

The Presence of Transference and the Ethical Aspect of Narrating in Füst Milán's *A feleségem története* and Ford Madox Ford's *The Good Soldier*

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The Performative and the Vocative Aspects of *Skaz*

In his essay on Gogol's "The Overcoat," Boris Eichenbaum distinguishes between two types of narration: the more traditional, or, as he calls, "primitive" kind is dominated by the narrated events, "because their whole interest and their whole movement are determined by a rapid and diverse succession of events and situations" (Eichenbaum 377). In the case of the other type, composition is not determined by the plot, but the narrating voice dominates throughout the text; as Eichenbaum says, "the center of gravity is transferred from the theme (which is reduced to a minimum) to the narrative devices" (377). The two novels explored in the present essay belong to the second category:¹ although in different ways, the narratives are dominated by the speaking voice. A passage from Füst Milán's *A feleségem története* will suffice to illustrate this point:

S most el kell képzelni mindezek tetejébe: amint nagynehezen hazakészolódom valami autón, még meg is szólít a háziuram. Ez olyan ember volt, akinek magamban már mindenféle nevet adtam: öreg kappan meg ilyeneket. Mert az volt: egy hígfejű, fafejű próféta, egy aprófejű gavallér. Salátaevő a javából, misztikus ember, aki mindig korán kelt fel a madarakkal. Most el kell képzelni, hogy álltam én evvel szemben a lépcsőn.
(153)

In this quote, as in the entire text, the narrator's presence is made conspicuous by his use of language. The imitation of oral storytelling (what Bakhtin calls *skaz*) is prevalent throughout the narrative, and Eichenbaum notes the same in the case of Gogol's short story, emphasizing that *skaz* has a performative effect. He analyses this performative aspect of Gogol's literary language on phonological, morphological and syntactic levels. He argues that Gogol's

text is composed of the presentation of live speech and verbalized emotion. Moreover: this narrative has the tendency not simply to relate, not simply to talk, but to reproduce words mimetically and by means of articulation, with sentences chosen and joined not according to the principle of logical speech alone, but rather on the principle of expressive speech, in which a special role belongs to articulation, mimicry, sound-gestures, etc.
(380)

¹ "Samuel Hynes claims that the action of this novel [*The Good Soldier*] is not the sequence of passionate gestures which in another novel we would call the plot, but rather the action of the narrator's mind as it gropes for the memory" (qtd. in Stannard 384).

Eichenbaum's elaborate analysis of the performative nature of *skaz* describes a crucial part of the mechanisms of language in such texts as "The Overcoat," and his ideas can be applied very well to the two novels (*A feleségem története* and *The Good Soldier*) analysed in the present paper, but there is at least one important feature of *skaz* that is not examined in Eichenbaum's essay. In these two novels, the dominance of the narrative act over the narrated contents is due not only to the performativity of language, but also to the vocative aspect of the narrative language, that is, the relationship between the narrator and the listener, the moment of "turning-towards" the listener that necessarily precedes and embeds the narration. This non-referential aspect is going to provide the basis for a transferential and ethical reading of the texts. When arguing for the usefulness of the transferential reading method of literary texts, Peter Brooks also highlights this vocative aspect of language: "Texts are always implicitly or even explicitly addressed to someone. The 'I' that speaks in lyric ever postulates a 'thou'" (Rimmon-Kenan 11).

This is also obvious from the above quote from *A feleségem története*. The Captain's description of his landlord is a spectacular example of what Eichenbaum calls an absurd and illogical combination of words (384). The landlord is described as „hígfejű” and „fefejű” at the same time, which is controversial, since taking these words literally, it is obvious that something which resembles a watery liquid cannot be solid at the same time. What these two adjectives, along with „aprófejű” have in common (though not synonymous even in a figurative sense) is that they all refer to the foolish or stubborn character of the landlord, but what matters throughout is the vocal and acoustic features of the words rather than their semantic content. Another such incompatible pair of words is that of „próféta” and „gavallér,” which are not even from the same lexical register, and, in this case, unlike in the previous example, it is difficult to find any connection between the two at all. The same mundane-transcendent binary opposition can be found in the pair of „salátaevő” and „misztikus ember”: the two clearly cannot be put together to form a distinct outline of the character, because there is nothing mystical about salad, but on the contrary, it is very mundane. The first nickname given to him by Störr is „öreg kappan,” and a couple of lines later we also learn that he „mindig korán kelt fel a madarakkal,” and in this example the connection (similarity to fowls) is evident, but after all the other misleading examples, it is hard to take this one seriously. Even less so if we accept Eichenbaum's claim that the abundance of details is a further (but quite feeble) attempt to mask the logical absurdity of the description, but eventually, it enhances the comical effect by the unsuccessful faint effort (385). Although I examined these

phrases in separate groups in order to highlight the basic antagonism between them, it is important that they are used one after the other to describe the same landlord. This list of incongruous words and features does not give a proper, conceivable description, rather, as Eichenbaum says “The internal vision remains untouched (nothing is more difficult, I think, than to draw Gogolian heroes); – from the entire sentence, there remains in memory, more than anything else, an impression of a kind of progression of sounds” (387). This oversaturated representation of the landlord is a definite example of how the act of telling, the act of narration becomes more important than the content of the speech, and how the text becomes non-referential as a result of this saturation. As Füst Milán says in *Látomás és indulat a művészetben*: „S nekem nem az a célom, hogy elhiggyék nekem, amit mondok, hanem hogy átéljék” (228).² This is the essence of Störr’s unimaginable description of the landlord and other characters: instead of giving an accurate and authentic portrayal, it creates an effect (probably mirroring Störr’s own sensations at the time of perception) in the reader by the performativity of the narrative language.

Störr’s first words („S most el kell képzelni”) already call the reader’s attention to his part in the work of fiction. He instructs us to imagine the landlord, and right after this, he gives a description, or rather, a long list of incongruous characteristics which makes it impossible to imagine him. Therefore, I would suggest that in this quote, the description of the landlord’s figure is not important at all; it may sound paradoxical, but the Captain’s depiction does not serve the purpose of giving a face to the landlord. Rather, it shows how the text works on a bigger scale. Störr’s voice is much more characteristic than the image of the landlord created in the reader’s mind by the portrayal, thus – anticipating my major claim – this quote already suggests that in the novel – to borrow Emmanuel Levinas’s terms – the “Saying” is more important than the “Said.”³ His voice is closer to the reader than the landlord’s or even his own figure, and without his characteristic voice, his story would be less effective - in fact, it would cease to exist. Instead of giving a proper description, this scene emphasizes the act of “turning-towards” the listener on the narrator’s part. By saying „S most

² A striking similarity to Füst’s statement can be found among the greatest modernist writers in world literature: “In his preface to *The Nigger of the 'Narcissus'*, Conrad famously and paradoxically remarks, ‘my task which I am trying to achieve is, by the power of the written word to make you hear, to make you feel – it is, before all, to make you see’” (Newton 76).

³ In *Otherwise than Being*, Levinas states that “The correlation of the saying and the said, that is, the subordination of the saying to the said, to the linguistic system and to ontology, is the price that manifestation demands” (6). In these two novels, however, just like in several other literary examples, the works of language can be spotted on the pre-ontological level as well, and measuring the pre-ontological weight of language will be beneficial for my research instead of treating it simply as a code (Levinas, *Otherwise* 43).

el kell képzelni,” he places this act into the everlasting present. He dramatizes the moment of facing the implied reader by such phrases, and, tellingly, he closes the description of the landlord with the same formulae: „Most el kell képzelni, hogy álltam én evvel szemben a lépcsőn.” Therefore, this example can be read as an allegory of how the moment of “turning-towards” the listener *precedes* and *embeds* the narration.

In *Totality and Infinity*, Levinas calls attention to the inherently vocative quality of language: “Language presupposes interlocutors, a plurality. Their commerce is not a representation of the one by the other, nor a participation in universality, on the common plane of language. Their commerce [...] is ethical” (73). This ethical⁴ responsibility over representing the dead, crucial in both novels, will be explored in this paper.

Störr’s and Dowell’s use of language is performative indeed, but the other aspect of *skaz*, that is, directly addressing the implied reader, has another crucial result: our involvement in the flow of narrative becomes inevitable. Though both narrators invite us in by their rhetoric, asking for our opinion and sympathy, they cannot completely succeed, because certain other properties of their narrative voice resist identification. While the Captain tends to exaggerate the importance and consequences of certain events, Dowell understates crucial issues;⁵ the reader, relying on his own judgement, can recognize these occasions and, as a result (in contrast with the narrators’ interest!), s/he is distanced from the narrator’s position. Speaking of their relationship with the Ashburnham family, *The Good Soldier*’s narrator, Dowell refers to what he calls an “extreme intimacy” (9) between the two couples, and this ambiguous construction characterises not only the seemingly perfect, but in fact, false state of their gilded relationship, but also the way the narrator is related to the reader. Through the choice of words, Dowell – probably unconsciously – offers us a clue to interpreting their relationship and, also clarifying our own connection with him. In his paper entitled “Who Framed The Good Soldier? Dowell’s Story in Search of a Form,” Frank G. Nigro argues that “Dowell’s pseudo-structure, a structure based on a false or even artificial sense of ‘intimacy,’ becomes a sort of exoskeleton, like the windy, skeletal, Athenian Parthenon” from which the

⁴ I use the word *ethics* in the Levinasian sense, thus I do not intend to give a moralizing reading to these texts, but I wish to explore the *ethical situation of responsibility*.

