macro-CFTW is introduced at the beginning of the novel and persists therefore alongside the CTAW for the entire narrative, potentially contributing to the emotional impact of Dina's life on several readers as outlined in 5.2-3. Analysis in both chapters also suggested the existence of micro-CFTWs constructed at minor points within narratives where characters make decisions between different options, such as Frank's contemplation of alternative courses of action in his conversations with his wife in *Revolutionary Road*. Here, again, as with at multiple points throughout analysis, these micro-CFTWs were constructed as preferable to the alternative in the CTAW that transpired. My analysis also indicated that CFTWs may exist to different degrees of explicitness, such as CFTWs overtly constructed in the dialogue of characters as in the discussion of the men in *A Fine Balance* where Om envisions time being 'a bolt of cloth', as well as those CFTWs which are constructed more implicitly, such as in the happier moments of the narrative in *A Fine Balance* which conceivably work to evoke a better world in which moments of joy might be experienced more frequently. The CFTWs explored in Chapters 5 and 7, whether implicit or explicit, were all stylistically constructed as happier or in some way preferable to the CTAW, again helping to explain the sad nature of these novels and their frequent elicitation of negative emotions, such as sadness, in readers.

FTPWs: In 6.4, 7.5, and 10.4, I applied the world-type of FTPWs to my analysis, exploring the ways in which different FTPWs are stylistically constructed within narratives. Stylistic analysis indicated that FTPWs are constructed as having various degrees of attainability. In Chapter 6, I applied the concept of restricted FTPWs to exemplify how FTPWs in *A Fine Balance* are

stylistically constructed as lacking in attainability, and suggested that this works to evoke the societal factors preventing the realisation of characters' dreams. I suggested, too, that this may therefore lend pathos to characters' construction of FTPWs and help to explain why the hopelessness of Om and Ishvar's existence caused sadness for several readers. In Chapter 7, however, I analysed *Revolutionary Road* using the world-type of FTPWs and explored how, whilst hopeful FTPWs are constructed to some extent in the depiction of Frank and April's dream to move to Europe, elements of the stylistic construction of these worlds imply the unattainability of this FTPW, perhaps helping to explain why several readers, as explored in 6.3, expressed doubt regarding the realisation of the couple's dream. In Chapter 10, meanwhile, I explored FTPWs constructed with various levels of attainability, with my analysis suggesting that the construction of a hopeful and attainable FTPW for Joy at the end of the novel contributes to the creation of an ending that is happier than the rest of this text, explaining to some extent why several readers in 10.2-3 expressed a sense of hope in relation to the ending of this novel.

Overall, my analysis across the three chapters in which FTPWs were a central focus suggested that if hopeful or positive FTPWs are constructed as attainable, this may contribute to the elicitation of positive emotions such as happiness for readers; yet if hopeful or happy FTPWs are constructed as difficult to attain, as in *A Fine Balance,* then this may convey lack of hope or unhappiness and therefore may accordingly be associated with the elicitation of such emotions. However, the attainability of FTPWs may interact with readers' emotions in complex ways. For example, the FTPWs represented by the transient relief of alcohol, shopping, and food in *The Trick is to Keep Breathing* are often stylistically constructed as attainable but not as representing truly hopeful FTPWs, since these represent only a temporary escape from the reality of Joy's depression. Alongside this, discussion of readers' responses when triangulated with analysis of FTPWs also indicates that readers' emotional responses to the construction of FTPWs – as with other world-types – exist in relation to extratextual factors and their wider experiences of the narrative. Readers' existing knowledge of a character or narrative situation or their schematic awareness may work to contradict the construction of a hopeful FTPW; for example, the presentation of Frank and April's difficult relationship in *Revolutionary Road* means that even where the FTPW of moving to Paris is constructed as hopeful, readers may doubt in the capacity for this to truly bring happiness, whilst the depiction of alcohol as presenting a hopeful FTPW for Joy may be contradicted by previous depictions both of the character's reliance on the substance as well as potentially by readers' schematic awareness of alcohol's addictive properties. My analysis suggests, therefore, that exploring the attainability alongside the level of hope represented by a FTPW presents a useful mechanism for analysis, but any conclusions drawn regarding the emotional effects of a FTPW must be text-specific due to the complexity of any novel's stylistic construction and the impact of extratextual factors.

