

“OBSERVE, WRITE!”

Histories of Observation and the Psychological Novel Anton Reiser

Anton Reiser Reads *Werther*

While we can only assume the extent to which Goethe’s revisions to the second edition of *The Sufferings of Young Werther* had been influenced by his reading of the first two books of Karl Philipp Moritz’s *Anton Reiser*, we know that Moritz admired Goethe’s *Werther*. The autobiographical hero of his psychological novel, Anton Reiser, proves to be a—rather naive—admirer of Goethe’s first novel, in which he recognizes his “idea about the *near* and the *far*” and “a continuation of his reflections on life and existence.” However, he has no real understanding of “Werther’s actual sufferings”: “In short, Reiser recognized in Werther all his own thoughts and feelings, except for the item of love.”¹

1. Karl Philipp Moritz, *Anton Reiser: A Psychological Novel*, trans. Ritchie Robertson (London: Penguin, 1997), 204–206.

But even before Anton discovers Goethe's *Werther*, it has left its mark on the third book of the psychological novel, when the narrator reports on Anton's advancing attempts to keep a diary: "The need to share his thoughts and feelings gave him the idea of again keeping a kind of diary, in which, however, he no longer wanted, as formerly, to record trivial external events, but rather the internal history of his mind, and to send what he recorded to his friend in the form of a letter."²

It is not difficult to recognize the epistolary form of Goethe's novel in Anton's attempt to find an appropriate way of observing his own life by means of written records, and barely hidden is the reference to Friedrich von Blanckenburg's *Versuch über den Roman* with its psychological requirement to focus on the inner history of man. Moritz's genre designation "psychological novel" is the conscious attempt to follow up on the contemporary theory of the novel and its epistemological rather than poetological claims.³ It is interesting that Moritz combines both the theoretical and practical approach to the novel and that he does so in regard to Goethe's *Werther*.⁴ Although Anton reads *Werther* in a clearly identificatory

2. Moritz, *Anton Reiser*, 187.

3. Dörr dedicates a whole chapter of his book *Reminiscenzen* to *Anton Reiser* and *Werther* and pays particular attention to the two discursive areas of *Erfahrungsseelenkunde* and the theory of the novel combined in the new genre definition "psychological novel." (See Volker C. Dörr, *Reminiscenzen: Goethe und Karl Philipp Moritz in intertextuellen Lektüren* [Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 1999], 49–115.)

4. Elliott Schreiber pointed out the importance of *Werther* for Anton's emotional and intellectual development. In his discussion of Moritz's reading of *Werther*, Schreiber focuses on the aesthetics of the autonomous artwork by confronting Anton Reiser's engagement with *Werther*'s letter dated August 18 with Moritz's close reading of *Werther*'s letter dated May 10 in a published piece titled *Über ein Gemälde von Goethe*. In regard to the psychological novel, Schreiber shows how Anton's identification with *Werther* is tied to a transformative experience of reading that reciprocally affects the reader and the text. "In *Anton Reiser*," Schreiber concludes, "Moritz provides a vivid and complex account of how the escalating production and reception of sentimental literature in the late eighteenth century contributed to the sense of perpetual change that marks modernity." (Elliott Schreiber, *The Topography of Modernity: Karl Philipp Moritz and the Space of Autonomy* [Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2012], 23.)

way, the novel *Anton Reiser* presents *Werther* as a model of observation that successfully implements the demand for a psychological perspective. Even before Goethe establishes, in the second version of his novel, the narrative mode that enables such a psychological perspective, Moritz presents *Werther* as a model of self-observation suitable for young people like Anton Reiser.

Moritz's psychological novel has often been read in the context of the *Magazin zur Erfahrungsseelenkunde*, the first psychological journal in Germany: a collection of psychological reports that Moritz had initiated, compiled, and edited in collaboration with Karl Friedrich Pockels and Salomon Maimon between 1783 and 1793.⁵ The close connection between Moritz's psychological novel and the *Magazin* is unquestionable and has received a good amount of scholarly attention, but subordinating the novel to the category of *Erfahrungsseelenkunde* fails to recognize its literary potential and its epistemological effects on the development of empirical psychology.⁶ *Anton Reiser* is not only another case of Moritz's extensive psychological project but also a paradigmatic case for the importance of literary form in the observation and recording of psychic phenomena.⁷ The institutional framework of the novel is

5. I will continue using the German term *Erfahrungsseelenkunde* as well as the German title of Moritz's journal. Anthony Krupp has pointed out that the translation of *Erfahrungsseelenkunde* as "empirical psychology" could be misleading and would be "more accurately rendered as 'experiential science of the soul,'" to avoid "the rationalist associations evoked by the term *psychologia*." (Anthony Krupp, "Observing Children in an Early Journal of Psychology: Karl Philipp Moritz's *Gnothi sauton* (Know Thyself)," in *Fashioning Childhood in the Eighteenth Century: Age and Identity*, ed. Anja Müller [Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006], 34.) Considering the methodological premises of *Erfahrungsseelenkunde*, the term *Magazin* would not be sufficiently understood by translating it as "journal," but refers to a storage device and filing system that makes available observations and cases to future interpretation.

6. This connection is discussed most substantially in Lothar Müller, *Die kranke Seele und das Licht der Erkenntnis: Karl Philipp Moritz' Anton Reiser* (Frankfurt am Main: Athenäum, 1987).