⁵ They want to remain accurate concerning the events, but their memory either embellishes or distorts them. Barry D. Bort also highlights the significance of Dowell’s auto-suggestion, saying that “he, like Edward [or Störr], is a victim of self-delusion, insisting on the wonderful serenity of their foursome, yet still aware too of its actual horror” (196), and indeed, at some points, he either ignores or understates the harsh facts of how Florence, Leonora and Edward have misled him for nine years. He does so in spite of being aware of his tragedy, as well as Edward’s and Florence’s suicides.

entire novel grows out (386). Intimacy is supposed to be a benign, gentle or, as *The Oxford Dictionary* defines it, “a cosy and private or relaxed atmosphere” necessary to establish precious interpersonal relationships, but Dowell’s choice of a much harsher and energetic adjective creates a discrepancy between the two words.

This duality also applies to the reader’s position in the case of *A feleségem története*, although Störr achieves the same result as Dowell by means of a very different voice. Both of them keep asking questions from the implied reader, not hiding their ignorance, and trusting the listener’s knowledge instead. These frequently repeated desperate questions appear at moments of entanglement, when the narrators cannot make head or tail of their own stories, therefore, both narratives are made up partly of remembering and partly of reliving-repeating moments of the past. These are points where the use of the psychoanalytical concept of *transference* seems especially rewarding, since past events are represented in the present in such moments of repetition, which are “a way of remembering, brought into play when recollection in the intellectual sense is blocked by repression and resistance” (Rimmon-Kenan 10). Thus, transferential repetition can be seen as an obstacle, but it also has another characteristic: as Freud claims, it is the only place where unconscious problems can be solved; “every conflict has to be fought out in the sphere of transference” (104). Here are some examples of how Störr and Dowell address the reader: „Most mondja meg nekem valaki, miért vettem én ezt feleségül?”⁶ (Füst, *A feleségem* 191), „Ezt magyarázza meg nekem, aki tudja”⁷ (374), „És ténfergek köztük, és semmit se tudok – mi ennek a titka?”⁸ (162) or “I don’t know; I don’t know; was that the last remark of hers the remark of a harlot, or is it what every decent woman, county family or not county family, thinks at the bottom of her heart? Or thinks all the time for the matter?” (Stannard 13); after telling all the tragedies except for Edward’s suicide, Dowell asks the reader about his own dilemma: “For I ask myself unceasingly, my mind going round and round in a weary, baffled space of pain – what should these people have done? What, in the name of God, should they have done?” (148) What is common between the two otherwise very different narrative strategies and ways of address is the almost obsessive insistence on the lack of the narrators’ knowledge, and the almost desperate appeal to the listener or reader.

⁶ “Would somebody please tell me why I had to marry such a woman?” (156) The English translation for the most important Hungarian quotations from *A feleségem története* is provided in footnotes, using Ivan Sanders’s translation of the novel: *The Story of My Wife; The Reminiscences of Captain Störr*. NY: PAJ, 1987.

⁷ “Who will explain it to me?” (312)

⁸ “I keep wandering aimlessly in their midst and I learn nothing. What is behind all this?” (131)

These two aspects of *skaz* create a triangle between the characters, the narrator and the listener (or implied reader); a triangle which, by definition, is inseparable from transference and ethnicity. The transferential model, as Peter Brooks says, “illuminates the difficult and productive encounter of the speaker and the listener, the text and the reader, and how their exchange takes place in an ‘artificial’ space” (51); transference, thus, defines a profoundly ethical conception of intersubjectivity, especially in our case, for both narrators are deceived husbands who represent their deceased wives through *dialogized monologue*.⁹ It is the ethical aspects of the triangle of narrator, character and reader that I am going to discuss in a comparative analysis of the two novels.

⁹ Peter Brooks uses this term in “Discourse in Psychoanalysis and Literature” (Rimmon-Kenan 11).

Referentiality, Transference and Ethicity

There are numerous views on how fictitious texts refer to the real world. Some theoreticians argue that they do not have reference to reality at all, while John Searle thinks they have what he calls “pretended reference,”¹⁰ others think that they refer to themselves, or that such texts refer to a different world (an especially tempting option in the case of certain genres, like science fiction or fantasy). The two novels discussed in this paper show that the question of referentiality is of little importance: interpretation is barely influenced by whether the reader shares Searle’s views or thinks that the characters in question really exist in our world (maybe without having the chance to meet them).

The only statement one can safely make, hoping for general agreement seems tautological: fictitious texts, with all their figures, places, events, and so on, are fictive. Historical novels, as well as memoirs and diaries, are also fictive in spite of all the included historical or personal data and references, because life can be turned into stories by narrating. In the same vein, it is easy to see that flesh-and-blood people can be turned into fictive characters, that is, they can be fictionalized. This is, however, a reciprocal procedure, since, at least in theory, nothing rules out the existence of fictive characters, and realistic personae are only separated from us by the act of *narration*. Whilst there are no grades of fictitiousness, compound cases of fictionalization are present in the two novels: both narrator-protagonists (always already textual beings) fictionalize their deceased wives.¹¹ Thus, we need to remain sceptic vis-à-vis the representation of the wives (Lizzy and Florence), not least because, for obvious reasons, these story-tellers (Störr and Dowell) are unreliable narrators. With their representational powers and supreme authority in shaping the text, they hold responsibility for the way the other characters appear in the novel. This is precisely the point where ethics and the ethical concerns of story-telling become a central issue.

My claim is that an important mechanism of these texts (which has never been extensively explored) can be brought to surface in a comparative analysis. Though it might appear to be no more than one more alternative approach to the texts, in fact, we might realize that we cannot remove ourselves from the story’s ethical dimension. In the form of feeling sympathy or animosity, every reader is affected. We can say that, most of the time, these two

¹⁰ Cf.: Searle, R. John. “The Logical Status of Fictional Discourse.” *New Literary History* 6.2 (1975): 319-32.

¹¹ Harmath Artemisz uses a chiasmus in order to highlight the dual nature of the process of fictionalization: „A feleség egyszerre jelen van, és kizárt, hogy jelen legyen” (90).

modernist novels maintain the illusion of reality, but even if it were not so, we would not be distanced, because when reading, we treat fiction as part of reality – performing “the willing suspension of disbelief” in Samuel Taylor Coleridge’s words. The interest of reading these texts from an ethical perspective becomes evident when we look at Zachary Newton’s definition of hermeneutic ethics,¹² which, as he sees it, is “both a topic within the text and a field of action outside it, that is, a narrative inquiry into the extent and limits of intersubjective knowledge in persons’ reading of each other, and the ethical price exacted from readers by texts” (25). Newton’s claim implies that, where first person narration shapes the plot, as in these two novels, we should primarily focus on the mode of representation, the act of story-telling (“Saying”) rather than on what is represented (“Said”), or in Jakobsonian terms, the *phatic* function of language dominates over the *poetic*. Newton suggests that “to learn more about the price (ethical confrontation), we need to leave the dimension of the ‘Said’ for ‘Saying’”¹³ (5). In other words, the problematics of ethics in narration can only be explored on the level of the narrator’s language use.

To show why “Saying” is more important than what is “Said” in *A feleségem története*¹⁴ and *The Good Soldier*, I shall start by looking at a few instances of how the texts work, because they give us clues to what these reminiscences mean to the narrators. When analysing narratological features in *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, Zachary Newton remarks that “closed stories or grasping too much onto stories result in paralyses (Life-in-Death)” (4). This applies perfectly to the narratives of Störr and Dowell, who want to hold together their entire personal history and find the turning points in their lives while telling the story to us. They are frozen into their own story in the past, with no way leading out of it. Time stops for Störr when he loses Lizzy (first when they are divorced and years later, when she dies), and also for Dowell when Florence, and later, Edward commit suicide. In both cases, it is as if two dramatic events filled up their receptive capabilities¹⁵ to such an extent that afterwards they

¹² He differentiates three subcategories of ethics in narrative prose fiction: narrational ethics, representational ethics and hermeneutic ethics.

¹³ “Said” and “Saying” (narrative act) – the latter is a performance, it is intersubjective; the surplus, the unforeseen and the self-exposure (Newton 3).

¹⁴ Although Schein Gábor notes that „a nyelv esetében az észlelés sohasem lehet egységes és a mondás szükségszerűen kifordul a mondottból,” he does not examine this correlation on the field of ethics, but only states that its insurmountable nature leads to the Captain’s vicissitudes (475).