11.4 Key Findings and Contributions

Taken together, the analyses within the world-types summarised in 11.3 suggest that readers' emotional responses to narratives may be partly understood through the application of a framework of textual actual and possible worlds. By providing a greater degree of specificity regarding the temporality of textual actual and possible worlds than has thus far been offered by previous models (Ryan 1991b; Bell 2010; Raghunath 2020), my analysis has been able to illuminate some of the ways in which textual actual and possible worlds are stylistically constructed in different ways at different points within narratives. The detailed stylistic analysis facilitated by the typology formulated for this thesis has cast light on some of the ways in which readers' emotions may be impacted by the time-bound ontological status of textual actual and possible worlds and by the way in which these statuses are constructed. By specifying the temporal location of textual actual and possible worlds, I have also been able to demonstrate some of the ways in which both the establishment and the occlusion of these worlds may contribute to the emotions that novels elicit. My analysis also indicates that a fictional text is not only a 'machine for producing possible worlds' (Eco 1979:246) in readers' minds, but is also one in which textual actual and possible worlds – once produced – are constructed with varying degrees of attainability and may also even be textually removed or occluded, thus potentially contributing to the emotional effects a novel may have on its readers.

Analysis in Chapters 5-10 indicates one important commonality in that the degree of happiness or unhappiness of different world-types may interact with how they are experienced emotionally by readers. In particular, the status of different world-types in relation to the CTAW and the extent to which they are constructed as happier or unhappier than the CTAW is significant to the emotional responses expressed by readers. More specifically, analysis across each chapter indicates that if PTAWs, PTPWs, or CFTWs are constructed as preferable or happier than the CTAW, this is often associated with negative emotions such as sadness, sympathy, or frustration for readers, perhaps due to a perception of the CTAW, or the 'here and now' of a narrative, as inferior to past or present alternatives. The way in which FTPWs, however, interact with the CTAW in terms of their relative happiness or favourability appears to be more complex. If a FTPW is presented as happier or more favourable than the CTAW, emotions such as hope and happiness may be experienced by readers; however, this appears to be the case largely when such FTPWs are constructed as attainable, such as in the FTPWs analysed in Chapter 10. In cases where even FTPWs which are more hopeful or happier than the CTAW are constructed as restricted FTPWs and therefore as lacking in attainability, as explored in Chapter 6, this may increase the sense of unhappiness evoked by the textual possible world and thus potentially experienced by readers, rather than increasing it. Importantly, the interactions of world-types

suggested here in terms of their relative happiness and unhappiness are *broad* tendencies, and must not be interpreted as universal assumptions or interpretations that can be expected in every circumstance due both to the inevitable complexity of narratives and the undeniable influence of readers' schemata and extratextual factors on their emotional responses. My conclusions certainly cannot be reduced to a straightforward formula whereby a happier PTAW, PTPW, or CTFW than the CTAW leads to sadness, while an attainable FTPW which is happier than the CTAW elicits hope. My analysis indicates that the stylistic construction of the favourability of world-types may correspond broadly with some of the emotional effects of narratives which are reported by readers, but this analysis is presented with the caveat that the typology offered here is intended as an adaptable tool for stylistic analysis of potentially emotion-causing elements of textual actual and possible worlds, rather than as an attempt to simplistically link certain world-types to certain emotional effects.

