

## *Being and Time: Max Frisch's Homo faber*

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### ABSTRACT

Time plays a central role in Max Frisch's *Homo faber*. Reading the autobiographic entries that comprise the novel necessitates navigating a convoluted temporal structure. In addition, the literary and cinematographic representations, which Walter Faber, the technocratic hero of the novel, obsessively produces, constitute an attempt to arrest the passage of time in the mechanically-produced image and word. Allusions to the Biblical «Garden of Eden», the Oedipus myth, and classical art and antiquity further complicate the temporal structure of the novel. Most importantly, the novel suggests that Faber is actually incapable of understanding life or death because he lacks an authentic relationship to time. This becomes significant because Faber pens the narrative of the novel from the hospital room in which in he awaits news of his impending death. Therein lies the problem: How can a man with no relationship to time face his own mortality? The answer offered here is that Faber must give birth to himself as a human being in time. The following essay addresses this possibility by focusing on two complexes of «falls» (i. e., «Zufall» «Fall» and «Unfall»), which begin and end the «First Station» of the novel. The first complex throws Faber into a primeval, conflated, «Eden-like» temporality; the second complex features Faber's «fall» from this original (pre)temporality into the discrete, limited, linear temporality characteristic of human experience. Thus, in the «Second Station» of the novel, Faber emerges as a human, senscient being able to face the inevitability of his death and the reality of his life in time.

Near the beginning of Max Frisch's *Homo faber*, in the desert near Tamaulipas, Faber insists: «Ich bin Techniker, und gewohnt, die Dinge zu sehen, wie sie sind» (25). If Faber indeed sees things as they are, why do

representational media, and indeed representation itself, play such an important role in his life? It would seem that Faber, in fact, takes every measure possible to mediate his vision of the world, transforming it through the filtering eye of his camera into a technologically biased view of reality. Similarly, every experience in the novel is mediated by a technical hand. As he sits in the hospital in Athens at the beginning of the second station of the novel, he bemoans the fact that they have taken his precious «Hermes-Baby»: «Ich sollte von Hand schreiben! Ich kann Handschrift nicht leiden [...]» (175). As Walter Jens notes: «Schon daß der Techniker Faber überhaupt *schreibt*, erscheint wie ein Widerspruch in sich selbst» (qtd. Schmitz, 224)<sup>1</sup>. It seems that Faber's insistence, that he is used to seeing things as they are, could not be more untrue – Faber transforms every human sense impression into a technologized image incapable of threatening his notion of a mechanical world. Faber uses technology to inoculate himself against reality by transforming every human sense impression into an inert technologized representation.

However, this is not where Faber's interest in representation ends: though he expresses a complete disdain for art in general, he falls in love exclusively with women, who are passionate about art. More specifically, he falls in love with women whose primary artistic interest revolves around antiquity, and even patiently accompanies Sabeth on a tour through Italy and Greece of the most important relics of classical art. When Faber makes small talk with Hanna in her apartment, inquiring about her work, Hanna, the archeologist, replies: «Ich kleistere die Vergangenheit zusammen» (149). In other words, she transforms time into space: she transforms the past into an object. Similarly, the artistic manifestations of antiquity, about which Sabeth is so passionate, also embody a temporal objectification of sorts – they manifest the past in the present, thus transforming a temporal progression into an object in space.

This transformation of time into space offers some insight into why representation seems so necessary to Faber. As the *Techniker*, who accepts reality «as it is», Faber would seemingly have no use for representation – that is if he could accept the true nature of reality, and the true nature of himself, not as a machine, but as a human being, subject to the passage and ravages of time. However, this is not the case. As Hanna astutely points out, technology is a trick that Faber uses to insulate himself against the world. Technology allows him to live life without experiencing it by suggesting that life without death is possible. As Faber recounts the conversation between Hanna and him: «Mein Irrtum: daß wir Techniker versuchen, ohne den Tod zu leben.

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<sup>1</sup> Originally from Walter Jens. «Max Frisch und der homo faber». *Die Zeit* 9 Jan. 1958.

Wörtlich: Du behandelst das Leben nicht als Gestalt, sondern als bloße Addition, daher kein Verhältnis zur Zeit, weil kein Verhältnis zum Tod. Leben sei Gestalt in der Zeit» (184). As a «Techniker» Faber attempts to live life as if he were not mortal – as if he would never die. The only way to avoid the reality of death is to avoid the reality of linear, finite, human time, because, according to Hanna, life is a *shape* in time.

