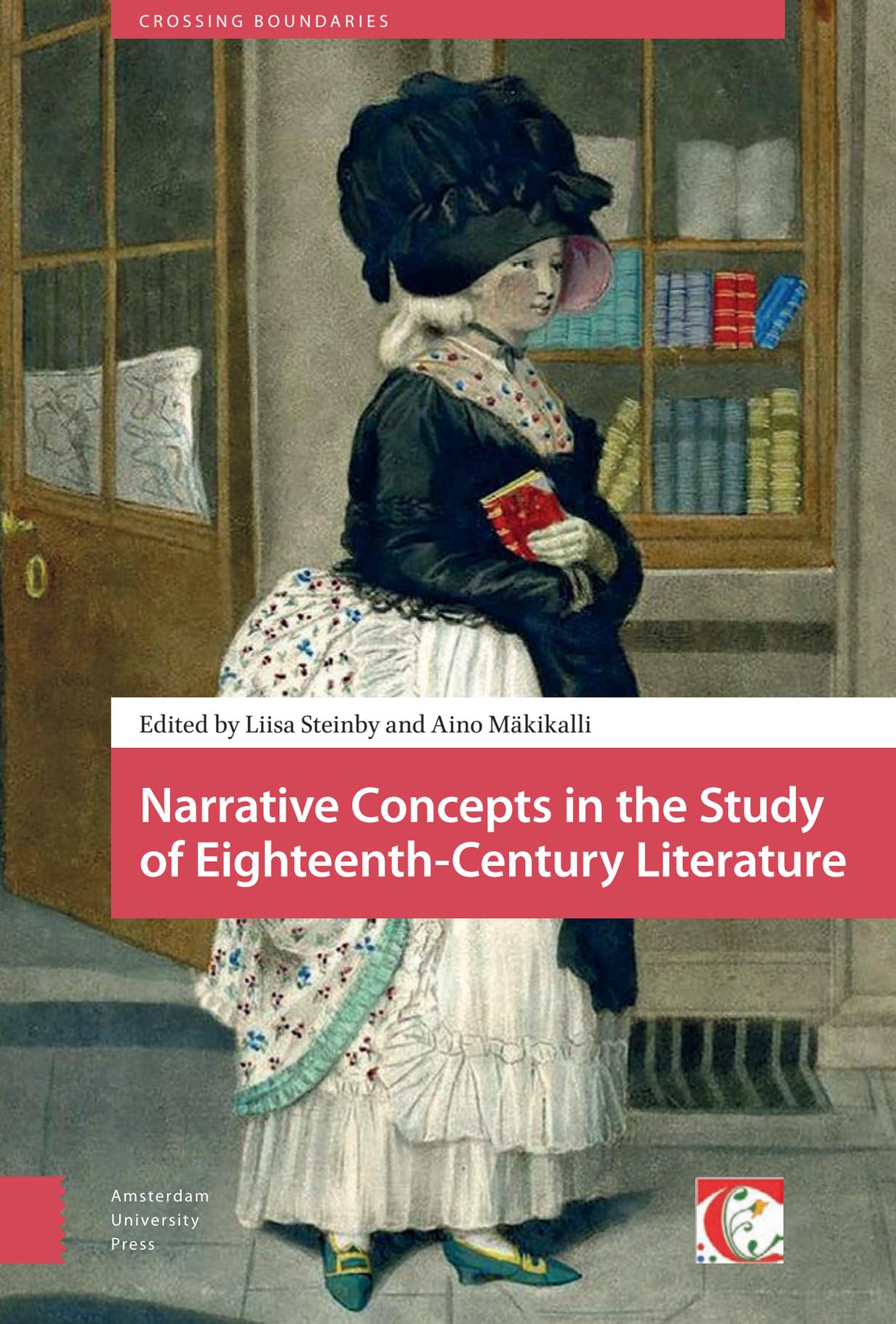


CROSSING BOUNDARIES



Edited by Liisa Steinby and Aino Mäkikalli

Narrative Concepts in the Study of Eighteenth-Century Literature

Amsterdam
University
Press



Narrative Concepts in the Study of Eighteenth-Century Literature

Crossing Boundaries

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Liisa Steinby and Aino Mäkikalli

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Introduction

The Place of Narratology in the Historical Study of Eighteenth-Century Literature

Liisa Steinby and Aino Mäkikalli

Definierbar ist nur das, was keine Geschichte hat. (Nietzsche)¹

Narratological concepts, such as focalization, perspective, implied author, the distinction between story and discourse, and even homo- and heterodiegetic narration, today belong to the toolkit of scholars of literature, including those who do not consider themselves narratologists. Since literary analysis almost always also encompasses formal aspects of works, narratological concepts concerning the structure and forms of a narrative are taken by many as a 'natural' choice. Narratologists did not originally see their work as 'a handmaiden to interpretation'; their theoretically-based taxonomic description of narrative was separated from interpretation, which always also has to do with the content of the narrative (Herman, 2008, p. 30). However, while there are those, even today, who want to keep narratology 'uncontaminated' by other approaches (see, e.g., Kindt, 2009), most narratologists now welcome attempts to combine narratological conceptualization with a whole range of different approaches in contemporary literary scholarship (see, e.g., Nünning, 2009). We can therefore speak of a *rapprochement* between the narratological analysis of narrative forms and various approaches which stress cultural and historical contextualization in interpretations of literature.

This *rapprochement*, however, is not unproblematic, and there still exists a clear split between the narratological study of literature and the study of literary history, i.e. the historically and contextually interpretative study of literature. Scholars of literary history continue in their research to make use primarily of other conceptualizations than the narratological. Given the present heightened awareness of the historicity of all cultural phenomena, literary scholars more and more widely regard all literary research as historical, in the sense of taking into account the specific character of the literature of a certain period and its particular social, cultural, and

1 'Only something which has no history is capable of being defined.'

historical circumstances, which in turn naturally leads to conceptualizations of a historical character. In contrast, narratological concepts were originally conceived of as ahistorical, universally valid classifications of the phenomena of narrative discourse (cf., e.g., Fludernik, 2009, pp. 9, 110), and they have remained so very much down to today; only recently has the possibility been raised among narratologists of taking the historical dimension into account in narratological research (cf. especially Fludernik, 1996; 2003). How these different conceptualizations – historical and content-specific on the one hand, formal and ahistorical on the other – interact in the historical study of literature is a widely unexplored area. In practical historical research, the different nature and source of conceptualizations is mostly not reflected upon, and though present-day ‘postclassical’ narratology proclaims itself open to other approaches, encompassing content and context, this still has the character of a programme rather than a *fait accompli*.

In the title of the present volume, ‘narrative concepts’ refers, first of all, to the (basically ahistorical) concepts of narratology, and what is at issue is their use in, and compatibility with, the historical study of eighteenth-century literature; but the notion also leaves place for conceptualizations of a more historical character, and inquires into their relationship with narratological ones. The authors, while demonstrating how some central concepts function in practice, are concerned in particular with the meta-level question of concept use and formation. The study of eighteenth-century literature is, in the opinion of the editors, particularly well-suited to this kind of self-reflection, in that – as for example Monika Fludernik has observed – the original narratological categories, as established in the work of Gérard Genette, Franz K. Stanzel, and their followers, though universally oriented, were derived above all from the eighteenth- to early twentieth-century novel (e.g., Alber and Fludernik, 2010, p. 8). This means that the problems we encounter in the study of eighteenth-century narrative literature clearly do not follow from the need to expand the range of a theory beyond its original primary scope, but that we need to deal with the even more fundamental issue of the compatibility of narratological conceptualizations with the historical study of literature.

In this Introduction, we first follow the development of narratology from its early, structuralist phase to the modern, ‘postclassical’ phase, which promises an opening up not only to historical literary research but also to many adjacent fields – including some, such as cognitive science, that are traditionally considered remote from literary scholarship. This is followed by some observations on practices of concept formation in

the historical study of literature and in narratology – a field of study which, despite the greatly enhanced theoretical self-awareness of literary scholarship in general, has remained underdeveloped, or even more or less ignored. In the concluding section of the Introduction, the problem of compatibility is first considered in the light of one excellent recent example of historical research, followed by a brief survey of the articles in the present volume.

Developments in Narratology: From Structuralist Approaches to ‘Diachronic’, ‘Cultural’ and ‘Contextual’ Ones

Structuralist narratology, today called ‘classical’, was inspired by the same zeal to raise the ‘scientific’ status of literary scholarship that fuelled the work of the Russian Formalists. ‘Classical’, structuralist narratology was built in analogy with structural linguistics, for which the object of research was the structure of language which enables speech. As Jonathan Culler explains in the foreword to Tzvetan Todorov’s *Poetics of Prose* (orig. *La poétique de la prose*, 1971), the aim of structuralist poetics is not the interpretation of individual works but discovering ‘the structures and conventions of literary discourse which enable them [the works] to have the meanings they do’; in this, poetics is following the example of structural linguistics, which aims at making explicit the rules and conventions of a language (Culler, 1977, p. 8). In describing his scientific method, Todorov, a pioneer of structuralist poetics, stresses that it is the general characteristics of literary discourse that structuralist poetics deals with; however, he goes even further, claiming that it is the possible, not the actual literary forms that are the subject of poetics: ‘Poetics will have to study not the already existing literary forms but, starting from them, a sum of possible forms: what literature *can* be rather than what it *is*’ (ibid., p. 33; emphasis in the original). Defining the possible rather than the empirically observable forms of literature implies a method that is not purely empirical but deductive. Todorov explains this as follows: ‘[S]cientific method proceeds rather by deduction. We actually deal with a relatively limited number of cases, from them we deduce a general hypothesis, and we verify this hypothesis by other cases, correcting (or rejecting) it as need be. [...] it is not the quantity of observations, but the logical coherence of a theory that finally matters’ (Todorov, 1987, p. 4). The method includes the deduction of categories from theoretical premises, rather than creating categories on the basis of a historical analysis of literature. This is exemplified by Todorov’s distinction between historical

literary genres and theoretical ones: 'historical genres are the result of an observation of literary phenomena; theoretical genres are deduced from a theory of literature' (ibid., p. 21). He clearly prefers the latter.

The question of the nature and role of 'deduction' in the method of structuralist poetics is an area which has scarcely been examined, and indeed concept formation in structuralist poetics and narratology as a whole is a neglected subject of study. No attention has been paid to the important fact that theory-building in structuralist narratology (and poetics) lacked the solid method of hypothesis verification that was available in structuralist phonology – the pilot and paragon of a structuralist science (cf. Dosse, 1997, pp. 54, 174) – i.e. the commutation test.² Consequently, no clear criteria were established for considering something a 'theory', rather than merely a bundle of (more or less original) general claims or ideas. This might have led to a chaotic plenitude of competing 'theories'; what actually happened, however, was that one particular theory became the core of the structuralist – and, as we will see, even later – narratology for decades to come: Gérard Genette's *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method* (orig. 'Discours du récit' in *Figures III*, 1972). This is not because its theoretical foundation, allegedly lying in the 'grammar of verbs' (cf. Genette, 1980, p. 30), was any more solid than that of other, competing theories (such as that of Roland Barthes), but because Genette's definitions of the concepts were exceptionally clear and because he succeeded in systematizing certain main concepts in the prevalent traditions of research on different forms of narration (cf. Culler, 1980, p. 7; Steinby, 2016). Although several of Genette's concepts, particularly focalization, voice, person, the status of the narrator, and the story-discourse distinction (cf. Alber and Fludernik, 2010, p. 13), have been the subject of extensive critical discussion, it is his conceptualization – with some additions, such as Wayne Booth's 'implied author' – that forms the hard core not only of 'classical' narratology but also of more recent applications of narratology in other approaches to literary research.³

2 In phonology, the existence of a phoneme in a language is proved by the commutation test, in which a native speaker of the language is asked to decide whether the difference between two sounds is functionally meaningful or not, i.e., whether the difference in sound produces a difference in meaning (cf. Trubetzkoy, 1971, pp. 31-33). The commutation test is the means for empirically testing the validity of theoretical hypotheses.

3 There are, of course, claims that the classical concepts can and should be replaced by new ones; Monika Fludernik, for example, suggests that in her 'natural' narratology, 'the cherished distinctions of classic narratology can be dispensed with or reconceptualized with great facility' (Fludernik, 1996, p. 347). Such reconceptualization, however, does not take place here.

The lucidity of Genette's definitions, and his presentation of a taxonomic system of categories of narrative discourse, commonly viewed as the merits of his narratology, also define its limits. The definitions are of the type "prolepsis" is a leap forward in time in narration' (cf. Genette, 1980, p. 40), in which the concept is exhaustively defined by specifying the defining criteria: nothing needs to be, or can be, added to it. The concepts are universally applicable: independently of content, context, or century, 'prolepsis' always refers to a narrative leap forward in time, and nothing but that. Genette's taxonomy provides the scholar with a great number of such clear, exhaustively defined, universal categories dealing with the formal traits of narrative discourse. The kind of empirical research that such a taxonomy allows consists of identifying in a particular text some of the traits as presented in Genette's categories; obviously, the categories are not negotiable. As the categories are derived from a more fundamental theoretical basis – in Genette's case, the grammar of verbs – it of course is impossible for them to be affected by empirical research. However, some later narratologists, such as Monika Fludernik, have suggested that the empirical study of literature can be used to contest certain existing narratological categories, or even to renew or add something to them (cf. Fludernik, 1996; 2003) – which means conceding that not everything can be derived from a theoretical basis.

The strength of Genette's narratology is also its weakness: it can be used to identify accurately some traits of the formal structure of narrative, but for nothing but that. Questions of content, context, and reading experience, in other words essential aspects of literature, are excluded from narratological study. It is true that these aspects cannot be captured in any such concise, exhaustive definitions as those Genette offers us for the formal aspects of narrative. The reluctance of narratologists – old and new – to use concepts which cannot be expressed in the form of concise and exhaustive definitions is exemplified by James Phelan's discontent with the 'mimetic component' of literary characters, which entails some 'messy problems': 'this talk about characters as plausible or possible persons presupposes that we know what a person is. But the nature of the human subject is of course a highly contested issue among contemporary thinkers' (Phelan, 1989, p. 11). Concepts that concern content-related, historical, and contextual aspects of literature, and that cannot be simply defined, are deplored because of their lack of 'scientificity' and are therefore preferably avoided. This being the case, scientificity in narratological research is achieved at the cost of excluding many or most of the questions relevant to the study of literature (cf. Bal, 1990).

The development of narratology following its structuralist phase (cf. e.g. Herman, 2008) can be described from (at least) three different angles. First of all, there is the 'internal' development of narratology; according to several leading contemporary narratologists, such as David Herman and Monika Fludernik, where classical narratology was modelled upon structural linguistics, the present-day understanding of narrative tends to seek its theoretical foundation in cognitive linguistics and cognitive science more generally (cf. Herman, 2008; Fludernik, 2008). The development of narratology can be outlined as following that of linguistics: the era of structuralism was followed by Noam Chomsky's 'generative grammar', inviting narratologists to study and identify correspondences between the deep and surface structure of literary texts. This was succeeded by text linguistics, i.e. the study of units of utterance transcending the sentence – which of course has a natural affinity to the research of literary texts. In the next phase, linguistic pragmatics examined the different practices and functions of language use; it is to this phase of linguistics to which Fludernik, in addition to cognitive linguistics, anchors her own 'natural' narratology (cf. Fludernik, 1996, e.g., p. xi). Finally, in cognitive linguistics, language use is considered as a human cognitive process determined by general modes of human cognition, such as particular schemata – frames and scripts – for organizing and interpreting information (cf. e.g. Alber and Fludernik, 2010, p. 11). In what is called cognitive narratology, there are at least two different approaches to the study of literature: while Fludernik, despite basing her model on colloquial ('natural') narrative, is primarily interested in reconceptualizing traditional, or classical structuralist, notions of literary study on the basis of her pragmatist-cognitivist approach, such scholars as Herman, Lisa Zunshine, and Alan Palmer are obviously primarily interested in general cognitive problems, and in using literature as a resource in this research.⁴ Cognitive narratology, which takes narrative in general as its object of study, is then regarded as one of the disciplines of cognitive sciences (cf. Palmer, 2010, p. 6) – one that, among other things, can teach us how we 'read' the human mind (Zunshine, 2006). However divergent these two directions in cognitive narratology are, and however far they may be from structuralist narratology, they share the view that

4 According to Herman, 'the project of integrating narrative theory and the cognitive sciences can be seen as an effort to understand how people weave tapestries of story by relying on abilities they possess as simultaneously language-using, thinking, and social beings' (Herman, 2003, p. 11). He describes his own work as an exploration of 'the nature of narrative as a basic cognitive endowment' (ibid., p. 19).

the aim of research is to uncover the universal, constitutive principles which enable particular acts of mind, utterances, or (literary) texts, rather than investigating those particular utterances, texts or works. By so doing, cognitive narratologies revivify the prospect of reaching a new level of scientificity in the study of literature.⁵

This story of the development of narratology, as following in the footsteps of linguistics, nevertheless gives a somewhat too smooth picture of the actual course of events; it disregards the fact that at some point in the 1980s, narratology, as the strict science of narrative it claimed to be, was proclaimed as good as dead (cf., e.g., Herman, 1999, p. 2), and several of its important proponents, such as Slomith Rimmon-Kenan and Mieke Bal, had turned to something else. The recovery, however, followed sooner and from a different direction than expected: from the theory of historiography, where Hayden White had already claimed in 1973 that historians present the results of their research in a narrative form that does not derive from the subject of study but from certain primordial, mythic narrative structures (cf. White, 1973). Questions as to the (alleged) presence, functions, and specific forms of narrativity in historiography have not ceased to concern historians since then; but with what became known as ‘narrative turn’, narrative was soon recognized as a ubiquitous form of human sense-making practices, and the debate concerning narrative and its functions began to flourish in a great variety of disciplines and fields of study, including sociology, folkloristics, and the study of biography and autobiography. This sudden interest in narrative, as a form of making sense of human experience, certainly diverged from the structuralist narratologist’s interest in the formal traits of narrative discourse, separate from the narrated contents, but despite this the new interest in narrative has revived narratological study, which has expanded to a previously unimaginable degree. In contemporary research on narrative, aims and interests converge: cognitive narratologists, relying on the scientific basis of brain research, cognitive psychology and even artificial intelligence, are concerned with the same phenomenon of narrative as a mode of human cognition which, in more concrete form, preoccupies various disciplines in the humanities and social sciences.⁶

5 Cf. Fludernik (2008, p. 51): ‘The cognitivist paradigm shift could thus pave the way for a much closer companionship of narratology with the empirical sciences and, perhaps, come a long way towards fulfilling narratology’s original aspirations towards a scientific image’.

6 In the *Routledge Encyclopedia of Narrative Theory*, for example, ‘narrative’ is defined, drawing on David Herman, as ‘a fundamental way of organizing human experience and a tool for constructing models of reality’ (Ryan, 2005, p. 345).

Yet another angle from which the development of narratology can be viewed is the perspective of the historical study of literature. The opening up of narratology to questions of human cognition and significance also includes new attempts to create a 'diachronic', 'historical', 'cultural', or 'contextual' narratology. These narratologies are advocated primarily by German scholars – not surprisingly, since in Germany the historical orientation in literary and humanist research is traditionally very strong. Of the narratologists speaking for these new tendencies, the most prominent are Monika Fludernik and Ansgar Nünning. We can take a closer look at some of their writings, to find out what these new narratologies are about. In so doing, we look particularly closely at the question of concept formation.

In a much cited article from 2003, Fludernik deplors 'the depth of neglect of diachronic concerns that is prevalent in narratology', but she is convinced that 'a major breakthrough' of 'diachronic narratology' is imminent (Fludernik, 2003, pp. 332, 334). In her *Towards a 'Natural' Narratology* from 1996, she presents a theory of narrative based on cognitive linguistics and linguistic pragmatism,⁷ defining narrative, or rather narrativity, as 'experientiality' (Fludernik, 1996, p. 26), which she understands in terms of representation of personal, emotional, 'inner' experience.⁸ Towards the end of her study, however, she stresses that her 'Natural Narratology is [...] neither a purely theoretical nor a purely synchronic enterprise. Although I have just sketched a synchronic analysis of narrativization, historical or diachronic factors need to be incorporated into the theory as well' (Ibid., p. 313). 'Synchronic' and 'diachronic' are, of course, concepts borrowed from structuralist linguistics. Fludernik's use of the notions in narratology is similar to David Herman's, according to whom a synchronic study 'seek[s] to capture the state of [...] the narrative system at a specific phase of its emergence', while diachronic study traces the 'historical development of the system in question' (Herman, 2011, p. 23). In these definitions, the concept of 'system' holds the core position: the historical changes that are observed are changes in some aspects of the system. The perspective in

7 Fludernik, 1996, p. x: 'Towards a "Natural" Narratology proposes to redefine narrativity in terms of cognitive ("natural") parameters, moving beyond formal narratology into the realm of pragmatics, reception theory and constructivism'.

8 According to Fludernik, a historical narrative typically lacks this kind of experientiality and 'therefore only qualifies as zero-degree of narrativity'. Nevertheless, she will continue 'to refer to such texts of zero-degree narrativity as "narratives" because common parlance prescribes this usage. There also is some precedent for similar terminological hassles', and she believes that 'the embarrassments of terminological awkwardness are more than outweighed by the advantages of my re-evaluation of narrative properties' (ibid., p. 328f.).

both synchronic and diachronic study is system-immanent: no contextual factors that might explain the changes in the state of the system are taken into consideration. In our view, this trait of system-immanence is what distinguishes a synchronic study from a historical study proper, which concludes explaining circumstantial factors. Moreover, upon closer inspection it turns out that diachronic study does not reveal *new* traits in a system, but rather corroborates that certain traits defined in the theory are present or absent in narrative literature at a certain historical moment. For example, Fludernik suggests that we should ask when *erlebte Rede* ('free indirect discourse') emerged in narrative literature (cf. Fludernik, 2006, p. 127). This kind of historical inquiry into the emergence, or more generally into the presence or absence, of certain given traits does not shake the theoretical foundation of the system: the concepts are not themselves derived from history, but are conceived as universal and theoretically founded. Fludernik remarks that while Genette's typology is 'self-avowedly synchronic', these categories could easily be applied 'to the history of the novel, mapping out a diagram to show which combinations of narratological parameters were current in which successive historical periods' (ibid., p. 331) – and this is very much how she understands the diachronic dimension of her 'Natural' Narratology. She proposes for both that 'one could produce diagrams that would represent in visual fashion how a number of narrative parameters cluster in individual works and how these clusters remain constant or shift their emphases and combinations on a diachronic plane' (ibid.).

Variation in the distribution of the paradigmatic possibilities inherent in the theory is how Fludernik (in this phase, at least) understands historical, or diachronic, research; and she shares this understanding with Herman.⁹ Fludernik suggests a diagrammatic representation of the distribution, and Herman comes very close to this in recommending quantitative methods to test 'the patterns of constancy and change' in diachronic research (Herman, 2011, p. 25). In this kind of diachronic research, change is thus nothing but the redistribution of certain universal options, i.e., of the paradigmatic possibilities present in the ahistorical, universal theory, and changes are not contextualized in the historical world in which they take place. It is therefore well-founded to say, as Astrid Erll and Simone Roggendorf do, that Fludernik (at least in this phase) takes historical (or rather 'diachronic')

9 Herman writes of research into fictional mind representation that 'A diachronic perspective focuses on the evolution, or *changing distribution*, of the strategies for mind representation' (Herman, 2011, pp. 23-24; emphasis added).

change into account – albeit only in this distributional sense – but does not contextualize it.¹⁰

In her textbook, *An Introduction to Narratology* (orig., *Einführung in die Erzähltheorie*, 2006) from 2009, Fludernik writes that ‘narratology’s most prominent feature is its implicit universal validity’ (Fludernik, 2009, p. 9). The claim is rephrased in weakened form when she says that ‘narrative theory has, for the most part, concerned itself with the universal structures found in narrative. Typologies have been devised which include and classify every conceivable kind of narrative’ (ibid., p. 110; emphasis added). Particularly in German narratology, however, there is also the diachronic approach to the study of narrative, which ‘trace[s] developments in narrative forms and functions through the centuries’ (ibid., p. 110). The role assigned to such research has widened somewhat compared to *Towards a ‘Natural’ Narratology*:

Historical analyses are relevant because they provide additional information about how specific narrative techniques originated and when they came to predominate or fell out of favour [i.e. the distributional model]. But this is not all. Such analyses can sometimes lead to a significant revision or modification of the theoretical, especially the typological, bases of narrative theory (ibid., p. 111).

Thus, it is suggested that diachronic research may affect theoretical concepts themselves. It is not that theoretical concepts are formed primarily on the basis of historical materials, but that historical findings can modify theoretically based concepts – or at least typological categories, which we should probably understand as clusters of narrative traits (cf. Fludernik, 1996, p. 331). Purely historical concepts still appear problematic from a narratological point of view: ‘One could argue, for instance, that certain accepted notions in narratology are only valid for certain periods. If this is so, can one still justifiably regard these categories as universals, or are they only special features which may come into play in particular historical periods?’ (Fludernik, 2009, p. 115) Apparently, historical concepts which lack universal validity are not considered as possible parts of a narratological theory.

In their *Introduction to Postclassical Narratology: Approaches and Analyses* (2010), Monika Fludernik and Jan Alber distinguish between two phases

¹⁰ ‘Fludernik historisiert, ohne zu kontextualisieren’ [‘Fludernik historicizes but does not contextualize’]; Erll und Roggendorf, 2002, p. 96.

of postclassical narratology, the first of which is characterized as a phase of ‘multiplicities’, ‘interdisciplinarity’, and ‘transmedialities’ (Alber and Fludernik, 2010, p. 5). They accept Ansgar Nünning’s view that narratology has proceeded ‘from descriptive to interpretative and evaluative paradigms’ and ‘from universalism to particularism (which is equivalent to contextualism)’, and quote him saying that postclassical narratology seems ‘to move toward a grand contextual, historical, pragmatic and reader-oriented effort’; the issue is ‘to recontextualize the classical paradigm and to enrich narrative theory with ideas developed after its structuralist phase’ (ibid., p. 6). There now exist feminist, postcolonial, and other content-specific narratologies; ‘narratologists have tried to argue that the categories of narratology need to be modified or extended in order to accommodate the concerns of race, power, gender, ethnicity, or sexual orientation’. However, just like ‘classical’ narratologists, Alber and Fludernik do not believe that there is any ‘natural’ connection between narratological traits and ideological concepts like these: ‘Narrative devices by themselves do not carry any ideological freight; often they are neutral modes of focusing attention that only acquire normative or critical meanings in their various contexts of use’ (ibid., p. 8). Nevertheless, Fludernik’s cognitivist basis allows her to open up narratological concepts to content-dependence and contextual determination. While ‘structuralist narratology did not pay much attention to the referential or world-creating dimension of narratives’, cognitive narratologists (like herself) ‘show that the recipient uses his or her world knowledge to project fictional worlds, and this knowledge is stored in cognitive schemata called frames and scripts’ (ibid., p. 11). Frames and scripts are a formative apparatus for dealing with information, but there is variation in which particular frames or scripts are used in a particular historical and/or cultural situation and for a certain genre or literary tradition. That is to say, some of the main concepts of the cognitive model of narration – frame and script – include the possibility of historical, cultural, and contextual change.¹¹ Fludernik and Alber can therefore claim that ‘all narratology nowadays is *context-sensitive*’ (ibid., p. 22). (Though still primarily ‘diachronic’ in its approach, we may observe traces of contextualization in Fludernik’s paper in the present volume).

What Alber and Fludernik are suggesting is that postclassical narratology, after a somewhat turbulent initial phase, has now arrived at a second

11 ‘Cognitive narratology can thus be argued to affect the status of categories of narratological analysis; it shifts the emphasis from an essentialist, universal, and static understanding of narratological concepts to seeing them as fluid, context-determined, prototypical, and recipient-constituted’. Ibid., p. 12.

phase, in which consolidation is taking place, and they obviously believe that this is happening under the roof of cognitive theory (*ibid.*, pp. 15, 22). Yet they admit that a process of further diversification is still ongoing, a process in which ever new postclassical narratologies are proclaimed to have been established by combining different approaches. Even the articles in the volume edited by them ‘all combine and creatively blend different approaches’, to achieve ‘a synthesis that looks different in every individual essay but is a synthesis nevertheless’ (*ibid.*, p. 23) – a statement that rather signals the prolific imagination of the new narratologists than corroborates the idea that a consolidated state has been achieved in contemporary narratological theory.

Among the ‘postclassical’ narratologists, Ansgar Nünning has most emphatically proclaimed the coming of a new, contextual, historical, and/or cultural narratology. In an article from 2002 written together with Vera Nünning, he claims that narratology is now open to approaches and fields that were previously excluded from it, such as ‘the dimensions of history and the historical variability of narrative forms, aesthetics, ethics, ideology, interpretation and eventually the socio-cultural dimension’.¹² The authors admit that narrative theory is not yet complete: some questions are still unanswered, and some have not yet even been asked (*ibid.*, p. 29) – which suggests that narrative theory in its traditional, structuralist form is nevertheless considered to have succeeded in defining most of the relevant features in a narrative text.¹³ In another article from 2003, Ansgar Nünning maintains that ‘formalist analysis of narrative [...] is no longer the main focus, narrative theorists have begun to turn their attention to “cultural analysis”’, referring to Mieke Bal, who had asked narratologists to place their analytic tools at the service of ‘other concerns considered more vital for cultural studies’ (cf. Bal, 1990, p. 729; Nünning, 2003, p. 240), i.e., to combine the formal analysis of narratives with some aspects of content or ideology. Nünning quotes Herman in his appraisal that the transformation from a classical, structuralist narratology to the contemporary, postclassical one ‘can be described as a shift from text-centered and formal models to models that are jointly formal and functional – models attentive both to the text and to the context of stories’ (*ibid.*, p. 243);¹⁴ ‘functional’ here of

12 ‘die Dimensionen der Geschichte und der historischen Variabilität von Erzählformen, die Ästhetik, der Ethik, der Ideologie, der Interpretation und schließlich die soziokulturelle Dimension’; Nünning and Nünning, 2002, p. 20.

13 There may be some discrepancy here, since the authors also contend that narrative forms are not constant but mediate views and collective ideas of their time of origin (*ibid.*, p. 29).

14 The quotation is from Herman, 1999, p. 16.

course refers to taking into account the various functions of formal traits in a narrative text. Nünning's overall estimation of the present state of narratology, however, is more diffuse, and in fact questions the very idea of a completely new narratology: he remarks that 'there are currently more self-styled narratologies under the sun than ever before' (ibid., p. 247), but that ultimately, 'most of the approaches in question are either mere applications of narratological concepts, i.e. narratological criticism, [...] or so far removed from narratological research goals and methodological premises as to be virtually incompatible with narratology' (ibid., p. 260).

In his next article on the same topic, in which Nünning hopes to be able to proffer 'some conceptual and methodological premises for a context-sensitive and cultural approach to narratives that is still rooted in narratology', he seems to think along the same line: that the novelty of the new narratology consists of putting the analytical tools provided by (classical) narratology 'to the service of a cultural analysis of narrative fictions' (Nünning, 2004, p. 356). He emphasises that 'it *does* make a difference whether we can establish a consensus about textual features or not, and it is the descriptive toolkit of narratology that provides us with the terminological categories needed as the basis for rational argument'; he sees the task of cultural narratology in exploring 'the ways in which the formal properties of novels reflect, and influence, the unspoken mental assumptions and cultural issues of a given period' (ibid., p. 358; emphasis in the original). In an article from 2009, Nünning contends that there are a lot of new, contextualist, historical, and cultural narratologies, in which, however, the narratologists 'always seem to be moving towards new destinations, but apparently they hardly ever get there' (Nünning, 2009, p. 49). This means that new narratologies exist rather in the form of programmes than of finished achievements, and in his view 'narratology and context-sensitive interpretations of narratives still seem oceans apart' (ibid., p. 56). In yet another article from 2013, Nünning repeats the claim that contextual narratology has so far produced only works entitled 'towards...' (Nünning, 2013, p. 26). He also contends that the existing cultural narratology (*kulturwissenschaftliche Narratologie*) comprises the application of the analytical categories of narratology to historically and culturally variable forms and functions of narration, and the augmentation of the analytical toolbox by concepts which make narratology compatible with the questions and interests of cultural studies (ibid., p. 27). He speaks of closing the gap between formalist and content analysis as a semanticization of narrative forms (ibid., p. 29; cf. also Nünning, 2009, p. 64). In his view, what is needed first of all is a system of narratological categories for the context-oriented study of narrative and for a narrativistically oriented

cultural studies (Nünning, 2013, p. 46). In this view – that the creation of a new narratology has to start by establishing the most general categories, which are defined in a highly abstract, theoretical discourse¹⁵ – Nünning is following the opposite route compared to historians of literature, who start with the investigation of the concrete and proceed from there to abstract concepts.

On the basis of Fludernik's and Nünning's reviews of postclassical narratologies, it remains an open question how far, and in what ways, literary historical research can be combined with narratological conceptualizations, either in narratology's classical form or in some new, postclassical one. However, the genuine interest of both Fludernik's 'diachronic' approach and Nünning's 'cultural narratology' (*kulturwissenschaftliche Narratologie*) for the historical dimension of literature is unquestionable. This cannot be said of postclassical narratology as a whole, in particular of the work done in the United States. Insofar as the aim of American cognitive narratologists continues to be the elucidation of literary phenomena, rather than, on the contrary, using literature as materials in the study of human cognitive mechanisms,¹⁶ 'theory' is very much favoured and 'mere' interpretation of literary works is criticized. We put 'theory' in inverted commas, since 'theory' is here often used quite loosely to refer to any general ideas concerning a topic, rather than a systematic presentation of the most basic, abstract concepts organizing and explaining a field.¹⁷ The new custom of presenting various 'theoretical' ideas and testing them with examples from literature has been praised, among others, by James Phelan and Peter J. Rabinowitz, who have coined the term 'theorypractice' to refer to it (cf. Phelan and Rabinowitz, 2008, pp. 2, 5). They claim that 'the continuous production

15 An example: "Zu den wichtigsten "lebensweltlichen Funktionen, die dem Erzählen zugeschrieben werden", zählen die "Episodenbildung", die Kohärenzstiftung, die "Geschehensintegration" und die Sinnbildung, die vor allem darin besteht, "Handlungen, Ereignissen und Geschehnissen Bedeutung zu verleihen" (Ibid., p. 41). [Among the most important "lived-world functions assigned to narrating" are counted "episode-building", creation of coherence, "integration of events" and creation of meaning, which consists primarily of "assigning meaning to acts, events and incidents".] Expressions in inverted commas are quotations from theoreticians given in the footnotes.

16 According to Herman, the aim in cognitivist research is 'to explore the nature of narrative as a basic cognitive endowment' (Herman, 2003, p. 19); or (quoting Mark Turner), 'the study of language and of literature as expressions of our conceptual apparatus' (Herman, 2010, p. 137).

17 One example of the loose, non-traditional use of 'theory' is Lisa Zunshine's concept of an innate 'Theory of Mind' (Zunshine 2006), an instance from which the 'readers of fictional narratives recruit [...] to link what characters say and do to inferences about underlying mental states' (Herman, 2012, p. 126). Here 'theory' is used to refer to a (supposed) innate disposition in the human mind, which contradicts of course the traditional understanding of theory.

of such [interpretative, non-theoretical] essays is less and less profitable' and that 'untheorized interpretation can make only a minor contribution to contemporary narrative studies' (Phelan and Rabinowitz, 1994, p. 7). However, seeing interpretative and historical research of literature as lacking in any theory is incorrect; theoretical questions and concepts play an important role in interpretative and historical research too, even though these concepts may not be universal but content-specific and valid for a particular period only.

Theoretical Concepts in the Historical Study of literature

Reflections over the formation of concepts and their use in the historical study of literature are rare; this is certainly an under-researched area of literary studies. What can be done in this Introduction is of course not to fill the gap, but merely to suggest some obvious aspects of the issue, the goal being to identify important differences between concept formation in narratology and literary history.

The theoretical concepts used in historical literary research are of various ages and origins. Some concepts are of very ancient origin, such as those of the literary genres of tragedy, comedy, and epic. This, of course, does not mean that these concepts have remained the same over centuries and millennia; we know that 'tragedy' in ancient Greece meant something other than in Elizabethan England or in eighteenth-century neoclassicism. This is something of which the modern scholar of literary history is well aware¹⁸ – in contrast to authors from many earlier periods. The concepts of classical poetics, the tradition of which reaches from Aristotle to mid-eighteenth-century neoclassicism, were meant to be universally valid. We now know, of course, that they were not: even when the word designating a concept remained the same (e.g. 'tragedy'), the content of the concept changed in the course of time. Concepts of genre, like other concepts of classical poetics, were not originally conceived of as tools for literary scholarship, but as rules to be followed by the authors of literary works. The nature of, for example, eighteenth-century tragedy is thus a question related both to the theoretical debate and to the tragedies produced and performed in that period. The two things are connected, but not identical.

¹⁸ For the literary historian, it is clear that genre concepts, though theoretical constructions, are historical formations developed in close connection with literature itself, and cannot be 'deduced' from any ahistorical theory, as Todorov was suggesting; cf. e.g. McKeon, 2002, p. 1.

Problems with theoretical concepts in literary history are to considerable extent similar to those involved in more general conceptual history (*Begriffsgeschichte*) which Reinhart Koselleck illustrates with examples from social history (cf. Koselleck, 2005). A literary historian, too, must beware of a careless transfer to the past modern, context determined expressions' (ibid., p. 81). The historian must also be critical of a 'history of ideas' which treats ideas 'as constants, assuming different historical forms but of themselves fundamentally unchanging' (ibid.); and he or she should keep in mind that 'the fact that a word has remained in constant use is not in itself sufficient indication of stability in its substantial meaning' (ibid., p. 82). Some concepts change more, others less; in poetics, the most technical concepts, such as 'iambus', tend to change less than broader, more comprehensive ones, such as the genre concepts or the concept of 'literature' itself. New concepts, referring to new literary phenomena, are of course formed as well, such as 'bourgeois tragedy' in the eighteenth century.

In addition to concepts deriving from eighteenth-century debates, the literary historian also makes use of theoretical concepts of later origin. In the study of eighteenth-century English literature, these include for example Ian Watt's concepts of the 'rise of the novel', referring to the emergence at the beginning of the century of a genre of the novel which differed radically from seventeenth-century romance, and of 'formal realism' which in Watt's view describes what was crucially 'new' in the novel (cf. Watt, 1981, pp. 34-35). Watt's ideas marked an important turn to the novel in the study of eighteenth-century English literature. In the course of the debate, which has now been ongoing for more than half a century, his views have been contested, corroborated and augmented in a series of major contributions to the 'rise of the novel'. This is an example of how important a new historical conceptualization can be for a field of research.

How such concept formation takes place is difficult, or perhaps impossible, to explain. What is clear is that these concepts concern merely a restricted historical phenomenon – such as the new novel from the beginning of the eighteenth-century England – and that they are not derived from any underlying theory or borrowed from any other discipline. They are based on the empirical study of literature, even though the concept formation is not effected by any simple process of observation.¹⁹ Slightly less difficult

19 In an account of the genesis of *The Rise of the Novel* from 2000, Watt reveals that he only came to recognize the rootedness of the new English novel in empiricism by the detour of an 'exposure to German thought' of Theodor Adorno, Georg Lukács, Max Weber, and others (cf. Watt, 2000, pp. 151, 153).

to explain is the character of such conceptualization. A concept referring to a complex cultural phenomenon – such as the ‘rise of the novel’ – is more than a mere word, whose meaning can be defined. The concept is clarified in Watt’s book-length study on the topic, in which the phenomenon is elucidated from different aspects but not exhaustively defined. In this sense, Nietzsche is right in contending that something that has a history – or something that is a historical phenomenon – cannot be given a short, sharp definition, as definition was understood in structuralist poetics (or classical physics; see Steinby, 2016). For Genette, as noted above, a definition contains everything – and nothing but – what belongs to the content of the concept: the definition is in this sense exhaustive. A ‘prolepsis’ is a narrative leap forward in time; it is this and nothing but this, universally and immutably. In contrast, a definition of a phenomenon like ‘the rise of the novel’ is something like a description, in which the most essential aspects of the phenomenon are brought together. Anyone who attempts such a definition/description is aware of the fact that it will not be exhaustive, nor will it be permanently or universally valid. On the contrary: as research in the field proceeds, new and (hopefully) better descriptions/definitions will follow. And since our understanding of this particular phenomenon is essentially dependent on how we perceive adjacent phenomena, or related phenomena from another age, there is no limit to the progress of our understanding of the phenomenon, and consequently to the need for reformulation of the concept.

Obviously, not all core concepts of literary history were coined originally for the study of a particular historical period or a particular phenomenon; concepts and categories from other fields are applied as tools for the historical study of literature as well. The evolution of our understanding of, for example, the concepts of modernity, individuality, society, and rationality that has taken place over the past few decades in the humanities and social sciences affects the conceptualizations of literary historians as well. What is specific in this appropriation of concepts from other fields in the service of literary history is our awareness that the phenomena we encounter for example in the eighteenth century do not exactly fit the concept as defined in a philosophical or social-scientific theory. The concept does not remain the same when applied in the study of a particular literary historical period. The task of the literary historian is not a matter of identifying something known as ‘individuality’ or ‘rationality’ in a particular object of study, but of asking what that phenomenon looks like in this particular period, in the works of these particular authors.

We can pick – somewhat arbitrarily – a few examples of literary historians’ conceptualizations from some seminal works on eighteenth-century

English literature. J. Paul Hunter's *Before Novels: The Cultural Contexts of Eighteenth-Century English Fiction* (1994) indicates in its very title that the scope in which the 'rise of the novel' is here examined has expanded decisively from that of Watt's. Hunter reminds us of the danger of 'universalism', 'essentialism', and 'ahistoricism', which remain powerful trends in literary studies (Hunter, 1994, p. 5). He insists on not projecting our views concerning the contemporary novel, and its secularized worldview, onto the eighteenth century. The process of secularization needs to be examined in detail; likewise, the character of the 'realism' of the eighteenth-century novel must be separately determined (*ibid.*, pp. 180, 200). Other concepts that need reconsideration include the didacticism of the early novel (*ibid.*, p. 55), and the development of privacy and its relationship to the public realm (e.g., *ibid.*, pp. 157, 303). We can see that theoretical concepts are used to focus research on particular issues or fields, which are not merely subsumed within a given category but which need to be examined in order to gain a full picture of the specific character of the general phenomenon in this particular historical case. The work of the literary historian is thus to a great extent guided by certain crucial theoretical concepts, while the empirical research on the topic leads to revisions in the conceptualization of the subject.

In line with Hunter's study, John Richetti's *The English Novel in History 1700-1780* (1999) contextualizes the 'rise of the novel' both in different literary discourses and in social and cultural history. Richetti suggests that the main theme of the new novel is 'the contested nature of subjectivity' (*ibid.*, p. 3); he elaborates upon this by applying Alasdair MacIntyre's interpretation of 'character' as a mask, 'a mode of social existence', maintaining that the novel dramatizes 'the gap that exists between an individual and his or her social role, a gap that is nonexistent in the *character*' (*ibid.*; emphasis in the original). Thus, Richetti traces the changes in the forms of subjectivity that are entailed in the new ways of dealing with what is traditionally called 'character' in literary studies. Stuart Sherman, in *Telling Time: Clocks, Diaries, and English Diurnal Form 1660-1785* (1996), discusses the impact of changes in the consciousness of time on the English literature of the period. The characterizing concepts he uses include a 'growing appetite for "contemporaneity"' (Sherman, 1996, p. 172) and a 'task-oriented' versus 'time-governed' model of organizing experience, saying that Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* 'refigures task time as tasks timed' (*ibid.*, p. 229). Again, a new form of thought precipitates new forms of shaping the narrative.

Michael McKeon's *The Origins of the English Novel 1600-1740* (1987) traces the same development as Hunter and Richetti, but his theoretical frame

is somewhat different and more philosophical, since he is interested particularly in the development of the epistemological and the socio-ethical dimension in the emerging novel. He considers the strength of the novel as a modern genre to be derived from its unrivalled power both to formulate and to explain a set of problems that are central to early modern experience. These may be understood as

problems of categorical instability, which the novel, originating to resolve, also inevitably reflects. The first sort of instability with which the novel is concerned has to do with generic categories; the second, with social ones. The instability of generic categories registers an epistemological crisis, a major cultural transition in attitudes toward how to tell the truth in narrative. [...] The instability of social categories registers a cultural crisis in attitudes toward the way in which the external social order is related to the internal, moral state of its members (McKeon, 2002, p. 20).

Thus, at the beginning of his empirical study of the emerging novel McKeon defines the leading questions and theses in philosophical and simultaneously cultural and historical terms. He also gives a reflective account of his method, which he calls dialectical and which he defines as follows: 'A basic premise of dialectical method is that all categorizations are operational and conditional rather than once and for all and absolute – that they are parts of a larger process from which they may be abstracted only provisionally' (*ibid.*, p. xviii). That is to say, each category is tested and redefined in the course of the empirical study of the subject, and each definition of a concept, or description of a phenomenon, affects our understanding of other, adjacent concepts as well. Accordingly, McKeon professes the 'virtue of concretion, that of descriptive precision' (*ibid.*). This is very much, we dare say, how the historian of literature proceeds, even if he (or she) only too rarely explains his or her dealing with concepts and their relation to empirical research.

Encounters, Negotiations

The idea that the compatibility of narratological concepts with literary historical research, and their usefulness in it, consists in narratology's providing the tools for dealing with the formal traits in narrative discourse, to which historical research adds content and context, turns out to be simplistic and defective. The suggestion that narratology can be opened up to historical research by 'semanticizing' the universal narrative forms

defined in narratology presents these forms as an ahistorical repertoire which can be filled in with different contents, while literary historians are disposed to think that form is not separable from the specific content – defined, for example, in terms of genre – which the form expresses. If forms, as suggested above, cannot be defined abstractly, apart from the content, in historical literary research, this points to a fundamental difference in concept formation compared to narratology. What we have here is also a matter of different views of conceptual accuracy: while for narratologists it means exhaustive definition (of a trait in narrative discourse), which is valid for all possible circumstances, for literary historians it means a pertinent description of what is essential in a concrete historical phenomenon. These differences in the understanding of the functioning of theoretical concepts are bound to cause difficulties in attempts to dovetail or fuse narratology with historical literary research.

We can illustrate the problem with the excellent example of a study in which a literary historian accepts the challenge of narratological theory: Armin Schulz's *Erzähltheorie in mediävistischer Perspektive* (Narrative Theory in a Medievalist Perspective, 2013). Since narratology, despite its ahistorical, universal orientation, was originally constructed with the modern novel in mind ('modern' in the broad sense of beginning in the eighteenth century), the question of its compatibility with the study of medieval literature arises naturally. Schulz' main argument is that narratology does not help much in the analysis of medieval narratives, since it remains on the surface of narration, rather than examining *'how the story – the histoire – is composed conclusively of action and the motives [or reasons] of action [Handlungsgründen]*'.²⁰ He enumerates important aspects of medieval narratives that contradict the basic suppositions of narratology: author and narrator cannot be distinguished; the characters narrate things they ought not to know about; the narratives appear to contain both too much and too little; the characters are not individualized, but have an identity essentially determined by social bonds, genre-dependent behavioural patterns and their history (but not by any characteristics owned by this individual alone; *ibid.*, pp. 1-2, 128). The vantage point in examining medieval narratives, according to Schulz, has to be that of the different genres – courtly novel, heroic epic, the 'Märe' (a novelistic story in verse), and the courtly legend – since patterns of story, narration, and characters are tied to genre (*ibid.*, pp. 4-5). Important elements in the analysis are

20 *'wie das Geschehen – die histoire – bündig aus Handlungen und Handlungsgründen zusammengesetzt wird'* (Schulz, 2012, p. 1; emphasis in the original).

narrative schemata, the semantics of space, and the technique of creating coherence (ibid., p. 6). Schulz demonstrates how the narrative schemata and characters of narratives in different genres derive from 'courtly anthropology' and from the medieval worldview, in which a Providence rules over Fortuna and human wilfulness. However, he also introduces a large number of narratological and related theories into his discussion, ranging from Genette to Propp and Bakhtin, but he always returns to the specificity of medieval narration, as deriving from medieval thought patterns and narrative schemata, and the 'collective imagery', which is historically specific (ibid., p. 21). He shows how the logic of creating cohesion in a medieval story is different from a modern one (e.g., ibid., pp. 322, 331); he sums this up by saying that the structure of a medieval narrative derives from 'a conflict between different patterns of creating meaning, of different action schemata, themes, patterns of interaction and anthropologies'.²¹ As a whole, Schulz's study demonstrates convincingly that the content and form of a narrative cannot be separated: a form is always the form of a particular content. This content, and consequently its form, is historically variable and contextually determined.

Eighteenth-century narrative literature, particularly the novel, is considered the beginning of the modern tradition of narration; the period is nevertheless sufficiently remote to elicit the question of historical specificity of the narratives of the time. In the present volume, concepts and conceptions both of narratology and of the historical study of literature are reflected upon in the light of eighteenth-century narrative literature. Some of the authors give more stress to narratological, others to historical conceptualizations; some suggest the applicability of certain narratological concepts with further specifications, or propose augmentations to these concepts based on particular historical observations, while others consider that narratological concepts do not serve to capture the phenomenon in question, and explain why.

The volume opens with Michael McKeon's article on the challenge which the study of eighteenth-century literature presents to narrative theory. The author argues that the universalist emphasis of narratologists 'misrepresents generic historicity as transhistorical', since in their general theories of narrative they chiefly refer to the modern novel. McKeon goes on to reflect upon some crucial concepts in narrative theory. Starting with the concept of realism, he maintains that it is not only Genette and Bal

21 'vom Widerstreit unterschiedlicher Sinnbildungsmuster, Handlungsschemata, Themen, Interaktionsmuster und Anthropologien'; ibid., p. 348.

who equate mimesis, or the illusory imitation of an external reality, with literary realism; like them, Watt in his concept of formal realism partly misrepresents the phenomenon by disregarding the reflexive moment in realism. Richardson is not merely pretending to be giving a 'historically' accurate account of Pamela's experiences; the form through which this experience is mediated – Pamela's style of letter writing – is thematized as well. Thus, 'diegetic self-consciousness' is part of novelistic realism from the very beginning. McKeon goes on to argue that the narratologists' understanding of 'mimesis' is likewise defective, and for much the same reason as realism: mimesis is understood solely in terms of illusionism. In his discussion of free indirect discourse (FID), McKeon detects important differences between Genette's and Bal's views on the matter. He suggests that the nature of the phenomenon is misrepresented both in Bal's narrative layers model and in Genette's idea of the character's speech being partly 'emancipated' from the narrator's speech, and argues that FID is a reflexive mode of writing which thematizes the realistic form of character representation. He emphasizes that the emergence of FID is to be contextualized in the eighteenth-century preoccupation with 'the nature and the limits of person, impersonation, personality, and personal identity'. Finally, McKeon raises some doubts regarding the claim that postclassical narratology is no longer tacitly bound to the modern novel; at least in some (postmodern, poststructuralist) forms, it seems to be attached even more restrictively to twentieth-century and contemporary narrative.

John Richetti's article continues the discussion of the topic of realism in the eighteenth-century novel, adopting another angle: he examines the intricate relationship between rhetorical plot-making and the representation of 'socio-economic actualities' in Fielding's *Tom Jones*. He begins by arguing that plot is for Fielding a generically determined rhetorical artifice, rather than an arrangement of events as they flow from the characters and their experiences, as suggested by contemporary narrative theory. Fielding is presenting his readers with a 'comic epic in prose', which crucially affects the way the narrator deals with incidents and, above all, with the outcome of events. What is at issue for Richetti, however, is the tension between the comic-epic plot and the representation of problematical aspects of actual mid-eighteenth-century English life and social institutions – indeed giving 'a fairly complete survey of English institutions' – which resists a full absorption into comic artifice. Richetti suggests that the socio-historical aspect is present particularly in some of the minor characters; he demonstrates this by analysing some of the soldiers in whose company Tom spends some time in Book VII. More specifically, the ruthless Northerton,

who in a quarrel almost stabs Tom to death, is interpreted as a character from a socio-economic and institutional landscape, who nevertheless also functions as a cog in the machinery of plot leading to the discovery of Tom's parentage and his return to Paradise Hall, and who disappears from the novel after fulfilling his 'task' in the plot. Richetti compares Northerton's role to that of the three Blifils (young Blifil, his father, and his uncle), who represent the 'evil', scheming counterforce to Tom. They are completely absorbed in their function in the plot construction – with their intrigues and their intent to manipulate an 'audience' (Mr. Allworthy), they are a kind of parallel to the plot-making of the Fieldingesque narrator – while Northerton acts just as the reckless himself. What remains of him is a residue of 'unassimilated characterological substance' in the novel, which hints at other, additional possibilities of plot construction, more like those dealt with in contemporary narratology.

The presence of ample descriptive detail is considered to be a characteristic of literary realism, and Watt's claim that the 'rise of the novel' involves a shift to formal realism, i.e. to considering as real what is particular in time and space, fuelled the conception that eighteenth-century novels abound with descriptive details – which has proved to be a misconception. Monika Fludernik tackles the question of the description of house interiors in eighteenth-century literature, using the tools provided by Franz Stanzel in his concepts of perspectival and aperspectival description. Fludernik starts historically, with a brief overview of pre-eighteenth-century types of description – ekphrasis, portrait description, allegorical description – and includes in her discussion a contextual or 'culturalist' aspect: the increase in interior descriptions in eighteenth-century literature was due in part to changes in interior design in non-aristocratic households. As she points out, Stanzel's concept of perspectival description refers to representing interiors in a manner which defines the spatial locations of the rooms and the objects in them, i.e. 'draws a map', rather than (aperspectivally) merely giving an account – an inventory, a list – of the contents of the rooms. Fludernik delineates the development in eighteenth-century literature from aperspectival to perspectival description of interiors. While in early descriptions of houses the organizing principle was critical assessment of the house and the objects in it, rather than spatial contiguity, in the 'tour guide model' the description follows more or less closely the visitor's route in the house. The earliest perspectival descriptions are thus found in Gothic novels, while for example Defoe in *Moll Flanders* represents spaces and the location of objects only to the extent that it is relevant to the action.

Aino Mäkikalli takes a look at two early eighteenth-century English novels: Aphra Behn's *Oroonoko* and Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*. She interprets the temporal order in these narratives in the context of late seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century conceptions of time. The analysis examines the structure and temporal continuum of events and representations of characters in relation to time, in the context of contemporary time-keeping, chronological studies and the idea of history. Mäkikalli shows how the intrusion of history – 'real life' – into Behn's narrative disrupts its 'adventure time', which is characteristic of the baroque romance. Defoe's dating of events is more precise than Behn's, but both authors use temporal references to enhance the verisimilitude of the narrative and to create an effect of reality.

The topic in Liisa Steinby's article is temporality, and the related questions of the central experiencing subject and the perception of other characters, in Defoe's *Moll Flanders* and Goethe's *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*. The vantage point are the two revolutions in conceptions of time that took place in eighteenth-century literature. The first revolution, occurring at the beginning of the century, is that which Ian Watt refers to as the 'formal realism' of the new novel: what is now conceived as 'reality' are particular things in a particular place and at a particular time, rather than universal, timeless essences of things. The second revolution, taking place towards the end of the century, is the breakthrough of historicism – conceiving of all human things as historically changing – which has a counterpart in the novel of the development of an individual (the *Bildungsroman*). Steinby shows that the temporal structure of *Moll Flanders* is primarily determined by the protagonist's manner of seeing everything from the perspective of her struggle for survival. In *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*, the main form of temporality is the individual's experience of time, in which he constantly recurs to past experiences, reinterpreting them and himself in their light, has new experiences which cannot immediately be given any definitive meaning, and imagines the future, which essentially codetermines the interpretation of past and present. What the protagonist himself is, how his life-story should be narrated, and what the other characters are both in themselves and for him, are then questions processed temporally, rather than something that can be instantaneously and definitively resolved.

In Dorothee Birke's contribution, the main theoretical concept is Stanzel's authorial narration, which she considers in the light of two examples of English novels from the 1750s. Stanzel's authorial narration is often equated to narration from a position of 'godlike omniscience', comprising not only the characters' hidden motives and thoughts but also the moral value of the

acts, and is therefore often seen as outdated and incompatible with modern scepticism towards authority. Birke, however, argues that already in the eighteenth-century novel, authorial narration meant less the assumption of an authoritative stance than reflecting on narrative authority. Such means of reflection included commentaries on events and characters and on the narration itself, projected reader figures, and 'gnomic' commentaries, offering general maxims concerning morality or human nature. Haywood's *The History of Miss Betsy Thoughtless* opens with a passage on the general state of contemporary morals and manners, allowing the reader either to judge the heroine according to these conventional norms or, on the contrary, to examine these norms critically on the basis of the character and her story. As readers, we are invited to reflect upon our expectations and our role as reader. In the anonymously published *Charlotte Summers*, excessive authorial intrusions and Fieldingesque irony are displayed to make the reader conscious of him- or herself, as someone who is manipulated and convinced by the narrator, but who may also raise questions concerning the narrator's authority.

Karin Kukkonen looks at the problem of tellability in the context of German eighteenth-century criticism and novel-writing. The relevant critical discussion here was conducted by the German authority on poetics Johann Christoph Gottsched and the Swiss theoreticians Johann Jakob Bodmer and Johan Jakob Breitinger, and it concerned the question of how to make a literary work interesting by using a topic which contains something 'marvellous' without contradicting its verisimilitude. Kukkonen suggests that there is not only a lower limit of tellability – what makes the story worthwhile relating and reading – but also an upper one: too disturbing an event may not bear narration, while too many extraordinary elements may render it impossible to structure the whole into a convincing narrative. Using an example from eighteenth-century novel-writing, Maria Anna Sagar's *Karolinens Tagebuch*, Kukkonen elucidates the difference between event-based and character-based narrativity, the latter historically succeeding the former. *Karolinens Tagebuch* contains, in addition to letters by the I-narrator concerning her own, rather eventless life, the story of her friend, whose life-story closely resembles the lives of the heroines in admired contemporary novels by Christian Fürchtegott Gellert and Sophie von La Roche. The tellability of these (rather eventful) character novels is contrasted with Karoline's plan to write a novel following the pattern of the adventurous baroque novel, which in this context represents an exceeding of the limit of (event-based) tellability: too many extraordinary events cannot be shaped into a convincing whole. Kukkonen goes on to argue that the relatively eventless life of the

protagonist achieves tellability by the reciprocal mirroring of the different narrative strains in her letters. Thus, the metafictional dimension proves to be a relevant aspect of tellability.

Claudia Nitschke starts with an analysis of the functions of embedded narratives in Wieland's *Don Sylvio*, and goes on to outline a trajectory reaching from Wieland through Lessing to the emergence of the aesthetic autonomy of art in Goethe's *Unterhaltungen deutscher Ausgewanderten*. *Don Sylvio* is described as a highly complex construction of different diegetic levels, ostensible presence of publisher, translator and author, spurious footnotes, authorial intrusions and the comments of the characters within the main story on the embedded ones. Not only is literary self-consciousness displayed – playfully and often satirically – in the structure of the novel, but the understanding of the nature and function of literature is also its main topic: the plot consists of the young protagonist's learning to distinguish between fiction and reality. Nitschke shows how this takes place in the interplay between embedded stories and the protagonist's experiences in 'real' life (i.e., in the main story of the novel). The theoretical categories used in the analysis include immediacy and immersion, the Husserlian conception of 'intersubjective objectivity', and the difference between the pragmatic and the ontological approach toward fiction. In the end, *Don Sylvio* is able to differentiate between real life and literature, as a sphere of its own – a sphere which here is still not experienced primarily aesthetically. While Lessing emphasizes emotion and empathy as essential factors in understanding literature, Goethe's novella cycle ends with a fairytale which emphasizes the aesthetic autonomy of literature.

Christine Waldschmidt asks a question that has not been asked in narratological theory: how is the relationship between the thought content of a narrative and its narrative form to be understood? This is a question which was very much present in the eighteenth-century literary scene, because of the stress in Enlightenment thinking on the didactic aspect of literature. Waldschmidt discusses the issue as one of rhetoricity: narrative form was viewed as the rhetorical means for persuading the reader to accept the thought content of an exemplary story. In Germany, the topic was discussed particularly in the framework of the theory of the fable. As examples of this tradition, Waldschmidt analyses a fable by Lessing and a short story by Schiller, a renarration of an embedded story in Diderot's *Jacques le fataliste*. In Lessing's fable about the dying wolf, the reader is made to accept the fact that hypocrisy is common in the world, but that this need not unsettle the existence of an ideal moral order. In Schiller's story *Merkwürdiges Beispiel einer weiblichen Rache*, no moral conclusion can be drawn on the basis of

the story, in which events take place just as in the revenge plan of the female protagonist – except for the decisive, unexpected turn in the end, which shatters her wish for revenge. This unexpected outcome demonstrates the presence of a dynamic of psychic energies in human beings which we are not aware of. Waldschmidt's conclusion is that Schiller is here continuing the exemplary mode of storytelling, but that the general thought that guides it is something that is in need of investigation rather than any known truth.

Penny Pritchard's topic is the characterization of the deceased in English eighteenth-century funeral sermons. She starts by reminding us of the fact that the 'rise of the novel' took place amidst the flourishing of a plethora of various fictional and (mostly) non-fictional text-types, which is one reason to examine the characterization in funeral sermons with narratological tools developed for the study of fiction. Published funeral sermons were a didactic genre, the purpose of which was to exhort listeners or readers to follow in their lives the exemplary spiritual conduct of the now dead. The 'obligatory' praise of the Christian virtues of the deceased in the biographical parts of the funeral sermons led to accusations of hypocrisy. The praise of the Christian conduct of the deceased often followed a typology of professional virtues: the person was characterized as a charitable merchant or a philanthropic physician. Finally, Pritchard discusses two atypical cases of characterization in a funeral sermon: one in which an idiosyncratic manner of the deceased is mentioned – the interest in this is motivated by the extraordinary stature of the deceased (Sir Robert Boyle) – and another in which the funeral sermon is used to absolve the reputation of the deceased against unjust accusations. The general and moral nature of the characterizations does not leave space for 'experientiality', which according to Monika Fludernik is a criterion of narrativity.

In the last two articles in the volume, Genette's concept of paratext (or peritext) is applied to eighteenth-century writing. Pat Rogers discusses the biographies published by the English bookseller and publisher Edmund Curll, who also wrote parts of them. These biographies, whose subjects included authors, churchmen, scholars, politicians, soldiers, and historic figures from previous centuries, typically consisted of a great variety of different components, of which the biography itself was only one, minor part. Rogers describes the characteristic features of a Curllian biography, classifies the different types of paratext in terms of the categories of the time, and defines their different functions, yielding a list different from Genette's. A few exemplary cases clarify Curll's compilation method, which aimed primarily at maximizing commercial profit. Curll's case is an extreme example of the use of paratexts – if we can call them that, in

books in which they no longer form a 'threshold' into the work proper but very much the matter itself.

Finally, Teemu Ikonen's subject is peritextuality in French eighteenth-century narratives. Rather than aiming at a classification of various peritexts – Ikonen finds Genette's project problematical – he examines peritextuality as a matter of 'dispositional' effects across the boundary of text and 'off-texts', effects which can be studied in terms of textual order, of the position of the author and of the reader, respectively. Two different versions of a work, by Diderot and de Laclos, in which the same narrative is embedded in different peritexts, are examined as examples. Ikonen shows how changes and rearrangements in peritextual settings transform the position of the author as an authority, and invite the reader to adopt different stances to the narrative text. The differences between versions of texts should not simply be left to textual criticism, Ikonen concludes: authorial revisions common in the eighteenth century can be considered as acts of repetition and transformation, creating narratologically challenging connections between the main narrative, its framings, and the cultural context.

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The Eighteenth-Century Challenge to Narrative Theory¹

Michael McKeon

I'll begin with a narrative. Years ago in graduate school, as I became aware of the novel as something to study as well as to read, my eye was caught by two recent books whose claim was that the novel was getting a lot more attention than it deserved. Although very different in other respects, both Frye's *Anatomy of Criticism* and Scholes and Kellogg's *The Nature of Narrative* made the point that in those days, the dominance of novel studies was such that to speak of the novel, it seemed, was to speak of narrative as such. Their influential books argued that it was time to put the novel genre in its place by resituating it within the narrative mode, thereby throwing into relief all the other genres that had preceded it.

I already had read Aristotle's *Poetics* in college, and I recognized this as an Aristotelian move. Aristotle's method, I'd learned, proceeds from the most general categories – those of human knowing, acting, and making – to divide and subdivide categories into their component parts until the analytic process reaches the limits of its usefulness. Aristotle describes poetics as an imitative kind of making, which can be subdivided (among other ways) according to three different 'manners' of imitation. The poet may speak in the same voice throughout; or 'dramatically', in the assumed voices of several characters; or in alternation between 'narrative' and an assumed character, 'as Homer does' (Aristotle, 1448a). These three manners of imitation distinguish between what came down to us as poetry, drama, and narrative, the three modes of poetic or literary imitation. Aristotle treats these three manners of imitation as covering the field of logical possibility, and for this reason Frye calls them the basic roots or 'radicals of presentation' (Frye 1957, pp. 246-47). But after this initial analysis, the *Poetics* turns from the logical to the historical, and summarizes the major stages in the development of poetry from its origins to his present day, a summary that accounts for the several genres that fall under each mode, and that, unlike the modes to which they belong, are contingent categories whose

¹ My thanks to John Belton for helping me with the ancient Greek of Plato and Aristotle, and to Riccardo Capoferro and Natalie Roxburgh for acute reflections on an earlier draft of this essay.

existence and nature are determined by historical vicissitude (Aristotle, 1448b-1449b).

Frye, Scholes, and Kellogg wrote around the same time as the apotheosis of structuralist theory, which promoted the primacy of the literary modes – but with a fundamental difference from Aristotle’s usage. Ferdinand de Saussure had distinguished between *langue* and *parole*, synchrony and diachrony, the structural and the chronological axes of language. His followers in mid-century France and elsewhere treated this distinction as a dichotomous separation, and thought the understanding of literary modes is best attained when they are unconditionally separated from their historical instances – or more precisely, from the historicity of those instances.² Structuralism looked to the operation of language for rules by which to challenge the authority of what it saw as un-self-critical historical practice – not just local and temporary literary usages but the category ‘genre’ itself. The effect was not only (in general) to divorce theoretical from historical study, but also (in particular) to redirect attention away from kinds of narrative that, like the novel genre, have a specific historical character, and toward narrative as such, from whose general language use, it was thought, might be derived a broad understanding unclouded by the specific biases of more narrowly historical practice.

In the years following its heyday, narratology based on a linguistic model has received considerable criticism of which the readers of this essay are no doubt aware, and it has been superseded by what might be called an inclusively eclectic narrative theory. My aim in this essay is to undertake at some length a theoretically coherent critique of structuralist narratology, and in a more synoptic fashion to ask if and how its successor has responded to the problems I describe.

Narrative theory or narratology – I’ll use the terms interchangeably – rose on a wave of structuralist enthusiasm, dedicated not, like Aristotelian method, to the relationship between the general or synchronic category and its particular or diachronic instantiations, but to analyzing the general mode in isolation from its constituent genres. But how could the universal nature of the mode be analyzed apart from the evidence provided by its generic instances? The answer to this question is of course that it could not. Drawing on scientific method, narratology necessarily employs the evidence of particular generic usage to identify the abstract mode; but it brackets, as immaterial to that result, the concrete formal

2 Saussure (1959, pp. 79-81) himself disputed the correlation of ‘diachrony-synchrony’ at the linguistic micro-level with ‘history-structure’ at the macro-level.

circumstances from which the abstract modal form is generated. The particular variant features of generic forms provide the necessary means to the end of making intelligible the general and constant form of the mode; but the means have served their purpose once their variable elements have been winnowed away from what is constant to and constitutive of the mode as such. By this I don't mean to deny that narratological studies cite particular narratives in their analyses. I mean that the dates of composition and the generic character of these narratives are treated as irrelevant to the issues at hand, which are not generic but modal, not local but universal.

This particularizing generic data plays no part in the final assessment of the mode of narrative, but it does of course appear in narratological accounts of the evidence on which conclusions are based. Do the temporal and spatial range of these narratives justify generalizations about the nature of narrative as such? Taking Genette's *Narrative Discourse* (1972) and Bal's *Narratology* (1985) as a sample of structuralist narratology,³ I find that most of the narrative texts and usages cited by these exemplary theorists are quite recent. That is, the abstract theory of the narrative mode is largely drawn from the concrete practice of the novel genre. Narrative theory, which aims to universalize its principles beyond the local practice of any historical genre, appears to derive those principles from the generic practice of one, chronologically localizable, genre in particular. One might conclude from this that the universalizing premise of narratology misrepresents generic historicity as transhistorical. Or to put it differently, one might conclude that what we call narrative theory is for the most part really the genre theory of the novel. The theoretical separation between modes (like narrative) and genres (like the novel) is indispensable. But the coherence and integrity of modes depend on their abstract accountability for the concrete genres that compose their domain. To generalize about the nature of narrative therefore requires an attentiveness both to the historical—the temporal and spatial—particularity of genres and to the difference between the particularity of the part and the generality of the whole. Eighteenth-century experiments and innovations in narrative form were remarkably rich and deeply consequential for the future of narrative. This is the eighteenth-century challenge to narrative theory—which also amounts to a reminder of the historicity of literary form.

3 Quotations from Bal, 2009 may be assumed to appear also in Bal, 1985 unless explicitly noted.

Mimesis and Realism in Narrative Theory

Both conclusions would seem to follow from Genette's and Bal's analysis of narrative 'mimesis' and 'realism', which both critics use synonymously (e.g., see Genette, 1980, p. 165; Bal, 2009, p. 36). Genette in particular derives his understanding of mimesis and realism from Plato and Aristotle, and I therefore will begin by comparing Plato's celebrated passages on narrative in Book III of *The Republic* with Genette's reading of them.

Plato records the discourse of Socrates, who famously works with wholes and parts. In dialogue with Adimantus about the speech of the poets, Socrates uses the word *diegesis* or narration in a general sense, as a whole that contains three particular parts or kinds of narration: *haple diegesis*, or pure narration; *diegesis dia mimesis*, or narration through imitation; and narration that uses both of these kinds (392 D).⁴ But Adimantus seeks clarification, and Socrates replies: 'I won't try to speak in wholes and universals but will separate off a particular part and by the example of that try to show you my meaning' (392 E). Using the *Iliad* as his text, Socrates recalls an early passage in which Homer speaks in his own voice, then quotes – speaks in the voice of – one of his characters. Socrates identifies the first kind of narration as *haple diegesis* and the second kind as *diegesis dia mimesis* – a term that for clarity he shortly will change to *diegesis dia mimeseos hole*, narration wholly through imitation – adding that it's 'in this manner' – by combining the two kinds (into what English grammar calls direct speech) – that Homer 'has carried on nearly all the rest of his narration' in his epic poetry (394 B-C). And he reminds Adimantus that 'it is narration [...] both when he presents the several speeches and the matter between the speeches' (393 B). Finally, and in order to make the distinction as clear as possible, Socrates now 'translates' a longer excerpt of mixed narration from the *Iliad* into *haple diegesis*-pure narration. At this point Adimantus declares, 'I understand'. So Socrates returns to the topic of the whole of narration with which he'd begun, aligning the three parts of narration with three genres of poetry: the dithyramb, or 'the recital of the poet himself'; tragedy and comedy, 'which work wholly through imitation';

4 In English we might use the word 'narrative' to distinguish the general sense from the three particular kinds of 'narration' it encloses. Plato's translator usually uses 'narration', but occasionally 'narrative'. Genette usually uses 'récit' for narrative, but sometimes the adjectival 'narratif' (or even 'narrative'), as in 'discours narratif'. His translator usually uses 'narrative' both as noun and adjective, although occasionally 'narrating' adjectivally. None of these texts use distinct words to distinguish between the general and the particular sense of narrative – nor will I in this essay.

and epic poetry, 'which employs both' (394 B-C). (Aristotle's typology, with which I began, although it reminds us of his master's, on examination is significantly different.)

'As we know, Plato contrasts two narrative modes': Genette (1980, p. 162) begins his commentary, reasonably enough, by focusing on the two kinds of narration that Socrates extracts from the passage of the third, mixed kind – epic – in which the first two coexist. What is odd is that even though it is here the source of those two kinds, Genette (1980, p. 172) neglects to mention Plato's third kind of narration, not only here but throughout his entire explication of Plato on narrative (except once and to no analytic purpose). The result is that although for expressly heuristic purposes Plato has temporarily separated one part, narration through imitation, from another, pure narration, Genette refers to the former part simply as 'mimesis' and allows it to assume the aspect of a singular and exclusive whole, a kind of narration that appears only by itself. He reinforces that effect, moreover, by abstaining from Plato's general and inclusive usage of diegesis-narration, thereby enabling that inclusive category to acquire an exclusive character while retaining its broader connotation of inclusiveness, hence universality. By this means mimesis becomes in Genette's commentary not simply a kind of narration that is permanently detached from its counterpart pure narration: it ceases to be a kind of narration altogether.