¹⁵ In his late short essay on the “Mystic Writing Pad,” Sigmund Freud comes up with a spectacular metaphor to illustrate that impressions and memories are not stored at the same part of the mind. The celluloid layer of the Mystic Writing Pad is capable of receiving impressions which will be imprinted, stored in the wax slab – one part of the psyche receives the stimuli and the other stores it, but earlier impressions must disappear from the

are not able to store any new impulses, because they are only concerned with their memories. When narrating, they obsessively describe the events of these relatively short, frozen points in their lives. In the process of story-telling they become uncertain whether to talk about the past from a retrospective position, being aware of everything known to them at the moment of narration (including how they were betrayed), or to relive the past without showing any signs of posterior information. Thus, the two narratives are informed by the contrasting pulls of remembering and repetition.

They, however, do not make the same choice, and their respective decisions (originating from their different personalities) have a very spectacular effect on their narrative tone. Dowell's allegory clearly explains his own case: "If for nine years I have possessed a goodly apple that is rotten at the core and discover its rottenness only in nine years and six months less four days, isn't it true to say that for nine years I possessed a goodly apple?" (12). As we can see, his knowledge at the moment of the original experience prevails over his present awareness, thus he tends not to re-evaluate past events when narrating from the present. As a result, his tone is not angered when speaking about the signs of Florence's betrayal, but remains calm, and he often uses understatements for the same reason. Störr, in contrast, thinks retrospectively most of the time, highlighting signs of Lizzy's unfaithfulness from his present position of hindsight, and, as no one fails to notice, he keeps suspecting her throughout the novel, even in the most innocent cases. His paranoia and hyperbolic utterances originate from this view of the past events.

After this short, but necessary detour, I shall return to the question of how the two narrators try to revitalize their "frozen" lives. Störr and Dowell drop out from the flow of their lives and can only return as narrators of the stories of their wives, which have become – by originally marking the endpoint – their own stories. To "live in death," they keep retelling their history, but the futility of this might be gently expressed by the figure of Nancy in the last scenes of Ford's novel, who becomes crippled and whose verbal production is limited to the repetition of two utterances: "Shuttlecocks" and "*Credo in unum Deum Omnipotentem*" (Stannard 149, 160). Just like Nancy, the narrators keep on talking, which irrefutably shows

celluloid layer before new ones could be taken in. This metaphor also explains why Störr and Dowell cannot receive outside stimuli as long as the process of remembering occupies their present. My own, less spectacular, metaphor (being frozen into their past state) originates from the same concept: reality is not attractive for people who keep trying to relive their past by rethinking and remembering it. Citing Störr's own metaphor is also useful here; he describes what happened to him when he was "assured" of the affair between Lizzy and Dedin as follows: "Mert aztán nem gondoltam már semmire se. Minden elnémult bennem, megálltak a kerekem" (282).

the signs of life, and telling their stories makes them part of their old lives again, but in fact, they are emptied husks, left with nothing but a story. The first moment of utterance is already preceded by the act of “turning-towards” the listener, and this order inherently commands the implied-reader’s participation in the story, also suggesting that, because of the channelling of transference and ethical responsibility, we are destined to share the narrators’ burden. Newton expresses the very same idea when saying that “What produces merely a temporary release from living in his [the narrator’s] story – retelling it – not only return him to death-in-life, but similarly sentences every person whose ear he bends” (6). These examples indicate that “Saying” is more important than the “Said” both in Füst’s and Ford’s novels, and in order to learn more about the ethical aspects of these texts, the dissection of language at the level of “Saying” is necessary, since, as Levinas argues, ethical problems can appear only there. In what follows, first I shall explore how the discourse of confession relates to transference and ethnicity in the two novels.

Transference and Confession

Freud's concept of transference has been frequently applied to the reading of – mostly narrative – works of literature.¹⁶ In a reading of Füst's and Ford's novels, I shall stress the implications of psychoanalytic transference for the ethics of narrative, taking my cue from Freud himself, who is fully aware of the ethical as well as the technical difficulties arising from the phenomenon of transference, particularly transference love: "For the doctor, ethical motives unite with the technical ones to restrain him from giving the patient his love" ("Papers on Technique" 169). What makes the psychoanalytical insights concerning transference particularly relevant to the study of narrative fiction is the similarity between the types of intersubjective relationship obtaining between the narrator and the narratee on the one hand, and the analyst and the patient on the other.

Psychoanalytic narratives (the patients' accounts of their life) seem to invert the usual power relations between the story-teller and the listener, or at least to make them thoroughly ambiguous – and this is something that is paralleled in several literary narratives that dramatise the process of storytelling and narrating as a transaction. Since we can only rely on the narrator's presentation of the story, that is, on the text itself, our possibilities are limited by the teller's knowledge and willingness to represent the events and other characters. We can form an opinion of the others only by following what Störr or Dowell tells us about them. Although in practice, nothing prevents us from doubting the validity or truthfulness of their narratives, certain limitations of first person narration have to be accepted in order to interpret the text, or in an even better case, these limitations might be turned into clues. The relationship between the story-teller and the listener is necessarily ambiguous, because, although the reader's possibilities are clearly restricted by the text, we should also emphasize that the listener has a certain authority above the narrative. In other words, we might say that the agent's role can be occupied by the story's narrator, forcing all the other textual characters into a subordinate position, but at the same time, *A feleségem története* and *The Good Soldier* both make it clear that the narrators also depend on the reader, mainly because of the narratives' confessional nature.

¹⁶ Probably the most notable example is Peter Brooks, who considers transference to be the most useful concept when one tries to bring the discourses of psychoanalysis and literature together. "We constitute ourselves" he says "as human subjects in part through our fictions and therefore that the study of human fiction-making and psychic process are convergent activities and superimposable in forms of analysis. [...] psychoanalysis can lead us to models for literary study," and he finds the concept of transference to be the most effective, since "it is constituted between analysand and analyst" (Rimmon-Kenan 9).

Especially in “confessional” novels like *A feleségem története* and *The Good Soldier*, the listener fills the role of the father confessor and thus, perhaps, of a moral judge. In his paper on *The French Lieutenant’s Woman*, Bényei Tamás says that “The whole speech situation of the confession is based on the assumption that truth, lodged in our most secret nature, demands to come to the surface [...] Therefore, a special ritual has to be composed in which the articulation of the secret will seem to the speaker a kind of relief or release” (132). Dowell creates a very conceivable visual image of the speech situation which might serve as a symbolic space for transaction between him and the listener. It is a calm quasi-realm inhabited by the teller who confesses to the sympathetic, but utterly silent listener; it is also a sphere where transference takes place: “So I shall just imagine myself for a fortnight or so at one side of the fireplace of a country cottage, with a sympathetic soul opposite me. And I shall go on talking, in a low voice while the sea sounds in the distance and overhead the great black flood of wind polishes the bright stars” (15). Still, it is important to remark that, unlike literary characters, we cannot give direct feedback to Störr and Dowell, and even if they succeed in gaining our sympathy, the material transaction between us remains one-sided, *id est* they can offer their stories for judgement, but (as an inherent result of fictionality) they will never receive our opinion in any direct form; in other words, although we enter a discourse with the narrators, we cannot shape their way of storytelling – unlike the other fictive characters. Yet, an outsider is needed to interpret their stories without bias, because no matter how much they desire so, they cannot step out of their narratives, they cannot pretend to have cut their bonds with other people.¹⁷ Both narrators establish a personal connection with the implied reader in their very first sentences, and adapt to their position in the confession: “This is the saddest story I have ever heard” (9) – begins Dowell. Not very differently from this, Störr also establishes an intimate connection with the reader in his first sentence: „Hogy a feleségem megcsal, régen sejtettem”¹⁸ (9). This utterance is already duplicitous; as Angyalosi Gergely says, „Sokáig elhisszük a narrátornak, hogy valamilyen felismert igazság álláspontjáról tekint vissza múltjára” (29), which is not true, but only a pretence, and for this reason the reader is invited to unveil the *Truth* (its existence is inscribed in the genre of confession, even if such a thing is unreachable) behind the Captain’s life-story. Dowell’s opening sentence also betrays his uncertainty, because it is emphasized that he is not the writer or even the recorder of their story; he only heard it from Leonora and Edward. The significance of this curious disclaimer,

¹⁷ Instead, they can only step into other narratives, provided by other fictive characters. These *narrative men* (*hommes-récits*) and their role are also elaborated in this paper.

¹⁸ “My wife’s been unfaithful, this much I have long suspected” (5).

the narrator's referring to what is going to be his story as to a narrative he has *heard*, could not be overestimated in terms of the dynamics of the narrative transaction. Barry D. Bort is hardly exaggerating when he says that "*The Good Soldier* is a novel of repeated misunderstandings told by the person least equipped in point of maturity and intelligence to grasp its real importance" (200). Still, he is the one who must retell the story and not Leonora. She was also cheated on for nine years, but can live peacefully in her new marriage after Edward's death, whereas Dowell's life "freezes" at the end of the story, for he becomes a nurse again, repeating the basic scenario of his previous marriage, but now with the crippled Nancy.