Interestingly, Hanna defines life via the artistically-charged word, «Gestalt». As previously discussed, Faber loves women who transform time into space through art. On closer examination, his own pseudo-artistic pursuits, i. e., film-making and writing, can be seen as more than just a means of distancing himself from the realities of life and death — by mediating life through technological apparatuses, they also embody Faber's own attempts to transform time into space. Faber's writing, the context in which the entire novel is narrated, produces a convoluted temporality, which, at times, simultaneously expresses a past, present, and future. Thus, through his writing, Faber is able to avoid the reality of time, by transforming a linear temporal structure into the atemporalized object of his writing. Though the filming of his surroundings would not necessarily serve to detemporalize time, the way his film work is described expresses a similar breach of temporality. As Faber sees his films for the first – and, incidentally, only time – in Düsseldorf, he comments: «ich staunte, wieviel Sonnenuntergänge, drei Sonnenuntergänge allein in der Wüste von Tamaulipas, man hätte meinen können, ich reise als Vertreter von Sonnenuntergängen [...]» (202). It is not likely accidental that Faber's filmic object of choice is itself a most basic image of passing time: the sunset, the transition between day and night, transformed by film into an objectified image. As the film progresses to Italy, and the subject of his film is Sabeth instead of sunsets, Faber contemplates the unreal feeling of seeing the deceased alive and well on film: «Ihre Hände, die es nirgends mehr gibt [...] ihre Arme, die es nirgends mehr gibt – [...] Ihr Lachen, das ich nie wieder hören werde →» (206). Faber's characterization of these images of Sabeth function similarly to his images of sunsets: technologically preserved forever on film are the images of a living Sabeth – who, as fate has evidenced, is all too mortal and no longer exists. As with the sunsets, the passing of time is arrested through the cinematographic image. It is precisely these representations of temporal disruption — of past images in present time — that cause Faber to abruptly leave his films and Düsseldorf, lamenting: «Ihre zwei Hände, die es nirgends mehr gibt, [...] ihre Zähne, ihre Lippen, ihre Augen, die es nirgends mehr gibt, ihre Stirn: wo soll ich sie suchen?» (209).

Faber seems determined to avoid death and life at all costs, attempting to reach his goal by ignoring time. His attraction (post-Hanna) to exclusively younger women exemplifies this. Although Sabeth is, of course, the most

obvious example, Ivy, too, is more than twenty years younger than Faber, and even Faber's subtle flirtation with the stewardess is coupled with the remark that the woman was young enough to be his daughter (20). However, as Hanna reminds him (as paraphrased by Faber), his attempts at thus avoiding time are not entirely successful: «Mein Irrtum mit Sabeth: Repetition, ich habe mich so verhalten, als gebe es kein Alter, daher widernatürlich. Wir können nicht das Alter aufheben, indem wir weiter addieren, indem wir unsere eigenen Kinder heiraten» (184). There are portents throughout the novel that imply that no matter how hard Faber tries, his attempts at avoiding the passage of time, and eventual death, by transforming time into space are for naught – Faber fears he is running out of time, and must learn to face his own mortality.

The novel itself appears to be partially motivated by Faber's fear of death: the opportunity to write the narration is afforded by Faber's stay in the hospital in Athens, where he hopes to finally find out what is wrong with his stomach. Faber is convinced that the diagnosis will be certain death — at the end of the novel, he writes: «Ich habe noch keine Minute geschlafen und will auch nicht. Ich weiß alles. Morgen werden sie mich aufmachen, um festzustellen, was sie schon wissen: daß nichts mehr zu retten ist» (215). His repeated reference to his stomach pains throughout the novel, coupled with his resistance to having his maladies diagnosed by a doctor, suggest that he is indeed afraid that his suspicious pains indicate imminent death. Furthermore, the novel not only ends with suggestions of Faber's encroaching death, there are also subtle allusions to Faber's increasingly apparent mortality throughout the novel, particularly at the beginning. The first page describes Faber as «todmüde» (7), and as he looks in the mirror, before his collapse at the airport, he describes his reflection as «Scheußlich wie eine Leiche» (11). He metaphorically describes the desert as a «Totenreich» (26), though he qualifies this remark by insisting that he, as a *Techniker*, sees things as they are: naturally does not as a realm of the dead, but only as a desert.

