

Immediacy

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

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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 Abentheuer 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 *Mythoscopia 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 Unterricht 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 haften, 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 gemeynt 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 abgeschmacket 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 Lyceimi, 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 autopoeisis, 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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