This repetition on Dowell's part is not deliberate, and his helplessness is made explicit in the scene following Florence's death, when, in a cataleptic state, he keeps repeating that "Now I can marry the girl" (73). By this unconscious choice, though not immediately, he fits into his familiar pattern once again. "Up until the night of Florence's death, Dowell sees his relation to his wife as that of empowered subject to dependent object. He is both her nurse and her protector. Indeed, he defines his whole existence according to his role as her indispensable guardian: 'my function in life,' he writes, 'was to keep that bright thing in existence'" (Foss 228). When Florence ceases to exist, as a consequence, he marries Nancy and becomes her nurse, even though before Florence's death, Dowell never informed us about his attraction towards "the girl." He himself seems to be surprised by his claim, saying that "I had never had the slightest conscious idea of marrying the girl; I never had the slightest idea of caring for her" (73).¹⁹ This leaves two possible explanations for us: the first is that he *was* attracted to her prior to Florence's suicide, but because of being a married man, we (knowing Dowell's blameless and clean-handed nature) can suppose that he found it improper to express such adulterous longings in any form. The other, more likely, explanation is that, as he said, he had no distinguished affectionate feelings towards her, but, wrenched out of his accustomed nurse position by the wife's death, he immediately wished to change his role to that of an ordinary husband, and to marry Nancy was an obvious and enticing choice. At that time she was healthy, and Dowell had a slight chance to turn the tides and become the "empowered subject" himself, but the girl became disabled later, after learning about Edward's suicide. This grim mischance of fate forces Dowell to take up the role of the nurse once again, instead of living a happy life in marriage with Nancy.²⁰ For him, this demonic aspect of the repetition

¹⁹ Interestingly enough, the word *conscious* is missing from the original manuscript; it was inserted by Ford later.

²⁰ Chris Foss adds that "Florence was a trophy for Dowell, and Nancy is the ultimate fetish object – a pretty picture without content" (243). Though it is doubtful that Dowell considered his first wife a trophy, I partly agree with the second half of Foss's statement: Nancy becomes an object of attraction not because of her charming

of forms and patterns in life offers no escape from his already established roles, whereas, as we learn from the narrator, Leonora remarries and has a promising prospect for the future. This difference explains why it is Dowell who needs to tell the story, and furthermore, it might remind us that such moments of unconscious repetition are also transference scenes, where the untold tragedies of Dowell's life haunt his present in the form of distorted repetitions, causing him to relive the original experience in a new form. From this perspective, this explains the ending of the novel: throughout the text, Dowell is reluctant to describe the actual scene of Edward's suicide (to which he was the only witness; and ironically, the only narrated scene to which *he was* a witness); he keeps giving hints about the details, and already foreshadows his death in the opening pages, but still, he is able to tell the actual circumstances only at the very end of his confession, by starting the account with "It suddenly occurs to me that I have forgotten to say how Edward met his death" (161). After a brief summary, he has nothing left to say, because it was precisely these tragic events that motivated his narrative, and his driving force (which is to recollect, to reconstruct, to relive past events and to confess to an outsider) has petered out by the very end of the novel.²¹ However, scarcely any reader would argue that the "talking cure" healed him, providing for him a symbolic relief from his real problems by means of the narration.

qualities, but because Dowell needs a "replacement" after Florence's death. First she seems to change the marital set-up Dowell is used to (being the unimportant nurse dependent of his patient), but since Edward's suicide traumatizes Nancy, a kind of *status quo* is restored.

²¹ Frank G. Nigro's argument regarding Dowell's motives is quite unique among the innumerable papers on *The Good Soldier*; he (not in the most convincing way) suggests that Dowell contributes to the death of Florence and Edward, which he hides in the maze-like narrative: "Dowell manipulates novelistic techniques and sees through novelistic glasses whenever it proves convenient to his agenda, which is to lead the reader away from any suspicion of his complicity in the round of deaths in *The Good Soldier*," and "Ford suggests that Dowell really does have something he wishes to cover up" (385, 387).

Narrative Persons and the Subject Supposed to Know

To explain their reasons for trusting us with their tales, Freud's sentence, quoted above, might be useful once again. If we use Freud's statement²² in the extended sense, it is important to clarify that psychoanalysis and literary studies are not separated by a sharp divide, since psychoanalysis is also a narrative discipline. Peter Brooks compares therapy to a huntsman deciphering traces in the wood, which highlights the fact that both fields require active participation and interpretation from the *reader-interpreter*.²³ This suggests that, as Peter Brooks says, "mental health is a coherent life story, [whereas] neurosis is a faulty narrative" (49). As I shall show, both Störr and Dowell go through a comparable reconstruction process, trying to make their lives look fuller and more coherent than how they actually perceived it. Chris Foss also suggests that "In a sense, Dowell's own psychology is the real story of *The Good Soldier*" – which statement may further reinforce the relevance of exploring the features of the narrator's language use in a psychoanalytic context (227), also confirming Zachary Newton's basic tenet: to learn more about ethical confrontation in such texts, we need to leave the dimension of the "Said" for "Saying" (5).

Focusing on the psychoanalytical and transference aspects of these narratives has some further advantages. The concept of the *talking cure* is not a device exclusively for psychoanalytic purposes: we can say that every narrative can have a curative effect, and the hope to be relieved from the story's burden often serves (either consciously or unconsciously) as a motivation behind the act of telling. By the inherently vocative attribute of language, every narrative implicitly addresses a listener who can notice things that are unclear to the teller. Relying on Russell Grigg's argument, we could say that the role of the reader is to act as a guarantee; "His presence is the guarantee that this work of speaking [the therapy or narrating] to no end into the void actually means something, even well before he is able to know *what* it means" (qtd. in Ragland-Sullivan 104). Thus, the addressee of the narrated story, called *le sujet supposé savoir* in Lacan's terminology, inevitably occupies a position very similar to that of a psychoanalyst.²⁴ Peter Brooks also argues that "it is the potential of

²² "For the doctor, ethical motives unite with the technical ones to restrain him from giving the patient his love" ("Observations on Transference-Love" 169).

²³ Relying on the same logic, another parallel can be made between psychoanalysis and a concrete literary genre, namely, detective fiction (Brooks 47). In these roles, the agent constructs a coherent system around a few given points, that is, creates a narrative just like the psychoanalyst.

²⁴ Störr goes to a psychoanalyst twice in his life. On the second occasion, he is thinking about abandoning Lizzy and settling in a foreign country, but before he would do that, he needs to hear the supposedly clairvoyant

interpretation on the part of ‘the subject supposed to know’ [...] that sets the transference going” (Rimmon-Kenan 13). However, in the case of *A feleségem története* or *The Good Soldier*, direct interaction between the teller and us is impossible, and thus the relationship remains one-sided. This fact, however, cannot change the original motivation behind storytelling, that is, the fact that the tellers entrust us with their tales, hoping a solution to the mysteries of their own lives.²⁵ As Slavoj Žižek states in *The Sublime Object of Ideology*:

we suppose in advance the presence in the other of a certain knowledge [...] This knowledge is an illusion, it does not really exist in the other, the other does not really possess it, it is constituted afterwards, through our – the subject’s – signifier’s working; but it is at the same time a necessary illusion, because we can paradoxically elaborate this knowledge only by means of the illusion that the other already possesses it and that we are only discovering it.

(56)

Peter Brooks’s metaphor of the huntsman appears to be more pertinent now; it is implied by him, Lacan and also by Žižek that first, it is necessary to assume that there are traces and then it might become possible to identify the source of a symptom. Still, in spite of the illusory nature of transference and this knowledge, “we cannot bypass it and reach directly for the Truth: the Truth itself is constituted *through* the illusion proper to the transference – ‘the Truth arises from misrecognition’” (Žižek 57). This error will necessarily be part and condition of the Truth even if eventually the subject (with outside help) can come up with valid explanations. This is precisely what happens in the two novels. The question is how the narrators establish such an intimate relationship with the reader that can help in identifying what they are looking for, namely, their Truth.

analyst’s opinion, who, after listening to Störr’s questions and doubts, reassures him that “ez a világ nem is úgy van megcsinálva, hogy elrendezni lehessen,” (227) that is, he confirms that he does not know the answers to the Captain’s questions, either. This telling scene might be read as a *mise-en-abyme*, an avowal that although the listener or the analyst seems to be an outsider who can provide help, (s)he, in fact, also becomes involved in the story (it turns out that the analyst would be glad to run away from his wife, too) and thus, his knowledge is also very limited.

²⁵ Dowell admits that he cannot come up with an expansive explanation, but he still hopes that the reader might be able to do so: “The things were all there to content everybody; yet everybody has the wrong thing. Perhaps you can make head or tail of it; it is beyond me” (Stannard 151).

The two novels' stress on the narrative contract,²⁶ on the psychological, epistemological and ethical implication of the "intimacy" between teller and listener is reinforced by the fact that both texts contain mise-en-abyme episodes of storytelling. These episodes allow us to focus on the other aspect of the ethical dimension; namely, on the link between the narrator and other literary characters. Though it would be difficult to deny that all the characters in a tale are represented from the narrator's perspective in first person narrated texts, we should not forget, either, that even these "less privileged" personae can influence the flow of narration; here I do not mean the plot itself, but the way how the narrators construct their stories.