Herein lies the central conflict of the novel: how does a person like Faber, who «has no relationship to time», as Hanna would say, face his own mortality – his human nature as a finite being subject to the passage of time? In order to face death, all Faber must do is learn to face time. But, how does Faber, a man who has learned – through various sophisticated means – to immediately transform time into space, learn to live with time as time? How does Faber learn to understand «Leben als Gestalt in der Zeit»? The answer in the framework of this novel is that Faber must give birth to himself in time – or rather, Faber must give birth to time. And, in order to give birth to time, one must return to the mythological origins of time: to reinvent time, one must return to Eden. Two major turning-points of the novel – the plane crash

that first gives Faber the opportunity to revisit his past through his acquaintance with Herbert, and the events surrounding Sabeth's death, which lead him to the discovery of himself as human in the second part of the novel – both revolve around a series of «falls». This paper will investigate Faber's reconciliation with time, and thus with life and death, through analyzing these two complexes of «falls» in reference to the Biblical «fall» of Adam, and as a commentary on the nature of time in the novel.

The novel begins with time problems – specifically with delays. In fact, the first sentence of the novel punctuates this fact: «Wir starteten in La Guardia, New York, mit dreistündiger Verspätung infolge Schneestürmen» (7). This is not where the initial time problems end. The novel proceeds with a series of waiting: the plane and its passengers wait forty minutes on the runway for takeoff. In Houston, everyone except Faber waits twenty minutes for refueling – Faber escapes the waiting game by passing out in the airport lavatory, which in turn causes the rest of the plane to wait for a tardy Faber. Faber cannot stand the fact that others are waiting for him: «ich hielt sie nicht aus, diese Warterei auf meine Person» (13), perhaps suggesting that his life has an intimate relation to time after all, and decides to (unknowingly) cheat fate by allowing the plane to fly on without him. His plans are, however, foiled by the stewardess, who finds him, exclaiming: «We're late, Mister Faber, we're late!» (14). He follows her to the plane, excusing himself for causing the delay: «Ich sagte, meine Uhr sei stehengeblieben, und zog meine Uhr auf» (15).

This series of temporal moments, suspended in waiting, which occur right before the accident, and Faber winding his watch are related: the symbolic act of winding the «stehengebliebene» watch, and the temporal suspension implied by «waiting» foreshadow the fact that in a few hours, time will stand still. A series of «falls» will land Faber in a pre-historic landscape, where time is transformed from a linear, finite, structure into a circular, conflated, «pre-historic» temporality.

This altered temporality is inaugurated by a complex of «falls» or, rather, as Faber calls it, a «Kette von Zufällen» (23). This extraordinary chain of events begins with the «fall» of the plane, constituting the «Unfall». Following the crash, Faber learns of the «Zufall» that the annoying German, Herbert, who was seated next to him on the plane, is Hanna's one time brother-in-law. As even the skeptical Faber admits: «Ohne die Notlandung in Tamaulipas (26. III) wäre alles anders gekommen; ich hätte diesen jungen Hencke nicht kennengelernt, ich hätte vielleicht nie wieder von Hanna gehört, ich wüßte heute noch nicht, daß ich Vater bin» (23). It is emphasized that this series of «falls» is related to temporality: the first thing Faber does after the emergency landing is wind his watch – again, and he later remarks

that it is «eigentlich ein Skandal, daß die zweiundvierzig Passagiere und fünf Leute der Besatzung nicht längst aus dieser Wüste befreit waren, schließlich reisten die meisten von uns in dringenden Geschäften» (34). Faber is desperately trying to maintain his definition of time as an object – as a business tool. Winding his watch is an action that insists that hours and minutes have some meaning in the desert. His claim that it is scandalous that they have not yet been rescued rests solely on the importance of time in the business practices of those stranded. Time, for Faber, is a business commodity to be used, spent, bought – he, at this point, has no understanding of time as a dimension upon which his very life is dependent.

However, the desert offers a turning point on this account – there are signs that Faber is slowly learning that time cannot be controlled as a business tool. Without electricity, Faber must break his compulsive shaving habit – thus displaying the passage of time on his face. Though he complains that for the 85 hours spent in the desert «es blieb uns nichts als Warten» (24), in contrast with his impatience en route, he seems strangely content with this fact – playing chess and chatting with Herbert to pass the time. In any case, the fact that, after they are rescued, he chooses to spend several weeks with Herbert drinking beer and laying in a hammock in the jungle – on a wild goose chase to find a friend he hasn't seen in twenty years – clearly demonstrates that time has attained new meaning for Faber. As he repeatedly clarifies, such behavior, and usage of time, is utterly inconsistent with the serious engineer he generally considers himself to be.