7. Closely following Lothar Müller's claim that the novel must be understood as a pathological case history, Christiane Frey asks what is needed to turn a case history into a psychological novel and argues that *Anton Reiser* contributes to psychology by means of its literary, and, more specifically, "romanhafte," presentation

not just the *Magazin zur Erfahrungsseelenkunde*, but literary discourse as an epistemological rather than aesthetic enterprise.⁸ This is why the novel's references to Goethe's *Werther* uncover two different ways of reading: one emphatically and unconditionally identifies with Werther, and the other distances the reader from the sufferings of the protagonist by emphasizing the novel's exemplary character and by recognizing the epistolary form as an appropriate means of self-observation. Moritz's psychological novel is itself not an epistolary novel, and Anton's readings are always already framed and presented in a psychological discourse that does not focus on the biographical development of Anton's character but on the emotional effects of his experiences. In this, the psychological novel differs significantly from *The Sufferings of Young Werther*, where the fiction of the editor still provides the reader with the pleasure of taking Werther's letters as authentic documents.⁹ By contrast, *Anton Reiser* makes use of a particular narrative voice to create the distance necessary for psychological observation and self-observation. *Anton Reiser*, as I argue later in this chapter, is a literary exercise in establishing a perspective from which self-observation becomes possible. More than being just a case of *Erfahrungsseelenkunde*, the psychological novel experiments with the narrative conditions of observation as an essential requirement for practicing empirical psychology.

of psychic material. (See Christiane Frey, "Der Fall *Anton Reiser*: Vom Paratext zum Paradigma," in *Signaturen des Denkens: Karl Philipp Moritz*, ed. Anthony Krupp [Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2010], 19–41.)

8. Moritz is known for his radical formulation of the autonomy of the artwork. (See Helmut Pfotenhauer, "'Die Signatur des Schönen' oder 'In wie fern Kunstwerke beschrieben werden können?': Zu Karl Philipp Moritz und seiner italienischen Ästhetik," in *Kunstliteratur als Italienerfahrung*, ed. Helmut Pfotenhauer [Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1991], 67–83.)

9. In this context, Volker C. Dörr argues that the psychological novel can be read as "Kontrafaktur des Briefromans": "Der Text des 'Anton Reiser' diskutiert emphatische Fehllektüren und führt sie zugleich im narrativen Binnentext vor—exemplarisch an einem Text, der Fehllektüren nur vorführt und (deswegen) seinerseits anregen konnte" (Dörr, *Reminiscenzen*, 115).

Beobachtungsgeschichten: Erfahrungsseelenkunde and the Method of Observation

The fact that Moritz published excerpts from *Anton Reiser* in the *Magazin* would suggest that the novel was to be understood as a case among others in the context of *Erfahrungsseelenkunde*. But the connection between *Erfahrungsseelenkunde* and the psychological novel is far more complex. To begin with, it has often been noted that the *Magazin zur Erfahrungsseelenkunde* consists of a wide array of textual forms and genres that cover a vast field of disparate themes and topics.¹⁰ According to Andreas Gailus, this is one of the most notable accomplishments of the *Magazin*:

Whereas anthropology is concerned with establishing itself as an institutional discipline with clear methodology and borders, Moritz untiringly emphasizes the status of *Erfahrungsseelenkunde* as an emergent science still in the process of defining its object, methods, and disciplinary boundaries. This attitude is reflected in the highly eclectic and unusually loose structure of Moritz's journal, which brought together excerpts from novels and character sketches of school pupils, detailed descriptions of aphasias and gory narratives of murderers, the stale reasoning of rationalist know-all's like Moritz's co-editor Pockels and a piece of mad writing—a kind of Dadaist writing *avant la lettre*—that pokes fun at the belief in social progress through medicine.¹¹

Whereas the epistemological project of the *Magazin zur Erfahrungsseelenkunde* essentially depends on the variety of representation, *Anton Reiser* attempts to align psychological observation with

10. See Nicolas Pethes, "Vom Einzelfall zur Menschheit: Die Fallgeschichte als Medium der Wissenspopularisierung zwischen Recht, Medizin und Literatur," in *Popularisierung und Popularität*, ed. Gereon Blaseio, Hedwig Pompe, and Nicolas Pethes (Cologne: Dumont, 2005), 70; and Yvonne Wübben, "Vom Gutachten zum Fall: Die Ordnung des Wissens in Karl-Philipp Moritz *Magazin zur Erfahrungsseelenkunde*," in "Fakta, und kein moralisches Geschwätz": *Zu den Fallgeschichten im "Magazin zur Erfahrungsseelenkunde" (1783–1793)*, ed. Sheila Dickson, Stefan Goldmann, and Christof Wingerts Zahn (Göttingen: Wallstein), 140.

11. Andreas Gailus, "A Case of Individuality: Karl Philipp Moritz and the Magazine for Empirical Psychology," *New German Critique* 79 (2000): 78.

the genre of the novel. To understand the context and implications of this attempt requires an understanding of Moritz's use of the novel: he interconnects observation with a particular form of narrative recording so as to allow for the psychological understanding of individual experiences.