The mise-en-abyme episodes point to a curious aspect of the ethical relationship between the narrator and other characters. Störr and Dowell encounter characters other than their wives who are decisive influences on their life-stories. Moreover, they both meet people who tell Störr and Dowell their own tales which, in turn, affect the narrators' mode of telling. As a result, the story we are listening to is not coming directly and exclusively from Störr and Dowell – they cannot keep their narratives intact from other fictive characters' interpretations. Borrowing and slightly modifying Tzvetan Todorov's term, we can say that the most important *narrative persons*, or *hommes-récits*²⁷ in *The Good Soldier* are Leonora, Edward and Mr Bagshawe, and in *A feleségem története*, the scale-man (*mázsamester*) fulfils this role.

For more than nine years, Dowell has not even suspected his wife Florence of unfaithfulness, and even when he learns about it, the realization is not the result of his own deduction: the truth is revealed to him by Edward and Leonora (his wife) on two separate occasions. Similarly to Störr, Dowell problematizes the act of narration, and when he says that "I don't know how it is best to put this thing down – whether it would be better to try and tell the story from the beginning, as if it were a story; or whether to tell it from this distance of time, as it reached me from the lips of Leonora or from those of Edward himself" (15), he highlights the tension between his present knowledge and his past experience, as well as the

²⁶ Ross Chambers claims in *Story and Situation: Narrative Seduction and the Power of Fiction* that "narrative is most appropriately described as a transactional phenomenon. Transactional in that it mediates *exchanges* that produce historical change, it is transactional, too, in that this functioning is itself dependent on an initial *contract*, an understanding between the participants in the exchange as to the purposes served by the narrative function, its 'point.' Although narrative content is not irrelevant, of course, it is this contractual agreement as to point that assigns meaningfulness to the discourse" (8).

²⁷ "Characters who exist to give birth to a new narrative, to a further structure of embedding in the narrative situation" (qtd. in Brooks 78). The original, detailed description of the concept can be found in Todorov's *The Poetics of Prose*.

fact that what is supposed to be his own story comes from other people. His importance as a character is secondary, but, as narrator he still has supreme authority, which might seem contradictory. It is impossible to clearly identify Leonora's *filtering agency* in the plot, but her interpretations haunt Dowell's narrative voice. We are entitled to doubt or discredit certain parts that relate episodes when Dowell was not present, but there is no textual evidence of any suspicion on Dowell's part towards what Leonora said. In fact, Dowell is an unreliable narrator also for this reason, and not only because of his intention to make this story of betrayal more acceptable, less painful for himself.

Mr Bagshawe, one of Dowell's *narrative men*, appears only twice in the novel: he had put up Florence, her father, and her previous lover and servant Jimmy in his manor when they had travelled to England – not long before Florence met Dowell for the first time. Mr Bagshawe does not seem to be an important character at this point, but later – and this is characteristic of Ford's narrative technique – he returns as the only one who knows about Florence's ignominious affair with Jimmy. Thus, he partly functions as a catalyst to the woman's death. In the short scene of his second appearance, he starts an unwanted discussion with Dowell in the hotel where the two couples reside. While they are talking, Florence rushes through the lounge, coming from the park where she had glimpsed Edward confessing his sincere love to his new (and last) lover, Nancy. Catching a glimpse of Florence running to her room, Mr Bagshawe recognizes her, and, not knowing that they are husband and wife, tells Dowell that: ““By Jove: Florry Hurlbird. Do you know who that is?” he asked. ‘The last time I saw that girl she was coming out of the bedroom of a young man called Jimmy at five o’clock in the morning. In my house at Ledbury. You saw her recognize me’” (72). Right after this scene, Florence commits suicide with prussic acid, but Dowell thinks, mistakenly, that she had a heart attack until Leonora tells him the truth, that is, that Florence had no heart problems at all, and that she poisoned herself after witnessing Edward's betrayal. The real reason for the suicide in Dowell's understanding, however, is not what Leonora tells him (Florence seeing Edward and Nancy on the park bench), but he keeps thinking that Mr Bagshawe's appearance and a coincidence (the date was 4th August) made Florence desperate enough to end her life. According to R.W. Lid, in order to emphasize Dowell's blindness to the truth, Ford “makes the pages surrounding the death of Florence among the swiftest moving in the novel. The reader is given no opportunity to question or to doubt events” (67). Instead of accepting the obvious facts, Dowell constructs another theory as a mechanism of self-defence:

If it had been merely a matter of Edward's relations with the girl I dare say Florence would have faced it out. She would no doubt have made him scenes, have threatened him, have appealed to his sense of humour, to his promises. But Mr Bagshawe and the fact that the date was the 4th of August must have been too much for her superstitious mind. You see, she had two things that she wanted. She wanted to be a great lady, installed in Bramshaw Teleragh. She wanted also to retain my respect.

(81)

He shifts the focus onto the date and offers himself an understated, and in a sense, ridiculous solution to settle his qualms about Florence's death. The effectiveness of his self-comfort becomes clear if we consider how rarely he speaks about Florence after this explanation. The above argument offers a possible reason for Florence's sudden disappearance from the narrative about half-way through the novel as well; but more importantly, this case provides a convincing example of the *narrative man's* (Mr Bagshawe here) power to change the whole course of narration, which comes from the basic proposition that storytelling has the power to change human relationships.

Edward's case is quite similar to Mr Bagshawe's, since both of them have only one meaningful conversation with Dowell, which in both cases alters the way he constructs his narrative around the most important points provided for him by Leonora. For nine years, Edward was talking to him about nothing but hunting, his rifle-association, his magistrate duties and estates, yet, not long before his suicide, he confesses his true feelings about Nancy, who has already left for India, despite their mutual love. This final act of Edward's, that of leaving his story behind to Dowell, is very similar to Dowell's act of narration – their life ends where the story finishes (as I have already mentioned, Dowell ends the narrative with the description of Edward's death), but they still want to give solace to the listener by a faint consoling gesture. Dowell says to the implied reader that "at any rate there is always Leonora to cheer you up; I don't want to sadden you" (161) just before we watch him witnessing the suicide of Edward Ashburnham, who, already with a penknife in his hand, but confident that Dowell will not try to intervene, looks at him with "soft and almost affectionate" (162) eyes. Thus, Edward's death (together with Florence's) triggers Dowell's narrative, but in the Captain's case, these last emotional moments and his summary of the nine years change the narrator's approach to his figure. Partly because of Edward's contribution to his present knowledge, Dowell insists that he holds no grudge against the man who had been his wife's secret lover for nine years. He makes this clear in the first chapter: "I don't want you to think that I am writing Teddy Ashburnham down a brute" (14). In this utterance we can identify

two of the primary features of the narration, namely, Dowell's biased tenderness towards the Captain after his suicide, and what I illustrated earlier with Dowell's example of the "goodly apple that is rotten at the core": throughout the novel, he wants to pretend that his present knowledge of the narrated time does not exist, thus, he tries to tell the story as it occurred to him in the past. One might realize that these two features are somewhat incompatible, because Edward's unfortunate death influences Dowell's manner of speaking about him from the beginning of the text, but we should also note that this is the consequence of Dowell's uncertainty as to how he should construct the narrative. He wishes to keep the story intact from his present knowledge, but he fails to do so, because the *narrative persons* inherently influence the process of reconstruction. Thus, the *narrative persons* might be seen as allegorical figures who embody the very (f)act of narration itself: the fact that a narrative inevitably and necessarily differs and digresses from the events as they were experienced.²⁸ Therefore, these figures are the figures of narration itself.

In *A feleségem története*, the most remarkable example of what Todorov calls a *narrative man* is the scale-man. His figure also embodies the act of narration, including its distorting nature, the performative and the vocative aspects, and the implied ethical responsibility, but unlike previous examples, the scale-man's story is told in the form of a parable. Because it is embedded in this unique speech act, I shall treat the scale-man's example with special attention. Starting out from the paradoxical nature of the parable, I shall give a close reading of Störr's rhetoric, and try to explore how this scene shows that transference is present throughout the entire text, and also, how the fictive characters, the narrator and the listener are connected to one another by a bond which is inherently ethical.

²⁸ Füst Milán's idea, articulated in *Látomás és indulat a művészetben*, describes the impossibility of the reconstruction of the past in a similar way: „Az ember képzeletével állandóan újjá teremti maga számára a világot, amellet viszont el is rontja vele az életét természetszerűleg” (51).