Despite the commonalities in the emotions reported by readers which I discussed in Chapters 5-10, my exploration of readers' responses indicates that, while the construction of textual actual and possible worlds may partly help to explain readers' emotional responses to my focus texts, this is always mediated by readers' own contexts and experiences. In 6.3, 8.3, and 10.3, I highlighted three readers' responses in qualitative interviews which were atypical in comparison to the rest of the dataset, and discussed how each reader demonstrated a striking degree of awareness regarding the way their own emotions diverged from those they perceived to be suggested by the text. This atypicality and self-reflective commentary by readers on their emotional responses may be most clearly understood in light of Stockwell's (2013:269) notion of texts having an 'encoded, text-driven preferred response' which may diverge from the 'dispreferred*'* responses experienced by some readers. This is also evocative of Eco's (1979) concept of the Model Reader, which denotes the interpretive responses a text directs its reader towards before empirical reading has occurred, as well as his notion of the three '*intentios*' (Eco 1990:50-51) of a text: the *intentio auctoris*, or what the author intends to say; the *intentio operis*, or what the text wants to say, in reference to the way it is stylistically constructed; and the *intentio lectoris*, or what readers cause the text to say with reference to their own system of expectations, beliefs, and experiences. Readers' perceptions of how their own responses may differ from the emotional responses they construe as intended by the narrative do work, to some extent, to indicate the nuanced nature of readers' emotions and the indubitable influence of extratextual factors on interpretation. Paradoxically, however, their insight into an emotional response they perceive to be intended by the author – even if this might contradict with or diverge from their own response – also suggests consciousness of what might be seen as a 'preferred response' (Stockwell 2013:269) or the '*intentio operis*' (Eco 1990:50) of a text and thus an awareness of

how the stylistic construction of textual actual and possible worlds might be associated with the elicitation of particular emotions.

11.5 Limitations and Potential for Future Development

Whilst I was cognisant of some of the ways in which readers' personal contexts and experiences might affect their emotional responses, as acknowledged in 4.6, this was not specifically accounted for within my typology which sought to cast light on the stylistic construction of world-types within narratives rather than the nuances of readers' schemata and the implications for readers' emotions. However, the frequency with which readers contextualised their responses to the novels chosen for this study with reference to their own experiences suggests that this could be a focus of further analysis. In future adaptations of this research, contextual factors could be explicitly accounted for within my analytical framework. For example, similarly to Raghunath's (2020:77) accounting for the way readers use historical knowledge in a process of 'ontological superimposition' to construct 'reader knowledge worlds', future research could explicitly embed the relevance of individual readers' experiences within the typology, in order to combine stylistic analysis with focused analysis of how readers bring their own schematic experiences to texts as they co-construct, and respond emotionally, to textual actual and possible worlds. In future research, more detailed exploration of individual reader contexts could also be developed through undertaking extended qualitative interviews – or perhaps several interviews – with a smaller number of participants focusing on one novel, with questions designed specifically to elicit data regarding the way in which readers' autobiographical experiences and personal or social standpoints interact with the construction of textual actual and possible worlds to elicit emotions. Such research could develop more detailed consideration of how readers' awareness of 'preferred' (Stockwell 2013:269) emotional responses also interacts with their experiences of textual actual and possible worlds in light of the findings discussed in 11.4.

The texts chosen for this study are all literary novels, but this similarity does not limit the replicability of the typology for analysis offered here. The temporal segmentation of textual actual and possible worlds presented in this thesis could feasibly be applied to a wide range of fictional texts, since temporality is intrinsic to the unfolding nature of narratives. All novels analysed in this thesis are broadly linear texts, though all encompass some form of external analepsis within the narrative; each is a realist text; and none have any fantastical elements associated with those 'impossible worlds' (Alber 2009; Ryan 2013) that have become an important focus of many recent applications of Possible Worlds Theory. The placing of some limitations on texts chosen for analysis was inevitable within the constraints of space and scope of this thesis, and the similarities between the texts enabled me to draw links and parallels in the stylistic constructions of world-types and some of their attendant effects. However, application of the typology or some

of its world-types to a different genre of fiction, such as novels which manipulate spatial, temporal, and ontological boundaries, would be an interesting avenue for further research. The typology devised here is intended as an adaptable exemplification of the affordances of classifying different temporal worlds within the broad categories of textual actual and possible worlds, and the temporal refinement of Possible Worlds Theory provided here could be manipulated further for application to other forms of narratives. Indeed, even a straightforward application of the typology to any other text requires careful reflection and discretion on the part of the researcher in considering whether each world-type is an appropriate choice for stylistic analysis of the chosen text, in order to benefit from its richness and flexibility as an analytical tool.