Let me now be more concrete about the combined sleight of hand and sheer confusion with which this dichotomization of diegesis and mimesis is achieved. Socrates, we recall, rewrites an excerpt of Homer's mixed narration into pure narration; Genette (1980, p. 163) erroneously reduces this to a rewriting of 'mimesis' into 'diegesis', then enigmatically equates mimesis with 'direct speech in the manner of drama'. 'Direct speech' customarily refers to quotation mediated by a framing voice, applicable to the mixed narration of epic but not to dramatic dialogue, which of course lacks narratorial mediation. The former reference would redeem Genette's identification of Socrates's source text as 'mimesis', but he appears more intent on reducing mimesis to its stripped-down and minimal, unmediated and non-diegetic extreme of dramatic dialogue. That diegesis is 'mediated by the narrator', 'told' rather than 'directly shown', means for Genette that its object, communicated to the reader by the agency of language, is itself language rather than something that purports to exist outside it. '[T]he very idea of *showing*, [...] because of its naively visual character [...] is completely illusory: in contrast to dramatic representation, no narrative can "show" or "imitate" the story it tells' (Genette, 1980, pp. 163-4).

The epistemological implications of the absolute opposition between telling and showing are equally absolute. To experience the narration of something is to apprehend it through the distancing mediation of a narrator. To experience the imitation of something is to apprehend it in the absence of mediation. Venturing into the theory of reader response, Genette characterizes imitation in the most reduced of terms, as a 'direct representation' 'borrowed from the theater', and its project as 'making one forget that it is the narrator telling', creating a 'feeling [...] of literal fidelity'. This is best achieved when the object of imitation is speech, which can 'impose itself with the documentary autonomy of a quotation' (Genette, 1980, pp. 163, 166, 171). Indeed, Genette (1980, p. 169) associates the mimesis of sheer quotation with 'that absolute imitation' that consists in duplication. In other words, unlike Socrates', Genette's 'imitation' is a project in attaining formal transparency. And by implication, the simple fact of narration, however managed and modulated, would seem on the contrary to represent in the writer and ensure in the reader a knowing sophistication regarding the construction of meaning by language.

How do these slippery arguments serve Genette's strategic avoidance of Socrates' third kind of narration, the mixed mode that dominates Homer's epic poetry? Homer's mixed narration combines 'pure narration' and 'narration wholly through imitation' to achieve (as I've just pointed out) direct speech, in which narration mediates imitation. Genette avoids this simple recognition by the confusing presentation I have just tried to characterize – most of all by an illogical but unrelenting dichotomization of narration and imitation, depicting the two techniques as not just oppositional but linguistically incompatible, incapable of coexistence within the same linguistic structure – for example, the mixed narration of epic. Moreover Genette asserts the incompatibility of narration and imitation by construing the commonplace metaphor 'showing' in literal, 'naively visual' terms. First, he insists that only the imitation of words by words qualifies according to this gratuitously literal standard. Second, he collapses the full range of techniques for imitating language into the singular instance of dramatic dialogue, which is by definition unmediated by narration. Yet even taken on its own terms this rationale must fail. Genette is acutely sensitive to the way our experience of narratorial mediation can interpose itself between what we're 'told' and what exists outside the telling. But surely the elaborate apparatus of theatrical presentation by which drama 'shows' us its spectacle is an experience of mediation at least as powerful as if drama were mediated by narrative language – unless words alone are deemed capable of mediation.

Much has been written over the years about the distinction between telling and showing, but it would be very difficult to find anyone who ever subscribed to the view – attributed by Genette to ‘the Anglo-American normative vulgate’ in the wake of Percy Lubbock – that narrative can do without a narrator and thereby achieve transparency (1980, p. 163). Genette’s strategic literalism embraces the putative naïve literalism that he has attributed to Lubbock and his followers. This allows him to use the false dichotomy telling vs. showing to reinforce the false dichotomy narration vs. imitation that he has been propounding. However, a more likely understanding of what is meant by showing as a narrative norm is that it refers to the “artistic” subtlety of narration that subtly veils the obvious agency of the narrator and the sheer force of narrative telling. If this is a plausible view of Lubbock’s meaning (which implies nothing about its value), there is an ironic similarity between the idea of showing that Genette reviles and the idea of focalization whose analytic precision he is commended for.

Transformed in Genette’s account by an excluded middle that in Plato had served an inclusive purpose by mediating between the other kinds, the Socratic triad becomes dichotomous and exclusive. Those instances of mixed narration that are no longer accounted for are silently folded into the other two kinds of narration, where their mixed character becomes invisible and they enable the dichotomization of diegesis and mimesis, the pure narration of the narrator and the pure imitation of dramatic dialogue (Genette, 1980, pp. 162–63). The presentation of an exclusive and partial system as inclusive and universal is perhaps an apt description of at least Genette’s practice of structuralist method.

Genette now consolidates his reduction of the Socratic triad to an oppositional dyad by advancing, from a ‘strictly analytic point of view’, the following axiom: ‘narration, oral or written, is a fact of language, and language signifies without imitating’. And for this reason, narrative mimesis is ‘the *illusion of mimesis*’. We might suppose that it all depends on what we mean by imitation. But Genette (1980, p. 164) anticipates recourse to other strictly analytic points of view by writing, in the very next sentence: ‘Unless, of course, the object signified (narrated) be itself language’. The absolute opposition of narration and imitation suddenly seems to dissolve. When it’s language itself that language narrates, narration must be mixed, both narration and imitation (that is, quotation). This is exactly what Socrates means by mixed narration, whose generic exemplar, combining pure narration and narration wholly by imitation, is epic. Is Genette proposing to restore the third, mixed part to the triadic whole of narration? Not so fast. His rationale, obscure as it is, seems rather to be this: The dichotomy between

narration and imitation must dissolve not through the addition of a third term but through the subtraction of the second term, imitation. However, narration, now reduced to a single category, by the logic of structuralism becomes itself susceptible to dichotomization, reproducing the absolute opposition of telling and showing, as it were, one level down.

What is the logic of this devolution? Structuralism is based on a principle of stability according to which categories are defined, and certified as definitive, by their absolute opposition to other categories. A case in point: Genette tells us here that his phrase 'the poet can deliver a speech as someone else' is 'the Platonic definition of mimesis'. But as we know, this is at best an exclusive because partial meaning of mimesis as far as Plato is concerned, because it excludes the meaning of mimesis as one part of diegesis. And in any case, Plato's ambition is not an austere inquiry into the nature of mimesis as such (which might support Genette's notion that the only mimetic use of language is that whose object is language) but the applicability of that term to one particular usage currently under discussion – namely, quotation. Nor does Plato deal in 'definitions': Socrates is not a structuralist but a dialectician of wholes and parts. Nonetheless Genette concludes that having excised imitation from narration, the single category of narration must be divided: 'we must distinguish here between narrative of events and "narrative of words"' (Genette, 1980, p. 164). To achieve the structuralist stability of dichotomy, however, is also to risk its destabilization. Poised on dialectical process, it is the fate of structuralism to mistake this supersession of static structure as a fall from it. Genette's scare quotes enclosing 'narrative of words' suggest that although the meaning of the phrase is that it is one kind or part of narrative, that meaning is also equivocal. (The same equivocation is achieved, in the passage I quote above, by the parenthetical juxtaposition of 'narrated' with 'signified').

In order to explain why what he calls the narrative of events precludes, and on the same grounds, both realism and mimesis, Genette (1980, p. 165) now draws on Roland Barthes's essay on 'the reality effect'⁵ in 'the realistic novel' of Gustave Flaubert. According to Genette, Homer's epic creates a 'mimetic effect' 'fairly typical of' Flaubert's reality effect by including 'redundant information', like 'useless and contingent detail[s]', in the narration of events. The effect is a 'referential illusion', what Genette calls elsewhere a 'feeling of literal fidelity', an illusion that language is referring to something beyond itself. Because Genette has excluded from Plato's capacious 'narration' all narration that isn't 'pure', words that are otherwise

5 Genette's translator renders Barthes's 'l'effet de réel' infelicitously as '*realistic effect*'.

functional in narration become ‘useless’, serving ‘no purpose other than to let us understand that the narrative mentions it only because *it is there* [...] and demands to be “shown”’. Whatever words are used in the narration of events but don’t participate in telling the story have this mimetic-realist effect. The opposition is absolute. Such words may even have a clear and well-known narrative status or function neither to tell nor to refer – Genette cites the Homeric epithet ‘the loud-sounding sea’ (*Iliad*, I, p. 34), whose redundancy, we might suppose, is a feature of its mnemonic purpose – but if words don’t tell, the only alternative is that they must (illusively) refer (Genette, 1980, p. 165). Yet although Genette claims to be dealing with ‘strictly textual’ factors in making these definitive distinctions, he offers no criterion for defining which words have the exclusive function of ‘telling’ (ibid., p. 166). (Later on, in his commentary on the Socratic translation of mixed narration into pure narration, Genette acknowledges the relativity of this distinction by good-naturedly observing that Socrates might have ‘push[ed] further’ in that process rather than including in his target text of pure narration, as he has, ‘elements of a sort of intermediary degree’ (ibid., p. 170). And as we will see, when Genette extricates himself from narrative theory in order to account for some of the major varieties of narrative practice, he allows himself the looseness of phrases like ‘a little more mimetic’ (ibid., p. 171). Once a general structure of exclusive rules has been built into the universality claimed by the narrative mode, the inclusiveness that is the logical concomitant of universality can be imported into its interstices through varieties of generic historicity – so long as they’re recognized to be illusory or tautological.

How is the mimetic-realist illusion of reference carried off? Genette (1980, p. 157) uses several terms: ‘realistic motivation’ or ‘rationalization’ ‘justifies’ what otherwise would seem unaccountable. ‘The role of the analyst is not to be satisfied with the rationalizations, nor to be ignorant of them, but rather, having “laid bare” the technique, to see how the motivation that has been invoked functions in the work as aesthetic medium’ (ibid., p. 158). Genette’s allusion to Shklovsky suggests that motivation enhances the reality effect by somehow lashing the useless detail to narrative storytelling. Bal’s (2009, p. 36, 37) account of narrative motivation is more precise and full than Genette’s, training an attention on ‘description’ – ‘a textual fragment in which features are attributed to objects’ – that is comparable to his focus on the detail. For Bal, motivation is a technique of ‘naturalization – that is, making those interruptions known as descriptions seem self-evident or necessary, so that the inflections of the presentation, the attribution of qualities, and the ideological machinations remain invisible’. That is,

lashing descriptions to narration renders their extra-narrative function invisible or transparent and makes plausible ‘the referential existence of their described objects’ (Bal, 2009, pp. 41, 40; ‘remain invisible’ not in 1985).

The corollary is that if the lashing technique is ineffective and becomes visible, the mimetic-realist illusion fails. But Genette observes that this is a matter of degree, depending as it does on ‘a highly variable relationship between the sender and the receiver’. Truth may be one, but illusion has many forms and ‘varies according to individuals, groups, and periods’. Seventeenth-century readers, Genette speculates, likely ‘found more mimesis than we do’ in seventeenth-century narrative. But the bottom line is that the ‘narrative of events [...] is always narrative, that is, a transcription of the (supposed) non-verbal into the verbal’ (Genette, 1980, pp. 165, 166).

As a restatement of Genette’s strictly analytic but perplexing axiom, this one seems unexceptionable. Indeed, ingenuous. Does the rigorous apparatus of structuralist narratology come down to the insistence that language is ontologically of a different order than non-language – that art is not life? If the argument is that all varieties of mimesis-realism whose project is the imitation of the non-verbal are for this reason ‘illusory’, the point has the truth of truism: language does not transcribe objects into non-linguistic objects; mimesis-realism does not entail an identical reproduction of the object imitated.

Genette now turns from narrative of events to narrative of words – or rather, ‘narrative of words’. Having deemed illusory the verbal imitation of the non-verbal, he now wonders if his other invented category, the verbal imitation of the verbal, ‘is condemned a priori’ to being mere duplication, not illusory but tautological. Of a passage in Proust Genette writes: ‘The narrator does not narrate the hero’s sentence; one can scarcely say he imitates it: he *recopies* it, and in this sense one cannot speak here of narrative’ (1980, p. 169, Genette’s italics). Has the excluded middle absorbed the two poles as well? Even apart from the obscurity with which it has been presented, Genette’s dichotomy has come to seem no more than theoretical, diametrically refined to a vanishing point. Yet although the mimetic force of the narrative of events is notionally illusory, Genette (1980, pp. 165-66) observes (as we have seen) that it has had a historically rich and varied efficacy. Similarly, although the imitative narrative of words is dubious as both narration and imitation, Genette (1980, pp. 171-73, all italics are Genette’s) nonetheless constructs for it a three-part typology, applicable to both uttered and inner speech:

- 1 *‘Narratized, or narrated, speech’*, the sort of target text that Socrates achieves in his translation of Homer’s mixed narration into pure narration.

- 2 *'Transposed'* or indirect speech (also known as reported speech), 'a little more mimetic than narrated speech'. However 'the narrator's presence is still too perceptible in the very syntax of the sentence for the speech to impose itself with the documentary autonomy of a quotation'. Includes the variant known by the name of 'free indirect style'.
- 3 Homer's mixed narration. Commonly known as direct speech but called by Genette *'reported* speech, dramatic in type', 'rejected by Plato' because it is the 'most mimetic' of the three. This is the only occasion when Genette actually acknowledges that Homer's narration is a mixture of his two polar kinds, which makes unaccountable his account of it, here and earlier (see above, p. 39), as dramatic.

Genette (1980, p. 175) follows this typology with a revelatory gloss on what he means by 'theory': 'Needless to say, unless one is deliberately trying to prove a point [*parti pris*] (like the rejection, in Plato's rewriting of Homer, of all reported speech), the different forms we have just distinguished in theory will not be so clearly separated in the practice of texts'. Certainly the work of theory, an abstracted overview of concrete practice, is to construct schematic categories that must blur the most particular differences between practices in the name of insight derived from generalization about their similarities. But when theory is motivated by an *a priori* impulse to prove a point, especially when the practice in question shows the point to be wrong, insight is the first casualty. I'll return to the case of free indirect discourse because for several reasons it must hold a special interest in this inquiry. But the imbalance between rich theoretical generalization and the impoverished store of practical examples in structuralist narratology requires that having sampled the narrative theory of mimesis and realism, we turn first to the meaning of mimesis and realism as they're actually deployed in, respectively, classical and eighteenth-century practice.

Mimesis in Classical Practice

It all depends on what we mean by imitation. As Genette (1980, pp. 172-73) elaborates his reading of Plato on narration, he becomes so committed to the exclusive structure he imposes on it that the entire discussion takes on the illusory quality of a definitive judgment, not a neutral description but a normative prescription: thus Plato has 'rejected' the purely mimetic and made an 'appeal for the purely narrative'. Genette (1980, p. 173) finds support for this misreading in the supposed antithesis of Plato and Aristotle as,

respectively, partial proponents of narration and imitation: 'Aristotle lost no time upholding, with the authority and success we know of, the superiority of the purely mimetic. We should not fail to appreciate the influence that this prerogative, massively granted to dramatic style, exerted for centuries on the evolution of narrative genres'.

There are two problems here. First, Socrates's distinction between three kinds of narration in these passages is instrumental toward a greater end, which concerns the principle that the Guardians of the republic should be expert in a single function, the craft of 'civic liberty':⁶

It would not be fitting for these to do nor yet to imitate anything else. But if they imitate they should from childhood up imitate what is appropriate to them [, ...] but things unbecoming the free man they should neither do nor be clever at imitating, nor yet any other shameful thing, lest from the imitation they imbibe the reality. [...] [T]here is a form of diction and narrative in which the really good and true man would narrate anything that he had to say.

But such a man,

When he comes in the course of his narrative to some word or act of a good man will be willing to impersonate the other in reporting it [...] Then the narrative that he will employ will be of the kind that we just now illustrated by the verses of Homer, and his diction will be one that partakes of both, of imitation and simple [i.e., pure] narration, but there will be a small portion of imitation in a long discourse (395 C-396 E).

In other words, Socrates's distinction between narration and imitation in these passages is a means to an end, rather than, as in structuralist method, a self-standing and invariable opposition, an end in itself. By the same token, Genette isolates one part of an argument, treating it as a whole or an end in itself rather than recognizing the greater whole it subserves.

As he so often does, Socrates uses the analysis of one sort of human activity – in this case language use – to think analogically about greater philosophical principles – here, the nature of justice in the polis. (The *Republic* itself inquires into the nature of the ideal state in order to investigate by analogy the nature of the soul). The end served by that distinction is to

6 On the idea of the work, function, virtue, or particular excellence of a thing, see Plato, 352 E-352 D.

establish the principle that for the most part, the speech and action of the Guardian will be an outgrowth of his own particular excellence, although he also will have imitative recourse to that of other good men. Plato locates this norm in epic poetry and its mixture of narration and imitation – or in his own terms, pure narration and narration wholly through imitation. What Genette (1980, p. 172) calls ‘Plato’s appeal for the purely narrative’ in this passage is therefore really an appeal for the mixed speech characteristic, as Genette puts it, ‘first of the epic and then of the novel ...’. Bal, as well, finds in Plato a rejection of imitative form. He rewrites Homer, she thinks, because he finds the *Iliad*’s passages of description (Genette’s ‘narrative of events’) ‘problematic’ – in her view Homer does too – rather than to explain to Adimantus why the Guardian needs to master both narration and to a much lesser extent imitation (Genette, 1980, p. 36).

This may suggest the second problem. Genette not only imposes a dichotomizing fixity on Socrates’s dialectical method. He also mistakenly assumes that Plato and Aristotle mean the same thing by imitation. So far from ‘rejecting’ it, Plato understands imitation to be ontologically foundational, the dialectical scale and measure of all entities, hence by its very nature not singular and abstract but differential and incremental across the entire range of existence. In the comparison of any given thing to any other, imitation measures the proportion between being and appearance, truth and probability, and the comparison can move up or down the dialectical chain revealing any entity – object, discourse, institution, art – to be by turns more or less proximate to the ideal forms of truth and being. For Aristotle, however, imitation pertains to one domain of philosophy in particular – the sciences of making, as distinct from those of nature and knowledge. That poetry is imitative says nothing about its qualitative status with respect to other, non-imitative arts or other domains of science. But because all aspects of poetic making are imitative, the dramatic, the narrative, and the mixed manner of poetry are all imitative. And because diverse means of making – language, instrumental music, dance – are comprehended in the category ‘poetry’, the fact that language can be said to signify doesn’t affect its status as an imitative art (see R. McKeon, 1952).

Returning to Genette, we can now see that Aristotle’s *Poetics* doesn’t uphold ‘the superiority of the purely mimetic’ to the ‘purely narrative’ (Genette, 1980, p. 173): it methodologically categorizes all poetry as mimetic (Aristotle, 1447a-b). Genette may base this erroneous claim on the fact that Aristotle judges tragedy to be superior to epic. But if all poetry is imitative, it should be obvious that this judgment has nothing to do with the imitative nature of tragedy in particular. It is based instead on other factors, most

important the respectively greater and lesser unity that tragic and epic plots are likely to possess (Aristotle, 1462a-b). Still, perhaps it is because the *Poetics* treats of drama that Genette is encouraged to conflate the entire range of poetic imitation, seemingly on Aristotle's authority, with what he takes to be the extreme instance of dramatic dialogue.

So on the one hand, Aristotle's understanding of the nature and scope of imitation is very different from Plato's. Alien to both of them, on the other hand, is Genette's model of the excluded middle, which reduces imitation to a single, absolute version that purports to reproduce reality with exactitude. We've already seen how contrary this model is to Plato. For his part Aristotle's celebrated distinction between poetry and history makes clear its irrelevance to his thinking (1451a-b). Nor does Aristotle suggest that poetic imitation should aspire to raising in the reader a feeling of literal fidelity, whether to events or to words (Genette, 1980, p. 171). Rather, our pleasure in imitation is for him predicated on our awareness that it is art, and therefore can be compared to life: for it is 'natural for all to delight in works of imitation'. '[T]hough the objects themselves may be painful to see, we delight to view the most realistic representations of them in art' ('tas eikonas tas malista ekribomenas', literally 'the artistic images the most perfectly and exactly made'). But 'if one has not seen the thing before, one's pleasure will not be in the picture as an imitation (mimema) of it, but will be due to the execution or colouring or some natural cause' (Aristotle, 1448b). Here Aristotle uses the language of 'seeing' and 'viewing', perhaps because he soon will be focusing on dramatic imitations in particular. But because he regards all poetry as imitative, he argues that the pleasures of self-conscious illusion are also available through the mediating experience of reading a play, as they are in reading an epic (Aristotle, 1462a). For Aristotle, imitation is the crucial means of mediating between art and life, creating an illusion of their sameness whose pleasure depends on the recognition that it is illusory, not present/presence but representation.

I began this essay with the anecdotal observation that the texts treated by structuralist narrative theory are by and large modern, and suggested on that basis alone that narratology's claims to be generalizing about the universality of narrative are illusory. In the previous section I've adduced evidence that what narratology takes to be, alternatively, the generic theory of epic mimesis or the modal theory of narrative mimesis is based on faulty assumptions and defective interpretations. The conjunction of these two sets of evidence might appear to predict that modern realist theory can be shown to diverge from the ancient theory of mimesis, thereby 'proving

the point', already adumbrated by its selection of primarily modern texts, that narrative theory's claims to universality are groundless. However the best foundation on which to conclude the disparity between ancient mimesis and modern realism will be laid not by positing it at the outset, but by presenting historical evidence for the coalescence of a distinctively modern theory and practice of imitation by the end of the eighteenth century.

Realism in Eighteenth-Century Practice

In the structural analysis theorized by Genette and Bal, the function of realism is to sustain the illusion of reference beyond language by using descriptive details that lack a narrative function but are made to appear to subserve it. Genette and Bal also agree that realism is the novelistic equivalent of ancient epic mimesis – or perhaps more likely, that it is the novelistic expression of what is universally present in all instances of the narrative mode, mimesis. But in either case, close attention to the ancient texts on which the narratological reading of mimesis is based has revealed the need for a very different understanding of classical imitation. What are the results when we bring a comparably close attention to modern literary realism?

The historicity of realism is evident even in the nineteenth-century origin of the term itself (in contrast with mimesis, a transliteration of ancient Greek). And even in the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century pre-history of the term, the practice to which 'realism' refers is not simply an illusory imitation of an external reality that conceals its motivating artifice. In Cervantes, and continuously from Fielding onward, what we now call realism is the technique of combining the representation of the real with a more or less explicit reflection on its status as a representation. In the words of György Lukács, novelistic realism involves a 'double reflection': a reflection of the world, and a reflection of the process by which that reflection is accomplished (Lukács, 1973, p. 202). Another way of putting this is that the novel is reflexive. It thematizes its formal procedure on the level of content: what the novel is about is, in part, what it does. The technique of realism as such takes no position on the further question of whether the real has an actual existence beyond language. The essence of the technique is the balance between an unprecedentedly detailed account of the real world – Ian Watt's 'formal realism' suffices to describe this aspect of the technique – and an account of how that account has been created. This is the understanding

propounded by the three most important theorists of the novel,⁷ and in departing from this view Watt's admirable and highly influential study of the rise of the novel, although it aims to historicize that genre, promotes a straightforward and non-reflexive view of realism as a formal technique. Not that Watt ignores or denies the 'distancing effect' of Fielding's intrusions, their interference with the 'sense of narrative illusion'. Rather, he thinks Fielding's techniques run counter to and undermine novelistic realism, and that they could not and did not 'become a permanent element in the tradition of the novel'.⁸ So in this respect, *The Rise of the Novel* played a major role in detouring Anglo-American novel criticism to an extent from which it has not yet recovered. In structuralist terminology, Watt's formal realism dovetails with the structuralist view that realism is a technique of imitative representation that is innocent of self-conscious diegetic representation.

Of course, reflexivity isn't unique either to the novel or to narrative. Broadly speaking, all literary discourse as such is more or less reflexive or self-conscious in its formality, and novelistic reflexivity is only one of the ways in which literary reflexivity is achieved. What formally distinguishes novelistic from other sorts of literary reflexivity is the fact that the novel undertakes a representation of the real whose empirical ambition and insistence are unprecedented. These qualities are bound up with the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century revolution in empirical epistemology that coincided with the origins of the novel genre, and that evoked both sides of its double reflection: both the ambition to represent the world, and the will to display the means by which that representation is achieved.

I've made the unsurprising suggestion that narratology is indebted to scientific method. More surprising, perhaps, is the suggestion that novelistic epistemology is indebted to scientific method (although the divergence of the new narrative genre from the new philosophy is also crucial). To attribute the rise of realism in eighteenth-century Britain to the scientific revolution of the seventeenth century would reduce an overdetermined development to a single cause. Nonetheless the influence of the new science on the emergence of the novel was enormous (see McKeon, 2009). And this suggests that in terms of epistemology and method, the similarities between novelistic and structuralist ambitions are considerable – up to a point.

Francis Bacon's notion of experiment proceeds on the basis of two principles. The natural world can be known only through the senses. But the

7 György Lukács, José Ortega y Gasset, and Mikhail M. Bakhtin, all excerpted in McKeon, 2000a. For a comparison of Watt with Lukács, Ortega y Gasset, and Bakhtin see McKeon, 2000b.

8 Watt 1964, pp. 285, 286, 288.

sensible knowledge of nature is unreliable if sense data isn't analyzed so as to separate nature itself from the influence of what can seem to be part of it, the circumstances by which it has come to be known. Scientific method aims to achieve this separation by transforming the single and singular experience of knowing into an experiment that multiplies the occasions and varies the circumstances – the time, place, and agency – of knowing. The more such data accumulates, the more a pattern of constancy can be discerned in its interstices, one that repeats and confirms the invariable identity of the thing itself as distinct from the variables that pertain to the disparate circumstances of each single act of knowing. Once those variables have been winnowed away, the identity of the thing itself stands disclosed (McKeon, 2009, p. 208). Formulating a technique for accomplishing a narrative version of this process required trial and error; I'll devote a page or two to summarizing how it emerged.

In their earliest novels Defoe and Richardson attempt to apply empirical epistemology in the comparatively naïve form of what I've elsewhere called 'the claim to historicity': namely, the representation of their texts as authored by actual people, their protagonists (McKeon, 1987, p. 45 and *passim*). The immediacy effect that is achieved by the claim to historicity precludes any mediating distance between Pamela's presence and her representation, between content and form, what happens and how it happens – in narratological terms, between mimesis and diegesis⁹, story and discourse, *fabula* and *sjūzet*. In other words, this early attempt to create the illusion of external reference is analogous to the first of Bacon's experimental provisos, that the world can be known through the senses. Richardson takes advantage of epistolary form as a first-person narrative technique that maximizes the immediacy effect of actual authorship in two distinct but related ways: by creating a sense of both subjective expression and documentary objecthood. And in his parody of *Pamela* (1740), Fielding capitalizes on that absence of mediation, exploding Richardson's claim to historicity by providing his own damning mediation. *Shamela* (1741), he claims, is the actual set of documents that *Pamela* was designed to substitute for and misrepresent, and that express a very different sort of subjectivity.

9 In this commentary I will sometimes, as here, present the relation between 'mimesis' and 'diegesis' as dichotomous in order to make explicit the contrast between this narratological reduction of realism-as-mimesis, and the accurate understanding of realism as the dialectical relation between mimesis and diagesis. In particular I urge the reader not to confuse this faulty sense of mimesis (again, in its narratological reduction) with the meaning of that term that I've found in classical usage, which like realism incorporates in itself the self-conscious dialectic of life and art.

Fielding's parody might be said to have tolled the death knell for the claim to historicity. But *Pamela* also involves, less ostentatiously, a very different formal technique that lays the ground for the sort of reflexivity that will become realism. Richardson's claim to historicity draws our attention to and objectifies *Pamela* by a standard that is external to the text and therefore susceptible to the sort of disconfirmation that Fielding imagines. But in his prefatory material to *Pamela*, Richardson makes another sort of claim, about the pleasing authenticity of Pamela's literary style, a claim that is internal to the text and that is confirmed if our own reading confirms it. One of Richardson's prefatory puffers, advising him not to revise, objectifies the relatively insubstantial and unelaborated nature of her literary style by comparing it to that of her clothing: '[L]et us have *Pamela* as *Pamela* wrote it; in her own Words, without Amputation, or Addition. Produce her to us in her neat Country Apparel, such as she appear'd in, on her intended Departure to her Parents; for such best becomes her Innocence and beautiful Simplicity' (S. Richardson, 2001, p. 9). The comparison encourages us to anticipate a certain quality in Pamela's writing style that stands out from mere writing as objectively as does her dress from the sort that Mr. B. would have her wear. In this way Pamela's formal style becomes thematized on the level of content, and throughout the novel we're sensitized to the way descriptions of dress reflexively evoke qualities of writing, an evocation that's central to Richardson's technique.

Also crucial are the responses of other readers to Pamela's letters, readers who are also characters internal to the text we read. The most important of these is her master and would-be seducer Mr. B. Before his change of heart, Mr. B.'s desire to possess Pamela sexually is accompanied by his conviction that her letters are a tissue of misrepresentations that he also must possess and monitor. And because Pamela is therefore obliged to conceal her letters about her body and under her clothing, they're thematized in a way that lends itself to her sexualization. So when at one point Pamela's keeper Mrs. Jewkes seizes a packet of her letters, Pamela consoles herself that much of her writing 'I still have safe, as I hope, sew'd in my Under-coat, about my Hips'. But Mr. B. forces Pamela to undress herself by threatening to do it for her:

'Now', said he, 'it is my Opinion they are about you; and I never undrest a Girl in my Life; but I will now begin to strip my pretty *Pamela*, and hope I shall not go far before I find them.' [...] he began to unpin my Handkerchief. [...] So I took off my Under-coat, and with great Trouble of Mind, unsew'd [my writing] from it. And there is a vast Quantity of it (S. Richardson, 2001, pp. 227, 235-36).

Earlier Mr. B. had acknowledged that

I long to see the Particulars of your Plot, and your Disappointment, where your Papers leave off. For you have so beautiful a manner, that it is partly that, and partly my Love for you, that has made me desirous of reading all you write; [...] there is such a pretty Air of Romance, as you relate them, in your Plots, and my Plots, that I shall be better directed in what manner to wind up the Catastrophe of the pretty Novel.

By this point Mr. B's sexual desire has modulated into a species of love for Pamela that's inseparable from his desire to read her, and to have the kind of pleasure entailed in that experience. Most important in the present context, Mr. B's generic terminology suggests his detachment from the question of Pamela's veracity. He no longer cares to challenge (as he had earlier) the documentary-empirical 'mimetic' truth of what Pamela writes but is focused instead on the subjective and diegetic 'manner' of her writing, her style. Now he confirms this in response to Pamela's final plea. Putting these papers into his pocket, Mr. B. says: 'You have more than these. Yes, Sir [says Pamela]; but all that they contain you know, as well as I. – But I don't know, said he, the Light you put Things in' (S. Richardson, 2001, pp. 231-32, 239). And like Mr. B., we external readers learn to read self-consciously for Pamela's manner, the light she puts things in, experiencing Richardson's novel as a double reflection whose story is to some degree about itself. Recalling Genette's naively literalistic rejection of narrative 'showing', Richardson internalizes a figuratively unmediated sense of being 'shown' within the process of reflexive mediation. Fielding doesn't acknowledge the diegetic self-consciousness that is secreted at the heart of Richardson's mimetic claim to historicity, but in *Joseph Andrews* (1742) he formulates the first coherent theory of novelistic realism (Fielding, 1999, bk. 3, ch. 1). Watt is right to emphasize the formality of novelistic realism. But he's only half right, because he passes over the doubleness of its reflection, the fact of its reflexivity.

So the primary purpose of Richardson and Fielding's realism isn't simply mimetic (in the narratological sense of the term). Its purpose is to represent the real while accounting for how that representation has been accomplished. By the same token, novelistic self-consciousness, rightly seen as frustrating the naïve idea that empirical reality is subject to an immediate reflection, is also rightly seen as a skeptical instrument of empirical analysis, the narrative version of Bacon's second stage of experiment. Novelistic narrative self-consciously reflects on the fact and method of its reflection

on the world. It doesn't require Shklovsky or Genette to 'bare the device' by which the formal pleasures of reading are obtained.

But unlike the skeptical experimentalism of scientific method (and this is the crucial difference I refer to above), novelistic method doesn't winnow out the variables it turns up. These variables, the dense circumstantiality generated by novelistic experimentation, also partially constitute the truth about the nature of human experience that is the object of experiment. They remain in the novelistic text both as a formal residue, the record of the author's literary experiment, and as the thick and expansive mimetic-diegetic content that provides for the reader a second-order level of 'experience' in which to rehearse and learn the experimental method practiced by the author. To read a novel is (among other things) to encounter the diegetic thematization of an experiment in narrative form (McKeon, 2010, pp. 407-8). The experimentalism of structural narratology ignores this early history of novelistic method because it takes the novel to be governed by the universal principles that are assumed to govern narrative as such. On the one hand, the narrative constant of the novel is narration; on the other hand, all novelistic elements that narrative theory takes to play no role in storytelling it categorizes as variables under the broad category of illusory details or description. Although structural narratologists differ in the degree to which they bracket the analysis of novelistic description (Genette and Bal are a case in point), the normative dichotomization of narration and description, of diegesis and mimesis, directs relatively little attention or understanding to what is consigned to the latter category.

So far I have been describing the experiments in novelistic form that were practiced within the early novels. To this I'll add a brief account of the closely-related debates about the nature of artistic reception and response that transpired during the same period and that shaped the ideas of realism and the aesthetic that were being formulated over the course of the eighteenth century. These debates evince an understanding very different from that posited by Genette in underscoring the structuralist axiom that 'language signifies without imitating'. We recall his argument that whereas narrative can achieve only 'the illusion of mimesis', 'dramatic representation' literally does 'show' in a visual medium what it purports to imitate, and is therefore on the contrary 'purely mimetic'. But Genette's division between narrative telling and dramatic showing has only the logic of theory and bears no relation to the practical experience of Enlightenment commentators, for whom the problem of artistic illusion arose first with regard to drama, precisely because drama displays the real with visual immediacy. '[I]n contrast to dramatic representation', Genette (1980, p. 164) writes, 'no narrative can "show" or

“imitate” the story it tells’. But neither can dramatic representation: the insight of the Enlightenment commentators both anticipates and supersedes him.

It was, in fact, not the subtle mediations of narrative language but the spectacular mediations of drama and the psychology of dramatic spectatorship that generated the first formulations of realism and the aesthetic, because theatrical presentation so patently intervenes between the viewer and the viewed. The issue was forced by the late Restoration ‘neoclassical’ doctrine of the two unities of time and place, which naively insisted that for dramatic imitation to be credited by its viewers requires a play to duplicate the reality it imitates as closely as possible in terms of the amount of time it takes and the quantity of space it traverses. Dryden represents the debate in *Of Dramatic Poesy. An Essay*. In the words of one speaker: ‘For what is more ridiculous than to represent an army with a drum and five men behind it, all which the hero of the other side is to drive in before him[?]’ How can plays please, and in some sense be ‘credited’ by, spectators who could not plausibly be thought to have taken their theatrical illusions for reality? (McKeon, 2009, pp. 232-33).

The answer to these questions, refined and sophisticated by a succession of authors from Dryden through Addison, Edmund Burke, Samuel Johnson, and William Wordsworth, was that it is neither the visual verisimilitude nor even the artistic medium that imitation depends on, but the creative imagination of its spectators. On the subject of staged warfare, another of Dryden’s interlocutors replies: ‘For my part, I can with as great ease persuade myself that the blows which are struck are given in good earnest, as I can that they who strike them are kings or princes, or those persons which they represent’. It is because playgoers don’t take theatrical imitations for reality that they are pleased by and credit them. Like Aristotle, Addison wrote that the pleasures of imitation are generated by the self-conscious comparison we make between what we see and how it is represented, ‘a new Principle of Pleasure, which is nothing else but the Action of the Mind, which *compares* the Ideas that arise from Words, with the Ideas that arise from the Objects themselves’. And as this passage suggests, Addison went even further than Aristotle by arguing that our aesthetic experience is not simply available but is positively enhanced by reading rather than watching a play, which only increases the imitative mediation required to obtain the greatest pleasure. ‘It will be asked’, wrote Johnson, ‘how the drama moves, if it is not credited. [...] It is credited, whenever it moves, as a just picture of a real original’. The results of these inquiries into dramatic response were later applied to narrative and poetry, and at the end of the century, Samuel Taylor Coleridge famously described our response to art as being achieved through the ‘willing suspension of disbelief’. That Coleridge wrote this in reference to novel reading makes

clear that these writers thought drama and narrative were analogous modes of imitation (McKeon, 2009, pp. 234, 237 [Addison's italics], 239, 245, 250).

At one point in his commentary Genette (1980, p. 168) affirms 'the millennial opposition between *diegesis* and *mimesis*'. But the notion that either ancient mimesis or modern realism aims to achieve the illusion of a transparent, unmediated imitation is itself a modern illusion, and it would be difficult to find anyone affirming Genette's 'millennial opposition' before twentieth-century structuralist theory itself.

My brief review of realist theory at its modern origins brings it into close proximity with the ancient theory of mimesis. Does the resulting evidence of a greater diachronic continuity confirm narratology's principle of narrative universality? It seems to me that by now the defects of dichotomous thinking and its model of the excluded middle suggest the need for a more balanced relation between continuity and discontinuity. One such relation is available in the system of modes and genres that we owe to Aristotle, a system that integrates the relative continuity between two genres, epic and novel, that belong to the same narrative mode, with the relative discontinuity of two narrative genres that thrived under very different historical circumstances.

When Does History Matter?

Earlier in this essay I affirmed the common wisdom that structuralist narratology entails a strict separation between narrative analysis and historical variation. The passages of narrative theory discussed here would seem to confirm that wisdom even though the nature of the narrative continuity they assert is mistaken. In the third edition of *Narratology*, however, Bal (2009, pp. 71, 62) draws our attention to her treatment of description and the embedded 'mirror-text' as evidence that 'another preconception can be eliminated: that structural analysis is ahistorical'. We recall that in Bal's analysis, description in the mimetic-realist text, inherently problematic, is rendered invisible by 'naturalizing' it to the narrative. Historical change enters with modernism. To demonstrate this difference between realism and modernism, Bal (2009, pp. 36, 38) devotes several pages to the analysis of a long passage from Djuna Barnes's *Nightwood*, in which description 'ruptures linearity' and 'stops narrative in its tracks'; her contrasting realist passages are straightforward snippets from James and Dickens and allusions to Hardy and Balzac. My quantifying language perhaps too baldly underscores one problem with Bal's analysis. More daunting is the rapt overstatement of her exegesis, as though to compensate for the availability of comparable passages in realist novels

(not least those of James and Dickens) (Bal, 2009, pp. 37-43). In a comparably historical vein, Bal (2009, p. 71) claims that 'postmodernism has a special preference for the use of mirror-text'. Yet the ratio between postmodern and earlier texts Bal actually cites by way of example doesn't come close to bearing out this generalization, and the far more frequent incidence of mirror texts before the mid-twentieth century measured against total number of publications must belie this easy claim (Bal, 2009, p. 71; cf. pp. 62-71).

Yet when a narrative technique is by consensus agreed to have attained broad acceptance at a recognized historical watershed, Bal sustains the ahistorical character of structural analysis by explicating it within a strictly linguistic classification. Free indirect discourse (FID) is a case in point. Bal treats FID within the logic of grammatical categorization without alluding to the chronologic of its dominant historical usage. Thus FID is one of the 'intermediate forms' in the progression of 'levels of narration' from more to less direct techniques by which the 'language situation' of the narrator introduces the language situation of the character (Bal, 2009, 51-56).

As already mentioned, Genette classifies FID as a variant of indirect style, and like Bal he characterizes it in soberly grammatical vocabulary. At the same time, Genette permits himself a less neutrally technical account. In fact it is in reference to indirect style that he (mistakenly) coordinates an imitative grammar of narration with the epistemological aim of raising the feeling of 'literal fidelity' (see above, p. 44). Indirect speech, still too shadowed by 'the narrator's presence', fails in that aim. However FID, 'allowing a greater extension of the speech', thereby engineers the 'beginning of emancipation' (Genette 1980, p. 172). Sensitized by this strikingly qualitative metaphor for the relation between character and narrator in Genette's account of FID, I returned to Bal only to find lurking within her own language an equally metaphorical term, but one of radically different import: not emancipation but invasion (*ibid.*, p. 51). In Bal's analysis, FID entails 'text interference', in which the language situation of the narrator is 'invaded' by that of the character. The implication of this terminological difference is that Bal and Genette bring to the analysis of FID the distinct forms intimated by their chosen categories of grammatical taxonomy: for Bal, the typology of 'levels of narration'; for Genette, the typology of 'states of characters' speech' (Bal, 2009, p. 48; Genette 1980, p. 171). As these terms may suggest, Bal's analytic norm is (to use Genette's terms) 'who speaks', whereas Genette's is 'who sees' (Genette, 1980, p. 186). If so, the idea of focalization has succeeded for the most part in normalizing this crucial distinction, but it has not been successful in normalizing its application in narratological analysis.

What's the significance of Bal's unpersuasive revelation of antirealist techniques in modernist description that resists naturalization, and in the postmodern mirror text, as historically innovative? From the historically more rigorous perspective of genre history, these techniques are not anti-realist. And from the perspective of actual usage, by the twentieth century they're not innovative but conventional. Nevertheless Bal's recourse to history does challenge the common wisdom about narratology and history. By way of amendment, it's not that structuralist analysis eschews history but that it tends to get it wrong. More precisely, it abstracts moments or sequences from the diachronic continuum of history in order to erase some of them, and to give others the authority of the normative, even the universal, measure of narrative. A little history is a dangerous thing, especially when it's selected with *parti pris*.

The comparison of how Bal and Genette analyze FID offers another insight. Both use structural typologies in their analyses, but both use figures – 'invasion' on the one hand and 'emancipation' on the other – to express the challenge FID makes to the coherence of those typologies. The reason for this is that structural typologies aim to be static taxonomies in the sense that they consist of 'states' and 'levels' that are fully separable from one another. However FID entails not a stasis but a process, a movement from one state or level to another and back again. I would like to suggest that there is an analogy between the challenge represented by FID at the micro-level of the sentence and the challenge represented by generic change at the macro-level of history. Both are processes that are inconsistent with static structures, but in certain cases both are seen to require accommodation.

Like Bal, Genette gestures toward eliminating the preconception that structural analysis is ahistorical, and the technique he refers to is more truly innovative than those of Bal. In what he calls '*immediate speech*' and a further emancipation of the speech of the character, 'the narrator is obliterated and the character *substitutes* for him'. Genette describes here the technique 'whose inchoateness supposedly guarantees transparency and faithfulness to the deepest eddies of the "stream of consciousness"', and this he regards as a 'revolution in the history of the novel' (Genette, 1980, pp. 173, 174, 180, his italics). That structuralist narratology might celebrate as a historical milestone the devolution of narrative to sheer imitation is surely unexpected. For non-structuralists, the importance of stream of consciousness is not to be doubted. But to see FID as no more than a halfway house on the road to stream of consciousness – or as, in contrast to it, undeserving of historical notice – would appear to bypass a consideration of the major difference between the two techniques.

Both Genette and Bal are interested in the affective response to narrative structures, but perhaps uncertain on how to integrate reader reception, presumably processual and variable under different micro- and macro-circumstances, with decontextualized and invariant form. Whether a matter of character states or levels of narration, Bal and Genette concur that to read FID is to experience the ‘merging’ of what normally are kept separate (Genette, 1980, p. 174; Bal, 2009, p. 51). In some cases, ‘a distinction into narrative levels can no longer be made’ (Bal, 2009, p. 56). In Genette’s (1980, p. 172) words, the experience of the reader can be one of ‘ambiguity’ and ‘confusion’. But although these descriptions seem accurate, they treat FID, and for that matter the syntagmatic axis of language itself, as though it were a snapshot rather than a cinematic unfolding in which something remarkable – a temporal ‘mediation’ – begins and runs its course. The point can be made by comparing what happens in FID to the temporality of stream of consciousness, which captures the character’s experience of interior dynamism but leaves the reader’s sense of it static and immobile because it is abruptly given rather than entered into or departed from by process.¹⁰ FID consists on the contrary of the process, self-conscious by virtue of being a process, of oscillating between the ‘voices’ of narrator and character, creating the effect of moving back and forth between ‘outside’ and ‘inside’, a movement that seems palpably to carve out a space of subjective interiority precisely through its narrative objectification.¹¹

What makes FID distinctively different not only from stream of consciousness but also from direct and indirect discourse is that it enables us to ‘hear’ the difference between the voices of narrator and character along a grammatical and syntactic continuum that proceeds from the voice of the narrator to that of the character, and then back to that of the narrator. The sequence is continuous in that the tense of narration and the third-person reference with which it begins are maintained throughout. But the sequence is also a differential in that it takes us from (and finally back to) a narrative voice that’s more or less distinctive in its own right, but that is separated from the voice of the character by the fact that the character’s voice is represented in the recognizable expressive idiom with which direct

10 Genette (1980, pp. 173-74) offers a tendentious reading of Joyce’s remark about stream of consciousness that makes a virtue of its abruptness as, rather than interiority, its ‘main point’. This is to sacrifice an understanding of FID that is within the supreme capacity of structural analysis alone – that is, the distinction between two correlative structures – to convey.

11 My scare quotes aim to shield myself from the charge of naïve literalism. By ‘voice’ I mean to evoke metaphorically how the words of narrators, and the thoughts of characters translated into words, would sound if spoken.

and indirect discourse have already made us familiar. (In the terminology of focalization, one might say that this difference in idiom corresponds to a shift in the focalized.) Although it reads like speech, FID represents at the level of thought. The representation of the character's speech would require a grammatical shift that would preclude continuity by interrupting it, rather than sustain continuity (as FID does) by modulating it along a differential. As a realist (and therefore self-conscious) technique, FID invites us to experience the character's consciousness by figuratively descending into that character's interiority, achieving the effect of depth by linguistic means that simultaneously displays and owns the technical artifice of that achievement. Stream of consciousness is the great example of realism in the faulty, structuralist sense of that term; FID exemplifies realism as the outcome of a macro-development in the capacity of novelistic narrative to thematize its formal technique of representation at the micro-level of the sentence.

Earlier in this essay I described Richardson's thematization of form through the representation of the character Mr. B. reading Pamela's letters and journal, the text that his readers are also in the process of reading. Exploiting Cervantes's techniques of self-conscious narration, Fielding achieves a similar but more striking effect by embedding impersonal abstractions of his narrator and his reader in the text of *Joseph Andrews*, at first belaboring the latter in the voice of the former for being little more than an ignorant and passive bystander at the site of narrative action, but gradually inviting the reader into a more active participation in the imaginative composition of the text.¹² In passing, Fielding's reflexive textual intrusions might well be described as interferences or invasions, constituting narrator and reader as separate entities in order to bring them into explicit, sometimes jarring, relation. Several decades later, Burney and then Austen substantially refine Fielding's intrusive technique in the direction of FID. They forgo Fielding's obtrusive embodiment of his reader within his text as a distinct entity (although the unobtrusive invocation of the reader remains an occasional strategy), instead locating the reader function temporarily within one or another character (as Richardson does with Mr. B.). They transform Fielding's punctual moment of intrusion into

12 For example, in the last book of *Joseph Andrews* Fielding's (1999, p. 196) narrator tacitly invites the reader to anticipate the climax of the plot by employing one of the most familiar conventions of family romance, then begins his narration of the following day by personifying morning as a 'beautiful young Lady' who 'rose from her Bed [...] with a Countenance blooming with fresh Youth and Sprightliness, like Miss _____' – at which point a note directs us to the bottom of the page, where we read: 'Whoever the Reader pleases'.

an extended temporal process. And they conflate, then re-separate, narrator and character in that process, whose dialectical subtlety sustains the 'illusion' (Genette, 1980, p. 164) of interior depth, but not the illusion that the process that sustains this illusion is or should be 'invisible' (Bal, p. 41). The relation between Fielding's innovative technique of narration and the institutionalization of FID offers one way to appreciate Fielding's remarkable contribution to the development of novelistic narrative.

How is Fielding's narrative practice accounted for in narrative theory? Given FID's challenge to narratology, we might expect some comparable treatment of the way Fielding's narrator ostentatiously intrudes into his own narrative. However he plays no role in Bal's text, and no more than a cameo role in Genette's. Is this because FID challenges the separation of narrator from character that defines their chosen typologies, whereas Fielding challenges, at a higher level, the separation of discourse from story? But are not the latter terms general categories or wholes that are made up, respectively, of particular parts like narrator and character? Genette dismisses the importance of narratorial intrusion on the basis of considering it within a typology of narratorial 'person' or 'status'. In this framework, '[i]nsofar as the narrator can at any instant intervene as such in the narrative', every act of narration is 'presented in the first person', and the 'real question' concerns not narratorial intervention in the narrative but 'whether or not the narrator can use the first person to designate one of his characters' (Genette, 1980, p. 244, *his italics*). The resulting typology gives us 'the four basic types of narrator's status', none of which correspond to Fielding's (or Cervantes's) practice because none narrate from outside the narrative yet become intervening presences within it without also being named as first-person characters (Genette, 1980, p. 248).

But Genette returns to the topic of narratorial intervention when he considers 'The Functions of the Narrator', and it is here that Fielding's name briefly surfaces (Genette, 1980, p. 255). Although Genette does number these functions, he is at pains to disclaim any system here: 'These five functions are certainly not to be put into watertight compartments'. The 'narrator's interventions' comes up almost by the way. '[E]veryone knows that Balzac "intervenes" in his narrative more than Flaubert, that Fielding addresses the reader more often than Mme. De La Fayette does [...] but we will not claim to derive some cumbersome typology from that' (Genette, 1980, pp. 256, 257). Of course Genette is at liberty to derive any sort of typology that would express his view of what is important enough to systematize for analysis; so his refusal to claim is less the scrupulous assessment of objective data it may sound like than the corollary of his judgment that the data he has

assembled lacks narratological importance. Or so it would seem. But it turns out that Genette's diffidence relates not to narratorial intervention but to its eighteenth-century innovations. Shortly after this disclaimer Genette boldly characterizes the modernist interventions of Proust's Marcel as an 'invasion [...] of the narrative by its own discourse'. In fact this Proustian practice may bear responsibility 'for the strongest shock given in this work, and by this work, to the traditional equilibrium of novelistic form', and Genette speculates that the *Recherche* 'concludes the history of the genre (of the genres) and, along with some others, inaugurates the limitless and indefinite space of modern *literature* ...' (Genette, 1980, p. 259).¹³ This is a familiar argument from eschatology. Its effect is to efface the prior history of narratorial intrusion, which gathers momentum toward the end of the eighteenth century along with (*pace* Genette) the actual inauguration of literature as an explicit category. The problem is not entirely that structuralist narratology, thrown back on history, is likely to overemphasize modernism and to overlook its antecedents. As he explains in the Preface, Genette's aim in writing *Narrative Discourse* was divided between his critical ambition to write a study of Proust's *Recherche* and his theoretical ambition to use Proust as the basis for a study of narratology. But it must be said that the division of purpose that Genette describes, too comfortably, as 'the paradox of every poetics', may be itself a symptom of narratological overconfidence (Genette, 1980, p. 23). Not that Fielding should be put in competition with Proust's incomparable text. My doubts concern more the way the stringent self-denial of ahistorical analysis is rewarded by the supreme confidence of ungrounded historical fiat. Perhaps the experience of deriving the totality of narrative theory from that single text created in Genette the illusion that in the process he had comprehended the totality of narrative practice.

Still, Genette's remarks on Proust invite a more historically grounded reflection on modern attitudes toward genre. What is the relationship between the modern belief in the death of genre and the late modern notion of a non-genre literature, and the way the novel has been theorized, for most of its history, as a genre singularly deficient in generic identity? The idea of a separable 'literary' category is foreign to traditional culture. What looks like the special deficiency of the novel may rather be one of its

13 We might infer that Fielding's intrusions fail to occasion the epochal shock delivered by Marcel's because the structural absence of Fielding's hypostatized reader from the internal terrain of the story somehow denies that reader the affective experience of intrusion. However, Genette, now describing what he calls the 'ideological' function of the narrator, has increased the range of his exemplary texts to include novels that diverge from the autobiographical structure exemplified by Marcel and Gil Blas (see Genette, 1980, pp. 256-58).

special functions: the role of enacting for modern culture the meaning of freedom as a negative quantity, a 'freedom from' what exists over against it. The modern shift in the idea of genre – from an enabling hermeneutic to a constraining taxonomy – is coextensive with the emergence of the novel because it marks a similar separation out of what formerly was held in relation. The novel is the great modern genre because it explicitly articulates a problem in matching particular instance to general kind or type that is only tacit, hence non-problematic, in traditional genre theory. The novel crystallizes genre-ness, we might say, self-consciously incorporating, as part of its form, the problem of its own categorial status. What makes the novel a different sort of genre is not in its 'nature' but in its tendency to reflect on its nature – which of course alters its nature in the process.

By the turn of the nineteenth century, FID was well on its way to becoming the new genre's most distinctive method of narrating the speech and thoughts of characters in language that conveys their personal interiority. At this moment, the power of the new genre to evoke a range of positions along an epistemological continuum between documentary objectivity and emotional subjectivity was gathering at the latter end of that spectrum. To appreciate the importance of FID, the student of genre is likely to contextualize its emergence not only diachronically, within the history of novelistic form, but also synchronically, in relation to other analogous developments. At the turn of the eighteenth century, for example, the growth of so-called societies for the reformation of manners came to a head in the celebrity of the minister Jeremy Collier, who attacked playwrights for what he described as their profaneness and immorality. In Collier's mind the basis for this attack was that "'tis the Poet that speaks in the *Persons* of the Stage', and when these dramatic characters are vicious, the playwright's '*private Sentiments* fall under Censure'. Collier's insistence that the characterization of a vicious person is necessarily a vicious characterization evoked many rejoinders, including the playwright William Congreve's measured reply that nothing should be 'imputed to the Persuasions or private Sentiments of the Author, if at any time one of these vicious Characters in any of his Plays shall behave himself foolishly, or immorally in Word or Deed'.¹⁴ This is the same moment that Swift, irritated at complaints that *A Tale of a Tub* is irreligious, felt obliged to point out '*that some of those Passages in this Discourse, which appear most liable to Objection are what they call Parodies, where the Author*

14 See McKeon 2005, pp. 99–102, where the Collier controversy is discussed in the context of other evidence that the modern separation between the public and the private was established in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

personates the Style and Manner of other Writers, whom he has a mind to expose' (Swift, 2010, p. 7). Neither Swift nor Congreve supposes himself to be breaking new ground. They're insisting on tacit protocols of interpretation that, now made explicit, contribute to the period's preoccupation with the nature and the limits of person, impersonation, personality, and personal identity.

Like the separation of the author's from the character's personality, the separation of narrator from character became an explicit protocol of literary characterization and interpretation. With hindsight, both separations can be recognized as the necessary precondition for modern experiments in their conflation. What the structuralists sequester in modernism and its aftermath as a strictly linguistic phenomenon is a far earlier, more gradual, and more expansive turn toward the modern that consists in the dialectical interaction between an unprecedented division of knowledge on the one hand, and on the other the multiple challenges to that division that were generated by it. Whether conceived as the 'interference' of one level with another or as its 'emancipation', what's sacrificed through the analysis of FID as a strictly linguistic technique is an appreciation – seemingly a simple point – that language use partakes in larger intellectual and cultural movements with which it is contemporary, and shares structural similarities.

The structuralist separation of 'structure' from 'history' precludes this sort of insight by conceiving structure as ahistorical. I began this essay by describing the difference between the universal mode of narrative and its particular generic instances as structuralism has construed that difference in terms of a division between an abstract system of linguistic signification and the applications of that system in concrete use. Now, insofar as structure is an abstract universal, it seems justified to treat it as in itself suprahistorical; what's been at issue in the foregoing discussion is the absence, in structuralist method, of analytic intercourse between the universal and the particular, structure and history. But there's another sense of structure – structure as synchrony – that is related to universality in being devoid of temporality, but that is not for that reason devoid of a historical character.

Broadly speaking, until the later eighteenth century to do history had been to engage in diachronic or chronological study. At that time writers of the Scottish Enlightenment posited and began to practice a method of studying the past that abstracted a period, even a synchronic 'moment', apart from its diachronic temporality based on its similarity to other, structurally comparable moments in other diachronic sequences. Once returned to its chronology, the question was whether the distinctively layered character of

this synchronic moment bore a relation to its diachronic sequence similar to what transpired in those other ones. From these experiments emerged a comparative historiography. Half a century later Marx formulated a conception of history as the dialectical relation of diachrony and synchrony. Structuralism conceives the relation between synchrony and diachrony dichotomously. But the tradition that flows from Marx and the Scottish Enlightenment sees the synchronic departure from temporality as a condition under which the momentary suspension or freezing of diachrony allows historical understanding to be thickened along a different axis. It departs from temporality not by rising above it but by burrowing into it.

By this modern understanding, the study of history requires subjecting the diachronic dimension of sequential stages of temporality to the analysis of each moment's synchronic dimension into levels of structure. Analogously, realism is a modern technique of representation that entails a double reflection: on the one hand, the ongoing representation of the real in the dimension of mimetic content; on the other hand, the representation of the real through the penetration of mimetic content by the dimension of diegetic formal self-consciousness, transforming the one-dimensionality of 'the real' into the reflexivity of 'realism'.

Postclassical / Postmodern / Unnatural Narrative Theory

My argument thus far has concerned the ambition of structuralist narratology to theorize narrative form exclusively in terms of universal linguistic structure. On that basis narratology sought to isolate narrative form, both as diegetic form abstracted from mimetic content at the micro-level of a given narrative, and as modal structure abstracted from its generic variations at the macro-level of the history of narrative. Narratology's ambition, I've maintained, is frustrated by its unrationalized reliance on one genre in particular, the novel, for its evidence of universal usage; by its reduction alike of generic, novelistic norms of realism and modal, narrative norms of mimesis; by its embedding of exclusive criteria within putatively inclusive criteria of narrative form; and by an ambivalent slippage between structural and affective standards in assessing narrative form.

In the last several decades, theorists of narrative impatient with the limitations of structuralist analysis have challenged this 'classical' narratology with increasing confidence and from multiple directions, culminating in a consensus that narrative theory has entered its second phase, far more inclusive than the first although profiting from the work done in

preparing the ground for the second. David Herman, who coined the term 'postclassical narratologies' and may be the most thorough explicator of this watershed, sees nearly as much continuity as break in the transition, but at the same time describes a new enterprise in which it would seem that just about anything goes.¹⁵ Another term for this second phase is 'Postmodern Narrative Theory', whose proponents see the first phase as more fully outmoded than does Herman, and from a more decidedly deconstructive and poststructuralist position (see Gibson, 1996; Currie, 1998). Finally, 'unnatural narratology' is the name given to work that understands structuralist narratology, itself a discloser of 'naturalization', to be a framework whose protocols 'naturalize' narrative, and therefore provide a negative guide to unnatural effects dictated by formal procedures or in any case achieved at the level of content (see Alber, Iversen, Nielsen, and Richardson, 2013).

So narratology has been radically reconstituted. No longer conceived as the systematic description of linguistic signification, narrative theory is currently defined by its rigorous inclusivity, forgoing the strict division of form from content, *langue* from *parole*, and structure from history and thereby accumulating a vast assemblage of new data, techniques, and narrative entities. And yet the relation between narrative and novel, mode and genre continues to be problematic. The great majority of texts analyzed and adduced as exemplary narratives continue to be novels, hence representative of only the most modern genre of that mode. Both mimesis and novelistic realism continue to be construed as epistemologically one-dimensional projects dedicated, whether naively or instrumentally, to the illusion of transparently representing the real. Moreover the classical partiality to the most modern genre, which persists in postclassical narratology's common recourse to novels as representative of narrative, is aggravated by unnatural narratology's preference for the most contemporary and self-consciously experimental novels to exemplify antimimetic/antirealist narrative. Yet as I have argued, the founding reflexivity of the novel genre exemplifies the formal and epistemological qualities of what continues to be called 'antirealism', while the richest trove of nonrealism in the ontological sense of supernatural and impossible contents is to be found in pre-modern romance, allegory, and the like.¹⁶

15 See Herman, 1999; Herman, 2005; Herman, 2012; Fludernik, 2005; Alber and Fludernik, 2010; Herman and Vervaeck, 2005.

16 Alber, Iversen, Nielsen, and Richardson, 2013; Mäkelä 2013; B. Richardson 2012; Phelan and Rabinowitz, 2012; Schaeffer and Vulture, 2005; Ronen, 2005; Palmer, 2005a; Fludernik, 1996, pp. 35-38, 130-31. In Fludernik's argument mimesis is closely correlated with realism and realism with verisimilitude, thereby over-emphasizing illusion at the expense of self-conscious reflexivity.

In 1985, Bal cautioned against the term 'theory of the novel' because its practitioners have 'obscured the precise position of the novel with respect to other genres and types of text' (1985, p. 116; 2009, p. 175). Bal's warning becomes unintentionally ironic with the realization that (as I've been arguing) theory of narrative of the sort she practices has had just this effect. In 2005, the postclassical narratologist David Herman wrote that 'theories of narrative were entangled until quite recently with theories of the novel' (Herman, 2005, 32n.1). Half a century ago this was, in the view of Frye, Scholes, and Kellogg, the result of novel imperialism (see above, p. 37). For the next forty years, I've been arguing, it's been a function rather of structuralist narratology. Herman appears to suggest that with postclassical narrative theory this entanglement has ceased; yet this seems to me neither true nor, measured by the postclassical rejection of exclusive and analytic standards, desirable. Has structuralist narratology itself continued to exert a more powerful and lasting influence than the watershed thesis recognizes? Or was the structuralist paradigm only symptomatic of a larger phenomenon?

The differences between classical and postclassical narratology are most likely to be foregrounded when the topic under analysis is a concrete instance of language use like FID, where not narrative structure but its effect on the reader has become of unambivalent interest in postclassical writings. Recent commentary stresses how a focus on the reader (or hearer, in oral interchange) and the metaphorical nature of 'voice' generate rhetorical, pragmatic, perceptual, cognitive, medial, and contextual variables that militate against the adequacy of structurally systematic and unified typologies of language use. What nonetheless isn't likely to be thrown into relief is the generic and historical specificity of FID, like narratorial intrusion and other expressions of realist reflexivity, as a novelistic technique (Walsh, 2010; Palmer, 2005a).¹⁷ The shift from a less to a more inclusive narrative theory cannot be doubted. Yet what seems most subject to inclusion is not the diachronic diversity of narrative but the diversity of theoretical postures that proliferated with the decline of structuralism and the rise of poststructuralism, and that has continued despite the decline of Theory itself.

However, her work is highly unusual if not unique in its methodological insistence that narrative theory must be informed by the history of genres (see below).

17 However, this might be understood less as continuous with the structuralist exclusion of historical contingency than as the result of the postclassical extension of FID beyond the literary boundaries imposed by the structuralist framework.

The exceptions to these (admittedly under-documented) generalizations, however, are of fundamental importance. I will limit myself to two scholars, who despite significant disagreement provide cogent and broadly complementary theorizations of FID as a historical phenomenon. Ann Banfield has argued that FID is a product of the 'moment' when orality or reported speech, which is dominated by the communicative function, is met and infiltrated by the expressive function of literacy or represented speech. In that engagement, the 'self' expressed by writing and the 'now' entailed in its subjectivity, tacit under conditions of orality, are separated out from the temporal 'present' of the 'speaker's' act of communication and become explicit. FID enacts the dialectic between the speaker's narration and the self's expression. But because the moment of literacy is recurrent and variable, the moment of FID lies both in the linguistic potentiality of literacy and in its historical actualization – in Europe, when western culture becomes a literate culture. Monika Fludernik's exhaustive study of FID combines a mastery of linguistics, an acute and imaginative engagement with classical and postclassical narratological scholarship, and a remarkably deep investigation of the historicity of FID, not only from the early novel onward but also in pre-novelistic, non-literary, and oral discourse. Fludernik argues that to come to terms with FID we need to acknowledge its presence in texts as early as the medieval and in forms more disparate than has yet been recognized. And we need to replace the familiar and misleading typology of direct, indirect, and free indirect discourse by a scalar model that can begin to account for its complex set of combinational variables, both linguistic and extra-linguistic, and for the subtly incremental range of its effects (Fludernik, 1993).

But the striking achievements of Banfield and Fludernik nonetheless leave the achievements of postclassical narratology itself uncertain. I am far from knowing the field well enough to submit that Fludernik's achievement is not simply remarkable but unique; however both options leave the achievements of postclassical narratology itself uncertain. Narrative theory has been liberated from an analytic model far too rigid to do justice to its subject matter. And it may be in the nature of this liberation that the ambition implicit in the original project – to theorize narration in universal terms that therefore apply to all particular instances – will be transformed into a more eclectic aim of inclusivity, and the application of *a priori* principle exchanged for unregulated if not random profusion. Nonetheless, a looser coordination of the modal whole with its constituent generic parts still seems a viable aim. The problem is that apart from the

work of these two scholars and a few others,¹⁸ research in the field remains as partial as before the change, and in the same way. The *a priori* misconception of realism continues to skew the reading of the novel, while the already established tendency to focus on modern narrative (hence the novel) has become a yet more restrictive concentration on twentieth-century and contemporary narrative, especially as it entails non-literary discourses and media or is marked by their influence. That premodern narrative has comparable cross-discursive qualities but attracts little critical attention suggests that this ultra-modern emphasis has less to do with matters of form than with modernity itself.

Like classical narrative theory before it, postclassical and unnatural narratology seem to be trapped in what I have elsewhere described as the paradox of the 'Novel Tradition' (see McKeon, 2000a, pp. 268, 490, 587, 803-6). For such theorists, the wholesale valorization of novelty and free innovation that characterizes Western modernity at large (by which I mean the period that in England began around 1700) enforces a conviction that to be plausibly modern, modern history must be demonstrably or at least seemingly unprecedented, a conviction that interferes, even more than the historiography of progress, with the capacity to think historically. To have coherence, all historical things must display both the continuity of an integral entity and, within that continuity, the discontinuity that confirms its existence over time and space, its capacity to change without changing into something else. To have a historical existence, the novel therefore must possess a discernible continuity, a tradition. But the only tradition compatible with modernity must be characterized by the discontinuity of innovation. Consequently the history of the novel is intelligible only as a series of discontinuous stages – typically realism, modernism, postmodernism, and perhaps postcolonialism – each of which radically innovates on its predecessor, a claim that can be credited only by ignoring the formal coherence of realism's dialectic of double reflection, which also grounds all later stages of the genre however distinct the terms of that dialectic may become. The longevity of FID is in this respect instructive. A remarkably subtle technique, FID brings the dialectic of form and content down to the micro-level of the sentence, and its affective power, structurally undiminished over time, nonetheless requires of its modern readers an undiminished capacity of attentive reception and response. We needn't rehearse the force and consequence of life in late modernity – Benjamin's storyteller virtualized and digitized – to conceive how the reflexivity of FID might be flattened

18 E.g. see Alber and Fludernik, 2010, p. 13.

by familiarity to a merely one-dimensional reflection. This misrecognition then sets the stage for the putatively unprecedented self-consciousness of contemporary narrative. Adapting Giorgio Santayana, those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it as though it were new. David Herman has rightly observed that postclassical narratology 'should not be conflated with poststructuralist theories of narrative' (Herman, 1999, p. 2). But the overlap is considerable, especially with regard to what has become the taken-for-granted reduction of novelistic realism (e.g., see McKeon, 2000a, parts p. 10, p. 13). In this respect the legacy of structuralism has lived on in poststructuralism and postclassical narrative theory. Maybe we've learned to let the prefix 'post-' do too much of our thinking for us.

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Formalism and Historicity Reconciled in Henry Fielding's *Tom Jones*

John Richetti

Every student of Henry Fielding's *Tom Jones* quotes Samuel Taylor Coleridge's remark in his *Table Talk*: 'What a master of composition Fielding was! Upon my word, I think the *Oedipus Tyrannus*, the *Alchemist*, and *Tom Jones*, the three most perfect plots ever planned' (Coleridge, 1856, p. 521). The novel's justly-celebrated plot with its twists and turns and surprises seems to involve for readers a series of uncertainties about the ultimate fates of its characters. And yet Fielding's plot is distinct from what we now think of as 'plot'. For one thing, the narrative unfolds in a supremely leisurely and digressive fashion, lacking the 'structuration' that contemporary narratologists see as the essence of plot. To quote a representative definition by Karin Kukkonen, plot 'designates the ways in which the events and characters' actions in a story are arranged and how this arrangement in turn facilitates discussion of their motivations and consequences'. Kukkonen adds that 'these causal and temporal patterns can be foregrounded by the narrative discourse itself or inferred by the reader'. Plot, the expanded definition continues, can be 'progressive structuration', as readers perceive 'connections between story events, motivations and consequences', and it can also be part of 'authorial design' whereby the author structures the narrative 'to achieve particular effects' (Kukkonen, 2014). That is to say, plot in narratological analysis is a cognitive tool whereby the matter of the narrative – the nature of the characters (psychological, socio-historical, and so on) – the events and sequences that flow from those characters and their experiences, creates through the narrator's arrangement and the reader's interpretation a meaningful whole.

But narratological analysis of the elusive aspect of narrative we label plot runs up against Fielding's undermining of plot in *Tom Jones* in our current sense of the term. Even though readers know that the narrator is completely in control (how could he be otherwise!), withholding for a time crucial facts and details about the sequence of events that constitute the story but occluding the links and characters' motives that in fact connect those events, Fielding poses as merely the teller of a tale or the relator of a simple story (a 'History'), facetiously minimizing his role as inventor of the narrative, creating a supervising suspense or suspicion about the ultimate fates of

his main characters, especially Tom. To be sure, the sobriquet that the title gives Tom, 'a Foundling', is a broad hint to the alert reader of the novel's ultimate revelation, since foundlings in myth and romance are always more than they seem to be (Oedipus, Moses, for example), although Tom even in his exalted final restoration to grace is still a bastard, a fact that cannot be erased even by the romantic ending of the novel. That is to say, there is a generic inevitability in Fielding's implicit evocation (strongly promoted by the word in his title, 'a Foundling') that reassures the alert reader (we cannot of course be sure just how alert or fully aware of the literary-historical ironies in his subtitle his initial readers were) about Tom's ultimate fate and the resolution of the novel's events. Contemporary narratological generalities are insufficient or indeed irrelevant in the face of Fielding's playful comedy in which plot in any stable sense is undermined. For Fielding, we may say, plot is a rhetorical device tied to the generic inevitabilities of the comic romance tradition in which he is operating. Plot in *Tom Jones* is a visible rhetorical artifice rather than an unfolding or exploration of the uncertain destinies or developing identities of his characters.

Moreover, Fielding's coy sub-title for his book, a 'comic epic in prose', seeks to dilute plot in its technical narratological sense but also crucially, I want to argue, to modify the playful generic features of comic romance by its frequent elaboration of socio-economic actualities. In its way, *Tom Jones* is a panoramic view of mid-eighteenth-century England, and that representational fullness is sometimes in tension with the artificialities and rhetorical playfulness of comic romance. That is to say, there are problematical aspects of actual mid-eighteenth-century English life that rear their ugly head when the novel may be said to go just a bit too far into situations or facts (or in the case I have in mind in presenting characters) that resist full or seamless absorption into comic artifice. Certain representations in Fielding's novel may be said to leave traces of a somewhat intractable or in point of practice an actuality beyond the artifice of comic romance. Fielding both offers glimpses of this historicity and withdraws from its articulation or full exploration as he pursues his comic and moral symmetries. His narrative method provides socio-historical knowledge such as other sorts of novels, including his own *Amelia* (1751) and of course Samuel Richardson's *Clarissa* (1747-1748), are uniquely equipped and designed to offer. But in his first two 'novels', *Joseph Andrews* (1742) and here in *Tom Jones* he at times occludes or appropriates such socio-historical facts by literary transformations that are part of his comic romance.

Critical approaches to Fielding's *Tom Jones*, exemplified by classic and still influential essays by R.S. Crane and Ralph Rader, stress either the

artifice and control of the narrator (Crane, 1957) or the rich and varied socio-historical representations the novel features even as it creates a comic artefact (Rader, 2011). Crane's analysis of the plot of Fielding's novel stresses its organizing comic form whereby our anxiety over Tom's fate 'is the comic analogue of fear', comic because there are plenty of narrative signals that all will be well in this basically benign world that Fielding evokes and controls. But despite his rigorous attention to the formal devices of Fielding's novel, even Crane refers at times to a gap, which we don't feel in other comic works such as Oliver Goldsmith's *She Stoops to Conquer*, between this form and an implied world of, shall we say, socio-historical reality just beyond the novel's representations: 'We are not disposed to feel', Crane admits, 'when we are done laughing at Tom, that all is right with the world or that we can count on Fortune always intervening, in the same gratifying way, on behalf of the good' (Crane, 1952, p. 84). I would revise Crane's comment drastically to say that in fact the fortunate fate the plot of *Tom Jones* arranges for its hero dramatizes that Fortune in the actual world will never intervene on the side of the angels, that the good will almost invariably meet an undeserved bad end. For his part, Rader in his essay, '*Tom Jones: The Form in History*' takes Tom's distinctive and spontaneous goodness that for Crane provides readers with comic security about the hero's ultimate fate and locates it ideologically and historically in Fielding's reading of the Latitudinarian preachers of the day. And he also asks among other pertinent questions why a novel centred on a single protagonist should 'have in it such a wealth of characters from all levels of society?' and 'why in purely artistic terms should it include glimpses of and encounters with the Jacobite rebellion of 1745?' (Rader, 2011, p. 246).