The Scale-Man's Parable

As I have already noted, in *A feleségem története*, it is the scale-man (*mázsamester*) who fills the role of the *narrative-man*. His example is also unique for the reason that his tale is told by the Captain to Lizzy in a parabolic speech act. This example is different from Leonora's, Edward's and Mr Bagshawe's case, because, unlike them, the scale-man does not appear in the narrative as a regular character; he is only present as (the protagonist of) a story. During a quarrel with Lizzy, Störr tells her the scale-man's story as follows:

- Volt nekem egyszer egy mázsamesterem, igen derék, ügyes ember, [...]s ezt az embert egy nap elég csúnyán megcsalta a felesége, illetve rájött, hogy megcsalja – zártam le az első tételt, s itt szünetet tartottam, mert sodortam magamnak egy cigarettát.
 - S hogy ezt hogy tűrte a mázsamester, hogy nem, erről semmit se tudok, elég abból annyi, hogy egy nap elvált tőle, megszakított vele minden kapcsolatot. Csakhogy ez se segített. Úgyis izgatott ember volt, a boldogtalan fájtán semmi se segít – most még izgatottabb lett. S addig-addig, míg egy nap rá nem szánta magát, és mégiscsak hazament. S ott ugyan elfogadott még egy csésze teát a felesége kezéből, de meg is fojtotta rögtön utána. – S itt újra szünetet tartottam.
 - És ezt mért meséli nekem? – szólalt meg a csendben. – Ez talán példázat?
 - Mondjuk, hogy példázat vagy akármi – feleltem én.²⁹
- (88)

Although this is obviously a secular parable, based on the choice of name (*mázsamester*), it would also fit among the parables in the New Testament. The figure of the *mázsamester* itself already includes the possibility of a metaphorical or allegorical reading, which is crucial in many parables of Jesus as well (e.g. the Doorkeeper, the Wicked Tenants, the Sower and the Seed, the Serving Two Masters, The Prodigal Son, the Vineyard Workers, and so on). The figure of the *mázsamester* and even the word itself implies a sound judicial faculty, temperance, the right sense to estimate and weigh the “real” value, or measure the worth of all things, and we might also recall the figure of Justitia with her scales. He is supposed to have high authority, control over something, and in Störr's narrative, at first he appears as an example to follow. He recurs in the novel every now and then, but only as a *story* – he is not easier to imagine, or as Eichenbaum says, draw than the landlord (whose name also indicates authority – *háziuram*, *házigazdám* in the original text). It is partly due to his name and the parabolic speech act in which he first appears that his figure is unrealistic and mythicized. Störr, however, tries to embed him in a realistic universe later by telling us his proper name: Kilián Péter. Needless to say, this feeble attempt of verification is in vain, and throughout the

²⁹ The immediate context of this scene is provided in the appendix.

rest of the story, he is referred to as *mázsamester*. Still, the attempt itself is very telling, because it shows how the Captain “uses” other characters in his narrative. They are arbitrarily dragged into the story like marionettes whenever Störr can project his own opinions into them; he makes them utter what originally he wants to, but being reluctant, he does not do so, and, in an attempt to avoid the ethical consequences, he tries to distance himself from his own responsibilities. Thus, instead of saying that “Lizzy, I will strangle you if you dare to leave me,” he puts his own words into the scale-man’s mouth, building a separate story around him in order to exemplify the possible consequences of their actual relationship, and also, to put an end to their argument.

This parable haunts the rest of the novel; it alters Lizzy’s behavior, and, more importantly, it keeps Störr thinking that he has ensured his wife’s faithfulness. It is only near the very end of the novel, right after when the Captain finds Lizzy on a departing train with her assumed lover Dedin, that he has to admit: Mert nem vagyok én mázsamester. Mert hogy én ennek az asszonynak a hóhéra legyek...” (326). He no longer believes that he would be able to control his wife with the help of a story told to him by another man. He realizes that in their unique situation with Lizzy, the effect of a retold, a constructed tale cannot last forever, because he cannot repeat what the scale-man has done. It seems that the difference between the fictive world (or the world which was fictionalized through the act of narration) and “reality” lies here, and this difference can be understood on a fundamentally ethical plane.³⁰ By asking „Ez talán példázat?,” Lizzy recognizes the parable as a figure of speech, but only taking it literally would allow her to enter its realm. It is seen as figurative language, which prevents any moment of epiphany in reality (Miller 146-47).

Störr’s story about the scale-man is parabolic, but not in the traditional sense, because it becomes one only through the act of narration. To show the importance of this difference, it is necessary to emphasize the genre’s general characteristics. In his book *Az újszövetségi példázatok irodalma: Pétika és teológia*, Mártonffy Marcell says that the basic form of the

³⁰ „S ezek a jegyzetek talán éppen erre valók. Hogy pótoljak velük valamit, minthogy annyi mindent elmulasztottam az életben. Mert semmit se tettem, és semmit se mondtam akkor és ott, mikor annak helye és ideje lett volna. Mit csináljak?

Két dolog azonban mindenestre kiderült a történetekből. Az egyik ez: hogy se megölni nem fogom én tudni soha, se szétverni azt a fitos orrát, vagy összetörni, ahogy annyiszor akartam. Mert ha most nem, akkor igazán soha többé. És hiába példálóztam én a mázsamesterrel. Ugy látszik, valami retteneteset akarok én, csakhogy elégtelen vagyok ehhez...” (237) – summarizes Störr after letting Lizzy leave without any kind of retribution. The only possible field to take revenge would be the realm of narrative, for he has representational authority over Lizzy’s figure, but his intention is not to take revenge, rather he strives to create a just representation of the wife.

parable is the story, the narrative [*történet*], which distinctly separates it from the simile the basic form of which is the sentence, or rather the utterance [*mondat*] (23). In Störr's case, the latter would be too explicit and probably it would have less effect on Lizzy as a result. Something like "Lizzy, I will strangle you just like the scale-man did his own wife, if you dare to leave me," would be unreasonable, because in fact, Störr does not want to threaten his wife, rather, he wants to have control over her, and this scene shows that he can only achieve it through story-telling – both in the scale-man's example and on the level of the whole narrative.³¹ Following the scale-man's precedent is not a viable option for the Captain, this parable can only reach Lizzy as a story, it can never *happen*. I emphasized the importance of the performative aspect in both narrators' use of language very early in this paper, but here it shall be noted again that parables, either biblical or secular, are genuinely performative: "A parable does not so much passively name something as makes something happen. A parable is a way to do things with words. It is a speech act" (Miller 139). Indeed, Störr's parable is performative;³² its effect is the Captain's (limited and temporal) control over Lizzy, but it also ensures that he will never repeat what the scale-man has done.

The nature and purpose of parable is paradoxical, which further enriches this brief scene. J. Hillis Miller notes that "Etymologically the word means 'thrown beside,' as a parabolic curve is thrown beside an imaginary line going down from the apex of the imaginary cone on the other side of whose surface of the parabola traces its graceful loop from infinity and out to infinity again" (135). Störr and Lizzy are in the middle of a row, when, running out of further reasonable arguments, Störr "throws in" the scale-man's parable as a kind of *ultima ratio*, and it can be said that he does succeed in creating the desired effect by telling this parable. He consciously inserts longer breaks into the story in order to increase the tension, eventually forcing Lizzy to guess and articulate the purpose of his speech act. Regarding its nature, parabolic speech is a device of cognition, but at the same time, it is also an obscure and vague parlance [*homályos beszéd*]; furthermore, as Mártonffy highlights, it is

³¹ Dowell's basic attitude towards his deceased wife is similar; he does not aim to (or simply cannot) represent her as a real flesh-and-blood person who is/was equal to him, but he wants control over her: "when it has been necessary to talk about her [Florence] to Leonora or when for the purpose of these writings I have tried to figure her out, I have thought about her as I might do about a problem in Algebra" (120) – says Dowell, and this is exactly how he should *not* try to treat Florence in order to understand her. She was not a logical system of numbers and thus cannot, should not be treated so. There is no access to her figure in which leaving the ethical aspect of narrating untouched is possible.

³² The other characteristic aspect of the narrators' use of language, that is, the vocative aspect, the moment of "turning towards" the listener is also a prevalent feature of parables. As Mártonffy says „A parabolikus kommunikáció nemcsak kilátásba helyezi, hanem tematizálja is a megértést. Úgy is felfogható, mint a megértő odafordulás előbbvalóságának folytonos kijelentése" (26).

not only a speech act which *offers an explanation* through the combination of a pictorial field with a conceptual one, but also a riddle which *requires explanation* and interpretation from the listener (64-65). In this respect, Lizzy might feel puzzled and uncertain about her husband's intentions, but from Störr's perspective, the example he has provided may suffice as an overall explanation to their current situation. I believe, however, that this speech act rather serves as an attempt to release the Captain from the burden of ethical responsibility. Throughout the novel, he quotes, paraphrases or simply speaks through other depthless, unrealistic characters when they are needed to reinforce his own arguments. This parabolic speech act is not an exception, moreover, the genre is supposed to liberate him from ethicity to a great extent (but never fully!), since "the categories of truth and falsehood, knowledge and ignorance, do not properly apply to it" (Miller 139). Eventually, escaping ethicity remains impossible even in the scene when the scale-man's parable is told/narrated, because the paradoxical nature of the genre, as it were, backfires.