The relevance of the *Magazin zur Erfahrungsseelenkunde* in regard to the development and establishment of a discipline of empirical psychology is well-known.¹² The epistemological contribution of Moritz's novel to this psychological project exceeds its being a case among others, by establishing a connection between observation and writing that is essential for the success of any scientific operation. Empirical observation alone does not suffice to produce general anthropological knowledge, a goal to which *Erfahrungsseelenkunde* explicitly subscribes. Observations need to be recorded, documented, collected, arranged, and made accessible in order to be of more than just individual value. The eighteenth century saw the publication of numerous scholarly treatises on the method of observation, but the problem of recording observations in writing did not seem of particular concern.¹³ In 1778, however, the author and Enlightenment pedagogue, Johann Karl Wezel, concluded an essay, published in Johann Bernhard Basedow's and Joachim Heinrich Campe's journal, *Pädagogische Unterhandlungen*, with the appeal: "And now, you pedagogues, tutors, informants, kindergarden teachers, principals, vice-principals, schoolmasters, and professors!—Observe, write!"¹⁴

Wezel's essay "Über die Erziehungsgeschichten" anticipates by four years Moritz's much more famous "Vorschlag für ein Magazin zur Erfahrungsseelenkunde" in the renowned journal *Deutsches*

12. See Dickson, Goldmann, and Wingertzahn, "Fakta, und kein moralisches Geschwätz."

13. The method, art, and spirit of observation in eighteenth-century medical discourse is presented and discussed in the chapter "Observieren" in Nicolas Pethes, *Zöglinge der Natur: Der literarische Menschenversuch des 18. Jahrhunderts* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2007), 201–257.

14. Johann Karl Wezel, "Über die Erziehungsgeschichten," in *Gesamtausgabe in acht Bänden*, vol. 7, ed. Jutta Heinz and Cathrin Blöss (Heidelberg: Mattis Verlag, 2001), 430.

Museum. Moritz's proposal for a collection of psychological cases in a *Magazin*, and his essential innovation to carefully distinguish between facts and moral judgments,¹⁵ can already be found in Wezel's essay, which is concerned with the composition of what he first calls "Erziehungsgeschichten," and later, "Beobachtungsgeschichten," histories of observation. Although Wezel does not explain this change from education to observation, it is clearly related to the methodological problem he aims to address. The essay reacts to an unsuccessful call for "Erziehungsgeschichten" by the editors of the journal: "One did not comply with their demand. Maybe some of those who would have had the strength shied away from the difficulties; others maybe did not see the difficulties, wanted to write, but could not, because they did not know how to direct their attention. I will say a few words about the *difficulties* and *composition* of such a history."¹⁶

Wezel's main concern is the attempt to connect pedagogical observation with its written recording in order to contribute to a general pedagogical science. As the greatest danger for such an endeavor he identifies man's inclination to theorize, to classify, and to jump to conclusions. And he explains that nowhere else would this human tendency cause more harm than in the art of education, which must strictly limit itself to unbiased observation: "For a long time, it [the art of education] must content itself with the *collection of individual experiences*, from which we can sometimes abstract and register a small general rule, and then deliberately wait to see whether sooner or later the opposite experience will nullify it" (Wezel, 436).

To this effect, Wezel suggests a kind of empirical survey, a collection of histories of observation that would not attempt to systematize and would be based on unprejudiced observation. But even if the human urge to theorize, to summarize, and to conclude were to be successfully eliminated, observation needs to overcome other, equally challenging obstacles. Most notably, how should one choose

15. Here, I refer to Moritz's famous exclamation "Fakta, und kein moralisches Geschwätz," in his "Vorrede zum 'Magazin zur Erfahrungsseelenkunde,'" in Karl Philipp Moritz, *Dichtungen und Schriften zur Erfahrungsseelenkunde*, ed. Heide Hollmer and Albert Meier (Frankfurt am Main; Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 2006), 811.

16. Wezel, "Über die Erziehungsgeschichten," 430.

a focus without any experience? A successful observation requires “extensive psychological knowledge,” as Wezel argues: “Wherefrom should a young man, who dedicates himself to the task of education, acquire such skills?” (Wezel, 431). Wezel considers history, biographies, novels, comedies, and tragedies to be valuable in this regard, “as long as one could be certain that the composer of true histories and the author of fictional events would have followed the model of nature” (Wezel, 432). As long as there is no guarantee of this, however, the best method is to rely on one’s own experiences and to learn from the observation of oneself. Here, Wezel encounters another problem that will later become central to Karl Philipp Moritz’s program of *Erfahrungsseelenkunde* and will significantly inform the narrative structure of the psychological novel *Anton Reiser*: “Self-observation requires its own talent, a specific acuteness of the inner sense, of consciousness; a faculty to carefully listen to our feelings, drives, passions, a faculty to become almost two people, one who observes while the other acts, and the former inwardly reflects after each revolution *what* could be caused by the latter, and how” (Wezel, 432). A few pages later, Wezel characterizes this observation as “cold” (Wezel, 438), a metaphor that will leave its mark on Moritz’s method of self-observation, and, as I show in chapter 3, will essentially inform Friedrich Schiller’s poetological reflections in his “true story,” *The Criminal of Lost Honor*.

In sum, Wezel argues that general anthropological knowledge must first be accomplished on the basis of thorough and unrestricted observation before application-oriented histories of pedagogical value can be successfully composed. And the method of observation he envisages is not to leave anything out. The observer has to inform himself about every single detail in the life of his pupil, whether by means of his own observations or by the interrogation of his predecessors: “All this information he shall store in his memory as if it were a magazine, and he shall not make any selection other than parting facts from judgments and speculations” (Wezel, 437).