I want in what follows to try to answer or at least to explore these two questions Rader asks of Crane's approach to *Tom Jones* (and in the process to speculate about why Crane admits that there is a limit to our confidence in the novel's comic resolutions), since I think that Fielding's unresolved socio-historical representations appear most clearly through a few minor or peripheral characters who function to a greater or lesser extent as part of the narrative structure, those tangled circumstances that will resolve Tom's dilemma and in the end reward him as he deserves. To the extent that *Tom Jones* is panoramic or epic in scope, by the way, it resembles equally ambitious nineteenth-century novels, which as Alex Woloch observes shrewdly in their proliferation of characters are often 'structurally destabilized' by too many people 'who are incompletely pulled into the narrative' and hang between allegorical generality and a particularity of reference that in its fullness should by rights belong only to the major characters (Woloch, 2003,

p. 19). But in *Tom Jones* at least some of these minor characters also acquire in the course of events a kind of virtual independence and disruptive socio-historical resonance that the main characters do not possess. Paradoxically they have a particularized reference, a socio-historical specificity that exceeds that of major characters with quasi-allegorical names like Allworthy and Squire Western or Thwackum and Square, or of minor characters like the many comic servants and innkeepers, for example. Some minor characters can be said to mark the limits of Fielding's comic artifice or at least of his full narrative interest in articulating their histories.

To be sure, just about all the time, Fielding in *Tom Jones* smoothly manages these potentially problematical aspects of socio-historical representation perfectly well by establishing a jokey complicity with his readers, a form of reassuring comic universalizing in which we wait for the working out of the amusing inevitabilities of frail or corrupt human nature and the interlocking of events in the movement of the plot as they manifest themselves toward a long-delayed resolution, which is of course insured by the generic form of the comic romance. For an instance of a series of events and characters that will allow me to illustrate how such representation is managed smoothly in Fielding's characteristic fashion even as it exposes the problematics of socio-historical representation, I want to consider the introduction of a company of soldiers in Chapters 11 and 12 of Book VII, as Tom tries to find the road to Bristol in order to seek his fortune after being banished from Paradise Hall. These soldiers are on their way northward to take on the Jacobite rebels led by Bonnie Prince Charlie. A look at this scene will respond to Ralph Rader's question of why that specific historical moment is inserted into Fielding's novel. As Martin Battestin notes in the Wesleyan edition of the novel, Fielding places the action very precisely in November 1745 when the Duke of Cumberland had been appointed commander of the forces at a crisis point: the rebel army had penetrated into England as far as Derby, before beginning their retreat back to Scotland and eventual decisive defeat at Culloden in April 1746 (Battestin, 1975, p. xxxviii). Late at night when Tom is asleep in an armchair in the tavern where the suspicious host will not allow him a proper bed, the soldiers burst in and demand drink from the landlord. Tom awakens, joins in the revelry, and in fact pays the reckoning at the end when a dispute arises over who owes how much, some of the soldiers having decamped to avoid paying their share. So this historically resonant – and in 1749 very recent – moment of national crisis begins in comic boisterousness and predictable lower-class self-seeking and petty cheating, which tells us a great deal about the dominance of comic form in the novel:

The Company having now pretty well satisfied their Thirst, nothing remained but to pay the Reckoning, a Circumstance often productive of much Mischief and Discontent among the inferior Rank of Gentry; who are apt to find great Difficulty in assessing the Sum, with exact Regard to distributive Justice, which directs, that every Man shall pay according to the Quantity which he drinks (TJ, p. 327).¹⁹

The son of a soldier, Fielding portrays here and elsewhere in *Tom Jones* the eighteenth-century English army as the imperfect, not to say laughably corrupt and inefficient, institution it may to some extent have been, staging at some length for comic effect the ignorance and loutishness, here and elsewhere, of the common soldiery, who are no different and possibly worse in their thoughtless brutality and self-seeking than the other plebeians he represents in the novel. (I should insert here that whether this depiction of a key institution is driven by literary or ideological motives is a good question without a clear answer. Why, to ask Rader's question again, is the 1745 Jacobite rebellion, a very recent and deadly serious political crisis, inserted and then withdrawn from the novel? Why is the focus in this scene as Tom volunteers to fight against the rebels on the comic and corrupt aspects of military life? What does such a depiction of the military tell us about Tom's heroic and somewhat embarrassingly self-conscious patriotism as he joins the forces?) The sergeant of the company, for example, is a minor *miles gloriosus*, telling Tom 'many entertaining Stories of his Campaigns, tho' in Reality he had never made any; for he was but lately come into the Service' and as the narrator tells us ascended to his rank 'by his Merit in recruiting, in which he was most excellently well skilled' (TJ, pp. 328-29). Fielding's readers then and perhaps now are certain to know that military recruiting in the eighteenth century was often enough a matter of trickery and false promises, so our sergeant is very much a rogue, comic enough in the narrative (he later tries to sell Tom a sword for the astonishing sum of twenty guineas but relents quickly when challenged and says that he meant twenty shillings!), but in actual practice as a recruiter he would be a symptom of corrupt, devious, and often brutal military custom for filling the ranks. Indeed, much later in the novel Lady Bellaston proposes to Lord Fellamar that Tom can be legally pressed into the navy, and she's right. Martin Battestin's note in the Wesleyan edition of the novel explains that in 1744 a new law went

19 All further quotations from *Tom Jones* in the text are from Penguin edition of the novel edited by Thomas Keymer and Alice Wakely.

into effect that any able bodied male who had no visible trade or means of support could be conscripted.²⁰

But at the end of this chapter of Book VII, as Tom meets the officers of the company, he is greeted gallantly by the senior of the group, a sixty-year-old lieutenant (an unlikely age for a soldier, especially then), who sees 'a remarkable Air of Dignity in [Tom's] Look, which is rarely seen among the Vulgar, and is indeed not inseparably annexed to the Features of their Superiors' (TJ, p. 329) and invites him to dine with the rest of the officers. This courtly lieutenant provides an exemplary military case history that can only be meant to illustrate the moral corruption and misuse of power in the army, which is surely Fielding's point in offering his story in some detail: promoted to lieutenant from ensign personally, we are told, by the Duke of Marlborough for his bravery after the battle of Malplaquet, the lieutenant has remained at this rank for forty years because his wife (unbeknownst to him) has refused to prostitute herself to the colonel who is his superior officer. As the narrator reports, this lieutenant had served

near forty Years; during which Time he had seen vast Numbers preferred over his Head, and had now the Mortification to be commanded by Boys, whose Fathers were at Nurse when he had first entered into the Service [...] This unfortunate Officer (for so I think he may be called) had many good Qualities, besides his Merit in his Profession; for he was a religious, honest, good natured Man; and had behaved so well in his Command, that he was highly esteemed and beloved, not only by the Soldiers of his own Company; but by the whole Regiment (TJ, pp. 330-31).

In this and the chapters that follow, the lieutenant proves himself in the context of an institution like the army that denies him advancement a noble and upright exception to its moral laxity, reproaching his junior officers for their ignorance and profanity and serving as a kind of temporary father figure for Tom after he is nearly killed in a cowardly assault by one Ensign Northerton in a quarrel a few chapters later, as Northerton, presumably drunk, after Tom has proposed a toast to Sophie Western, swears that 'Tom French of our Regiment had both' Sophia Western and her aunt at Bath (TJ,

20 'Though the impressment of recruits for the Navy had been practiced in England since the thirteenth century, in 1744 a new law went into effect (17 George II, cap. 15) explicitly empowering local authorities to conscript as soldiers or marines all "such able-bodied Men as do not follow any lawful Calling of Employment, or have some other lawful and efficient Support and Maintenance"' (Fielding, pp. 863-64).

p. 334). When Tom calls him an impudent rascal, Northerton fells Tom with a bottle to the head.

The officers' dinner where we meet those ensigns under the command of the noble lieutenant is a riotous scene such as Fielding, who after all began literary life as a dramatist, loves to set up throughout the novel. It features his characteristically comic babble of voices and accents, a rich variety of idiolects for the members of the company, in which self-serving and boastful ignorance, profanity, and loutish behaviour collide not only with the lieutenant's nobility and generosity but with Tom's reverential evocation of Sophia and his heroic sentiments at the prospect of defending his country and his religion against the Jacobite menace. As he exclaims at one point over dinner:

'I don't know, Gentlemen,' says Jones, 'what may be your Opinion; but I think no Man can engage in a nobler Cause than that of his Religion; and I have observed in the little I have read of History, that no Soldiers have fought so bravely, as those who have been inspired with a religious Zeal: For my own Part, tho' I love my King and Country, I hope, as well as any Man in it, yet the Protestant Interest is no small Motive to my becoming a Volunteer in the Cause' (TJ, p. 332).

Such high flown, even priggish sentiments sound fairly odd in this profane and riotous company, where a bit earlier Northerton has aggressively displayed his ignorance after Tom describes the 'Merriment' that had passed among the soldiers with whom he arrived and avers that, nonetheless, "they will behave more like Grecians than Trojans when they come to the Enemy." "Grecians and Trojans!" says Ensign Northerton, "who the Devil are they? I have heard of all the Troops in Europe, but never of any such as these" (TJ, p. 331). Despite having been at school and even after being reminded by the lieutenant of Pope's translation of Homer, Northerton is not at all embarrassed by his ignorance, and his exuberant defiance of cultural and linguistic decorum pits his racy and irreverent manner of speaking against Tom's and the lieutenant's decorous pieties and sober conversation:

'D___n Homo with all my Heart,' says Northerton, 'I have the Marks of him in my A___ yet. There's Thomas of our Regiment, always carries a Homo in his Pocket: D___n me if ever I come at it, if I don't burn it. And there's Corderius, [Mathurin Cordier, author of a Latin textbook] another d___n'd Son of a Whore that hath got me many a Flogging' (TJ, p. 331).

Northerton continues in the same vein, swearing as he recalls his father's desire that he should be a clergyman (hence his being sent to school), and the lieutenant cautions him to watch his language and to avoid abusing the clergy: 'Scandalous Names and Reflections cast on any Body of Men, must be always unjustifiable; but especially so, when thrown on so sacred a Function' (TJ, p. 332). The lieutenant is like Tom: except for a pardonable failing (despite his piety, he believes in a soldier's right to defend his honour by duelling) he is a paragon, both morally and linguistically, and his proprieties we might add make him a kind of straight man for the slangy and irreverent Northerton.

In the shadow of what his original audience would have known was the nearly successful 1745 Jacobite rebellion, Fielding's evocation of the English armed forces with a cast of characters like this is a distracting mixture of possibilities, of traditional comedy and satiric exposure, comic indignation or simply amusement at predictable knavery and hypocrisy, we might want to call it, coexisting with what can only be read as satisfaction in the historical outcome in which this institution worked well enough in defeating the rebels. Except for the odd panegyric like Addison's 'The Campaign' about the victorious Marlborough, or Defoe's embarrassing tributes to the military triumphs of his hero, King William, it is hard to find among major eighteenth-century English writers any glorification of military life and its leaders, and Fielding is no exception. Implicit in the standing army debates in England going back to the late seventeenth century is an anti-militarism that Fielding seems to share. But any systematic critique of arbitrary and unjust standards for military advancement implied by the lieutenant's career is diluted by the private sexual melodrama that we are told has held him back, although Fielding's original audience would have been well aware that commissions were legally purchased, with power and social privilege rather than military capacity or skill at the core of the English officer class, at least at the lower levels. The injustice perpetrated by the lieutenant's libidinous superior is chalked up to the moral inevitabilities of unchecked power in corrupt individuals rather than to the nature of an institutional culture that permits such abuses or at least does nothing to prevent them.

From scenes like this, one can generalize outward and say that *Tom Jones* offers, in its broad representational sweep, a fairly complete survey of English institutions, which are if one stops to think about it, the sources of its plot complications – the church and the clergy, the judiciary, the game laws, the rural gentry who exploit and administer that law, the army, an often corrupt and immoral aristocracy in the persons of Lady Bellaston

and Lord Fellamar, the upper financial bourgeoisie like Nightingale's father, social welfare and the regulation of the poor (consider Black George, Allworthy's gamekeeper and his impoverished family), and many other aspects of mid-eighteenth-century English society, including the lack of vocational opportunities for young, educated but impecunious men like Tom – all these institutions and social classes governing mid-eighteenth-century life are represented both seriously and comically as deeply flawed, but they do provide material for a series of good jokes, serving as occasions for severe critique, laughter accompanied by sentimental regret and even outrage at injustice, implicit indignation at downright exploitation and abuse of power. And yet ridicule and contempt are held within a controlling and reassuring comic understanding, the scandalous socio-historical particulars balanced by a universalizing and uniformitarian psychology and history. Fielding's subject as he tells us in his opening chapter is after all primarily human nature rather than the condition of England in the mid-1740s.

In his tracking in these chapters from the feckless common soldiers, to the roguish other ranks, up to the often treacherous and ignorant lower office corps, Fielding displays his talent for comprehensiveness and inclusiveness; the canvas is Hogarthian, the effect is comic plenitude through varieties of demotic speech, regional accents and cross-class mixtures, especially in the fascinating character of Northerton, a ruthless and reckless parvenu who will shortly play what will turn out to be a key and indeed totally unexpected role in the working out of the intricate twists and turns of Fielding's plot. If we think about Ensign Northerton as a character when we first meet him in the officers' dinner scene and in his subsequent actions in the narrative – his treacherous, thoughtlessly or perhaps just spontaneously brutal behavior in the chapters that follow his introduction – Northerton resonates beyond his socio-economic and linguistic place; he is both an interesting occasion for social satire, an illustration in his precise class history of the ignorance, the self-seeking corruption and casual brutality of the lower officer corps. But in the end he turns out to be much more important as a key cog in the mechanism of the plot. For one thing, his assault on Tom keeps him from taking part in the expedition to Scotland against the Jacobites. Bribing the landlady of the inn where he is being held prisoner by the lieutenant for that nearly fatal assault, Northerton escapes and as the narrator informs us in Book IX, Chapter 7 he hastens to a rendezvous with his mistress, none other than Jenny Waters, formerly known as Jenny Jones, common-law wife of his fellow soldier, one Captain Waters and of course the woman who

confessed to Allworthy that Tom was her illegitimate son. Concubinage and casual sexual connections and temporary relationships among the soldiery are about as realistically sordid a detail as one can imagine, but Northerton brings murderous violence and theft to the mix, as well let it be noted an apparent sexual dynamism that prompts Mrs. Waters to abandon her captain for him. But at the bottom of Mazard-Hill, he attempts to murder his mistress and relieve her of a valuable ring and ninety pounds with which he plans to make his escape from England from one of the Welsh ports, thereby betraying the lady who had agreed to desert her military 'husband' Captain Waters and flee the country with him.

Fielding's evocation of his sudden impulse for murderous treachery is worth quoting for the narrator's refusal to speculate about Northerton's pre-meditation and its implication, given his previous outburst of rage against Tom, that his violence is more or less automatic and spontaneous. That is to say, Fielding avoids granting Northerton a coherent character or personality that explains his violent treachery; his effort seems to be to make him simply part of the hidden mechanism of the plot, although at this point a reader cannot possibly know that.

Whether the execrable Scheme which he now attempted to execute, was the Effect of previous Deliberation, or whether it now first came into his Head, I cannot determine. But being arrived in this lonely Place, where it was very improbable he should meet with any Interruption; he suddenly slipped his Garter from his Leg, and laying violent Hands on the poor Woman, endeavoured to perpetrate the dreadful and detestable Fact, which we have before commemorated, and which the providential Appearance of Jones did so fortunately prevent (TJ, pp. 457-58).

Tom happens to be sitting nearby with the Man of the Hill, and he intervenes to save Mrs. Waters in the nick of time. The coincidences and relationships in this violent intersection of three people are multiple, even for the reader and certainly for Tom, since he has never met or known about the woman who admitted to Allworthy that she was the foundling's mother. So this key moment in the plot is not understood by readers and characters for what it is. Instead, it is at first a dramatization of Northerton's villainy and Tom's selfless heroism. Every reader of the novel will remember the rest, as Tom takes the terrified and nearly bare-breasted lady to the inn at Upton to complete her rescue. Fielding goes on to dwell upon the circumstances that led Northerton to this violence:

[W]e have opened to thee a Scene of Folly, as well as Villainy, which we could scarce have believed a human Creature capable of ; had we not remembered that this Fellow was at that Time firmly persuaded that he had already committed a Murder [that is of Tom at the officers' dinner], and had forfeited his Life to the Law. As he concluded that his only Safety lay in Flight, he thought the possessing himself of this poor Woman's Money and Ring, would make him Amends for the additional Burthen he was to lay on his Conscience (TJ, p. 458).

One wonders whether Fielding wants us to believe that Northerton has a conscience! He goes on to say that since Northerton 'had neither the Birth nor Education of a Gentleman' he was not fit to be an officer in the army, and that if 'his Baseness can justly reflect on any besides himself, it must be only on those who gave him his Commission' (TJ, p. 458). Given what we have learned about some English officers such as the colonel who has opposed the saintly lieutenant's promotion because his wife would not prostitute herself to him, this is a fairly empty protest on Fielding's part. The fact is that having invented Northerton in all his elemental viciousness as a crucial and hidden link in his plot, Fielding finds it difficult to account for his character. He cannot fully accommodate a character like this to his comic vision, but as we shall see we need him for a key twist in the plot.

Had it not been for this incident and Tom's subsequent liaison with this woman, the quondam Jenny Jones, later Waters, he comes to fear is his mother, his real identity might never have emerged in the tangled series of events that is the novel's plot. So Northerton's compulsions, his sexual history and his spontaneous violence, are the secret essence of Fielding's famous clockwork plot, a crucial cog in its workings, and yet given what Northerton has told us of himself he is something more than that, not only pathologically violent but a significant case history, a 'character' whose story has various potentially realistic and socio-historical dimensions that do not fit into the comic symmetries Fielding cultivates in his adherence to the comic romance genre.

This elusive and ruthless Northerton, resisting the upward mobility his parents had in mind when they sent him to school and designed him for a clergyman, grabbing pleasure, enjoying defiance, sowing destruction and disorder as he goes, is not quite an incidental picaro, since his origins and social trajectory are carefully noted; he has a history and Fielding sees that readers are informed of it: the child of parents who hoped through their son to ascend socially. This is what he says earlier in the dinner scene when the lieutenant asks him if he has been at school:

'Ay d___n me have I,' answered he, 'the Devil take my Father for sending me thither. The old Put wanted to make a Parson of me, but d___n me, thinks I to myself, I'll nick you there, old Cull: The Devil a Smack of your Nonsense, shall you ever get into me. There's Jimmey Oliver of our Regiment, he narrowly escaped being a Pimp too; and that would have been a thousand Pities: For d___n me if he is not one of the prettiest Fellows in the whole World; but he went farther than I with the old Cull: For Jimmey can neither write nor read' (TJ, pp. 331-32).

In his subversively malevolent energies, his self-destructive rejectionism, his reckless denial of moral and social decorum, his contempt for the social ambitions his father had for him, Northerton might well be a comically sinister figure out of a nineteenth-century realistic novel by Stendhal or Balzac or Thackeray or Dickens. But for Fielding in *Tom Jones* he is primarily a functional figure in the clockwork complicated mechanism of his plot and only secondarily part of the socio-economic/institutional landscape, the historical knowledge that Fielding to some extent delivers, but to an important extent fashions for his own literary and comic purposes: first, Northerton helps move along the Hogarthian comedy and the satire of the eighteenth-century army, but his much more important – if implicit – function comes in his serving as the subversive double of Tom Jones, the bastard born to be hanged as everyone said, the drunken and irresponsible ward of the lord of the manor who is expelled from Paradise Hall for his behaviour. But in point of fact Northerton's dependable villainy, his amoral resiliency and elusiveness, as well as his energetic profanity are the realistic opposites of Tom's instinctive and improbable virtue and fine speeches, although later in the novel he and Tom will be more or less equal in the eyes of the law, both suspected of felonious assault. To some extent at first glance, Northerton's demonic personality and brutal history are efficiently absorbed by the demands of the novel's moral and comic symmetry in which characters tend to be balanced in pairs. But as we contemplate his actions there is a surplus energy and expressiveness in Northerton as Fielding represents him that erodes or eludes that symmetry.

As an instance of military incompetence as well as thoroughgoing villainy, Northerton is indeed part of what I am calling Fielding's critical examination of eighteenth-century institutions. His villainy is not derived overtly from his occupation, although the implication is that fecklessness like his thrives in a specific eighteenth-century English military context. In his predictable and amoral viciousness, Northerton is of a piece with the other villains in the narrative, although he is crude and overt where Tom's half-brother

(as he turns out to be in the end), Blifil is subtle and cunning, but like the latter's lies and distortions Northerton's actions create what turn out to be temporary obstacles and in paradoxically happy fact essential contributions to Tom's progress toward his ultimate happy ending. Northerton's character is precisely problematical in that one can derive it from his socio-economic circumstances that locate him within the limited possibilities for movement upwards for young men without connections or wealth in eighteenth-century English society, as his subversion of morality and discipline might well be seen as the negative reaction to his privileged education, just as Tom's essential decency might be related to Allworthy's disastrous choice of tutors for him and Master Blifil, with Tom reacting against their absurd and inflexible teachings and Blifil manipulating both of his tutors for his own advantage. Of course, I am highlighting and isolating what Fielding only touches on in passing, uninterested as he seems to be in deriving character from circumstances, or at least as later novelists would in seeking to understand the relationship between character and socio-economic circumstances; but if we read as it were against the comic grain of the narrative, Northerton as a character is instructively distinct from what will emerge as Tom's privileged and magical status as the true heir to the Allworthy estate, the folk tale foundling (to be sure still a bastard, conceived out of wedlock), the hero of a modern romance, however modified from the traditional simplicities of that genre. Northerton's story is, from this perspective, the realistic or malevolently picaresque alternative to the comic romance embodied in the charming and sweet person of Tom Jones. Northerton's amoral and destructive energies are in an important sense a dramatization of what Tom would most likely have become without the literary transformations wrought by Fielding's comic narrative in which Tom, as Rader pointed out, is a benevolent, generous embodiment of Latitudinarian goodness.

To be sure, as a minor character who is almost purely functional in Fielding's complicated plot, Northerton is as Alex Woloch says of the implied person behind any minor novelistic character, not so much reflected in the text as 'partially inflected', radically contingent within the story as a whole (Woloch, 2003, p. 13). There is a fascinating if unresolvable excess in Northerton; he is in Woloch's terms inflected but we can't be said to have any clear sense of what his deviations (that is to say, his inflections, his singular markings) from moral and social norms actually signify. What, in other words, drives this character to commit various forms of mayhem? Fielding doesn't bother to explore it; he ignores it or claims that it is opaque and mysterious, and Northerton is simply part of the comic and brutal English soldiery, although as later events prove he is not simply that.

It is quite otherwise for Fielding as he presents Tom's other, more obvious evil twin, Blifil, who is a major character in the novel and thereby far less elusive than Northerton in the sense that the reader is instructed to understand him and Tom in their relationship as half-brothers, with Blifil as Tom's moral and emotional opposite. Blifil's place in the comic and moral symmetries of Fielding's novel, then, is absolutely clear, dictated by the balancing of characters into opposing pairs. Whereas Northerton as he himself presents his history is in one sense completely forthright in his impulsive violent urges and amoral movements, Tom Jones is transparent in his public persona, ingenuous and open, generous and spontaneous for better and sometimes for worse. Blifil, however, in his capacity as Tom's opposite, is decidedly not what he seems to be to other characters in the novel; he is manipulative, devious, and self-serving, opaque to others, indeed possessed of the secret upon which the plot turns, Bridget Allworthy's admission on her deathbed that Tom is her son by the late Mr. Summer. And yet both young men have, as we learn at the end, the same mother, and they have identical childhoods, the same loving uncle and aunt and the same tutors, although Tom is slightly older. The balancing symmetries of the romance plot, here and elsewhere overrule such naturalistic possibilities.

Since a minor character like Northerton turns out to be essential for the working out of the plot of *Tom Jones*, I want, then, to consider as well how the plot of Fielding's comic romance is served in other senses by a few major characters who are in one respect similar in villainy to him, although totally different in their self-presentation and self-consciousness – all three Blifils, the uncle, Dr. Blifil, the father, Captain Blifil, and Blifil (who is never given a first name) the son of the marriage between Captain Blifil (another soldier, as it turns out) and Bridget Allworthy. Dr. Blifil is part of the Allworthy household we meet in the opening chapters, the recipient of Allworthy's patronage as someone who is unable to support himself in the medical profession his father forced him to study. This Blifil, Fielding tells us, had 'a great Appearance of Religion', and he adds, his tongue firmly in his cheek, 'Whether his religion was real, or consisted only in Appearance, I shall not presume to say, as I am not possessed of any Touchstone, which can distinguish the true from the false' (TJ, p. 60). In Fielding's transparent irony, his disingenuous pseudo-ignorance, this means that Dr. Blifil is a hypocrite, a Tartuffe of the first order. Noting quickly that the sexually eager Bridget Allworthy (Fielding's embarrassing joke about plain spinsters ready to marry any warm body is what drives this part of the plot, and it is distasteful to modern readers) would provide him with an avenue to possession of the Allworthy estate, he finds that, as Fielding renders his

thoughts, there is one obstacle to this opportunity: 'an unfortunate Accident which had happened to him about ten Years before; namely, his Marriage with another Woman, who was not only still alive, but what was worse, known to be so by Mr. Allworthy' (TJ, p. 61). Fielding's narrator pretends to validate Dr. Blifil's frame of reference, although the effect is to dramatize it comically as the character's moral nullity. So Dr. Blifil remembers, in Fielding's ingenuous tracing of knavery, 'that he had a Brother who was under no such unhappy Incapacity' (TJ, p. 61). Thus Captain Blifil enters the novel, invited by his brother to court Bridget as a means of acquiring the Allworthy estate. Here in part is his history and his portrait, what for Northerton by significant contrast Fielding never provides:

This Gentleman was about 35 Years of Age. He was of a middle Size, and what is called well built. He had a Scar on his Forehead, which did not so much injure his Beauty, as it denoted his Valour (for he was a half-pay Officer.) He had good Teeth, and something affable, when he pleased, in his Smile; though naturally his Countenance, as well as his Air and Voice, had much of Roughness in it, yet he could at any Time deposite this, and appear all Gentleness and good Humour. ... in his Youth had abounded in Sprightliness, which, though he had lately put on a more serious Character, he could, when he pleased, resume. [...]

He had purchased the Post of Lieutenant of Dragoons, and afterwards came to be a Captain; but having quarrelled with his Colonel, was by his Interest obliged to sell; from which Time he had entirely rusticated himself, had betaken himself to studying the Scriptures, and was not a little suspected of an Inclination to Methodism (TJ, pp. 61-62).

The ironies in these evocations of the Blifil brothers are as thick as they are obvious. In their self-seeking hypocrisy and careful scheming for advantage, they represent the dominant opposition to the virtuous and the deserving in Fielding's comic universe, where the prevailing mode of conceptualization of characters is comic opposition. The Blifils are poised for comic effect in the Somersetshire countryside against, Tom, Sophia, and Allworthy. We wonder, perhaps, why Allworthy and others are fooled by these knaves and by similar bad actors such as the two tutors of the boys, Thwackum and Square. But Fielding warns us that life is not like his comic novel:

the Reader is greatly mistaken, if he conceives that Thwackum appeared to Mr. Allworthy in the same Light as he doth to him in this History; and he is as much deceived, if he imagines, that the most intimate

Acquaintance which he himself could have had with that Divine, would have informed him of those Things which we, from our Inspiration, are enabled to open and discover (TJ, p. 123).

But the hypocrisies of his father and uncle are nothing compared to the self-seeking and scheming for advantage of the youngest Blifil, who succeeds where they do not. For one fiendishly clever and indeed crucial instance of his scheming, consider the moment in Book VI, Chapter X when Blifil maliciously reports that Tom was drunk on the day that Allworthy fell ill and was thought to be in danger of dying: 'in the very Day of your utmost Danger, when myself and all the Family were in Tears, he filled the House with Riot and Debauchery. He drank and sung and roared' (TJ, p. 275), and that day Blifil and Thwackum surprised Tom in amorous embrace in the woods with Molly Seagrim. But of course readers already know that Tom was drunk when he celebrated Allworthy's recovery. The narrator tells us very precisely that Thwackum had wanted to tell Allworthy that very day of Tom's drunken behaviour, and he explains Blifil's strategy:

In Reality, Blifil had taken some Pains to prevail with the Parson, and to prevent the Discovery at that Time; for which he had many Reasons. He knew that the Minds of Men are apt to be softened and relaxed from their usual Severity by Sickness. Besides, he imagined that if the Story was told when the Fact was so recent, and the Physician about the House, who might have unraveled the real Truth, he should never be able to give it the malicious Turn which he intended. Again, he resolved to hoard up this Business, till the Indiscretion of Jones should afford some additional Complaints; for he thought the joint Weight of many Facts falling upon him together, would be the most likely to crush him; and he watched therefore some such Opportunity as that with which Fortune had now kindly presented him (TJ, p. 276).

The cold calculation in this is chilling and of course tremendously effective for the key event in the novel's plot, since it leads to Tom's banishment from Paradise Hall and the beginning of his adventures and travails. Blifil we may say is like a playwright or a novelist; he is aware of an audience, in this case Allworthy, and alert to the timing and thus the effect of his words, which he uses here and elsewhere to manipulate others rather than like Tom and other characters who speak to express an opinion or an emotion. To some extent, Blifil is like Fielding's narrator in this regard; he withholds information and times its partial revelation precisely in order to produce

actions and consequences. But Blifil is not writing a comic romance; he is rather manipulating others for his own advantage and not like Fielding for his readers' amusement and instruction. Blifil is in this light a demonic parody of the Fieldingesque narrator.

A comparison of Blifil and Northerton is thus instructive. Northerton's actions and words are spontaneous and unplanned and to some extent self-destructive, purely revealing of a rapacious self and nearly demented and out-of-control personality. His spontaneity makes him much more like Tom than like Blifil. *The History of Tom Jones, A Foundling* depends upon a host of secrets, of the narrator's withholding or suppression of information, the most important of which if one thinks about the title is exactly Tom's mysterious paternity, a secret that Blifil possesses and also suppresses. Northerton has no secrets, but unlike Tom he has an identity and a personal history that place him in a profession that he has recklessly chosen over the career his father planned for him. He has a demented and reckless agency, whereas Tom is as he goes manipulated by events that Fielding's plot arranges, his agency compromised by the circumstances of the plot, Northerton's cowardly attack on him at the inn among the most important. Northerton, however, is not a figure out of romance, like Tom the foundling, but a representation of social possibility and active, purposeful, self-destructive moral failure. Blifil's schemes propel Tom into his adventures in the world, and Northerton's actions are part and parcel of those adventures, in fact the key impetus to the resolution of the plot and the exposure of Blifil's careful conspiracy. But Northerton does not know that he is a crucial cog in the plot (how could he?). Blifil, on the other hand, deliberately and carefully attempts and almost succeeds in controlling for his own evil ends the plot of the novel.

Overall, *Tom Jones* is nearly representational in the full latter-day novelistic sense: offering readers comprehensive, moral-satiric knowledge of a whole range of characters within social institutions in their historical unfolding, and articulating them across a wide spectrum of comic idiolects from different professions and the entire gamut of English mid-eighteenth-century social groups and positions. Fielding subordinates many of the socio-historic actualities of his day to his fashioning of a moral and aesthetic artefact we know as *Tom Jones* that exploits but foreshortens or abridges or simplifies these actualities to shape the ideal movement of his comic epic plot. Ensign Northerton's history and character play a crucial part in the plot but also mark an unresolved contingency in that shaping, marking Fielding's mostly unrealized (or pointedly neglected) potential for conveying to his readers insights into how character and personality are immersed in

socio-historical circumstances. Northerton is an instance of how a more or less accurate or realistically disturbing rendition of a character in a particular historical moment is accommodated to the comic necessities of the all-encompassing final structure of the plot in its final resolution, even if there remains a residue of unassimilated characterological substance within that rendition. Blifil and his father and uncle, by contrast, are completely assimilated character types, along with a whole host of other characters such as the Allworthys, Thwackum and Square, Partridge, Jenny Jones, the Seagrim family, Squire Western and his sister, Di Western, Lady Bellaston, Lord Fellamar, as well as Tom and Sophia. In their different ways, these characters fit into the workings required by the genre of comic romance and also serve that social comprehensiveness Fielding's novel adds to that pattern. When we finish the novel we know their interlocking fates, which form a comic mosaic, a happy and satisfying whole.

Northerton is, as it were, borrowed from outside the realm of social and moral types who populate the novel; he is simply himself and in that reckless self-assertion he helps move the plot along. But whatever becomes of the deserter and moral desperado? What indeed in the novel's moral economy and comic resolution could become of such a personage? We'll never know, since he is simply dismissed from the novelistic scene thanks to Tom's typical carelessness: he ties his hands but not his legs. So this murderous Northerton simply walks away from Mazard-Hill, out of the novel into some indeterminate future while Tom is mesmerized by Mrs. Waters' exposed breasts, and their subsequent tryst in the inn at Upton is a crucial prelude, if at first with temporarily disastrous consequences, to his eventual redemption, possession of his Sophia, and return to Paradise Hall. Tom's sexual spontaneity is part of the essential movement of the plot; through his brief affair with Mrs. Waters he begins the chain of events that lead to his deliverance.

By virtue of his irrepressible, gratuitous villainy, Northerton is crucial to the workings of Fielding's plot. But he is, it would seem, simply an instrument or device to move things crucially along, and Fielding as we have seen declares himself unable to explain the motives in his mayhem. In some actual world or in another kind of novel distinct from Fielding's comic romance novelistic plot in our current sense would demand that he be accounted for in some way, that his actions and his ultimate fate be explained or explored. In *Tom Jones*, however, he remains a key but unwitting actor, as well as a unique loose end in an otherwise completely tidy summing up for all the characters at the end of the novel. In short, Northerton is never absorbed by the resolving final structure of Fielding's plot, and his

disappearance from the reader's ken marks him as intractable, incapable of transformation by comic form or assimilation into the concluding symmetry and reformed community the plot creates. Northerton belongs to another kind of novelistic plot such as contemporary narratology understands it in which characters are situated in and derived from the specific events and circumstances that constitute the plot. Northerton stands apart from those events and circumstances.

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Perspective and Focalization in Eighteenth-Century Descriptions¹

Monika Fludernik

As Cynthia Wall has so magisterially illustrated in *The Prose of Things* (2006), descriptions of rooms hold a marginal position in eighteenth-century texts. This is due partially to conventions of writing and partially to the absence of fixed furniture arrangements before the end of the eighteenth century. On the one hand, literary descriptions before the eighteenth century were often stylistic exercises in rhetorical enumeration. Mieke Bal, in her superb essay on description, cites (a translation of) a *locus amoenus* passage from Longus's novel *Daphnis and Chloë*:

And that garden indeed was a most beautiful and goodly thing and such as might become a prince. For it lay extended in length a whole furlong. It was situated on a high ground, and had to its breadth four acres. To a spacious field one would easily have likened it. Trees it had of all kinds, the apple, the pear, the myrtle, the pomegranate, the fig, and the olive; and to these on the one side there grew a rare and taller sort of vines, that bended over and reclined their ripening bunches of grapes among the apples and pomegranates, as if they would vie and contend for beauty and worth of fruits with them. So many kinds there were of satives, or of such as are planted, grafted, or set. To these were not wanting the cypress, the laurel, the platan, and the pine. And towards them, instead of the vine, the ivy leaned, and with the errantry of her boughs and her scattered blackberries did imitate the vines and shadowed beauty of the ripening grapes.

Within were kept, as in a garrison, trees of lower growth that bore fruit. Without stood the barren trees, enfolding all, much like a fort or some strong wall that had been built by the hand of art; and these were encompassed with a spruce, thin hedge. By alleys and glades there was everywhere a just distermination [sic! M.F.] of things from things, an orderly discretion of tree from tree; but on the tops the boughs met to interweave their limbs and leaves with one another's, and a man would

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have thought that all this had not been, as indeed it was, the wild of nature, but rather the work of curious art. Nor were there wanting to these, borders and banks of various flowers, some the earth's own volunteers, some the structure of the artist's hand. The roses, hyacinths, and lilies were set and planted by the hand; the violet, the daffodil, and anagall [sic!] the earth gave up of her own good will. In the summer there was shade, in the spring the beauty and fragrancy of flowers, in the autumn the pleasantness of the fruits; and at every season amusement and delight (Longus, 1955, pp. 189-91; cited Bal, 1982, pp. 112-13).

As Bal notes, this garden cannot be drawn. Its rhetorical structure is based on the list which is meant to signal a plenitude of items. The description first divides the trees in the garden into those that do or do not bear edible fruit; then spatially into external and internal; and finally outlines the patterns of trees and flowerbeds. Although the logic of textual succession is partly motivated by spatial distribution, the description is not mimetic and not focalized. The list is the linguistic means of realizing a poetics of instantiation. For a garden to serve as the optimal manifestation of an ideal, it has to display a variety of trees, among them fruit trees, and has to supply both the security of enclosure and the pleasures of aesthetic variety. The description, one could almost say, microtextually echoes the *prodesse et delectare* of classical poetics – it instructs the reader about the available varieties of trees and delights him or her with their aesthetic arrangement.

There are three traditional types of description in use in literature before the eighteenth century. The first category comprises ekphrastic passages in which objects are depicted at length (the shield of Achilles in the *Iliad* [see *The Iliad*, Book 18, lines 478-608, pp. 322-33] being the standard exemplum). Type two consists of the portrait description in the Petrarchan tradition which occurs in love poetry (Sir Philip Sidney's and Edmund Spenser's sonnets), but also in romance (e.g. the ekphrastic description of Philoclea's portrait in the *Old Arcadia* [1580] or the introductory depiction of Pamphilia in Mary Wroth's *The Countess of Montgomery's Urania* [1621]).² The third type of pre-eighteenth-century description is allegorical. Unlike the *locus amoenus* passage above, allegorical vignettes are sometimes perspectival in a foregrounded manner – their information allows readers to trace spatial arrangements with great exactitude. See, for instance, Diego de san Pedro's *The Prison of Love* (*Cárcel de Amor*, 1492)

2 For the passage in the *Old Arcadia* see Sidney, 1987, pp. 10-11.

in John Bourchier's English translation (1549?). In this text, the narrator, a knight from Spain, encounters a prisoner being led to a castle, and the guard tells him: 'I ame principall officer in the house of the god of loue [...] And with the beautie of this Image I cause ye affections wherwith³ I broyle and enflame the lyues as thou maist se by this prisoner whom I lede in to the prisone of loue: who all onely by dethe hopeth his delyuerance' (Bourchier, 1492, 8).⁴ The knight, on the plea of the prisoner, gains access to the castle and discovers him sitting in a chair of fire. The castle and the knight's imprisonment are depicted extensively in allegorical manner. The Castle of Love is built on a rock, the foundation being the stone of Faith. It is upheld by four pillars, namely Understanding, Reason, Memory, and Will. There are two porters, who ask him to leave his 'armour' behind, who are called Hope, Rest, and Contentacion. The first porter is later identified as Desire, the second porter as Torment. The 'auctor' or narrator ascends the stairs, which are later identified as Anguish. He then encounters the prisoner of love, one Lereano, who is fettered to a chair that is burning. He has a shield, with which to defend himself, which is called Wit. Though sitting in the chair of flames (Just Affection), he never gets scorched. There are two women who minister to him, called Pain and Passion, and they serve him the Bread of Steadfastness. There is also a Moor (Despair) and three servants, who are Evil, Pain, and Dolour, who give him a dish of Despair, with the meat of "Doutfulness" and the Cup of Tribulation. Finally, the walls of the castle carry three images, namely of Heaviness, Anguish, and Travail, and the brightness surrounding the prisoner and emanating from an eagle's beak corresponds to the prisoner's Inward Thoughts.

The narrator is here led into the castle and guided through the interior in the manner of a disquisition on the horrors of erotic servitude; the qualities of love-lornness are discursively transformed into an architectural design and operate by means of memorial techniques (compare Miller). While portraits usually employ a top-down-structure (hair–eyes–cheeks–lips–necks–bosom), which is not after all so different from the themes-subthemes-structure proposed by Philippe Hamon (Hamon, 1981; Hamon, 1982) and discussed in Bal's reference to the *locus amoenus* passage, in this example we encounter spatial focalization which follows the narrator on his path into the central apartment and therefore closely resembles a

3 All manuscript abbreviations are spelled out in my quotations.

4 The facsimile edition has no pagination. I have numbered the pages starting with the title page.

'route perspective' in linguistic parlance (Linde and Labov, 1975; Taylor and Tversky, 1992 & 1996; Tversky et al., 1999).⁵

The near-absence of mimetic descriptions before the eighteenth century can moreover be explained by reference to interior design before 1660. Early modern interiors, as numerous studies have demonstrated, were fairly empty and did not have a fixed arrangement of furniture (Rybczynski, 1987; Tristram, 1989; Young, 2004; McKeon, 2005; Brown, 2008). Tables and chairs were positioned around the walls and carried into the chamber when needed for meals. In fact, beds were a rare luxury, with benches and tables also used for sleeping. Futon-like mats could be put on benches or the floor. Only in the second half of the eighteenth century did non-aristocratic households start to furnish their interiors on a more regular basis. From the mere possession of a piece of furniture, whose very existence was foregrounded, attention shifted to the quality of objects displayed (and that display was the issue is, for instance, noted by Brown, 2008) and later on to their tasteful (or tasteless) arrangement as evidenced in the descriptive passages of Victorian novels. One can, therefore, argue that the history of interior design is responsible for the very existence and content of literary descriptions in narratives (Wall, 2006). This evolution can also be observed in drama, where the Restoration period, despite its introduction of grand scenery by means of shutters and wings, was still focused on a fairly empty stage. By the time of Richard Brinsley Sheridan's *The Rivals* (1775) or *The School for Scandal* (1777), however, more extensive furnishings appear in the stage directions, though they still remain scant by Victorian standards of the *pièce bien faite* ('well-made play').⁶

This culturalist reading of the presence of description in eighteenth-century literature, in my opinion, complements rather than disproves Ian Watt's theses about the novel's increased attention to realistic detail as documented by the fact that Daniel Defoe's novels are cluttered with objects. As I will show below, when it comes to interiors, Defoe does not necessarily provide extensive descriptions of interior spaces and their contents. It is, however, true that his protagonists own and handle a great variety of objects and that the desire for possession and attainment of such

5 On description in general see the recent volume by Wolf and Bernhart, especially Nünning's article, as well as the earlier introductory essay by Haupt. Excellent contributions on literary description are also, for the nineteenth century, Kullmann, 2004, and, for the early modern period, Jahn, 1993.

6 One may think of the sofa under which Lydia Languish and her maid Lucy hide the books from the lending library from the eyes of Mrs. Malaprop in Act I, Scene ii of *The Rivals*, or of the screen behind which Lady Teazle hides in the fifth act of *The School for Scandal*.

objects is constitutive of their social and personal self-fashioning. People are what they seem to be on account of their dress and comportment; identity congeals into what one owns and what one wears and how one is able to live. It is less the quality, beauty or conveniency of an item that makes it remarkable in Defoe; ownership trumps appreciation. Though Watt's emphasis on realistic detail in my opinion fails to reflect the scarcity of actual passages of description in Defoe's texts, his insights are important to focus on the emergence of objects as named entities in early eighteenth-century fiction. The empty spaces of early modern houses, streets, towns, and other spaces start to fill up with consumer goods. The first stage in confronting this deluge of objects is to name them, to list them; only later – once one has become accustomed to the items cluttering one's life – does one start to focus on them in detail, to distinguish between them, to appreciate their artistry, their neatness, or their beauty.

What I would like to do in this article is to analyse the descriptions of interiors from the viewpoint of perspective and focalization and to do so by taking Franz Karl Stanzel's seminal (a)perspectivism thesis as a starting point for a diachronic analysis of description in English literature. I will then discuss examples of descriptions from the eighteenth century in a variety of texts.

Perspectivism and Aperspectivism: Stanzel's Model Reconsidered

In the Section 5.2 of his *Theory of Narrative* (1984), Stanzel proposed a thesis regarding the development of description. He submitted the hypothesis that before the late nineteenth century, in fact before the advent of the figural novel, i.e. the novel of internal focalization, descriptive passages tended to be aperspectival, whereas, with the onset of interior focalization, perspectivism asserted itself. The only critic to have engaged with this thesis so far is Manfred Jahn, who noted that his students consistently agreed that Stanzel's example of perspectivism (a passage from James Joyce's *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*) was a clear instance of a perspectival description, but overwhelmingly balked at the alleged aperspectival nature of the Trollope passage which Stanzel quotes as illustrating a lack of perspective (Jahn, 1999, pp. 95-96). What does Stanzel, then, mean by the term (a)perspectival?

Stanzel's definition of this term, it should be underlined, does not at all coincide with internal focalization *per se*. Stanzel is of course well aware that the figural novel emerges only at the turn of the twentieth century, hence it does not make sense to expect internal focalization to occur in

the Victorian or eighteenth-century authorial novel. Instead, Stanzel's hypothesis concerns the imaginative evocation of novelistic space and the reader's ability to visualize the setting in precise and empirically validatable terms. Stanzel's empirical test consists in the reader trying to draw a map of the space depicted in the descriptive passage. As it so happens, his two examples are both of interiors (although he could have chosen gardens or landscapes); his thesis is not restricted to the inside of houses.

Let us look at the passage cited by Stanzel as an example of aperspectival description. It comes from Anthony Trollope's *Barchester Towers* (1857) and delineates the shocking experience of Dr. Grantly and Mr. Harding when they first visit the new bishop, Dr. Proudie, in his office:

His lordship was at home, and the two visitors were shown through the accustomed hall into the well-known room where the good old bishop used to sit. *The furniture had been bought at a valuation, and every chair and table, every bookshelf against the wall, and every square in the carpet was as well known to each of them as their own bedrooms.* Nevertheless they at once felt that they were strangers there. The furniture was for the most part the same, yet the place had been metamorphosed. *A new sofa had been introduced, a horrid chintz affair, most unprelatical and almost irreligious; such a sofa as never yet stood in the study of any decent High Church clergyman of the Church of England.* The old curtains had also given way. They had, to be sure, become dingy, and that which had been originally a rich and goodly ruby had degenerated into a reddish brown. Mr. Harding, however, thought the old reddish-brown much preferable to the *gaudy buff-coloured trumpery moreen* which Mrs. Proudie had deemed good enough for her husband's own room in the provincial city of Barchester.

Our friends *found Dr. Proudie sitting on the old bishop's chair*, looking very nice in his new apron; they found, too, *Mr. Slope standing on the hearth-rug*, persuasive and eager, just as the archdeacon used to stand; *but on the sofa they also found Mrs. Proudie*, an innovation for which a precedent might in vain be sought in all the annals of the Barchester bishopric! (*Barchester Towers*, pp. 33-34; cited Stanzel, 1984, p. 120; my emphasis).

As Stanzel correctly notes, one would be hard put to draw a map of the room, since its content is given, but not the relationship of the individual items in their relation to one another. One can imagine the bishop's desk to be on the left, the fireplace with the hearth-rug in the middle, the windows on the right, and the notorious sofa as placed in the middle downstage so

to speak; but the fireplace could just as well be to the right, the sofa to the left and the desk in the upstage middle, with two sets of windows to the left and right of it. The narrative does not authorize us to read the sequence of impressions as occurring in a left to right clockwise direction. On the contrary, the passage is structured rhetorically by moving from the familiar to the unfamiliar and scandalous. To this extent, then, Stanzel is perfectly within his rights to characterize the passage as aperspectival.

Why, then, Jahn's students' 'doubt and incomprehension' (Jahn, 1999, p. 96)? An explanation might be sought in the implied perspective of the paragraph. What we are confronted with are the impressions registered by the two entering clergymen. They step into a very familiar room and note as a *pièce de résistance* first the sofa and then the curtains and finally, horror of horrors, Mrs. Proudie enthroned upon her 'chintz affair'. The passage therefore could be argued to reflect the newcomers' gaze as it sweeps across the familiar surroundings and gets arrested at what they perceive to be striking incongruities. The whole vignette is of course an ironic comment on the traditionalism of the rural clergy, who expect everything to remain exactly the same, down to the furnishings of the bishop's chambers. It also registers (perhaps less ironically so) Victorian male affront at female intrusion into the male preserve of clerical business, the domestic sphere transgressing into the public domain. Mrs. Proudie has not merely dared to change the curtains (it is, incidentally, rather strange that the colour buff, not a flaming red or tasteless pink or pea green, should receive such derisory notice); she has moreover obtruded her sofa and herself onto the bishop's official space, thus annihilating the boundary between the private and the public realms.

The narrative is not devoid of perspective, but it veils the precise spatial arrangement of the items noted by the two visitors and overlays the clergymen's impressions and moral outrage by a narratorial medium that filters their consciousness through a highly elaborate rhetorical discourse: 'every chair and table, every bookshelf against the wall, and every square in the carpet was as well known to each of them as their own bedrooms'. This sentence is not likely to be free indirect discourse, though the vocabulary of scandalization mimics the indignation experienced by the two guests. Were one to turn to Uspensky, one could therefore argue that this vignette expresses Grantly's and Harding's perspective *ideologically* and *psychologically*, but not linguistically or spatially. Hence the impression of Jahn's students that this cannot be totally 'aperspectival'.

When one turns back to Stanzel's major thesis, however, focusing on the inability to draw a map of the setting, the passage's aperspectivism

immediately emerges as an important quality of the extract and opens our eyes to a major historical fact of novelistic narrative, namely the dearth of spatial perspectivism in literary descriptions before the end of the nineteenth century. Not only, that is, are there few descriptive sections in narratives before the nineteenth century; descriptions (Keen 2014), when they do occur, are very rarely perspectival. In what follows I would like to discuss some rare examples of perspectivism before Trollope, but also to raise a few theoretical questions. Among these, three stand out. Since there are a few perspectival examples before 1800, do these correlate with internal focalization? Put differently, can spatial focalization occur only in conjunction with psychological perspective and a backgrounding of the authorial narrator? Secondly, is description in novels/passages of internal focalization *always* perspectival in Stanzel's sense? And thirdly, what happens in postmodernist texts that no longer employ internal focalization? Questions two and three are clearly beyond the temporal purview of this volume and will therefore be left for a later opportunity.

Early Description and Perspective

As Wall illustrates in her seminal *The Prose of Things*, descriptions in early modern texts focus primarily on spaces (in the depictions of London by Stow, for instance) and then on inventories of items gathered in one space, thus producing a model of description in lists (Wall, 2006, Chapter 3). Initial anticipations of the depiction of persons by means of description can be found in the work of Aphra Behn; it is what people wear that characterizes them – outside the topoi of the beauty catalogue and the portrait, a character's facial expressions does not yet figure in the way we are familiar with from the nineteenth century. Thus, Prince Tarquin, in the passage cited by Wall (2006, p. 126), is presented as having 'his Cloak cast over his Face, and a black Periwigg'; he is moreover 'all alone, with his Pistol ready cock'd' (*Fair Jilt*, p. 165). This description is fully functional, since it explains the strategies of his assassination attempt. When Prince Tarquin is about to be executed, we get an extended description of his comportment and clothing, emulating the visual spectacle: 'The details of the prince's clothes, the arena of execution, the motion of his hands, the stroke of the executioner, the cultural differences between executions in Flanders and those in England, the behavior of eager, weeping, sympathetic, bloodthirsty spectators, combine for an exact, drawn-out scene' (Wall 2006, p. 127; see *Fair Jilt*, p. 174).

Yet this scene remains theatrical, its descriptions part of the spectatorial frame of watching from afar.

When we move into interiors, there are some close-ups of people's faces in Richardson's *Clarissa*, for instance, when Lovelace indulges in a lengthy prosopographia, as Wall calls it (2006, p. 143), of the woman he is about to get into his power (Letter 99, Richardson, p. 399; cited as Letter III, p. 55 in Wall, 2006). In this passage he spends a full paragraph on her 'wax-like flesh' and 'its delicacy and firmness', rejecting the Petrarchan snow imagery as analogue to her 'flesh and blood' complexion. He continues by focusing on her 'wavy ringlets', 'wantoning in and about a neck that is beautiful beyond description', and then turns to her cap, a 'Brussels-lace mob', and her negligée, a 'morning gown' of 'pale primrose-coloured paduasoy' (Richardson, p. 400; quoted Wall, 2006, p. 143). The paragraph continues to describe the cuffs of this garment, her earrings, handkerchief and shoes; but the main effect of this description is not fashion-related information but erotic tease – the garments allow glimpses of and invite speculations about her body. Lovelace's eyes are glued on Clarissa's packaging, which hides that which she keeps from him and which he intensely desires.

As Wall demonstrates in Chapter 7, domestic tours are the first instances of extensive depictions of interiors. These include both the layout and the description of individual rooms. *The Journals of Celia Fiennes* (1662-1741) and Defoe's *A Tour Thro' the Whole Island of Great Britain* (1724-1726) serve as spearheads of a whole avalanche of house guides published in the eighteenth century (Wall, 2006, pp. 191-97). Let us look at some of these descriptions to see how they handle perspective.

Samuel Pepys, for instance, visited Audley-End on October 7th, 1667, and gave the following description of it:

Took coach to Audley-End, and *did go all over the house* and garden; and mighty merry we were. The house indeed do appear very fine, but not so fine as I hath heretofore to me; particularly *the ceilings* are not so good as I always took them to be, being nothing so well wrought as my Lord Chancellor's are; and though the figure of the house without be very extraordinary good, yet *the stayre-case* is exceeding poor; and a great many *pictures*, and not one good one in the house but one of Harry the Eighth, done by Holben [sic]; and not one good suit of *hangings* in all the house, but all most ancient things, such as I would not give the hanging-up of in my house; and the other furniture, beds and other things, accordingly. Only the *gallery* is good, and above all things the *cellars*, where we went down and drank of much good liquor. And indeed the cellars are

fine: and here my wife and I did sing to my great content (Pepys, 1997, p. 606; my emphasis).

This description is structured not according to spatial contiguity (you enter, then proceed through the lobby, up the staircase, etc.), but in reference to critical assessment. It starts out with the disappointing features of the house, the ceilings, staircase, pictures, and hangings, and then, having singled out one good picture, continues by praising the gallery and cellar. The description fails to clarify which ceilings Pepys is talking about (in the hall, in the gallery?); it also does not explicate where the pictures are hung (also including the gallery?). The outside of the house, inserted by counterpoint into the criticism, is conceded to make a fine figure, architecturally speaking (one assumes). When the gallery is praised, it remains open whether its superior quality resides in its proportions, its panelling, or in the views it offers onto the grounds; and the juxtaposition with the cellars is odd, since they are enjoyed for their wine and (presumably) not their construction; hence the impression of a logical *non sequitur* between the gallery and the cellars being 'good'.

One can observe that Pepys focuses on foregrounded items in a list of features that he is interested in in houses (external approach, painting on the ceilings, grandeur of staircase, paintings, gallery and the view from it, wine) to the exclusion of other topics (china, carpets). His description is both judgmental and selective; it certainly does not aim to provide an exhaustive representation of the interior.

Defoe's depiction of Wilton in the *Tour* is much more extensive. It also anticipates guidebook language by using a second-person (and even first-person plural) pronoun for the virtual visitor (the reader) and by tracing a path through the house that resembles a proper tour. In the terms of Linde & Labov and Taylor & Tversky (1992; 1996) this is therefore a clear instance of a 'tour perspective', of a description in which the observer or focalizer moves through the depicted space and lists impressions as they open up.

There are no less than four [...] rivers, which meet all together at or near the city of Salisbury; [...] The two first [i.e. the Nadder and the Willy] join their waters at Wilton [...]; and these are the waters which run through the canal and the gardens of *Wilton House*, the seat of that ornament of nobility and learning, the Earl of Pembroke. [...] *Wilton House* is now a mere museum or a chamber of rarities [...].

You ascend the great staircase at the upper end of the hall, which is very large; at the foot of the staircase you have a Bacchus as large as life, done

in fine Peloponnesian marble, carrying a young Bacchus on his arm, the young one eating grapes, and letting you see by his countenance that he is pleased with the taste of them. Nothing can be done finer, or more lively represent the thing intended – namely, the gust of the appetite, which if it be not a passion, it is an affection which is as much seen in the countenance, perhaps more than any other. *One ought to stop* every two steps of this staircase, *as we go up*, to contemplate the vast variety of pictures that cover the walls, and of some of the best masters in Europe; and yet this is but an introduction to what is beyond them.

When you are entered the apartments, such variety seizes you every way that you scarce know to which hand to turn yourself. First *on one side you see several rooms filled with paintings* as before, all so curious, and the variety such, that it is with reluctance that you can turn from them; while *looking another way you are* called off by a vast *collection of busts* and pieces of the greatest antiquity of the kind, both Greek and Romans; among these there is one of the Roman emperor Marcus Aurelius in *basso-relievo*. I never saw anything like what appears here, except in the chamber of rarities at Munich in Bavaria.

Passing these, you come into several large rooms, as if contrived for the reception of the beautiful guests that take them up; *one of these* is near seventy feet long, and the ceiling twenty-six feet high, with another adjoining of the same height and breadth, but not so long. Those together might be called *the Great Gallery of Wilton*, and might vie for paintings with the Gallery of Luxembourg, in the Faubourg of Paris.

These two rooms are filled with the family pieces of the house of Herbert, most of them by Lilly or Vandyke [...].

After we have seen this fine range of beauties – for such, indeed, they are – far from being at an end of your surprise, *you have three or four rooms still upon the same floor, filled with wonders as before*. Nothing can be finer than the pictures themselves, nothing more surprising than the number of them. *At length you descend the back stairs*, which are in themselves large, though not like the other (*A Tour*, pp. 198-99; italics in the original; my emphasis in bold italics).

The tour starts at the grand staircase and then describes the rooms on the first floor, which seems to serve merely representative purposes of museum-like display. It then passes several apartments and rooms, ending in two spaces of great height which Defoe christens the gallery. After the gallery, there are more rooms before one can 'descend [by] the back stairs'. This clear spatial sequence is, however, vitiated by a considerable vagueness regarding the

precise spatial relationship between these stages of the guided tour. First, one would expect the grand staircase to be located in the centre of the house and for the various rooms to be arranged circularly (or quadrangularly) around it; with visitors, say, moving up the staircase and then turning left, passing a couple of rooms in a row and then arriving at the 'gallery', after which more rooms take one back to the main staircase. This, clearly, is not the path of the tour that Defoe is describing. Pictures from Wilton's site online, for instance, demonstrate that (one of) the room(s) with busts is an oblong gallery, thus suggesting that the floor plan consists not of one sequence of rooms in which one needs to observe a one-way route but that there are parallel rooms at each stage so that one can branch off from the main rooms to subsidiary ones. Even in Defoe's time, apparently, the private quarters of the proprietors were closed off to visitors, hence the exit through the back stairs. This suggests that visitors were allowed only into one wing with the state rooms, a hypothesis corroborated by the absence of bedrooms in the extract.⁷

Celia Fiennes' travelogues, which she started to write in 1702 but then never published (first extracts were printed in 1812 and the full manuscripts only in 1888), have a similar guide-book feel to them. She visits places of interest and of note, accumulating lists of houses seen and places she has visited. Her diaries include several extensive descriptions of house interiors, many of which take us through the sights as if we were on a tour:

[T]he house [Longford House near Salisbury on the Avon] stands finely to the River, a brick building, you enter into a walled Court low up 12 steps at least [sic] into a noble hall, on the left hand was a parlour and on the right a large drawing roome a little parlour and large Staires up to severall very handsom Chambers furnish'd with good tapistry and damaske and some velvets which was new [...]. [O]ut of the drawing roome by Glass doors you enter the Garden on a terrass and that by steps so to severall Walks of Gravel and Grass and to the Gardens one below the other (*The Journeys of Celia Fiennes*, pp. 57-58).

Though her text is very clear on the architectural setup of the entry hall, she then focuses only on the furnishings on the first floor without providing any information on the number of chambers or the precise location of tapestries and velvet curtains.

7 Wilton Estates kindly allowed me access to maps of the ground floor and first floor from 1746. The design indeed shows a quadrangle structure, but the names given to the rooms do not easily correspond to Defoe's description; notably, the map fails to show the two galleries.

At the end of the eighteenth century, house descriptions get more specific and they are more perspectival in Stanzel's sense, allowing the reader to draw a map of the described spaces:

[A]fter being *led through a large hall*, we were introduced to the ladies [...]. *The room* where they sat was about forty-five feet long, of a proportionable breadth, with *three windows on one side*, which looked into a garden, and *a large bow at the upper end*. *Over against the windows were three large book-cases*, upon the top of the middle one stood an orrery, and a globe on each of the others. In the bow sat two ladies reading, with pen, ink, and paper on a table before them, at which was a young girl translating out of French. At the *lower end of the room* was a lady painting, with exquisite art indeed, a beautiful Madonna; near her another, drawing a landscape out of her own imagination; a third, carving a picture-frame in wood, in the finest manner; a fourth, engraving; and a young girl reading aloud to them; the distance from the ladies in the bow-window being such, that they could receive no disturbance from her. *At the next window were placed a group of girls* [...] (*Millenium Hall*, pp. 58-59; my emphasis).

In this abstract from Sarah Scott's novel *A Description of Millenium Hall* (1762), the narrator and her companion visit the hall of the estate in which the female community is housed. Here it is possible to draw a map of the hall with the various windows, bookcases and groups of characters which the visitors see as they enter. However, since the passage does not employ deictics in the form of *to the left* or *in front*, this is an example of a perspectival description which is not necessarily focalized through a particular subjective viewpoint. In fact, the only deictic hint regarding a point of view comes in the terms *upper* and *lower*, where (one assumes) the persons entering from opposite the windows see the bow (bay) further to their right (or left) and the lower end closer to them on their left (or right). In the terms of Linde and Labov or Taylor and Tversky (1992; 1996), the description therefore employs non-grounded spatial specifications, but in practice corresponds to a gaze tour, a view of the room from one particular point.

In the late 1790s, as narratologists know very well, the Gothic novel notably anticipates internal focalization in the representation of consciousness, employing considerable stretches of psychonarration and free indirect discourse. It is also in the Gothic novel where the first perspectival descriptions in Stanzel's mode can be found in passages that present interiors from the experience of a character through internal focalization. A

good example of such a perspectival description occurs in *The Mysteries of Udolpho*:

Lady Blanche, it being not yet dark, took this opportunity of *exploring new scenes, and, leaving the parlour, she passed from the hall into a wide gallery*, whose walls were decorated by marble pilasters, which supported an arched roof, composed of a rich mosaic work. Through a distant window, that seemed to terminate the gallery, were seen the purple clouds of evening and a landscape, whose features, thinly veiled in twilight, no longer appeared distinctly, but, blended into one grand mass, stretched to the horizon, coloured only with a tint of solemn grey.

The gallery terminated in a saloon, to which the window she had seen through an open door, belonged; but the increasing dusk permitted her only an imperfect view of this apartment, which seemed to be magnificent and of modern architecture; though it had been either suffered to fall into decay, or had never been properly finished. *The windows, which were numerous and large, descended low, and afforded a very extensive, and what Blanche's fancy represented to be, a very lovely prospect;* and she stood for some time, surveying the grey obscurity and depicting imaginary woods and mountains, vallies and rivers, on this scene of night; her solemn sensations rather assisted, than interrupted, by the distant bark of a watch-dog, and by the breeze, as it trembled upon the light foliage of the shrubs. Now and then, appeared for a moment, among the woods, a cottage light; and, at length, was heard, afar off, the evening bell of a convent, dying on the air. When she withdrew her thoughts from these subjects of fanciful delight, the gloom and silence of the saloon somewhat awed her; and, having *sought the door of the gallery, and pursued, for a considerable time, a dark passage, she came to a hall*, but one totally different from that she had formerly seen. By the twilight, admitted through an *open portico*, she could just *distinguish this apartment* to be of very light and airy architecture, and that it was paved with white marble, pillars of which supported the roof, that rose into arches built in the Moorish style. While Blanche stood *on the steps of this portico*, the moon rose over the sea, and gradually disclosed, in partial light, *the beauties of the eminence*, on which she stood, whence a lawn, now rude and overgrown with high grass, *sloped to the woods*, that, almost surrounding the chateau, extended *in a grand sweep down the southern sides of the promontory to the very margin of the ocean*. *Beyond the woods, on the north-side*, appeared a long tract of the plains of Languedoc; and, *to the east*, the landscape she had before dimly seen, with the towers of

a monastery, illuminated by the moon, rising over dark groves (*Mysteries of Udolpho* II, x, pp. 471-72; my emphasis).

Not only do we get a clear outline of the succession of rooms through which Blanche passes; we moreover are rewarded with a landscape prospect that combines the uncanny of the mansion with the sublime in the landscape. The passage is perspectival in Stanzel's sense since it provides us with very explicit directions on the contiguous objects and scenes observed by Lady Blanche. Yet, despite the extensive particularities outlined in the text, the overall impression regarding the castle's interior is not of a clear structure but of a labyrinth.

We can therefore conclude that in the eighteenth century, though descriptive passages are not that common in fictional narratives, a marked increase in perspectivization can be noted where the layout of interiors is concerned. Is this also true of single rooms? The passage from *Millenium Hall* can be taken as a perspectival endpoint. Are there any examples of perspectivism to be found in earlier texts which depict rooms?

A novel that most readers agree to be full of precise descriptions is *Moll Flanders* (1722). Yet when one looks at the actual text, one is bound to be disappointed. For instance, in the following passage it is apparent that the plate which Moll wants to steal lies in the shop window. The scenario is focused on the plate and its accessibility. As one can observe, Moll enters and is about to snatch her prey when she is intercepted by a vigilant inhabitant from the house opposite. The owner of the shop being absent, it can be speculated that the ware lies on an interior windowsill (otherwise, Moll might have snatched it from outside through the open window); but as to the precise arrangements inside the shop, these are left very vague indeed since 'at one side of the shop' fails to clarify the position of the door and window to the room as a whole:

It was on the *Christmas-day* following, in the Evening, that, to finish a long Train of Wickedness, I went Abroad to see what might offer in my way; when going by a Working Silver-Smiths in *Foster-Lane*, I saw a tempting Bait indeed, and not to be resisted by one of my Occupation; for the Shop had no Body in it, as I could see, and *a great deal of loose Plate lay in the Window*, and *at the Seat of the Man*, who usually, as I suppose, Work'd at one side of the Shop.

I went *boldly in*, and was *just going to lay my Hand upon a piece of Plate*, and might have done it, and carried it clear off, for any care that the Men who belong'd to the shop had taken of it; but an officious Fellow in

a House, not a Shop, on *the other side of the Way*, seeing me go in, and observing that there was no Body in the Shop, *comes running over the Street*, and *into the shop*, and without asking me what I was, or who, seizes upon me, and cries out for the People of the House (*Moll Flanders*, p. 343; italics original emphasis, bold italics my own emphasis).

Likewise, when Roxana in Defoe's eponymous novel (1724) accedes to the wishes of the landlord, he returns her furniture to her, which is listed without a clear indication of where individual items would be placed.⁸

A much more perspectival passage is the one where Moll steals the bundle:

Wandering thus about, I knew not whither, I passed by an Apothecary's Shop in *Leadenhall-Street*, when I *saw lie on a Stool just before the Counter* a little Bundle wrapped in a white Cloth; *beyond it stood a Maid Servant with her Back to it, looking towards the top of the Shop, where the Apothecary's Apprentice, as I suppose, was standing upon the Counter, with his Back also to the Door, and a Candle in his Hand, looking and reaching up to the upper Shelf for something he wanted*, so that both were engaged mightily earnestly, and no Body else in the Shop.

[...] It was no sooner said but I step'd into the Shop, and *with my Back to the Wench*, as if I had stood up for a Cart that was going by, *I put my Hand behind me and took the Bundle*, and went off with it, the Maid or the Fellow not perceiving me, or any one else (*Moll Flanders*, 1989, pp. 254-55; italics original emphasis, bold italics my own emphasis).

Here we get a very good sense of the spatial relations between Moll and the two shop assistants, but there is of course barely a pause in the temporal sequence of the story of theft. The description here serves the function of (delayed) orientation. Moreover, though the relative positions

8 This was the first View I had of living comfortably indeed, and it was a very probable Way, I must confess; seeing we had *very good Conveniences, six Rooms on a Floor, and three Stories high*: While he was laying down the Scheme of my Management, came a Cart to the Door with a Load of Goods and an *Upholsterer's* Man to put them up; they were chiefly *the Furniture of two Rooms*, which he had carried away for his two Years Rent, with two fine Cabinets, and some Peir-Glasses, out of the Parlour, and several other valuable things. These were all restored *to their Places*, and he told me he gave them me freely, as a Satisfaction for the Cruelty he had us'd me with before; and the Furniture of one Room being finish'd, and set up, he told me, he would furnish one Chamber for himself, and would come and be one of my Lodgers, if I would give him Leave' (*Roxana*, p. 32; italics original emphasis, bold italics my own emphasis).

of the involved parties are noted carefully, the rest of the shop receives no notice; hence we have no idea whether there were one or two shop windows, whether there were counters on each side of the door, and so on. The description here serves the function of explaining how the theft was possible but does not have an ulterior purpose of creating the atmosphere of the shop or of metonymically signalling the shop owner's character through the description of his workplace; nor is the passage meant to reflect Moll's emotions or dispositions in the way that descriptive paragraphs typically do in nineteenth-century novels.

Even where we encounter an extensive description of a room in an eighteenth-century novel, the presentation need not be very perspectival, though it is focalized:

He went *up stairs into a Garret*, where he saw a most moving Scene. *There lay on a Bed* (or rather on a parcel of Rags patched together, to which the Mistress of the House *chose* to give the *Name* of a Bed) *a young Man*, looking as pale as Death, with his Eyes sunk *in his* Head, and hardly able to breathe, covered with half a dirty Rug, which would scarce come *round him*. *On one Side of him sat holding him by the Hand, a young Woman* in an old Silk gown, which looked as if it had been a good one; but so tattered, that it would barely cover her with Decency. Her Countenance was become wan with Affliction, and Tears stood in her Eyes, which she seemed unwilling to let fall, lest she should add to the Sorrow of the Man she sat by, and which, however, she was not able to restrain. *The Walls were bare*, and broke in many places in such a manner, that they were scarce sufficient to keep out the Weather (*David Simple*, pp. 125-26; italics original emphasis, bold italics my own emphasis).

In this passage from Sarah Fielding's *The Adventures of David Simple* (1744), the perspective is focalized through the eyes of David, the sentimental hero. Yet the enumeration of impressions does not follow a spatial logic, but draws the eyes and imagination of the readers to the main sufferer and his sister. The room itself is not only bare, but taken note of only when the affecting misery of the siblings has been expanded on; the vignette of overloaded sentimental sympathy operates in a centrifugal manner by concentrating first on the dying man, then on the sister sitting next to him amid the signs of poverty which underline the pathos of her anguish, and only at the last notes the dreary surroundings as another intensifier of the scenario. (The text continues with the presence of the cantankerous landlady, whose earlier mention would have disturbed the pathos of the scene).

Concluding Remarks

While it seems that the architectural outlay of interiors in eighteenth-century texts begins to anticipate perspectival descriptions in Stanzel's sense of the term, when one turns to rooms, that is, enclosed interiors, this trend is much weaker. Although descriptions of *objects*, including persons, become more and more minute by the end of the eighteenth century, the depictions of rooms lag behind. We continue to find lists of items which are arranged by different logics, but not in terms of spatial contiguity and relationality. Only at the very end of the eighteenth century does one find some instances of perspectivism in the depiction of rooms.

On the other hand, these examples from eighteenth-century texts suggest that focalization and perspectivism do not necessarily go together. Whereas in Stanzel's model, the modernist novel clearly displays perspectival descriptions motivated by internal focalization (the observer is a reflector figure), in the eighteenth-century texts that I have looked at, the conjunction does not always occur. One may have descriptive passages that are focused through the eyes of a character but do not allow one to draw a map, since the focus is on what strikes the protagonist rather than on presenting a very useful description of the room (Pepys, Fielding, Trollope). Conversely, one can have narratorial presentations of interiors that are extremely perspectival and allow one almost sufficient material for a map (Fiennes, Defoe); these usually correlate with a gaze or tour perspective. It also seems likely to me, though I have not yet done the relevant research, that many nineteenth-century descriptions, at least in English literature, will be focused through the eyes of various protagonists (motivated by their entry into rooms) on the pattern we observed in the Trollope passage. Yet, despite this (often merely implicit) visual focalization, these descriptions I suspect, like Stanzel's example from *Barchester Towers*, will also emerge as being *not* perspectival (i.e. consciousness-centred) in Stanzel's sense. It therefore seems very plausible to me that a more extensive analysis of descriptions in the Victorian novel will turn out to corroborate his assessment.