The scene of narrating the parable also involves the implied reader in a way that illustrates how the triangular ethical structure works on the micro-level of the text, basically through a version of narrative transference that is pervasively present throughout the text. When Störr reports his own conversations, in numerous examples it cannot be decided where the self-quote ends and the internal discourse, meant to the implied reader, begins; we cannot tell whether he quotes himself talking to Lizzy in the past [*mimesis*], or what we read is already his recounting, a part of his narrative [*diegesis*]. The Captain's answer³³ to Lizzy's question is definitely a reported sentence, but after that period, the addressee can hardly be identified. Störr goes on to repeat his answer in a slightly modified form: „Lehet, hogy példázat – ismételttem rekedten –, vegye, aminek akarja. Egy kétségtelen: hogy az ilyesminek csakugyan semmi értelme, mert minek megfojtani egy asszonyt? Az is csak emberi lény, annak is csak kell a levegő – mondja magának az ember” – the first sentence is seemingly still a reported sentence addressed to Lizzy, but his final comment might suggest that the rest is no longer a verbatim quote from their conversation, rather it seems that the listener is allowed to witness the Captain's thoughts. The next couple of sentences, however, in true transferential fashion, might be addressed either to the listener, to Lizzy, or even to the scale-man: „És mégis megteszi. S az ilyesmi túl nagy beavatkozás is a világ menetébe, mindezt tudjuk, ő is tudta – s ha már megtette, mi haszna belőle, ugye? Csakúgy szenvedett, csakúgy emésztődött tovább is az asszony után...” (89). The scale-man is the referent of the personal pronoun „ő”

³³ „Mondjuk, hogy példázat vagy akármi – feleltem én” (88).

in the second sentence, and with this reference, Störr shifts between the addressees once again, and goes on saying: „Mondtam is neki utóbb: - maga egy nagy számár volt, Kilián Péter – mert így hívták...” Seemingly, the opening formula suggests that the addressee was the scale-man, and their conversation is directly quoted, but here, the problematic word is „*utóbb*,” because it is unclear whether Störr refers to a possible second conversation with the scale-man (which took place after the argument with Lizzy), or what follows happened at the same time when he was told about the murder. Ambiguity lingers on, since Störr continues with another indefinite time-adverbial: „*Akkor ő már túl volt mindenben, már nem is volt mázsamester,*³⁴ a dokkokon dolgozott, ahol nemigen kérdezik, ölt-e valaki.”

As a result of this narrative technique, it is always uncertain whether he addresses the listener or Lizzy. We are put into the centre by Störr’s motion of “turning-towards,” by the confessional nature of the narrative, and also because he considers the listener to be the *subject supposed to know*. Still, because of the constant workings of transference, ours is a spectral presence; the text which seems to be told to us, is in fact addressed to Lizzy. The narrator addresses the deceased wife, who is much more important than the silent listener, the inheritor of the story.

Thus, the wife is recreated in a transference fashion through the speaking voice; she comes into existence by the act of narration. She is revitalized, but the responsibility we have over the dead remains a burden weighing on the narrator, thus ethical dilemmas are constantly present in the process of narration. The novel’s epigraph³⁵ is a prayer, which is important not

³⁴ After telling the scale-man’s parable to Lizzy, Störr describes the effect it had on him: „Az agyam elborult, a halántékom lüktetett – közben pedig éreztem ám, hogy rajtam a szeme, de nagyon is – nagyon vigyázott minden mozdulatára, s ezt jól tette. Mert el tudom képzelni, egy ügyetlen szót szól, s én máris nekiállok és szétrombolom ezt a lakást meg őt, de magamat is, ezért nem szabad nekem a végsőig elmenni, az *utolsó szavakig*” (88). By choosing the form of parabolic speech, he cannot tell the *final words* by definition, because, as J. Hillis Miller argues both kinds of parable tend to be parables about parable. Jesus spoke the Word of the Kingdom of Heaven (Logos), but he had to translate it into humanly comprehensive language, therefore, the original is never uttered (147-48). After he strangled his wife, the scale-man was bereft of his position, and thus symbolically of his right sense of estimation. He crossed over, but in spite of being aware of the harshness of his crime, in his trial he insisted that the unutterable last words would justify him: „Több igazam van, mint amit elmondani lehet. S az Isten úgy legyen irántam irgalmas. És maguk iránt is, bíró urak” (303). Störr might feel that his righteousness cannot be expressed directly and as a result he chooses the form of parable since it is “a mode of figurative language which is the indirect indication, at distance, of something that cannot be described directly [...] it transcends altogether direct presentation” (Miller 135).

³⁵ „Téged fennen szólítunk, hogy ilyennek teremtetted az embert s az embert szintúgy szólítjuk, hogy önmagáért mégis ő felelős... tekintsd hát ezt is, az ördögi felelőst emberi szívünkben, Uram! És ne tartóztasd meg szent szemeidet, hogy meglássák e nyomorúságot, de a szörnyeteget is, amely a bensőnkben rejtve lakik, mert hozzájárul ám az is ehhez, hogy a kísértések úgy etetik őt, valamint mikor hallevest adnának eléje. És ne vigy minket a kísértésbe, könyörgünk estefelé, csakhogy a bűn az ajtón kopog ám, sőt bejön a szobánkba, sőt egész az asztalig jön előre. Távoztasd hát el a forró serpenyőt, amelyen ég a húsunk, lévén az állat énbennem oly igen esendő.”

only because it emphasizes the vocative aspect of the narrative, but it may also mean that throughout the text, who is addressed is not directly present, because (s)he belongs to a transcendent sphere. (S)he comes into existence, as Massimo Cacciari says in *The Necessary Angel*, through the invocation of the unknown, the immeasurable – therefore, the addressee dwells in the very word, without invocation (s)he would not exist in any comprehensible form (10-11). Lizzy is dead, but brought back in a disembodied form by Störr's narrative, and because of the constant presence of transference, it is safe to assume that eventually, he is confessing as much to his late wife as to us.

From this perspective, the remarkably poetic fourth (closing) part of the novel can be seen as a speech of *apology*. In spite of starting it by saying: „Voltaképpen alig is van már mondanivalóm,” (331) it is the prolonged final part of the narrative which closes with Störr seeing Lizzy's apparition. When her ethereal figure appears,³⁶ Störr accidentally drops a bouquet of violets on the pavement in his great surprise. One of the most common symbolic meanings of violets is *faithfulness*, and shortly after this supernatural scene, Störr realizes that it was this grand feeling, his love towards Lizzy that governed his entire existence, and that his final purpose in life is to meet his late wife's apparition once again: „ma már minden bizalmamat abba vetem, hogy egy nap, verőfényes időben megint csak fel fog tűnni valahol [...] A lelkemet teszem rá, hogy ez így lesz. Különben minek élni? Mert én már csak erre várok, és mindaddig várni fogok, amíg élek. Ezt megígérem. Hogy kinek? Nem tudom” (401).³⁷ Jill Roberts notes that there is a kind of “ethical language [which] is pure apology, which Levinas defines as an inclination before the transcendent” (8), and I believe that the ultimate aim of Störr's narrative is not simply to rewrite his life, to try to make it more coherent by reconstructing and using everything to his liking, but primarily, it is an apology indirectly addressed to Lizzy. Although he seems to be in search for his *Truth* throughout the narrative, he becomes a wiser man by the end and relinquishes this unrealistic aim. The

³⁶ „Mintha nem is testi jelenés: csak a szelleme volna, mert oly csodásan fiatal is volt... lehetetlenül és érthetetlenül fiatal, mint akivel azóta semmi se történt – s az időnek nem is volna rajta foganatja” (393). Though Störr recounts the most important events shared with Lizzy, and tries to reconstruct her figure, eventually, nothing changes in him regarding her. On, another occasion he articulates almost the same idea: „És mégis, holott annyi minden állt már köztünk az időben, övele magával énbennem semmi se történt. Valamely elvarázsolt vagy megdermedt csendben lakott a szívem szomszédságában, egy másik szobában valahol – mondjuk úgy –, ahova csak be kellett volna nyitni, s ott volt ő, nagy csendbe merülve, s olvasta furcsa könyveit. S ez csak most derült ki, bizony, annyi évek után, hogy velem ez így van, s talán azért is, mert annyira nem akartam emlékezni rá” (357).

³⁷ The last two sentences also suggest that even Störr realizes by the end that the addressee's identity is uncertain throughout the text – it is more likely that he promises Lizzy to wait, and not the listener.

purpose of his reminiscences shifts from trying to provide an extended explanation for all the misfortunes in his life, to a sincere, humble apology to his wife.

The Patterns of Narration

In the case of *The Good Soldier*, I shall give a close reading to the opening pages – laying special emphasis on Dowell’s language use and tropes –, since, as R.W. Lid says “here we have the nexus out of which the story grows as it moves backward and forward through a maze of events” (35). The antagonism between life and art suggests that perfect mediation between the two realms is impossible. Since any retrospective narrative is inherently an artistic approach to the past, it falsifies reality on the one hand, but also offers genuine alternatives to interpret life on the other. Z. Newton gives a spectacular metaphor to illustrate the peculiar relationship between art and reality: “Life, being all inclusion and confusion, and art being all discrimination and selection, the latter, in search of a hard latent *value*, with which it is alone concerned, sniffs around the mass as instinctively and unerringly as a dog suspicious of some buried bone” (130). Thus, any attempt of “dis-covering” and purifying values buried by life can only happen through simplification in art. Although never with perfect accuracy, life can be reduced to art, to a story, or even to a chain of metaphors which originates from a recurring pattern.