The temporal transformation that Faber begins to experience is mirrored by his description of the desert landscape:

Ich sehe die gezackten Felsen, schwarz vor dem Schein des Mondes; sie sehen aus, mag sein, wie die gezackten Rücken von urweltlichen Tieren, aber ich weiß: Es sind Felsen [...] Es gibt keine urweltlichen Tiere mehr. [...] Ich sehe auch keine versteinerten Engel [...] auch keine Dämonen, ich sehe, was ich sehe: die üblichen Formen der Erosion, [...] aber keine Gespenster. [...] Ich sehe auch kein Sintflut, sondern Sand [...]. Ich weiß nicht, wie verdammte Seelen aussehen; vielleicht wie schwarze Agaven in der nächtlichen Wüste. [...] Ferner weiß ich, daß ich nicht (wenn es im Augenblick auch so aussieht) der erste oder letzte Mensch auf der Erde bin [...]; wir stehen nicht in einem Totenreich, sondern in der Wüste von Tamaulipas, Mexico [...] Ein Flugzeug ist für mich ein Flugzeug, ich sehe keinen ausgestorbenen Vogel dabei [...] Ich kann mich auch nicht entschließen, etwas wie die Ewigkeit zu hören [...] Ende der Welt, wieso? Ich kann mir keinen Unsinn einbilden, bloß um etwas zu erleben. [...] und ich sehe nicht ein, wieso dort, Richtung Tampico, das Jenseits beginnen soll. (25-26).

Interestingly, this diatribe appears to function far more to reassure Faber that his surroundings are natural, rather than as a ploy to convince Herbert that he need not characterize these perfectly natural surroundings as an «Erlebnis». After all, Faber is not responding to fantastic similes that Herbert has suggested – the metaphorical language he uses to describe the desert landscape is composed by Faber himself. Why must Faber go on for a page and a half to make his point? Perhaps it is because all these similes express a common thread: without exception, each of the fantastic similes Faber invents suggests a disruption of temporality. «Urweltliche Tiere» are *pre-historic*; «Engel», «Gespenster», «verdammte Seele», «ausgestorbener Vogel» (i.e., Phoenix) all express immortal beings – beings that exist after death, and thus out of time; «Totenreich», «Ewigkeit», «Jenseits», all express a realm beyond time; the «Sintflut» signifies both a death and rebirth of the world; and «Ende der Welt» designates the end of the world – the end of a (mortal) temporal order. Though Faber insists that these fantastic comparisons do not express the reality of the scenario, it is as if he might be protesting a bit much<sup>2</sup>. What these similes do suggest is that in falling from the air, the plane has thrown Faber into a realm where everything is somehow out of time – Faber has metaphorically fallen into Eden, where linear time has no meaning – time has become eternal, circular. This interpretation is supported by Faber's further travels. The desert, as pre-historic time, produces in Faber's subsequent travels a conflated, circular temporality – in contrast to the linear temporality of history – wherein Faber jumps between spaces of primitivity and modernity, birth and death.

Faber moves from the barren desert directly to the fertile jungle, which – in contrast to the atemporality of the desert – Faber characterizes as a thoroughly primitive place. As Faber arrives in Palenque, he remarks that he felt as if he were «am Ende der Welt, mindestens am Ende der Zivilisation» (39). Marcel, who tries to convince Faber how advanced Mayan culture was, fails

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<sup>2</sup> At critical moments, Faber often insists that something is not the case in an attempt to disguise what he fears is precisely true. One example: when Faber is trying to convince himself that the extraordinary chain of events, associated with the crash – which would make even the most dedicated skeptic a believer in fate – can be deduced from the laws of probability. He concludes: «Es war mehr als ein Zufall, daß alles so gekommen ist, es war eine ganze Kette von Zufällen. Aber wieso Fügung? Ich brauche, um das Unwahrscheinliche als Erfahrungstat-sache gelten zu lassen, keinerlei Mystik; Mathematik genügt mir» (23). He then goes on to describe the laws of probability themselves and cite a few relevant academic texts, as if he, himself, were not convinced by his own rationalization. Faber will go to any extremes to preserve his world-view and deny the possibility of any super-scientific phenomena. Another example is his insistence, regarding Sabeth's accident: «was den Unfall betrifft, habe ich nichts zu verheimlichen» (169).