Perhaps one will have to acknowledge that our desire for reproducible interiors is anachronistic and possibly induced by the ubiquity of film and transmedializations of novels into film. Having been raised on a diet of visual representations that are by nature exact, when we turn to written texts we now expect them to provide equally complete information. As a result, we tend to suppress the important role of indeterminacy in the literary reading process. It is precisely because we do not get complete spatial information that we make fictional settings resonate psychologically – the

inbuilt gaps are not filled completely in the reading process but allow for empty but suggestive spaces in our minds and for imaginative creativity. The banality of photography and film in their more humdrum manifestations lies precisely in their freezing of impressions in one unchangeable visual image. Art movies therefore tend to symbolize the surface of reality depicted; they also creatively juxtapose scenarios, introduce indeterminacy and blur the boundaries between fantasy and the fictional world. While factual description focuses on providing information, on directing interlocutors and readers to gain a particular destination or put together a piece of furniture, literary descriptions need to engage our imaginations. The more suggestive the description the better; excessive delineations of spatial arrangements on the lines of the *nouveau roman* paradoxically turn out to be deadly and flat, whereas a few strokes of the stylistic brush can produce vivid images of fictional settings.

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Temporality in Aphra Behn's *Oroonoko* and Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*

Aino Mäkikalli

In the *Routledge Encyclopedia of Narrative Theory* (2005) Monika Fludernik suggests that time in narrative can be viewed from three different perspectives: first, the general, *philosophical* aspect of temporality and its significance for the levels of story and discourse; second, the relationship between the *story* and *discourse* levels; and third, the *grammatical* and *morphological* devices used (tense markers) and their significance for the levels of discourse and story. She stresses the study of two temporal levels, that of the *story* and that of the *discourse*, leading to the analysis of chronological distortions of the surface level of the narrative text and the surface-structure analysis of tense in narrative (Fludernik, 2005, pp. 608-09).

Fludernik's categorization broadens the problem of temporality in narrative from the classical narratology of Gérard Genette, who placed the focus on the analysis of temporal relationships in terms of the concepts of *order*, *duration*, and *frequency*; these helped to identify in particular the rhythms and temporal strategies of narration. Fludernik remarks that Genette's concepts promote the analyses of chronology and sequentiality, which are scrutinized from the viewpoint of objective, measurable calendar and clock time. She suggests, however, that there are other ways to investigate time in narrative. Fludernik brings forward psychological and subjective conceptions of temporality, noting for example that reading time is not merely a matter of the number of hours spent reading the pages of a book; it also includes the reader's expectations and interpretations during the reading process. She refers to this as the 'cognitive order' of the reading process, which is closer to the experience of time than counting minutes and hours of time. Fludernik thus emphasizes narrativity as based on *experientiality*, and on the narrator's or character's experiential reality in the narrative (Fludernik, 2005, p. 610). Thus, time in narrative is not merely a question of time at the linguistic level, but also of time as experience.

While the question of experience is important, in this article I focus mainly on temporality at the structural level of a narrative and on characterization. In the debate over temporality at the level of story and discourse in narrative, considerable controversy has arisen since Genette's classical

theory.¹ One problem that these studies have identified is that there exist plenty of elusive narratives, containing for example such serious temporal contradictions that it is almost impossible to derive a consistent chronology from the text. Brian Richardson (2003) refers to Alain Robbe-Grillet's *La Jalousie* as an example of such a novel. But another kind of a problem – and this is what I see as the main problem in narratological approaches to temporality in fiction – lies at the metalevel, in the concepts of time and temporality themselves. If we take a look at almost any encyclopedic account of temporality or time in narrative, we will find meticulous lists, categories and perhaps hierarchies of how time can be studied in narratives. We find the notion that 'time is culturally constructed, and thus concepts of time vary as a result of historical evolution', as in *The Living Handbook of Narratology* (Scheffel, Weixlerti, and Werner, 2014); yet the same source claims that in narratological analysis, 'time is both a dimension of the narrated world (as conceived in the broader sense) and an analytical category ('tense') which describes the relation between different narrative tiers'. Thus narratological theory recognizes historical and cultural aspects of time, but does not take them into account in practice. Time is treated as though it were self-evidently lucid and explicit, even though we are dealing with a concept which is itself highly elusive and challenging to define.

In his essay 'Time in Literature' J. Hillis Miller (2003, p. 87) surveys studies on the topic, and makes an important point: '[l]iterary works [...] may reflect the philosophical, theological, or scientific concepts of time prevalent when they were written'. I would add that contemporary concepts of time not only may do so, but are embedded in all fiction, in their structure, language and themes. Hillis Miller's claim implies that time itself can be understood in various ways; it is not a closed or 'natural' concept, but can be sensed differently depending on the historical period. This is an observation which seems to be ignored in most of the narratological discussion; whether a narrative is from the eighteenth or the twentieth century, as has been shown, time is viewed as a closed and unchangeable concept. Nonetheless, at the end of their entry for 'Time' in *The Living Handbook of Narratology*, Scheffel, Weixler, and Werner (2014) remark that a great deal remains to be explored in narrative temporality, as 'narratological research still privileges a Newtonian concept of time which cannot always be adequately applied to pre- and postmodern novels'. This is a pivotal point, albeit it must be noted that modern novels too can represent much more, or something other, than only Newtonian time.

1 See e.g. Herman, 1998; Gallagher, 2000; Richardson, 2002; Levenson, 2009; Scheffel, Weixler, and Werner, 2014.

My purpose in this article is to examine ways in which temporal ordering in prose fiction narratives of the late sixteenth and early eighteenth century can be analyzed and understood in the context of the conceptions of time then prevalent. Rather than *how* time is ordered in these narratives, the ultimate question is *what* time means in these narratives. What does it add to our understanding, to be aware of the historical fact that for example at the end of the seventeenth century Newtonian physical time was only being established, or that in everyday life clock-time was experienced mostly within hearing distance of church bells or nearby public tower clocks? How do we take into account the great historical distance, and possibly varying ideas of time and temporality, when these early novels were published? This essay is an attempt to tackle the problem in relation to the early modern English novel. In taking examples from two, considerably different, writers, Aphra Behn and Daniel Defoe, my purpose is to show that our understanding of time in narrative can fruitfully be extended by including in the analysis culturally, socially and historically differing views of time. Temporal ordering in these examples is connected to both pre-modern and modern ideas of time, as can be observed at the level of language and in formal structure.

***Oroonoko*: Pre-Modern Temporality and the Emergence of Realism**

Although the focus in this volume is on eighteenth-century literature, it is also appropriate to take into account the 'long' eighteenth century and to look at such late seventeenth-century narratives as Aphra Behn's *Oroonoko* (1688). Behn's novel, as indicated by its full title *Oroonoko: or the Royal Prince. A True History*, claims to be a true story.² It tells the story of an African prince who falls in love with a beautiful and noble maid, Imoinda. The couple meets with adversity: Imoinda is sold into slavery, as ultimately is Oroonoko as well. In the end, they are unexpectedly reunited in Surinam, both as slaves and Imoinda becomes pregnant by Oroonoko. Since they cannot gain their freedom, the love story ends with the couple's mutual agreement to die rather than continue in slavery.

According to Joanna Lipking (1997, p. xi), *Oroonoko* stood for what was new in the late seventeenth century: a new form of prose fiction, the

2 Fludernik too uses *Oroonoko* as one of her key texts in theorizing 'natural' narratology. See Fludernik 1996.

growth of empires, the emergence of women writers, and an interest in non-European ‘others’. In the twentieth and twenty-first century, critics and scholars have disagreed as to the form of the narrative – its meaning and tendencies – and have been drawn to ideological readings because of the novel’s themes. *Oroonoko* has been scrutinized for its representation of slavery, colonialism, race, class, gender, political philosophy and economic history. Laura J. Rosenthal (2004, p. 156) notes that less attention has been devoted to the novel’s form and complex artistry. *Oroonoko* shares many of the aspects of the seventeenth-century tradition of the heroic romance, such as the somewhat stereotypical aristocratic characters and the love story.³ Rosenthal (2004, p. 161) therefore suggests that the narrative creates its innovative literary form by combining realism and romance.

Compared to seventeenth-century romances, especially those of French heroic and pastoral romances, as well as later novels, *Oroonoko* is relatively short, around 100 pages (65 pages in the Norton critical edition of 1997). The story consists of events starting from Coramantien, where Oroonoko, the soldier prince, first meets his beloved, Imoinda:

Oroonoko coming from the Wars, [...] he thought in Honour he ought to make a Visit to *Imoinda*, the Daughter of his Foster-father, the dead General; [...] and to present her with those Slaves that had been taken in this last Battle, as the Trophies of her Father’s Victories. **When he came**, [...] he was infinitely surpriz’d at the Beauty of this fair Queen of Night, whose Face and Person was so exceeding all he had ever beheld [...]. So that **having made** his first Compliments, and **presented** her an hundred and fifty Slaves in Fetters, he **told** her with his Eyes, that he was not insensible of her Charms; [...] she understood that silent Language of new-born Love; and **from that Moment**, put on all her Additions to Beauty.

‘Twill be imagin’d *Oroonoko* stay’d **not long before** he made his second Visit; nor, considering his Quality, **not much longer before** he told her, he ador’d her (O, pp. 14-15).⁴

What can we make of this passage in terms of temporality and conceptions of time? We can begin by looking at language and tense, and how sentences – and more generally events – are temporally linked. The elements emphasized in the text show that the narration follows the past tense,

3 Cf. Liisa Steinby’s essay in this volume.

4 Unless otherwise noted, in this essay bolding is added but italics are original.

the narrator being outside of the action in this part. We find temporal expressions such as 'not long before' and 'not much long before'; later in the text we find 'in a little time' (O, p. 19), 'one day' (O, p. 19) or such adverbs and particles such as 'soon', 'before', 'after', and 'while', resembling a more timeless tale placed in a far-away land. What is constant in the narrative is its temporal 'nonpunctuality'; more specifically, the absence of clock or calendar time as a device to organize events, which would strengthen the realism of the narrative. The narrative seems to be arranged in 'and then' form, combining events in a temporal order without being overly precise.⁵

The events in the story follow chronological order, with one exception. The story begins with a first-person narrator, the 'Eye-Witness to a great part' (O, p. 8), telling the reader about the circumstances in which the hero's story has evolved, and about those in the colony of Surinam in the West-Indies, where the final events of the story take place. In this context the narrator says: 'before I give you the Story of this *Gallant Slave* [Oroonoko], 'tis fit I tell you the manner of bringing them [slaves] to these new *Colonies*' (O, p. 8). The narrator then gives a detailed depiction of the milieu, the people of Surinam and their customs, before she turns to describing the place called Coramantien, Oroonoko's homeland in Africa. Now the actual story begins, moving forward to Oroonoko's and Imoinda's first encounter. The union of the lovers is at risk, as the king too is in love with Imoinda. When it is discovered that Imoinda has lost her virginity, she is sold as a slave. Since death is thought to be better than slavery, the king tells Oroonoko that Imoinda was executed. Oroonoko enters another war, is betrayed and is himself sold into slavery, in the same place as Imoinda: Surinam. There they meet, to their mutual surprise.

The narrative moves forward in vague temporal terms, and events take place in succession, with days, weeks, or months passing between them; sometimes something happens before or after something else. The narrator's key idea, however, is to tell the story as it might have happened in real life:

I do not pretend, in giving you the History of this *Royal Slave*, to entertain my Reader with the Adventures of a feign'd *Hero*, whose Life and Fortunes Fancy may manage at the Poet's Pleasure; nor in relating the Truth, design to adorn it with any Accidents, but such as arriv'd in earnest to him: And it shall come simply into the World, recommended by its own proper Merits, and natural Intrigues; there being enough of Reality to support it, and to render it diverting, without the Addition of Invention (O, p. 8).

5 For 'and then' narration, see Rimmon-Kenan, 1986, pp. 16-17.

This is the narrator in the very first paragraph of the narrative, assuring the reader that the story is true and is being retold as witnessed by or told to the narrator. Whether or not the story was true in real life, we cannot ultimately know, but as a narrative it reports events *as if* in the order they took place, without narrowing the time of events too accurately. The narrative thus seems to follow much more the temporal ordering of a fairy tale, 'once upon a time...' than of a precise historical account. Unlike such novels as for instance Fielding's *Tom Jones*, it is reported as a sequence of interesting biographical events rather than as the composition of a complex plot. This convention can be attributed to the contemporary literary context, the romance and its narrative patterns, but it can also be linked to contemporary views of time.

The idea of vague temporal expressions was prevalent in the seventeenth-century romance tradition, as well as, it can be argued, in everyday life: the sense of time was mainly ordained by the natural cycles of the year, the rhythm of holy days, and the everyday tolling of church bells. It is thus no surprise that in prose fiction the sense of time follows similar patterns, and is not confined to precise time-keeping. We can grasp a concrete sense of how time was experienced in London in the 1660s from Samuel Pepys's diary. It was in 1665 that Pepys, a government official, was presented with his first silver watch, worth £14: his first personal timekeeper so accurate as to show time to the minute. The watch, however, seems to have been more of a diversion for Pepys than a useful device; he himself, like the general public, seems to have ordered his sense of time by the church bells of London or, occasionally, a sundial.⁶ At a general level, the view of time was connected to several contexts. In addition to the everyday experience of time-keeping, the conception of history was still primarily cyclical. After the medieval period, underpinned by Christian eschatology, a cyclical view originating from antiquity regained its strength during the Renaissance. The cyclical view entailed two assumptions: first, that nature is uniform and unchanging, secondly, that history consists of a sequence of repetitive cycles. As nature was thought to remain static, the existence of parallels between individuals and events from different epochs seemed evident (Guibbory, 1986, pp. 8-9). The idea of return is inherent in the Italian word *rinascita* and the French *Renaissance* (also used in English), indicating the rebirth of something old rather than the emergence of something new (Whitrow 1991, pp. 132-34). According to Achsah Guibbory (1986, p. 8), the

6 *The Diary of Samuel Pepys* Vol. VI, 1981 (1665), p. 101, pp. 221-22. See also Mäkikalli, 2007, pp. 162-63.

cyclical conception of history clearly prevailed during the sixteenth and seventeenth century, and continued to exercise considerable influence into the eighteenth. This also means that in historical prose fiction the past is viewed as providing exemplary patterns for the narrating of historical events. It is in this light that we should consider the key aspects of temporality in *Oroonoko*. While Behn is radical in locating events in the context of the recent past, and in ascribing noble and heroic characteristics to non-Europeans, we can nevertheless approach the story as an exemplary one.

We can clarify the cyclical idea of temporality in *Oroonoko* by taking a look at characterization in the narrative. If we look at the passage quoted, we find characterization shared with the romance form: the modern novel rarely if ever tells stories about princes or princesses, but that is the case in Behn's story. Oroonoko is a prince; heroic and brave, he has 'real Greatness of Soul' and 'refin'd Notions of true Honour, that absolute Generosity, and that Softness that was capable of the highest Passions of Love and Gallantry' (O, p. 12). Moreover, he is educated in the European sciences and languages (he had a French Royal Tutor), and his shape is the most perfect that can be imagined: 'The most famous Statuary cou'd not form the Figure of a Man more admirably turn'd from Head to Foot. [...] The whole Proportion and Air of his Face was so noble, and exactly form'd, that, bating [except for] his Colour, there cou'd be nothing in Nature more beautiful, agreeable and handsome' (O, p. 13). Imoinda in turn is the most beautiful and virtuous creature there can be, 'the fair Queen of Night' as Behn puts it. Let us take a look at another passage from the narrative:

[A]s he [Oroonoko] knew no Vice, his Flame aim'd at nothing but Honour, if such a distinction may be made in Love; and specially in that Country, where Men take to themselves as many as they can maintain; and where the only Crime and Sin with Woman is, to turn her off, to abandon her to Want, Shame and Misery: Such ill Morals are only practis'd in *Christian-Countries*, where they prefer the bare Name of Religion; and without Vertue [sic] or Morality, think that's sufficient. But Oroonoko was none of those Professors; but as he had right Notions of Honour, so he made her such Propositions as were not only and barely such; but, contrary to the Custom of this Country, he made her Vows, she shou'd be the only woman he wou'd possess while he liv'd; that **no Age or Wrinkles shou'd incline him to change, for her Soul wou'd be always fine, and always young;** and he shou'd have an **eternal Idea in his Mind of the Charms she now bore,** and shou'd look into his Heart for that Idea, when he cou'd find it no longer in her Face.

After thousand Assurances of his lasting Flame, and her eternal Empire over him, she condescended to receive him for Husband; or rather, receiv'd him, as the greatest Honour the Gods cou'd do her (O, pp. 15-16).

Thus the characters are aristocratic and superior to the common people, and have eternal features and qualities, which will not change in the course of time. As we see in the first quotation, 'he told her with his Eyes, that he was not insensible of her Charms; [...] she understood that silent Language of new-born Love; and **from that Moment**, put on all her Additions to Beauty' and '**not much longer before** he told her, he ador'd her'. The couple fall in love in an instant – a conventional feature in the romance tradition. Human qualities are permanent, and remain unaffected despite the many events and ordeals encountered by the characters. It is well known that throughout her life Behn maintained her loyalty to the Stuart monarchy, and it has been suggested that Oroonoko embodies the heroic qualities that Behn admired in Charles I (Rosenthal, 2004, p. 155). The narrative suggests a close correspondence between birth and worth; as both the Stuart king and the royal slave were destroyed, Laura Brown (1997) has argued that the death of the royal slave may have functioned as an allegory for the end of Stuart power, or at least the end of an era.

This idea of characterization can be partly contextualized back to what Mikhail Bakhtin has described as *adventure-time*, referring both to structural temporality and to the characters' relation to time. According to Bakhtin, in the romance tradition there is a timeless vacuum between the beginning and the ending. That is to say, the gap between the two different biographical stages is not productive but seems timeless, in the sense that after the moment of falling in love no further events seem to affect the eventual marriage. The initial feelings lead to wedlock, leaving no room for potential changes brought about by the characters' intervening experiences or development. The time taken up by the depiction of mere adventures is thus empty, standing outside realistic life. The action is detached from biographical and biological time, because it is never subject to change (Bakhtin, 1986, pp. 89-91). Behn's narrative first seems to present unchanging characters, rather than the developing or individualistic ones found in modern novels. The end of the narrative and the downfall of the characters, however, contradict the romance tradition, which presented happy endings and praised eternal love between the central characters. In *Oroonoko*, we are following biographical events with a tragic ending. This brings an element of realism to the narrative: we have people with unforeseen destinies that could have occurred in real life. This is also underpinned by the historical depiction of practices in Surinam.

Although Behn uses neither specific years nor any other precise time references in her narrative, some details are nevertheless mentioned which indicate a particular historical event. One way of creating a sense of temporal realism is the use of a first-person narrator, who reappears later in the text as a character, and who seems to have much in common with the author herself. Aphra Behn in fact visited Surinam, and the depiction of the setting and events in *Oroonoko* contributes a sense that the action takes place in the English colony of Surinam before 1667, when it was taken over by the Dutch:

his [Oroonoko's] Misfortune was, to fall in an obscure World, that afforded only a Female Pen to celebrate his Fame; though I doubt not but it had liv'd from others Endeavors if the Dutch, who, immediately after his Time took that Country, had not kill'd, banish'd, and dispers'd all those that were capable of giving the World this great Man's Life, much better than I have done (O, p. 36).

Behn's use of a realistic setting thus at the same time contributes a certain realism to the use of historical time. We are to believe that last stages of Oroonoko's and Imoinda's lives took place in the 1660s. Yet we might speculate that in this passage Behn is using history to condemn Dutch actions in Surinam, rather than creating realistic time and place for her narrative. Whether factually 'true' or not, the story of *Oroonoko* in a sense reflects a hybrid temporality, in a story the point of which is to present the destinies of unusual people and unexpected events to European readers. At the same time, its temporal vagueness is something originating not from a fairy-tale but from contemporary ideas of time and history.

Robinson Crusoe: Dated Events

In early English prose fiction we are witnessing the emergence of the representation of particular time: of chronological, concrete, 'real' and secular time, in contrast to the absence of temporality or the timelessness represented for example by the romance tradition. We can ask to what extent the narrated time of prose fiction is based on 'real' time, which both Georg Lukács (1971, pp. 120-22) and Mikhail Bakhtin (1986, pp. 11-39) identify as the main constitutive element of the modern novel. They argue that time in the modern novel is immanent, dynamic and continuous, standing outside the static world of ideas.

Although Behn too uses the first name of the character in her title, thus placing the emphasis on the individual, Defoe's novels present characters with more detail and personal history than Behn's. Robinson Crusoe is born in York, a son of a middle-class family; he feels wanderlust, and ignores his father's wish that he study law and earn an appropriate middle station in life. This already depicts a different ground upon which the character is based. Defoe's story world is not one of idealized princes or princesses, aristocrats or royals, but of middle-class English people. As earlier studies have shown, Defoe's characters are particularized to a certain extent, but they lack the psychological development and the individual view of the world which would turn them into modern, dynamic and developing individuals. The passage of time turns them into better persons in terms of morality and faith, but not of psychological growth.⁷ Nevertheless, they are represented as persons who could have lived in late seventeenth-century or early eighteenth-century England, and can thus be identified *as if* they were real historical persons, situated in a particular time and place.

The detailed study of temporal references in Defoe's novels reveals that in following chronological and calendar time, Defoe is using specific temporal coordinates more than earlier writers of prose fiction. This is something that Ian Watt (1983, p. 23) regards as a central aspect of the early English novel. The convention can be demonstrated in *Robinson Crusoe* (1719), the first of Defoe's novels. I have dealt with the temporal aspects of Defoe's novels in detail elsewhere (see Mäkilalli 2007); here I merely give brief examples of Defoe's use of temporality in *Robinson Crusoe*, to demonstrate the differences in temporal representation compared to *Oroonoko*, published only some thirty years earlier.

In Defoe's *œuvre* as a whole, temporal duration and the specificity of temporal references in relation to calendar time and chronology vary from novel to novel. When we arrange the temporal references in *Robinson Crusoe* so as to form a temporal continuum, already the opening sentence is significant: it exemplifies the manner typical of Defoe's novels of placing events and characters on a chronological continuum: 'I was born in the Year 1632, in the City of York' (RC, p. 4). The novel thus begins by informing the reader of the central character's year of birth. In the course of the story further dates are mentioned which seem to be central in Robinson's life. September 1st, 1651 is the day when Robinson first boards a ship; eight years later, now a wealthy planter, he sets out again on the same day on a voyage to purchase slaves on the West coast of Africa, but ends up shipwrecked

7 For Defoe's characterization, see Watt, 1983; Novak, 1963, p. 129; Mäkilalli, 2007, pp. 106-13.

on a desert island.⁸ Later he carves the date of his landing ashore on a wooden cross, which serves him as a calendar (*'I come on Shore here on the 30th of Sept. 1659'*, RC, p. 48); he also mentions celebrating the anniversaries of his arrival on the island (RC, p. 76). Robinson is rescued from the island on 19 December 1686 and arrives in England on 11 June 1687 (RC, p. 200). He lives in England until the death of his wife; in 1694 he is ready to take off again, ready for further adventures, which are narrated in the sequel, *The Farther Adventures of Robinson Crusoe* (RC, p. 219; FRC, p. 11). Robinson returns to the island on 10 May 1695 (FRC, p. 32) and embarks on further adventures in Asia; he returns to London on 10 January 1705 at the age of 72, having spent ten years and nine months away from England (FRC, p. 319). We can thus follow Robinson's course of life chronologically, pinpointed by certain dates from the year of his birth to that of his retirement.

Defoe thus uses specific dates in order to endow the narrative with a realistic illusion or *vraisemblance*. There may have been plenty of reasons for doing this; yet one might be linked to a rising general awareness of ways of representing the past, and of techniques for inscribing a secular chronology. The early modern period challenged many earlier views of time, and there was a steadily growing interest in temporal order and chronology. According to Anthony Grafton, no discipline was more central to the study of time during this period than the careful study of the past. Events had their place in a history, which began with the Creation and proceeded in an orderly way through the Flood and the Exile, the fall of Troy and the rise of the European nations, before finally reaching modern times. From the Renaissance to the Enlightenment, technical chronology, i.e. the reconstruction of calendars and the dating of the main events of ancient and medieval history, was a central topic of debate among European thinkers (Grafton, 1993, pp. 4-7). The period following the Reformation spurred a special interest in the interpretation of the Bible not merely as allegorical revelation but also as a historical document, thus widening the theological debate over biblical chronology (Whitrow, 1991, p. 137). The concept of the 'century' in the reckoning of time established itself in the Protestant areas during the 1550s, leading historians to arrange events and documentary materials in a more chronological order (Borst, 1993, p. 103). The inauguration of the Gregorian calendar in 1582, and the view of chronology presented by the French Calvinist Joseph Scaliger in his *De emendatione temporum* (1583),

8 In the original edition of *Robinson Crusoe*, a blank space stood in place of the date of departure on the disastrous voyage, but in the fourth edition, also published in 1719, the temporal reference was already added. See RC, p. 31, n. 6.

may also have exerted an influence on Defoe's fascination with chronology, and his tendency in his novels to provide a chronology based on exact dates and calendar years. Scaliger's purpose was not to demarcate the beginning and end of time based on theological or natural explanations, but to define the precise location of events on the historical timeline. The purpose of his system of Julian days, which started at noon 1.1.4713 BCE, was to counteract changes (i.e. inaccuracies) in the lengths of years and months in calculating the interval between two events. It has been suggested that modern historical chronology (*chronologia*) begins with Scaliger's time-scale, into which he incorporated central historical events.⁹

Defoe's and Behn's shared interest in writing prose fiction was to tell *true* stories. *Oroonoko* claims to be 'a true history' in its title; *Robinson Crusoe* similarly claims on the title page to be 'written by himself'. In the preface to *Robinson Crusoe*, 'The Editor believes the thing to be a just History of Fact; neither is there any Appearance of Fiction in it' (RC, p. 3). Both narratives emphasize that they are to be read as reports of events taking place in real life, in history. As scholars have demonstrated, both narratives could have been based on real accounts: *Oroonoko* on Behn's own experiences in Surinam, *Robinson Crusoe* on Alexander Selkirk's calamitous voyage and shipwreck as a mariner. In *Oroonoko* the sense of realistic narration comes to the fore in depictions of place and milieu, but at the structural level and in characterization it follows the romance tradition. The temporality of the narrative thus remains vague, the action is not temporally particular or precise, and the characters have eternal rather than temporally dynamic qualities. In *Robinson Crusoe*, in contrast, we find an endeavor to locate the action on a chronological time scale. The temporality of the narrative is therefore more specific, and the characters are given a personal and thereby a historical context.

The study of temporality in narratives such as *Oroonoko* and *Robinson Crusoe* points in various directions, and needs more detailed contextualization within contemporary views of time than has been possible here. *Oroonoko*, with its vague temporal references, represents timelessness; in *Robinson Crusoe* Defoe uses specific dates to inscribe a new, chronological time. I hope in this essay to have demonstrated that in analyzing these narratives and novels it is fruitful to take into account historical views of time. Ultimately, what is at stake here is a matter of methodology.

9 Whitrow 1991, p. 137; Borst 1993, pp. 104-06; Richards 1999, pp. 12-13.

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Temporality, Subjectivity and the Representation of Characters in the Eighteenth-Century Novel

From Defoe's *Moll Flanders* to Goethe's *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*

Liisa Steinby

Introduction: Temporality and Subjectivity in Classical Narratology and in the Eighteenth-Century Novel

In the course of the eighteenth century, the experience of time – and, connected to this, the experience of human existence – underwent profound changes. Here I trace these changes as expressed in the eighteenth-century novel mainly on the basis of two examples, representing two different phases of temporalization of experience: Defoe's *Moll Flanders* (1722) and Goethe's *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* (1795-1796).

If we agree with Ian Watt's view of the 'rise' of the modern novel in England in the first half of the eighteenth century, what we have here is the first radical temporalization of experience in that century. According to Watt, this turn was based on a change in our understanding of reality: the Platonic-Aristotelian and medieval view of the immutable, ideal essences of things as the primary reality was replaced by the conception of the primary reality consisting of particular things that we perceive. In contrast to general essences, a particular thing always appears in a certain place and time (Watt, 1981, pp. 12-35). This 'formal realism' of the new novel corresponds, according to Watt, to Locke's empiricist philosophy. The literature of the classical period – extending from Aristotle's *Poetics* to eighteenth-century neoclassicism – dealt with the eternal truths of life in the form of illustrative *exempla* (ibid., p. 25), and the characters were bearers of the common human lot or specimens of general character types. In contrast, in the new novel the focus of interest lies in a particular individual (or individuals) and his or her experience (cf. ibid., pp. 15-16). The individuation of characters also leads to a loss of credibility for traditional patterns of action, i.e. conventional plots, which are replaced by the narration of an individual's experiences (ibid., p. 15). The importance assigned to the temporal dimension of events

is also manifested in a more accurate account of time compared to earlier literature (*ibid.*, pp. 26-28).

Watt claims that it is typical of the new novel to see the individual's life as 'a historical process', signifying that the 'narrative is occurring at a particular place and at a particular time' (*ibid.*, p. 26). However, the turn to historicism proper – seeing things historically – takes place in a later phase of Enlightenment thinking, namely in the last third of the century. Contrary to the classical view of history deriving from the antiquity, history is now no longer seen as a repetition of ahistorical patterns, but involves the constant creation of something new. Reinhart Koselleck describes this change in the perception of history as a change in understanding the relationship between the experience of the past and the expectation of the future: where in traditional society the world appeared immutable, and the future was therefore expected to be similar to the past, in the new, historicist thinking the experience of the past and the expectation of the future fall apart: what happened in the past need not return in similar form in the future (Koselleck, 1985, pp. 349-75). The French Revolution meant a confirmation of this late-Enlightenment idea of the possibility of change: by acting in the present, a future can be created which will be different from the past, and which hopefully will be something that better meets human needs and desires (cf. *ibid.*, p. 54). And by creating history, humankind by the same time creates itself: history is now understood as the endless self-constitution of humanity, as described by Johann Gottfried Herder, one of the first proponents of historicist thinking (Herder, 1985, p. 716f.; 1991, p. 153f). Moreover, the view of the historical constitution of humanity has a counterpart in the new understanding of individuality that emerges towards the end of the century. Individuals are no longer considered as instances of general humanity or specimens of ahistorical character types, but an individual now appears as a unique personality. Sociologically speaking, this emphasis on individuality arises in a society in which one's possibilities are no longer automatically determined by one's inherited rank or position in the society. As Günter Saße contends (Saße, 2010, p. 241), the plurality of functions which one had to occupy in modern society evoked the need to find in oneself, in one's individual personality, the integrating instance which could counteract this pluralization. However, what a person is is not a stable thing: just as humankind will recognize its potentialities only in the process of history, the individual becomes him- or herself only through a process of development.

In what follows, we shall examine how the temporalization of experience affects the 'story logic', or the manner in which cohesion is built in the

narrative, and the representation of the experiencing and acting subject – the protagonist – and other characters. I apply the concepts ‘experiencing and acting subject’ and ‘character’ in a ‘naturalized’ way, as referring to something that we imagine to be fictional counterparts of real persons.¹ The experiencing and acting subject refers to the person from whose perspective the fictive world (primarily) appears to the reader. The experiencing and acting subject of course has a ‘character’, too, but it may come to the fore in a different manner compared to other characters. While the vantage point in this study is in the history of the eighteenth-century novel and its intellectual background, we may ask how far narratology can provide us with a toolkit for the analysis.

The discussion of temporality in narratology has occurred basically within the framework set by Gérard Genette in his influential *Narrative Discourse* (1980; orig. ‘Discours du récit’, in *Figures III*, 1972; cf. e.g. Sternberg, 1990; 1992). Following the idea of the Russian formalists that the basic opposition in a narrative is that between the story told and the narration of it, the main questions of narrative time concern the order and duration of narration in relation to the order and duration of the events of the story. The order of narration can either adhere to the (chronological) order of events in the story or can deviate from it, and there is a varying relationship between the duration of the event and the duration (i.e., the number of pages) of its narration (Genette, 1980, Ch. 1 and 2). Thus ‘time’ here means physical, objectively measurable time, and the parameters of temporality that are taken into account have to do with location along the continuum of time and quantity. ‘Frequency’, which Genette takes up as a third dimension of narrative temporality, of course is a quantitative concept as well. For Genette, ‘frequency’ means comparing the number of events in the story and the number of their occurrences in the narration. It is possible to narrate a single event once or n times, and to narrate an event that occurs n times once or n times. The first of these possibilities Genette calls a singulative (*ibid.*,

1 Structuralist narratology introduces the concept of the ‘actant’ as a functional unit of the action, or plot, to replace the ‘character’. Cf. e.g., Bal, 2002, p. 115: ‘[A]n actor is a structural position, while a character is a complex semantic unit. But as readers, we “see” characters [...] That no satisfying, coherent theory of character is available is probably precisely because of this human aspect’; Margolin, 1990, p. 844: ‘Character as actant is a purely functional category [...] actants may be invested with semantic features, turning them into acteurs’; Herman, 2002, p. 119: ‘[S]tructuralist narratologists began by underscoring the constructedness of characters, their irreducibly semiotic status, when viewed as nodes in a network of signs’, while James Phelan has studied ‘characters’ mimetic, synthetic (= semiotic), and thematic dimensions’. Cf. also Phelan (1989) and Jannidis (2004; 2009).

pp. 114-15), the third one is called iterative narration (*ibid.*, p. 116). Genette's striving for strict objectivity and exactness means cleansing the concepts of anything that refers to the subjective experience of time.²

Along with temporality, another basic aspect of narrative discourse for Genette is 'mood', defined as a phenomenon of focalization. The 'focalizer' is the one through whose perception events in the story world are seen (answering the question 'who sees?'; *ibid.*, p. 186). The focalizer is the closest that Genette's narratology comes to the experiencing subject; another subject is the narrator, who in Genette's theory is reduced to a narrative function, a 'voice' (answering the question 'who speaks'; *ibid.* p. 186). The tendency to consider both the characters and the narrator of the story as abstract functions rather than as representations of human beings is characteristic of classical narratology (cf. e.g., Bal, 2002;³ Margolin, 1990). Just like temporality, focalization too is discussed in terms of location and quantity. For example, what is traditionally called 'telling' and 'showing' are, according to Genette (1980, p. 164), distinguished in terms of greater or smaller distance from the object, and consequently in different quantities of information. It is evident that the concept of focalization does not include any interpretative activity on the part of the perceiving subject: a focalizer is a mere optical point of observation and a neutral transmitter of information (cf. Steinby, 2016). We may question how far these abstract, quasi-physical concepts of time and focalization can serve the analysis of the temporalization of experience in the eighteenth-century novel.

Defoe's *Moll Flanders*: Time, Subjectivity and Character Representation in a Survival Story

Watt describes the novelty of the rising novel, as represented by Defoe, Richardson and – with some reservations – Fielding against the backdrop of the seventeenth-century romance. Despite the fact that recent scholarship has demonstrated the existence of a great variety of fictional and non-fictional text types that flourished in England at the turn of the eighteenth century and formed the ground for the growth of the novel (cf. Davis, 1983; McKeon, 2002; Hunter, 1994; Richetti, 1999), a comparison between the

2 I have discussed Genette's concepts of time, space, and subjectivity in more detail in Steinby (in press).

3 Bal, 2002, p. 16: 'When [...] I discuss the narrative agent, or narrator, I mean the linguistic subject, a function and not a person [...].'

romance of the previous century and the emerging novel serves well in carving out what is 'new' in the new novel. This is also valid for changes in ways of experiencing time.

The conventional pattern of action in a Baroque novel (romance) is the following: The protagonists are two young rulers, or a prince and a princess, from far-away countries and an indefinite past, who fall in love with each other; before they can marry, however, they are separated, and each of them has to undergo a great number of adversities and dangers. The virtue and fidelity of the lovers are tried in stereotypical adventures, including among others war, battle and shipwreck; being captured by pirates, sold on the slave market, or harassed by an obnoxious suitor; having a narrow escape from being burnt at the stake or sacrificed to a foreign god. The lovers remain unshakeable, and in the end their virtue is rewarded and their enemies punished: the infamous enemy who threatens their kingdom and possibly their lives is destroyed, the kingdom(s) is (are) restored to them, and they enter into matrimony.⁴ There is no inner connection between the events and the characters that experience them: their intentions and actions have nothing to do with what they encounter. Instead of 'horizontal' or causal connections between the adventures, there is a 'vertical' connection between the events and the transcendent world order: it is divine Providence, using Fortuna as its tool, that probes the virtue of the lovers (cf., e.g., Röder, 1968, pp. 27-36; Frick, 1988). Those temporal coordinates that are given are vague and punctual, such as 'suddenly', 'the following day'. Temporality as the dimension in which things undergo development or inner change is in these novels completely lacking.⁵

In Daniel Defoe's second novel, *Moll Flanders*, the protagonist's life is narrated by herself towards the end of her life. The events take place in contemporary, or almost contemporary, England and the British colonies, and the narration mainly follows the chronological order of events; at the end of the story, Molly mentions that she has completed her biography in 1683, when she is almost seventy, which means that her life is a couple of generations back from her first readers. Like a heroine in a Baroque novel, Moll experiences a great variety of adversities and adventures; but the world is the

4 The enormous size of these novels is a considerable hindrance for today's curious readers. For example, Mme de Scudery's *Artamène ou Le Grand Cyrus* (1649-1653) comprises ten volumes and several thousand pages. A useful compilation of excerpts from the German representatives of the genre is Cholevius (1965).

5 On the Baroque novel, see e.g., Emrich (1981), Frick (1988). Mikhail Bakhtin's (2008) account of the Greek adventure novel offers a good description of the Baroque novel (or romance) as well, since many of the distinctive features are the same.

recognizable, everyday English world. Several real names of places are given as the scene of events, including London, Hammersmith, Bath, Lancashire, York, Virginia and Maryland. However, contrary to what Watt says about the great amount of concrete details in the new novel – something that he refers to as a ‘commonplace view’⁶ – there are no detailed descriptions of places, interiors, objects, or the characters’ attire.⁷ We are moving about in familiar places among familiar objects, which are not described but merely recognized as what they are: the aesthetic or picturesque values – or sociological implications – of places, interiors or particular objects are paid no attention to at all. Of Brickhill, for example, where she is going to marry her fifth husband, Moll writes: ‘After dinner we walked to see the town, to see the church, and to view the fields and the country, as is usual for strangers to do’ (MF, p. 154). A guest-house is merely a guest-house, a room a room, in which those pieces of furniture are mentioned which play a role in the action, as in the room where Moll will spend the night with the would-be (fifth) husband: ‘There was a bed in the room, and we were walking to and again, eager in the discourse; at last, he takes me by surprise in his arms, and threw me on the bed, but without the least offer of any indecency, courted me to consent [...]’ (MF, p. 155). Obviously, space and different objects are present only as the prerequisites of action.

There is, however, one particular aspect of objects to which Moll does pay attention: their monetary value. When Moll mentions, and possibly specifies with an adjective or two, valuable things such as jewels, precious cloths, watches or any other property, up to and including houses and estates, this always happens with a calculating eye: she is estimating the pecuniary value of these possessions. This manner of perceiving things follows naturally from her position in the world: she is the progeny of a Newgate convict mother and an unknown father, and from her earliest childhood was at the mercy of strangers. This determines what kind of story her life history is: the survival story of a girl and woman, without family or connections, who has nothing to rely on but her own resourcefulness. Thus, despite the many surprising turns and adventures, Moll’s life story – unlike those we find in Baroque novels – has an inner cohesion: it is her striving for security that determines her attitude to events and to other people, and even her experience of time.

6 Watt, 1981, p. 18: ‘particularity of description had always been considered typical of the narrative manner of *Robinson Crusoe* and *Pamela*’.

7 That this is the case in eighteenth-century English novels in general is demonstrated by Wall (2006).

In Moll's story time is an important dimension, and the most relevant time-span is her lifetime. Moll keeps from the beginning the reader informed about her age: in connection with various life events, she mentions having been three, seventeen, twenty-five, forty-two, fifty, sixty-one or sixty-eight. The age is much more than mere neutral recording of the course of time: it is something which Moll's prospects of success definitely depend on. At the age of three, she is completely dependent on those who are taking care of her; when she is seventeen and a beauty, she is seduced, but is saved by the marriage proposal of the brother of the deceitful seducer. When this husband dies only five years later, Molly survives by remarrying, repeatedly, till she is about fifty. She now realizes that she scarcely has a chance on the marriage market any longer, and for years she 'earns' her living as a thief. Thus, age is utterly important⁸ – not as a measure of anything like an inner maturing process, but because it is a highly relevant factor in Moll's life project of securing for herself a safe, and if possible comfortable, existence.

In Moll's account of events, the hour or the time of day when something happens is hardly ever mentioned; a watch, for Moll, is a precious object to be stolen, rather than an article of utility. Moll keeps however recording the duration of the different periods of her life: how many months or years had gone by, sometimes how many days, and particularly how long she lived with each of her five husbands. The specification of time is functionalized in relation to Moll's main objective: to survive. There is a connection between the calculation of the value of her possessions and the counting of time: the question is always, for how long a time a certain sum of money will suffice, invested in property or liquid assets. Her struggle for survival is also the perspective from which she sees other persons, including – and particularly – her husbands, whom she may love dearly, but who represent for her primarily providers of security.

For example, of her second husband Moll writes that '[m]y husband had this excellence, that he valued nothing of expense. As his history, you may be sure, has very little weight in it, 'tis enough to tell you that in about two years and a quarter he broke, got into a sponging-house, being arrested in an action too heavy for him to give bail to [...]' (MF, p. 53). The husband leaves her, and what remains to Moll is to count her possessions and on this basis to assess her position: 'I found, upon casting things up, my case was very much altered, and my fortune much lessened, for, including the hollands and a parcel of fine muslins, which I carried off before, and some plate and

8 See the discussion of 'female time' in *Moll Flanders* and *Roxana* in Mäkilä, 2006, pp. 201-17.

other things, I found I could hardly muster up £500; and my condition was very odd [...]’ (MF, p. 55). She does not tell about her emotional but about her economic distress.

Moll does not depict her husbands, in the neoclassical manner, as different character types, nor does she employ black-and-white painting, like a Baroque novelist. For her there is no problem in recognizing what someone is like – once the possibility of deliberate deception is excluded, against which Moll knows enough to be on her guard; and this commonsense understanding of people, which takes no time to acquire, suffices very well for her in any of her relationships. Of some of her husbands, she mentions one or two characteristic features – for instance that her first husband was a great joker – but she sees no point in going into their characters more deeply. How little the husbands are individualized is indicated by the fact that most of them are not even mentioned by name. Moll therefore has to use other means of distinguishing them when she happens to speak of two of her husbands in the same sentence: ‘It must be observed that when the old wretch, my brother ([the third] husband) was dead, I then freely gave my husband [the fourth but also the final one, reinstated in this position towards the end of Moll’s life] an account of all that affair [...]’ (MF, p. 294).

Of her marriages, Moll tells us very little. For example, the five years of the first marriage are summed up in two sentences:

It concerns the story in hand very little to enter into the further particulars of the [husband’s] family, or of myself, for the five years that I lived with this husband, only to observe that I had two children by him, and that at the end of the five years he died. He had been really a very good husband to me, and we lived very agreeably together; but as he had not received much from them [his family], and had in the little time he lived acquired no great matters, so my circumstances were not great, nor was I much mended by the match (p. 50).

Moll’s attention is focused on the periods between the marriages, when she has to find new forms of livelihood. At first, for several decades, this means providing herself with a new, preferably prosperous husband. Each search for a new husband is an undertaking that requires great energy and wisdom, as well as often some cunning. For example, she tells us about the man who would become her third husband:

I picked out my man without much difficulty, by the judgment I made of his way of courting me. I had let him run on with his protestations that

he loved me above all the world; that if I would make him happy, that was enough; all which I knew was upon [the mistaken] supposition that I was very rich, though I never told him a word of it myself (MF, p. 67).

While the periods of dependence on a husband are recorded only briefly, Moll's narration of the dangerous period when she had to support herself by stealing contains much more detail: she describes several particular occasions when she narrowly escapes being caught, which would mean being hanged or transported as a convict to the colonies. Eventually, Moll is captured and transported to the New World; but she manages to secure her likewise convicted and transported fourth husband (a highwayman) a place in the same ship, and by investing cleverly the assets she had earned by stealing they establish a new, prosperous living on an estate in Maryland. The values of the different possessions, the yearly profit of the estate, and Moll's inheritance from her mother – who was also the mother of her third husband – are carefully specified.

Thus there is a clear rhythm to Moll's story of her life: it is the periods of insecurity, which are the times in which her life depends on her own initiative and inventiveness, that are described in detail, including the lively rendering of crucial scenes and dialogues, while the smooth periods, those of her relative security and her dependence on a husband, are recounted only very briefly. The narrative rhythm thus accentuates the phases when Moll appears as an independently acting subject. Defoe's Moll, like his Robinson Crusoe, is an individual left on her or his own to get along in the world, and time is an essential dimension in her struggle for subsistence. The passing of time is a threat when the means of livelihood are running out, but time is an asset when it offers an opportunity to gain property. For Moll, the intervals between her marriages are periods in which these 'active' aspects of time are accentuated, while within her marriages, the passing of time is relatively insignificant: Moll merely emerges from each marriage some years older. Thus in Moll's life, essentially the same problem – how to survive – as well as a temporary solution to this problem surface again and again; and the repetition of the pattern brings a feature of seriality to Moll's narrative of her life.⁹

9 Stuart Sherman has analysed the serial form in eighteenth-century diaries and the adoption of this form in the new novel (Sherman, 1996). Moll's autobiography is not in diary form but is presented as having been written 'afterwards', when she has lived through all the adversities of life and is now a prosperous estate owner; here it is the content of her life, the repetition of the very same distress, that entails the repetitive pattern of her life history.

At the end of the novel another time perspective comes to the fore: that of eternity. In the last sentence of the novel Moll writes that she and her husband have now returned to England, 'where we resolve to spend the remainder of our years in sincere penitence for the wicked lives we have lived' (MF, p. 295). Thus old Moll and her aged husband turn their faces from time to eternity (cf. Mäkikalli, 2006, pp. 95-113). The reader, however, cannot avoid the impression that Moll has not abandoned her previous life strategy in the first place: what she is now doing, in deciding to repent for the rest of her life, is securing comfort in her life hereafter.

In conclusion, we see that the essential story logic of *Moll Flanders* does not derive from the fact that Moll is the focalizer who registers events, offering information about events and characters (cf. Genette, 1980, pp. 75f., 160-64); what is decisive is rather that the information she gives us is strongly biased and conditioned by her struggle for subsistence. This is to say that in order to grasp the inherent logic in her story – including its temporal structure – we have to take into account the kind of person she is and the nature of her primary problem in life. That events and other characters are seen from her perspective means that anything she encounters she sees as either an opportunity or a hindrance in her struggle for subsistence and a comfortable life. The rhythm of her narrative, which is formed by the alternation of condensed and expanded narration, derives from her experience of the alternation between tranquil, relatively secure, passive periods – primarily those of her marriages – and turbulent, risky, active ones in which both the threatening and promising aspects of time come most clearly to the fore. This indicates that narrative duration and rhythm are phenomena that, in order to make sense, must be explicated in connection with the content, which again is dependent on the particular historical conditions: in this case, the insecure position of women without a fortune in eighteenth-century England.

Goethe's *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*: Temporality, Character Representation, and the Experiencing and Acting Subject

In Goethe's *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* (*Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship*), temporalization extends to the manner how characters are seen as well as to one's way of understanding oneself. This is connected with the new understanding of human beings as unique and developing individuals. We have seen that in *Moll Flanders*, although the characters are not presented as representatives of general types, individuality does not play a great role

in their depiction. There is no problem of recognizing people as they are, and the characters are thinly if at all described and strongly functionalized as parts of Moll's survival story. There is no issue of the identity of the protagonist, either. In contrast, in Goethe's novel the individuals, including the protagonist, are not easily identified as what they are. In addition, while Defoe's characters do not change except for aging, Goethe's characters undergo changes, which further complicates their recognition. It is precisely the individual's change or formation (*Bildung*) that is thematized in the *Lehrjahre*. Traditionally, a *Bildungsroman*, of which the *Lehrjahre* is considered to be both the earliest example and the paragon, is understood as the story of the development of a young person towards a fully developed personality (cf. Dilthey, 1965, p. 273). As I have argued elsewhere, however, the *Lehrjahre* is less the story of Wilhelm's *Bildung* than a narrative of his disparate experiences, out of which he strives to construct the story of his *Bildung* (cf. Saariluoma [Steinby], 2004, esp. 310-16). The queries in what follows concern character representation and the role of Wilhelm as the experiencing and acting subject, approached from the viewpoint of the new temporalization of experience.

Individualization and Temporalization in Character Representation

To close the gap in character representation between Defoe and Goethe, a few remarks on two other authors may be appropriate. While Defoe does not pay much attention to the representation of characters, for Henry Fielding, another exponent of the new novel, the pertinent, insightful representation of characters is of primary importance: it is the field within which an author can display his skills in the 'new province of writing' which Fielding claims to have established with his *Joseph Andrews* (1742) and *Tom Jones* (1749).¹⁰ This new genre, which he calls 'private history',¹¹ is about 'morals and manners'. He assures us emphatically that 'I describe not men, but manners; not an Individual, but a Species'.¹² To be able to do so, he has studied human nature by observing men (and women) in contemporary life.¹³ Thus, while

10 'For as I am, in reality, the founder of a new province of writing, so I am at liberty to make what laws I please therein'. *Tom Jones*, Book II, Ch. 1.

11 *Tom Jones*, Book XIII, Ch. 1. However, despite proclaiming being free to invent whatever laws he wishes for the new province of writing, Fielding fits the new genre into the neoclassical frame, defining it as 'prosaic-comic-epic writing' (*Tom Jones*, Book V, Ch. 1) or (in the *Preface of Joseph Andrews*) 'a comic Epic-Poem in Prose'.

12 *Joseph Andrews*, Book III, Ch. 1.

13 See *Tom Jones*, the introductory chapters of Books I, IX and IV.

Fielding embraces the (neo)classical thinking of characters, seeing them in terms of human nature and different character types, these types are not borrowed as such from the literary tradition but are based on the author's own observations. This brings a flavour of particularity, empiricism and 'contemporaneity'¹⁴ to his otherwise atemporal neoclassicism. The characterization is also atemporal in the sense that Fielding, in the neoclassical manner, regards 'conservation of character' as an inescapable principle of character representation.¹⁵

In contrast, the German novel in the latter part of the century was particularly interested in how human beings change: either through inner maturation or by their experiences of the world, or both. Christoph Martin Wieland's *Geschichte des Agathon* (Agathon's Story,¹⁶ 1766-1767) is considered to be the first novel of this type.¹⁷ The novel tells the story of the protagonist's development, which comprises the difficult choice, on the basis of his experiences of life, between Platonism and hedonism. The ample psychological analysis of the struggle in the protagonist's mind brings dynamism to the whole; what is at stake are however two philosophical positions, which can be exhaustively defined in general terms. Contributing to the sense of atemporality is the author's choice to set the psychodrama in the world of antiquity, as though to emphasize the ahistorical character of the problem. The characters represent, in the neoclassical manner, general human possibilities. Thus the main adversary of Agathon's Platonism, the sophist Hippias, is introduced to the reader using purely classificatory notions:

Der Mann, der sich für zwei Talenten das Recht erworben hatte, den Agathon als seinen Leibeigenen zu behandeln, war einer von den merkwürdigen Leuten, die unter dem Namen der Sophisten in den griechischen Städten umherzogen [...]. Hippias [...] war einer von diesen glücklichen, dem die Kunst, sich die Torheiten anderer Leute zinsbar zu machen, ein Vermögen erworben hatte [...] (Wieland, 1986, p. 46).¹⁸

14 For the eighteenth-century author's growing appetite for 'contemporaneity', see Sherman, 1996, p. 172 (Sherman is here referring to J. Paul Hunter).

15 *Tom Jones*, Book XVIII, Ch. 1

16 The German 'Geschichte' means both 'story' or 'history'; the title is emphatically modelled in line with English novels, such as 'The History of Tom Jones'.

17 See, e.g., Köhn, 1968; Jacobs, 1972.

18 'The man who had for two talents purchased the right to treat Agathon as his slave was one of those odd people who under the name of sophists traveled around in the Greek cities [...]. Hippias [...] one of those lucky men who had made a fortune by the skill of profiting of others' foolishness [...].'

There is no need to describe the individual; the description is completed by defining the general class to which Hippias belongs.

Towards the end of the century, the replacement of human essence and character types by individual identities revolutionized the description of characters in the novel. The identity of a unique individual is something that has to be defined in each particular case separately.¹⁹ This unique individuality is formed in the course of one's life, and is recognized through reflecting upon that life. The search for an identity in one's life may be called the creation of a 'narrative identity' (cf. e.g., Taylor, 1989, p. 289; Schmidt, 1989, p. 92). In a seminal article, Verena Ehrich-Haefeli locates the emergence of the narrativization of character representation in Goethe's *Die Leiden des jungen Werther* (*The Sorrows of Young Werther*, 1774). When Werther in a letter to his friend wants to give a description of his new acquaintance Lotte, he first looks for general attributes that would describe her aptly, but soon gives up the effort: all that, he says, is nothing but trash, miserable abstractions which cannot express her self (*Werther*, p. 19). Instead he narrates about his first meeting with her, which is the famous scene where Lotte divides up the bread among her younger sisters and brothers. Ehrich-Haefeli concludes that although the individuality cannot be expressed in general terms, it can be the object of narration (Ehrich-Haefeli, 1998, p. 818). This does not mean that Lotte's life story is told; rather, she is shown in a number of situations of which she is a part. Ehrich-Haefeli points up that while in earlier (neoclassical) novels the characters are defined prior to the events and remain in their essence untouched by them, in *Werther* characters and events are intertwined in a new, unprecedented way (*ibid.*, p. 819). With this shift in characterization, the roles of narrator and reader have profoundly changed: instead of being described directly by the narrator's authority, the character of a fictive person is something that can only be conjectured from the particular situations and events of the story.

Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre was preceded by the manuscript entitled *Wilhelm Meisters theatralische Sendung* (Wilhelms Meister's theatrical calling), written in the 1770s about the same time as *Werther* and later reworked into the first five books of the *Lehrjahre*.²⁰ The narration in both novels is extra- and heterodiegetic (Genette) or auctorial (Stanzel), although it closely follows Wilhelm's experiences. In the *Sendung*, however, it is the

19 As Odo Marquard remarks, the pre-modern concept of essence has in Modernity been replaced by the concept of identity (Marquard, 1979, p. 358).

20 The *Sendung* was not published in Goethe's life-time, and the manuscript was thought to be lost for good, until one copy was found in the early 1900s and published in 1911.

narrator who provides the reader with insight into the nature of events and characters, while in the *Lehrjahre* much more is left for Wilhelm and the reader to interpret and judge. This is connected with a difference in the protagonist's character and his position in the novel. The *Sendung* is the story of the development of a theatrical genius, in which everything the protagonist encounters is related to his calling. In contrast, Wilhelm in the *Lehrjahre* is no genius, and his enthusiasm for the theatre proves to be a false path. The *Lehrjahre* thus lacks an organizing centre analogous to Wilhelm's calling in the *Sendung*, and it is much more difficult to find any pattern in the events. What Goethe is here suggesting is that one's experiences in life do not naturally form any coherent entity, since what we encounter is not easily deciphered – not to mention seeing everything as a meaningful element in our own life story.

Let us take as an example the introduction of the actress Philine. In the *Sendung* it goes as follows:

Sie war das gutherzigste Geschöpf von der Welt, naschte gerne, putzte sich und konnte nicht leben, ohne spazieren zu fahren oder sich sonst eine Veränderung zu machen; ganz allerliebste war sie aber, wenn sie ein Glas Wein im Kopfe hatte. Wer ihr diese Freuden verschaffen konnte, war ihr angenehm, und wenn sie einmal, welches doch selten geschah, einiges Geld übrig hatte, so vertat sie es auch wohl mit einem irrenden Ritter, der ihr leidlich gefiel und dessen starke Seite der Beutel nicht war. In reichlichen Tagen schien ihr nichts gut genug, und bald darauf nahm sie wieder mit allem vorlieb. Sie pflegte sich einem freigebigen Geliebten zu Ehren mit Milch, Wein und wohlriechenden Wassern zu waschen, bald tat ihr der gemeine Brunnen gleiche Dienste. Gegen Arme war sie sehr freigebig und überhaupt von Herzen mitleidig, nur nicht gegen die Klagen eines Liebhabers, den sie einmal abgedankt hatte (*Sendung*, pp. 729-30).²¹

21 'She was the most good-hearted person of the world, who liked nibbling at delicacies and grooming herself, and could not live without going for a drive or in some other way entertaining herself; and most charming she was when she had imbibed a glass of wine. Whoever could offer her these pleasures was agreeable to her, and when she sometimes, which happened only seldom, had some money left, she spent it with an erring knight who pleased her reasonably, and whose purse was not his strong side. In prosperous days nothing seemed good enough for her, and soon afterwards she was again contented with everything. To honour a generous lover she used to wash herself with milk, wine and fragrant waters, but soon a common well served the same purpose. Towards the poor she was very generous, and in general she had a compassionate heart, except for the complaints of a lover whom she had once dismissed'.

The listing of Philine's habits goes on for another half a page. The characterization of Philine does not take place directly by categorizing her, let us say, as a 'frivolous actress', but the description of her habits amounts unambiguously to something like that. The narrator approaches his topic as though he were a close acquaintance of hers, who has observed her for a long time and now sums up his singular observations in a portrait of her habits. This means that becoming acquainted with Philine's character is a temporal process, although what is given here are only the results of that process. (We note that it is necessary to 'naturalize' the narrator as someone who has a 'past' in which he has 'observed' a character). The lively portrait of the frivolous actress chimes in with Wilhelm's view of Philine: she represents for him the light pleasure-seeking that the theatre means for part of the public. This is something with which Wilhelm finds fault, and he therefore keeps at a distance from her.

In the *Lehrjahre* no description of Philine's character is given by the narrator, not even in the iterative form of describing her habits; she is presented only in particular situations which she shares with Wilhelm. His first encounter with her is reported as follows:

Ein Mädchen, das Rosen und andere Blumen herumtrug, bot ihm [Wilhelm] ihren Korb dar, und er kaufte sich einen schönen Strauß, den er mit Liebhaberei anders band und mit Zufriedenheit betrachtete, als das Fenster eines an der Seite des Platzes stehenden andern Gasthauses sich auftat und ein wohlgebildetes Frauenzimmer sich an demselben zeigte. Er konnte ungeachtet der Entfernung bemerken, daß eine angenehme Heiterkeit ihr Gesicht belebte. Ihre blonden Haare fielen nachlässig aufgelöst um ihren Nacken; sie schien sich nach dem Fremden umzusehen. Einige Zeit darauf trat ein Knabe, der eine Frisierschürze umgegürtet und ein weißes Jäckchen anhatte, aus der Türe jenes Hauses, ging auf Wilhelmen zu, begrüßte ihn und sagte: 'Das Frauenzimmer am Fenster läßt Sie fragen, ob Sie ihr nicht einen Teil der schönen Blumen abtreten wollen?' – 'Sie stehn ihr alle zu Diensten', versetzte Wilhelm, indem er dem leichten Boten das Bouquet überreichte und zugleich der Schönen ein Kompliment machte, welches sie mit einem freundlichen Gegengruß erwiderte und sich vom Fenster zurückzog (*Lehrjahre*, pp. 90-91).²²

22 'A girl, with roses and other flowers for sale, coming by, held out her basket to him, and he purchased a beautiful nosegay; which, like one that had a taste for these things, he tied up in a different fashion, and was looking at it with a satisfied air, when the window of another inn on the opposite side of the square flew up, and a handsome young lady looked out from it.

The reader sees only the same particular events as Wilhelm, who sums up this encounter as a 'pleasant adventure' (*artiges Abenteuer*, *ibid.*, p. 91). The reader may notice that Wilhelm is attracted to the cheerful-looking young woman. This is confirmed when Wilhelm is soon afterwards invited to her place, where she insists on combing his hair and in so doing 'could not avoid' touching his knees with hers and bringing her bosom so close to his lips 'that he was more than once tempted to give it a kiss'.²³ Undoubtedly, Philine is the same frivolous actress as in the *Sendung*; however, there is more ambiguity in her character in the *Lehrjahre* than in the *Sendung*. The momentary impressions of her the reader receives vary considerably. Wilhelm's relationship to her is ambiguous as well: he is at the same time repelled by her frivolity and attracted by her. When she keeps Wilhelm sitting on a bench in front of a guesthouse and caresses and kisses him in that public place, he feels embarrassed and annoyed; when he sees her by the side of the beautiful countess with whom he is in love, the contrast is very much to her disadvantage; but after Wilhelm is wounded when the theatrical troupe with which he travels is attacked by highwaymen, it is she who stays back to take care of him; and when one morning he finds her with a book in her hand, sleeping innocently at the edge of his bed, he can scarcely resist the temptation to caress her. What Philine 'is', is a task for both Wilhelm and the reader to be solved in the course of time, but the question is never answered definitely – just as in real life we can never be quite sure that we know a person completely. All Wilhelm – like the reader – possesses are glimpses of her in different situations, out of which he can try to compose a portrait of her.

In the first five books of the *Lehrjahre*, the characters are not presented to either the protagonist or the reader through a continuous narrative of their lives, but through their acts in particular situations. Only through synthetic activity on the part of Wilhelm – and the reader – can coherence be created among these separate images. This recognition of what someone

Notwithstanding the distance, he observed that her face was animated by a pleasant cheerfulness: her fair hair fell carelessly streaming about her neck; she seemed to be looking at the stranger. In a short time afterwards, a boy with a white jacket, and a barber's apron on, came out from the door of her house, towards Wilhelm; saluted him, and said: "The lady at the window bids me ask if you will not favour her with a share of your beautiful flowers."—"They are all at her service," answered Wilhelm, giving the nosegay to this nimble messenger, and making a bow to the fair one, which she returned with a friendly courtesy, and then withdrew from the window' Goethe, 1917, Book II, Ch. 4.

23 '[...] daß er mehr als einmal in Versuchung gesetzt war, einen Kuß darauf zu drücken' (*ibid.*, p. 94).

is like is a temporal process which is open towards the future: we can never be certain that the future will not reveal some new aspect of the person. In addition, a change in our general understanding of the world may change the way we see someone. This all comes very close to the manner in which, in Goethe's opinion, we create a portrait for ourselves of real people in real life.²⁴ Approaching the identity of a person through concrete acts and situations, rather than in abstract concepts, is part of Goethe's 'gegenständliches Denken', his tendency of thinking in terms of concrete objects rather than abstractions (cf. e.g., Bollacher, 2001).

To sum up: in these eighteenth-century novels, we see how atemporal typology of characters, such as Fielding's or Wieland's, is replaced – in Goethe – either by the iterative description of the person's habits or by a 'singulative' rendering of the person's particular acts in particular situations. The Genettean categories of 'iterative' and 'singulative' are applicable here, but they are insufficient to provide a full account of the temporalization of character representation. This is because Genette's categories of narrative time bear no relationship to the question of whether reality is seen as atemporally or temporally ordered. It is precisely this shift from atemporal to temporal thinking – the emergence of a historical view of the world and of human beings as unique individuals, identified by their particular acts and experiences – that brings about the fundamental change in character representation in the novel.

Temporary Identities: Attempts at Narrating Who One Is

The *Bildungsroman*, of which *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* is the paragon, may sound like the prototype of modern life narrative, since in the *communis opinio* it is a narrative of identity formation. However, if 'narrative' means that a 'sets of events' has been 'transformed into stories with beginnings, middles, and ends' (White, 2005, p. 137), 'impos[ing] order on chaotic events, structuring amorphous, lived experience' (Ritivoi, 2005, p. 231), or creating a 'network of connections [which] gives events coherence, motivation, closure, and intelligibility and turns them into a plot' (Ryan, 2005, p. 347),²⁵ this is not what the *Lehrjahre* offers. Coherence, insight into

24 Goethe (1999, p. IX) writes in *Farbenlehre*: 'Vergebens bemühen wir uns, den Charakter eines Menschen zu schildern; man stelle dagegen seine Handlungen, seine Thaten zusammen, und ein Bild des Charakters wird uns entgegentreten' ('It is a vain effort to try to describe the character of someone; you just have to assemble his acts and deeds, and a portrait of him is given to us').

25 Cf. also Richardson, 2005, p. 353: 'in this conception, plot makes events into a narrative'.

causal connections between events,²⁶ and closure are lacking in the account of Wilhelm's experiences in the *Lehrjahre*. Events are not emplotted so as to give a narrative of Wilhelm's development. Rather, as I have argued elsewhere, it is the narrative of Wilhelm's experiences over a certain period of time, and of his unsuccessful attempts to discern a plot in his life and define what he himself is (cf. Saariluoma [Steinby], 2004).

To make it clear to the reader that Wilhelm's interpretations of himself, of others and of his situation are unreliable, the author of the *Lehrjahre* employs at the very beginning of the novel an exceptional narrative perspective. Before the reader catches sight of Wilhelm at all, the first chapter presents a discussion between his love, the actress Mariane and her old servant, which reveals that Mariane has another lover. This is a man whom Mariane does not care about, but whom she keeps, on her servant's advice, for economic reasons, and who has now given notice of returning in a fortnight. Mariane says that despite this she will give herself to Wilhelm, whom she loves, hoping for some miraculous salvation from her distress: 'Vierzehn Tage! Welche Ewigkeit! In Vierzehn Tagen, was kann da nicht vorkommen, was kann sich da nicht verändern!'²⁷ (*Lehrjahre*, p. 11). In the next chapter Wilhelm enters, and it turns out that he plans to leave his bourgeois family and the merchant's trade for a career in the theatre, where together with his beloved he will work for the education of the public. He tells Mariane about the puppet theatre and other theatrical performances of his childhood, which he created and carried out more or less successfully with his friends, as compelling evidence that the theatre has always been his calling. Finally, he compares these reminiscences of his childhood with his present situation:

Es ist eine schöne Empfindung, liebe Mariane, [...] wenn wir uns alter Zeiten und alter unschädlicher Irrtümer erinnern, besonders wenn es in einem Augenblicke geschieht, da wir eine Höhe glücklich erreicht haben, von welcher wir uns umsehen und den zurückgelegten Weg überschauen können. Es ist so angenehm, selbstzufrieden sich mancher Hindernisse zu erinnern, die wir oft mit einem peinlichen Gefühle für unüberwindlich hielten, und dasjenige, was wir jetzt, entwickelt, *sind*, mit dem zu vergleichen, was wir damals, unentwickelt, *waren* (*Lehrjahre*, pp. 16-17; emphasis in the original).²⁸

26 Cf. Ronen, 1990, p. 819: 'It is commonly agreed that only events tied together by chronology and causality can form the basis for a narrative text'.

27 'A fortnight! What an eternity! What cannot all happen in a fortnight, what cannot change!'

28 'It is a fine emotion, Mariane, [...] when we bethink ourselves of old times, and old harmless errors; especially if this is at a period when we have happily gained some elevation, from which we can look around us, and survey the path we have left behind. It is so pleasant to think, with

The passage is the first occasion when Wilhelm offers an overall interpretation of himself and his life, whose course he now believes himself to know with certainty: he tells us how his life story is to be emplotted, and describes this moment as the point in time when he has reached maturity. The reader, however, knows that Wilhelm is building his expectations of a future with Mariane on false presuppositions – and that his error in evaluating his situation is in fact much more grave than any of the mishaps in the theatrical performances of his childhood. Indeed, when Wilhelm a fortnight later detects Mariane's deception, all his dreams concerning his future life in the theatre are crushed. Mariane leaves town, and Wilhelm will never see her again. The fact that Wilhelm is shown initially as an unreliable interpreter of his own life affects the reader's attitude toward him throughout the novel: rather than accepting Wilhelm's interpretations, the reader has to interpret the events in the novel along with Wilhelm, but independently of him.

Later, when Wilhelm is sent on his travels to collect outstanding payments from his father's debtors, he comes across a number of actors and spends his time with them; among other things, he follows them into a count's residence, where he participates in entertaining the aristocratic society by theatrical performances. When after these experiences Wilhelm is offered a post as a professional actor, he accepts the proposal, although what he has seen of the theatre so far does not corroborate his youthful dreams of the educational function of the theatre. His decision is provoked by a letter from his brother-in-law, who is planning a future for him as a merchant, which he finds anything but attractive. He writes back that his goal from early on was the *Bildung* of himself as a many-sided personality, and that this goal can nowhere be realized better than in the theatre. Here Wilhelm proffers the second interpretation of himself and his life story – one which seemingly fits very well the idea of the *Lehrjahre* as a *Bildungsroman*. The reader, however, sees that Wilhelm is again mistaken: first of all, it is not true that Wilhelm has always pursued his own *Bildung* – originally he dreamt of a theatrical career with the goal of educating the theatre public; secondly, from Wilhelm's experiences so far it is clear that the theatre, even when favoured by high society, cannot offer him the kind of opportunity for *Bildung* that he now claims to be seeking. Indeed, after just a few performances his theatrical career ends with his final disappointment with the theatre.

composure and satisfaction, of many obstacles, which often with painful feelings we may have regarded as invincible; pleasant to compare what we now [,developed,] are [*are*], with what we then were struggling to become [rather: with what we at that time, undeveloped, *were*]'. Goethe, 1917, Book 1, Ch. 3.

After leaving the theatre, Wilhelm can no longer find any direction in life: everywhere, he sees only his own errors. In the last two books of the novel, Wilhelm is further away than ever from being able to tell a coherent story of his life. He becomes acquainted with members of the so-called Society of the Tower, an association of men (and women) who, in the spirit of the late Enlightenment, are active in the fields of education and in practical projects of general benefit. Wilhelm feels confused and distressed; when he realizes that he is desperately in love with the beautiful, saintly Natalie right after he has proposed marriage to another woman (Therese), this does not alleviate his agony. In this state of mind, he reads the account of his 'apprentice years', written by some of the educators in the Society of the Tower:

Er fand die umständliche Geschichte seines Lebens in großen, scharfen Zügen geschildert; weder einzelne Begebenheiten, noch beschränkte Empfindungen verwirrten seinen Blick, allgemeine liebevolle Betrachtungen gaben ihm Fingerzeige, ohne ihn zu beschämen, und er sah zum erstenmal sein Bild außer sich, zwar nicht, wie im Spiegel, ein zweites Selbst, sondern wie im Portrat ein anderes Selbst: man bekennt sich zwar nicht zu allen Zügen, aber man freut sich, daß ein denkender Geist uns so hat fassen, ein großes Talent uns so hat darstellen wollen [...] (*Lehrjahre*, p. 505).²⁹

This life story is not presented to the reader, who of course would be very interested to hear how a 'great talent' emplots Wilhelm's life history. Most conspicuously, Wilhelm obviously does not benefit in the least of reading this story: whatever he thinks of it, he does not recognize in it any pattern that would bring him clarity. He is after the reading as confused as before and remains that till the very end of the novel. We can therefore say that the novel proceeds from the protagonist's (false) certainty about his identity and the 'plot' of his life to a completely uncertainty of both; and it seems that even a 'great talent' succeeds only partially in this portraying task. The novel ends in a moment of bliss when Wilhelm learns that the woman whom he truly loves – the 'beautiful amazon' Natalie – offers him her hand. This does not mean however that Wilhelm's confusion concerning his identity and his life is over.

29 'He found his life delineated with large sharp strokes; neither unconnected incidents, nor narrow sentiments perplexed his view; the most bland and general reflections taught without shaming him. For the first time, his own figure was presented to him; not indeed, as in a mirror, a second self; but as in a portrait, another self; we do not, it is true, recognise ourselves in every feature; but we are delighted that a thinking spirit has so understood us, that such gifts [great talent] have been employed in representing us [...]' Goethe, 1917, Book VIII, Ch. 1.

Thus, although in the two last books the Society of the Tower shows great interest in the ‘apprentice years’ of individuals, and the life stories of many characters are displayed, Wilhelm’s life story, which could reveal his identity, remains untold (cf. Saariluoma [Steinby], 2004, pp. 210-27; Petersdorff, 2006; Schöll, 2008). This is valid both within the world of the novel and to the reader. Replying to Schiller, who had read the manuscript and wished that Goethe would make the relationship between the different elements and the central idea of ‘apprentice years’ clearer, Goethe speaks of his ‘realistic tic’, which prevents him from creating such order.³⁰ He seems to be suggesting that the inherent dispartateness of one’s experiences resists any clear patterning – a view in which we recognize Goethe’s modernity. The ‘objectivity’ (*Gegenständlichkeit*) of the representation which is characteristic of Goethe means that the author offers to his readers events and the actions of the characters in particular situations, but leaves their ‘meaning’ and their role in the protagonist’s development almost as opaque as events and characters are in real life. There is no ‘vertically’ given significance of events, as in Baroque novels, nor are events ‘horizontally’ interconnected in any way that might make their overall significance clear (as, for example, in Moll’s story). It remains the task of both Wilhelm and the reader to search for coherence in Wilhelm’s apparently disparate experiences.

We can therefore say that the *Lehrjahre* does not present a life story that provides the protagonist with a narrative identity, and that the novel as a whole proceeds from the protagonist’s (false) certainty about his identity and about the ‘plot’ of his life to complete uncertainty about both. If in *Werther* narrative appeared as a means of capturing someone’s individual identity, a task of which no general categories were capable, in the *Lehrjahre* ‘narrative identity’ appears as something difficult or impossible to achieve – although the search for it is a temporal process into which the reader is invited, along with Wilhelm.