This study has largely focused on the way in which textual actual and possible worlds are constructed at the micro-level of language at key moments within narratives, in order to demonstrate the affordances of Possible World Theory for facilitating detailed stylistic analysis of the ways in which texts construct worlds and, as such, affect readers' emotions. However, given the capacity of Possible Worlds Theory to also cast light on the construction of meaning across entire narratives, future research could apply the typology formulated for this study to trace the development of world-types across novels in a greater degree of depth. I would be particularly interested to explore the construction of FTPWs across whole novels and to analyse how, as well as various FTPWs being constructed with varying degrees of attainability as identified in my analysis, the degree of attainability of a single FTPW may shift or alter throughout a narrative. Furthermore, the concept of restricted FTPWs could additionally be applied to further analyses in Possible Worlds Theory, in helping to cast light on gradations of possibility across narratives. Since this study has highlighted that CFTWs exist as both macro- and micro-CFTWs, future research could attempt to formulate a more detailed exploration of how the size and scale of CFTWs may contribute to readers' emotional responses to fictional texts. To achieve such analyses working at the level of both language and narrative, single world-types could be applied in detail to the exploration of single novels to facilitate both depth and breadth of analysis. While I have analysed how PTPWs and PTAWs may be both constructed and occluded in Chapters 6 and 8, further research could also grant a greater level of focus to the moments of transition in narratives between actuality and possibility, thus granting greater consideration to the way that 'events' within a narrative 'receive their meaning from the states between which they mediate' (Ryan 1985: 719).

Notwithstanding the areas for development outlined here, this thesis has demonstrated that a Possible Worlds Theory approach holds the potential to enrich understanding of the emotion-causing aspects of literature. The research presented here has thus achieved its core aim to provide

contributions to Possible Worlds Theory and the study of readers' emotions by drawing out the relevance of each discipline to the other. The research undertaken here has shown that a cognitive stylistic analysis using Possible Worlds Theory can help to explain some of the emotional states experienced by readers by revealing the way in which narratives can not only construct possibilities but may also alter or remove them. The use of empirical reader response data has facilitated understanding of some of the emotions elicited by the focus texts for this study, whilst also suggesting some of the potential effects on readers of the constructions of textual actual and possible worlds I analyse in this thesis. The temporally segmented typology developed for analysis here facilitates the cognitive stylistic analysis of the construction of textual actual and possible worlds, thus reinforcing the value of Possible Worlds Theory in stylistics, and also provides a flexible, adaptable tool for the analysis of how textual actual and possible worlds may affect readers' emotions. Furthermore, in offering a refined approach to the application of Possible Worlds Theory as a tool for the exploration of the emotion-causing effects of literature, the research presented here has indicated that readers' emotions interact in complex, temporally linked ways with concepts of actuality and possibility.

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Appendices

Appendix (A) Transcription Key for Reader Interviews
Available to download at:
https://aston.box.com/s/oipzqav373b8n5geb6rl7607eku28ayr

Appendix (B) Dataset 1 – Reader Interviews: *A Fine Balance*
Available to download at:
https://aston.box.com/s/l9oselg98dqd3q3fmm1nuhibcqq3vawc

Appendix (C) Dataset 2 – Reader Interviews: *Revolutionary Road*
Available to download at:
https://aston.box.com/s/inxzewk8hdr4cpu2ijw52ldxvqv5ep11

Appendix (D) Dataset 3 – Reader Interviews: *The Trick is to Keep Breathing*
Available to download at:
https://aston.box.com/s/pgwkhkjhqsj58iu5myj7cs6kksun13um

Appendix (E) Dataset 4 – Online Reviews: *A Fine Balance*
Available to download at:
https://aston.box.com/s/s1dpmcc5u7vxw9ybex95c7ttiakf9tai

Appendix (F) Dataset 5 – Online Reviews: *Revolutionary Road*
Available to download at:
https://aston.box.com/s/1da3biw5guic1ysxl5gh6s97qfcsmoyq

Appendix (G) Dataset 6 – Online Reviews: *The Trick Is To Keep Breathing*
Available to download at:
https://aston.box.com/s/otmdti2c14zkk7jnfolal4s17l4x63ha