at his attempts: Faber remarks, «weil ich für Sachlichkeit bin, finde ich ja diese Ruinen sehr primitiv [...] gerade weil sie keinerlei Technik hatten, dafür Götter (47). However, primitivity is not the only temporal marker carried by the jungle: Faber repeatedly refers to the jungle as a space of birth. He describes the jungle as «schleimig», which, perhaps wouldn't be striking were it not for the context of several other similar descriptions. After they cremate Joachim, Faber notes:

Wir hätten Joachim (so denke ich oft) nicht in die Erde begraben, sondern verbrennen sollen. [...] Erde ist Schlamm nach einem einzigen Gewitter (wie wir's auf unsrer Rückfahrt erlebt haben), Verwesung voller Keime, glitschig wie Vaseline, Tümpel im Morgenrot wie Tümpel von schmutzigem Blut, Monatsblut, Tümpel voller Molche, nichts als schwarze Köpfe voller Molche, nichts als schwarze Köpfe mit zuckenden Schwänzchen wie ein Gewimmel von Spermatozoen, genau so – grauenhaft. (73-74)

One wouldn't necessarily have to read this citation as indicating birth. However, it seems to suggest this. Following this description, he characterizes himself, Herbert, and Marcel as «schmierig wie Neugeborene» after the rain. On the next page he recalls what Marcel once said: «Tu sais que la mort est femme! [...] et que la terre est femme!» (75). This slimy, feminine earth enriched with spermatozoan salamanders certainly portrays this land as womblike. Concerning salamanders, he mentions elsewhere: «[...] ein Gewimmel von Molchen – überhaupt diese Fortpflanzerei überall, es stinkt nach Fruchtbarkeit, nach blühender Verwesung. / Wo man hinspuckt, keimt es» (55). The repeated mention of salamanders could certainly indicate that they were, indeed, everywhere. However, it is not likely accidental that he chose to use the salamander – a well-known symbol of spontaneous generation – to describe this teeming landscape of life. That the jungle can be read as a realm of life and reproduction is supported by his description of the native women, who «kommen nicht aus dem Gebären heraus, scheint es» (182). Nevertheless, though the topos of birth reigns supreme in the jungle, birth is here also conflated with death, connoting the conflated temporal status of the jungle. Faber describes the jungle as the «Ende der Welt». Though he intends it as a description of location, it is a repetition of the temporal signifier used to describe the desert landscape. Furthermore, Marcel's quote, in which he describes the earth as feminine also identifies death as similarly feminine — and one must not forget that the description of the jungle as a space of birth is inspired by Joachim's death and burial. The womb of the earth also serves as Joachim's tomb<sup>3</sup>. In the jungle,

«Fruchtbarkeit» and «Verwesung» are scarcely distinguishable from each other, and perhaps the only symbol more plentiful than the salamander is the ubiquitous vulture, constantly hovering above, waiting to sustain his own life with the ever-imminent death of others.

In contrast to this land of primitivity and birth is Faber's next stop, New York City, that perennially ultra-modern city, whose architecture Faber characterizes as marking death: «die Wolkenkratzer wie Grabsteine (das habe ich schon immer gefunden)» (176). At the party he organizes right before he leaves, Faber complains to the party-goers: «In eurer Gesellschaft könnte man sterben [...], man könnte sterben, ohne daß ihr es merkt [...], wozu diese ganze Gesellschaft, wenn einer sterben könnte, ohne daß ihr es merkt» (72). However, though New York is primarily characterized by death, New York is also gilded with accents of birth. As Faber waits, contemplating his impending cruise to Paris, he remarks: «[...] ich freute mich aufs Leben wie ein Jüngling, [...], ich hatte das Gefühl, ein neues Leben zu beginnen [...]» (69). New York, like the Jungle, embodies a conflation of birth and death – thus suggesting a conflated, non-linear temporal status. However, in the jungle, it is birth that reigns supreme – bearing only undercurrents of death – while ultra-modern New York is primarily characterized as a space of death and alienation, revealing the hope of birth like a silver lining.