Temporality in the *Lehrjahre* is a many-faceted phenomenon; here we have focused on Wilhelm’s experience of time.³¹ Wilhelm produces interpretations of his experiences, which, however, do not last; he interprets himself differently at different times, without coming to any conclusion; and – like other characters – he changes over the course of time. The overall dynamism of the novel suggests that what is at issue here is Wilhelm’s incessant activity itself, both participating in events and searching for their

30 Goethe in a letter to Schiller from 9. July 1796, Schiller – Goethe, 1977, p. 242.

31 Other aspects of time in *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* are discussed in Saariluoma [Steinby], 2005.

meaning, rather than the outcome of these activities. The novel shows the complex experience of temporality of the modern individual, for whom everything, including oneself, is constantly changing and the understanding of things is a never-ending task.

Conclusion

The analysis of Defoe's *Moll Flanders* and Goethe's *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* has shown that there occurred a temporalization of experience and narration in the eighteenth-century novel, and that novelistic temporalities grew ever more complicated towards the end of the century. We have applied some of Genette's categories in describing these temporalities, including order, duration and rhythm, along with iterative and singulative narration: however, these conceptualizations alone do not suffice in describing temporal experience and temporal structures in these novels. What is problematic in Genette's conceptualization is its objectivistic, scientific view of time, perception and narration (Steinby, 2016). When the questions asked concern merely the relationship between the order and duration of events and those of the narration, together with the amount of information gathered by the recorder of events (the focalizer), what is overlooked is the ambiguity of the modern world which is characteristic of the modern novel. 'Gathering information' is too simplistic a view of what takes place with the 'focalizer' as the central experiencing and acting subject of the novel, and the experience of time which structures the novels is not a matter of recording clock and calendar time.

What essentially determines the temporal experience and gives a coherence to the protagonist's life story in *Moll Flanders* is her basic situation in life: being exposed all alone to the adversities of life and compelled to cope entirely on her own. She does not register the events 'objectively', but things, events and other people signify for her possible means of survival. The passing of time is likewise relevant in relation to the question of subsistence, to which even the question of her age is subordinate; and it is this question that determines the rhythm in her narrative of her life. In *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*, the experience of time is much more complex than in *Moll Flanders*. This derives from the fact that the experiencing subject in this novel is a modern, autonomous subject of interpretation and action, for whom 'common sense' (or the religious view of the world) is no longer a reliable guide to understanding matters. Relying upon himself, he has to create for himself an understanding of events, of the persons he meets,

and of himself. It is difficult to recognize what others are like, and even more difficult to know oneself and to see one's life as a meaningful whole. Wilhelm makes efforts to understand himself on the basis of his acts and experiences, but he fails to create for himself a stable narrative identity. The *Lehrjahre* presents the modern human condition: the uncertainty that characterizes one's existence and one's understanding of oneself and others, and a temporality in which the present is constantly bringing forth new material of experience, while at the same time it is necessary to further reflect upon past experiences and to take responsibility for one's future. This is a temporal condition that resists capture by objectivistic concepts based on location and quantity.

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Authorial Narration Reconsidered

Eliza Haywood's *Betsy Thoughtless*, Anonymous' *Charlotte Summers*, and the Problem of Authority in the Mid-Eighteenth-Century Novel

Dorothee Birke

From a narratological point of view, one of the most controversial legacies the eighteenth-century novel has bestowed onto its inheritors is the technique of authorial narration. Described by Franz K. Stanzel as one of three typical narrative situations, authorial narration as defined in the *Routledge Encyclopedia of Narrative Theory* is 'characterized by a highly audible and visible narrator' who 'sees the story from the ontological position of an outsider, that is, a position of absolute authority which allows her/him to know everything about events and characters, including their thoughts and unconscious motives' (Jahn, 2005, p. 364). This association of authorial narration with an assumption of 'absolute authority' has, in conjunction with the modernist preference for 'showing' rather than 'telling', made the mode seem suspect to many twenty- and twenty-first-century novelists and their audiences. David Lodge, to name a prominent example, sees 'an increasing reluctance among literary novelists to assume the stance of godlike omniscience that is implied by any third-person representation of consciousness' (Lodge, 2002, p. 86). Authorial narration, it might seem, is reactionary, both aesthetically and ideologically speaking: incompatible with contemporary scepticism towards authority and grand narratives.

It could be seen as a surprise, then, that authorial narration has been making a comeback since the last decades of the twentieth century. Paul Dawson has recently shown that in works by contemporary British and American authors like Salman Rushdie, Martin Amis, Zadie Smith, Jonathan Franzen and Don DeLillo, there is a 'prominent reappearance of the ostensibly outmoded omniscient narrator' (Dawson, 2009, p. 143). He argues that while the "universal" moral authority of the classic omniscient narrator is indeed no longer available to contemporary writers', it has 'been replaced by a range of non-essentialized and more specific relativized modes of narrative authority' (Dawson, 2009, p. 149) which are realized in contemporary versions of the 'classical' model. Dawson ties this renewed interest in authorial narration on the part of novelists to concerns about the perceived decline of the novel's cultural significance in the age of digital media.

A pressing question that Dawson's excellent analysis leaves unanswered is how universal the 'moral authority of the classic omniscient narrator' really is (or was). As I will argue in this paper, closer examinations of the use of authorial narration in the eighteenth-century novel suggest that authorial narration in the eighteenth century is no less complex and contradictory than its twenty-first-century counterpart. Then, too, it served to reflect on authority as a problem for the novelist rather than straightforwardly assuming an authoritative stance. Seen in the context of the history of the novel, this makes perfect sense: mid-eighteenth-century authors like Henry Fielding, Sarah Fielding or Charlotte Lennox were intensely involved in debates about the purposes and functions of the novel as an emerging cultural phenomenon. Authorial narration as a technique (or maybe better, a spectrum of techniques) provided a rhetorical means of importing such debates into the pages of the novel.

I have elsewhere discussed Henry Fielding's *Tom Jones* – a work often referred to as providing stable narratorial authority – as an example of highly complex and ambivalent rhetorical self-fashioning in which the author of the novel playfully asserts and disputes his own claims to authority (see Birke, 2015). The large number of intrusive authorial commentaries in *Tom Jones*, I argued, serves to reflect on and complicate notions of novelistic authority rather than to cement such claims. With their highly ironic and sophisticated commentary, Fielding's novels are of course in some ways a special case. In this paper, I will consider authorial narration in the 1750s, the decade after the publication of *Tom Jones*, in which novelists, on the one hand, sought to build on the critical success of Fielding and Richardson, and on the other hand were writing back against views of the genre as superficial or salacious.

My two examples will be novels that represent juxtaposing tendencies: Eliza Haywood's *The History of Miss Betsy Thoughtless* (1751) employs commentary throughout, but in a less obtrusive way than Fielding. The anonymously published *The History of Charlotte Summers, the Fortunate Parish Girl* (1750), in contrast, continues and intensifies the playful commentary as a form in its own right. It exemplifies the novelist's self-conscious stance towards his or her own work as a cultural artefact that scholars like Thomas Keymer and Christina Lupton have described as characteristic of the time (see Keymer, 2002, p. 17; Lupton, 2011, p. 290).¹ I will show that in both its

1 The seminal point of reference for all such studies is Wayne Booth's 1952 article on 'The Self-Conscious Narrator in Comic Fiction Before *Tristram Shandy*', in which he describes works featuring narrators (both homo- and heterodiegetic) who comment on the act of narration in

flamboyant and more restrained varieties, authorial narration was a key technique for reflecting on the problem of the novelist's authority in a period in which the 'rise of the novel' (Watt, 1957) was gaining momentum.

Theoretical and Terminological Foundations

The different narratological conceptualizations of authorial narration have reflected a broad range of views on its defining characteristics. For Stanzel, a main concern was to distinguish the voice of the authorial narrator from that of the author – a move that freed theorists from narrowly intentionalist discussions. Since then, narratologists have concentrated on two major phenomena associated with the technique. The first of these is the authorial narrator's 'omniscience', or what Gérard Genette has called 'zero focalization', i.e. a distribution of information 'where the narrator knows more than the character' (Genette, 1980, p. 189). The second aspect is the degree of the authorial narrator's 'intrusiveness', which is created by the commentaries that make the narrator 'audible and visible' (Jahn, 2005, p. 364). As Dawson rightly points out, these two aspects are not necessarily linked, and there are many instances of zero focalization without instances of intrusive comments. He thus proposes to limit the usage of the label 'omniscient narration' to 'those works which actualize a panoramic narrator, which perform omniscience, rather than those narratives which report without comment, or in which commentary does not reveal a sense of the narrator's personality' (Dawson, 2009, p. 148).

While I agree that the two phenomena should be distinguished, I would argue that 'omniscience' is not the best label to use because it emphasizes the aspect of focalization instead of that of intrusiveness. Narratorial comments, as I will demonstrate in my analyses, should more usefully be seen as rhetorical bids for authority than as expressions of god-like all-knowingness.² Stanzel's term 'authorial narration' at first sight seems to be problematic as well, since it suggests precisely what Stanzel wanted to get away from: the idea that the narrator's voice is that of the author. This, however, could be less inappropriate than classical narratology has made it

order to show that Sterne's employment of narratorial digression in *Tristram Shandy* was not an original invention, but had quite a few predecessors in the 1740s and 1750s.

² Dawson also argues that '[w]e need not take the notion of an all-knowing narrator literally' (2009, p. 148), as those critics tend to do who seek to describe the authorial narrator as a telepath or a superhuman entity.

out to be. As Susan Lanser has argued in her feminist study on the history of narrative mediation, the voice in narratorial commentary

(re)produces the structural and functional situation of authorship. In other words, where a distinction between the (implied) author and a public, heterodiegetic narrator is not textually marked, readers are invited to equate the narrator with the author and the narratee with themselves. This conventional equation gives authorial voice a privileged status among narrative forms (Lanser, 1992, p. 16).

The idea that authorial narration is a mode of self-fashioning on the part of the writer is particularly useful insofar as it gives a convincing answer to the question where the 'authority' of this type of narration stems from: it is connected with the act of storytelling, with acts of invention, selection and persuasion, rather than with supernatural powers such as all-knowingness. What narratological theory has not sufficiently acknowledged so far is that the 'authority' of authorial narration is neither monolithic nor uncontested: it involves different kinds of authority (defined by the *OED* as 'the power to influence action, opinion, belief'), which do not necessarily reinforce each other. One type of authority (which I label 'narrative authority') comes as part and parcel of creating a work of fiction: it is the power to influence the reader's beliefs with regard to what happens in the story, what characters do and think and so on. Being accepted as an author of fiction means being able to put forward such authority claims, which cannot be contested.³

However, commentaries extend beyond the facts of the fictional world: they involve, for example, claims with regard to the psychological credibility of the characters that are portrayed, or with regard to the moral implications of the story. Such claims to psychological and ethical authority transcend

3 There is one branch of narrative theory that has given careful consideration to authority as a problem: feminist narratologists, first and foremost Susan Lanser (1992), have argued that explicit authority claims were problematic for female writers, who were not granted the same authoritative status as their male counterparts. More recently, Vera Nünning has shown that women writers in the eighteenth century tended to use more unobtrusive strategies, whereas their nineteenth-century counterparts 'like Charlotte Brontë and George Eliot could make extensive use of the privileges of overt narrators and thus lay claim to a position of authority' (2012, p. 104). These studies offer important contributions for historicizing and contextualizing narrative strategies. The one point in which they fall short, in my view, is that they tend to cement a monolithic view of overt authorial commentary as straightforwardly assuming a position of authority rather than negotiating various, sometimes contradicting or contentious, authority claims. This is why they have problems with female authors like Eliza Haywood, who do use overt authorial commentary.

the specific cases to which they are attached. They are linked to larger ideas about the purpose and potential of fictional writing, for example the notion that novels can give particular insights into the human psyche, or that they can function as models for morally sound behaviour, etc. Whether authors of fiction are regarded as authorities with regard to moral or psychological questions is obviously a contested and also historically variable issue. The authority claims in authorial narration, then, can function as instantiations and extensions of contemporary debates about the functions of novel-writing. This is particularly obvious in the case of those commentaries that offer general maxims (I will call them 'gnomic') and those that reflect on acts of narration or reception ('metadiscursive' commentaries).⁴

Claims to kinds of authority other than narrative authority have a somewhat contradictory aspect insofar as the more explicitly they are put forward, the more do they expose themselves to potential scrutiny and criticism. In contrast to the fictional 'facts' themselves, the reflections offered in commentary are subject to discussion – in a sense, many of these utterances can be read as partial answers to the question 'why should I read this book?'. By spelling out a particular position, commentaries also open up the possibility of contradiction, and thus, ultimately, the question of whether the story should have been told differently (or even not at all). In this sense, I argue, narratorial comments problematize authorial control at the same time at which they invoke it.

The History of Miss Betsy Thoughtless

Eliza Haywood's *The History of Miss Betsy Thoughtless* starts out with a general statement about contemporary morals and manners:

It was always my opinion, that fewer women were undone by love than vanity; and that those mistakes the sex are sometimes guilty of, proceed, for the most part, rather from inadvertency, than a vicious inclination. The ladies, I am sorry to observe, are apt to make too little allowances to each other on this score, and seem better pleased with an occasion to condemn than to excuse [...]. There are some who behold, with

4 My typology of commentaries follows the suggestion of Ansgar Nünning, who distinguishes between comments focussing on particular characters or events (he calls them 'analytical', I prefer 'diegetic' in order to emphasize their focus on the universe of the fictional characters) as well as the types I have labelled 'gnomic' and 'metadiscursive' (Nünning, 1997).

indignation and contempt, those errors in others, which, unhappily, they are every day falling into themselves; and as the want of due consideration occasions the guilt, so the want of due consideration also occasions the scandal: and there would be much less room either for the one or the other, were some part of that time which is wasted at the toilette [...] employed in examining the heart, and what actions are most becoming to the character (BT, p. 3).⁵

After this general remark, the narrator moves directly into the exposition of the story: 'Betsy Thoughtless was the only daughter of a gentleman of good family and fortune in L—e, where he constantly resided...' (BT, p. 3). In these passages, Betsy is introduced as having 'a great deal of good-nature' (BT, p. 4), but being naïve and susceptible to flattery and thus in danger of falling under the bad influence of another young woman, the tellingly named 'Miss Forward', who 'had a great deal of the coquette in her nature' (BT, p. 5).

At first sight, the beginning of the novel seems to be a good example for the use of authorial commentary to straight-forwardly convey a moralizing message, in this case one about female vanity and the dangers to which it exposes even generally amiable women. This is precisely how some critics have seen the novel, for example Lanser, who charges Haywood with conventional misogyny (Lanser, 1992, p. 49).⁶ It might seem puzzling, then, that in her introduction of the edition in the 'Mothers of the Novel' series, Dale Spender represents the novel as a feminist classic: 'Eliza Haywood holds up to scrutiny the values of her day and she does not hesitate to focus on the sexual double standard and its inherent injustice' (Spender, 1986, p. xii). Such widely differing evaluations of the novel are, I want to argue, possible not *despite* the overt narratorial commentary, but rather *because* of the specific ways in which it is employed.

First, Haywood sets the tone for the novel in the choice of topic for this first gnomic commentary: the fallibility of conventional judgment, which attributes immodest behaviour to 'vicious inclination' rather than to a more complex and common mixture of vanity and lack of circumspection (a mixture that is also already alluded to by means of the protagonist's telling name). The passage, then, sets up two conflicting ideas about of the main purpose of the subsequent introduction of the protagonist Betsy and her

5 Citations are from the Pandora edition of the novel.

6 Vera Nünning offers a Lanserian reading of the passage I have cited, regarding it as an example of a 'firm and overt establishment of a position of moral authority' (2012: 90), which takes a male subject position and criticizes behaviour that is represented as typically female.

ill-advised behaviour: is the reader mainly invited to judge the character, to decide to what extent she is a positive or negative example for female behaviour – or is this an injunction on the reader to monitor precisely these evaluations, to reflect whether the reader has the same uncharitable views that were just criticized?

Second, this ambiguity is intensified by the fact that the first and the second paragraph of the novel are not connected by any explicit transition clarifying the application of the gnomic statement in the first passage to the descriptions of the second. In the terms suggested by Karin Kukkonen in her reading of Haywood, the narration flaunts the Gricean maxim of relation: it abruptly shifts from a very general observation to specific descriptions of individual experience and thus poses the question of relevance. If they do not want to regard the sequence as incoherent, readers will themselves have to look for ways of applying the moral from the gnomic statement to what follows.⁷ In contrast to the pattern established by Henry Fielding's narrators, who frequently reflect on the effects the narrative could or should have on the projected reader (albeit in an ironic manner),⁸ Haywood here does not use metadiscursive commentary or explicit reader address. Readers are left to infer that the reference to the process of 'examining the heart' in the first paragraph of the novel can also be read as a writing programme for the novel itself, which, in laying open the motivations and emotions of its protagonist, is supposed to foster insights into human behaviour as well as self-scrutiny in the reader. Here, again, the protagonist's telling name and its exposition in the title point the way: they signal to the reader to expect an exploration of Betsy's character as a type – in this case, a familiar stereotype of femininity which is sympathetically expanded in the course of the novel. This expansion is facilitated by the range of different possible connotations of the word 'thoughtless' – ranging from the negative 'lacking consideration for others' to the positive 'free from care or anxiety' (see *OED*).

Third, one could say that the oscillation between an assertion of conventional norms and values and their critical examination is already self-reflexively announced in the first chapter title: 'Gives the reader room to guess at what is to ensue, though ten to one but he finds himself deceived'

7 Kukkonen describes the narrator in *Betsy Thoughtless* as 'uncooperative' with regard to the maxim of manner – she shows how the narration anticipates future events in the story, thus playing with reader expectations (Kukkonen, 2013, pp. 210-15).

8 See e.g. the beginning of Chapter 11 in *Tom Jones*: 'It hath often been observed by wise Men or Women, I forget which, that all persons are doomed to be in Love once in their Lives. [...] Miss Bridget is an Example of all these Observations' (*Tom Jones*, pp. 64-65).

(BT, p. 3).⁹ Kukkonen observes that such references to the handling of reader expectation serve to establish the narrator herself as a coquette, who like many of the female characters in her novel ‘manages her encounter with the reader, prefiguring inferences, disappointing or gratifying them’ (Kukkonen, 2013, p. 215). I would add that in contrast to the coquette, Haywood’s narrator invites readers to be aware of this interplay at the same time in which they are engaging in it. This awareness is, possibly, heightened by the juxtaposition of different modes: there is a contrast between the playful mode typical of the chapter titles and the somewhat more sober tone of the narration proper.¹⁰ Whereas Henry Fielding’s novels are characterized by a pervasive use of irony and direct reader address, Haywood uses these devices much more sparingly, so that their condensed employment in the chapter titles becomes more conspicuous. The question raised by the combination of the chapter title and the first two paragraphs, then, is not only ‘what is going to happen on the level of the story?’, but also ‘what kind of book am I reading, and what kind of insights can I expect from it?’. Even taken by itself, the chapter title already touches upon both questions, as the reader’s guess about ‘what is to ensue’ could pertain either to the actions described in the novel or the reading experience on which the reader is embarking.

Authority claims are thus evoked and negotiated in complex ways at the beginning of *Betsy Thoughtless*. The many evaluative phrases in the first paragraph (‘guilty’, ‘vicious’, ‘I am sorry to observe’), first of all, announce moral authority. At the same time, the gnomic commentary lays claim to psychological authority, as it puts forward a general observation about the true motivations of typical female behaviour (‘those mistakes the sex are sometimes guilty of, proceed [...] rather from inadvertency, than a vicious inclination’). This combination suggests an affinity to conduct literature

9 The narratological distinction between the level of the paratext and that of the main body of the text should not preclude the treatment of such paratextual elements as chapter titles in the case of authorial narration: one important element of the ‘(re)produc[tion] of the structural and functional situation of authorship’ (Lanser, 1992, p. 16) in these novels is the suggestion that the narrative voice is that of the person responsible for or at least involved in selection (sometimes also invention/creation) and editorial arrangement of the textual elements.

10 For a discussion of the function of chapter titles in mid-eighteenth-century English fiction, in particular the novels by S. Fielding and Lennox, see Birke (2012). I argue there that chapter titles are frequently used to juxtapose different narrative styles and thus heighten the sense that the title is a playful commentary on the text – a similar technique is employed in Charlotte Lennox’ *The Female Quixote* and, even more strikingly, in Sarah Fielding’s *The History of David Simple*.

with its aim of regulating female behaviour.¹¹ Such an implicit purpose is complicated, however, by the aspects analysed above: the focus on social norms of evaluation as themselves problematic, the implicit challenge to establish connections between gnomic statements and the description of concrete characters and events, and the playful attitude towards the reader encapsulated by the chapter title. The novel is positioned as a text that can not only incorporate the regulatory potential of conduct books, but present deeper truths about the human heart and character. At the same time, it is suggested that these two kinds of purpose and authority may be at odds with each other. Moreover, by highlighting the issue of reader expectation and by playing with the cooperative principle, the novel foregrounds the processual character of the practice of reading and ultimately raises the question of the degree and the limits of authorial control.

Although, as I have already observed, metadiscursive commentary – including reader address and references to narrative technique – is much less extensively employed in *Betsy Thoughtless* than in *Tom Jones* (apart from the use in chapter titles), there are quite a few notable instances, as for example in Chapter 2:

She [Betsy Thoughtless] had a great deal of wit, but was too volatile for reflection; and as a ship without sufficient ballast is tossed about at the pleasure of every wind that blows, so was she hurried through the ocean of life, just as each predominant passion directed.

But I will not anticipate that gratification which ought to be the reward of a long curiosity. The reader, if he has patience to go through the following pages, will see into the secret springs which set this fair machine in motion, and produced many actions which were ascribed, by the ill-judging and malicious world, to causes very different from the real ones.

All this, I say, will be revealed in time; but it would be as absurd in a writer to rush all at once into the catastrophe of the adventures he would relate, as it would be impracticable in a traveller to reach the end of a long journey, without sometimes stopping at the inns in his way to it. To proceed, therefore, gradually with my history (BT, p. 8).

After the diegetic commentary on the person of the protagonist, which evokes the conventional metaphor of the self as a vessel at sea, a metadiscursive commentary is added which calls into question the explanatory

¹¹ There are some direct allusions to the genre, for example the title of Chapter VI: 'May be of some service to the ladies, especially the younger sort, if well attended to' (BT, p. 31).

and proleptic significance of the former. The reader is warned not to assume that the catch-all assessment of the character as fickle can provide the same insight into the ‘secret springs’ or underlying character traits and motivations that the narrative as a whole is supposed to convey. This recurring evocation of the special effect of fictional writing is here combined with a play on the (also conventional) metaphor of the novel as a journey – as famously elaborated on by Fielding in *Joseph Andrews*, when he compares chapter titles to ‘Inscriptions over the Gates of Inns [...], informing the Reader what Entertainment he is to expect, which if he likes not, he may travel on to the next’ (*Joseph Andrews*, p. 90). Haywood modifies the metaphor by describing the author, not the reader, as a traveller. By doing so, she suggests a synchronization between the process of reading and the production of the text – both the impatient reader and the hasty author need to slow down. The modification thus highlights the interdependence between expectations on the part of the reader and designs on the part of the author: they must constantly be negotiated. The metadiscursive commentary dramatizes such a negotiation as a spectrum of rhetorical acts in which the reader, as the writer’s counterpart, is not just an implied addressee, but projected in more specific attitudes: being patient or impatient, finishing the book or not, more or less carefully judging the characters. This serves to privilege or suggest specific stances on the part of the reader – however, it also acknowledges the fact that just as the writer is free to lay out her own rules for her work, the reader is free to evaluate the results and to realize the act of reception in his or her own individual way.

The History of Charlotte Summers, the Fortunate Parish Girl

While Haywood’s *Betsy Thoughtless* represents a tendency to tune down the intrusiveness and irony of the Fieldingesque authorial narrator, the anonymously published *Charlotte Summers*, ‘one of the more successful fictions of the 1750s’ (Lupton, 2011, p. 292), features the opposite approach to authorial narration, increasing the self-reflexive tendency of the technique to the point of excess.¹² This is done, for one thing, by playfully emphasizing the family resemblances to Fielding’s work. In the introduction, the narrative voice is explicitly marked as imitating Fielding’s style. The narrator

12 The novel has been attributed to Sarah Fielding (who is still listed as the author, for example, in the catalogue of the digital library of the Bayerische Staatsbibliothek), but the critical consensus seems to be that this is a misattribution (see Foster, 2004, p. 62; Moore, 2013, p. 759).

introduces himself as an illegitimate child, ‘the first begotten, of the poetical issue, of the much celebrated Biographer of Joseph Andrews, and Tom Jones’ (CS I, p. 3).¹³ The homage to Fielding is furthermore evident both in the highly intrusive authorial commentary and in the novel’s plot: the protagonist, the orphaned Charlotte Summers, is taken in by the benevolent, Allworthy-like Lady Bountiful. Like Tom Jones, Charlotte is forced to leave and to go on an adventurous journey that eventually brings her to London and unsavoury places like a brothel and a debtor’s jail. In the end, both her lost parents reappear, so that (again like Tom Jones) she turns out not to be an orphan after all, and she is allowed to marry the man she loved all along, Lady Bountiful’s son Thomas.

Like the authorial narrator in Fielding’s novels, the narrator of *Charlotte Summers* throughout the novel comments extensively not only on the characters and events but particularly conspicuously on his narrative technique, which is frequently compared with Fielding’s. He resolves to imitate, for instance, the division into chapters and books, which are prefaced by digressive introductory chapters:

These were Mr. F—g’s nodding Places for his Readers; for he it seems could not take a Nap, but he was obliged to pump and sweat for laborious Dullness to please them [...]; but it was his Misfortune to be a Wit, and consequently out of his natural Element when endeavouring to be really stupid; but for me whose Wit is borrowed and the Effect of Art, and to whom Dullness is natural, there is nothing in Nature more easy to me than to take a sound Nap with my Readers for twenty pages together (CS I, p. 33).

Such playful disparagements of his own abilities are typical of this narrator, who is preoccupied with the question of how the reader will experience and react to the narrative. One main means of exploring this question is to take the trope of the author-reader relationship as face-to-face interaction to an extreme: the narrator not only envisages himself, like Fielding in *Tom Jones*, as an inn-keeper who provides for his guests (CS I, p. 4) and as the arbitrator of social relationships who brings his readers ‘into the Company’ (CS I, p. 12) of the characters. He also offers a whole scenario in which the READING IS TRAVELLING and the READING IS SOCIAL INTERACTION metaphors are combined and extended:

13 Citations are to the Corbett edition from 1750 (available on ECCO).

Before I introduce my Readers to the Company of Miss *Charlotte Summers*, I must make them acquainted with some of her Friends [...], for which Purpose, I must beg their Company as far as *Carmarthenshire*, in Wales. [...] [W]e Authors are always provided with an easy flying Carriage, which can waft our Readers in an Instant [...]: We are Masters of a Kind of Magic, that we have only to speak the Word, and *presto*, you are transported [...] to the Place where we would have you attend us. Don't you find already the magical Effect? The Journey is over, and we are just alighted at the Gate of a stately old Building [...]. You may enter freely, I'll conduct you to the Parlour, where you may have the Honour to salute the hospitable Owner of this venerable Mansion (CS I, p. 13).

'Author' and 'reader' are both imagined as acting participants in the fictional world rather than as the producer and recipient of a book. Of course, by explicitly evoking the process of readerly immersion into the fictional world, the narrator disrupts rather than enhances it. Similarly, by insisting on the supernatural powers of the author, the narrator draws attention to the *differences* between actual travel and the reader's mental travel, the magical use of words to affect time and space, and the writer's use of words to describe time and space. The outlandish image of the author's superior power raises the question of his or her actual influence: what kind of impact do narratives actually have on their readers?

In fact, the specific image of the magician is itself already ambivalent with regard to the question of power. He could either be a wizard performing real magic, or an illusionist with a bag of tricks – the word 'presto', in particular, suggests a commercial performance rather than a supernatural action. Like the innkeeper who needs to advertise his services and keep his customers happy in order to make a living, the magician could then also be read as a figure representing the dependence of the author on the reader. The reader is somebody to be manipulated, but also to be enticed and convinced (in the rhetorical manoeuvre performed in the passage) – and also somebody who may prove to be beyond the author's control, and even in turn exerting control on the author. Rather than just asserting a sense of authorial power (however playfully), this passage – like many of the other metadiscursive comments – raises the question of its extent and limits.

This ambivalence with regard to author-reader relations is also evident in a particularly noticeable feature of the novel: its projection of possible reader reactions as concrete situations or interjections (a technique that was subsequently also used, among others, by Laurence Sterne in *Tristram*

Shandy and, a century later, by William Makepeace Thackeray in *Vanity Fair*):¹⁴

I fancy by this Time, my Readers are pretty well acquainted with the Lady *Bountiful*, and ready to thank me for the Pains I have taken, to introduce them into such valuable company, but I can hear Beau *Thoughtless* and pretty Miss *Pert*, whispering to one another, 'Hang the old Woman, I wish we were done with her, we have seen enough of her, I wish to see the young Wench, there has been so much talk about, whereabouts can she be? Sure she's locked up in the old Lady's Closet. The Devil take our Conductor, after leading us such a Dance, from *London* to *Carmarthenshire*, to keep us so long from what we want to see;' but I must inform the pretty Triflers, that I am determined my Readers shall learn something in every Chapter, and in this, amongst other Things, they much learn and practice Patience [...]. But that you may not be altogether discourag'd, I must tell you, that I am now going to speak of her [Lady Bountiful's] Faults; a Subject I am sure you cannot be so soon weary of, as it borders so much on your dearly beloved scandal (CS I, pp. 24-25).

Further reader figures whose reactions are described in detail include Miss Censorious, who is shocked (though also fascinated) by any hints of sexual misconduct, Arabella Dimple, who reads *Charlotte Summers* in bed and has taken the already-cited commentary about the nap seriously, so that she has to turn back a few pages to understand what is going on in the narrative, and the Widow Lackit, who insists that the novel's ending include the protagonist's marriage.

Wayne Booth points out the ridiculous character of 'this multifarious "reader", who is always, underneath his various disguises, the same stupid person introduced for the real and unspecified reader to laugh at' (Booth, 1952, p. 181). Clearly, these reader figures represent expectations towards the novel that are not altogether admirable (though not, I would argue, identical): Thoughtless and Pert want racy entertainment, Miss Censorious wants an affirmation of her hypocritical sense of moral superiority, and the Widow Lackit wants vicarious gratification. The actual reader is certainly not invited to identify with these satirically drawn figures, and by evoking concrete circumstances and even dialogue, the novel makes them appear as a special type of fictional character rather than a stand-in for myself as

14 Booth, in fact, sees *Charlotte Summers* as a missing link between *Tom Jones* and the more radically self-reflexive *Tristram Shandy* (see Booth, 1952, p. 181).

I am perusing the text. However, it should be noted that the novel, while making fun of these readers' attitudes and demands, at the same time caters to them. The way Thoughtless, Pert and Censorious talk about Charlotte, for example, highlights the sexual interest that can be taken in the descriptions of the 'young wench', who is, like Richardson's Pamela and Clarissa, continually exposed to unwanted sexual attention in the novel (and, for example, nearly raped by a man who adopts the same trick as Mr. B. in *Pamela* when he switches places with the heroine's maid and bedfellow one night). Similarly, the Widow Lackit's demand for a conventional happy marriage at the ending is complied with in the final chapter of the novel.

The passages evoking the reader figures thus, more vividly than the more conventional reader address in *Betsy Thoughtless*, foreground how expectations on the part of the audience force authors to some kind of response, be it to deny or to cater to such expectations. Moreover, they reflect on the problem of the novel's purpose in a more general sense: they raise the question of how to keep the reader interested (for example in the many ironic references to the narrator's dullness), of how to address questions of sexual morals without being salacious, of what a reader could or should hope to 'learn' from a novel besides 'Patience'. In alluding to the commercial, material, social and ideological implications of novel-writing and reading as a social practice, they dramatize not just the variety of possible roles to be taken by the reader, but also the possible social functions that can be fulfilled by the author of the novel, as well as the issue of his or her still precarious cultural standing.

Conclusion

The two case studies have shown how in the 1750s, the technique of authorial narration that had been popularized by Henry Fielding in *Joseph Andrews* and *Tom Jones* was taken into different directions: some authors opted for a restrained use of authorial commentary, others for its conspicuous extension. Further examples of the first option include Sarah Fielding's *The History of the Countess of Dellwyn* (1759), John Kidgell's *The Card* (1755) and Charlotte Lennox' *The Female Quixote* (1752);¹⁵ William Goodall's *The Adventures of Captain Greenland* (1752) is one of the (much rarer) examples

15 Kidgell's novel contains a number of original highly self-reflexive elements, which play with aspects such as typography and graphic design (see Barchas, 2003, especially pp. 112-17), but its use of authorial commentary is not very extensive.

of the second. I have argued that in both variants, narratorial commentary is used to complicate and reflect on the issue of authority and the relations between author and reader rather than just to reinforce authorial control. A closer look at the mid-eighteenth century as an early stage in the evolution of novelistic technique, then, serves to complicate simplifying views on the functions of authorial narration in literary history. Concerns about the practice of novel reading and writing in our age of mounting digital competition are only the most recent phase in a long tradition of novelistic self-reflection, for which authorial narration is a fundamental tool.

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Problems of Tellability in German Eighteenth-Century Criticism and Novel-Writing¹

Karin Kukkonen

'My God, said the Duchess. I am pregnant. Who done it?' Marie-Laure Ryan cites this mock-formula of French bestsellers in her entry on 'tellability' in *The Routledge Encyclopedia of Narrative* (Ryan, 2005, p. 590). What makes a narrative worth telling, it suggests tongue-in-cheek, are religion, aristocracy, sex and mystery. The formula illustrates how tellability depends on the subject matter of the narrative. Ryan points out that such salience can be, on the one hand, grounded in universally relevant topics (such as sex and death) and, on the other hand, be related to cultural contexts (for example the interest in the exploits of aristocrats seems to be tied more particularly to seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Western literature). Narratology presents 'tellability' as a concept for what allows us to judge the story: Can it ward off the question 'so what?' However, the strategies with which the narrative prevents readers from asking this particular question move beyond pregnant duchesses. It can also depend on the rhetorical skill of the narrator in capturing the attention of the reader, the unexpectedness of events and their logical complexity (in the plot), as well as the general fascination with particular topics or particular settings and characters (see Baroni, 2014).

The roots of 'tellability' in narratology lie in research on oral storytelling, where the storyteller is constantly subject to the feedback of the listeners, as formalized in the 'so what?' question (first discussed by Labov, *Storytelling in the Inner City*). Indeed, most of the defining features of 'tellability' have been developed on oral storytelling rather than literary narratives (see Labov, 1972; Ochs and Capps, 2001; Norrick, 2005), as well as professional storytelling in legal and journalistic contexts (see Baroni, 2009) and short

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story structures (see Ryan, 1991).² Monika Fludernik's influential discussion of the tellability that arises from narrative's capacity to capture experience also depends on her engagement with the 'natural narratives' of oral storytelling (Fludernik, 1996). As Ryan reminds us, 'high literature often makes art out of the non-tellable, thereby following in the footsteps of Flaubert, who claimed that *Madame Bovary* was a "novel about nothing"' (Ryan, 2005, p. 590).

Writing a novel about 'nothing' in the eighteenth century would be a decidedly trivial enterprise, and certainly not a feature that an author would brandish about as Flaubert does. Literature was meant to contribute to a learning process about the social world, its hidden workings and underlying order, that provides both emotional and intellectual pleasures to readers. In the terms of the Horatian formula, literature was meant to delight and instruct ('aut prodesse aut delectare'). In order to fulfil these functions, as the critics in the eighteenth century knew very well, the narrative has to capture readers' attention. For Johann Jakob Breitinger (and a few other critics of the German-speaking countries in the eighteenth century), the 'marvellous' contributes to a narrative's tellability, because it captures readers' attention and ensures their enjoyment of narrative. Breitinger states in *Kritische Dichtkunst* (1966 [1740]) that 'der Poet durch das Wunderbare in seinen Erzählungen die Aufmercksamkeit und die Verwunderung des Lesers beständig unterhalten muß' (Breitinger, 1966, p. 342).³ For Breitinger (and other critics of the German-speaking countries in the eighteenth century), the 'marvellous' leads to a narrative's tellability, because it captures readers' attention and ensures their enjoyment of the narrative. At the same time, however, it also needs to be embedded in the general probability of the text. Where the boundaries between the marvellous and the probable run was the subject of fierce debates in the German-speaking countries in the eighteenth century, which we shall revisit in the following section.

Approaching the concept of 'tellability' through these debates on the marvellous and the probable allow us to connect 'tellability' with a tradition in literary criticism that reaches back to Aristotle.⁴ At the same time, it also

2 A salient exception to this trend is Mary Louise Pratt, who connects conversational analysis and literary theory (rather than narratology) in *Toward a Speech Act Theory of Literary Discourse* (1977).

3 'The poet has to keep up the attention and the puzzlement of readers through the marvellous in his narratives'. Unless noted otherwise, this and the following translations are mine. Throughout, the German texts are kept intact with their original eighteenth-century spellings.

4 Throughout the article, I translate 'wunderbar' with 'marvellous' and 'Wahrscheinlichkeit' with 'probability'. These are the corresponding terms found in seventeenth- and

helps us develop tellability further as a concept, in particular with respect to three issues: First, tellability is usually discussed in terms of a minimum threshold (how much excitement do you need to make a narrative tellable?). The tension between the marvelous and the probable, on the other hand, reminds us to take into account both the lower and the upper limits of tellability. Second, narratology limits tellability to the diegesis of the narrative (what is being told, see Baroni, 2014). As the historical shift of what makes a story tellable in the period we consider here (1730-1774) shows, however, not only the events in the story but also the psychological development of the characters (existants in the diegesis) contribute to tellability. Third, Jerome Bruner's notion of 'canonicity and breech' is introduced both by Ryan and Baroni as a specification of tellability. According to Bruner, a narrative has to draw on established scripts of action, but at the same time, it needs to break these scripts for the narrative to gain its 'point', to become tellable (Bruner, 1991). Drawing on Aristotle's notion of 'improbable probability' (and its treatment in the eighteenth century), we discover the metafictional dimension of tellability's treatment of scripts and conventions.

But before we move into the worlds of the marvelous and the probable, I need to correct my claim from earlier that no eighteenth-century author would advertise that they are writing a novel about 'nothing'. The Austrian writer Maria Anna Sagar (1727-1805) entitles her second novel *Karolinens Tagebuch; ohne ausserordentliche Handlungen, oder gerade so viel als gar keine* (2013 [1774]).⁵ As the preface informs us in an impish tone, this might reflect the honesty of the author that, as a woman writer from the provincial backwaters of Bohemia ('böhmisches Frauenzimmer'), she really has nothing of interest to say. Or, she continues, perhaps it is a ploy on her part to make readers curious about how she is going to fill the three hundred pages of her book with 'nothing'. What Sagar chooses to do with her three hundred pages is roughly the following: Young Karoline writes a set of letters to her sister Nanette and to her writing master Herr Cyrili. As the bride of Karl, she traces her own emotional states with the wedding approaching, while at the same time, she sets out to recount the more adventurous tale of her friend Eleonora Lusani. Eleonora is abducted and put in the care of the mysterious Duchess of ^{f***} in order to protect her from the rakish duke, and she hears the duchess's story of her unhappy marriage, separation from her son and how

eighteenth-century English criticism for these concepts. For an accessible demonstration of these terms and debates, see 'The Wonderfully Long Chapter on the Marvelous' in Henry Fielding's *Tom Jones*.

5 *Karoline's Diary, without extraordinary events, or just about none at all.*

she finally managed to reunite with him. Throughout the novel, Nanette and Herr Cyrili critique the probability of these letters and question in how far they help Karoline in her attempts to put her thoughts into order. Luckily, Karoline is no Emma Bovary, and the project of literary education succeeds in the end. *Karolinens Tagebuch* is steeped in the contemporary critical debates that I have outlined above, and Sagar plays with the conventions of tellability as they were in the process of getting established for the novel. In what follows, instances from *Karolinens Tagebuch* shall accompany the more theoretical discussions of eighteenth-century takes on tellability.

Tellability, Marvelous and Probable

According to Aristotle, mimesis makes a fictional narrative pleasurable for its audience because we take delight in imitations (Aristotle, 1996, p. 6). How exactly this imitation of nature should work for a successful narrative was the subject of seemingly never-ending debates in neoclassical criticism. A properly European project, neoclassical criticism begins with the extensive elaborations on Aristotle's *Poetics* which Castelvetro, Vida and Scaliger provided in the sixteenth century, became the dominant critical discourse in seventeenth-century France and Britain, and was renegotiated within the tension between Enlightenment rationality and sentiment that arose in eighteenth-century France, Britain, and eventually Germany (see Kukkonen, 2015 for an overview). By that time, around 1730, the notion of 'probability' (*Wahrscheinlichkeit*) had been established as the key concept for mimesis in neoclassical criticism (see Bray, and Kremer for France and Patey for Britain). Probability is not the same as reality. Instead, it shapes reality in such a way that it becomes interesting, pleasing and instructive for readers, while yet remaining credible. A narratologist might rephrase this as 'probability makes narratives tellable' today. There is a lot more to probability than just tellability, but we shall focus on the overlap between the two concepts here and follow our present purpose to let the eighteenth century speak back to the twenty-first.

In the 1740s, the German-Swiss relations in the world of letters were shaken, when the Swiss critics Johann Jakob Bodmer and Johann Jakob Breitinger took up their quills and responded to the German critic Johann Christoph Gottsched. While the strict Gottsched seemed to tie literature down to a dull correspondence to the real world, the Swiss stressed the freedom of the imagination and liberated literature to explore possible worlds. This is the potted narrative which is often told of the controversy

conducted between Gottsched's *Versuch einer kritischen Dichtkunst* (2003 [1730]), Bodmer's *Kritische Abhandlung von dem Wunderbaren in der Poesie und dessen Verbindung mit dem Wahrscheinlichen* (1740), Breitinger's *Kritische Dichtkunst* (1740) and Gottsched's second edition of *Versuch einer kritischen Dichtkunst* (1751). Lubomír Doležal, for example, highlights Breitinger's *Kritische Dichtkunst*, certainly the most rewarding of the three treatises, as the point at which European poetics moves from the notion that literature imitates in correspondence with nature to the idea that the poet transforms possible worlds into worlds that have 'the appearance and the name of reality' (Doležal, 1990, p. 42; English version by Doležal). For our purposes, however, it is useful to take a broader view of the debate.

Gottsched's *Versuch einer Critischen Dichtkunst* is part of the larger programme for promoting literary culture in the German-speaking countries, which he pursued together with his wife Luise Gottsched (see Goodman, 2005 and Brown, 2012), and which included the publication of a literary journal (*Die Vernünftigen Tadelinnen*, 1725-1726), a repository of German translations of established pieces for the theatre (*Die Deutsche Schaubühne*, 1741-1745) and a new standard grammar for German (*Deutsche Sprachkunst*, 1748). *Versuch einer Critischen Dichtkunst*, in turn, is meant to lay the foundations of German literary criticism. In particular, Gottsched sets out to define what literature is and what functions it should fulfil. He writes, 'Die Fabel ist nichts als eine Nachahmung der Natur. Denn wenn eine Fabel nicht wahrscheinlich ist, so taugt sie nichts' (Gottsched, 2003, p. 34).⁶ Gottsched's use of the term 'Fabel' evokes the literary genre of the fable (which according to him is the essential genre of literature that carries a moral message), as well as the notion of what we would call 'plot' today. Does the fable have to be 'probable' with respect to its reference of reality? As Sarah Ruth Lorenz (2014) points out, Gottsched's *Critische Dichtkunst* runs into trouble at this point, because even though Gottsched pursues the notion that literature should imitate nature, at the same time, he also privileges the fable where animals can talk and other improbable things happen. According to Lorenz, Gottsched's forms are constantly shifting between probability as something which can happen in the real world and the potentially fantastic probability of the narrative that aims to instruct. This reflects Gottsched's struggle to devise a literary theory based on probability which supports Enlightenment ideals of instruction.

At the same time, I think, Gottsched indicates – in slightly garbled form – a connectedness between the plot (understood as the arrangement

6 'Plot is an imitation of nature, since if a plot is not probable, it is no good'.

of events in the narrative) and the referentiality to reality. Gottsched, as well as Bodmer and Breitinger, tends to describe the mimesis of literature in terms of painting in the 'ut pictura poesis'-tradition, which had a long history at this point (see Hagstrum, 1968; see Kowalik, 1992, pp. 62-86 for Breitinger's indebtedness to Dubos in particular). Like a good painter, the poet represents reality as faithfully as possible. However, poets also make changes to heighten the interest of readers in reality. In fact, as Breitinger points out, it is the artistic nature of the representation which leads readers to pay attention to things copied that they would ignore in reality ('Die Copie ziehet uns stärke an sich, als das Original', p. 72). However, the things copied are not only representations of items and characters from reality, but also – true to Aristotle's definition – the actions of the characters. As Gottsched puts it, 'Ein Poet ahmet hauptsächlich die Handlungen der Menschen nach' (Gottsched, 2003, p. 48),⁷ and the imitation of these actions unfolds through the plot of the narrative. Hence, the fable can be probable, even with its speaking animals, because it imitates the (typical) actions of men (see also Waldschmidt in this volume for eighteenth-century debates around the fable).

Probability, as the designed imitation of neoclassical criticism, unfolds both on the level of the fictional world (and its degree of correspondence to reality) and on the level of the plot (and its arrangement of events). Drawing on the neoclassical debates (and contemporary cognitive approaches), I have suggested elsewhere that we can think of a narrative's 'probability design' in terms of a feedback loop between the plot and the *vraisemblance* of the fictional world (that is, what we think its likely state of affairs; see Kukkonen, 2014). As the narrative progresses, readers' probability judgements for the fictional world develop according to the events and the information that the plot reveals. None of the neoclassical critics would have put the relationship in these terms, but when Gottsched writes that '*Wahrscheinlichkeit*' ensures 'die Übereinstimmung der Fabel mit der Natur' (Gottsched, 2003, p. 129),⁸ we can read 'fable' both in terms of the plot and in terms of the fictional world.

Contrary to common prejudice, Gottsched admitted that a probable narrative can feature marvelous elements ('lauter neue, seltsame und fürtreffliche Sachen', p. 104), but these need to be carefully integrated into the overall narrative (Gottsched, 2003, pp. 115, 122). As Gottsched puts it, 'Ein heutiger Poet hat also grosse Ursache, in dergleichen Wunderdingen

7 'The poet imitates mainly the actions of men'.

8 'The fable matches nature'.

sparsam zu sein' (Gottsched, 2003, p. 115).⁹ He does not ask for the exclusion of the marvelous, but for its judicious application to the purposes of narrative. One of the poets who, according to Gottsched, went overboard with the marvelous is John Milton in his *Paradise Lost*. Bodmer writes his *Kritische Abhandlung* explicitly to come to the rescue of Milton and to highlight the value of *Paradise Lost*, following and extending Joseph Addison's series of essays on Milton in *The Spectator*. Bodmer defends Milton's use of marvelous elements in the epic poem, explaining for example, why Milton was justified to present the immaterial angels as having bodies (and moreover bodies that can bleed), why Milton did not fail probability when he presents Pandemonium as too small for the entire host of Satan, and why Milton had every poetic right to introduce pagan gods and personalizations like Sin for allegorical purposes. In the second edition of his *Versuch einer Kritischen Dichtkunst*, Gottsched responds to Bodmer and adds comments that explicitly argue against Milton, stressing that the English poet fails to achieve probability in his epic (see for example the notes referencing the 1751 edition in Gottsched, 2003, pp. 50, 78, 114).

While Gottsched and Bodmer disagree profoundly on the value of Milton's *Paradise Lost*, they also perform a critical debate through the shared vocabulary of 'Wahrscheinlichkeit' (probability), 'das Wunderbare' (the marvelous) and 'Natur' (nature). Indeed Gottsched acknowledges a key point of Bodmer and Breitinger: 'Dem Dichter stehen nun alle mögliche Welten zu Diensten' (Gottsched, 2003, p. 89 FN).¹⁰ But while the poet can employ any possible world she likes, Gottsched stresses, she also needs to make sure that it still remains probable ('wahrscheinlich'). In turn, Bodmer agrees that 'Wahrscheinlichkeit' is crucial for the successful poem. However, neither Gottsched nor Bodmer provide a convincing and clear definition of the relation between the marvelous and probability. Instead, if we read their arguments for or against Milton, the controversy soon seems to approach the level of farce.¹¹

9 'Poets today have good reason to use the marvelous but sparingly'.

10 'The poet can draw on all possible worlds'. (This remark was added in the 1751 edition).

11 Let us take as our example their responses to Voltaire's observation that *Paradise Lost* lacks in probability, because Pandemonium is not big enough for all of Satan's host (in Voltaire's *Essai sur la poésie épique*, especially pp. 339-43). Gottsched repeats Voltaire's charge, asking whether the demons need to turn into dwarfs in order to enter it. Bodmer, on the other hand, stresses that only Satan's war council would need to find space in it. Breitinger indicates that he has little patience with such debates, and arguments around questions such as whether all the damned angels can fit Pandemonium or whether angels can bleed (also discussed in both Gottsched and Bodmer) that are so far removed from today's concerns of literary theory that they are easily mocked. Note, however, that these examples serve to indicate roughly where

Breitinger's *Kritische Dichtkunst* provides a more systematic engagement with 'das Wunderbare', 'Wahrscheinlichkeit' and 'Natur', and he spells out some of the assumptions which were more implicit in Gottsched and Bodmer (for general introductions to Breitinger, see Bender, 1973 and Zelle, 2009). Breitinger defines the work of the poet as follows: 'Sein gantztes Vermögen bestehet in der geschickten Verbindung des Wunderbaren mit dem Wahrscheinlichen; Dieses erwirbt seiner Erzählung Glauben, und jenes verleihet ihr eine Kraft, die Aufmerksamkeit des Lesers zu erhalten, und eine angenehme Verwunderung zu gebähren' (Breitinger, 1966, pp. 298-99).¹² The marvelous is necessary for the attention of the reader and for the pleasure of reading, but (and Breitinger mentions this first), it also needs to remain credible. According to Breitinger, the marvelous does not just arise out of unusual personages like Milton's angels. Instead, he stresses that 'Das Ergezen ist also zweyfach, das erste entstehet eigentlich von der Materie der Nachahmung, das andere von der Kunst der Nachahmung'¹³ (Breitinger, 1966, p. 71; see also pp. 292-93). In other words, the tellability of the marvelous does not just arise from the subject matter, but also from the construction of the narrative. Breitinger defines the marvelous in terms not dissimilar from today's narratologists define tellability: 'Je neuer demnach, je unbekannter, je unerwarteter eine Vorstellung ist, desto grösser muß auch das Ergetzen seyn' (Breitinger, 1966, p. 112).¹⁴ Such tellability can be due to the inherent strangeness of the idea, or, indeed, due to the fact that the mind of the reader has not had the opportunity to engage with the marvelous object before (Breitinger, 1966, p. 124). Breitinger gives the notion that tellability can be due to contextual features an Enlightenment spin, when he approaches it with the assumption that texts engage readers' minds and lead them to greater insight into the principles of the world.

the boundaries between the marvelous and the probable run for the two critics. Gottsched has a more limited notion of the marvelous. Hence Milton's angels are too much, and he saddles them with another marvelous transformation in order to stress the absurdity. Bodmer, with his more capacious notion of the marvelous, thinks that Milton's angels are still probable and hence he finds the more probable explanation of the smaller group. Even though they draw the boundaries differently, both critics work on the same overall (Aristotelian) model.

12 'All the poet's capability lies in the skillful connection of the marvelous and the probable; the former gives credibility to the narrative, the latter gives it the force to maintain the attention of readers and to give birth to pleasant wonder'.

13 'Hence the pleasure is two-fold, the first emerges from the subject matter of imitation, the second from its art'.

14 'Accordingly, the newer, the less familiar, the less expected the thought, the more delightful must it be'.

According to Breitinger, the poet can employ all possible worlds in her work, because she needs to explore both those parts of creation that are visible and those that are invisible. The marvelous that arises out of presenting the merely possible not only retains readers' attention and creates delight, but also opens the literary work to elements of the world that might not be perceptible to the naked eye. It elicits a profitable struggle with our reason:

Sobald ein Ding, das das Zeugniß der Wahrheit oder Möglichkeit hat, mit unsren gewöhnlichen Begriffen zu streiten scheint, so kann es uns nicht bloß als neu und ungewohnt vorkommen, sondern es wird das Gemüthe in eine angenehme und verwundernswolle Verwirrung hinreissen, welche daher entspringet, weil wir mit unserm Verstand durch den reizenden Schein der Falschheit durchgedrungen, und in dem vermeinten Widerspruch ein geschicktes Bild der Wahrheit und eine ergezende Übereinstimmung gefunden haben (Breitinger, 1966, pp. 129-30).¹⁵

Breitinger never cuts the marvelous loose from 'Wahrscheinlichkeit'. Indeed, he writes 'Das Wunderbare ist demnach nichts anders, als ein verummertes Wahrscheinliches' (Breitinger, 1966, p. 132).¹⁶ As the poet strives to distance her work from the actual world to a certain degree, the marvelous that emerges needs to be designed in such a fashion that our imagination can train itself in its judgements about probability (Breitinger, 1966, pp. 138, 308-10).

While most other critics writing on the debate between Gottsched, Bodmer and Breitinger stress the (profound) disagreements between the Swiss and the German, it has been my interest here to work out the common ground from which they started the debate. In each of their takes, the marvelous and the probable are closely connected, and, with shifting emphasis, they acknowledge that both have a role to play in literature. If we phrase a definition of tellability in eighteenth-century terms, drawing on Gottsched, Bodmer and Breitinger, it can run as follows: A narrative becomes tellable by introducing aspects of the marvelous (through unnatural fictional worlds, but also through actions and events in the plot), because it provides a new and unexpected take on this world. At the same time, the marvelous needs

15 'As soon as something that has been confirmed as true or possible seems to conflict with our general concepts, it might seem not just new and unfamiliar, but will pull the mind into a pleasant and marvellous confusion, which emerges because we have penetrated the teasing illusion of falseness with our reason, and have found in the seeming contradiction a well-designed image of truth and a pleasurable correspondence'.

16 'The marvelous is accordingly nothing but masked probability'.

to be embedded in the probability of the fictional world so that it can lead readers back to an instructive realization about the real world drawn from the marvelous, and hence remain worth telling.

Upper and Lower Limits of Tellability

Let us turn to *Karolinens Tagebuch* to see how such eighteenth-century tellability plays out in the eighteenth-century novel. Karoline's first literary endeavour in her letters to her sister Nanette clearly fails to achieve tellability. 'Wie? Ich wäre nicht klug, sagtest Du gestern zu mir: "mein Geschmiere wär' nicht wert, daß man darauf achtete"' (*Karolinens Tagebuch*, p. 33).¹⁷ In the previous letter, Karoline recounts a dinner party in a satirical tone, concluding that none of the behaviours on display could be a model of her own. Nanette, however, does not care for her sister's professed discernment: It is 'nichts als ein eitler Kunstgrif um mir dadurch einiges Lob zu erschleichen' (*Karolinens Tagebuch*, pp. 33-34).¹⁸ The dinner party (which Nanette also attended) is profoundly uninteresting, as Karoline herself remarks, and also her satirical comments do not make it worthwhile. By the end of her letter of response to Nanette, however, Karoline has developed a different strategy: 'Doch warte, ich habe schon einen andern Vorrath da: die Fräulein Eleonora Lusani hat mir in einen Aufsatz, ihre eigene Geschichte überschicket. Hievon will ich dir von Zeit zu Zeit einen Theil in Abschrift überschicken, und vielleicht kann ich dich damit angenehmer unterhalten' (*Karolinens Tagebuch*, p. 40).¹⁹ In the narrative of Eleonora, which Karoline purports to copy, tellability is much increased. Indeed, we find almost all the features that Ryan introduces in her formula for French fiction: Eleonora encounters a duchess (aristocracy), she narrowly escapes a sexual predator (sex), she is locked away from the rest of world (social death) and she is repeatedly asked to rely on providence (religion). Eleonora describes herself as a 'heroine' ('Romanenheldin', p. 44) and the narrative might put contemporary readers in mind of Christian Fürchtegott Gellert's *Geschichte der schwedischen Gräfin von G**** (1746) or Sophie von LaRoche's *Geschichte des Fräuleins von Sternheim* (1771), where young women are taken out of their

17 'What? I'm not prudent you said to me yesterday: "my scribbling is not worth of being taken note"'.
 18 'Nothing but a sleight of hand to garner praise'.

19 'But wait, I already have another store: Miss Eleonora Lusani has sent me an essay, her own history. From this narrative I shall send you parts from time to time, in hope to provide more pleasant entertainment'.

19 'But wait, I already have another store: Miss Eleonora Lusani has sent me an essay, her own history. From this narrative I shall send you parts from time to time, in hope to provide more pleasant entertainment'.

safe domestic environments and submitted to the whims of fortune. By introducing elements of the contemporary novel, Karoline has dramatically increased the tellability of her narrative, and Nanette will not interrupt her again.

When Eleonora's narrative draws to a close, Karoline already has new plans: she proposes to compose a novel 'wo etwas mehr von Handlungen zu lesen seyn wird' (*Karolinens Tagebuch*, p. 256).²⁰ She writes:

Ein Paar Helden habe ich schon im Vorrath, die ihre Prinzessinnen von ihren Verfolgern erretten, sie hinter sich auf das Pferd werfen, und mit ihnen ganz tugendhaft in den Wäldern herrumirren, sie hernach verlieren, dreyssig, vierzig Jahre in der Welt herumsuchen, endlich auskundschaften; aber um selbige blutige Kriege führen müssen, und als Ueberwinder, ihre Heldinnen noch in der blühendsten Schönheit finden, sie heyraten und ganze Jahre mit Banquetiren und Turniren bey der Hochzeit verbringen (*Karolinens Tagebuch*, p. 256).²¹

If we identify tellability as the new and noteworthy aspects of narrative, then Karoline's forecast of the next planned narrative brings even more tellable elements into play. We have even higher degrees of nobility ('Prinzessinnen'), repeated separation and rescue, a larger scale of conflict ('blutige Kriege'), surprising temporal inconsistencies and excessive splendour at the wedding. And yet we do not have to adopt the stern mind-set of Herr Cyrili to find the narrative that Karoline proposes ridiculous. Because this version of the baroque romance is such a condensed panoply of marvels, it ceases to have any significant degree of tellability.

Narratology usually does not ask whether one can stack a tall tale too high. Rather, following Labov's 'so what?', the focus is on pushing the narrative over the threshold of relevance by making it more tellable. An exception is Neal R. Norrick who, working on oral storytelling, suggests a 'two-sided notion of tellability' (2005) with both an upper and a lower limit. The lower limit corresponds to the familiar notion from Labov, whereas the upper limit is drawn by what Norrick calls the 'propriety' of the exchange. Whenever the narrative gets too personal, intimate and revealing, participants in

20 '[I]n which one can read more actions'.

21 'I already have a couple of heroes in store. They will save their princesses from pursuers, throw them on their horse, and wander about virtuously in the woods, then lose them, search the world for thirty, forty years, finally spot them, but have to lead bloody wars for them, and as victors, find their heroines in the most radiant beauty, marry them and spend entire years with the banquets and tournaments of the wedding'.

conversational storytelling might judge it as untellable because the breach of canonicity is too violent. Arguably, such a notion of the upper limit of tellability translates into literary narration and, for example, could be fruitfully applied to the study of trauma narratives. To stay within the period, Samuel Richardson has his heroine Clarissa refer of her rape in fractured prose and in a text set confusingly on the page. The events are so disturbing that they do not bear narration or, indeed, create a narrative of 'transgressive, unwelcome and frightening nature' (Smith and Sparkes, 2008, p. 230, see also Baroni, 2014).

Yet Karoline's proposed novel does not interfere with Norrick's conversationally defined notion of 'propriety'. The heroes and their princesses behave 'ganz tugendhaft', and there is no indication of trauma after the 'blutige Kriege'. The upper limit of tellability is instead set by the structuration of the narrative itself and the possible relationship to readers' reality; in other words, its probability. Karoline does not paint a 'geschicktes Bild der Wahrheit' in Breitinger's sense. Instead, we get multiple heroes and princesses and repeated rescues without any indication of how these events differ from and relate to each other meaningfully, expanded time schemes without any corresponding indication of the weight of the subject matter and comeuppance which seems ridiculously disproportionate to the events that precede it. Each element of the narrative has hyperbolic tellability, but Karoline does not provide us with the structuration that would make the narrative overall tellable.

Karoline sets out in her writings with the expressed purpose to learn how to think in an orderly fashion, and she recruits Nanette and Herr Cyrili to help her (*Karolinens Tagebuch*, p. 15). After each of the passages which she copies from Eleonora's narrative, Karoline comments on her responses to it (p. 54), she reflects on her own emotions in relation to Eleonora's experience and, at times, continues with the narrative to distract herself from her own emotional involvement (pp. 103-04). Also Eleonora and the duchess understand their own lives in terms of the narrative which they read (in the case of Eleonora, p. 107) or write (in the case of the duchess, p. 137). Sagar writes her novel at a time when not only critics but also practitioners of literature strove to provide means for educating readers to think about themselves and their place in society (see Baldwin, 2002, pp. 13-37; von Mücke, 1991; McCarthy, 1984); a development that gave rise to the *Bildungsroman* (see Saariluoma, 2004). The tellability of Eleonora's narrative depends on how much it contributes to the process of Karoline's mental education, which we read about in her comments on the narrative. In the whimsical follow-up narrative, which Karoline suggests, the marvelous does not seem to be

embedded in a probability structure that would allow readers to relate events to their own life. Her narrative, even though it capitalizes on the popular narratives of the seventeenth-century novel, does not give any indication of how it could be relatable through the experience of the characters themselves and the constellations of events which happen. While the concern with the educational function of literature is fading after the eighteenth century, the trade-off that emerges from it, between marvelous features that *make* the narrative tellable and the overall probability of the narrative that ensures that it *remains* tellable (and relatable), is also today relevant for thinking about tellability.

Event-Based and Character-Based Tellability

In his entry on the topic in the *Living Handbook of Narratology*, Raphaël Baroni distinguishes between three aspects of tellability. He emphasizes that tellability can arise from the story level of narrative, the discourse level (and the interactions between the two levels), as well as from contextual parameters. The story level, the bare-bones events of the narrative, can hold interest for readers if its arrangement in the plot moves away from standard scripts of action (see Baroni, 2014 and Bruner, 1991) or if there is a particularly rich forest of alternative paths which the plot could have taken (see Ryan, 1991). The evaluation devices of the speaker (or narrator) on the discourse level also contribute to tellability. The third aspect which Baroni highlights are the 'contextual parameters' of tellability, which include on the one hand the situational feedback between storyteller and listener, and on the other hand, contemporary cultural expectations and genre conventions.

In *Karolinens Tagebuch*, we find all three aspects renegotiated. Her narrative develops out of Nanette's evaluation in the feedback situation of the epistolary novel, where Karoline and Nanette need to agree on what kind of narrative is worth their joint attention. Eleonora's story then presents us with a very tellable narrative in the eighteenth-century mode, including abductions, hidden family relations and revelatory portraits. Its plot moves away from the standard, real-world scripts of action, according to which young women in the company of her mother are not subject to the preying desires of rakish dukes, but go home to marry a predetermined suitor. In particular critics writing on Sagar's novel in a feminist vein have pointed out that the ideal life of a woman in the eighteenth century should not be tellable at all (see Baldwin, 2002; Jirku, 1993). Karoline herself writes to Nanette on their actual lives, 'O was wird das für eine matte Geschichte

von uns beyden werden? Siehe in zwey Zeilen kann man unsere ganze Begebenheiten bringen' (*Karolinens Tagebuch*, p. 302).²² There is clearly a gendered dimension, not only in terms of the kinds of narratives that female narrators are allowed to tell (particularly relevant with respect to oral storytelling, I presume), but also in terms of the kinds of adventures that female characters can experience. This gendered dimension prefigures the tellability of female lives, probably according to the prototypical female plots that Nancy Miller (1984) works out for eighteenth-century French and British novels, and gives it standard ways of deviating from the uneventfulness of feminine lives. Karoline's letters, in the feminist take on the novel, are a way for her to write back against the expected 'matte Geschichte' of the normal female life on the one hand (see Baldwin), but also, I think, against the expected conventional modes of female adventures made tellable in the literature of the day.

Karoline's brother Leopold challenges her writing repeatedly and threatens to publish it, which she responds to, first, by recording everything that he says, with unnerving accuracy, into her letters (*Karolinens Tagebuch*, p. 38), and then by stating that she is not afraid of what improbabilities male critics might discover in her writings (*ibid.*, pp. 197-98). 'Aber Dir bleibt Immer der Stahr in den Augen, wenn du auch mit jenen glaubtest, daß es, um einen Roman zu schreiben, über die frauenzimmerliche Logik, noch etwas mehreres brauche als Romanen gelesen zu haben' (*Karolinens Tagebuch*, p. 198).²³ In the overall composition of Sagar's novel, these two responses are connected: the very detailed recording of Leopold's taunts, and Karoline's own thoughts, as she reflects on Eleonora's narrative and her own situation as bride, stand in opposition to the well-designed narratives of Eleonora and the duchess and the stylized comedic conclusion to the novel (which I shall address in more detail in the next section). Sagar seems to work towards a novel in which the everyday life-events of Karoline gain narrative interest.

In 1774, the same year as Sagar's novel, Friedrich von Blanckenburg publishes his *Versuch über den Roman* (Essay on the Novel). Blanckenburg operates within the same terminological parameters as Gottsched, Bodmer and Breitinger had thirty years earlier, and he asserts the need for 'probability', but he gives the term a different emphasis than the earlier generation of critics had. Responding to new developments in novel-writing, in particular

22 'Oh what an insipid narrative will be told of us? Look, one can write it all up in two lines'.

23 'But you will always be blind to the truth if you believe that in order to write a novel on female logic you need any other qualifications than having read many novels'.

Wieland's *Geschichte des Agathon* (The History of Agathon; 1766-1767) and Fielding's *Tom Jones* (1749), Blanckenburg writes:

Eine andre Folge, die aus dieser Behandlung der Begebenheiten entsteht, ist diese, daß der einzelnen Vorfälle nicht mehr so viel werden seyn können, als bis jetzt in den gewöhnlichen Romanen zusammen gepropft sind. Der kleinste Vorfall nämlich wird zu seinem Wirklichwerden eine Reihe von Ursachen nöthig haben, die zwar an und vor sich selbst auch andere Vorfälle wieder seyn können; diese aber werden sehr oft aus so unmerklich kleinen Zügen bestehen müssen, daß man sie nie unter die Begebenheiten eines Romans wird zählen wollen, wenn man die Begriffe hierzu aus den gewöhnlichen Werken dieser Art nimmt. Daher wird natürlich eine einzige Begebenheit, zu ihrem Wirklichwerden, mehr Raum erfordern, als jetzt zur Erzählung von zehnen erfordert wird [...] Von dieser Art der Behandlung einer Begebenheit gilt es übrigens im eigentlichen Verstande, dass der Dichter seine Leser zwingen könne, das zu glauben, was er wolle, dass sie glauben sollen [...] Wir sehen, bey dieser Behandlung, die Personen anschauend mit all ihren Eigenthümlichkeiten vor uns. Sie treten gleichsam aus dem Gemälde hervor (Blanckenburg, 1774, pp. 308-10).²⁴

What constitutes for Blanckenburg the successful imitation of nature is to have characters so detailed that they 'step out' of the picture of poetic creation, and the tellability that he envisages is that of the small events of everyday experience in all its complexity.

Wieland's *Geschichte des Agathon*, for example, enacts this move. The narrative starts with fast-paced action of the ship-wreck, the Bacchantes, and the slave-traders that capture the hero (all features of the novel of the seventeenth century), but then, as the hero develops his own thinking about the question of the good life and as the narrative perspective gets more complex, the narrative itself slows down. *Karolinen's Tagebuch* brings

24 'Another consequence emerging from this treatment of events is the following: the individual events can no longer be as many as so far have been stuffed together in the ordinary novel. For the smallest event will need a whole range of causes to become real; causes which in turn have to be events, and those will very frequently consist of such small features that you cannot number them as the events of a novel if you take the terms from the common works of this genre. Hence a single event will, naturally, take more space to come real as now is necessary to narrate ten of them [...] This treatment of events means (in the actually sense) that the writer can force their readers to believe what he wants them to believe [...] We see in this treatment the characters with all their features before us. It is almost as if they stepped out of the painting'.

this historical shift from the event-based tellability of baroque novel to the character-based tellability of the eighteenth-century novel (which arguably also underlies today's standard of the novel) more explicitly to the fore. Here, we have the detailed description of Karoline's experience as a bride-to-be and her confusion about her own feelings for her fiancé Karl in contrast with the narrative of Eleonora, and more strikingly, with Karoline's own proposal for a new narrative. The baroque novel's tellability depends on plot events and their strikingness as culturally meaningful. In the German-speaking lands, novels like Andreas Heinrich Bucholz' *Hercules* (1659) and Henrich Anshelm von Ziegler und Klipphausen's *Asiatische Banise* (1689) were still read when Sagar's novel was published, or they were reedited, such as Anton Ulrich zu Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel's *Aramena* (1669-1673/1782-1786). As late as 1797 and 1799, journals publish keys to identify the historical persons behind the characters in Wolfenbüttel's *Octavia* (1685-1707; see Cholevius, 1866, pp. 293-94). Sagar's readers would have been well-aware of the event-based tellability of the baroque novel that is satirized in Karoline's proposal for a new narrative. The eighteenth-century novel's tellability, on the other hand, depends more on the responses of characters to these plot events and on their strikingness as an exceptional (but relatable) experience. Even though I cannot offer a detailed historical trajectory from the tellability of the baroque novel to the tellability of the eighteenth-century novel, the juxtaposition of different kinds of tellability in *Karolinens Tagebuch* illustrates the need for a diachronic investigation of narrative concepts in order to distinguish between different kinds of their instantiation in the long course of the development of narrative fiction.

The Metafictional Dimension of Tellability

In his essay 'The Narrative Construction of Reality' (1991), the psychologist Jerome Bruner lists nine principles that circumscribe how our minds get a grip on reality through narrative. Narrative, in other words, becomes an intelligent tool through which we make sense of and communicate our world; a take which cognitive narratology has often supported (see Herman, 2009). 'Canonicity and breach' is one of Bruner's principles that has been related in particular to tellability (see Ryan, 2005 and Baroni, 2014). According to this principle, the scripts of social actions, such as the moves we go through when visiting a restaurant (a classical example from Schank and Abelson), are 'pointless' and they need to be broken for a narrative to emerge out of conventional, routine actions (Bruner, 1991, p. 11). However,

he also stresses that the breaches of canonicity are often conventionalized, and focuses on the case of everyday narrative (and its cognitive functions) rather than on literary texts.

If we turn to the eighteenth-century debates around probability, we quickly come across a concept that shares features with Bruner's principle: 'improbable probability'. Gottsched writes, 'eine Sache, die an sich ungläublich und unmöglich aussieht, durch den Zusammenhang mit anderen Begebenheiten und unter gewissen Umständen nicht nur möglich, sondern auch wahrscheinlich und gläublich werden könne' (Gottsched, 2003, p. 132).²⁵ An improbable event can be included in the larger context of the narrative in such a way that it becomes probable after all. Aristotle puts this notion centre-stage in his *Poetics*: the best, complex plots involve reversals (peripetia) that are unexpected and yet following an inner logic ('as a result of what has happened before, out of necessity or in accordance with probability', p. 18), and hence they create effects of 'astonishment' (Aristotle, 1996, p. 30). For clever people, like Sisyphus, to be deceived in the reversal, says Aristotle, citing the Greek playwright Agathon, '[there] is no violation of probability in this; [...] it is probable for many improbable things to happen' (Aristotle, 1996, p. 30). In his conclusion to the discussion of plot, Aristotle plays through the constellations of the improbable and the probable once more and states that 'it is probable that improbable things will happen' (Aristotle, 1996, p. 45). Improbable things may well happen in a narrative (and make it tellable), but literature then uses these improbabilities to reaffirm the probability of the narrative in an unexpected way (and hence increases the overall tellability of the narrative). David Herman's discussion of Bruner's 'canonicity and breach' (Herman, 2009, p. 19-21) suggests that as the narrative deals with the breach, and redresses the balance, it provides explanations and formulates reasons for readers. The improbable is reinscribed into the probable. However, this account seems to side-line the surprising nature of Aristotelian reversal, as well as the more metafictional solution to improbable probability which the eighteenth century has devised.