Just as important as this procedure of observation, however, is its written recording. After having discussed the obstacles and challenges of the method of observation in general, Wezel gives detailed instructions on how to compose histories of observation.

Besides a report of the facts and a detailed description of the individual, such a history must also pay attention to the observation itself; to contribute to a general knowledge of pedagogical practice, it must document its circumstances and arrangements. Histories of observation, therefore, must record observations as well as take into account the following three aspects regarding method: "(1) *How* did one proceed? (2) *Why* did one proceed in this manner? and (3) *What* followed from this procedure?" (Wezel, 441). Thus, these histories not only contribute to an archive of observations but also develop a complex technique of documentation, in which observing and writing directly correspond to each other by reflecting and conveying their methodological objectives.

A few years after Wezel published his account on histories of observation, and with a similarly emphatic notion of the observational method, Karl Philipp Moritz wrote his famous "Vorschlag für ein Magazin zur Erfahrungsseelenkunde" and successfully initiated a new field of psychological inquiry. Under the motto "Gnothi seauton"—*know thyself*—and for the ten years between 1783 and 1793, the *Magazin* was a place to publish empirical observations and became an archive of heterogeneous materials such as diaries, anecdotes, biographies, letters, and autobiographies. Because the *Magazin* marked the beginning of a new field of study, and its contributors could not refer back to an already existing psychological system, the editors had to content themselves with the mere collection of materials from which they hoped to derive a true and complete system of psychological knowledge: "In the beginning, all these observations must be collected in a magazine under certain rubrics, without any reflection until a sufficient quantity of facts are there, and then at the end all of this must be ordered into a purposeful whole. What an important work for humanity this could be!"¹⁷

It was one of the outstanding innovations of Moritz's project that it did not require any specific expertise, that not only scientifically educated doctors and pedagogues but also uneducated laymen

17. Karl Philipp Moritz, "Vorschlag zu einem Magazin einer Erfahrungs-Seelenkunde," in *Werke I: Dichtungen und Schriften zur Erfahrungsseelenkunde*, ed. Heide Hollmer and Albert Meier (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1999), 796–797.

could make valuable contributions to the *Magazin's* collection of observations and self-observations. Due to its preliminary character and “theoretical dilettantism,”¹⁸ the *Magazin* became a largely heterogeneous archive that eschewed the consistency of medical collections of cases.¹⁹ Although the *Magazin* did not subscribe to a particular order of knowledge, Moritz reports that he followed the advice of Moses Mendelsohn, namely, to apply a system of medical classification drafted by Marcus Herz in his *Grundriß aller medizinischen Wissenschaften* in 1782.²⁰ As a result, the *Magazin* strongly focused on mental pathologies and moral aberrations of the soul (*Seelenkrankheitskunde*), and the observations collected under this rubric were often taken from juridical contexts. Andreas Gailus has emphasized the importance of forensic practices for *Erfahrungsseelenkunde* that did not emerge solely from “the simple extension of medical discourse to mental problems but from the complex crossings of medical thought, (auto)biographical traditions, and juridical narratives.”²¹ According to Gailus, Moritz’s *Erfahrungsseelenkunde* is a successor of François Gayot de Pitaval’s *Causes célèbres et intéressantes* and a precursor of nineteenth-century criminology.²² Indeed, in his “Vorschlag,” Moritz

18. Müller, *Die kranke Seele*, 77.

19. The lack of a consistent form of the contributions and the importance of interpretive restrictions for the success of the entire project might have been the reason for Moritz, as Monika Class speculates, to solely speak of observations instead of cases. (See Monika Class, “K. P. Moritz’s Case Poetics: Aesthetic Autonomy Reconsidered,” in *Literature and Medicine* 32 [2014], 50.)

20. See Moritz, “Vorschlag,” 809. The reference to the *philosophical doctor*, Marcus Herz, further shows, as Lothar Müller argues, the proximity of *Erfahrungsseelenkunde* to Enlightenment anthropology and a developing medical psychology. It also shows the extent to which Moritz applied medical categories to the investigation of the soul and how much the *moral doctor* owed to the medical sciences. For a detailed discussion of Marcus Herz’s influence on Moritz and the *Magazin*, see the chapter, “Porträt eines philosophischen Arztes: Marcus Herz,” in Müller, *Die kranke Seele*, 48–75.

21. Gailus, “Case of Individuality,” 73.

22. “Edited by Karl Philipp Moritz, the *Magazin zur Erfahrungsseelenkunde* might be said to anticipate nineteenth-century developments in pedagogy, psychiatry, and criminology Foucault has convincingly analyzed in terms of micropower and biopolitics. Moritz urged his readers to make public ‘the secret history of [their] own thoughts,’ record the behavior of neighbors, students, and friends, publish their

emphasizes the usefulness of *Erfahrungsseelenkunde* for the purpose of social control and, by considering the criminal a worthy object of study, suggests that it could develop into a valuable tool in support of the legal system:

We witnessed the execution of a thousand criminals, without considering worthy of analysis the moral damage of these limbs, which were cut off from the social body. But these limbs are as important for the moral doctor as they are for the judge, who must perform the sad operation. How did the inflammation of the damaged limbs slowly increase? Was it possible to prevent the growth of the evil, to cure the damage? What negligence in inspecting or dressing the wound caused it to spread until all antidotes were ineffective? On which thorn did the healthy finger scratch itself? Which little unnoticed splinter remained in it, inflamed, and gave rise to such a dangerous tumor?²³

Although Moritz strategically begins his "Vorschlag" with the social malady of crime, *Erfahrungsseelenkunde* did not attempt to establish itself as a psychological discourse by focusing on monstrosities and particularly spectacular and dreadful cases of capital crimes. In fact, Moritz took the opposite path when drawing "attention to the seemingly little," which can nevertheless have significant effects, as the above quoted passage strikingly shows.²⁴ Instead of evoking great social effects, Moritz is initially concerned with observation as the basic requirement for objective analysis. *Erfahrungsseelenkunde*, thus, constituted itself as a strict regime of meticulous observation considering nothing too small, nothing too insignificant to escape the scrutiny of the attentive observer.²⁵ And like Wezel,

earliest childhood memories, and write case histories of criminals, madmen, and other misfits" (Gailus, "Case of Individuality," 69).