The atemporal landscape of the desert and the subtle temporal conflation implied by Faber's travels to the jungle and New York prepare him for the ultimate temporal taboo – an incestuous relationship with his daughter. When he meets Sabeth, Faber no longer needs to travel through spaces of temporal conflation – like the desert, the jungle, and New York – because this structure of time is optimally embodied in the figure of Sabeth. Since he learns of the significant role he played in Sabeth's birth, only through her death, the conflation of birth and death is manifested by Sabeth herself. Clearly, their incestuous relationship is a temporal taboo – it unifies two distinct generations. Additionally, the novel explicitly characterizes their relationship as such, as Hanna reminds Faber near the end of the novel: «Wir können nicht das Alter aufheben, indem wir weiter addieren, indem wir unsere eigenen Kinder heiraten» (185). However, their relationship is not characterized as simply incestuous; rather, it is innocent, unknown, fated – in other words, Oedipal.

One hardly needs to argue this point: the novel goes through great pains to ensure that the reader will recognize this allusion. The novel's repeated references to Faber's metaphorical blindness (i. e., 200, 156, 120) – connoting

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<sup>3</sup> Freud also aligns birth and death by attributing the uncanny fear of being buried alive to the fantasy of living in the mother's womb (*Das Unheimliche* 257).

the fate of Oedipus – are bolstered by references to «*Blinddarm*» operations (107, 116), a sudden onset of foot pain after Sabeth's accident, recalling the Oedipal «club-foot», and a seemingly arbitrary mention of «Oedipus und die Sphinx, auf einer kaputten Vase dargestellt in kindlicher Weise» (154) as an example of what, by Hanna, is treated as empirical fact. If these not-so-subtle suggestions weren't enough, on his way to Zürich, Faber repeats, in fantasy, the conclusion to the Oedipus myth: «Ich sitze im Speisewagen und denke: Warum nicht diese zwei Gabeln nehmen, sie aufrichten in meinen Fäusten und mein Gesicht fallen lassen, um die Augen loszuwerden?» (209). It is significant that this relationship is clearly characterized as Oedipal, because it reveals the relationship itself as a temporal conflation. As Oedipus meets the Sphinx, he is faced with the riddle: «What animal is it that in the morning goes on four feet, at noon on two, and in the evening upon three?» (Gayley 262). The Oedipus myth embodies a circular, conflated temporal structure, because the solution to this riddle demands the conflation of three time periods – morning, noon, and evening. Thus, in marking the relationship as Oedipal, the Sphinx's riddle further characterizes Sabeth and Faber's relationship as a symbol of temporal conflation. In a stroke of irony, a possible etymology of the name «Oedipus» – «I know» (*oida*) «the two-footer» (*dipous*) – indicates precisely that two-footed being that Faber does not know: man as a mortal being.

Though Oedipus is certainly suggested by the repeated references to blindness, and by allusions throughout the novel to Greek mythology and art, one must not forget another mythological figure of blindness: the three blind sisters of fate – particularly given the emphasis and importance of coincidence («Zufall»), vs. fate in the novel. Faber is determined to transform every apparent manifestation of fate into a simple coincidence or accident. The blind sisters of fate, in contrast to Oedipus, represent not a circular, conflated temporality, but a finite, linear temporality symbolized by the thread of life, the severance of which spells immediate death<sup>4</sup>. Perhaps that is why Faber goes to any extreme to reject the possibility of fate – not because he is afraid that accepting the role of fate in his life would indicate a belief in super-scientific powers or suggest that he is superstitious, but rather because accepting the existence of fate would imply an acknowledg-

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<sup>4</sup> Interestingly, Faber is not the only one to try to control time through a «text». The sisters of fate also weave a «textile» of finite, linear time directly opposed to the circular, eternal time Faber hopes to spin with his own «texts». In addition to the way in which Faber uses representation to transform time into innocuous space, as argued in Plato's *Symposium*, the very act of *creating* (in the broadest sense of the word) is related to an attempt to taste immortality by leaving something of the self behind (Plato 102-106).

ment of the temporality symbolized by those blind sisters, and thus of his own mortality and certain death. It is such a temporality – finite and linear – which Faber cannot understand or accept; however, it is precisely the acceptance of this structure of time, which will allow him to give birth to himself as a human being, with a relationship to time and, thus, to death and life.