In *Karolinens Tagebuch*, Sagar offers various instances of 'improbable probability'. The first revolves around the conclusion to Eleonora's narrative, when Herr Cyrili interrupts Karoline and asks her how she wants to bring the narrative to an end, given all its confusing loose ends ('Sie haben sich

25 '[A] matter, which in and of itself might seem incredible and impossible, [can] in connection with other events and under particular circumstances not only become possible but probable and believable'.

ziemlich verwickelt, wie werden sie sich heraus helfen, und wo haben sie alles das Zeug hergenommen?', *Karolinens Tagebuch*, p. 259). More precisely, how is she going to pay for all the expenses, such as debts accrued and commissions in the army, that she has imposed on her characters ('sie haben sie in erstaunliche Ausgaben versetzt', *ibid.*)? Karoline proposes to kill off some of the older characters to bring about an inheritance and to have a treasure hidden in the library to be found in good time, but she also states that this very conventional ending has been enforced by Herr Cyrili's lack of patience and that she could have provided a more fitting one on the principle of improbable probability ('Ich hatte meiner Geschichte eine unerwartete Entwicklung zgedacht, sie bringen sich selbst um die Ueberraschung'. *Karolinens Tagebuch*, p. 263). Sagar here provides a conclusion that would fall flat if it were not for the metafictional framework of Karoline's comments on the narrative that she tells. For Eleonora's narrative, the ending with the found treasure and the double inheritance seems rather too improbable, even within the conventions of the novel. However, because this conclusion emerges from Karoline's reaction to Cyrili's impatience, it works within the probabilities of the frame narration. It is a surprising ending, but one that Karoline would probably devise, given the situation.

In many eighteenth-century novels, improbable probability is included, and tellability is ensured, though such a metafictional shift of probability across narratorial levels. Rüdiger Campe in his book *The Game of Probability* (2012) connects the critical debates around poetic probability in the eighteenth century to debates around probability calculus. In the chapter on 'Improbable Probability', he discusses Fielding's *Tom Jones* and Wieland's *Geschichte des Agathon* for the ways in which they splice probability through a double narrative frame. According to Campe, Fielding's and Wieland's reader is presented with a 'world whose probability he can supply because he understands the improbability of its constitution' (Campe, 2012, p. 292). This framing device, so Campe, becomes 'necessary for [the novel's] own functioning' (Campe, 2012, p. 290) and turns improbable probability into the 'hallmark of the theory of the novel' (Campe, 2012, p. 284).

In the case of Eleonora's narrative, however, we as readers do not exactly supply probability for this narrative once we understand its improbability. Rather, Sagar seems to use Eleonora's narrative to guide readers' attention to another instance in which improbable probability works as it should. This other instance is the frame narrative of Karoline's and Karl's courtship. Throughout the novel, Karoline struggles with understanding the feelings that she has for Karl (see *Karolinens Tagebuch*, pp. 79, 81, 102). She chooses to approach him through the fictional templates of the dramatic performance,

obviously contrived but highly effective in Sagar's novel. When Karl declares his feelings, Karoline cannot respond in any other way than by asking her brother to tell her which role in this 'comedy' she is supposed to play (p. 98). Elsewhere, she similarly understands their relationship as a piece for the theatre for the benefit of her relatives ('Schauspiel', p. 144) and describes her suitor in terms of theatrical protagonists (pp. 274-75). When Karl is seriously ill, Karoline expects, like a sentimental heroine, that seeing her will contribute to his recovery – and indeed, it does. Sagar foregrounds the improbable probability further, when she writes the scene in which Karoline confesses that she loves Karl and agrees to marry him as a dialogue in a play.

The frame narrative of *Karolinens Tagebuch* gains tellability, not so much because the events of the courtship would be terribly interesting, but because Sagar makes their constructedness salient in the metafictional shift in improbable probability. By foregrounding the conventionality of its narrative, Sagar's novel (and many other eighteenth-century narratives with a metafictional slant) turns Bruner's principle upside-down. Sagar does not rely on breaking canonicity. Rather, as she foregrounds the canonical modes of telling a narrative like Karoline's, Sagar makes the narrative tellable. To my knowledge, narratologists working on tellability have not considered how the concept plays out in metafictional texts. From the eighteenth-century perspective, improbable probability suggests that tellability can emerge from surprising, yet fitting plot solutions and from foregrounding the very fittedness of a convention metafictionally.

Conclusion

Bruner writes, 'Labov's great credit is to have recognized that narrative structures have two components: "what happened and why it is worth telling"' (Bruner, 1991, p. 12; cited in Baroni, 2014). As Baroni points out, the second question is side-lined by the structuralist approaches to narratology that consider mostly how a narrative is constituted and not why one might want to share it or hear it. Structuralist abstraction is certainly a good explanation for why it was sociolinguistics, and its interest in situated storytelling, that introduced the concept of tellability into narratology. At the same time, it seems that the general notions of literary appreciation are not entirely favourable to notions of 'tellability' either. As indicated by Flaubert's comments on *Madame Bovary*, tellability smacks of narratives with a need to be heard, narratives that follow a purpose, and narratives that strive to please readers rather than ascend to heights of artistic disinterestedness

that became more prominent in the nineteenth century. Hence, it is not surprising that tellability has not been developed with literary narratives in mind. Eighteenth-century literary criticism, however, provides us with a reservoir of critical voices and conceptual developments that takes us not only back in time before the current conventions of literary appreciation were institutionalized but that also allows us to step outside these conventions when discussing narrative concepts.

Eighteenth-century quixotes generally awaits a better fate than Madame Bovary, because the Enlightenment believes more strongly in the educational capacities of literature. Literary templates allow Karoline to come to terms with her feelings for Karl. In Wieland's *Don Sylvio*, a narrative 'wo alles wunderbare natürlich zugeht' (as the subtitle informs readers),²⁶ the hero seems to enter a fairy realm only to find out that the adventures were designed to educate him out of his delusions. Literature does not just take readers' minds away from reality, and achieves tellability because it is new and special, but also because it can help readers find a new relationship to the social and cultural worlds that they live in, and achieve tellability because it provides an important insight to be gained. Narratives like Sagar's (and Wieland's) were written in close conversation with contemporary criticism and work through such tensions in tellability. They shuttle between the lower and the upper limits of tellability, they trace a development between (historically) different kinds of tellability and they renegotiate canonicity and breach by drawing attention to the metafictional aspects of tellability. Even if we do not want to go back to eighteenth-century ideas about literature that instructs and delights, we can still use their different perspective on narrative to develop our own, present-day perspective.

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26 '[W]here everything marvelous is achieved by nature'.

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Immediacy

The Function of Embedded Narratives in Wieland's *Don Sylvio*

Claudia Nitschke

Systematic narratological classification helps identify 'trans-historical' phenomena which share defining characteristics, but can still change over time in terms of form or function. In the eighteenth century, seminal, long-term social and political shifts (even before the French Revolution) became widely tangible. With society undergoing massive structural changes, literature formed no exception: writers began taking stock and started rigorously to probe and investigate the semantic potential of emergent genres such as the novel, but also the narrative medium itself.

As a means of observing and analysing this historical self-exploration embedded narratives – here more specifically the metadiegetic level – seem particularly well-suited: they often directly thematize functions and qualities which are perceived as specifically literary, i.e. pertinent to an emerging field of literature. The metadiegetic level in Christoph Martin Wieland's novel *Der Sieg der Natur über die Schwärmerey, oder die Abentheuer des Don Sylvio von Rosalva, Eine Geschichte, worinn alles Wunderbare natürlich zugeht* (1764) (*Reason Triumphant over Fancy; exemplified in the Singular Adventures of Don Sylvio de Rosalva, 1773*)¹ will serve as starting point to delve into this form of eighteenth-century literary self-description. Toward the end of the century, the texts increasingly began to place an emphasis on the aesthetic quality of literature. In order to capture different stages of this development the article also includes a brief analysis of a play that makes extensive and quite explicit use of the metadiegetic level, namely Gotthold Ephraim Lessing's *Nathan der Weise* (1779) (*Nathan the Wise*), and finally, in an even more succinct manner, of Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's narrative

¹ The rendition of the title is obviously not accurate, since it replaces the German 'Natur' (which translates as nature) with reason. This translation is indeed not felicitous and omits central passages, therefore I had to draw on two different versions, only one of which actually included the so-called Nachbericht (supplement), which is actually a preface: for the preface I used Christoph Martin Wieland, *Reason triumphant over fancy; exemplified in the singular adventures of Don Sylvio de Rosalva [...]* Translated from the German original of Mr. C.M. Wieland, I (1773), and for the rest of the novel I refer to Christoph Martin Wieland, *The Adventures of Don Sylvio de Rosalva with an introduction by Ernest A. Baker* (1904).

cycle *Unterhaltungen deutscher Ausgewanderten* (1795) (*Conversations of German Refugees*). While the meta-diegetic level provides us with a constant point of reference throughout, the close contextual analysis will help isolate the specific historicity of Wieland's approach. Systematic and historical narratology thus interlock in this analysis.

Taking my cue from Gérard Genette, I presuppose that the metadiegetic level here refers to a narrative embedded within the intradiegetic level which in turn represents the primary narrative (cf. Genette, 1972, Chapter 5). The fact that the narrative includes other, inserted narratives will be referred to as metadiegesis. There are further specifications at our disposal which, for instance, focus on the simultaneity of events bracketed together (as *accolement*) (Bremond, 1973), however it will become clear that in the case of the three texts here that the primary narrative indeed represents a higher degree of immediacy than the narrative mediated by the narrator(s) who appear(s) as fictionally real in the primary story. This notion of immediacy generated by the different tiers of the text will be an important aspect of the argument in the following; it does not relate to the discussions on mediacy in narratological theory which address the famous dichotomy of *discours/histoire*,² but defines a historical concept which will prove more apposite to describe the emergence of a new self-ascribed quality in literature.

In addition to immediacy so defined, another, intersubjective dimension of intradiegetic narration will be crucial: as Lynn Hunt has suggested, eighteenth-century literature comes into play as a major facilitator of concepts such as recognition and empathy. Empathy here does not only refer to the actualization of empathy between text and reader,³ but, more importantly, to the historical, textual conceptualization of empathy (cf. Hunt, 2007; Wispé, 1987). The empathetic function of the embedded narrative allows for the pluralistic exchange of perspectives and the development of a mutual bond, a proper rapport which culminates in the formation of a collective,⁴ which takes a specific shape (and fulfils a certain function) in the eighteenth century.

2 This has recently been done with a view to analysing the role of focalization and perspective. Cf. Fludernik, 2010.

3 Especially in cognitive sciences and neurosciences, the concept of empathy has risen to importance, for instance in Miall, 1989. Empathy is also crucial aspect in narratological concepts of narrative empathy, see Fludernik, 1996; Nussbaum, 1994.

4 This aspect also contributes to the role it assumes in the politically stimulated phase of war and revolution and German Romanticism, when the mentally dispersed Germans had to regroup and re-identify who they were, not only as individuals, but also as a collective. Emphasis

Process and Problem of Reading Fiction in the Eighteenth Century: Wieland's *Don Sylvio*

As is often emphasized, Wieland's *Don Sylvio* incorporates many genres and techniques pertinent to contemporary narratives. The novel – a very loose adaptation of Cervantes' *Don Quixote* – unfolds the story of the young protagonist's idiosyncratic, even 'pathological' reading habits. Don Sylvio immerses himself in fairytale fantasies (*contes de fées*), taking their generic, yet elaborate storyworlds for reality. In the vein of Don Quixote, he embarks on an adventure after finding an amulet with the picture of a beautiful woman (an image which resembles the young widow Felicia) whom he falsely identifies as a fairytale princess in distress. Full of enthusiasm, he readies himself to rescue her. The novel ends on a happy note with the cure of the naïve, but good-hearted Don Sylvio, and his marriage with Felicia; one can justifiably claim that the fairytale ending (rounded off by an unlikely family reunification) chimes with the fairytale patterns the novel explicitly ironizes in regard to the *contes de fées* Don Sylvio loves so much. In this sense as well as in those others I will address in the following, *Don Sylvio* as a text becomes self-reflexive.

Often identified as the first modern novel in Germany, *Don Sylvio* despite *Don Quijote* has a distinctly original approach to the function of literature, also by dint of its specific use of the metadiegetic level.⁵ With its intricate frame structure of narration, the novel features a multitude of voices consisting of the 'publisher', the 'translator' of the Spanish author who penned the original, and finally the latter as narrator who comments extensively on the course of action and the characters involved. Not only does the preface which explains this complicated transmission frame the entire novel, but the primary narrative is also intercollated with various stories (such as the fairytale *Biribinker* to which I will return) and recounted dreams. The proper interpretation of these (micro-)narratives thus becomes topical in the text. In particular, literary practice and reception are the recurrent objects of ironic scrutiny. Literary self-consciousness is particularly tangible in the plethora of interferences of author, publisher, and narrator, all of whom comment on the events or, in the case of the publisher, on each

will not be placed on this function, I mention it here, however, as it touches on the question of how the texts devise fictionality and what functions they attribute to this specific quality of literature. Cf. for instance Meißner, 2007, pp. 107-124; Schneider, 2010.

5 Cf. on the 'Romanerneuerung', especially in the context of 'Bildung' and narratological specificities: Saariluoma, 2004, pp. 56-74.

other – for instance, when he highlights the anachronistic reference to the eighteenth-century philosopher Hume in the allegedly older records:

Der geneigte Leser wird hier einen ziemlichen Anachronismus bemerken, der, zum Unglück, nicht der einzige in diesem Werke ist, und vielleicht einigen Zweifel gegen die Glaubwürdigkeit dieser ganzen Geschichte erwecken könnte, dessen Hinwegräumung wir den Criticis überlassen. Anmerk. des Herausg ('Der Sieg der Natur über die Schwärmerey, oder die Abentheuer des Don Sylvio von Rosalva / Comische Erzählungen. März 1764-April 1765', p. 308).⁶

Incidentally, the preface instructs the reader to regard the ensuing story as a fictional narrative anyway and indeed reaccentuates this notion within the embedded narrative, when Don Sylvio marries Felicia, who turns out to be the daughter of Gil Blas (i.e. the offspring of the fictive character from Alain-René Lesage's famous eponymous novel). This reference to Lesage's picaresque protagonist gently disrupts the reader's absorption and introduces the notion of fiction into the text. Daniel Wilson therefore understands the title of the novel (*Sieg der Natur über die Schwärmeret*) as ironic:

Two of the main characters in *Don Sylvio* (Eugenio and Felicia) turn out to be quite literally descendants of other fictive characters in another eighteenth century novel, Le Sage's *Histoire de Gil Blas de Santillane* (1715-1735). Eugenio explicitly raises the question of 'Erfahrung' as the last test of Sylvio's folly, and then transforms this empirical reality into the world of fiction (Wilson, 1981, p. 69).

Following Wilson's analysis for now (I will return to it later), this finding adds to the proverbial grain of salt with which the readers are supposed to ingest fiction as such, just as the entire educational project in the text rests on learning how to differentiate between reality and fiction. Here Wieland's novel essentially ties in with the ongoing debates about fiction,

6 Christoph Martin Wieland, 'Der Sieg der Natur über die Schwärmerey, oder die Abentheuer des Don Sylvio von Rosalva / Comische Erzählungen. März 1764-April 1765', in *Wielands Werke. Historische-kritische Ausgabe*, VII.1 (2009) ed. by Nikolaus Immer, Berlin, New York: Walter de Gruyter, p. 308. In the following quotes as *Wielands Werke*, VII.1. 'The reader will observe a pretty sizeable anachronism in this place; which, unfortunately, is not the only one in the course of the work, and which possibly might excite doubts respecting the authenticity of this whole history. We therefore leave it with the critics either to remove the stumbling-block, or to trim and idealise it just as they please'. *The Adventures of Don Sylvio*, p. 409.

verisimilitude, pertinent functions of literature, and conventional modes of presentation and reception (cf. Wilson, 1981, pp. 81-90). Coming from the initial verdict on novels as downright lies, the theoretical concept of fictionality began to evolve and branched into various positions on literature and its pertinent properties. As a disciple of Christian Wolff, it was Johann Christoph Gottsched, who established a concept of 'Dichtkunst' based on probability and mimesis of nature, which allowed him to juxtapose it with rhetoric and extend it beyond poetry proper.⁷ Adapting Wolff's ideas, Gottsched proposes the invention of the fable as the highest form of literature (surpassing the description of nature and the mimetic portrait of characters) as a 'Erzählung einer unter gewissen Umständen möglichen, aber nicht wirklich vorgefallenen Begebenheit, darunter eine nützliche moralische Wahrheit verborgen liegt'.⁸ The sufficient *raison d'être* of literature goes hand in hand with the 'useful moral truth' the text is supposed to convey.

Gottsched's position was challenged by other concepts of fiction, famously by the Swiss critics Johann Jakob Bodmer and Johann Jakob Breitinger. As opposed to Gottsched's stipulation that poetry is dependent on the mimesis of nature (as the latter is ruled by God) in order to avoid the pitfalls of imagination (and its perceived proximity to vice), Bodmer suggests that the poetic act presented a combination of internal and external experiences, while Breitinger's approach 'was a radical enhancement of sensuousness since it placed poetry in a realm of truth outside the reason-based notion of truth' (Bendix, 1997, p. 31). Wieland's *Don Sylvio* resonates with these debates: in this sense, the discussion of the embedded narratives in the primary story, for instance, focuses on the aspects of probability and mimesis of nature that in fact comply with many of Gottsched's premises.

The publisher fiction and the 'fiction of truth' constitute additional techniques cited in *Don Sylvio*, drawing attention to the complex field of fictionality from the start (Weber, 1974, pp. 40-73). In the same vein, the validity and the educational value of fiction is reiterated in the publisher's preface which parodies conventional reception and affirmation modes (Wilson, 1981, pp. 81-90), but also identifies the core theme of the book as a current discourse topic in the eighteenth century: fictional genres required the reader's ability⁹ to differentiate between fiction and reality, but also

7 Cf. for more details Grimm, 2007.

8 '[N]arration of an incident which is possible under certain circumstances, but did not actually happen beneath which one can discover a useful moral truth'.

9 Cf. on the fictionality and reader experience (derived from reviews of literary texts): Berthold, 1993. Berthold describes the evolution of certain mechanisms of reception that allow the reader to perceive the text as an autonomous world ('eigene Welt').

to distinguish them from 'lies'.¹⁰ In the eighteenth century, in the midst of debates about the legitimacy of novels, it became staple to refer to the authenticity of 'novel'. In the paratext, usually the preface, the 'publisher' claims to have come across the completed text and explains the reasons for publishing it. Wieland's own use of this specific type of text is, in keeping with the actual novel, highly ironic. By paradoxically labelling the actual preface as supplement, he mocks the common practice of prefaces, namely conveying preconceived ideas with which the readers are primed in the name of authenticity and honesty. The publisher admits that he never saw the original manuscript. However, since his friend, the translator, has relayed the longwinded and intricate history of its origin and transmission, he has never really doubted his word. In this vein, the translator also admits to omissions from the original manuscript owed to nothing else than his own lack of time. While seemingly adhering to the genre of prefaces which are intent on authenticating the materials, the 'Nachbericht' in fact ironically undermines their genuineness and integrity. As mentioned above, the preface ultimately even suggests reading *Don Sylvio* as a work of fiction.

Moreover the 'Nachbericht' – and in this sense the paradoxical label 'supplement' is accurate in another respect, even though technically it is the preface – allows for the publisher to take stock of various encounters with the actual novel, as he reads it out to his wife, his clerk and so forth; the publisher not only relates the hilarity the story provokes in the listeners, but also juxtaposes this immediate response, the 'sardonic laughter', and the learned reactions of both a jansenist and a well-reputed deacon who join the discussion later. By employing clerical modes of exegesis, the jansenist who happens on the manuscript and insists on burning it after the quick perusal of its content, is unable to determine the *intentio operis*. In fact he seems to emulate Don Sylvio's fallacy: the latter transfers patterns of fiction to reality; in the same manner, the cleric projects exegetical categories onto a secular text:

Er wollte sichs nicht ausreden lassen, daß die Abenteuer des Don Sylvio eine Allegorie oder Parabola sey, wie er es hieß, deren geheimer Sinn und Endzweck auf nichts geringers als auf den Umsturz des Glaubens, des Evangelii des Pater Quesnell und der Wunder des Herrn von Paris abgesehen sey (*Wielands Werke*, VII.1, p. 6).¹¹

10 As Gotthard Heidegger famously referred to novels in *Mythosopia Romantica: oder Discours von den so benannten Romans*.

11 'Positively he would not be dissuaded from thinking, that the Adventures of Don Sylvio were so many Allegories or Parables, the later end and aim of which, tended to nothing less than the

By contrast the subsequently consulted deacon valorizes Don Sylvio's story by tying it to the Horation *aut delectare aut prodesse* principle of Enlightenment:

und wenn in einem Buch, das mehr zur Belustigung als zum Unterrichts geschrieben sey, und worinn guter Humor und scherzende Satyre herrsche, der scherzhafte Ton selbst über ernsthaftere Gegenstände ausgedehnt werde, so sey auch dieses so lange die Schranken der Anständigkeit nicht überschritten werden, ganz wohl zu dulden, indem die Wahrheit ein jedes Licht vertragen könne, und das Lächerliche niemals an der Wahrheit selbst hafte, sondern vielmehr bloß dazu diene, die falschen Zusätze, womit sie in den Köpfen der Menschen vermengt werde, von ihr abzuschneiden (*Wielands Werke*, VII.1, p. 6).¹²

In this manner, the novel and its various layers present a multitude of eighteenth-century reading habits and reception modes, ranging from readers who study the text for its educational value, often still following patterns of devotional literature, to the specific reader the novel figures as the eponymous protagonist Don Sylvio, who takes the fictional world for reality. The way the primary story is devised with its many embedded (micro-)narratives thus constantly circles around concepts of fictionality, which coincides with the main focus of the plot, as Don Sylvio has to liberate himself from a cluster of misconceptions that he has previously gleaned from the *contes de fées*. In so doing, the legitimacy of fiction, and thus, self-referentially, the novel itself becomes the subject of negotiation.¹³

overthrow of the faith, the destruction of Father Quesnel's Gospel, and of the miracles of the Abbé Paris' (*Reason triumphant over fancy*, p. VII).

12 'That he apprehended the Author had no other design, which in itself, and if kept within proper bounds, is by no means censurable; that it was not only allowable, but even useful to laugh at the follies of mankind, their prejudices, and mistaken conceits; the extravagancies of their imagination, and the wildness of their passions, and that this surely might well be allowed in a Book, written rather to amuse than to instruct, in which good-humour, and pleasing satire prevailed, and where the jocose stile was, and might be extended to the most serious subjects, provided it did not transgress the bounds of decency; since truth might be placed in any light, and would stand the test even of ridicule itself, which served to separate and distinguish it from those false and absurd notions with which it was too often blended by weak minds' (*Reason triumphant over fancy*, I, pp. VIII-IX).

13 'Bücher, die mit desto besserm Erfolg unterrichten und bessern, da sie bloß zu belustigen scheinen, und die auch alsdann, wenn sie zu nichts gut wären, als beschäftigten Leuten in Erholungs-Stunden den Kopf auszustäuben, müßige Leute unschädlich zu beschäftigen, und überhaupt den guten Humor eines Volks zu unterhalten, immer noch tausendmal nützlicher wären als dieses längst ausgedroschne moralische Stroh, dieser methodische Mischmasch von

Don Sylvio's Cure: Literature, Intersubjective Objectivity, Love

Even though Wieland emphasizes a certain overconsumption of *contes de fées* on Don Sylvio's part, the latter's delusion proves to be of a different quality than the madness that befalls his famous predecessor Don Quixote. The young adolescent is in principal amenable to the distinction between reality and fiction, as the course of the novel shows, but turns out to be simply blind to it. In *Don Sylvio* the therapeutic function of the embedded narrative seems indeed connected to this Enlightenment idea of education (although it is on the whole more redolent of rococo style than Enlightenment moral didactics). It has been suggested that *Don Sylvio* has to be regarded as a forerunner of the 'Entwicklungsroman' (Scheffel, 1997) and, while his adventures are to a large extent imagined ones, he is indeed forced to re-adjust his belief system fundamentally and thus to undergo the essential transformation characteristic of the 'Entwicklungsroman'. Nonetheless the accomplished young man sets about to gain proper life experience only after the narrative ends (the narrator briefly reports his two-year grand tour). Thus in fact the novel itself only focuses on the productive rectification of wrong assumptions.

Well-meaning friends expedite Don Sylvio's cure by telling him another, highly exaggerated fairytale and subsequently examining it together with him. In the novel, their mission to illuminate Don Sylvio by means of a narrative is intrinsically related to the metadiegetic scenario in which characters are granted room to discuss the fiction within the text. This narratological device becomes essential to the story and its outcome, since the novel thus introduces a notion of intersubjectivity and places an emphasis on personal interaction.

It is useful to draw on Edmund Husserl's *Meditations cartésiennes* (1931) (*Cartesian Meditations*, 1960) here to capture the complexity of the

mißgestalteten und buntscheckigten Ideen, diese frostigen oder begeisterten Capucinaden, welche hier gemeint sind, und die (mit Erlaubniß der guten Absichten, wovon ihre Verfasser so viel Wesens machen) weit mehr am Kopf der Leser verderben, als sie an ihrem Herzen bessern können, und bloß deßwegen so wenig Schaden thun, weil sie ordentlicher Weise nur zum Einpacken anderer Bücher gebraucht werden' (*Wielands Werke*, VII.1, p. 172). 'Such books, I insist upon it, would be of infinitely more use to the public, than that insipid species of morality, that systematical jumble of misshapen whimsical ideas; those phlegmatic and fanatical monkeries, now under contemplation; and which (no affront to their authors' good intentions, of which they make such parade) puzzle more brains than they correct hearts; and the possible pernicious effects of which nothing could prevent from being formidable, but the common practice of cutting them to pieces to pack up other books' (*The Adventures of Don Sylvio de Rosalva with an introduction by Ernest A. Baker*, p. 222).

process. In this treatise Husserl supplies the terminology to describe an important category in *Don Sylvio*, i.e. 'objective intersubjectivity', which is the key principle underpinning the healing of Don Sylvio. Community and an 'objective' intersubjectivity come about by analogy:¹⁴ for the young protagonist Don Sylvio the community seems to be a necessary corrective for his specific reading habits. Wieland indirectly anticipates what Husserl would call the *psyche* and the 'animate organism' at which one arrives, when one 'reduces' oneself:

if I reduce myself as a man, I get 'my animate organism' and 'my psyche', or myself as a psycho-physical unity — in the latter, my personal Ego, who operates in this animate organism and, 'by means of' it, in the 'external world', who is affected by this world, and who thus in all respects, by virtue of the continual experience of such unique modes of Ego- and life-relatedness, is constituted as psychophysically (Husserl, 1982, p. 128).

Husserl's phenomenological analysis specifies Wieland's reflection, as it conceptualizes intersubjectivity as a connection between animate organism and psyche on the one hand, but also, and that is important here, as a connection between one person and another person on the basis of both their bodies and psyches. As opposed to the playfulness with which other aspects are promoted in the text, it is exactly this feature that provides a foundation for a potential detachment from the idiosyncrasies of the fictional characters. It forms a quasi-transcendental premise for the events and for the *dénouement* at the end. The young protagonist Don Sylvio is

14 'It is more important to clarify the community, developing at various levels, which is produced forthwith by virtue of experiencing someone else; the community between me, the primordial psychophysical Ego governing in and by means of my primordial organism, and the appresentatively experienced Other; then, considered more concretely and radically, between my monadic ego and his. The first thing constituted in the form of community, and the foundation for all other intersubjectively common things, is the commonness of Nature, along with that of the Other's organism and his psychophysical Ego, as paired with my own psychophysical Ego'. 'Higher psychic occurrences, diverse as they are and familiar as they have become, have furthermore their style of synthetic interconnexions and take their course in forms of their own, which I can understand associatively on the basis of my empirical familiarity with the style of my own life, as exemplifying roughly differentiated typical forms. In this sphere, moreover, every successful understanding of what occurs in others has the effect of opening up new associations and new possibilities of understanding; and conversely, since every pairing association is reciprocal, every such understanding uncovers my own psychic life in its similarity and difference and, by bringing new features into prominence, makes it fruitful for new associations' (Husserl, 1982, p. 120).

therefore required to develop a stance on reality and fiction which is commensurate with an intersubjectively agreed *probability*.

As mentioned earlier, his new-found friends expose him therapeutically to an overdose of implausible and disconnected ideas in form of the fairytale *Biribinker*. Irrespective of its hyperbole, this fairy tale is still very much in keeping with the genre conventions of *contes de fées*. In the discussion surrounding this embedded narrative, not only the genre itself becomes relevant, but – and this is the designated lesson Don Sylvio is supposed to learn – literature is introduced as an autonomous realm, distinctly different from reality yet legitimate. From the information that *Biribinker* is a made-up story, he eventually derives the intellectual means to dissect his former set of premises, purely by applying the logic of transfer:

Die Geschichte des Herrn Biribinkers kam ihm jetzt selbst so abgeschmackt vor, daß er nicht begreifen konnte, wie es zugegangen, daß er den Betrug nicht augenblicklich gemerkt habe. Er fand endlich, daß die wahre Ursache davon schwerlich eine andere seyn könne, als die Ähnlichkeit dieses Märchens mit den übrigen, und das Vorurtheil, so er einmal für die Wahrheit der letztern gefaßt hatte. Er konnte sich selbst nicht länger verbergen, daß, wenn auch die Ungereimtheiten im *Biribinker* um etwas weiter getrieben wären als in andern Märchen, dennoch die Analogie zwischen dem ersten und den letztern groß genug sey, um ihm, zumal in Betrachtung alles dessen, was Don Gabriel und Don Eugenio dagegen eingewandt hatten, alle Märchen ohne Ausnahm verdächtig zu machen (*Wielands Werke*, VII.1, p. 317).¹⁵

Don Sylvio wonders why he first accepted Don Eugenio's fiction so willingly: to him, he finally concludes, the story seemed plausible, because it followed the genre specifics of the *contes de fées* he has been devouring.

It is exactly this quintessential formula which in the end renders the entire genre of *contes de fées* dubious. An analytical mode comes into play

¹⁵ 'The history of Biribinquer really seemed to him so silly and so vapid, that he could not conceive how it was possible for him not to have instantly discerned the cheat. At last he found there could be no other reason for it than the resemblance between this and other tales of the sort, joined to the favourable prepossession which he had always indulged of the truth of such narrations: nor could he conceal it from himself, that if inconsistency and folly were carried further in the tale of Biribinquer, than in other fairy tales, yet the analogy between this and the rest was still sufficiently great, in his opinion, to render all other tales of the fairies without exception doubtful; especially too, when he reflected upon all that Don Gabriel and Don Eugenio had urged against them' (*The Adventures of Don Sylvio*, p. 418).

here, since it is not the immediate effect of the narrative (which Don Sylvio quite happily takes in, admittedly with an expressed moral concern at the equally absurd and frivolous storyline) but rather the following discussion and the logical reasoning about diverse functions of literature which initiate the healing process.

In accordance with Husserl's assumptions, the actual cure, however, is predominantly linked to the physical presence of Donna Felicia (the coveted widow), as Don Sylvio discloses, when he reflects on the intellectual stimulation of his new friends:

Was ich empfinde, seit dem ich sie sehe, ist unendlich weit von den Wirkungen einer erhitzten Phantasie unterschieden; Ihr erster Anblick hat das ganze Feuer meiner Einbildungs-Kraft ausgelöscht, ich erinnere mich meines vorhergehenden Lebens nur wie eines eiteln Traums; von dem glücklichen Augenblick, da ich sie zum erstenmal sah, fängt sich mein wahres Daseyn an, und o! möchte es – Hier hielt der allzuschüchterne Jüngling inne, und ließ einen Blick, der bis in die Seele der schönen Felicia drang, vollenden, was er nicht kühn genug gewesen war auszusprechen (*Wielands Werke*, VII. 1, pp. 322-23).¹⁶

Only the combination of three aspects: the narrative, the subsequent discussion, and, last but not least, the sensual attraction which helps to set off the analytical process, ensures that Don Sylvio gains a proper and pertinent understanding of fiction as dissimilar from reality:

Don Eugenio und Don Gabriel bewunderten die sichtbare Verwandlung nicht wenig, die mit unserm Helden vorgegangen war; der erste hatte sich schon mit einer ganzen Rüstung von Gründen gewaffnet, um die Feen aus ihren letzten Verschanzungen in seinem Gehirn heraus zu treiben; allein er fand zu nicht geringer Beschämung seiner Philosophie gar bald, daß alle Arbeit schon verrichtet war, und mußte sich selbst gestehen, daß ein paar schöne Augen in etlichen Minuten stärker überzeugen und schneller bekehren, als die Academie, das Lyceum und die Stoa mit vereinigten

16 "What I have felt since I saw you, differs infinitely from the effects of a heated imagination. Your first look extinguished all that fire. I remember my past life but as a vain airy dream; 'twas from that fortunate moment alone in which I first beheld you, that I can reckon myself to have truly existed. And oh, how — how" Here our young, too-timid hero stopped short, explaining the residue of what he had not courage to pronounce, by a look that pierced the beautiful Felicia to the inmost soul' (*The Adventures of Don Sylvio*, pp. 426-27).

Kräften kaum in eben so viel Jahren zu thun vermöchten (*Wielands Werke*, VII.1., p. 326).¹⁷

Felicia's corporeal presence paves the way for Don Sylvio's cure, i.e. the proper understanding and handling of fiction in agreement with the others.

In addition to this, the text puts forward a relatively modern understanding of fictionality which differentiates between a *pragmatic* and an *ontological* approach toward fiction (Schmid, 2008, p. 26): Don Sylvio as we saw falls in love with Felicia after finding a pendant with her portrait in it. Around this image he spins his very own *conte des fées* in which the woman in the picture becomes nothing less than a princess. However, as soon as he meets her, the actual person (who is, rather mundanely, a widow) takes precedence over the idol. It is an ironic twist that the picture actually portrays Felicia's grandmother of whom the young widow is a spitting image. Moreover, the locket does not even contain an original portrait of the grandmother, but a miniature of the original painting. Hence the pendant holds an image in the second degree. The connections here are confusing, but what transpires is that the representational value of the portrait works *per se* differently from fiction: the intricate history of the portrait can be reconstructed and explained; the portrait claims to have a factual (representational) value¹⁸ as opposed to the *contes de fées* which propose fictive characters and actions. It becomes clearer in this context why the novel conjures up a curious genealogy referring back to Gil Blas: not chiefly in order to devaluate fiction, but rather to emphasize that it belongs to a different *pragmatic* category (in the sense of Schmid, 2008, p. 26) (and thus needs to be read and understood as fiction). Although certain fictional worlds seem to be under attack (and more so their *ontological* [Schmid, 2008, p. 26] reception by the readers portrayed in the novel who take them for factual worlds), fictionality – in the above mentioned pragmatic respect – also refers to the case that Wieland's own novel *Don Sylvio* is 'eine eigene Welt', an autonomous category which simply presupposes a certain *pragmatic* knowledge on the part of the reader

17 'Eugenio and Don Gabriel were greatly astonished at the visible metamorphosis which had taken place in our hero. The latter had got himself ready armed with a variety of arguments, in order to force the fairies to their last entrenchments in Don Sylvio's brain. But he soon perceived the whole business done without him, and found himself obliged to allow that two fine eyes know better how to persuade, and can work a more sudden conversion in a few minutes, than the Academy, the Lyceum, or the Stoa might, with all their united forces, have been able to do in the course of as many years' (*The Adventures of Don Sylvio*, pp. 431-32).

18 The wrong assumption that the image actually shows Felicia can be rectified and explained in reference to reality. In this sense it can be understood as a referent.

who should understand fiction as fiction and must approach it with this functional prior understanding. While Don Sylvio's specific consumption of literature is seen as problematic in a pragmatic respect, Wieland still sustains the inherent dignity and value of literature as a possible world, if understood and negotiated as such.

It is indeed an innovative perspective the novel provides here: if fiction is to be read in a different pragmatic mode (discarding the naive ontological stance which takes fiction for facts), the famous criterion of factual truth is *a priori* inapplicable. At the same time, this categorical shift (from to ontological to pragmatic reading) draws attention to the aesthetic quality of the text. This does not preclude an axiological approach from re-entering the novel and from implying an intra-fictional, hierarchical distinction between various forms of literature which can run the gamut from potentially harmful to educational. The emergence of art as a pragmatically different category remains the underlying core theme nonetheless.¹⁹

Immediacy and Immersion

Apart from this notion of fictionality emerging as an independent, self-aware system, Wieland also introduces another crucial aspect that strengthens this autonomy with a focus on the reception: the self-reflective set-up of the various primary narratives leads surprisingly to a heightened sense of 'immediacy' conveyed through fiction. Obviously, as John P. Heins has pointed out, the epistolary novel in the eighteenth century provided a specific sense of immediacy as an invited identificatory immersion in the text. The 'loss to the text' (of a potentially problematic quality) Heins describes is a concept Wieland partly travesties in his novel. By means of another prolonged embedded narrative in the primary story, Wieland problematizes a specific

19 To the same effect: 'Denn mit der jederzeit als ein Werk der "dichterischen Imagination" zu durchschauenden Geschichte von der glücklichen Integration seines Helden in die schöne Gemeinschaft von Lirias realisiert und reflektiert Wieland den für den Beginn der Neuzeit charakteristischen Prozeß der "Kunstwerdung der Künste" am Beispiel des Romans und vollendet insofern ebenso dessen Befreiung vom Wahrheitskriterium historischer Faktizität wie seine Ablösung vom Gebot der Nachahmung einer metaphysisch-providentiell geordneten Wirklichkeit' (Scheffel, 1997, p. 119). 'Based on the story of the successful integration of the protagonist into the community of Lirias (which is a product of the poetic imagination and throughout as such discernible) Wieland realises and reflects the process of 'becoming art' at the beginning of the early modern period, adducing his novel as an example, and thus completes its liberation from the truth criterion of historical facticity and its detachment from the demand for imitatio of a metaphysically-providentially structured reality'. Translation mine.

notion of immersion popular at his time: the love-story of Don Sylvio's lost sister Hyacinthe and Don Eugenio (the brother of Don Sylvio's future wife Donna Felicia) emulates structural patterns of Samuel Richardson's novels by introducing a young woman who is determined to protect her virtue and yet exposed to many compromising dangers. This embedded narrative seemingly follows the rules of the genre right to its end, where the sentimental story (and consequently the reader's immersion in it) is intentionally and quite ironically disrupted:

So interessant vermuthlich die Liebesgeschichte des Don Eugenio und der schönen Hyacinthe ihnen selbst und vielleicht auch ihren unmittelbaren Zuhörern gewesen seyn mag, so wenig können wir unsern Lesern übel nehmen, wenn sie das Ende davon zu sehen wünschen. Es ist in der That für ehrliche Leute, die bey kaltem Blut sind, kein langweiligeres Geschöpf in der Welt als ein Liebhaber, der die Geschichte seines Herzens erzählt (*Wielands Werke*, VII.1, p. 233).²⁰

In this context, Heins highlights that *Don Sylvio* 'refers not only to the problem of verisimilitude in general, but to the sentimental novel in particular'. Generally, Richardson's novels drew on a convention of verisimilitude and immersion which helped 'trigger the identificatory reading presumed necessary for the appropriate moral effect'. The attempt to debunk Richardson's verisimilitude effect, the authenticity of his texts, and their suggested morale went often hand in hand with recourse to Quixotic patterns which were supposed to undermine the notion of directness (Heins, 2003, p. 545). Johann Karl August Musäus (himself the author of *Grandison*, another Quixotic novel) for instance considered the psychological repercussions of the sentimental reception mode as psychologically dangerous, since he was concerned that the emotionally affected readers who found themselves fully immersed in the text might lose their potential for agency:

for Musäus the Quixotic mode of reading is not only a danger for readers of 'romances' (Romane), that is, fictional texts that might include the improbable or the fantastic (and hence bound to mislead the

20 'Interesting as the above history of the amours of Don Eugenio and the beautiful Jacintha might have been to themselves and possibly to their immediate hearers; we are not at all disposed to blame our Readers, if they secretly wish to see an end of them. To a certain good sort of people indeed, calm and cool in sentiment and who have either forgotten the heigh-day of the blood, or never felt its impulse. To such there certainly cannot be a more tiresome creature in the world than a Lover, relating the history of his own heart' (*The Adventures of Don Sylvio*, p. 307).

emotional reader), but also for readers of sentimental epistolary novels (also Romane), precisely those texts that imagine themselves avoiding the dangers of unrealistic literature by presenting a verisimilar world. In fact, for him (and increasingly throughout the century for others) there is an intimate relationship between sentimentalism and quixotic reading, precisely because of the intended emotional engagement of the reader and the priority on identification and emulations (Heins, 2003, p. 428).

This particular mode of reception, namely immersion²¹ as a loss to the literary text, is central in the story of Hyacinthe and Eugenio. Here the focus lies on a certain form of sentimental absorption which is unexpectedly interrupted. Different from the other extensive, embedded narrative (the fairy tale Biribinker), this story is a factual account of the Hyacinthe's and Don Eugenio's lives and as such it also serves another purpose in the text: by including the factual past in the quasi-presence of the current plot, it establishes a second degree of a past reality against whose backdrop Don Sylvio's story gains another form of immediacy within the novel, courtesy of the narrator who ungently (and with ostensible humility) disrupts the engaging emotional account of lovers, usurps the shared present and commits the account to the past.

The novel actually draws on embedded narratives in order to reintroduce both immediacy and another degree of reality by establishing the above-mentioned dichotomy of past (the embedded love-story) and presence (in the primary narrative), but also of fiction and reality, as expounded above. In Don Sylvio's awakening at the end both fictional reality (as opposed to fictional fictionality) and immediacy overlap, thereby imbuing the primary narrative with another, by comparison heightened quality of present reality.

The embedded narratives thus foreground two aspects: first, as often pointed out, it is implied that only a proper perspective on literature, an understanding of the different functions of different formats, is congruent with the standards of a natural life-style. Don Sylvio consumes the *contes de fées* following sentimental techniques cultivated in eighteenth-century reading circles in Germany, but he misjudges the inherent fictional quality and thus becomes unfit for life/reality.

Second, on a completely different level, the novel performatively reinforces its specific pragmatic concept of fictionality with regard to immediacy. In contrast to the two embedded, generic narratives, it is the primary narrative

21 I will use the word immersion here instead of immediacy to highlight the difference of these two modes in Wieland's text.

which generates the standpoint from which to evaluate the responses and to observe the impact of literature on the protagonists. Despite the frivolous tone of the comical novel, the new implication of a certain *perfectibilité* (a concept that is not-existent in Don Sylvio's precursor Don Quixote) stresses the educational function of literature, but also the intersubjective dimension of anagnorisis. By including the results of the pedagogical process, the real-life encounters and emotions, the text performatively indicates literature's capacity for grasping ideas which deviate from standardized, ready-made formulas. The reception of literature in the main narrative (i.e. the novel) ranges from the pathological, wrong use, through the pedagogically-administered correct use, to the appropriate reception of literature which provides enjoyment and stimulates the imagination. In so doing the text offers a complex analysis of fiction. However, it shies away from the conceptualization of a directly imparted or communicated aesthetic experience. Performatively, the self-referential novel itself offers this experience on another level, but the reactions triggered by the embedded narratives within the novel rather comply intradiegetically with notions of *prodesse* as a major engine of education. The *contes de fées* by contrast afford pleasure (as one half of Horace's dictum *aut delectare aut prodesse* requires), but potentially distort the perception of reality, which is why the entire genre appears to be devalorized. On this level, the novel seems to be strategically in keeping with accepted norms of Enlightenment. With its intellectual-holistic, intersubjective perspective and the performative actualization of the insights related to this angle, Wieland's *Don Sylvio* anticipates similarly self-referential texts in Romanticism – admittedly without placing an emphasis on the explicitly aesthetic experience in the primary narrative.

Dealing with Fiction: From Empathy (Lessing) to Aesthetics (Goethe)

Obviously, the metadiegetic level in a play works differently, but it is useful to include *Nathan der Weise* (*Nathan the Wise*) here, written in 1779, since it features a wide range of situations in which the protagonists are confronted with stories, parables, and hypothetical questions. The play engages extensively with the function and reception of fiction and diversifies Wieland's approach in a characteristic manner. It incorporates ideas about the productive imagination that are closely connected to concepts of empathy more expressly relating to sensualism. Lessing's play draws

on these concepts of empathetic discussion facilitated by fiction in order to introduce cooperative and altruistic concepts of togetherness which in certain instances nevertheless bear striking resemblance with events in *Don Sylvio*. In Wieland's novel severed family bonds are reinstated and new ties are established after the protagonists have truly paid attention to each other's stories. This resonates with the *tableau* at the end of *Nathan der Weise* in which secret family bonds are revealed and the hostile parties are brought together as relatives after they have carefully listened to what the other person had to say. While Wieland's novel focuses on the potentially detrimental absorption in specific genres, however, Lessing puts forward a more explicitly proactive function of literature: Nathan's educational principles stress that only a clear concept of both the difference and inter-relatedness of fiction and reality leads to a productive understanding of the real world. In Lessing's play the responses to the fictional experiments and the surrounding explanations and discussions trigger the imagination productively, however, by departing from the complex intellectual (as well as intersubjective) realization Don Sylvio faces and by steering towards modes of empathy and identification. According to Martha Nussbaum literature hones these abilities which, in her eyes, represent prerequisites to a moral community (cf. the chapter on rational emotions in: Nussbaum, 1994, pp. 53-78). In a properly functioning collective the person who can relate to others best, in other words the most compassionate person is – as Lessing famously pointed out – the best person. Reshaping Martha Nussbaum's general assumptions historically, Lynn Hunt has suggested that these qualities become increasingly desirable properties in the eighteenth century.²² Lessing's *Nathan* demonstrates how literature helps to detach oneself from selfish wants and to engage with the needs of others. Lessing's fictional world is a realm of imagination and emotional connecting, but with a clear view to creating companionship and cooperation. Although he still draws on Enlightenment techniques, such as cautionary tales, they distinctly appeal to emotional, rather than intellectual faculties.

In the 'dramatic poem' *Nathan*, a Jewish merchant returning to Jerusalem from a business journey, learns that his adopted daughter, Recha, has been rescued from a fire at home by a young German Templar, for his part a

22 Lynn Hunt describes this as a premise to the emergence of human rights, since 'to have human rights, people had to be perceived as separate individuals who were capable of exercising independent moral judgement; as Blackstone put it, the rights of man went along with the individual, considered as a free agent, endowed with discernment to know good from evil' (Hunt, 2007, p. 27). Cf. also Koschorke, 2003.

captive whom Sultan Saladin spared because he resembles Saladin's long lost brother. Towards the end hidden family ties come to light, as mentioned above, very much in keeping with the discovery of unknown family bonds in Wieland's novel. Nathan discloses that the Templar and Recha are both children to Saladin's brother, a revelation which affirms the quintessential themes of affiliation and kinship that are also prominently discussed in the so-called 'ring parable', the centrepiece of the play. In this narrative Nathan recounts this famous story in answer to Saladin's question which religion is true. It unfolds around a priceless ring traditionally bequeathed to the most beloved son who then also inherits the entire fortune. The ring had the hidden virtue to render its wearer beloved of God and man, if he wears it with this conviction, as the text states. When the ring is inherited by a father who is unable to choose between his three sons and therefore forges another two rings, chaos ensues after his death. A judge is called to determine which ring is the original. He points out that none of the sons seems to display the grace the ring promises to bestow upon the wearer, and he concludes that the original ring must have gone missing. According to him, all three rings nevertheless embody an intrinsic value: unlimited and equally distributed paternal love. In keeping with that, he admonishes the three brothers to strive actively for the excellence they took for granted as designated heirs of the ring. He refuses to act as an arbiter here otherwise, referring to a wiser judge yet to come. The context of the ring parable is inextricably connected with the core values of Enlightenment and the concept of peaceful coexistence of the three world religions indirectly advocated here. The message is conspicuously mediated through a narrative as the listener is supposed to adapt and apply it to their personal circumstances. It is not only the allegorical transfer, but also the paramount importance of the paternal emotions involved here that contribute to the understanding of the parable.

With this story Nathan paves the way for the individual reconciliation between Muslims, Christians, and Jews for which the play is famous. The scenario Nathan proposes with the ring parable invites empathy with the paternal dilemma and reaccentuates the essential aspects of worship and love, a message fully received by Sultan Saladin. The engagement with literature elicits 'rational emotions',²³ incarnating an otherwise undercomplex understanding of reality.

Not only the ring parable springs to mind in this context, but also various instances in which characters are gently instructed by a specific maieutic

23 In this context understood as a holistic judgement which includes a plethora of rational and emotional information.

technique, always presented in a ludic as if-manner. It was Johan Huizinga, who has stressed that any type of play forms an indispensable (but not sufficient) premise for the evolution and generation of culture.²⁴

The play elaborates on this notion and ties it to something that can be understood in the broadest sense as 'fiction', for instance, when Recha is determined to see the stranger who rescued her from a fire as an angel. What Nathan confronts her with in answer to this hubristic assumption might not be a coherent narrative; the series of maieutic questions and suggestions however do propose a different scenario, another 'possible world' (and since Nathan himself is aware that his speculation is fictive from the start, this dovetails with the pertinent questions revolving around fiction). Nathan demonstrates that Recha's belief in angels, which he ultimately understands as conceit ('Stolz'), allows her to disregard the (potential) human needs of the rescuer. This proposition is in return received with a great deal of empathy. Rather than rationally evaluating the suggestion, Recha responds with heartfelt dread, almost collapsing under the burden of what she learns to perceive as egocentric negligence.²⁵ The invented, alternative story about her rescuer (according to which he has fallen sick after his feat) helps her to re-focus on the essential insight here, i.e. the empathy for the next person which she could neither feel nor perform as long as she believed the Templar to be an angel.

For Lessing, the bonding process based on mutual understanding and empathy is also a product of appropriately consumed 'fiction'. The apposite reception of the micro-narratives is the instinctive, emotional response to the narratives themselves (in the sense of Martha Nussbaum's concept of rational emotions or emotion-thoughts as a valuable contribution to moral life [Nussbaum, 1994, pp. 53-78]), which productively offers guidance and helps to adjust the self to social challenges. Imagination becomes a useful tool precisely in its (previously disowned) complexity. This implies that fiction allows for an immediate intuitive comprehension of an elaborate set of premises. In a much more direct manner than in Wieland's *Don Sylvio*, the play suggests that the reception of fiction is coupled with the notion of immediacy as an instantaneous, enhanced grasp of reality through the dimension of fictionality. Rather than to intellectual properties, the 'stories' told within the play appeal to the interlocutor's compassion, his empathy, his 'rational emotions'.

24 Cf. more specifically: Huizinga, 1955, p. 119: 'Poiesis, in fact, is a play-function. It proceeds within the play-ground of the mind, in a world of its own which the mind creates for it. There things have a different physiognomy from the one they wear in "ordinary life", and are bound by ties other than those of logic and causality'.

25 Cf. Lessing, 'Nathan der Weise' in: *Werke und Briefe in zwölf Bänden*, pp. 483-627, 495-96.

To bring these observations to a conclusion, it is, finally, useful briefly to look at Goethe's *Unterhaltungen deutscher Ausgewanderten* (*Conversations of German Refugees*), as this text both combines and transcends the mechanisms I have described with regard to Wieland and Lessing and thus allows us to observe a development emblematic of the entire literary field in the eighteenth century. *Unterhaltungen deutscher Ausgewanderten* introduces a heterogeneous group of refugees who seek respite from the first War of Coalition attendant on the French Revolution. The discussion among the group soon becomes agitated as it touches on political issues, so they finally decide to share stories free of any political content.²⁶ The novella cycle merges dramatic aspects in a Boccaccio-like frame narrative with the insertion of various narratives that seem to comply with the increasingly refined content-related and also aesthetic demands of the refugees.²⁷ While they begin with telling each other ghost stories, they gradually evolve as persons, and so does their literary taste and their hunger for a specific experience facilitated by literature which becomes more aesthetic in character.

The cycle of narratives culminates in the famous, elusive fairytale (Niggel, 1988, pp. 91-108) which, interestingly, remains uncommented upon by the listeners since the *Unterhaltungen deutscher Ausgewanderten* simply end with it. Here the aesthetic experience is no longer mediated by fictional recipients, but rather delegated to the readers themselves. Goethe includes both above-mentioned aspects: the formation and education of a group and the elaboration of a new concept of literature. In Wieland's *Don Sylvio* the narrated reaction to literature still is dominated by an intersubjective and analytical mode. Thus it remains inextricably connected with reality. By highlighting the principal dichotomy of fictionality and facticity, the novel stakes out new territory. In Lessing's *Nathan* the idea of fictionality is a given and distinctly related to the power of imagination; at the same time the play explicitly endorses emotions and empathy as important facilitators of understanding in literature. Towards the end of the century, in Goethe's novella cycle, the inherently aesthetic quality of literature comes to the fore in a tangible fashion. The *Unterhaltungen deutscher Ausgewanderten* literally cut out the (specifically highlighted) middleman (in other words the group

26 This is obviously crucial for the text and its distinct position on contemporary history, but I cannot focus on this particular aspect, since I want to highlight a different, complementary one. Cf. for a more thorough interpretation of these phenomena in *Unterhaltungen deutscher Ausgewanderten*: Nitschke, 2004, pp. 84-101; Tang, 2012, pp. 67-92.

27 These ideas of course tie in with a prominent and central idea of *Bildung*, cf. Niekerk, 1995.

of refugees who have long-windedly discussed the previous narratives). With its end, it reinstates the reader as an immediate addressee, thereby performatively creating a form of aesthetic experience which is based on presence. In this specific respect the fairytale defies the exegesis of the group, shifting the focus to its aesthetic quality.²⁸

It is the immediacy²⁹ defining the autonomy of the aesthetic experience that is topical here; along these lines, Andreas Arndt elaborates on the new concept of immediacy as it came into being in the eighteenth century. He relates its emergence to the history of consciousness produced by a new form of individuality which in turn was formed and reshaped by both the enthusiasm in the view of nature and also by sentimentalism (*Empfindsamkeit*) in literature (Arndt, 2013, p. 19). Especially in the aftermath of Kant's *Kritik der reinen Vernunft* (1781) the terms referring to immediacy proved to be prevalent in the discourse of the time.³⁰

In this sense, in Goethe's *Unterhaltungen* the aesthetic realm stops existing for an audience and enters into the mode of a direct, immediate self-relation. In the wake of the metaphysical transformation the concept of immediacy undergoes at that time³¹ it becomes an immediacy in and of itself:

28 Chiming in with Karl-Friedrich Bohrer's concept of suddenness, Goethe's novella cycle already refers to an aesthetic, disruptive 'epiphany', enhancing previous elements and ideas (Bohrer, 1981, pp. 43-68).

29 The concept of 'immediacy' which is proposed here does not necessarily run counter to relatively recent theories on presence (Nancy, 1993; Ruina, 2006). However, it does not refer to any potential 'metaphysics of presence' in the sense of Jacques Derrida (Derrida, 1982) or the rebellion against meaning and hermeneutics as suggested by Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht in *Production of the Presence* (2004). The latter lays out the necessity of overcoming both the posthermeneutic and the metaphysical tradition by abandoning the epistemological premise of the subject and object paradigm as well as the semiotic idea of representation through signs. In their stead Gumbrecht reaccentuates the materiality of a spatial presence as a positive and plentiful experience. According to him, the chasm between the thinking and feeling self and its environment prevents any direct, immediate perception of the world. He does not follow Husserl's phenomenology and his pre-linguistic meaning, but suggests a non-temporal, spatial concept of presence. Gumbrecht, following Heidegger here, conceptualizes an 'Ent-fernung' in this sense, introducing an aesthetico-historical realignment with a focus on an immediate existential core and an immediate experiential context (Gumbrecht, 2004).

30 Arndt briefly sketches the relevant trajectory of the term from Jakobi, Reinhold, Fichte, Schleiermacher to Hegel.

31 'Sie findet seit 1800 auch Niederschlag im literarischen Bewusstsein außerhalb der Philosophie. [...] In solcher metaphysischen Auslegung ist "Unmittelbarkeit" nicht mehr nur der Terminus für unmittelbare Relationen vielfältiger Art; sie ist vielmehr eine verdinglichende Kategorie, die etwas über die interne Verfasstheit von Seiendem oder des Seins überhaupt behauptet' (Arndt, 2013, pp. 11-12). This is also reflected in the literary consciousness outside

Von besonderer Bedeutung ist dabei die Unmittelbarkeit als direkter Selbstbezug. Über diese Variante verschränkt sich die Rede von der Unmittelbarkeit mit dem neuzeitlichen Subjektparadigma. Unmittelbarkeit ist dann nicht mehr nur eine Unmittelbarkeit für uns, wie im ästhetischen Schein oder dort, wo uns etwas unmittelbar gegenübertritt, sodass wir mit seiner Präsenz konfrontiert werden. Sondern indem das, was uns gegenübertritt (und sei es unser Selbst in der Selbstobjektivierung unseres Denkens), als Subjektivität im Modus unmittelbarer, direkter Selbstbeziehung vorgestellt wird, verwandelt sich die Unmittelbarkeit von der Relation von uns auf etwas in ein Selbstverhältnis des Gegenstandes: Sie wird zu einer Unmittelbarkeit an und für sich (Arndt, 2013, pp. 10-11).³²

These reflections resonate with the metadiegetic level of the three texts under discussion here which illustrate how literature becomes increasingly reflective of its autonomous laws and begins to formulate a concept of aesthetic specificity in accordance with the growing differentiation and functionalization of modern society (e.g.: Luhmann, 1997; Werber, 1992). Along these lines, immediacy as self-relation can be seen in the light of the emerging autonomous functionally structured sub-systems and their corresponding autopoiesis, meaning that literature, as a separate sub-system, starts to define, maintain, and reproduce itself as an autonomous system, following its own self-referential selection criteria, as famously described by Niklas Luhmann.

The specific analysis of the metadiegetic level in the eighteenth century – together with the historicization of the notion of immediacy – helps cast light onto this process which becomes discernable in narratives or plays that explicitly explore, conflate, and re-accentuate different functions of literature. It throws a trajectory of literary self-perception into sharp relief at whose end the immediate and, more importantly, incommensurable

philosophy since 1800. [...] In such metaphysical interpretation immediacy is no longer only the term for direct relations of various kinds; it is also an objectifying category which claims something about the internal constitution of Seiendem and Sein'. Translation mine.

32 'Immediacy is of particular importance here as direct self-reference. This specific variation combines the discourse of immediacy with the early modern paradigm of the subject. Immediacy in this case is no longer an immediacy for us, as in the the aesthetic realm or in the case of being confronted with something which faces us directly with its presence. By conceiving that which encounters us (even our self in the self-objectification of our thinking) as subjectivity in the mode of immediate, direct self-relation, the immediacy of the relation of ourselves is transformed into a self-reference of the object. It becomes an immediacy in and of itself'. Translation mine.

aesthetic experiences became an intrinsic aspect of literature as an autonomous field.

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The Tension between Idea and Narrative Form

The Example as a Narrative Structure in Enlightenment Literature¹

Christine Waldschmidt

Enlightenment Interest in Exemplary Storytelling – Historical and Narratological Aspects

For the literature of the eighteenth century, particularly for those works that are seen as part of the Enlightenment, critics have foregrounded the moral, didactic interest of these texts. In the Enlightenment view, literature is supposed to serve a purpose (cf. Pizer, 2005, p. 91), and literary texts are always understood in terms of their function as serving moral goals. This penchant for the usefulness of literature is not very surprising: The Enlightenment defines itself as a movement towards greater intellectual independence and moral instruction – leading mankind out of its ‘self-inflicted immaturity’.² Hence the Enlightenment tends to explain the (ever-noticeable) short-comings of reason in the world not as the world’s inherent lack but as our lack of *understanding* of the reasonable order of the world. Such an attitude allows for an improvement for the better; in particular, the possibility of improvement that is due to the subject (instead of the state of the world) and it leads to a global call for projects of education (which in German would be connected with the concept of *Bildung*).³ These projects are allied with a more specific purpose of literature: if we live in a world for which a reasonable (or at least comprehensible) order is assumed, then the reason why ‘truth’ does not seem to prevail in the general state of affairs must be that it is not put across very well. In order for truth to hold sway, it needs to be popularised. Thus the Enlightenment movement discovers literature as ‘a means of effecting rational, moral instruction

¹ My sincere thanks to Karin Kukkonen for her skill in translating my article and for the patience she showed in our lengthy discussions.

² ‘Aufklärung ist der Ausgang des Menschen aus seiner selbst verschuldeten Unmündigkeit’. See Immanuel Kant, ‘Beantwortung der Frage: Was ist Aufklärung?’; Kant, 1964, p. 53.

³ For the notion of ‘Bildung’ and its roots in the German Enlightenment, see Hammermeister, 2005, p. 39.

under the aspect of entertainment' (Mazur, 1986, p. 53) and the instrument for generalising 'valid truths' about the world – be it a moral rule or a theoretical insight – so that these gain wide acceptance. As the Enlightenment stresses the functionality of literature, it draws on the familiar concept of didactic literature but, at the same time, it also discovers a possibility for legitimising the aesthetic sphere.⁴

This assessment is true for the literature of the Enlightenment in general, and it comes to the fore especially when such an aesthetic programme surfaces in certain individual narratives. We see this in particular in the short prose genres that traditionally presented moral insights in the form of narrative, namely the fable⁵ or the parable. They *explicitly* turn to the relationship between narration and theoretical or moral insights (that is, they mention their message or make it possible to derive such a message straightforwardly from the narrative), and they give to the story itself the function of illustrating the intended theoretical point. In that sense, these short prose texts present us with the basic features of the constellation of narration and moral purpose that I have outlined above. Basically, they work through exemplary storytelling,⁶ which represents general truth through a specific, concrete case. Of course, moral exemplification through narratives was a common literary strategy in antiquity already,⁷ but it gained new currency in the age of Enlightenment. We can see this in the increased theoretical interest in didactic narratives, as documented in the critical treatises of the time, as well as in the growing number of texts engaging in exemplary storytelling in the eighteenth century (Barner et al., 1998, pp. 224-25).

The historical perspective reveals that this complex of problems that comes with the attempt to use (literary) narration in order to convey

4 Fick, 2010, p. 219, refers to the argument for moral usefulness as a means of legitimising literature.

5 The fable in particular has often been considered as the paradigmatic genre of Enlightenment. Cf. Schrader, 1991, p. 9: 'In der Vielzahl der Fabeltheorien seit Chr. Wolff und in der Fabelproduktion des 18. Jahrhunderts erscheint die Fabel als diejenige Gattung, in der sich die Bildungsphilosophie der Aufklärung konkretisiert'. ('Most of the fable theories since Chr. Wolff and most of the fables of the eighteenth century treat the fable as the genre which makes concrete the educational philosophy of Enlightenment').

6 My notion of 'exemplariness' is wider than the 'exemplum' of the sermon. Such spiritual 'exempla' are an important tradition of exemplary storytelling but, like the fable and the parable, just one instance of the larger phenomenon.

7 See Pizer, 2005, p. 89: 'Since the age of Aesop, the fable had been regarded as among the most effective genres for guiding the individual in developing rational and moral discernment'. Accordingly, the 'fable's revival' in French and later in German Enlightenment would not be surprising.

particular (moral) ideas is paradigmatic for narrations of the age of Enlightenment. Narratology, however, has rarely concerned itself with these issues, and the relation between narrative representation and its message does not feature prominently in the narratological field of inquiry. There are several reasons for this: the first is that structuralist narratology (see Genette, 1998) considers literary texts, even if it develops its terminology in dialogue with them, mainly from the formalist and systematic perspectives that this brand of narratology requires. Its goal is to identify and discriminate between basic elements of narrative (such as time, space, narrative perspective, events, etc.) and their possible variants, in order to draw a map of the formal features of narration. In this process, narratology abstracts from the content of the actual narrative, which is from the point of view of narratological theory-building no shortcoming but rather necessary for its claim to be scientific. However, concentrating on the abstract possibilities of narrative means that the individual shape of the story no longer features as a contribution to its message but gets relegated to the status of a realization of the possibilities of narrative that have been defined beforehand. The intention to convey a message, and the choice of adequate narrative means to accomplish this intention, are no longer a subject of interest.⁸

The second reason why narratology has little to say about the content and the ideas of a story has to do with historical changes in how we see narrative. Narratology claims that its terminology and tools are universally applicable. However, because it considers every particular act of narration as the realization of assumed necessities of narration, narratology shows certain affinities to the emphatic view of literature as it has been shaped by post-romantic notions of the disinterestedness of art. Hence, it is not exactly surprising that literature which explicitly claims to serve a purpose, like the literature of Enlightenment, is not at the centre of narratological discussion. Considering eighteenth-century narratives can thus provide corrections (or extensions) of the narratological purview (and its limitations) both in terms of historical and systematical perspectives.

8 In *Rhetorical Narratology* (1999) Michael Kearns shares this critical perspective on the formal bias of narratological analysis. Yet his study and its central interest are different from mine: Kearns is not concerned with the question of how a particular insight or idea is conveyed in narrative, but with how texts present themselves as narrative. At the same time, this perspective leads him away from engaging with particular texts. Rather than discuss the specific features and functions of the text, he concentrates on the abstract effect on readers ('that a narrative text exists to move the audience in some way'). The epithet 'rhetorical' then is simply another term for the efficacy of texts, which, moreover is not assumed to depend on these texts but on their situatedness in contexts. Cf. Kearns, 1999, in particular p. 3.

Of course, the relation between narrative and the ideas expressed through it has not been completely ignored. It still resonates through some of the theoretical distinctions made by narratology, and it seems particularly prominent in cultural approaches to narrative. Yet these approaches treat the problem in very different ways from the rhetorical perspective that this article proposes. Narratology comes closest to touching on the relation between narratives and their ideas when it discusses the notions of 'plot' (that is, the structurations that turn the development of events and actions into a narrative) (cf. Kukkonen, 2014). The sheer diversity of notions of plot demonstrates, as has been frequently observed (cf. Dannenberg, 2008, pp. 435-38), a rather uneven object of inquiry. 'Plot' covers connections between *histoire* and *discours* as causally motivated (Forster) or non-chronologically arranged (Genette), but also recurring story patterns (Propp). By and large, these approaches agree on placing 'plot' at the 'Schnittpunkt der erzähltheoretischen Grundunterscheidung zwischen dem "Was" [...] und dem "Wie" [...] eines Erzähltextes'⁹ (Martinez, 2003, p. 92) and they usually describe the work of this 'how'-dimension in an abstract manner as the implementation of 'a sense-making operation' (Dannenberg, 2008, p. 435). If we assert that whenever we narrate we engage in 'sense-making', we have actually not said very much, because we have not specified what this 'sense' is supposed to be or what it is that is supposed to make 'sense'.

Hayden White¹⁰ and Paul Ricœur¹¹ put these assumptions about the work of narrative representation and the importance of sense-making through narrative even more clearly centre-stage. Both these critics tend to see narration as a method for producing meaningful connections and, on the same stroke, assign it a cultural function. For White, narration is the method of historiography, as soon as historiography wants to ensure the comprehension of the events it presents. In turn, the epistemological claim of historiography itself depends to a great degree on the narrative mode. White understands the creation of coherence through narrative as the guarantor of a (seemingly) inevitable process of sense-making – without any regard to the contents that make up this narrative coherence. Rather, White likes to 'confuse' narration as a method that ensures sense-making (but does not say what it makes sense of) with the articulation of a world-view or an

9 '[P]oint of intersection of the basic narratological distinction between the "what" [...] and the "how" [...] of narrative text'.

10 White, 1990, 'Die Bedeutung der Narrativität in der Darstellung der Wirklichkeit'.

11 Ricœur, *Zeit und Erzählung* (1988-1991), see in particular the chapters on 'dreifache Mimesis', vol. 1, p. 87ff.

ideological assertion (White, 1990, in particular p. 26).¹² We can observe something similar with Ricœur, when he posits the narrative structuration of experience as the condition for identity-construction; a move which makes narrative inevitable on the one hand and accommodates the desire of the individual for a meaningful place in the world on the other (Ricœur, 1988-1991, vol. 3, pp. 392-400). White and Ricœur do not distinguish the narrative from the function which it is supposed to fulfil but equate the two. If one makes narrative synonymous with its function, however, the function of narrative becomes its realisation (that is, the success of generating meaning through narrative). Moreover, this approach does not imply any distinction between the narrative mode and the production of an emphatic understanding of meaning, or indeed, between the notion of order and its confirmation. The impulse to equate narrative and its function thus does not seem to allow for a reflection of the relation between narrative process and the thoughts expressed by it, which need not always be affirmative. Conversely, it is not necessarily the case that the ideas which a narrative expresses are equivalent with the assumption of a meaningful place in the world for the individual.

Recent approaches in 'thematics' (an extension of narratology, but different from the traditional research into the history of topics and motifs) suggest a move away from the formal analysis of narrative structures and towards considering the structuring work of the content conveyed by the narrative. Thematics represents a wide variety of methodical and disciplinary interests (cf. Pettersson, 2002). Generally, it conceives of a circular movement in the text: all elements of the narrative can be seen as referring to a larger theme (which will only be established in their particular constellation) and, in turn, the theme allows critics to grasp the principle which unites the narrative and all of its aspects (this comes to the fore in particular in Sollors, 2002). The goal seems to lie in unfolding an idea of order *about* the narration that is confirmed by that narration, rather than to develop a specific thought (that could also be expressed independently) in the course of narration.

We can conclude: the established approaches to narrative discussed here depend on a very abstract, but always binding notion of 'content' and assume that narrative meaning-making is necessarily successful.

¹² In addition, in *Metahistory* White posits four basic types for patterns of meaning-making in historical narration (tragedy, comedy, romance and farce), which he treats as if they were independent from content, or rather as the structure of sense which needs to be imposed on the concrete facts.

The literature of the eighteenth century, which is not yet beholden to the notion that literature is disinterested, brings to the fore reflections and modes of narration which reckon consciously with the rhetorical potential of narrative, i.e. with the relation between the narrative and the thought that it conveys, but do not equate the two. This is especially true for texts which do not just aim to repeat commonly accepted ideas but to establish new insights by means of narration. Enlightenment texts remind us not to assume that narration is always successfully at the service of ideas but, instead, to think of it as the result of the proper composition of the narrative. The texts of the eighteenth century (with the interest they display in narrative for the communication of ideas) invite us to investigate both the relationship between thoughts and their narrative representation, and the potential which the aesthetic generalization of an idea holds. The possibilities of narrative reflected in these cases imply a number of relations between narrative and thought, which have not been sorted out so far. Leaving aside any turns to the mere appreciation of narration and notions of commitment, it seems important, in these instances, to draw critical attention to those features which are always taken for granted if one understands narrative as a means for successful rhetorical persuasion; in other words, the conditions, methods, and aesthetics of functionalization.

Narration as a Means of Persuasion – Fable Theory in the Eighteenth Century and the Rhetorical Function of Narrative

If we look into the eighteenth-century efforts to theorise exemplary narratives, we encounter the idea of communicating a general thought through narration in the shape of an explicitly rhetorical concern and conceptualised as a task for creativity. However, also these efforts do not clarify the issue, but rather describe it from a point of view that makes us aware of the partiality for the matter to be communicated and that therefore very quickly tends to consider the form of narrative as the guarantee for the persuasion of what it communicates. This comes to the fore in particular in the numerous comments on the genre of the fable. '[T]he German Enlightenment obsession with fable theory and practice', as John Pizer puts it (Pizer, 2005, p. 90), has often been noticed, yet without specifying what this 'obsession' is all about. Indeed, the programmatic statements of the fable theorists demonstrate the ideal of the fable's impact on the reader (or more specifically, a quite unreserved reliance on the didactic effects of

narrative representation).¹³ Here, the relationship between narrative and moral message does not feature as a complication in reaching its intended purpose but rather as a contribution to the notion of its general efficacy. A plain English version of this ideally imagined impact runs as follows: a narrative, in this case a fable, is considered to be more convincing than the moral maxim. Even if readers are in opposition to the message or if they experience difficulties in comprehending the theoretical elements, the narrative will help them overcome these impediments and, while they follow (or enjoy) the story, they will not only understand but accept the moral message. The fable criticism of the eighteenth century (I refer to Wolff, Gottsched, Breitingen and Lessing in particular) paints time and again, in different shades and colours, the same picture of the ideal of the fable's didactic effects. Breitingen, for example, remarks with respect to Aesop's fables:

Diese [die Fabel] ist erfunden worden, moralische Lehren und Erinnerungen auf eine verdeckte und angenehmergetzende Weise in die Gemüther der Menschen einzuspielen, und diesen sonst trockenen und bitteren Wahrheiten, durch die künstliche Verkleidung in eine reizende Maßke, einen so gewissen Eingang in das menschliche Hertz zu verschaffen, daß es sich nicht erwehren kan, ihren heilsamen Nachdruck zu fühlen (Breitingen, 1966, p. 166).¹⁴

Breitingen assumes that an opposition to the moral message exists. He conceives of it, however, not as an opposition with regard to content but as a psychological issue. (As he (*ibid.*) suggests, we take exception to the 'bitter' and 'dry' truths, as well as to moral edification more generally). Now, the fable is presented as a means to get readers over the emotional version of this opposition, and it does this not by engaging with the issue or solving it, but by papering over the cracks. As readers find aesthetic pleasure in the 'artificial cloaking' of the narrative, it is assumed that they simply do not *feel* the opposition any longer. Aesthetic appreciation and accepting the message become one and the same, and the effect of the fable is associated

13 This is the reason why, by and large, both the fable theory of the Enlightenment and numerous contributions to today's discussions of the fable attempt to flesh out the ideal of persuasion. See Schrader, 1991, p. 13.