23. Moritz, "Vorschlag," 793.

24. Moritz, "Vorschlag," 801.

25. "Attention to the seemingly little" not only puts emphasis on detailed observation but must furthermore be taken literally as the importance that Moritz attributed to childhood for the moral development of man. For a detailed discussion of the *Philanthropinum*, see Pethes, *Zöglinge der Natur*, 234–243. On Moritz's critique of philanthropism and in particular of Basedow's Dessau school, see Elliott Schreiber, "Thinking inside the Box: Moritz's Critique of the Philanthropist Project of a Non-Coercive Pedagogy," in Krupp, *Signaturen des Denkens*, 103–130.

Moritz, too, is aware that proper observation requires a disciplined practice of self-observation:

The proper observer of man must begin with himself: at first, he must meticulously draft the history of his own heart from his earliest childhood on; he must pay attention to all of his childhood memories, and he must not consider unworthy anything that had ever made a strong enough impression on him so that it still occupies his thoughts. [H]e must take the time to describe the history of his thoughts, and to make himself the object of his continuing observation. He does not need to be without any passion, but he must understand the art of momentarily stepping out of the turbulences of his desires in order to play the cold observer for a while without caring the slightest about himself.²⁶

This instruction for self-observation and successfully becoming a “cold” observer is an accurate description of what Moritz forcefully implemented in his psychological novel *Anton Reiser*.²⁷ Even the insights into the difficulties of self-observation in Moritz’s “Vorschlag” are owed to the autobiographical experiences on which his novel is built. One encounters in the “Vorschlag” the dangerous addiction to novels and dramas that will lead Anton Reiser astray.²⁸

26. Moritz, “Vorschlag,” 799.

27. The connection of Moritz’s concept of self-observation with the pietist assumption that certainty of faith required constant observation of one’s spiritual condition, has often been noticed, and *Erfahrungsseelenkunde* has been interpreted as a secular version of Pietism. (See Fritz Stemme, “Die Säkularisierung des Pietismus zur Erfahrungsseelenkunde,” *Zeitschrift für deutsche Philologie* 72 [1953]: 144–158.) More recent studies have argued that *Erfahrungsseelenkunde* should not be reduced to the religious tradition of Pietism alone and that it must rather be understood as a distinct secular discipline of anthropology that follows philosophical as well as medical traditions. Raimund Bezold discusses this connection in the chapter “Innenschau und Selbsttäuschung,” in his book *Popularphilosophie und Erfahrungsseelenkunde im Werk von Karl Philipp Moritz* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 1984), 152–166. Hans-Jürgen Schings rejects the claim that *Erfahrungsseelenkunde* could be reduced to pietist traditions in his discussion of *Anton Reiser* in *Melancholie und Aufklärung: Melancholiker und ihre Kritiker in Erfahrungsseelenkunde und Literatur des 18. Jahrhunderts* (Stuttgart: Metzler-sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1977), 226–234.

28. “Die Nachahmungssucht erstreckt sich gar so weit, daß man Ideale aus Büchern in sein Leben hinüber trägt. Ja nichts macht die Menschen wohl mehr unwahr, als eben die vielen Bücher. Wie schwer wird es dem Beobachter, unter allem, was durch das Lesen von Romanen und Schauspielen in den Charakter gekom-

Surely Moritz had his own crisis-ridden life in mind when he presented self-observation as self-elevation from feeling oppressed by an implacable fate: "As soon as my own state becomes a burden to myself," he writes, "I desist from being too interested in myself, and I begin to look at myself as an object of my own observation, as if I were a stranger whose fortune and misfortune I listen to with cold-blooded attention."²⁹

Remarkably absent from Moritz's "Vorschlag," and the *Magazin* in general is a discussion of the written recording of observations and the techniques of documentation necessary for their collection. Moritz himself seemed to have employed a system of recording that, akin to that of medical *observationes*, was based on extensive written documentation. In his "Vorschlag," he mentions a combination of recording techniques that accompany the process of observation: note keeping and tabulation.³⁰ But how does one proceed from these notes and tables to a coherent report? Remarkably, no guidance is given regarding the composition of a contribution to the *Magazin*, even though precise instructions for the composition of medical case histories were customary in medical textbooks, professional and popular journals, and in pedagogical contexts such as Wezel's instructions for the composition of histories of observation.³¹

The analogies between Wezel's essay and Moritz's "Vorschlag" are striking. Both propose an anthropological project based on empirical observation and archival collection; both share a belief in the importance of self-observation for the development of the observer; and both adopt the metaphor of the *cold* observer who reaches for objectivity in service of knowledge of the human soul.

men ist, das Eigne und Originelle wieder hervorzusuchen! Anstatt Menschen, oh Wunder! hört man jetzt Bücher reden, und siehet Bücher handeln. Leute, die wenig Romane gelesen haben, sind noch immer der leichteste Gegenstand für den Menschenbeobachter. Man lebt und webt jetzt in der Bücherwelt, und nur so wenige Bücher führen uns noch auf unsere wirkliche Welt zurück" (Moritz, "Vorschlag," 804).