Dowell’s recurring tropes provide the skeleton of his narrative; they establish the patterns of narration, and the first chapter can be read as his quest for the most adequate leitmotiv. Paul de Man “sees literature’s primary duty as that of fictionalizing into tropes its reading subjects” (qtd. in Newton 41), therefore, Dowell’s tendency to constrain and simplify his human relationships into tropes seems appropriate. Although this simile never returns, right in his second sentence,³⁸ he uses the image of a good glove to characterize their “extreme intimacy” with the Ashburnhams. He also describes it later as “the goodly apple rotten at the core,” and as a safe ship sailing upon a blue sea; he calls their quartet a “little four-square coterie” and a “safe castle” (10). These examples suggest that he wants to connect the visual image of a firm, secure, orderly, and aesthetically pleasing structure to their relationship, which, in reality, was characterized by betrayal and deceit. None of these tropes can become a leitmotiv in the narrative, since the symbolic firm structure of their foursome was destroyed when Leonora revealed everything to him – in fact, it never really existed because of the “physical rottenness of at least two pillars [Florence and Edward] of our four-square house” (Stannard 11).

³⁸ “We had known the Ashburnhams for nine seasons of the town of Nauheim with an extreme intimacy – or rather, with an acquaintanceship as loose and easy and yet as close as a good glove’s with your hand” (9).

The most appropriate and concise visual image or metaphor he can come up with regarding the relationship of the two couples is the *minuet* – it becomes a leitmotiv, and moreover, it can be read as a self-metaphoric image of how the text works.³⁹ This very formal and traditional dance (originating from seventeenth-century France) consists of a strict pattern of steps, a closed circle of movements with minimal physical contact. Thomas Secombe also notes that Dowell's method of narrating resembles a certain kind of dance, "four steps forward and then three back" (Stannard 229). After several unsuccessful attempts to provide an adequate metaphor, this particularly expressive image comes to Dowell by accident: "Permanence? Stability? I can't believe it's gone. I can't believe that that long, tranquil life, which was just stepping a minuet, vanished in four crashing days at the end of nine years and six weeks;" realizing that he composed the finest image so far, he suddenly exclaims "Upon my word, yes, our intimacy was like a minuet" (10). Their minuet is nonexistent in the narrated time, just like the image of the firm structure; however, the former can live on in the process of narration, because it is a genuinely dynamic activity involving the two couples, in contrast to the static four-pillared castle – which also explains why "You can't kill a minuet de la cour" (Stannard 10). Throughout the story, he desperately clings to the benign intimacy of their foursome, he cherishes the image of the minuet, which is "dancing away into the furthest stars" (10); and indeed, their minuet is eternalized by his speaking-voice and by the final text. Despite the fact that I have already claimed that the "talking-cure" does not heal Dowell, at least this effect of the narrative, the nearly idealized representation of their quartet might console him.

In *The Company We Keep*, Wayne C. Booth suggests "that narrative fiction in particular requires an initial act of assent and surrender, asking readers 'to follow story... to accept and pursue a pattern of desires imposed by an other'" (qtd. in Newton 64), which means that the implied reader too is bound to follow the patterns of narration enacted by the story-teller. Applying this notion to *The Good Soldier*, it shall be clear that Dowell's "silent listener" contributes to the story by fitting into its kaleidoscopic pattern, since (s)he perforce follows the minuet by reading the text in Dowell's composition. The quartet is reduced to Dowell and

³⁹ Another similarly self-metaphoric image of the text's mechanisms can be found in Dowell's seemingly insignificant description of his title deeds which are of *wampum* (10). As the footnote explains, the word means "Cylindrical beads threaded on strings and used by North American Indians as currency and as a substitute for writing." This short definition offers a sound interpretation: rowing beads on a thread is easily comparable to Dowell's method of narrating (especially as weaving wampum was also a substitute for writing). He records brief scenes one after the other which together make up a full-fledged composition. Maybe the sole discrepancy between his narrative and threading beads is that the former does not follow a linear order, and for this reason, the *minuet* is a more adequate self-metaphor of the text, because it even adopts the forward and backward movement of the unfolding story.

Leonora, but because of the presence of transference in the text, the listener is put into the dead characters' position – which is neither vivid nor utterly lifeless. The listener's presence makes the very act of story-telling possible, and (s)he further contributes by being turned into a kind of mediator between the narrator and other characters, into an essential element in the triangular structure of intersubjective relationships.

Conclusion

It appears that here I return to the point I began, namely, why both Störr and Dowell keep addressing the listener in a peculiar voice characterized by *skaz*, and how it affects the implied reader's presence in the text. In both novels, the listener first seems to fill the role of the father-confessor whom the narrators address directly, but gradually, this position changes partly due to the pervasive presence of transference: the addressee's identity becomes indeterminable in several cases – very often, what seems to be part of the narration might also happen to be a reported segment from a conversation of the past. As a result of this “in between” position, the listener gets involved in numerous intersubjective relationships, but cannot become a moral judge who stands beyond the ethical difficulties that arise from the representation of the dead. The narrators fall into a necessary illusion by considering the “silent listener” to be *the subject supposed to know*, but in truth, the implied reader does not experience the narrated story from the position of an omniscient outsider. Rather, he becomes the third point of the triangular ethical structure, next to the narrator and other fictive characters.

All the aspects explored in this paper are interconnected by the psychoanalytic notion of transference, and ethicity; and reading the two novels from this perspective leads to new possible interpretations. If we accept that Störr is confessing partly to Lizzy by placing the listener into an “in between” position, the last part, or maybe the entire novel can be read as a speech of *apology* to the late wife. In the case of *The Good Soldier*, Dowell's idealized concept of the *minuet* shall be emphasized, because it allows him to repeat and relive the shared past of their quintet in an artistic, modified form – although telling his story does not grant clairvoyance.

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Appendix

“The Scale-Man’s Parable” – Excerpt from *A feleségem története* (88-89)

– Volt nekem egyszer egy mázsamesterem, igen derék, ügyes ember, olyan, aki rakodómunkásokat is szerződtet, az angoloknál ennek stevedore a neve, elég gyakran jött ki a hajómra is mint bizalmi személy, jött egyik kikötőtől a másikig – s ezt az embert egy nap elég csúnyán megcsalta a felesége, illetve rájött, hogy megcsalja – zártam le az első tételt, s itt szünetet tartottam, mert sodortam magamnak egy cigarettát.

– S hogy ezt hogy tűrte a mázsamester, hogy nem, erről semmit se tudok, elég abból annyi, hogy egy nap elvált tőle, megszakított vele minden kapcsolatot. Csakhogy ez se segített. Úgyis izgatott ember volt, a boldogtalan fajtán semmi se segít – most még izgatottabb lett. S addig-addig, míg egy nap rá nem szánta magát, és mégiscsak hazament. S ott ugyan elfogadott még egy csésze teát a felesége kezéből, de meg is fojtotta rögtön utána. – S itt újra szünetet tartottam.

– És ezt mért meséli nekem? – szólalt meg a csendben. – Ez talán példázat?

– Mondjuk, hogy példázat vagy akármi – feleltem én. Ó, már akkor annyira voltam, majd szétszakadt a szívem. Nem törődtem én már semmivel. Az agyam elborult, a halántékom lüktetett – közben pedig éreztem ám, hogy rajtam a szeme, de nagyon is –, nagyon vigyázott minden mozdulatára, s ezt jól tette. Mert el tudom képzelni, egy ügyetlen szót szól, s én máris nekiállok és szétrombolom ezt a lakást meg őt, de magamat is, ezért nem szabad nekem a végsőkéig elmenni, az utolsó szavakig. Mert ismerem a természetemet. – Lehet, hogy példázat – ismételtam rekedten – vegye, aminek akarja. Egy kétségtelen: hogy az ilyesminek csakugyan semmi értelme, mert minek megfojtani egy asszonyt? Az is csak emberi lény, annak is csak kell a levegő – mondja magának az ember. És mégis megteszi. S az ilyesmi túl nagy beavatkozás is a világ menetébe, mindezt tudjuk, ő is tudta – s ha már megtette, mi haszna belőle, ugye? Csakúgy szenvedett, csakúgy emésztődött tovább is az asszony után... Mondtam is neki utóbb: – maga egy nagy szamár volt, Kilián Péter – mert így hívták...

– Akkor ő már túl volt mindenen, már nem is volt mázsamester, a dokkokon dolgozott, ahol nemigen kérdezik, ölt-e valaki? Amire ez a Kilián Péter így felelt nekem:

– Azok az Úristen napjai voltak a börtönben, kapitány... – Aztán hozzátette: – de azért ma is megtenném újra, meg én – és nevetett. – Mert van az úgy, hogy semmi sem segít, és hiába van önnek esze, ezt már csak az tudhatja, aki megpróbálta maga is. – Végül pedig odahajolt hozzám, és ezt súgta felém:

– Ostoba voltam, hogy elváltam tőle, tudja meg, ott kezdődik a dolog.

– No látja – feleltem én ennek az istenverte bitangnak...

Eddig szólt a történetem. Istenemre mondom, majd kiszakadt a szívem is, majd odavágódtam a vértolulástól. Mert hogy én szerettem a feleségemet, ez már nem volt akkor kétséges előttem. Ez a feleségem pedig ott ült, alig néhány lépésnyire tőlem, és remegett. Én pedig sírni tudtam volna, máris úgy fájt a szívem érte.

Aztán még fel-le jártam egy ideig.