14 'It [the fable] has been invented in order to infuse the human mind with moral lessons and memories in a covert and pleasant way, and in order to allow these truths, which are dry and bitter otherwise, to find undeniable entry into the human heart through the artificial cloaking in a charming mask, so that the human heart cannot help but feel their wholesome effects'.

with automatic approval. If readers are in the grip of the narrative, they cannot but accept its moral message.

Whereas Breitinger conceives of the relation between narrative and thought as a 'masking' the truth, Lessing's definition of the fable, on the other hand, understands this relationship as a means for bringing the truth to the fore. Herein he emphasizes the ideal effects of the fable even more: 'Wenn wir einen allgemeinen moralischen Satz auf einen besondern Fall zurückführen, diesem besondern Falle die Wirklichkeit erteilen, und eine Geschichte daraus dichten, in welcher man den allgemeinen Satz anschauend erkennt: so heißt diese Erdichtung eine Fabel' (Lessing, 1997, p. 376).¹⁵ Lessing simply equates the illustration with the complete comprehension of the general principle, that is, with the persuasion of exemplary storytelling.¹⁶ With this definition, Lessing enforces the identity of fable and moral message, which does not allow for a separation between illustration and the meaning that can be read from it.¹⁷ On the one hand, he identifies narrative form not simply with its function but with its effect.¹⁸ On the other hand, he takes his definition beyond a statement on aesthetic procedure: Lessing connects the aesthetic potential of the text – or rather, the metaphorical or allegorical meaning-making – with a rather basic process of intelligence, namely, *Anschauung*, the perception of things for their ideal content.

If the critical treatises confirm the ideal effects of exemplary storytelling, they also foreground that the narration has to overcome the problem that narrative and moral message are not the same. Herein we find a reference to a narratological problem which the theoretical exertions of the Enlightenment bring to the fore but cannot solve. In what follows, we shall attempt to discuss it with an eye on the rhetorical function of narrative. Every story which is constructed in order to communicate a

15 'When we relate a general moral principle to a particular case, endow this specific instance with reality and from it create a story in which upon contemplation one perceives the general principle, then this creation is called a fable'. Trans. by Mazur, 1986, p. 54.

16 Helmut Koopmann describes how Lessing's conception of the fable strives for the perfect identity between narrated case and general truth, in Koopmann's words, 'die unmittelbare Visualisierung einer Wahrheit' (Koopmann, 1994, pp. 58-60). This understanding of the effects of the fable implies that a 'decoding' or explanation of the narrated events is not necessary. See also Marksches, 1983, pp. 144-45.

17 Hence Lessing wants to elide any interpretative moves between a narrative and its meaning. Cf. Barner et. al., 1998, p. 229.

18 Remarks on the fable or on the theory of fables are often content with tracing or reproducing such articles of faith in the immediate effects of narrative illustration by presenting what they ask of the fable in terms of the effect which they ascribe to the story. Instead of merely affirming ideal effects, one would need to specify the narrative potential of the fable.

thought creates a relation between thought and narrative, which can be described as establishing and sustaining a contradiction. This contradiction can be described thus: a functional concern with regard to narrative prevails in these constellations, which is not rooted in the story that is told but in the thought it conveys. These kinds of narrative are supposed to be managed as fully as possible through the thoughts (or, rather depend on them) and hence they are *subjected* to a rhetorical purpose. However, if one subordinates the narrative to its rhetorical purpose, this also implies an additional effect of the narrative with regard to what it aims to argue, since narrative is preferred to the theoretical exposition or argumentation. This means that the thought to be conveyed depends on something different from itself – something constituted by a difference in form. Because the narrative gets to have its own effect, or provides its own contribution to the function to be fulfilled, it has to be something different from the thought and it has to assert this independence (or seeming independence) from the thought. In other words, the narrative run for communicating a thought is supposed to be dominated by this thought, but if the story is meant to confirm the theoretical assertion, then it needs to work as a narrated ‘slice of life’ and have features independent of the theoretical assertion. The analyses that follow will understand this contradiction inherent in turning narration towards its rhetorical function in terms of a dynamics that has unfolded its own productivity and which creates different degrees of dependence between narrative and thought. For such an approach, we have to distinguish between the ideal effects (that is, the desire for a narrative fit for purpose) and the actual effects of a narrative. We cannot ignore the difference between the act of ascribing potential to narrative and the act of realizing this function in practice. Readers might be able to guess that – in this analysis – we shall move beyond Enlightenment’s equation of literary form and its desired effects.

Moral Tales as Entertainment or Psychological Investigation – Lessing’s Fables and Schiller’s Short Prose Fiction

The first text to be discussed is a fable by Gotthold Ephraim Lessing. Drawing on Aesop and, to some extent, on La Fontaine (who mainly features as a target of criticism in his fable theory),¹⁹ Lessing develops his very own

19 Critics have observed that Lessing develops his programme for the fable by referring back to the Aesopian tradition (see Mazur, 1986, p. 53; Pizer, 2005, p. 93-94), while he criticizes La

kind of fable. Lessing aims for a sparse, pointed narration and a terse plot structure,²⁰ and he refuses to place an explicit moral maxim (called 'epimythion') at the end of his narratives. Both these strategies of narration bear testimony to a literary programme that stresses that everything that happens in the fable contributes to the message, which cannot be divorced from the narrative events.

Der Wolf auf dem Totenbette. (1759)

Der Wolf lag in den letzten Zügen und schickte einen prüfenden Blick auf sein vergangenes Leben zurück. Ich bin freilich ein Sünder, sagte er; aber doch, hoffe ich, keiner von den größten. Ich habe Böses getan; aber auch viel Gutes. Einsmals, erinnere ich mich, kam mir ein blöckendes Lamm, welches sich von der Herde verirret hatte, so nahe, daß ich es gar leicht hätte würgen können; und ich tat ihm nichts. Zu eben dieser Zeit hörte ich die Spöttereien und Schmähungen eines Schafes mit der bewundernswürdigsten Gleichgültigkeit an, ob ich schon keine schützenden Hunde zu fürchten hatte.

Und das alles kann ich dir bezeugen; fiel ihm Freund Fuchs, der ihn zum Tode bereiten half, ins Wort. Denn ich erinnere mich noch gar wohl aller Umstände dabei. Es war zu eben der Zeit, als du dich an dem Beine so jämmerlich würgtest, das dir der gutherzige Kranich hernach aus dem Schlunde zog (Lessing, 1997, pp. 316-17).²¹

Fontaine for concentrating on the entertaining aspects of the fable, its formal polish in rhyme and metre and the embellishment of the narrative.

²⁰ Lessing rejects everything that only serves purposes of ornament, because in his view it diminishes the persuasive effect of the narrative. We can see this in his fable theory when he criticizes La Fontaine, but it is also noticeable in the well-known fable *Der Besitzer des Bogens* (*The Owner of the Bow*), which reflects on its own poetic principles (cf. Fick, 2010, p. 230).

²¹ The dying Wolf.

A Wolf at the point of death, cast a retrospect on his past life, and examin'd his actions with the air of a penitent. I have been a great offender no doubt, said he; yet, I hope, I can say it without flattering myself, there are many much more criminal than I am. I have done ill 'tis true; but I have likewise done good. One day, I remember, a Lamb stray'd from the flock, and came bleating to the place where I stood; I might have kill'd it with the greatest ease; yet I meddled not with it. Much about the same time, I had the patience to hear the ill-language and abuse of a Sheep, with an indifference so much the more extraordinary, as I had nothing to fear, there being no Dog at hand to defend her. I can bear witness to the truth of these things, said a Fox, who attended him in his last moments: all the circumstances are fresh in my memory. 'Twas at the time when thou wast almost choak'd by the bone which stuck in thy throat, and which the Crane was afterwards kind enough to extract from thence (*Fables*, pp. 65-67).

A wolf professes on his deathbed that some of his actions were due to his moral nature, but he is soon presented to be a liar when the fable reveals that his 'good deeds' are occasioned by practical obstacles rather than his moral convictions. The general thought which the fable means to convey is obvious. Its narrative does not present a maxim, but diagnoses the general practice of moral pretension, which is adopted especially by those who do not act from moral motivations. In other words, when one moves away from good actions, one likes to hide behind a show of moral excellence. Lessing thereby conveys a generally known and generally accepted thought – hypocrisy in moral matters comes as no surprise to anyone and its acceptance therefore does not depend on persuasion.²² The message of the fable rather establishes a piece of worldly wisdom: That we can assume hypocrisy for every moral action (cf. Fick, 2010, p. 232), constitutes a universal judgement of the state of world, and it presupposes neither the moral constitution of the world nor the need to be shocked by this state of affairs. Here Lessing does not differ from the tradition founded by Aesop, which is also concerned less with the promotion of a moral message than with the demonstration of theoretical knowledge about the world or practical applications of this knowledge, and which does not assume a moral order to be at work.

If making a thought acceptable to readers is not at stake in Lessing's fable, then we need to ask what purpose the narration serves instead and what kind of relationship with the theoretical message it enters. The fable presents its thought as a riddle; a riddle, to which the solution is immediately supplied. It unfolds this riddle as a sequence of two interpretations of the wolf's actions (one by the wolf; one by the fox). The first interpretation establishes an ambiguity through the repeated contrast between the expected and the actual actions of the wolf – with the repetition underlining it. The fox then solves the riddle by confirming the predicted order of things, that is, by offering an explanation that matches the expected, characteristic behaviour of the wolf. The story unfolds the thought step by step. This gradual development implements

22 Neither can we find an instruction on how to act in the fable. After all, it is not clear what such an instruction could look like: do not cheat and do not lie? Or rather, do not let yourself be cheated? This has also been observed by Dithmar, 1988, p. 103: 'Lessings Fabeln enthalten Erfahrungssätze, die nicht immer unmittelbar auf Handeln zielen' ('Lessing's fables contain maxims which do not always directly aim for action'), and Fick, 2010, p. 232: 'Die "Moral" liegt meistens darin, dass er [der Leser] die Bestrebungen und Gesinnungen der Fabeltiere erkennt und richtig bewertet' ('We find the moral in readers' attempts to recognize the intentions and motivations of the animal characters and in their skill to judge them correctly'). However, both Dithmar and Fick maintain that the intention of the fable is to lead to a change in behaviour.

the following rhetorical strategy: If one follows the sequence of the narrative, one has already followed the logic of the thought. The sequence of riddle and solution suggests to readers that they themselves have created the thought (and hence have already accepted it). At the same time, this strategy presents the thought conveyed by the narrative as a confirmation of what we already know. As readers share the move to the solution, the narrative 'enacts' a commonly shared prejudice about the world as a matter of interest and approval, because it presents it as the result of readers' own thinking and insight. Here the fable differs from the established theoretical statements about the fable: To follow and to enjoy the story does not constitute an invitation to overlook a more or less fundamental disapproval of its message but rather an invitation to appreciate what one already knows because it is presented as the result of the entertainment of one's own intellectual activities.

In terms of its contents, the narrative produces a mere duplication of the thought: whatever we know of behaviour that is not moral, but claims to be, is confirmed by the narration of a particular case, where an action deviates from the moral ideal, and the judgement of the world is only enhanced by the indication that such behaviour indeed *exists*. By these means the narrative creates the abstract contradiction innate in any observation of non-moral behaviour (namely, the contradiction between non-moral behaviour in practice and the concept of morality which implies universal approval), without offering hope for change. Still, the acknowledgement that the ideal moral order does not match the actual state of affairs is not used as an argument against the notion that such an order exists.²³ (In fact, this is the enlightened quality of the fable that makes it different from the Aesopian tradition.) On the contrary, the narrative presents this mismatch as a confirmation of our moral judgement on the state of affairs. Both form (riddle and solution) and its content of moral insight consist of a return to the expected, or rather, a return to the presupposed moral order (which enables the contradiction produced by the narrative in the first place). Because the deviation from moral behaviour is presented as the affirmation of the order of things, in the sense that, as a deviation, it asserts the basic validity of the ideal, it already forms part of the larger moral worldview. Lessing's fable can thus reconcile the knowledge of the ideal moral order with the awareness that this moral order does not entail the moral behaviour of all its actors.

23 Certainly, Lessing does not mean to imply that all moral action is mere hypocrisy.

The result is that exemplary storytelling brings to the fore the notion of placing a single instance into a given order of the world. What the narrative makes 'concrete' here is not the subject matter or the content of the theoretical insight or judgement. Instead, this insight unfolds as a process of recognizing the ideal order. With this move of confirmation, the narrative takes the long way round, but the confirmation also depends on this detour so that it can match the thought that the narrative conveys. Thus, the fable fulfils its function of persuasion under the condition that it enacts the confirmation of prejudice (or pre-judgement) that has already been accepted. The story as the 'material' for such a confirmation does not get in the way of the thought; rather, the narration provides a playful way of taking a distance from the well-known judgement. It relegates the narrative itself to a means of depiction on which the theoretical insight no longer depends. This allows the narrative to create particular divergences from the thought, which have the sole purpose of showing that they match the general moral judgement after all. Even though the narrative (used as a means of confirmation) needs a particular, self-sufficient action, this does not turn into a contradiction of the fact that this action is subordinate to the thought to be conveyed. On the one hand, the particular action rather constitutes the minimum requirement for action as action and the details are introduced to provide its motivation, as well as minimal causal or practical coherence. In the case of Lessing's wolf, the events take place as the animal lies on its death bed, and this motivates the presence of the fox. On the other hand, Lessing's fable takes its place in the well-established patterns of its genre. Hence it can draw on already known moral characteristics for the animals. It is also a continuation to Aesop's *The Wolf and the Crane*, which tells the story of how the wolf swallows a bone and gets rescued from suffocation.²⁴ The fable hence does not work towards establishing its own reality, but rather towards its inclusion in the genre's world of agreed-upon moral meanings.

We find a very different – to a certain extent contrary – mode of exemplary storytelling in a narrative that is originally embedded in Denis Diderot's *Jacques le fataliste*. In this novel, the narrative in question is part of an exchange of stories that unfolds between Jacques and his master on

24 Many of Lessing's fables draw on ancient precursors (in particular on Aesop) or on the fables of La Fontaine, but they usually revise their moral message or give their story a different turn. Cf. Marksches, 1983, p. 157; Fick, 2010, p. 229. See also Barner et. al., 1998, p. 232: 'Wenn [Lessing] auf seine Quellen verweist, dann nicht nur, um auf die Ähnlichkeit, sondern auch um auf die Unterschiede hinzuweisen' ('Whenever Lessing refers to his sources, then he does not just highlight similarities but also differences').

their journey.²⁵ In what follows, we shall discuss this narrative, called the story of Madame de la Pommeraye, independently from the larger context of Diderot's novel. Indeed, a contemporary of Diderot, Friedrich Schiller, saw fit to take this story out of its larger context, when he translated it into German as a stand-alone narrative.²⁶ Schiller gives the story the title *Merkwürdiges Beispiel einer weiblichen Rache* (*A Remarkable Example of Female Revenge*; 1785), which carries the multiple meanings of German 'merkwürdig' as both 'strange' and 'remarkable'. The following analysis is based on Schiller's text, which does not simply provide a translation but rather a shortened and modified version of Diderot's narrative. Schiller leaves out the interruptions of the narrative (so typical of Diderot's narrative style), as well as the comments of the characters. He also condenses the plot and revises the style to include more emphatic and elevated features.²⁷

The narrative tells the story of a woman who, betrayed and abandoned by her lover, carefully lays a plot of revenge that leads to his utter moral and social ruin. In the beginning, Madame von P*** succumbs, with some hesitations, to the seductive charms of the Marquis A***, and after several vows of inviolable fidelity on his part, she agrees to become his mistress. Yet over time, the ardour of the Marquis cools off. When he admits as much to Madame von P***, she takes his abandoning her as cause for turning her emotional shock into a violation of her honour:

'Also ist es wahr,' schrie sie laut aus, 'es ist mehr als zu wahr, er liebt mich nicht mehr!' – Nachdem ihre ersten Aufwallungen vorüber waren und sie in stiller Wut über dem erlittenen Schimpfe gebrütet hatte, beschloß sie eine Rache, die ohne Beispiel war, eine Rache zum Schrecken aller

25 For his embedded narratives, Diderot adopts the narrative pattern of the *contes morales* (moral tales). In these tales, a particular case is subsumed in a general thought about the moral constitution of the world. The *conte morale* is another case of exemplary story-telling: a narrative from which we can draw general conclusions on moral principles and the determining factors for human actions. Diderot draws on this narrative pattern in order to execute it in an innovative way that departs from the generic convention.

26 Schiller's version of the story from *Jacques le fataliste* appeared for the first time in Schiller's journal *Die Rheinische Thalia*, and is quite likely based on a manuscript version of Diderot's novel, which the director of the national theatre at Mannheim, Heribert von Dahlberg, who subscribed to the *Correspondence littéraire*, sent to him. Not only Schiller's version (1785), but also a re-translation of it into French (1793) appeared before Diderot's novel was published in 1796. See Meise, 2005, p. 302. See also Buck, 1990, p. 247.

27 When Schiller takes the story out of the context of the novel and concentrates on the plot alone, this leads to the removal of the comments of the protagonists, the landlady and the extradiegetic narrator which shape the passage in Diderot, as well as the numerous digressions which interrupt the narrative of Madame de la Pommeraye. See Johnston, 2008, p. 202-03.

Männer, die sich gelüsten lassen, eine Frau von Ehre zu betrügen, und diese Rache führte sie aus (Schiller, 1954, p. 192).²⁸

What we have here is not the expression of disappointed, one-sided love. Indeed, in the course of her revenge, Madame von P*** will no longer act as a lover. Instead, her emotional pain is immediately connected with the 'insult she had suffered' ('dem erlittenen Schimpfe'), and still the story gives no indication of loss of honor or social disgrace.²⁹ Rather, Schiller presents us with Madame von P***'s move to a moral standpoint that derives from the emotional relationship a claim, a right that has been violated, and in turn, a violation that needs now to be redressed.

The narrative then details the progress of revenge, its planning and execution. Two women, mother and daughter, who work as prostitutes, are instructed to pretend to be impoverished and pious ladies and to lead a life of retreat from the world (the details of which are specified by Madame von P***). Madame von P*** makes sure that the ladies are introduced to the Marquis, who, as planned, falls in love with the daughter. Madame von P*** fans his fires and denies him satisfaction. Through both strategies she aims to increase the sufferings of the Marquis so that the marriage with the daughter comes to seem the only solution fulfilling his desires. Madame von P***'s revenge appears to be complete in the moment when she can expose her former lover to public disgrace for marrying a harlot the day after the wedding. Nevertheless, her plan fails insofar as the Marquis remains true to his love and, while he has to leave the city, goes on to lead a happy married life.

The narrative follows the sequence of events and traces each step of the revenge. It offers everything necessary for such an intrigue: the explanation of an intended purpose, the consideration of the means, as well as how they are used, and the development of the state of affairs, as well as, finally, the realization of the particular purposes.

Einen ganzen Monat lang wußte sie den Marquis in der Erwartung der versprochenen Zusammenkunft hinzuhalten – während dieser Zeit hatte

28 'So it is true', she exclaimed, 'it is more than true. He no longer loves me!' – When the first waves of emotion had subsided and she had brooded in quiet rage over the insult she had suffered, she decided on a revenge without example, a revenge that would serve as an awful warning to all men who might take it into their heads to seduce and deceive a woman of honor. And she proceeded to carry out this revenge. (Trans. by Robert Ellis Dye in Schiller, 2008, p. 16).

29 This interpretation is only mentioned at the end of the narrative in a comment on the behaviour of Madame von P*** as a justification of her excessive revenge.

er volle Muße, sich abzuhärmen, zu berauschen und seine Leidenschaft in Unterredungen mit ihr noch mehr anzufeuern. Er erkundigte sich nach dem Vaterland, dem Herkommen, der Erziehung und den Schicksalen dieser Frauenzimmer, und erfuhr immer noch zu wenig, und frug immer wieder, und ließ sich immer von neuem unterrichten und dahinreißen. Die Marquisin war schelmisch genug, ihn jeden Fortschritt seiner Leidenschaft bemerken zu lassen, und unter dem Vorwand, ihn zurück-zuschrecken, gewöhnte sie ihn unvermerkt an den verzweifelten Ausgang dieses Romans, den sie ihm bereitet hatte (Schiller, 1954, p. 208).³⁰

The logic of consequence that is suggested here comes even more clearly to the fore in the correspondence between the events as they are expected and the events as they happen. We can see this in the passage where the Marquis finds the confessor of the daughter and turns him into an ally: 'Sie erwarteten nun nichts Gewissers, als daß der Mann Gottes über kurz oder lang sich brauchen lassen würde, seiner geistlichen Tochter einen Liebesbrief zuzustellen, und diese Vermutung traf glücklich ein' (Schiller, 1954, p. 211).

At the same time, there are a number of things that we do not find in the narration of the planning and execution of revenge. We have a moral point of view as the source of the action, but it leads to actions that are anything but moral (let alone confirm a moral order of reality). On the other hand, however, it is never suggested that Madame von P*** can be seen as a thoroughly evil character (not only the final comment makes this clear), while her erstwhile lover would be turned from the villain to the victim of the intrigue. We also do not find any didactic gesture that would state that it would have been advisable to refrain from revenge. All in all, the narrative does not display a judgemental point of view; it does not present a moral evaluation and does not turn its action into the subject of a moral verdict.³¹ Neither the action of the narrative, the use of the means of revenge nor any

30 'She was able to put off the Marquis' expectation of the promised meeting for a [whole] month. During this interval he [had ample opportunity to] languish, [intoxicate himself with love and intensify his feelings even further in] conversations with Madame von P***. He asked about the women's origins, from which providence they came, about their education [and the fortunes which had befallen them], and could not learn enough, [and continued to enquire over and over. The Marquise was rascal] enough to call attention to every increase in his fervor, and, under the pretext of cautioning him, prepared him for the desperate outcome of the adventure [which she had prepared for him]'. The translation is based on that of Robert Ellis Dye, Schiller, 2008, p. 27; the modifications in brackets are added by Jessica Quinlan.

31 It seems beyond comprehension why the emphasis on the sequence of events should entail a clear moral perspective, as Otto W. Johnston, suggests, when he describes the narrator as

of the ensuing narrative developments permit readers to draw a conclusion as to who is in the right. In the end, the narrative neither accuses Madame von P*** of the vanity of her efforts or of her moral depravity, nor does it teach the Marquis a lesson regarding false honour. The story of Madame von P*** does not attempt to evoke a fascination with the invidious plan of revenge and its meticulous execution.

Instead, Schiller's narrative only gives us the events, the moves of the plot, the sequence of actions and reactions, their expediency and results. This way of narrating foregrounds two aspects of the narrative in particular: First, the plan for revenge comprises all of Madame von P***'s actions. What is remarkable is the absolute consistency with which everything is subordinated to the execution of revenge. One can call this revenge excessive because it bears no relation to its cause,³² the Marquis' breaking up the relationship, but also because of the radical execution that aims for the utter destruction of the lady's former lover and that considers everybody else (their feelings, their happiness in life, etc.) as means to achieve this end. In this way, the narrative overshoots what would be – from a moral and rational point of view – sufficient and appropriate for revenge. Second, these excesses of revenge are presented by the narrative as part of the *consequence* of the events, as a sequence with its own logic, in which one event follows from another as if guided by a certain necessity.³³ The narrative stresses this logic of consequence as it shows how the strategies of Madame von P*** match the reactions of the Marquis, as it anticipates events which will happen later on and, in particular, as it names the simple sequence of events. The narrative presents the events in such a way that the excess of revenge, the moral ruin of the protagonists (even with the unexpected outcome for the Marquis), does not result in a contradiction with the concern or the

condemning Madame von P***'s actions and when he puts forward Schiller's narrative as a treatment of 'the depths of immorality' (Johnston, 2008, pp. 202-03, 207, 209).

32 In that sense Schiller's version is rather similar to Diderot's: the character of Madame de Pommeraye appears 'inexplicable'. Rainer Warning writes, 'Unerklärbar insofern, als die Intrige in ihrer diabolischen Perfektion ein derartiges Eigengewicht erlangt, daß die Treulosigkeit des Marquis schließlich nur noch als auslösendes Moment, nicht aber als hinreichende Motivation erscheint'. ('It cannot be explained in the sense that the diabolic perfection of this intrigue takes such importance that the infidelity of the Marquis only appears to be the trigger rather than an adequate motivation'). Quite obviously, it is exactly the aim of the narrative to deprive readers of motivation. See Warning, 1965, p. 104.

33 Meise already stresses that Schiller was obviously interested in such a logic of consequence, because – as we have already seen – he drops all digressions and inserted discussions that occur in Diderot's novel. See: Meise, 2005, p. 302. Thus Schiller 'give[s] the tale a coherence Diderot didn't intend' (Johnston, 2008, p. 203).

execution of revenge, but instead in such a way that it puts into effect the consistent progress of revenge.

By these means Schiller's strategies of narration support the impression that the sequence of events is the result of a principle that, though it cannot be made plausible by rational motivation, is still effectively at work and determines everything through its law-like mechanics. (Moreover, the ending of the narrative, the only instance where the actual events differ from what the Marquise had planned, and which prevents the triumph of revenge successfully carried out, provides us with further proof of the existence of forces that move beyond rational control and that demonstrate in this case its powers in moving against the plan.) The sequence of events thus hints at a general law that seems to determine the events, but this general law cannot be grasped. The narrative suggests that there are powers at work behind the events, determining and driving these events and making them describable as the concrete actualization of these very powers. Thus Schiller continues the exemplary mode of storytelling that is guided by a general thought and that develops an example for the effects of the determining factors of human behaviour. Yet, at the same time, apart from the story's denial of moral motivations as the guiding principles, there is no explanation of what these powers, or the general principle behind the events, should be.³⁴ On the contrary, the narrative stresses the difference between the events narrated and any of usual hypotheses employed to explain human behaviour. Schiller turns this into his message: he repeats the paradox which is shaped by the sequence of events, when he states that there are powers at work which we do not know and of which the only thing we can say with certainty is that they do exist. This dynamics of psychic energies is identified as something to be clarified, something to be discussed. Rather than an explanation, the narrative intends the discovery of a field of further study.

The narrative strategy that we have observed in Schiller's narrative links to a general interest of the eighteenth century in the parameters that determine human behaviour. We find it elsewhere in the journals of the time, especially the moral weeklies, but also in early descriptions of mental drives and energies. Schiller offers a contribution to the latter genre with his translation of Diderot which presents an approach that is not dissimilar to Karl Philipp Moritz's collection of short stories and descriptions in 'Erfahrungsseelenkunde' (literally, the experiential study of

34 Warning shows for the embedded narrative in Diderot that the behaviour of the characters cannot be reduced to a general principle. There is no moral evaluation of the events; instead, the moral message itself turns into the element to be judged (Warning, 1965, p. 105).

the soul) (see also High, 2008, pp. 176-77). These texts consider themselves basically as pioneering work in psychological investigation. They set out to collect materials empirically,³⁵ so that it can be analysed later for insights into the general laws of human behaviour.³⁶ In making these efforts, it is assumed that such general principles are indeed accessible to our minds (and thus the psychological interpretation does not result in the diagnosis of irrationalities). With regard to this psychological interests, it is perfectly reasonable to put Schiller's adaptation of Diderot's narrative into the context of his original literary prose works, in particular with the text *Der Verbrecher aus verlorener Ehre* (*The Criminal of Lost Honour*, 1786/92).

This analysis has also shown which possibilities of exemplary storytelling Schiller develops here. As the narrative presents a reference to general principles – without making it particular through the content – it contributes to give substance not to the specific content of the thought but relevance to the question which it treats. The theoretical message that there are powers that guide human actions and thought is, taken by itself, almost void as a statement. Only through the narration do we get a sense of what is at stake. Only the narrative provides us with the flesh and bones (and the practical relevance) of the general principle for human behaviour. Schiller pursues a different strategy from Lessing here: we do not have a repetition of the thought in order to initiate a process of subsuming the individual case under the general judgement. Instead, the thought depends on the narrative; more particularly, on the capability of the narrative to create events that are incommensurable with the known principles of the human psyche. These are the strategies of the narrative which not only demonstrate the notion that there are principles shaping human behaviour, but also supply

35 In his preface to *Rheinische Thalia* Schiller states that he wants to present 'Gemälde merkwürdiger Menschen und Handlungen' ('pictures of remarkable people and action'), as well as '[n]eugefundene Räder in dem unbegreiflichen Uhrwerk der Seele' ('newly found cogs in the ineffable machine of the soul'). See Schiller, 1958, p. 95.

36 'Es soll ein Beitrag zu einer Systematisierung und Klassifikation der menschlichen Seelenkräfte geleistet werden, [...] zu einer analytischen Psychologie' ('The aim is to contribute to the systematization and classification of the powers that move the human soul, [...] to an analytic psychology') (Kaiser, 1978, p. 51). Nicolas Martin mentions Meißner and Moritz and refers to the influence of the 'anthropological and psychological perspective of the late Enlightenment that will govern Schiller's experiments in short prose fiction' (Martin, 2008, p. 190). Taking into account other prose by Schiller, High writes about the 'predilection for the combination of "inner truth" [of the story] and extreme or aberrant characters' and the aim to represent 'the deepest behavioural and moral truths about humanity'. The 'inner truth' of the narrative which High defines in terms of 'the correspondence of character, situation, and reaction', is meant to guarantee the exemplariness, the insights into the *general* principles of human behaviour and psychology (High, 2008, p. 174).

narrative substance and relevance for a presumed inner order of the subject that does not correspond to the expected analogy between subject and world (or rather, between a material and a moral order).³⁷

Conclusion

All the narratological approaches discussed in the opening section of this article have presumed that any narrative carries the content for which it has been created (or told) in the first place. However, these approaches do not consider the *relationship* between the thought conveyed by the narrative itself and the form of narration as a matter to be investigated theoretically. This is the case, partly, because they discuss primarily elements of narrative that have to be put into effect before actualising any particular subject matter of the narration; partly, because they already see the abstract structure of narrative as the key feature of narrative meaning. As most narratological approaches presume that the relationship between narrative form and specific content is not a complicated one (or, indeed, that the content is fully at the disposal of narrative form), they actually make a far-reaching statement about this relationship: From this perspective, there would always be a mutual affirmation between form and content of the message in a narration. This affirmation would take the form of a dependence that works automatically and that runs so flawlessly that it does not have to be considered more particularly in a general theory of narrative. My investigations here are meant to gently rock the all-too-steady boat of this narratological certainty, as they show that, at least in the eighteenth century, before the advent of a literature of disinterestedness, most narratives would present awareness of a tension between narrative form and the thought that they convey. Eighteenth-century writers are ambiguous about this tension: sometimes, it represents the possibility to heighten the plausibility and the binding effect of the thought; sometimes, it is felt to be a problem that cannot be easily explained away.

Both cases of exemplary storytelling considered here also demonstrate the importance of maintaining the tension between the subordination to an implied moral message on the one hand, and the appearance of

37 This is even more salient in Schiller's final sentences, added after the translation from Diderot: 'Aber die kühne Neuheit dieser Intrige, die unverkennbare Wahrheit der Schilderung, die schmucklose Eleganz der Beschreibung haben mich in Versuchung geführt, eine Übersetzung davon zu wagen [...]' (Schiller, 1954, p. 224).

independence of the narration on the other. The narrative presents a slice of life in such a way that the thought *appears* as the order behind the events narrated. It is not surprising that narration is put into the service of such meaning-making, because it is a general feature of storytelling to present a thought about the world in terms of a connection between circumstances and events. It is true that the exemplary narrative – as a concrete case – always falls short of reaching the universal claim of the thought, and hence can never present the general idea in its entirety, but the concrete cases of exemplary storytelling offer something else: namely, proof that the theoretical maxim can be demonstrated as a principle of reality. The achievement of narrative in exemplary storytelling lies in presenting a slice of life in such a way that readers see how it is governed by the general truth and in thus showing such truth both to be generally valid and practically relevant.

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‘Speaking Well of the Dead’

Characterization in the Early Modern Funeral Sermon

Penny Pritchard

Introduction

In depicting the character and personality of their deceased subject, English Protestant ministers in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries employ features of writing strikingly comparable to contemporary works of fictional narrative. Such features include not only the selective inclusion of biographical details from the subject’s life and death, but a spectrum of seemingly ‘literary’ devices such as the portrayal of multiple points of view through eyewitness ‘testimonials’, direct quotation of correspondence, poetry, diary entries, and vividly-realized deathbed scenes (some of which include dialogue).

These correlations illustrate the extent to which, as J. Paul Hunter has observed, such writing ‘may be used to shape a “life” that has become independent of its funeral occasion and taken on an ethical and literary form of its own’ (Hunter, 1990, p. 319). Hunter’s invaluable investigation, *Before Novels: The Cultural Contexts of Eighteenth-Century English Fiction* (1990), invites us to re-examine the shared origins of early modern fictional narrative and a host of contemporary popular genres including funeral sermons, spiritual biographies and the hagiographical ‘lives’ of saints and martyrs. The breadth of popular print culture from which the English novel emerges in the early modern period provides a remarkably rich cultural legacy, informing every feature of the genre, and ranging from scientific and political treatises to newssheets and ballads, spiritual biographies and conversion narratives, conduct works, sermonic and other popular religious literature. As these collected chapters demonstrate, many of the novel’s component features – including though not limited to plot, character, mode, narration, perspective, temporality, and paratextual elements – are paradoxically unique even while their analysis usefully informs our consideration of parallel features in other forms of contemporary print, both literary and otherwise.¹

¹ In addition to Hunter’s *Before Novels*, op. cit., important critical investigations of the novel’s development in relation to other, both literary and ‘non-literary’ contemporary print, include

Broadly speaking, characterization presents certain challenges for narratological theory since narratology is formalistic and people do not easily lend themselves to systematic, formal, categorization. In the case of eighteenth-century novels, these challenges are exacerbated since narratological theory was developed in relation to modernist literature and does not comfortably accommodate historical texts (for which literary genre cannot be so rigidly defined). Notwithstanding the essentially ahistorical derivation of narratological theory, I shall suggest that consideration of modes of characterization employed in early modern funeral sermons will inform how narratological analysis of character might be applied to specific historical models, including both early modern prose fiction and non-fictional 'specialist' forms of narrative such as the published funeral sermon.

The most pressing issue to be dealt with here is the matter of applying theories of literary analysis – designed for the consideration of fictional characters – to 'real' people (specifically, the deceased individuals being commemorated in funeral sermons). I feel this approach is justifiable for several, distinctly different, reasons. The first reason is ahistoric, based on principles of human cognitive function; the second is historically and geographically specific to the early modern print culture in which both novels and published funeral sermons first gained significant popular recognition.

On the level of cognitive function, readers do not make formal or even particularly discernible distinctions between fictive and actual people when actively engaged in reading (or viewing, or hearing) about them. Paul Hernadi suggests that

information transfer among humans goes beyond simple semiotic encoding and decoding: it involves hermeneutic inferences as to the feelings, intentions, and beliefs of those sharing information. As we study the transfer of information among humans, impersonal notions of 'uploading' and 'downloading' must be replaced by personalistic concepts of expression, communication, and representation (Hernadi, 2010, p. 57).

Hernadi goes on to assert that 'there is no clear division between literary and non-literary signification' (Hernadi, 2010, pp. 60, 62).² Such an assertion

Nancy Armstrong, *Desire and Domestic Fiction: A Political History of the Novel*; Lennard J. Davis, *Factual Fictions: The Origins of the English Novel*; Michael McKeon, *The Origins of the English Novel: 1600-1740*.

² For discussions of the role of human cognitive function in the reading of fiction and non-fiction, see Zunshine, *Why We Read Fiction: Theory of Mind and the Novel*; Hogan, *Cognitive*

reinforces Alan Palmer's findings in *Fictional Minds* when he concludes that

Just as in real life the individual constructs the minds of others from their behaviour, so the reader infers the workings of fictional minds and sees these minds in action from observation of characters' behaviour and actions [...] in various ways fictional minds are seen not as private, passive flows of consciousness, but as engaged, social processes of mental action (Palmer, 2004, p. 246).

Further support may be drawn from a concept central to cognitive psychology, that of 'Theory of Mind', the highly-evolved social capacity by which human beings feel they can understand the mental state of others on the basis of observable actions.³ Although the Theory of Mind function initially evolved in humans many thousands of years ago, to 'decode' authentic human behaviour, it is also precisely this function (cognitive psychologists argue) which later enabled the development of literature itself. As Lisa Zunshine has observed,

The very process of making sense of what we read appears to be grounded in our ability to invest the flimsy verbal constructions that we generously call 'characters' with a potential for a variety of thoughts, feelings, and desire and then look for the 'cues' that would allow us to guess at their feelings and thus predict their actions. Literature pervasively capitalizes on and stimulates Theory of Mind mechanisms that had evolved to deal with real people, even as on some level readers do remain aware that fictive characters are not real people at all (Zunshine, 2012, p. 10).

If human cognitive function responds to real or fictive characterization in the same manner (regardless of readers' awareness of the real or fictive nature of the person characterized), then there is no reason not to consider modes of characterization in relation to 'real' individuals.

The critical application of narratological models to historical, non-fictional, texts is comparatively rare, but it is not unprecedented (see, in

Science, Literature and the Arts: A Guide for Humanists, 'Literary Universals', *Poetics Today*, pp. 223-49.

3 See Zunshine's discussion in Part I: 'Attributing Minds', Sections Two and Three, especially concerning the work of Simon Baron-Cohen in *Mindblindness: An Essay on Autism and Theory of Mind* (1995).

particular, Fludernik, 2004, pp. 129-54 and 2007, pp. 241-66). As works of nonfiction, even the simplest early modern funeral sermon presents a historical narrative, one which alludes to multiple points along a chronological timeline of 'the past'. This frequently includes, at the very least, the days immediately before death, as well as episodes in the earlier life of the deceased, and very often Scriptural references which evoke more ancient periods of history. These multiple 'pasts' are distinguished in relation to a more collectively-experienced 'present' in which the deceased has died and congregational mourners are gathered together. The sheer complexity of the historical narrative(s) within a published funeral sermon merits further narratological analysis beyond the scope of this, introductory, investigation. Monika Fludernik, in particular, has provided an increasingly nuanced categorization of historical narratives in relation to the positing of experientiality (the representation of experience), and while her earlier investigations of nonfictional narrative found relatively little narrativity (compared with works of fiction), more recently she has concluded that 'experientiality (and hence narrativity) occurs on a scale, and [...] the more academic a historical text is, the less experientiality there will be' (Fludernik, 2010, p. 50).

I have two points to draw from Fludernik's more recent estimation of the scope for narratological analysis of historical narrative. The first point supports the estimation of human cognitive function drawn above by Zunshine, Palmer and Hernadi insofar as it merely reiterates that a simple binary distinction between fiction and non-fiction is insufficient to scrutinize the representation of human experience. The second point is more problematic and poses potential obstacles in relation to the narratological analysis of funeral sermons; although I have suggested the published funeral sermon presents a complex form of historical narrative, it is one in which 'experientiality' plays a considerably lesser role than its more prominent functions as a sermon and as a portrait of an exemplary life. This second point is the subject for a much more nuanced analysis of funeral sermons than will be possible here, and does not exclude the viability of the project at hand so much as it seeks further clarification of the precise role of 'experientiality' in the narratological analysis of historical narratives in general, and published funeral sermons in particular.

My final justification for the narratological analysis of character in relation to the deceased individuals commemorated in published funeral sermons is more pertinent to the cultural and historical context of this particular book. All of the eighteenth-century English novels under consideration here were first published in a period when funeral sermons jostled

alongside works of literary fiction, biography, satirical ballads and poems, plays, newsheets, and other works, in which clear distinctions between terms such as 'fact', 'fiction', 'romance', and 'history' were often purposely blurred by authors who typically worked in more than one of these genres (on this subject, see McKeon, 1987, pp. 25-64). The cross-fertilization of early modern popular print – in literary genres and otherwise – offers far more analytical scope and insight into this cultural period than the later imposition of formalized critical boundaries between them.

Notwithstanding these several justifications, what follows is also posited with clear acknowledgement of the significant caveats needed in applying techniques and terminologies associated with narratological analysis of characterization to the early modern published funeral sermon. It will also be necessary, at the outset, to place this relatively neglected genre of popular sermonic literature into a more precise cultural context, particularly in its printed form.

Exemplary Lives and the Origins of the Protestant Funeral Sermon

It is precisely the representation of the deceased's lived experience, as narrated by the minister through his published funeral sermon, which concerns us here. This textual component is integral to the overwhelming majority of Protestant funeral sermons in the early modern period.⁴ One of the ostensible purposes of the Protestant funeral sermon, that is, the exhortation of the living via narratives of exemplary spiritual conduct in those now dead, is fulfilled by the minister's portrayal of the deceased as an individual whose character and conduct merits the particular attention of the congregation, or reader, in relation to their own life.⁵ Indeed, the inclusion of exemplary biographical narrative may be cited as a feature of many contemporary forms of popular writing in the early modern period, in which accounts of human experience serve as positive (or alternatively, in the example of Newgate confessionals and other exceptions, admonitory) examples

4 There are some notable exceptions; see, for example, Samuel Acton's 1699 funeral sermon for an anonymous infant, Benjamin Mills' 1750 funeral sermon 'on the occasion of the death of a Pious Young Person', and Samuel Walker's 1753 (second edition) funeral sermon for 'a young man, who was drowned as he was bathing'.

5 For an investigation of the early modern Protestant funeral sermon, see Pritchard, 'The Protestant Funeral Sermon in England, 1688-1800' in *The Oxford Handbook of the British Sermon 1689-1901*.

for readers to follow (or avoid) in their own lives. The importance of the 'exemplary life' is such that some extant biographical narratives, specifically enhanced for publication, are published alongside funeral sermons – and this is often stated openly in the sermon's preface, as in Richard Gilpin's 1700 commemoration of Timothy Manlove (Gilpin). Such enhancements also indicate a reading public whose taste for didactic literature included a *range* of genres including, quite probably, both prose fiction and funeral sermons, thus reinforcing the potential for striking correlations between the modes of characterization found in these parallel forms.

It is relatively straightforward to identify when the English Protestant funeral sermon 'began' after the Protestant Reformation, yet its origins were not without controversy. According to the most stringent interpretations of early Calvinism, the Protestant funeral sermon shouldn't exist at all; scriptural prohibition of clerical attendance at funerals in the first verse of the twenty-first chapter of *Leviticus* technically defined the act of burial as a civil, rather than ecclesiastical, office. Throughout the early modern period, Protestant ministers have been periodically subject to accusations of mercenary behaviour, or hypocrisy, for exchanging public endorsements of spiritual integrity for fame, favour, or profit – charges dangerously reminiscent of the Roman Catholic procedures which had been outlawed by the Protestant ecclesiastical courts (Tromly, 1983, p. 137).

The secularity of funeral sermons was further emphasized by their ancient, pagan, origins in the Classical cultural tradition, as a public function undertaken by a professional body of orators in Athenian society. Singled out for particular criticism was the encomiastic rhetoric of such oratory, since 'praise for the dead' could be purchased (Tromly, 1983, p. 295). Despite the form's pagan and Roman Catholic origins, these aspects came to be comfortably acknowledged in light of what the genre had to offer the reader, as Edmund Calamy makes apparent in his 1694 funeral sermon for fellow minister Samuel Stephens:

Though funeral orations had their rise from heathenish vanity, yet may they (provided all unjust commendation of the dead, and servile flattery of the living, be avoided) be exceeding useful, even among Christians, in helping to make the survivors [sic] better; there being nothing that more promotes the amendment of our lives, than the serious consideration and improvement of the departure of others (Calamy, p. 1).

This cultural transition was achieved through the form's near-universal adoption of an asymmetrical bipartite structure in which the earlier (usually

larger) section was wholly dedicated to Scriptural exposition with little or no reference to the deceased subject whatsoever. Only the funeral sermon's second, biographical, section served to commemorate notable aspects of the deceased's life, death, and spiritual legacy. Although some exceptions to this structural template remain extant, these are strikingly rare during the long eighteenth century as a whole.

It is, arguably, this confinement of the biographical component to the sermon's second section which allowed the form to achieve so much more popular recognition than merely a re-acceptance into the Protestant canon of religious literature. Frederic B. Tromly observes that less than twenty funeral sermons were published during Queen Elizabeth I's reign, but from the latter seventeenth century onwards, multiple editions – and also multiple versions – of printed funeral sermons for notable individuals (as well as those by particularly distinguished ministers) indicates the form's burgeoning popularity within early modern print culture (Tromly, 1983, pp. 306, 311). Edward Pearse's 1674 work *The Great Concern: or, A serious warning to a timely and thorough preparation for death ... recommended as proper to be given at funerals* serves as an example of the form's popularity; the work reached its twenty-fifth edition by 1715 and was never out of print during the first half of the eighteenth century. Funeral sermons present one of the most recognized forms of popular religious literature in the early modern period, and in their published form, dominate a genre which Tony Claydon has observed was 'among the commonest publications of the era [...] many sermons would have made it towards the top of seventeenth-century best-seller lists' (Claydon, 2000, pp. 213-14). Because of their popular recognition, exactly contemporary with the genesis of the early modern novel, this chapter seeks to examine the potential for narratological analysis of published funeral sermons, and in particular, the modes of characterization employed both in novels and this form.

If Monika Fludernik has convincingly argued that narratological analysis may be applied to many forms of expression, both literary and otherwise, what is under investigation here concerns only the printed versions of funeral sermons – and thus not only the narrative discourse of Genette's *narration* and *récit* but also the range of linguistic utterance possible via mediated (textual representations of) language, avoiding altogether the question of verbal and rhetorical 'performance' of sermons (a field of enquiry demanding a very different set of analytical instruments).⁶

6 See, in particular, Fludernik, *An Introduction to Narratology* (2009); Genette, *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation* (1997). On the analysis of oral performance and transmission in

The intrinsic value, in spiritual terms, of biographical narrative in both novels and published funeral sermons also supports Bruce Hindmarsh's description of the period's taste for popular religious literature as one which 'witnessed a significant anthropocentric turn as theology increasingly concerned itself with the sequencing of salvation and mapped this understanding onto experience as an order of conversion' (Hindmarsh, 2005, p. 15). A contemporary account of the spiritual biography's value may also be found in the preface to Theodosia Alleine's *Life of Joseph Alleine*, in 1672, in which Richard Baxter observes that 'the Lives of Holy Men' provide the reader with 'God's Image [...] not only in Precept, but in Reality and Practice; not Pictured, but in the Substance [...] the real Impress and Holiness in the Soul, is that living Image of God' (Baxter, 1672, pp. 13-14). One aspect of the value of religious works containing biographical narrative is precisely this provision of a life with *substance*, specifically, the actual printed text of the funeral sermon itself. Indeed, in some quarters, the printed form of the sermon came to be valued in terms superior to its verbal counterpart. Plenty of extant evidence suggests the texts of published funeral sermons were given as gifts at funerals, a more appropriate gift – as argued by John Dunton in his 1692 commemorative anthology of notable deaths from history entitled *The Mourning Ring* – than the 'bisquets, Gloves, Rings, &c' traditionally given to well-to-do mourners attending the burial (Dunton, 1692). As Isobel Rivers has described, works such as Baxter's own *Christian Directory* of 1673 and Theodosia Alleine's 1672 biography of her husband extol the 'personal, domestic, social, economic, and political advantages of reading over hearing, with particular emphasis on the freedom of the individual reader to choose books most suitable to his or her condition' (Rivers, 1991, p. 116).

In turn, the importance of the individual reader's role in deriving didactic benefits from the published funeral sermon is one shared with contemporary prose fiction (with Defoe and Richardson providing only the most obvious examples). This perspective lends itself to a view of contemporary readership in which, as Henry Godman observed in the preface to his 1688 funeral sermon for Elizabeth Kilbury, the reader must 'act the part of a Pastor and Teacher unto thy self, and thy own Soul [... since t]he Minister's Application without thine own, will be little or no purpose' (Goldman). As both novels and funeral sermons develop, quite consciously, as products of a culture increasingly saturated by print, both make implicit demands on authors who seek the means to convey to readers a viable sense of their

moral authority. Characterization, employed both in early modern funeral sermons and early novels, provides one of those means.

In seeking to convey their moral authority via the medium of popular didactic literature, both minister-authors of funeral sermons and early novelists were subject to vociferous criticism of their hypocrisy and mercenary objectives.⁷ Critics of published funeral sermons included John Dunton in his 1707 poem *The Pulpit-Fool* as well as Daniel Defoe himself, who in his satirical *Hymn to the Funeral Sermon* remarks how 'Pulpit-Praises may be had/According as the Man of God is paid' (Defoe, 1703, p. 2). In 1745, an anonymous author in *A Brief Dissertation on Funeral Solemnities*, observes that

[t]hough some regard should be paid to the old maxim, *De mortuis nil nisi bonum*, and we should not unnecessarily say anything contemptible of the dead, yet if ministers are enjoined to say something in a publick manner concerning a notorious, graceless villain, they ought [...] so to express themselves as not to poison the living (*A Brief Dissertation on Funeral Solemnities*, p. 26).

Such sentiments are far from uncommon, but the most vicious castigation of funeral sermons may be found in contemporary ministers' own writing. In 1701 Philip Stubs defends the brevity of his own funeral sermon for Thomas Wright as a strategy to avoid the 'tedious Heap of foolish, fulsome, false daubings (the too common Entertainment in many such Discourses as this) which whilst they are made for every body, do indeed fit no body' (Stubs, 1701, p. 29). Hypocrisy in funeral sermons, Stubs continues, 'damns all Religion as Craft and Cheat, and Priests of all Perswasions for a Mercenary Tribe', while the corruption of the form has come to dissuade the 'honest well-meaning Parishioner' from even requesting a funeral sermon for his own burial since, '[h]aving seen the Sacred Place so often prostituted to the basest Flattery for filthy Lucre, [he] dares not run the risque of undue Mixtures in his Panegyrick' (Stubs, 1701, p. 30).

Presented within a funeral sermon itself, however, Stubs' arguments detract significantly from his own ability to praise the deceased subject, on whom he is forced to conclude, rather weakly, that

7 The earliest critic of *Robinson Crusoe*, Charles Gildon, specifically attacks Defoe's mixture of religious didacticism and fiction: 'The Christian Religion and the Doctrines of Providence are too Sacred to be deliver'd in Fictions and Lies, nor was this Method ever propos'd or follow'd by any true Sons of the Gospel ... substituted in the Place of the Holy Scriptures themselves' *The Life and Strange Surprizing Adventures of Mr. D- De F--*, of London...

[i]f any of this congregation knew of any remarkable failings in him (which God knows the best of us are subject to) those ye should industriously avoid: If any vertues which I have omitted, as unacquainted with them, those ye must endeavour to imitate [...] and that will be the best application of this part of my discourse (Stubs, 1701, p. 32).

The validity of the ministerial position, then, becomes increasingly paradoxical as the published funeral sermon simultaneously attempts to encompass both self-effacement and self-promotion (through publication). This moral conundrum, not dissimilar to that which taxed writers of early modern fiction such as Defoe and Richardson, continued to plague authors of published funeral sermons throughout the eighteenth century. The authority and durability so often associated with the written word are frequently invoked in funeral sermons, yet ministers' seeming reluctance to publish – their insistence that publication was only undertaken under duress from mourning relations or congregations – is expressed so frequently in prefatory sections that accompany funeral sermons that such disavowals constitute a commonplace of the genre. Notwithstanding these ministerial apologetics, the vilification of 'Hackney funeral sermons' was at its most acute during the long eighteenth century and also has direct implications for the spectrum of characterization strategies employed by ministers in funeral sermons.⁸

Typology and Characterization in Funeral Sermons

This lengthy preamble concerning the origins and cultural status of the published funeral sermon in this period is provided in order to contextualize the more detailed discussion of characterization strategies which follows. Regarding the deceased persons whose biographical narratives constitute the vast majority of published funeral sermons, most are private individuals now largely unremembered by posterity, depicted through funeral sermons tailored to aspects of their public and professional identities. It is frequently possible to make correlations between certain professions and a typological series of virtues – such as the charitable merchant, the philanthropic physician, and so on. A significant majority of funeral sermons, however – almost half of the published funeral sermons still extant from the long eighteenth

8 The phrase 'Hackney funeral sermon' is employed by John Dunton in *The Hazard of a Death-Bed-Repentance, Fairly Argued...* (1708).

century – do not relate to the noble classes but instead commemorate peaceable and pious ministers, both those within the established church and various non-conformist denominations. Additionally, 'virtuous Christian wife' could be posited as a significant sub-category of funeral sermons, with a distinct typological and gender-based complement of prevailing characteristics.

For every typological classification of funeral sermons attempted (for example, by profession), there are inevitable and interesting exceptions. This is, obviously, because the recognition of an individual's character in relation to their worldly profession represents a minute proportion of the myriad ways in which we might come to understand that individual. Notwithstanding this fact, to dismiss characterization in funeral sermons as a simple typological schema of human characteristics or professions, derived largely from the form's classical antecedents, would be reductive and inaccurate. In funeral sermons, the scope for diversity of characterization within broad typologies is large (and far beyond the parameters of this investigation) but not all-encompassing. The admixture of traits and observable actions which contribute to the funeral sermon's portrait of the deceased generally extends beyond one order of characterization. As in literary portraits, the sum of character is always greater than its typological parts, as was collaboratively observed nearly fifty years ago by Robert Scholes, James Phelan and Robert Kellogg:

There is more of myth and of fiction in Don Quixote than in Isabel Archer. There is more of mimesis in her. She may be quixotic, but he is Quixote. She may be typical, but he is archetypical. Yet, in their different ways, they both live. To suggest that one order of characterization is better than another is folly. To recognize that differences exist is the beginning of wisdom (Scholes, Phelan, and Kellogg, 2006, p. 161).

More readily discernible across the whole genre of funeral sermons, however, is the near-universal inclusion of praise for the deceased. Praise almost always unites the qualities of the virtuous Christian with more singular features of the individual's public identity. In 1798 Dr Joseph Harrison of Hatton Garden, for example, is conventionally depicted as 'studious, diligent and indefatigable in his honourable profession as a physician [...] ever willing to deliver his healing balm to the poor and distressed without fee or reward' (Proud, 1789, p. 18). Equally, patriotic, martial, and Christian values are seamlessly united in the commemoration of Sir Cloudesley Shovell in 1707, effusively praised for his efforts to 'rescue the Honour of God and Religion, and vindicate the Laws and Glory of our Nation' while exercising

those talents which 'render'd him a Sanctuary to Friends, and a Terror to the Enemies of his Cause' (Butler, pp. 6-7).

Shovell, now, is most often remembered as the unfortunate agent of the disastrous and arguably ignominious shipwreck which took his and many other lives in the Scilly Isles Disaster, and so the dubious praise expressed here – though common enough in published funeral sermons commemorating military figures – once again raises the possibility that the funeral sermon's tendency to praise the deceased's character compromises the overall sincerity of the genre. The 'sincerity' or authenticity of funeral sermons, however, is not within our remit here; what is significant for our consideration is that the interrogation of an individual's profession in relation to their behaviour may well be deployed as a means of depicting character in other forms of literature, including novels. In other words, we should not concern ourselves with the question of authenticity or 'truth' in the representation of Shovell's character so much as the means by which character is represented in published funeral sermons through an amalgam of attributes including, though not exclusive to, the profession or employment undertaken by the deceased.

Although exalted or noble social status is generally acknowledged with some deference in early modern funeral sermons, it is also common that members of the nobility are primarily praised for their private conduct as Christians, while aspects of their public, noble, or professional conduct are only subsequently acknowledged. In due deference to Christ's synoptic gospels in Chapter 19 of *Matthew*, Verses 23-24 ('it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God'), this tendency of characterization is readily apparent in Daniel Burgess' remark, concerning Elizabeth, Countess of Ranelagh, that '[o]f the Honour of her Parentage [...] I say not anything [...] Though, in the World these do make great Figures, the Church takes them for no more than Cyphers' (Burgess, p. 72). His categorical dismissal of her worldly attributes is immediately followed by a five-page description of the lady's Christian qualities, including 'Spiritual Understanding', 'Holy Affections', and 'Universal Godliness'. It remains impossible to know, now, whether this characterization reflects any authentic sense of the deceased's character, but it does represent one means by which funeral sermons mitigate categorization of 'character' by public or social status (noble, wealthy, privileged) with praise for Christian virtues.⁹ Here, some correlation with fictional

9 Other examples include Birch, *A funeral sermon on... Grace Lady Gethin*; Skynner, *A sermon preached at the funeral of Baptist Earl of Gainsborough...*

works can be found in the early depiction of Squire Allworthy, in which Henry Fielding combines the natural virtues of 'an agreeable person, a sound constitution, a solid understanding, and a benevolent heart' with secondary acknowledgement of Allworthy's possession of 'one of the largest estates in the country' (Fielding, 1968, p. 53).¹⁰

Non-Typological Modes of Characterization in the Early Modern Funeral Sermon

The remainder of this chapter will focus on two quite exceptional, though markedly different, detailed examples of characterization in published funeral sermons. These examples challenge, further still, any received notion that funeral sermons' modes of characterization are 'merely' typological or encomiastic in nature. The first is derived from Bishop of Salisbury Gilbert Burnet's 1692 funeral sermon for eminent Fellow of the Royal Society Sir Robert Boyle. During the course of a lengthy description of the deceased's well-known piety, Burnet observes that

the very name of God was never mentioned by [Boyle] without a pause and a visible stop in his discourse, in which one who knew him most particularly above twenty years, has told me that he was so exact, that he does not remember to have observed him once to fail in it' (Burnet, 1692, p. 24).

What is immediately striking about this seemingly minor detail (that is, a notable tendency to pause after naming God, as well as confirmation of this habit via a lifelong friend) – which is included within a much more elaborate portrait of Boyle's religious character – is its idiosyncratic nature and, related to this, how ostensibly 'useless' this detail of characterization would be as moral or spiritual exemplar. Burnet's detailing of Boyle's idiosyncratic verbal 'tic' *does*, however, offer a vivid sense of the deceased's Christian fervour, and so still fulfils the ostensible didactic purpose of the funeral sermon in depicting the (spiritual) character of the deceased for the benefit of readers. Nevertheless, there is no discernible spiritual benefit to be gained from pausing after naming God, or in emulating the behaviour of one who does.

¹⁰ A further consideration of exemplary character in novels and related concepts of 'type' and 'case' may be found in Clemens Lugowski's *Form, Individuality and the Novel*, in particular his discussion of 'The style of Wickram's cautionary novels', pp. 116–38.

Yet the opposite point – that literary fiction sometimes adopts the more conventional (exemplary) modes of characterization generally seen in funeral sermons – is certainly apparent and demonstrates the rarity of Burnet's particular mode of characterization considered here. Idiosyncracies in the depiction of fictional characters are common enough; often, however, these serve to reinforce rather than undermine prevailing features of the character under scrutiny. Squire Allworthy's refusal to remarry, or Uncle Toby's reluctance to kill a fly, present just such exemplary qualities in the form of idiosyncracies; in the case of Allworthy,

he would often talk a little whimsically on this head: for he sometimes said, he looked on himself as still married, and considered his wife as only gone a little before him, a journey which he should most certainly, sooner or later, take after her; and that he had not the least doubt of meeting her again, in a place where he should never part with her more (Fielding, 1968, p. 54).

Here, Fielding elaborates further the moral and religious integrity of his subject in terms of his steadfast fidelity and Christian resolve, and does so in a manner which might be emulated by others (in not remarrying after the death of a first spouse). Similarly, Uncle Toby's benign behaviour towards flies might be emulated by others in a manner which Boyle's verbal pausing would not.

Elsewhere in the funeral sermon Burnet offers a more conventional encomiastic portrait of Boyle's spiritual integrity, described at length in the pages preceding and following the detail of the verbal idiosyncrasy. Taken together, the exemplary traits and the idiosyncratic one are closely aligned to Burnet's repeated observation that the deceased was a singular and remarkable individual, 'one man among a thousand have I found' (*Ecclesiastes* Chapter 7, verse 28), intellectually brilliant and innovative in the application of his mental faculties, and thus not so much an example for ordinary men to copy but one simply to admire (Burnet, 1692, p. 6). As Burnet expresses it,

The different degrees and ranks of men, with relation to their inward powers and excellencies, is a surprising but melancholy observation; many seem to have only a mechanical life, as if there were a moving and speaking spring within them, equally void both of reason and goodness. The whole race of men is for so many years of life, little better than encreasing puppits [...] (Burnet, 1692, p. 6).

Fitting praise indeed for one of the greatest minds of the new sciences, but hardly intended to inspire readers to imitate Boyle's example. Burnet continues, however, in a vein which allows for a more encouraging perspective on mankind's potential for greatness:

But as there is a dark side of humane nature, so there is likewise a bright one, the flights and compass of awakened souls is no less amazing. The vast croud of figures that lie in a very narrow corner of the brain [...] The strange reaches of the mind in abstracted speculations, and the amazing progress that is made from some simple truths to theories, that are the admiration as well as the entertainment of the thinking part of mankind (Burnet, 1692, p. 7).

Ultimately, Burnet's depiction of Boyle's 'exceptional' character, if not exemplary, offers readers the opportunity to be more indirectly inspired, and much greater scope to reflect productively upon the chiaroscuro of 'Humane Nature' and the capacity for 'amazing progress' in some men's minds.

My second example offers an entirely different method of characterising the deceased subject, one heavily influenced by aspects of the published funeral sermon which remain formally separate from the main body of the sermonic text (specifically, the title page and preface). In fictional texts, such narrative components can be described in Genette's terms as part of the 'paratext'.¹¹ In Thomas Easton's 1692 funeral sermon for John Melford, a young man who died after a fall from a horse at the age of eighteen years, the minister's preface makes clear that the whole purpose of publication is to quash the false and heinous rumours which spread subsequent to the sermon's original reading at Melford's internment. In his published text, Easton states that the document in the reader's hands is in 'exactly the same Method and Language that 'twas first written, without so much as altering a sentence, scarce a single word' (Easton). It seems that, following Melford's funeral, local gossip had suggested that the deceased's accidental death occurred through inebriation and, in direct response to these rumours, Easton states in the preface to his published funeral sermon that he 'was personally with [the deceased] within one hour [after the fall], and neither his relations, nor myself, nor other friends could in the least suspect [the deceased's being drunk]' (Easton).

11 For a discussion of the definition of Genette's paratext, see Genette and Maclean, 1991.

We are not in a position to know if Easton is truthful in asserting that the text of this funeral sermon is identical to that which he originally preached, nor have I been able to find any other information concerning John Melford in order to interrogate Easton's depiction of him. This is not really the point; what concerns us here is that the strategies of characterization deployed in the printed version of this funeral sermon, portraying the character of the deceased John Melford, are mitigated by Easton's prefatory remarks as well as the sermon's title page (both of which would be encountered by readers prior to their reading of the main sermonic text). Specifically, Easton's title page makes reference to Chapter 13 of *Luke*, Verses 2-5, in which the disciple considers the fate of the eighteen innocent Galileans crushed to death when the Tower of Siloam collapsed. This allusion to the innocence of those who sometimes die a premature, if accidental, death might *seem* to relate simply to Melford's actual cause of death (a violent fall) but the contents of Easton's title page and preface were added for publication, and differ entirely from the key Biblical text for the original funeral sermon.¹² In seeking to quash the ugly rumours that Melford's violent death was a divine judgement on the sin of drunkenness, Easton's title page is further annotated with the solemn observation that 'Strange Judgements don't always infallibly denote the sufferers to be extraordinarily guilty', thus tacitly warning readers not to misconstrue the meaning of the narrative which will follow.

Moreover, in his preface, Easton draws attention to his own circumstances, rather than those of the deceased, when he alludes to St Paul's frustration in *Galatians* 4, Verse 16, commenting that 'Mine is a Worse Case', since it is his duty to correct others' misinterpretation of sin (Easton, 1692). In short, Easton provides a spirited defence of the deceased's character, not through his narrative discourse (since this ostensibly comprises merely the reiterated content of the oral version of his sermon), but instead, in his prefatory remarks and title page. Such a strategy is further notable in terms of funeral sermon characterization because the sermonic content is specifically deployed in printed form as a means of more accurately depicting the character of the deceased. In a comparative manner, in eighteenth-century popular fiction, Defoe, Richardson and Fielding all offer paratextual or prefatory discourses in

12 Easton's original Scriptural text (which proceeds directly after his preface) offers a considerably more anodyne reflection on Melford's death from *Psalms* 103, Verses 15-16: 'The life of mortals is like grass, they flourish like a flower of the field; the wind blows over it and it is gone, and its place remembers it no more'.

order to clarify or direct readers' understanding of the narrative which follows.

Taken together, the character portraits of Sir Robert Boyle and John Melford demonstrate the sheer diversity of characterization techniques apparent in a hitherto largely neglected form of print culture, in particular, one which enjoyed such a notable level of contemporary popular recognition in parallel with early modern works of literary fiction. It remains to be seen how best to address the vexed question of 'genre', whether 'literary' or otherwise, in considering the scope for narratological analysis of early modern texts.

Conclusion

In the introduction to this chapter I offered a series of reasons justifying the application of narratological modes of character analysis to a nonfictional historical genre. Some of these reasons were ahistoric and related to human cognitive function (broadly: humans do not distinguish, much, when reading about fictional versus nonfictional characters). Moreover, perceived as a complex form of historical narrative, funeral sermons might also be conducive to narratological analysis although it remains to be seen what precise role is played by 'experientiality' in this particular (sermonic) genre of nonfiction.

As relevant to both its Classical origins and its radical reformation through the Christian and subsequently Protestant didactic traditions, the funeral sermon bears witness to the character of the deceased almost wholly in terms of exemplary, and spiritual, conduct (whether positive or negative), and for didactic purposes. This is not to say that extraordinary individuals – such as Robert Boyle – are not recognized for their singularity of character, nor that unusual modes of characterization (such as those used by Thomas Easton to depict John Melford) are not extant. Funeral sermons are, however, principally concerned with the spiritual dimension of the deceased's character. Yet near-identical modes of characterization are readily apparent in myriad contemporary forms, including Newgate confessions, spiritual biographies, and early novels. In terms of the true scope for narratological analysis of characterization, it is this wider context of historical and biographical narratives in early modern print culture, in which both funeral sermons and the novel found popular recognition, which invites our further scrutiny.

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The Use of Paratext in Popular Eighteenth-Century Biography

The Case of Edmund Curll

Pat Rogers

Why Curll, of all people? A natural reaction to the title of this essay might be to wonder what the rascally publisher Edmund Curll has to do with narratology, the theme of this volume. It might be thought that Curll (1683-1747) was an interesting fellow, no doubt, but scarcely a pioneer of writerly innovation. The case I shall try to make here is that Curll's most characteristic productions, above all the instant biographies he brought out in the late 1720s and early 1730s, do tell us something about paratext – specifically on the way it constitutes a type of narrative statement – and may even exemplify changes in the shape of biography. In the limited space available, I can only point to a few salient features of his method, such as it was, and provide some empirical instances.

Western life-writing in classical and Renaissance times had been dominated by the Plutarchian model. This usually meant something brief, even elliptical, emphasizing character, and incorporating only a selection of significant incidents. Comparatively little use is made of letters until the time of James Boswell – though William Mason had anticipated the *Life of Johnson* under this aspect in his work *The Poems of Mr. Gray. To Which are Prefixed Memoirs of his Life and Writings* (1775). In English examples scant use is made of commonplace diurnal details; the biographer stands outside the narrative (again a fashion not followed by Boswell); we regularly detect a certain *pudeur* about using gossip in serious contexts; and the exemplary quality of the story outweighs picturesque 'human' touches. Few of these conventions, or shibboleths, held much appeal for Curll.

Output

Between 1706 and 1747 Curll was involved in the publication of some 1100 titles, of which more than 40 can be regarded as self-standing or full

biographies.¹ A number went into several editions, real or factitiously described as such. Some of these are short; some are very long, padded out by various devices to occupy hundreds of pages. In the majority of cases, the volume in question constituted the first such treatment of a particular individual, though it has seldom remained the best. Curll himself was probably responsible for writing as many of twenty of these, though he almost always makes no claim on the title-page or in advertisements. In other instances he assuredly edited the work of others.

These books ranged across several categories. Authors were the subject of the largest number of items: they included John Gay, Joseph Addison, Richard Steele, Matthew Prior, Delarivier Manley, William Congreve, William Wycherley, and John Philips. The printer John Barber, who performed the presswork for many works by Jonathan Swift, stands in a group of his own. Among churchmen and theologians we find Gilbert Burnet, Thomas Sprat, Francis Atterbury, and John Tillotson. Add to these scholars and antiquarians such as Thomas Hearne, Jean Le Clerc, and William Dugdale; thinkers such as John Locke; free thinkers such as Walter Moyle and Matthew Tindal (perhaps also John Toland, though this may be wrongly ascribed to Curll's list). A further category of politicians includes Robert Walpole, the Duke of Shrewsbury, the Earl of Halifax (also a writer of sorts), Arthur Maynwaring, and the Earl of Wharton. Physicians on the list are Dr. John Radcliffe, immortalized by the Camera, Observatory, and Infirmary in Oxford, and Dr. John Freind. From the acting profession come Thomas Betterton, Robert Wilks, and Anne Oldfield, a performer admired by Voltaire, and commemorated in her biography among other accomplishments for her liaison with Maynwaring. Soldiers, misers, Jacobite conspirators, and historians help to make up the tally. A miscellaneous group includes the astrologer John Partridge (victim of Swift's Bickerstaff hoax); the deaf soothsayer Duncan Campbell (a life formerly – but no longer – believed to have been written by Daniel Defoe); and historic figures such as Jane Shore, Lady Jane Gray, and the legendary first king of Britain, Lucius – this was put out to trade off a play by Manley currently on the London stage. Perhaps the most distinguished individual within all these categories is Cicero. A few were presented as autobiographies, including those on Manley again and on the adventurer John Ker, whose indiscreet revelations landed himself in gaol and Curll in the pillory. We should also note that the bookseller reprinted a number of the shorter productions, as well as fresh items, in collections of composite lives.

1 The count of 1100 includes new editions of previously published items.

Not included in this reckoning are more than thirty ‘memoirs’ appended to the works of writers published by Curll. On the surface the count is impressive, since among those involved are some considerable figures. We might name at random Vincent Voiture, Nicholas Rowe, Thomas Burnet (author of *The Sacred Theory of the Earth*, and an inexhaustible source of material for Curll), Jean de La Bruyère, George Farquhar, St. Évremond, Boileau, John Aubrey, John Pomfret, Sir Philip Sidney, Andrew Marvell (in the first collected edition of his works), the Earl of Rochester, the Duke of Buckingham, Sir Thomas Browne, Lord Roscommon, the mercurial Duke of Wharton, the neo-Latin author Bonefonius (Jean Bonnefons), and others – this is not to mention Julius Caesar and Theocritus. An outlier is the translation of three portions of *De viris illustribus* by Cornelius Nepos. Finally there are the copies of last wills commonly included with the published life, but also sold separately. At least twenty-five of these survive, and they too were spliced together into collections – bundling is not an invention of modern financiers.

Components

A characteristic Curll biography, as defined here, will contain a number of features, some of which serve to define by negatives the main goals of biography up to this point in time, especially those in the Plutarchian tradition. These include:

- A narrative of incident, without any subjugation of detail to the overall view of the subject.
- A willingness to include material of any kind Curll had been able to obtain, either by writing to friends and relatives, raking the dustbins, or merely by sending someone down to Doctors’ Commons (the ecclesiastical court where probate registers were kept), to get a will for a small fee.
- The habit of throwing in these things into the ongoing narrative as they come to hand. By what seems pure literary incompetence, he managed to create an often arresting cento which was before its time – before Sterne, Blake, Jean-Paul, and Carlyle he brought some of the effects associated with Robert Burton or Rabelais into non-satiric discourse. He even constructed a written collage long before the term was applied to literature.
- Regular interventions at arbitrary moments to boast about his discoveries and to deplore the failure of his rivals to lay hands on such privileged

material. At times the result approaches the effects of metanarrative. In some respects his productions can even resemble A.J.A. Symons's *The Quest for Corvo* (1934) or Ian Hamilton's *In Search of J.D. Salinger* (1998), where we may learn less about the putative subject than the process of attempting to come to terms with him or her.

- Elaborate documentation for the sake of it. No one snapped up more unconsidered trifles than Curll, and few trifles were more justly unconsidered than the scraps of correspondence he was able on occasions to ferret out. The interest of this material lies in its associative quality, not its content. It is no paradox that the great master of publicity made his name by exposing what had up till now been considered intensely private. As it happens, this is much the way that some celebrity biography has gone in our own day.
- Embedding official-looking documents that appear to confer a serious quality to the narrative. The most astounding example occurs in the third volume of *The Memoirs and Secret Negotiations of John Ker, of Kersland, Esq; (1727)*. Curll had got into very serious trouble over the first two volumes of the memoirs, in which the former spy released some embarrassing details about diplomatic activities during the reign of Queen Anne. Indeed it was this work – not as often supposed his obscene publications – that landed him in the pillory very soon after the third volume came out. So keen was Curll to boost the appeal of his production that he bookended this text with two curious items. The first is an affidavit at the outset, signed S. Gray, and purporting to guarantee the authenticity of the memoirs. Its author was Susanna Gray, a mysterious woman who may have lived with Curll around this period. The second was an appendix which actually gives the full indictment by the King's Bench court of the publisher in both Latin and English, setting out in complete form the accusations against Curll, named as 'a Malitious and Seditious Man' (with much more along those lines). Admittedly the imprint carries no name, and technically there was no obvious proof that the bookseller had been responsible for the new volume: but then Curll had kept his identity out of the two earlier volumes which had prompted the case against him.