29. Moritz, "Vorschlag," 802.

30. See Moritz, "Vorschlag," 805.

31. See Stefan Goldmann, "Kasus—Krankengeschichte—Novelle," in Dickson, Goldmann, and Wingertzahn, "*Fakta, und kein moralisches Geschwätz*," 33–65.

But for Wezel, proceeding from individual observation to general knowledge is enabled by a particular form of writing and recording that aligns the transmission of information with the method by which it is processed. The essential innovation of his *histories of observation* is combining the clinical method of observation with a technique of written recording that pays particular attention to observation itself. Moritz, to the contrary, does not give any instructions for the transcription of observations or seem interested in developing a more standardized procedure. With the psychological novel, *Anton Reiser*, however, he aligns the theoretical reflections from the “Vorschlag” with a particular form that implements the ambitious program of self-observation on the level of narrative.

The Psychological Novel (Moritz)

Although the *Magazin zur Erfahrungsseelenkunde* did not depend on a particular form or directly contribute to the formation of a specific genre, Moritz approached his own self-observation in the form of the novel. *Anton Reiser: A Psychological Novel* is largely based on Moritz’s childhood and appeared in four individual volumes between 1785 and 1790; short excerpts were also published in the *Magazin*.³² Indeed, Moritz attributed special importance to the novel and explicitly so in regard to the project of *Erfahrungsseelenkunde*. In his comments to the first three volumes of the *Magazin*, he wrote: “A book that I edited under the title *Anton Reiser, a psychological novel*, and of which I have disclosed some fragments in this *Magazin*, comprised a lot of observations concerning this matter: the memories of Anton Reiser’s earliest childhood were particularly important to determine his character and, to a certain extent, also his future fate. There will be many occasions in the future that I will refer to this *psychological novel*, as it

32. For a detailed discussion of the excerpts of *Anton Reiser* published in the *Magazin zur Erfahrungsseelenkunde*, see Frey, “Der Fall Anton Reiser.”

contains the strongest collection of observations of the human soul that I had the opportunity to compile."³³

In Moritz's assessment of *Anton Reiser*, the novel as a genre is of exemplary importance for the project of *Erfahrungsseelenkunde*. It allows for a particular form of observation that is supposed to provide insights into an individual's life and thus to meet the basic requirements of empirical psychology. Moritz's project of a psychological novel, however, takes *Erfahrungsseelenkunde* to a different level. Whereas the *Magazin* is based on the experiences and observations of its contributors and holds on to its unconditional methodological empiricism, the psychological novel replaces the experiential principle of immediacy with a literary narrative that establishes a critical distance to the life story of Anton Reiser. The protagonist himself does not have a say in the entire novel; instead, an omnipresent narrator discloses Reiser's childhood experiences from the perspective of a critical observer who is unhesitant to interrupt the narrative for his uncompromising psychological conclusions. A passage from the novel's second volume, in which the narrator reports on one of Anton's many, often awkward attempts to find recognition, illustrates this dominating narrative voice:

Reiser also sought by all possible means to confirm the preceptor's good opinion of him. This went so far that he walked up and down with an open book in his hand in a public place where the preceptor often went, in order to attract his teacher's attention and be considered such a model of diligence that he even studied while out walking.—Although Reiser did actually enjoy the book he was reading, the pleasure of being noticed in this pose by the preceptor was much greater, and from this trait one may see his inclination towards vanity. The appearance meant more to him than the substance, though the substance was not unimportant either.³⁴

33. Karl Philipp Moritz, "Fortsetzung der Revision der drei ersten Bände dieses Magazins," in *Magazin zur Erfahrungsseelenkunde als ein Lesebuch für Gelehrte und Ungelehrte: Mit Unterstützung mehrerer Wahrheitsfreunde herausgegeben von Karl Philipp Moritz*, ed. Petra and Uwe Nettelbeck (Nördlingen: Franz Grelo, 1986), 195.

34. Moritz, *Anton Reiser*, 116.

Although even contemporary readers were aware of the autobiographical traits that Anton Reiser shared with Karl Philipp Moritz, the novel should not be mistaken for the private case of its author. Rather than following the practice of confession, it displays a particular narrative as the appropriate form of observation. In the context of the psychological novel, psychology refers to a specific mode of observation: cold. Moritz's novel establishes by means of narrative what *Erfahrungsseelenkunde* had requested from its contributors: to momentarily play the cold observer by stepping out of the turbulences of one's desires and by not worrying in the least about oneself. In the context of the psychological novel, the request for cold observation is implemented by means of cold narration. The autonomous sovereignty of the psychological perspective is established by means of the sovereignty of the narrator who marks the cognitive threshold of the novel.