For a man who needs to learn about linear, finite time, the Eden-like world into to which Faber falls is no place to be. Faber falls into «Eden» in the first complex of falls; that is, he falls into a temporal order characterized by conflation and circularity. During the second complex of «falls», surrounding Sabeth's death, he falls out of «Eden» and into a human, discrete, linear temporality. This second complex of «falls» is initiated by Faber learning of the «Zufall» that Hanna is Sabeth's mother – and, hence, that he could be her father. This discovery is followed by his reunion with Hanna, made necessary by Sabeth's «Unfall». Faber makes clear, that Sabeth's «Unglück» – the true, tragic accident, was not caused by the snake's bite, but by a «fall» from a scarp. The narration marks the importance of Sabeth's fall by altering how it happened, suggesting that Faber feels some guilt or responsibility for her accident. In Faber's first retelling of the incident, right after his arrival in Athens, Faber claims that he finds Sabeth unconscious. He hears her scream and sees her fall, when he arrives, she is already unconscious, and it is only then that he sees the snakebite. In the second version, which is revealed only after Hanna and Faber return to the accident site, shortly before Sabeth's death, Faber declares, somewhat suspiciously (see note #1): «was den Unfall betrifft, habe ich nichts zu verheimlichen» (169), he went swimming while she was sleeping and heard her scream. Since he was swimming fifty meters away, it took quite a while for him to struggle through the shallow water back to the beach where she had been sleeping. When he arrived, she was standing on a small hill in a panic with her hand over her heart – over the snakebite. Faber ran up the hill, naked, and, as he tried to help her, she backed away from him, falling from the two-meter high scarp. He finds her unconscious and then sees the snakebite, and, as in the other version, hurries to Athens. Though it is not clear whether or not the doctors in Athens knew about the fall, Faber does learn that Sabeth dies not from the snakebite, which was successfully treated, but from an undiagnosed fracture of the skull, which could have been treated by surgical intervention. It is not clear whether Faber ever tells anyone about the fall; in any case, it is only the snakebite that Faber or anyone else discusses as a threat to Sabeth's life. However, if Faber hadn't believed that the fall was threatening, why does he recount two versions of the story – one, in which the importance of the fall is minimized, and in which he bears no responsibility for the

accident, and the other in which the fall is very important, and, in which he bears full responsibility for the fall and Sabeth's death?

The ambiguity associated with Faber's responsibility and guilt for Sabeth's fall and eventual death suggests the way in which this complex of «falls» is related to the first. These two complexes of falls: the first – surrounding the «Unfall» of the plane – which begins the «Erste Station», and the second – surrounding Sabeth's «Unfall» – which end it, are intimately related to temporality via the mythical structure that they recall. Both complexes invoke the Biblical «Fall» of Adam, and thus relate to the origin of history, mortality, and time. The first complex lands Faber in an Eden-like temporal structure – immortal, circular, pre-historical. That this first complex of «falls» can be read as related to the Biblical fall is clarified by the second complex of «falls», which allows Faber to fall back out of Eden into a mortal, finite, temporal structure. In the second complex of falls, the importance of the «fall» is intensified by the importance of Sabeth's fall – it was the fall, not the snakebite that killed her – and by the ambiguity associated with Faber's guilt for the fall. In the first version of the story, he bears no responsibility for the fall, in the second, he bears primary responsibility for it. Thus Adam's fall is here replayed through the linking of central motifs surrounding the Biblical fall: «the fall», «guilt», and «death». However, if this were not enough to recall the Biblical fall here, the Eden-like setting, the naked Faber, and the snake encroaching on paradise, sufficiently justify the validity of reading a Biblical cross-reference into this complex of falls.

The thesis, that these two complexes of falls result in a personal temporal transformation for Walter Faber is actualized following Sabeth's death in the «Second Station» of the novel. The second part of the novel is, in some ways, a repetition of the first: Faber revisits many of the locations from the first part of the novel – New York, the jungle. However, the second part of the novel is distinctly different from the first: instead of a tourist passing through different locales and different temporal structures, the second part of the novel reveals a Walter Faber on a highly personal, emotional journey on the linear, finite path from Sabeth's death in Athens, full circle to his own (at least feared) death in Athens. In other words, in the «Second Station» of the novel, Faber is liberated from a conflated, objectified temporality and allowed to give birth to himself as a feeling, mortal being, on a linear, finite temporal path towards his own death.