In general Plutarch's approach has been effaced by that of John Aubrey, whose *Brief Lives* remained undisturbed in the Ashmolean Museum, but whose antiquarian volumes on local history such as *The Natural History and Antiquities of the County of Surrey* (published by Curll in 1723) had begun to appear in print. Most of these were published under the auspices of Richard

Rawlinson, the nonjuring bishop and Jacobite who furnished Curll with much of his most saleable material. It was probably Rawlinson who supplied many of the purloined manuscripts that the bookseller brought before the public gaze (see Tashjian, Tashjian, and Enright, 1990; Baines and Rogers, 2007, pp. 132-38). But the snippets of information from which Curll typically assembled his text do not provide a succinct and relatively coherent picture of the subject, as with Aubrey's method of terse summary. They contribute rather to a loose-knit fabric in which anecdote, vital data and embedded citations mesh with one another.

Modes of Paratext

The foundational document here is of course Gérard Genette (1987). *Seuils* was translated into several languages, including an English version in 1997. We should begin with some semantic issues. The word *seuil* in French, which is cognate with *la soglia* in Italian, looks forwards and backwards. Where in the English language we use words such as threshold or doorstep, we typically think of progress into a space: the good thing about *seuil* is that we exit as well as enter that way. Genette and his followers have shown how *le péritexte* regularly invades the text proper. In his book Genette explores '*l'entour du texte*', its surroundings. The Greek preposition *peri*, as is well known, means 'about', but also 'beside, on the edge of', shown in terms we have derived such as periphrasis or perimeter. The work deals with a threshold that obviously has to be crossed. Even simply to name and conceptualize this peritext is to open up an expectation of border crossings and transgression. While the school of Genette seldom allude to biography or historiography, prime forms of narrative discourse, I am suggesting that the notion is as applicable here as in fiction, where these matters are usually detected.

Famously Jacques Derrida told us, 'Il n'y a pas de hors texte' (see Derrida, 1997, 158). Certainly in Curll's volumes what should be external, or preliminary, or supplementary, regularly infiltrates the main body of the book, and becomes constitutive rather than ancillary. We might think here of parallel French idioms: *hors d'oeuvre* of course, but also *hors série*, out of sequence, unclassifiable, and extending to the sense of incomparable or unrivalled. Then there is *hors sujet*, irrelevant, an idea highly relevant to what ends up in Curll's books. It may be recalled that Derrida made much of *supplémentarité*. As far as I understand it, he claims that the supplementary insinuates itself into the centre, in other words not just accreting but substituting or replacing as well as augmenting: as it inscribes, it erases.

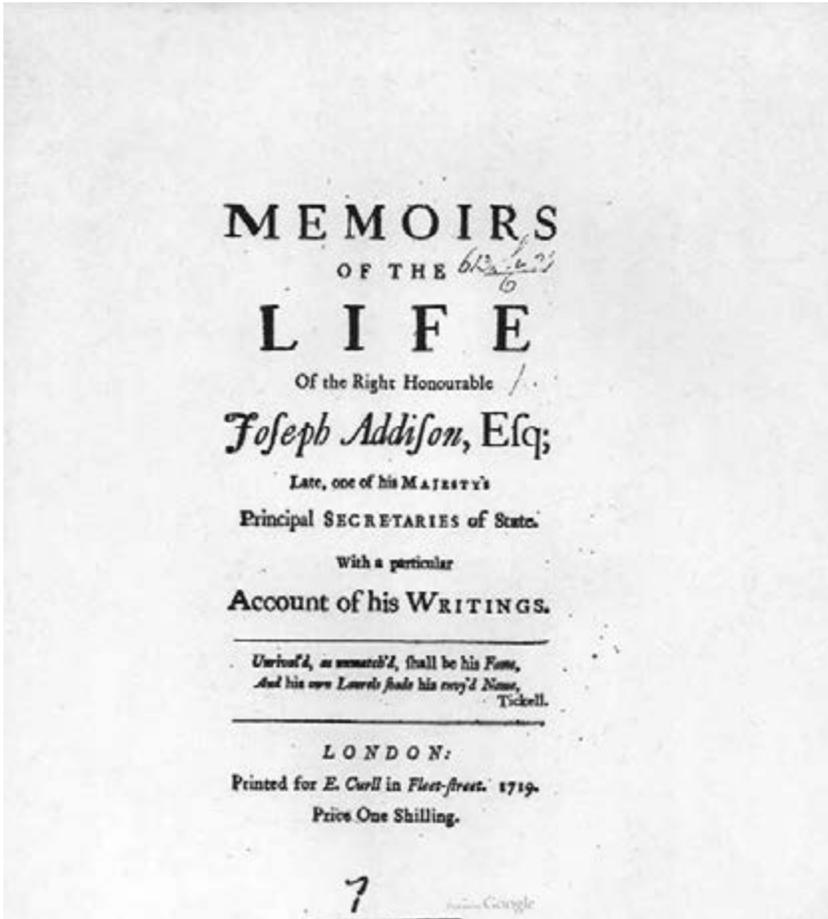
Curll loved supplements, which took many forms, such as new editions with slightly expanded contents. Since his productions are regularly constructed on the principle of the assembly toy Lego, as discrete gatherings which can be, and are, bound together in almost any order, they readily accommodate themselves to such a process. More obviously than any other publisher in early modern times, he takes advantage of the fact that buyers commonly acquired their books in sheets, and selected the binding style for themselves. This can lead to an aleatory quality in his works since we may encounter surviving copies on a variety of different assemblages, recalling the volumes of William Burroughs and B.S. Johnson in the 1960s. Of course he did not consciously attempt to create such an effect; but the productions of chance would seem to produce much the same results as a more purposeful use of the technique. Burroughs and Johnson may just mimic the processes which followed naturally from the way Curll did things.

Some of the elements of paratext have generally been defined as follows: Title-page (with half-title); Contents; Dedication; Preface; Affidavit/testimonial; Commendatory letters; Verse; Elegies; Footnotes; Postscript; Appendices; Supplement; Key; Index; Advertisements; Appendages, e.g. wills. One addition might be lists, for which Curll had a great fondness: as in *Faithful Memoirs of the Life, Amours and Performances, of that Justly Celebrated, and most Eminent Actress of her Time, Mrs. Anne Oldfield* (1731), where eight pages near the end set out well over 100 roles in which the subject performed. The array of features just supplied excludes graphic and visual items, such as frontispieces and plates, which Curll did employ, as well as typographic devices like borders and ornaments – one reason for omitting the latter here is that Curll employed a very wide range of printers over his career and never developed a unique house-style in matters such as layout.

However, he was master of almost all the elements just set out. Some examples will be given shortly, but a rapid summary will be help at this point. His title-pages are famous for their deceptions – for example, by announcing a new edition on a cancel title-page (that is, a new page that would be bound or pasted in to replace the original) while using old unsold sheets. Another common trick was to attribute a given book to a pseudonymous writer who bore a name suspiciously close to a real one. This happened in the case of several productions by ‘Mr. Joseph Gay’, not far from the successful John Gay, famous for *The Beggar’s Opera* and other works. These items were mainly written by his hack author John Durant Breval.²

² Typography can also help here: thus *Memoirs of the Life and Writings of the Right Honorable Joseph Addison, Esq; with his Character, by Sir Richard Steele* (1719: 1724), by Giles Jacob, makes

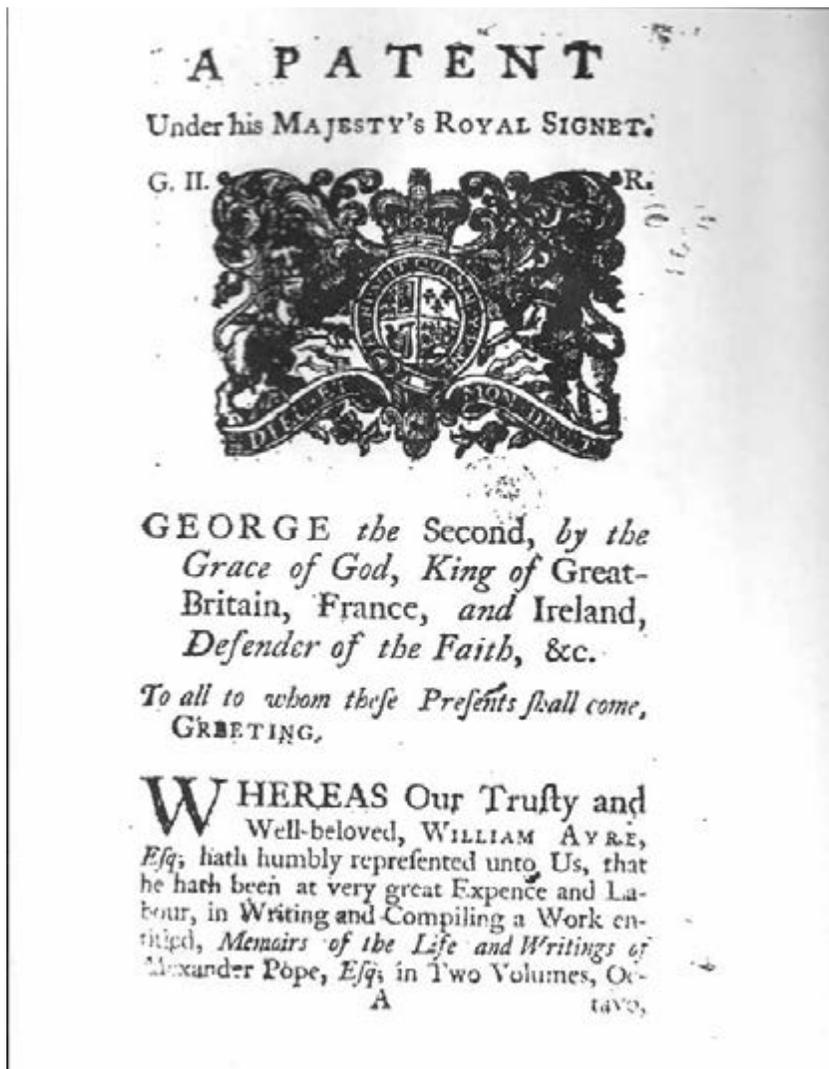
Illustration 1



His half-titles at the start of the volume often supply a name for the book quite different from that on the full title-page, which follows immediately afterwards in the printed sequence. On repeated occasions his imprint is unreliable, very frequently concealing his own responsibility, while the date of publication is put forward or back without compunction. He likes to supply affidavits guaranteeing the legitimacy of what follows, and more rarely a warrant from the Lord Chamberlain or other high authority (see for example

its point by printing Steele's name in the same large font size as that of Addison, even though Steele's contribution is simply a few paragraphs lifted, doubtless without permission, from the dedication to *The Drummer*.

Illustration 2



the late biography by 'William Ayre' of Pope (1745) – Curll may not have written this, as is often claimed, but he was almost certainly responsible for 'a patent under his Majesty's royal signet' claiming privilege at the start).

Contents lists do not invariably match up with all the material included. Footnotes are another speciality, utilized most often to advertise items from the publisher's catalogue. Supplements, already mentioned, include last-minute updates as new material reaches the bookseller. Keys, which

were used to decode the identity of persons mentioned within the text in a disguised form, find a place appended to scandalous works such as the so-called autobiography of Manley, published as *The Adventures of Rivella*, 2nd edition (1715); but they move from paratext to text in works such as Curll's *Complete Key to the Tale of a Tub* (1710) and *Compleat Key to the Dunciad* (1728), along with a few other such items. Indexes are generally found in the longer biographies among those considered here, but they seldom are very detailed or well compiled.

This leaves advertisements, a branch of the trade in which Curll had few superiors. They may appear at any point in the book, but most commonly on the verso of the half-title, before or after the prelims, or at the end. If placed at the end, they may be integral parts of the make-up of the volume, printed on the concluding leaves of the last gathering. Alternatively they may form a separate gathering, which bears a signature which aligns them with the entire collation of the volume. Just as often they are bibliographically separate entities, which might or might not form part of the whole in any given copy. The simplest to classify here are cases where Curll included his full catalogue, running to 16 or 24 pages, at the end of the text. Their presence in surviving copies is a little hit and miss, but the evidence would mainly indicate that they were routinely included in some publications – thus any titles with relevance to Pope are likely to have the catalogue present at the end, since items of Popiana figure so heavily in these lists. It should be stated again that much incidental advertising goes on within the main text.

Uses of Paratext

The paratextual modes employed by Curll do not exactly correspond with those found in the typology set out by Genette, who stresses the need to define categories in advance of any examination of their historical evolution: 'Their establishment is a precondition of any attempt to provide historical perspective' (Genette, 1997, pp. 13-14). This arises from his declared ambition to offer 'a synchronic and not a diachronic study'. If we look at Curll's procedures in a historical context, we shall require some adjustment of the categories.

In practice, we find an array of devices whose principal goals might be summarized as follows:

- Authority and authenticity. Curll generally aims more openly for the latter, but elements such as affidavits and warrants, already mentioned, clearly seek to achieve the former.

- Novelty or at least recency. This most often shows up in dates appended to letters he received shortly before publication, provided sometimes in the body of the text but usually in prefatory material or in some kind of postscript. By way of example, in the five volumes of *Mr. Pope's Literary Correspondence* (1735-1737) these dates may be as recent as a few days before publication.³
- Competitive advantage. Supplementary materials such as a preface denounce rival versions as spurious or incomplete (a claim often implicit in title-pages or advertisements).
- Supplementation. Curll engaged in this across almost every kind of book he published, but a good instance from his output of biographies occurs in [William Pittis], *Some Memoirs of the Life of John Radcliffe, M.D. Interspersed with Several Original Letters: His Two Speeches in Parliament, and a True Copy of his Last Will and Testament*. The item appeared in April 1715; during May a *Supplement to the First Edition* was issued both as an independent work and as a component of a second edition.⁴
- Reuse and rebranding of old materials. The Radcliffe life supplies some illustration of this, as the title was altered for the third edition and the title-page heavily reworked so that a buyer might even assume there were substantial new materials (not so). On scores of occasions – perhaps little short of a hundred times – Curll brought out a work with a cancel title-page, trumpeting a new edition, where the reality was that the rest of the volume consisted of unsold sheets from an earlier. The interval between these 'editions' might be as much as twenty years or more, or as little as a few days – a striking example occurs in the case of ['William Musgrave'], *The Life of the Right Honourable Sir Robert Walpole*, where the first edition was advertised on 27 September 1731, the second on 1 October, and the third on 11 October. A substantially new version with a fresh section on the family history of the Walpoles (and a new title) appeared in 1732. The family history portion came out again in 1738, with another fresh title, and once more this consists of the old sheets.
- Vindication. Curll actually uses this word from time to time. He may have been involved in the first edition of [John Oldmixon], *Memoirs of*

3 This effect was facilitated by Curll's publishing strategies. He produced a second and sometimes a third edition of volumes in this series shortly after their original appearance, typically in a different format (e.g. duodecimo following an octavo version).

4 The new material was also grafted into the text of the third edition (1716) and the fourth edition (1736).

the Life of John Lord Somers... With a Large Introduction, in Vindication of the Modern Biography (1716), although he did not advertise his claim prior to a supposed new edition said to be in the press in 1734. But more regularly he uses extra-textual means to justify the need for a given book and the means he has used to access the materials.

- Promotion of his stock, through advertisements, catalogues, booklists, footnotes, addenda and other methods. The brand is enhanced by extensive self-advertisement, with the insertion of his own doings, correspondence and publications. Thus the main flow of the volumes of Pope's letters (insofar as they have one) is interrupted by items such as a sneering dedication to Pope, doggerel verses celebrating the bookseller's triumph over his adversary in a case that came before the House of Lords, or notices of a print of Pope's house and garden entitled *The Honour of Parnassus* – a deliberately invasive gesture that carries the quarrel of the two men away from the pages of the current volume to a larger extra-textual space.

We could add to these objectives a greater opportunity for cheating, since much of the fraudulent side of Curll's output relates to claims he makes in a paratextual rather than a textual location. It is here that we find misdating, confusing or duplicated titles, misleading descriptions of previous bibliographical history, and other devices meant to throw buyers of the scent, or to circumvent the restrictions of the Copyright Act of 1709. Much of the appeal of his books lies in claims surrounding the text, rather than in the narrative itself.

Representative Cases

It would require a space equivalent to the length of this book to document in full the characteristics of a Curll biography, as outlined above. All that can be done here is to provide a brief sampling of particular cases as they illustrate features already noted, and the use made of the components listed. They make up a fairly arbitrary set, but not in any respect a misleading one.

Thus, *The Life of the Late Honourable Robert Price, Esq; One of the Justices of his Majesty's Court of Common-Pleas* (1734) is alleged on its title-page to have been 'printed by the authority of the family'. Such authority seems to derive from the countenance given to it by the judge's estranged wife, Lucy Price, a remarkable woman who acted – illegally of course, since she could not enter the inns of court – as an attorney for individuals in civil and criminal cases.

She supplied an affidavit testifying to the authenticity of Curll's *Memoirs of Matthew Tindal* (1733), which was itself a text centrally concerned with a question of authenticity – that is, the legitimacy of claims made by the writer Eustace Budgell to the estate of the freethinker Tindal. Lucy had probably drafted the will that was in dispute, and could not be regarded by any stretch of the imagination as an impeachable witness. There followed a long struggle between Budgell and the deceased man's expected heir, Nicholas Tindal, a clergyman and translator of Rapin de Thoyras's *History of England*. Curll became heavily involved in the episode, reprinting a copy of the will, contacting the Prime Minister Robert Walpole about it, and publishing pamphlets on the topic. The dedication to Lucy Price in the *Memoirs* is signed by Curll, and her testimonial is dated five days later. Budgell's fragile mind was unhinged by the affair and he ultimately threw himself into the Thames.

Curll's self-justifying prefaces are a thing of wonder in themselves. Take for example *Mrs. Manley's History of her Own Life and Times. Published from her original manuscript. The Fourth Edition. With a Preface Concerning the Present Publication* (1724). In reality, this is no more than a reissue of *The Adventures of Rivella* (1714), with a substitute title-page together with the addition of three leaves 'To the reader' before the preface, and a key at the end. The reissue came about because Delarivier Manley had recently died. The note at the start begins, 'It must be confessed, That these *Memoirs* have been written above Ten Years; and, likewise, That they have been published as long, though under a different Title. The Reason of which, as well as to prove them Genuine, I shall lay before the Reader with as much Brevity, as the Fact will admit of' (sig, A2^r). Curll, who signs the note at its conclusion, describes his original dealings with the author in 1714, and cites three of her letters, expressing friendship and gratitude to him as well as her readiness to carry out more work for him. The document openly admits that Charles Gildon (a frequent presence among Curll's stable of hacks) had originally planned to write a hostile account of Manley, and explains that she felt the need to provide her own more authentic narrative. It further seeks to justify the subterfuge of presenting the narrative on its first appearance as a translation of a foreign work. We cannot know how much of this is true, although the letters may well have been genuine. The professions of 'honesty' serve an obvious rhetorical purpose and they had enough plausibility to mislead some of those engaged in the study of Manley for a long time to come.⁵

5 For a full recent discussion, see Carnell, 2008, pp. 15-16, 130-32. See also the edition of *Rivella* by Zelinsky, Manley (1999).

Whenever possible, Curll enlisted his main antagonist as an unwitting collaborator, appropriating whatever he could. Thus, while he was in gaol in 1727, he had his son Henry issue *Some Memoirs of the Life of Lewis Maximilian Mahomet, Gent. Late Servant to his Majesty*. Curll also made oblique use of the other Scriblerian satirists, notably Swift and Gay. *The Life of Mr. John Gay, Author of The Beggar's Opera, &c.* (1733) contains a tasteless set of 'Verses on the Death of Mr. Gay'. The title of this item suggests that the compiler had somehow got wind of Swift's verses on his own death, which had been first drafted around 1731 but remained unpublished for some years. This volume carries a dedication to Gay's sisters and legatees, Catherine Baller and Joanna Fortescue, otherwise little known to history. It opens, 'Ladies, The Authority of the Gentleman from whom I have borrowed the Motto, prefixed to these Papers, is a sufficient Vindication of their Design' (sig. π3^r). The convenient quotation on the title-page, printed just above a vignette of Gay, comes from William Congreve. Midway through the text, the author suspends his discussion of *The What D'ye Call It*, a farce co-written by Gay with Scriblerian colleagues, as he has received a letter dated 28 December 1732, less than a month after the writer died, and five weeks before the biography appeared. This praises the parodies of tragedy found in the play. The interruption ends with a puff for a racy poem called *The Hornbook*, which came out about this time and in which Curll apparently had some interest. After this the narration resumes with no sense of embarrassment on the part of the compiler, recognisably Curll himself. Self-evidently, chronology must suffer in cases like this.

The typical form of these biographies was of course fully apparent to critics of Curll, and they were many. His main scourge was the *Grub-street Journal*, the weekly organ that served as a kind of streaming *Dunciad*. Another work devoted to the acting profession, *The Life of that Eminent Comedian Robert Wilks, Esq;* had come out in 1732 (dated '1733'). This is what the paper made of it on 8 March 1733: 'We could not refuse to publish *gratis* the following *Content* [...] written by a much greater comedian'.

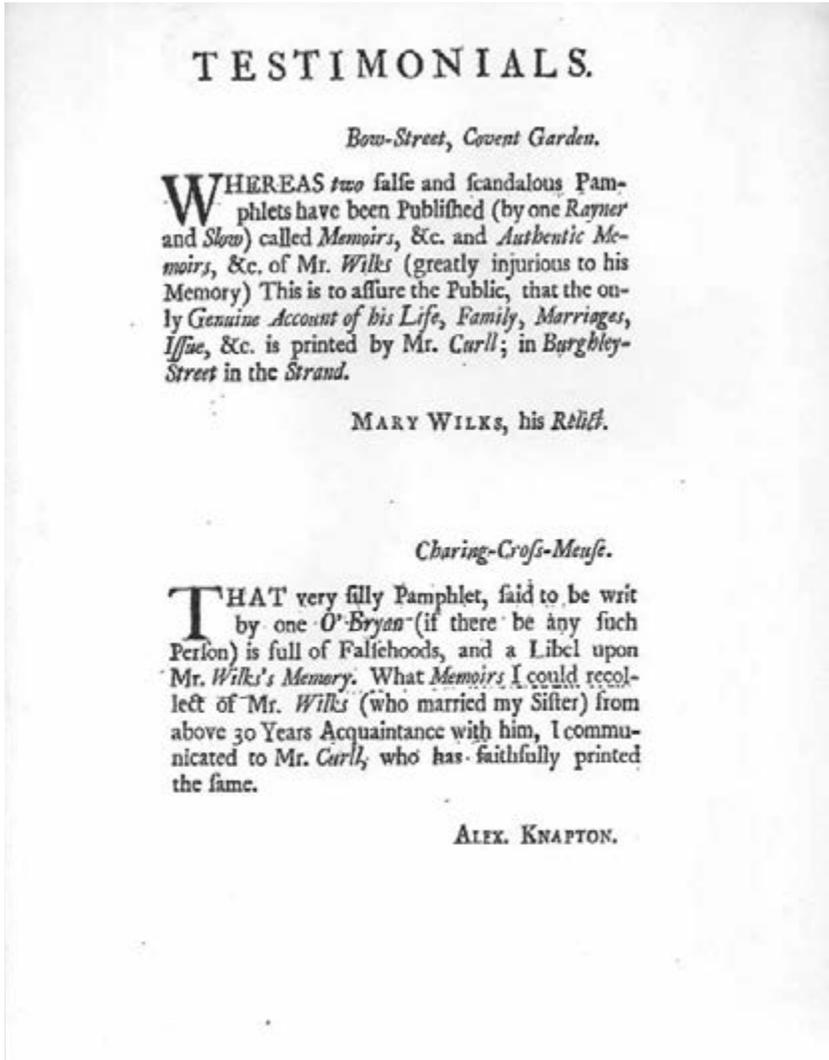
False title-page and dedication.	Pag. 8
<i>Preface</i> , with a catalogue of <i>Lives</i> printed for, and (most of them) supposed to be written by Mr. E. CURL.	6
<i>Introduction</i> taken from <i>Two Tatlers</i> , and one of Mr. FARQUHAR's <i>Prefaces</i> .	2
A digression about Mr. FARQUHAR, with a <i>Prologue</i> and <i>Epilogue</i> .	6
A second digression about Mr. FARQUHAR, with a <i>Prologue</i> and <i>Epilogue</i> .	8

A third digression concerning Mr. HEN. NORRIS, called JUBILEE DICKY, and his wife Mrs. ELIZ. KNAPTON.	2
A fourth digression, containing an honest confession of Mr. CIBBER in a <i>Dedication</i> .	1
A fifth digression, giving an account of the preference of Mrs. OLD-FIELD to Mrs. ROGERS.	2
An <i>Essay on the action of the Stage</i> , containing characters of four Plays, in which Mr. WILKS had the most eminent parts; taken word for word from the <i>History of the Stage</i> , published in Mrs. OLDFIELD'S Life by Mr. CURL, and taken originally from the <i>Tatlers</i> .	4
Characters of some other <i>Plays</i> , taken from the <i>Tatlers</i> .	4
<i>Post-script</i> , taken from the lord LANSDOWNE'S <i>Works</i> , containing his Defence of Mr. DRYDEN, against bishop BURNET.	4
<i>Advertisement</i> , containing an inventory of goods to be sold, taken from the <i>Tatler</i> of July 16, 1709.	5
A catalogue of books printed for E. CURL.	3
Some circumstances relating to Mr. WILKS'S Life.	8
Some account of his two wives.	2
A copy of his last will and testament.	4
A catalogue of the principal parts he performed.	5
Stanzas on his death taken from a <i>Daily Journal</i> .	4

The *Journal* could not resist adding, 'The reader, by casting his eye upon this table, will be surprised to see the *Life* of so great an actor, drawn within the narrow compass of 8 pages; for which he cannot surely grudge to pay 1s. 6d. having 4 pages of his last will and testament, and 66 of useful digressions into the bargain'. While this volume offers a slightly more muddled collection of disparate elements than some, it could not be claimed that the 'table' is inaccurate or that the overall description is misleading. Significantly the order of these items differs from one copy to another – the last two in the *Journal*'s table sometimes appear among the prelims, before the preface. One of those providing a 'testimonial' is the actor's widow, Mary Wilks, also the dedicatee.

The need here was to guard against a rival life put out by a bookseller who was bidding fair to inherit Curl's mantle as the least scrupulous member of the trade, William Rayner, who had got his version into print more speedily. The preface begins, 'That the Public may be farther convinced of the *Genuineness* of these MEMOIRS, I shall lay before them, the several Steps I have taken in compiling them' (sig. a1^r). Among documents cited are letters to the publisher/compiler from the daughter-in-law of Wilks. As usual, their recency is crucial to the effect: the idea is to lend these biographies

Illustration 3



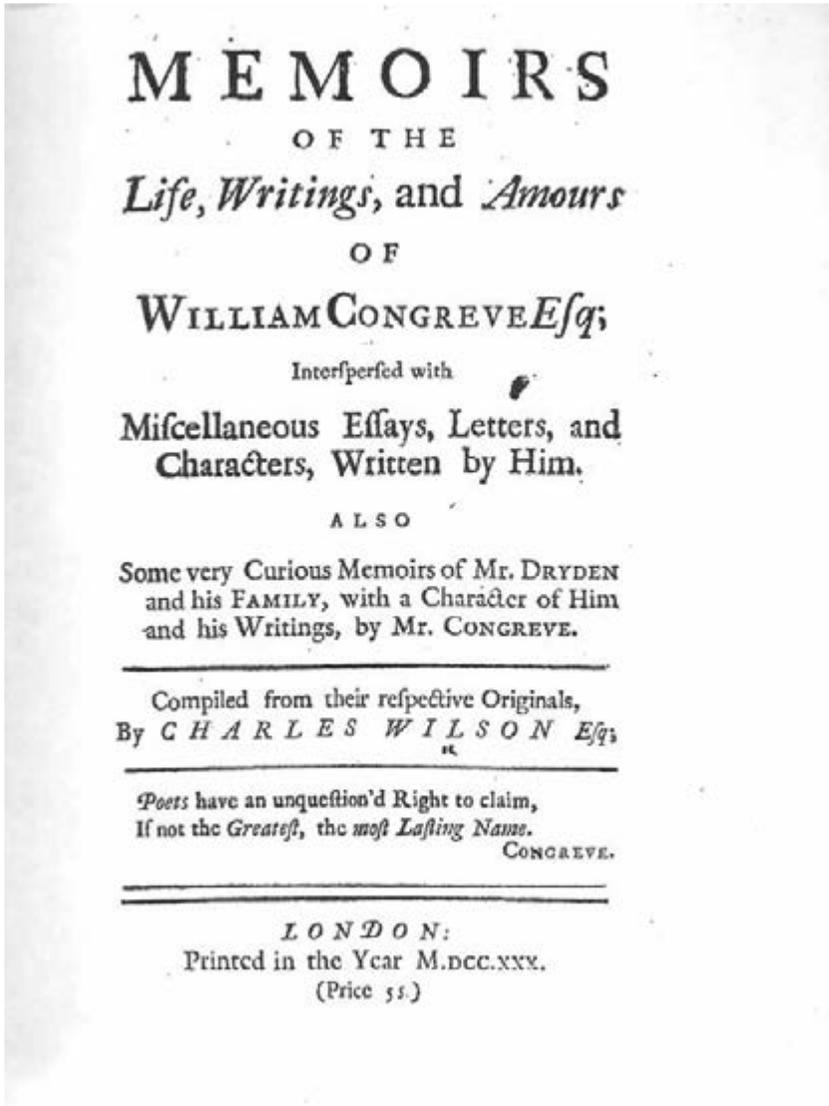
the appearance of what used to be called bang up-to-date. We should also note that the list of Curll lives is integral to the text, occupying the last page of the gathering. Likewise the catalogue seems to be present in all copies: it takes the form of 'new books' printed for Curll, and features as 'just published' a collection of the lives and families of more than thirty people. Actually these had been compiled by John Le Neve and strung together by Curll among other booksellers in 1713 and 1714.

Almost exactly the same thing happened in the case of the life of Matthew Tindal, already mentioned. This time the *Grub-street Journal* of 18 October 1733 analysed the contents of the volume, beginning with the dedication to Lucy Price, and then identifying seven sections that serve to pad out the book to 59 pages. These include four letters by William Whiston, 'in which there is not word relating to Dr. TINDALL; which Mr. C. calls *curious Anecdotes relating to our author, &c*'. A further five pages are described as follows: 'A short account of the Doctor; one page of which is taken from Mr. WOOD's *Athenæ Oxonienses*: one page a half from *Minutes* communicated by Mrs. PRICE or Mr. SMALL; the remaining page and a half fill'd with necessary connections of the curious materials above-mentioned, by Mr. E.C.'. We are told that fresh information on Tindal occupies less than four pages. Once again, it could scarcely be claimed that the *Journal* has misrepresented what the book contains.

In many respects the most egregious example of Curll's methods is to be found in a work dated 1730, but actually published in August 1729. This is *Memoirs of the Life, Writings, and Amours of William Congreve Esq; Interspersed with Miscellaneous Essays, Letters, and Characters, Written by him. Also some very Curious Memoirs of Mr. Dryden and his Family, with a Character of him and his Writings, by Mr. Congreve. Compiled from their Respective Originals, by Charles Wilson Esq.*

The complex bibliographical history of this item has been set out elsewhere and its heterogeneous contents described, so it is enough here to isolate a very few features (see Rogers and Baines, 2008). One concerns the preface, in which 'Charles Wilson' (possibly Giles Jacob, but perhaps the bookseller himself) remarks, 'I employ'd Mr. *Curll* to print these *Memoirs*, and think my *own Authority* sufficient for whatever I am *inclin'd to publish*' (p. xii), despite threats of reprisal from the physician and Scriblerian satirist Dr John Arbuthnot. The italics here hark back to expressions used in a paper war over the forthcoming book that had been going on in the pages of the daily press. Wilson goes on to attempt to convince his opponents that 'there was a very friendly Correspondence between Mr. *Congreve* and Mr. *Curll*', by citing a letter from the dramatist to the bookseller, conveying strong approval of one of Curll's earlier projects, *The Historical Account of the English Poets (1719-1720)*. Thus the writer kills at least three birds with one stone, as he is able to announce his publication, establish his title to authorship of the work, and make good his claim to authority by emphasizing the good relations between Curll and the subject of the biography. Actually there are no signs of anything remotely approaching intimacy between the two men.

Illustration 4



Among all the eccentricities of this broken-backed compilation the strangest comes perhaps in a passage referring to Congreve's ill health. This led to advice that he should drink snail-water as a remedy:

'but since he had 'a strong Aversion to this *Insect*', he rather chose *Ass's Milk*; till last Summer he became a Convert to the *Snail*, by reading at

Bath, in the *Posthumous Works* of that ingenious Poet and Physician Dr. *Sewell* of *Hampstead*, a small but very curious Dissertation of the *Usefulness of SNAILS* in MEDICINE, written by him, but the Year before his own Death, which for its Excellence and publick Benefit I shall here insert...' (pp. 128-29).

The next three pages reprint Sewell's deathless words which survey the advantages of snail-water. It hardly needs pointing out that Sewell had been one of the bookseller's most prolific authors; that a footnote directs readers to the *Posthumous Works*; or that the entire passage has no possible bearing on the main narrative.

Conclusion

Plainly, Curll in his eccentric fashion was one of those who contributed to the evolution of paratext. So much so, that he may be said to have taken its use almost to the point where our habitual category comes close to dissolution. When the 'core' of a life amounts to only eight pages, while the additional elements take up 58, these scarcely serve any longer as a mere 'threshold'.⁶ They serve a different function from the purely ancillary or supplementary role described by Genette. *Seuils* assumes that the make-up of books is overwhelmingly the responsibility of the author, who uses paratexts as a means of guiding the audience towards the meaning of the whole. By contrast Curll's publications are put together by the bookseller, and 'paratexts' become a constitutive element that serve his commercial interests. This distinction applies even in the many cases mentioned where we must regard Curll as the 'author' of the volume in question.

As the foregoing examples may suggest, the opportunistic and slapdash methods employed by Curll ensured that his biographies were as much process as product. The ostensible centre is under constant threat as subsidiary parts swell; yet these add-in elements flaunt their externality by their title or by the insertion of dates meant to stress the topicality of their contents. Postscripts, in particular, advertise their separation from the main narrative. With these biographies, Curll blundered and cheated himself into literary and publishing innovation. Some of the devices he employed to capture attention still have a place in our own day. It might

6 I owe some of the points here to Liisa Steinby, who offered incisive comments on the whole of this essay.

seem that his methods belong more to the history of publicity than to the development of the literary text *per se*. But they certainly helped to mould the way that readers understood the narratives of human life. If it is accepted that title-pages, prefaces, supplements and indexes can be involved in the creation of meaning for a story, then the old reprobate can legitimately claim a place in this volume.

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Peritextual Disposition in French Eighteenth-Century Narratives

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Introduction

The study of the so-called transnational novel has demonstrated the variety of practices of rewriting inside and across linguistic borders in the eighteenth century Europe (see e.g. Montandon, 1999; Stewart, 2009). Original works from the period are hard to distinguish from translations, translations of translations, pseudo-translations, authorial revisions, free adaptations, impostures, crudely abridged editions and other versions (Stewart, 2009, pp. 164-65). According to Coulet (1992), French authors were particularly busy revising their own works. Significant changes in narration and plot were common. Well-known is marquis de Sade's transposition from first-person narration in *Justine* (1791) to third person in *La Nouvelle Justine* (1799). In the edition of 1763 the protagonist in Gaspard Guillard de Beaurieu's *L'élève de la nature* is confined to live in a cage as a punishment inflicted at his parents; eight years later the confinement is, on the contrary, a part of an educational experiment approved by them.

Instead of these glaring cases of authorial revision, my focus in the following will be in cases in which significant changes – authorial or not – concern the texts framing narratives rather than narratives framed. More precisely, I shall pay special attention to interactions between the main narrative, its framing texts and the acts of revision in eighteenth-century French works. My hypothesis is that these interactions present theoretical and analytic challenges far from being exhausted in the study of narrative.

Theoretically, my starting point is not completely new: to really meet the challenge, a *rapprochement* between the theoretical and historical study of narrative is needed. Such an approach has, of course, repeatedly been called for in 'postclassical' narratology (see e.g. Nünning, 2000; Fludernik, 2003; de Jong, 2014) as well as in the historical study of eighteenth century fiction (see e.g. Richetti, 2011–12). In principle I agree with Richetti, who argues that 'the eighteenth-century novel... is very much a proper object of cultural as well as more strictly literary studies, since novels were part of an emerging consumer culture, a response to audience needs as they were perceived' (Richetti, 2011-12, p. 158). After all these proposals it is, however,

still relevant to ask: under what conditions would the study of narrative effectively undermine the separatedness of the theoretical and the historical, the cultural and the literary approaches to eighteenth-century French texts?

In the following, Gérard Genette's (1987) theory of the paratext will be transformed into a meeting-place for literary historical and narratological approaches to eighteenth century revisionist practices. The theory has potential for several reasons: although synchronic in emphasis (see Genette, 1987, p. 18), it is designed precisely to highlight the interplay between textual and contextual features in reading a literary work. Further, it is better attuned to the connection between an individual text, the history of the book and the development of print technology than the major theories of narrative, including Genette's own structuralist narratology. Lastly, as paratexts were the privileged place for foregrounding of the problematic of revision described above, focusing on them we can temporarily bracket the main text, usually in the centre of the analysis of narrative and, by so doing, get a sharper view of the consequences of revision to the layers of eighteenth century works.

After a mapping of what I will call 'peritextual dispositions' in eighteenth century French prose, two analyses will follow which show how the *rapprochement* of history and theory, text and context works in practice. I will conclude by discussing the consequences of my analyses *vis-à-vis* certain tendencies in narratology.

Peritextual Dispositions and Narrative in the French Eighteenth Century

By 'paratext', Genette refers to the various ways a text is presented as a book to its audience; its subconcept, 'peritext', gathers together ways to delimit a text inside a book (Genette, 1987, pp. 7, 10), such as titles, generic labels, prefaces and appendices. Although Genette developed his theory in the 1980s, paratexts have only recently become objects of extended study in literary history as well as in media studies (see Calle-Gruber and Zawisza eds., 2000; Berger and Massai eds., 2014; Desrochers and Apollon eds., 2014). The shift of focus to the boundaries of texts has been particularly called for in the context of eighteenth-century novel. The importance of prefaces and other prefatory materials has long been noted in the study of the period (see May, 1963). Over the past fifteen years, an excellently rich basis for a comparative study of French uses of peritext has been created, among others, by Jenny Mander (1999), Jan Herman (1999), Christian Angelet (2003)

and Elisabeth Zawisza (2013). Zawisza even dubs the eighteenth century as the 'golden age' of peritext in French literature; Angelet (2003, p. 9) calls it, less jubilantly, the age of its inflation. The studies mentioned also offer ample material for theoretical reflection. Following Angelet and Zawisza, I will transform the Genettean problematic by discussing peritextuality as effects instead of paratexts as objects.

My approach to peritextuality stems from problems in Genette's theory. Genette distinguishes between five dimensions in any paratext: spatial, temporal, substantial, pragmatic, and functional (Genette 1987, pp. 10-16). Spatially, the question is to what extent the ability of a textual unit to mark the boundary of a work is dependent on its location. Temporally, the peritextual set-up can change from the first authorial versions to later editions. The question concerning substance is how peritexts are mediated, by linguistic or other means; pragmatically, the question is who communicates them to whom and what is communicated. Aside from the principal function of peritexts to present the main text, they may serve various other purposes. Genette (1987, p. 17) posits the subsidiary functions primarily as objects of an empirical and inductive research, but, in my view, the functions – the principal function included – are not simply there to be observed and categorized. To identify a textual unit or feature as peritextual requires interpretation which takes into account factors inside and outside the work and, at the same time, requires reflection on how the boundary between them is constructed.

Drawing on an ambiguity of a term used in law and rhetorics in the eighteenth century France, I propose that in all of its dimensions, peritextuality is to be conceived as *dispositional*. The term combines the semantic fields of the terms '(the act of) ordering', 'arrangement (of objects or parts)' and 'predisposition or susceptibility (to act or change in one way or another)': what I am after is the interplay of authorial and other determinations, textual arrangements and readerly stances in a literary text always taking its place in a process of production, mediation and reception.¹ In this view, in peritextuality it is not a question of empirically describable features of certain textual methods but of effects across the boundary of text and off-text, determined partly by individual textual features and partly by

1 See *Encyclopédie*, 'disposition'. The ambiguity of the term is in conscious use, for example, in Diderot's novel *La Religieuse*: by describing herself as disposed of her liberty before she is allowed to dispose of any sum of money (Diderot, 2004, p. 285), Suzanne wants to dispose the audience of her narrative to empathic response (ibid., p. 296). My approach to the term is closer to Foucault's (1994, pp. 299-300) *dispositif* as dynamics of power relations than Palmer's (2004, pp. 108-12) *disposition* as cognitive potential forming the background of behavior.

contextual factors and always requiring interplay with the reader. On the one hand, the effect of separation between text and off-text can be created by verbal and other methods at one's disposal that highlight what is crucial in the text, what is marginal in it and what can be disposed of without changing the identity of the text. The author and others responsible for producing and reproducing the text may use peritexts to dispose the reader to a certain frame of mind. However, the same textual methods can have the contrary effect of disposing the producers of the text to lose control of it.

If we understand peritextuality as dispositional effects, we are more ready to face connections, transformations and hybrid forms inside different dimensions of peritexts and across Genettean distinctions. This requires us not to lean in advance on the logic of either-or implied in separation. Genette does emphasize that paratext as a threshold is a place of transition and interaction between text and context and between writer and reader, and not simply a place where these pairs are separated. However, he maps the dimensions of paratexts – except the functional – with exclusive alternatives: according to him, a preface, for example, is either by the author, *or* by an editor *or* by someone else; it is located either inside *or* outside a given work (see 1987, p. 17). In the context of eighteenth-century literature, this is too categorical; the studies of collective and collaborative writing have sufficiently shown, for example, that the question of authorship is more complex even empirically (see, e.g., Paku, 2007).

Next I will clarify what I mean by peritextual dispositions with examples from eighteenth-century French novels. Following Zawisza, the discussion is divided roughly in three parts: the extension of the main text, the status of the author, and the distribution of narrative features.

Peritexts can help to separate the main text from its surroundings, but, on the other hand, they allow the text to exceed its limits and thus destabilize its closure (Zawisza, 2013, p. 4). Here the boundary between fictional, the 'pseudofactual' (Paige, 2011) and factual is often at stake, as on the title page of de Cahousac's *Grigri* (1749), where it remains to be interpreted whether the place and time of publication (Nangazaki, Klnporzenkru, year 59749) is motivated by the contours of the fictional world, by the pressures of censorship in the real world of the author, by both, or by something else altogether. The reader of eighteenth-century French literature is wise to be alert to the world-constructing effects of censorship, which go beyond the traditional masking of the world and the author with a fictional veil. On the other hand, since the pseudofactual posture of the text as an authentic document had already enjoyed a long history at the beginning of the century, the possibility of parody should not be forgotten. This applies, among

other things, to the more than common use of *histoire* ('true story') in the subtitles, as in Voltaire's *L'ingénu: Histoire véritable* (1767). Again, *Grigri* is not only presented as a translation of a translation but as 'the last edition less correct than the previous' (de Cahousac, 1749, title page).

The degree of integration of peritexts with the main text varies greatly, even to the point that their principal function of foregrounding is threatened. Prefaces and postfaces can be relatively detached from the text they seem to introduce or comment, and titles can be in contradiction with the text that follows, as the satirical entries in Diderot's and d'Alembert's *Encyclopédie* show. The preface can usurp the main role in the book and postpone the beginning of the main text excessively. It may also be difficult to determine where the text ends and a postface begins: the ending of Diderot's *Jacques le fataliste* is much commented in this respect. In all these cases, the spatial definition of peritext proves to be insufficient; it is a task of reading to determine whether or not the texts framing the main text are actually used to mark the difference between the outside and the inside of the work, and if not, what we are to do with them.

'I writ this book, and this book improves me [*me fait*] every day', writes Abbé Bordelon (1706, p. v), introducing his study of language: paradoxically, the author is not an author before she has written the text, and the text does not come into existence without a subject of production. For the writer, peritexts such as the preface promise ways, as Flint (2002, p. 635) succinctly puts it, 'to appropriate a degree of authority often attributed to the supposedly impersonal process of the printing trade'. However, peritexts may associate the authorial voice with a series of more or less fictional discursive agents – in Angelet's terms, allographic and actorial instead of autographic² – and, by so doing, distance the author from the main text.³ On the other hand, the realities of book trade disposed the eighteenth century author to new kinds of error (see Angelet, 2003, p. 11). In the process of publishing the first edition of *Julie, ou la nouvelle Héloïse* (1761), Jean-Jacques Rousseau famously insisted that the title of the work

2 Angelet (2003, p. 10; comp. Genette, 1987, p. 182) divides prefaces in three categories: *autographic* and authorial, i.e. read as serious statements of the author; *allographic* and fictional, with the subject a fictional author, editor or publisher who has chosen the following texts, translated or otherwise transformed them; and *actorial* or figural, written by characters in the story as in autobiographical fictions.

3 These associations also create possibilities of identity confusion and metalepsis, strange loops between narrative levels as when a real-world writer meets a fictional character she has invented. On the uses of metalepsis in French literature from Bordelon's *Gomgan* (1711) to Aude's *Diderot à Versailles* (1804), see Kahan 2004.

should be divided onto two title pages to emphasize the first name in the title. In later editions and translations, however, the insistence was ignored, and 'Julie' was dropped altogether; even in official editions, the work has often gone by the name *La nouvelle Héloïse*, which presents the work and its heroine first and foremost as a rewrite of a symbol of passionate love (Stewart, 1997, pp. xiv-xvi).

One of the challenges eighteenth-century texts present to narrative theory is in the ways the distinctions between narrative sources and identities become blurred. Flint (2002) shows how Irish and British authors such as Jonathan Swift and Laurence Sterne used the framing methods offered by printing technology (asterisks, dashes, notes, empty spaces, etc.) to create ambiguity in the medium of expression (speech, manuscript, print) and in the source of utterance (character, narrator, editor etc.). In France, the avoidance of autographic framing produced comparable results. In a lucid early criticism of Genette, Keskinen (1993, p. 171) argued that there is no reason why the 'implied author' – the rhetorical subject of the work silently communicating over the narrator's discourse – could not be held responsible for quotations such as epigraphs. On the other hand, also according to Keskinen there are 'more often than not' reasons to attribute peritexts to an agent he proposed should be called 'the editor-narrator', hierarchically located between the implied author and the principal narrator, and responsible for 'present[ing] a given text to readers as a finished product, complete with the peritextual thresholds' (*ibid.*). The odds are difficult to tell in the context of eighteenth-century literature and in general, as well. However, the most tenable result of Keskinen's analysis is that a peritext cannot be anchored to a certain context of utterance before reading, and therefore it is wise to keep the question of agency – and its relevance, in the first place – open for interpretation.

In de Mouhy's *Lamékis* (1735-38), it is hard to tell to what extent the complexities of narrative agency follow an overall authorial design: in the text, the reason is that the figure of the author and the writing of the text is connected with the fantastical turns in the story. In 'The author's preface' we are told that the first three parts of the book are based on what he heard from an Armenian. At the end of the fourth part – not the third, as one would expect – the author-narrator tells us that he is unable to continue the story of the philosopher Déhahal because of a lacuna in the manuscript (de Mouhy, 1788, pp. 339-40). After a series of surprises by which the author has, among other things, to answer for his narrative choices to protesting characters from the story of Lamékis, he receives a manuscript including the continuation of the story of Déhahal. The manuscript is, however,

written in an unknown language, and thus the narrator is unable to retell its story (1788, p. 381). The problem is solved when the manuscript itself begins dictating the translation, and the author's pen automatically writes it down (de Mouhy, 1788, pp. 383-84). After a month and a day of dictation, the rest of the work is finished starting from Part 5 – the one in which we have been reading all this. In *Lamékis*, the continuation between narrative levels is constructed in a way that ridicules the pseudofactual posture in the preface: the author who has pretended to recount only what he has heard is first condemned for his inventions by the characters and then deprived of the ability to tell the story, to transform it, or to translate it altogether. Here we have an extreme case of mimetic narration in the Aristotelian sense, in which the lack of authorial intervention in the mediation of the text hardly makes the narrative more convincing.

Eighteenth-century uses of peritexts invite a study of the interaction of narrative, argumentative and other discourses without raising any one of them to the master position in advance. For example, there are various reasons why we should be alert to the problems in the use of the attribute 'narrative' in a totalizing way to cover the entire text. A classical prescription was to read a novel as exemplifying an argument, and sentimental variant in Samuel Richardson's works presented sensible details, identifiable characters and visually concrete scenes as media for edifying empathy. In either case, the explication of the poetics of the novel and other genres in the peritexts was often apologetic and ironic – the anonymous author of *Justine* arguing for his edifying purposes is a case in point – and thus the degree of integration of the narrative text and peritexts vary greatly. On the other hand, peritexts seemingly preferring argumentation often use the same narrative techniques as the main text, such as dialogues, dramatic scenes and independent narratives (Angelet, 2003, p. 9). We may have, then, two more or less narrative texts commenting on each other rather than a clear distinction between, say, a narrative text proper and its genre-critical metatext.

In the following I set out to analyze the peritextual dispositions in two pairs of eighteenth century texts, in versions of *Les deux amis de Bourbonne* ('Two Friends from Bourbonne', 1770) by Denis Diderot and *Les liaisons dangereuses* (*Dangerous liaisons*, 1782) by Pierre Choderlos de Laclos. Both works foreground the problematic of textual revision in their peritexts in a variety of ways, and both were revised in subsequent editions. With Diderot, I will focus on the extension of the main text and the distribution of narrative features; de Laclos's novel will deepen the view on the problematic status of the author.

Narrative as an Attachment: Diderot's *Les deux Amis de Bourbonne*

Denis Diderot, who began his writing career as a translator, used a plethora of methods to highlight the adaptable and appropriable character of texts throughout his work as he constantly revised his own texts and inserted various framing structures into them. The originality of his texts and their authorial status are often complicated peritextually. Works are presented, for instance, as supplements to existing works, e.g. *Supplément au Voyage de Bougainville*, or as parts of an open-ended series, e.g. *Ceci n'est pas un conte* (see Diderot, 2004, p. 1079, n. 4). *Jacques le fataliste* ends with editorial comments on documents on which the story was based and passes the task of supplementing the text to the reader (Diderot, 2004, pp. 881-82); the sovereignty of authorial narration hitherto celebrated in the text thus fades away.

In Diderot's *Les deux amis de Bourbonne*, adaptability is an issue in the history of the revision of the text, in the peritexts of its different versions, and in the stories they frame. The first (private) version tells the story of the consequences of friendship between Félix and Olivier in two letters, one by an anonymous 'Madame' and the other by Papin, the vicar of Bourbonne. In the story, third wheels seem to bring in all the misfortunes: the harmonic alliance between the two men is broken by a shared love for a girl; Olivier dies after he has saved Félix from being hanged by a cruel judge; Félix is forced to leave his homeland after becoming involved in a dispute over the location of a boundary stone between two neighbours; and the bond of empathy between Madame and the widow of Olivier is broken by the vicar, who sees the story differently than all the others.

In his introductory presentation to the second (semi-public) version in *Correspondance littéraire*, the editor of the magazine Melchior Grimm claims that, originally, the text was composed as a part of collective past-time storytelling in which he and Diderot had joined two lady friends of theirs in a game of 'mystification' by letter, of narrative make-believe. The story was sent as an attachment in a letter to a mutual friend of theirs with a tendency to believe touching stories (Diderot, 2004, p. 463). Grimm's introduction guides the reader to see through the pseudofactual posture to the comic ambiguity of the textual methods employed: in addition to the ideal couple in the story, 'two friends' in the title can be read as referring to the real-life collective process of writing the text (see Diderot, 2004, pp. 463, 1048-49). Furthermore, it can be read in relation to the moral tales of ideal friendship published around 1770 in France, including *Les Deux amis*

(1770) by Saint-Lambert, and also to the epistolary exchange in the text, as there are two letter-writers from Bourbonne involved in the fates of the characters. Grimm's presentation playfully complicates the choice of the primary frame of reference for the various dual relationships in and around the alleged kernel of the story.

If the reader does not compare the two versions, she may miss the emphasis of the peritextual set-up in the latter. In the first version, Madame tells the short story of the ideal friendship after responding to things in a previous letter by her addressee, nicknamed 'little brother', and before she moves on to other subjects. The story is thus delivered as a by-product, among other things. The continuation to Félix's story is told in the letter by the vicar Papin in response to another letter by Madame omitted from the text. Although Papin expresses his indignation towards the impious and criminal nature of the main characters, it is he who reconstructs the touching scenes of terror and pity in the first version.

By cutting the letter date away, the second version allows the reader to identify with the narrator's audience before it is revealed that the narrator is a certain she addressing a certain he, the 'little brother' (Diderot, 2004, p. 439). The reader is first invited into the storyworld with a straightforwardly conversational way of recounting; then this frame is interrupted and the reader may note how the events are mediated by writing in the storyworld. At the same time, the illusionist use of the pseudofactual is downshifted. Diderot's later decision to leave out Grimm's introduction altogether from his (public) authorial version downplays the comic ambiguity and gives more weight to the poetic and critical supplements in his own postface. The first part of the postface sets out to develop a classification of types of *conte* – 'tales', i.e. shorter pieces of narrative fiction – a theory which would then locate the means and purposes of the story just read. However, it does something else. Paige (2011, p. 154) has good reasons to argue that Diderot is, in fact, applying the classic distinction of epic, comic and tragic to the art of narrative in general, and not only to shorter fiction. In particular, he is criticizing his fellow 'historical storytellers' for failing to transpose tragedy into prose, as they preferred exotic sentimentality and sententious wisdom over visually concrete and believable scenes (see Diderot, 2004, p. 450). In the quest for a more convincing sentimentality, Diderot pushes the classic criticism of mimesis to a paradox: even the most natural way of telling a story is an art of rhetoric which persuades the reader by certain means, and therefore the hierarchy between the narrative genres cannot be constructed on oppositional distinctions between truthful discourse, *histoire* and immediacy on the one hand and lies, mystification

and mediacy on the other. Instead, immediacy could even be seen as an effect of mediacy.

The dismantling of the classic oppositions has bearings on the narrative form of Diderot's story as well, even though he does not continue in that direction in *Les deux amis de Bourbonne*. The formulation of the way out of the paradox is curious in this context: according to the postface, the most persuasive storyteller focuses not on 'the thing itself' but, metonymically, to what is attached to it, 'il parsèmera son récit de petits circonstances si liées à la chose [...] que vous serez forcé de vous dire en vous-même: Ma foi, cela est vrai, on n'invente pas ces choses-là'.⁴ There is no denying that this reads easily as a poetics of reality effect via detail; however, can it not be read as concerning narrative form and mediation, as well? In both versions, Madame has heard the story of Olivier from his wife; in the second, Madame receives the continuation to the story of Félix – which, in fact, constitutes the majority of the text – from a certain monsieur Aubert, whose version is preferred to the one expected from the vicar (Diderot, 2004, p. 441). Aubert, in his turn, has heard the story from the widow of a coal merchant, and he ends his story by attaching a letter from the vicar in which the latter suggests finding less impious objects of Madame's charity than the widows of Félix and Olivier. The story can only be constructed from a montage of rewritings of hearsay material by narrators who have not witnessed the events they recount. Instead of 'the thing', then, we have its effects in the narratives by people attached in one way or another to the chain of events. This is what stays unchanged in the two versions of the text. To dispose the audience to certain reactions, it seems not best to tell the story of the thing itself – whatever it might be, ideal duality in friendship, perhaps – but, instead, to present it in its absence, displaced to the marginal, in its narrative effects.

In *Deux amis de Bourbonne*, as well as in Diderot's other shorter prose from the 1770's, a reading of the moral of the story is complicated by the narrative form. In Diderot's text, the narrative seems valuable in its ability to dispose its audience to morally good emotions: it raises Madame's pity towards the widows and poor families without fathers. On the other hand, it can also fail in the task, as Papin's pitiless answer to Madame shows: she even thanks the vicar for clearing her mind to see how the story was 'well done for seducing a honest and sensible soul' (Diderot, 2004, p. 448). However, it can be argued that it is precisely this failure Madame uses to

4 'the little circumstances so connected to the thing [...] that you have to say to yourself: by Jove, this is true, these things cannot be invented' (Diderot, 2004, p. 449). The translations are mine.

dispose *her* addressee, the little brother, to a certain response, to indignation towards the vicar, for example. This rhetorical strategy is comparable with the epistolary double-play in Diderot's *La Religieuse* (1760): Suzanne, the sentimental heroine, is not simply a naïve victim in the mercy of more cunning plotters, but also a writer who constructs images of herself as a naïve victim to dispose her correspondent to certain feelings and actions. And what would be more convincing than a narrative of a double failure, a naïve representation of naïveté? However, in difference to *La Religieuse*, in *Deux amis de Bourbonne* we do not get to know about the rhetorical success of the organization of the narrative, as no response from the little brother is quoted in the text, and thus the text does not end by celebrating the symmetry of responses in a dual relation – or the seductive power of narrative.

The changes made by Diderot to the versions of *Deux amis de Bourbonne* show his awareness of the importance of peritextual effects in a narrative text. Ending the text with a postface where a third party interrupts the epistolar exchange foregrounds a structure of attachments which enables narrative persuasion but, at the same time, delimits narrative authority. In *Deux amis de Bourbonne*, narrative emerges in a chain of attachments, ever disposed to being relocated among other things.

Authors in Response: De Laclos's *Liaisons dangereuses*

The first published work by Choderlos de Laclos was a dramatization of Marie-Jeanne Riccoboni's novella *L'Histoire d'Ernestine* (1762). Riccoboni was one of the most-read authors in the late eighteenth-century France, popular for her epistolary novels, but also for her sequel (1761) to Marivaux's *La vie de Marianne*. Both facts are echoed in de Laclos's epistolary classic *Les liaisons dangereuses* (1782): the adaptability of texts is an object of constant reflection on all the levels of the work, and when de Laclos took responsibility for the work as a novel, he did it, significantly, in a correspondence with Riccoboni attached to the 1787 'Nantes edition' of the novel.

In the story, rewriting is what the libertines Valmont and mme de Merteuil do: they appropriate other people's messages and transform them into instruments of seduction and revenge. Their skill in carrying out their wicked plotting consists of an ability to detach from expressing their true views on the events and to foresee how the others – their victims and helpers – react and respond to them. The libertines present themselves to each other as masters of narrative *détournement*, capable of turning the message around against the original writer's intentions.

The connection of the peritextuality with the libertine art is created by an analogue between a written work and a human subject in the much-commented letter 81 by de Merteuil. There she describes her skill in combining 'à l'esprit d'un Auteur, le talent d'un Comédien' (de Laclos, 1951, p. 179).⁵ Before one can be a successful author, reading is indispensable. Novels and works by moralists have given her material with which she has learnt to build her outward appearance convincingly and to detach it from her true designs hiding behind it.⁶ De Merteuil wants Valmont to celebrate her systematicity in carrying out her poetic prescriptions: '[Q]uand m'avez-vous vue m'écarter des règles que je me suis prescrites, et manquer à mes principes? [...] ils sont le fruit de mes profondes réflexions ; je les ai créés, et je puis dire que je suis mon ouvrage'.⁷ However, the very letter aimed at demonstrating that she, as a piece of work, really follows her self-prescribed poetics turns against her as Valmont passes the text on to Danceny, who then allows it to circulate around Paris.

In the texts framing the correspondence, a similar logic of appropriation and loss of control can be seen at play. The fictional editor (*rédacteur*) tells that in principle he has obeyed a request from above to preserve the authentic letters as they are, but then he admits in fact having left some letters out and organized the rest into a meaningful whole by putting them in to a sequence and commenting on them (de Laclos, 1951, p. 6). Like de Merteuil, the editor emphasizes his control of the work by demonstrating how he has manipulated the text to produce a certain effect for the 'instruction of some others', as the subtitle to the work says. Again, it is questionable in what sense the work follows his prescription. Does it do so by quoting de Merteuil on how to read fiction to know how to deceive others? Or does it do so by showing how the written text is disposed to be re-framed, appropriated and turned against the intentions of its original – or previous – author? The last footnote to the correspondence further undermines the editor's initial claim of the completeness of the correspondence: there (de Laclos, 1951, p. 399) the publisher (*éditeur*) presents the end of the *ouvrage* contingent

5 '[T]he spirit of an Author, and the talent of a Comedian'.

6 See the *post scriptum* in Mme de Merteuil's letter to Cécile Volanges, the girl who is ignorant of her role in de Merteuil's revenge to her former lover, where the former guides the latter to conceal her real thoughts from everybody else except her trustee (de Laclos, 1951, p. 249). What Cécile does not know is, of course, that the *post scriptum* itself is written in accordance with the principle it is prescribing.

7 'When have you seen me stepping back from the rules I have prescribed to myself and neglecting my principles? [...] they are the fruit of my profound reflections; I have created them and I can say that I am my work' (de Laclos, 1951, p. 176).

and the possible future completion of it dependent on the response by the reading public. By this intervention, the publisher questions the alleged authenticity of the correspondence and recommends reading it as a novel. Even if the work were based on real letters, he writes in his preface, they are most likely from another time and place, adapted to 'our clothes and our customs' but foreign to the enlightened French people (de Laclos, 1951, p. 5).

De Laclos's initial choice to stay tacit behind the prefatory texts and allographic writer figures calls into question any linear development of novelistic authorship in the eighteenth-century French novel. The prefaces in Fielding's *Tom Jones* (1749), one of the key developments in the 'emergence of the author' in the eighteenth century, show, by their proliferation, the authority in constant need of further support and dependent on the education of an audience that would recognize the author as the master of his domain. In the French novel, the authority of the author had comparable delimitations. Montesquieu had originally presented *Lettres persanes* (1721) as an authentic collection of letters and posed as its editor; however, in the 1754 edition, he admitted being the author of what he then characterized as a well-designed novel with a beginning and an end (Zawisza, 2013, p. 70). As the pseudofactual preface of the former edition was retained in the latter, no decisive leap in authorship had taken place from allographic editing to autographic creation of a fictional novel. De Laclos can be read as rewriting the tension in *Lettres persanes* of 1754 allographically, using the figures of the publisher and the editor. He wrote even less in his own name than Rousseau had done in *Julie*: the title page of the first edition of the novel bore only his initials ('Par M.C..... de L...'), and the epigraph quoted Rousseau's claim of being only the publisher of the letters.

The question of truthfulness and usefulness of the text, discussed in the prefaces by the publisher and the editor, reappears in a complex way in the revised edition of 1787.⁸ In this edition, enter the figure of the 'bookseller' (*libraire*) who repeats the editor's gesture as he claims to be publishing letters not originally intended for public use; this time the reference is to the correspondence between Riccoboni and de Laclos (de Laclos, 2011, p. 6). On the other hand, his irony points at the whole enterprise of revising editions with new prefaces and other peritexts: the new edition is designed especially for those readers who are not interested in the novel but want to find, in a condensed form, what can be said for and against it. The correspondence

8 The Nantes edition adds a bookseller's preface, the correspondence between Riccoboni and de Laclos, and a collection of de Laclos's poetry to the text of 1782, and changes the initial order of the publisher's and editor's prefaces.

is presented as an answer to this call and thus as a device with which to avoid reading the narrative altogether (de Laclos, 2011, p. 5).

In the correspondence, Riccoboni writes (de Laclos, 2011, p. 466) that she is having trouble, as a Frenchwoman and a woman, accepting Mme de Merteuil's reality as the pseudofactual posturing of the work has invited her to; she is more inclined to take her as a fictional character, and harmful as such. Riccoboni's criticism seems to provoke de Laclos to acknowledge responsibility for the work and, at the same time, to convince Riccoboni that it is following the author's prescription well:

[J]'ai pu, comme lui, ressembler dans un même personnage les traits épars du même caractère. [...] J'ajouterai cependant que Mme de M. n'est pas plus une Française qu'une femme de tout autre pays. [...] Si j'ai donné à celle-ci l'habit français, c'est que, persuadé qu'on ne peint avec vérité qu'en peignant après nature, j'ai préféré la draperie que je pouvais avoir sous mes yeux, mais l'œil exercé dépouille aisément le modèle, et reconnaît *le nu* (de Laclos, 2011, pp. 469-70).⁹

Reading de Laclos's response as a sincere description of his poetics is problematic for several reasons. De Laclos seems to discard the pseudofactual posture by reverting to the classical notion of poetic truth as probability. He presents himself as a reproducer and synthesizer of features from different sources and as adaptor of an already existing – natural – model to contemporary circumstances. According to De Laclos's classical analogue, writing is divided in two, supplementary (cultural) clothing and the naked (natural) truth, a local and particular expression and universal meaning. The ethos of the poetics is made suspicious by the close resemblance between de Laclos's description of the practice of creating a character by synthesizing scattered traits and de Merteuil's way of constructing a deceiving facade to herself as her work. On the other hand, de Laclos's analogue can be read as a rewrite of the publisher's view of the novel as adaptation to local setting – a view made less convincing by the reference to the French people's incapability to the wickedness displayed by the libertines.¹⁰ One may also wonder about the rhetorical

9 'I have been able, like [Molière in *Tartuffe*] to gather together into one person scattered traits of one and same character. [...] I add, however, that Mme de M. is no more a Frenchwoman than a woman from any other country. [...] If I have given her a French habit, it is because, convinced that one paints truthfully only by painting after nature, I have preferred the clothing I have under my eyes, but a trained eye easily undresses the model and recognizes *the nude*'.

10 See Vanpée's (1996) fine analysis of how the correspondence between Riccoboni and de Laclos is related to the two prefaces.

motivation of the description: de Laclos implies that Riccoboni is not included in the community of trained readers who can move easily through the preface of clothing to the naked truth of the narrative body text. There are, however, profound reasons to doubt whether anyone is. Does not the structure of the work with all its framings and reframings precisely complicate the boundary between the inside and outside of the work, and by so doing prevent any direct view to the thing, to the real nature of the characters, to what happens between them, and to the overall purpose of the story?¹¹

The supplement of 1787 connects de Laclos to the chain of producers and compilers of *ouvrages* in the original edition who enter by responding to texts not written by them. De Merteuil, the editor, the publisher, the bookseller and de Laclos are all responding to texts they have read: the publisher has read the edited collection of letters; the editor has (supposedly) also read the letters he omitted, de Laclos answers Riccoboni's initial comment, and the bookseller comments not only their correspondence but the public debate and the publishing practices around the work, as well. Instead of being sovereigns who dictate conditions for entrance to the storyworld, the authors comment on the text and its reception in a figural continuum with other discursive agents. Their responses gain relative authority by subjecting themselves to the danger of losing that authority at the same time. The fact that the Riccoboni-de Laclos supplement was later detached from the work not only marks a retreat from the (mock-)classical to the pseudofactual but also further emphasizes the provisional nature of narrative authority as subject of and to peritextual dispositions. All this complicates the ultimate readerly position as subject to instruction given in the subtitle to the work. If there is a lesson in *Les liaisons dangereuses* it is that the text is not useful or harmful in itself but one or the other unless otherwise reframed.

Conclusion: Problems in Certain Tendencies in Narrative Theory

'How can we talk in more or less formal terms about works of prose fiction that are opportunistic and improvisatory and do not seem to adhere to any particular formal pattern? What sort of critical terms might be employed to explain

11 Among the cinematic and theatrical dramatizations of the novel, Heiner Müller's *Quartett* (1980) stands out due to its sensitivity to the mediatedness of the events in the original. Instead of being faithful to the story, Müller's aim was to create a dramaturgy for the epistolary structure (see Müller, 1992, p. 317).

how such fiction possesses a sustaining structure that provides coherence and meaning?' Above, this call by Richetti (2011-12, p. 158) is answered with a reading of peritextuality as dispositional in the context of eighteenth-century French prose. On the one hand, what Genette calls peritexts can surely be counted as stabilizing structures at writers' disposal. They allow emphasizing that the contours of a narrative text follow the author's prescription. However, even a brief look at eighteenth-century French novels suffices to show that they also created other effects than stabilizing the narrative genres: hybrid forms and fluidity between author, narrator, and other discursive agents; between narrative and other discourse types; and interactions on the boundary between text and context. This does not mean, however, that peritexts only follow the 'opportunistic and improvisatory tendencies of the century', to quote Richetti's words (2011-12, p. 158); in my reading, peritextual effects can emerge from a systematic thinking of the specificity of written text as a medium of narrative as well as by a sum of coincidental and contradictory factors, in between the intentional and the unintentional.

In my analysis of Diderot's and de Laclos's texts, I have tried to show how peritextual effects emerge as boundary-crossing movements from story to narration and framing texts, in the positing of authorship, in the interplay of narrative features and other discourses, and in the ambiguous references to textual features and contextual factors. These are but two examples of the ample material eighteenth-century French prose provides to question the tendency to posit textual boundaries first and foremost as separators of the artistic text from its historical surroundings. The tendency can be seen at play in the structuralist neglect of reflection of what makes textual identity and self-sameness possible or impossible, neglect which was again manifested in the more or less confused debate on the concept of implied author (see Kindt & Müller, 2006). One counter-force to this tendency in the structuralist tradition is Doležel's (1988) theory of literary 'transduction' in which written texts are 'always already' rewritings pregnant with their future revisions.

Though based primarily on literary material, structuralist theory seldom really focused on the particular features of written communication or reflected on the non-verbal means of utterance offered by print industry and book technology. A narrative theory best responding to ambiguities in the source of utterance and to particular effects of narrative medium in the eighteenth century would be one ready to see potential to disruption of communicative framings in any type of written narration, first-person included. In this respect, among the most promising recent developments is Nielsen's (2011) theory of inventiveness in narratives, especially if this theory is seasoned with a historical view on fictionality such as the one provided

by Paige (2011). Furthermore, my analysis of peritextual dispositions could be continued in directions that narrative theories have not been willing or able to go, for example to the philosophical problematic concerning the roots of the ambiguities which haunt the narratological objective of anchoring textual features to a certain source.

The project of 'natural' narratology launched by Monika Fludernik in the 1990s set out as a large-scale attempt to map the historical development of narrative forms in English literature. While carrying out this enormous task, Fludernik has presented views on the differences between oral and written media that also deserve attention in the study of peritextuality: one is her noting the tendency of written narratives to blur the boundaries between text types such as narration, description and evaluative commentary (Fludernik, 2005, pp. 80-81), boundaries allegedly naturally separative in the basic forms of conversational storytelling. However, even if 'natural' narratology is better attuned to the historicity and mediality of narrative than structuralist narratology is, the specifically written means of narration are at times too easily translated into conversational terms.¹² For example, for Fludernik (2005, p. 168) the authentication devices of epistolar narratives are reducible to the first-person mode anchored 'in the personal witness function of the narrator'. My analyses of Diderot and de Laclos give more support to Mäkelä's (2011, p. 200) counter-argument, according to which the core legacy of epistolar narration is, rather, the ambivalence of immediacy and mediacy in written experience.

In my view, the differences between versions of the same text, 'authorial revisions', as they are somewhat problematically called, should not be left only to textual criticism. Considered as acts of repetition and transformation which do not simply take place outside the text or the work but connect in various ways to the reflection of writing in and around it, these revisions create narratologically challenging communications between the main narrative, its framings, and cultural contexts.

The peritextual problematic discussed above is neither exclusively an eighteenth-century phenomenon nor limited to the genre of novel, or

12 On the diachronic orientation in cognitivist-oriented study of narrative, see also Zunshine (2011), who sketches parallels between the changes in cultural circumstances and narrative patterning. The project of unnatural narratology reacting to Fludernik's diachronically oriented theory is still searching its stance towards the historicity of narrative forms: Alber, for instance, has been balancing between the ideas of a narrative situation unnatural *per se* and the history of the automatization of defamiliarizing narrative forms. Note, however, how he (Alber, 2016, ch. 2.2) argues for a radical difference between unnaturality in the eighteenth century narratives and in the postmodernist questioning of representation.

even to books. A comparative study of literatures of earlier periods and non-European cultures could be begun with the aid of recent research on the global history of the novel (e.g. Moore, 2010). Transformations of peritextual dispositions offer a rich field of study in contemporary cross-generic adaptations of eighteenth-century novels as well. To end by quoting but one example: in a very eighteenth-century manner, Martin Rowson's *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman* (1996) omits, in its peritexts, the obvious – that it is rewriting a novel discussing the benefits and dangers of rewriting.

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List of Abbreviations

BT	<i>The History of Miss Betsy Thoughtless</i>
CS I	<i>The History of Charlotte Summers, the Fortunate Parish Girl, vol. I</i>
CS II	<i>The History of Charlotte Summers, the Fortunate Parish Girl, vol. II</i>
FID	Free indirect discourse
FRC	<i>The Farther Adventures of Robinson Crusoe</i>
MF	<i>Moll Flanders</i>
O	<i>Oroonoko</i>
OED	<i>Oxford English Dictionary</i>
RC	<i>Robinson Crusoe</i>
TJ	<i>Tom Jones</i>
TLHN	<i>The Living Handbook of Narratology</i>

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