From the very beginning, the narrator's presence can hardly be overlooked. In the prefaces with which each of the four volumes opens, he positions himself as the cognitive authority who guarantees the general importance of Anton Reiser's individual history. These prefaces reflect on the genre of the psychological novel itself and help its readers to distinguish it from the genre of the popular novel, which in the eighteenth century had the reputation of serving those with morally weak and seducible personalities. Anton Reiser's own reading mania and book addiction testifies to this: "Reading had become as much a necessity to him as opium is for Orientals, who use it to attain a pleasant state of insensibility."³⁵ In contrast to the novels that Anton Reiser consumes to escape the miseries of his young life, Moritz's psychological novel opens with the promise of realism when it reveals that the novel's "observations are for the most part taken from real life."³⁶

Although Moritz holds on to the designation *novel*, he pursues a redefinition of the genre. As a psychological novel, *Anton Reiser* would not entertain with stories of adventure and romance; its

35. Moritz, *Anton Reiser*, 142.

36. Moritz, *Anton Reiser*, 3.

"main purpose is to describe man's internal history."³⁷ With this remark, Moritz places the novel in the context of the theory initiated by Friedrich von Blanckenburg's *Versuch über den Roman* and its famous dictum that the novel should depict "the inner history of man."³⁸ While Moritz's novel shares some of the central features of Blanckenburg's ideal novel—such as the biographical storyline, the narrative distance, and the causally arranged structure of the plot—it differs from Blanckenburg's teleological concept. Blanckenburg explicitly distinguishes between the biographer and the novelist:

The poet shall be and wants to be more than the mere biographer of his characters. The biographer . . . records what he sees and knows; but he does not know the angle from which he shall look at it, and this angle will only know those who oversee the entirety of this one individual character. He does not know the relations and connections between what he records and what his characters shall or can become. He cannot see the point in which all individual streams meet and concur. . . . It is different with the poet. He is at the same time both the creator and historiographer of his characters, and he stands on such high ground that he sees the final purpose of it all.³⁹

The two most emphasized guidelines of Blanckenburg's conception of the novel contradict each other: the novel's plot must be

37. Moritz, *Anton Reiser*, 3.

38. Josef Fürnkäs emphasizes the importance of Blanckenburg's *Versuch über den Roman* for the historical-philosophical analysis of the psychological novel: "Wichtig für die Analyse des Einzelwerks *Anton Reiser* als Ursprung des geschichtsphilosophischen Formtypus psychologischer Roman ist Blanckenburgs *Versuch* insofern, als er die Bedingungen der Möglichkeit eines idealen bürgerlichen Romans, gedacht als 'innere Geschichte' eines Menschen programmatisch formuliert." (Josef Fürnkäs, *Der Ursprung des psychologischen Romans: Karl Philipp Moritz' Anton Reiser* [Stuttgart: J. B. Metzlersche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1977], 6.) Fürnkäs later emphasizes the twofold function of the "innere Mensch" for Blanckenburg's ideal novel: "Der innere Mensch hat für den Roman, der die innere Geschichte eines Menschen sein soll, einen doppelten logischen Status. Einmal ist er konkreter Inhalt bzw. Gegenstand des Romans. . . . Zum anderen ist der innere Mensch transzendente Bedingung der Möglichkeit des idealen Romans." (Fürnkäs, *Der Ursprung*, 17.)

39. Friedrich von Blanckenburg, *Versuch über den Roman: Faksimiledruck der Originalausgabe von 1774. Mit einem Nachwort von Eberhard Lämmert* (Stuttgart: J. B. Metzler, 1965), 379–380.

causally arranged within a realist setting, but it is supposed to eventuate toward an ending determined to show the ideal completion of its characters. The possibilities of the novel are therefore dogmatically limited in regard to its content.⁴⁰ Eberhart Lämmert, the editor of Blanckenburg's treatise, has further pointed out that Blanckenburg attempts to use the great contemporary and public interest in novels to direct it toward more serious goals.⁴¹ He adheres to an Enlightenment concept of *Bildung* to which he attributes—as his review of Goethe's *Werther* shows—an important educational function.

In contrast to Blanckenburg's pedagogical approach to the novel, Karl Philipp Moritz's psychological novel is driven by an epistemological question. This difference must be taken into account when comparing their respective references to the "inner" history as the guiding principle of Blanckenburg's ideal and Moritz's psychological novel. For Blanckenburg, the inner history of the hero must be the organizational principle for novelistic composition. The adventure to be told is the development and conversion of the hero's ethos, and by no means the exterior history of his life. While Moritz, too, focuses his psychological novel on the inner history of the protagonist, Anton's life is not told as a story of conversion from which a refined individual arises, ready to take responsibility for himself and, thus, for others. In the context of Blanckenburg's theory of the novel, the focus on the inner history holds a moral function. In Moritz's novel, the moral perspective is replaced by a psychological one that is directed toward cognition.

Thus, Moritz's psychological novel *Anton Reiser* differs from Blanckenburg's orientation toward perfection. But it also differs from an autobiography that answers the question of how its author became what he is.⁴² *Anton Reiser* is not written toward an ending and it does not follow the idealist narrative of the completion of a

40. See Kurt Wölffel, "Friedrich von Blanckenburgs *Versuch über den Roman*," in *Deutsche Romantheorie: Beiträge zu einer historischen Poetik des Romans in Deutschland*, ed. Reinhold Grimm (Frankfurt am Main: Athenäum 1968), 58.