In contrast to the first part of the novel, Faber's experience in each of the locales he visits is imbued with a highly emotional tone. Following Sabeth's death, he is first faced with his own existential crisis in that city of death: New York. He tries to reach his own home, only to find that he has been usurped by another. Faber's distrust of his own identity is clearly questioned

when he, Walter Faber, asks the new resident, «Are you Walter Faber?» (178). From New York, he returns to the jungle to see Herbert. Though in the jungle, he finds «alles unverändert», Faber is himself different. Instead of an inexplicable curiosity that led him to the jungle, Faber's purpose for visiting (though inexplicable to Herbert) is simply, «bloß um ihn [Herbert] wiederzusehen [...] man hat nicht soviel Freunde» (181). From the jungle, the land of birth, Faber proceeds to Cuba, which is repeatedly characterized as a land of youth: the pimps are constantly advertising their wares to Faber by gushing: «Something very beautiful! D'you know what I mean? Something very young!» (187, 197), and in Cuba, Faber is generally assumed to be American, which gives him pause to think about «The American Way of Life», which is characterized by a false, obscene youthfulness. What is, however, more striking about Cuba, is that, in opposition to the hardened scientist Faber, we find here, for the first time, an explicitly emotional Faber – a Faber who cries (191), repeatedly states his happiness (195, 196, 197), and even, at one point, exclaims to himself: «Ich preise das Leben» (197).

After leaving the land of apparent youth, Faber stops briefly in Düsseldorf to carry out an unrequested «Freundenpflicht» by showing the executives of Herbert's firm his films of Guatemala, then proceeds to the city of his literal youth and origin: Zürich. He admits that the purpose of his trip was to satisfy an emotional need: «Ich fuhr von Düsseldorf nach Zürich, glaube ich, bloß weil ich meine Vaterstadt seit Jahrzehnten nicht mehr gesehen habe. Ich hatte in Zürich nichts zu tun» (209). In the city of his birth he is greeted by a premonition of death in the flesh, Professor O., whom he must resist asking: «wann er denn sterbe» (210). He returns from this specter of death in Zürich to, what he believes will be his final resting place, Athens. At midnight, cussing the last day of the novel he writes: «Ich weiß alles. Morgen werden sie mich aufmachen, um festzustellen, was sie schon wissen: daß nichts mehr zu retten ist» (215).

This second travelogue, of the «Second Station» reveals a Faber who is not traveling through temporally conflated locales, but is traveling the course of his own life: from (Sabeth's) death, via Athens and New York, to birth via the jungle, youth via Cuba and Zürich, and finally to his own death in Athens. Two travelogues, two stations of the novel. This novel is seemingly full of twos. There are two complexes of falls, two mythologies (Judeo-Christian and Greek) referred to, two models of temporality – symbolized respectively by Oedipus and the blind sisters of fate, and two Walter Fabers. The novel ends with Faber writing (unfortunately in his own handwriting, they have taken his «Hermes-baby»), which returns us to the topic of «two», which began this paper: re-presentation. Representation plays such an important role throughout this novel, because it suspends time in space: as long as time is locked up

within a representation, it can have no effect on Faber's life and he cannot be compelled to face his own mortality. However, at the end, representation has been stripped of its role as a time-keeper. The two complexes of «falls», which constitute the two critical turning points of this novel – the plane crash in Tamaulipas, and Sabeth's accident and death – and frame the «First Station» of the novel, effect a temporal transformation. Time is no longer locked within representation: the first complex of «falls» returns time to its original status before the Adamic fall – as an eternal, circular, conflated construct, and the second complex of «falls» restores time to its post-Eden, human status as a linear, finite structure, and forces Faber to come to terms with his life in a finite temporality. In other words, these two complexes of falls force Faber to come to terms with his own imminent death. However, it is not only his death, that Faber faces through this temporal transformation of time, it is his life as well. After the second complex of falls, in the «Second Station» of the novel, Faber is finally able to cry, to be happy, to experience friendship. On the last day of the novel, Faber's rebirth as a human being, conscious of the finite nature of «Leben als Gestalt in der Zeit», is evident. In contrast to that Faber who faced a plane crash with nonchalance and academic interest, this Faber is desperate to live. That Faber, who seemed to regard human relationships as an annoying necessity, finally becomes one who understands what it means to be human:

Ich hänge an diesem Leben wie noch nie, und wenn es nur noch ein Jahr ist, ein elendes, ein Vierteljahr, zwei Monate (das wären September und Oktober), ich werde hoffen, obschon ich weiß, daß ich verloren bin. Aber ich bin nicht allein, Hanna ist mein Freund, und ich bin nicht allein (215).

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