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Auszug aus:

"After the first death" von Robert Cormier

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Übersicht über die Teile	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contents • The function of chapter one as an introduction to the novel • What type of person is represented in Miro? • Miro´s personal background • Miro´s motives for taking his role in the section • Artkin´s and Miro´s relationship • The meaning of homeland • Kate´s personality • INNER DELTA
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The function of part one as an introduction to the novel

Ben Marchand, the voice speaking to us in Robert Cormier's novel "After the first death", is the character in the text who tells the reader about his experiences, thoughts and feelings.

The reader does not only get information about the narrator's present, but also about his past and the future.

In the first line of Chapter One, Ben talks about his present feelings. ("I keep thinking that I have a tunnel in my chest.") The hijacking is over and Ben types his thoughts in his room in Castleton Academy. ("I am typing this in the room at Castle and it's beautiful here as I write this...") In the middle of the introductory chapter of the novel there is a change of time. ("Years from now...") The first-person-narrator is looking into the future and further on he comments on a possible future development. ("Will my wound ache like this when I am his age?") Moreover, Ben informs the reader about a definite future development by explaining: "I won't have stayed around to become a human barometer or an instrument capable of forecasting weather.")

In the following lines the narrator expresses his thoughts in view of the past. He reflects on Thanksgiving and the traditional football game between Castle and another Academy. When thinking about the "Bus and the Bridge", Ben is looking farther back into the past. He does so when remembering the things which happened before he was actually involved into the scenes on the railroad bridge. ("I only saw him in uniform that one time when he summoned me to his office...")

By commenting on three different levels of time (present – past - future) the narrator supplies the reader with wide-ranges information. If the text was opened by a chapter which only deals with the present situation of the hijacking, the reader would neither get to know about all the things which had happened before nor about all the consequences. Apart from that, the reader gets detailed information about Ben's feelings, thoughts and fears, as the story is told through his view of the events.

What type of person is represented in Miro?

Having a closer look at the type of person that is represented by Miro, it becomes obvious that it is hard to find a general characterization, since Miro does not always behave in the same way.

On the one hand Miro is inferior to Artkin. ("Miro frowned. A question had formed itself in his mind, but he was too timid to ask. He had never questioned Artkin before, had been content, indeed pleased, to carry out orders.") He is obedient and always tries to fulfil Artkin's orders properly. Another thing is that Miro somehow is dependent on Artkin as he was the one who found Miro and his brother Aniel in the refugee camp and brought them to the training school for freedom fighters. Now that Aniel is dead, Artkin is the only person Miro has a more or less close relationship to. ("...because his brother's death left him all alone in the world. Except for Artkin.") When staying in the bus, Miro does not feel anything for the chil-

dren and the female bus driver Kate. (“The children were meaningless to Miro. They all looked the same to him...He could make no connection with them.”)

On the other hand, however, Miro is afraid and unsure if he is doing right and does not always succeed in staying unfeeling. (“ Miro crouched beside the girl again. Her knuckles were white where they clutched the steering wheel. She was rigid, looking ahead through the windshield. Her chin trembled and her shoulders shook as if a chill had overtaken her. Miro remembered that one time when his own chin had trembled and his shoulders had shuddered beyond control. When Aniel died. He had fought tears...”) Sometimes Miro even tries to behave and act independently and to get his own way.

Miro´s personal background

Miro himself does not know much about his personal background. He is unsure about his date of birth. (“in the camp they had given him a birth date, and it had been chosen to suit his height and weight and growth.”) The young man does not know his parents but has a very close relationship to his elder brother Aniel. The two of them were found in the ruins of a house near the refugee camp. Artkin found them and brought them to the training school for freedom fighters nearby the camp. This camp and school became Miro´s and Aniel´s home for the next years. After a few years of attending the training school, the two brothers were given their first assignment with Artkin as their leader. (“Then at last their first assignment was given: America. And their leader: Artkin.”)

In one of the operations Miro´s brother Aniel died. His death makes Miro still feel very sad and sorry. (“The girl´s statement also made him think again of Aniel. Poor Aniel. Dead before his time.”) After Aniel´s death, Miro is alone and dependent on himself. Aniel was Miro´s only companion. (“Maybe it hurt him to talk about his parents and his dead brother...”) Although Miro does not know very much about his homeland, his whole life is organized for fighting for his home country. He never got another view of life than fighting. Stealing, for instance, is quite normal for Miro. (“Stealing was a way of life.”)

To come to a conclusion one can definitely say that Miro has a very negative view of life. His pessimistic view of life is caused by the early death of his brother Aniel and other negative experiences.

Miro – motives for taking his role within the section

Miro sees the hijacking as his duty and work. He explains: “Our duty is to let the people know the war exists, that the world is involved in it, that no one is free from war until our homeland is free.” His homeland is occupied by others and the education Miro received never told him anything else than fighting for the homeland. It also deserves mentioning that Miro does not want to disappoint Artkin. ”And yet it was Artkin who mattered. Artkin who he did not want to disappoint, Artkin whose praise he’d always sought.”) A further motive for Miro taking his role within the hijacking is the fact that it is his first great, real assignment. Killing the bus driver will be the young man´s first murder. Furthermore, the hijacking is planned to be a kind of training for the young hijacker.



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