41. See Eberhart Lämmert, "Nachwort," in Blanckenburg, *Versuch*, 554.

42. For a discussion of the problem of autobiography in regard to its linguistic form, the situation of its author, and the position of the narrator, see Philippe

sovereign individual. In contrast to Blanckenburg's ideal novel, the psychological novel does not result in a *Bildungsroman*, but is—as Lothar Müller concludes in his book-length study of *Anton Reiser*—more closely related to the model of the medical case history.⁴³ Müller argues for placing the novel in close proximity to the contemporary boom of anthropology and medicine rather than in the context of the novel. Its methodological core is the casuistic approach of *Erfahrungsseelenkunde*, and the search for a general knowledge of the human soul.

In his call for contributions to the *Magazin* in 1782, Moritz had explicitly emphasized the importance of *Erfahrungsseelenkunde* for the novelist, who would find it necessary to study *Erfahrungsseelenkunde* before even daring to begin a literary composition.⁴⁴ To that effect, Moritz's novel must be read not only as the inner history of its protagonist Anton Reiser but also as a programmatic attempt to engage the genre of the novel for the project of *Erfahrungsseelenkunde*. *Anton Reiser* is a contribution to the theory of the novel: it sets out to demonstrate what the novel can accomplish within the larger framework of literary anthropology.

It is obvious that Moritz's psychological novel stands in a rather complex referential context, and its generic definition causes particular problems. *Anton Reiser* can be, and has indeed been, read as literary novel, biography, autobiography, medical case history, and a case narrative in the context of the *Magazin zur Erfahrungsseelenkunde*. The psychological novel transgresses generic boundaries almost purposefully. It is worth recalling the first sentence of the novel's preface: "This psychological novel could equally well be called a biography, since its observations are for the most part taken from real life."⁴⁵ The readers of *Anton Reiser* must have been confused concerning the kind of text that they were about to read. Every

Lejeune, *On Autobiography*, trans. Katherine Leary (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989).

43. "Blanckenburgs idealer Roman tendiert zum Bildungsroman, Moritzens psychologischer Roman ist aufs engste mit dem Modell der Krankengeschichte verknüpft" (Müller, *Die kranke Seele*, 42).

44. See Moritz, "Vorschlag," 798.

45. Moritz, *Anton Reiser*, 3.

genre designation is immediately replaced by reference to another: from novel to biography to observation. Surely, this is not an arbitrary list; it is directed toward the depiction of *real life* that would not have to bother with questions of genre. In view of *real life*, the laws of genre and its limits can be suspended.

Thus, the psychological novel does not have to follow a given form, and Moritz counters the criticism that he loses himself in details that do not seem to directly contribute to the big picture with reference to real life: "Anyone who values such a faithful portrayal will not be offended by what initially seems trivial and insignificant, but will bear in mind that the intricate texture of a human life consists of an infinite number of trifles, all of which assume great importance when interwoven, however insignificant they may seem in themselves."⁴⁶

As a genre, the novel offered itself to *Erfahrungsseelenkunde* precisely because it did not have to subject itself to any poetic restrictions. It gains form by means of reference to its object through the depiction of life. The novel can claim to meet its only requirement of causality not through artistry, but by following the causality of life, where every detail has important biographical effects: "Anyone who examines his past life will, at a first glance, perceive nothing but futility, loose ends, confusion, obscurity, and darkness; but the more firmly his gaze is fixed, the more the darkness disappears, the futility gradually vanishes, the loose ends join again, confusion and disorder form a pattern—and discord is imperceptibly resolved into concord and harmony."⁴⁷ A fixed gaze in combination with attention to detail, therefore, is supposed to reveal the consistency of life. A careful reading of *Anton Reiser*, however, shows that the conception of a life that proceeds according to recognizable causal principles while keeping the semblance of its unique individuality is made possible by the sovereign perspective of a narrator. Only a few pages into the second book and thus almost immediately following the cited passages from its preface, the narrator interrupts the story

46. Moritz, *Anton Reiser*, 87.

47. Moritz, *Anton Reiser*, 87.

of Reiser's life so as to reveal this secret: "Here I have unavoidably had to recapitulate and anticipate some points in Reiser's life, in order to juxtapose matters that, according to my plan, belong together. I shall do this many more times; and anyone who apprehends my plan will require no apology for these seeming digressions."⁴⁸

As Josef Fürnkäs argues in his study on the origin of the psychological novel, the narrator of *Anton Reiser* can do both: he can enter the inner world of Reiser's thoughts and emotions and he can back out anytime into an analytic and schematic perspective. By substituting an epic with an analytic position, the narrator lends consistency to Reiser's life story, and thus establishes the protagonist's identity.⁴⁹ And as the psychological novel proceeds on the assumption of the protagonist's pathology and thereby eliminates any subjective perspective, it does not leave much room for interpretation. Instead of merely presenting the story of Anton Reiser's suffering, the novel uses narrative as a diagnostic tool for the representation of observations and hence combines the depiction of the inner history of the protagonist with an analytic perspective that exceeds the individual and moves toward general cognition. In this regard, Moritz's psychological novel is more than just the individual history of Anton Reiser. The narrator of the novel claims an elevated perspective from which he can reflect on the conditions of possibility for the inner history of the protagonist and on the difficulties of self-observation. On every level, the novel appears to be an exercise in "cold" observation: the narrator successfully establishes an aesthetic distance from the life and miseries of the protagonist, but the plot presents a series of Anton's failed attempts to establish such a sovereign perspective toward his own life. The psychological novel, therefore, deals with obstacles to self-observation while successfully establishing such a perspective by means of a distanced and "cold" narrative. Anton's own attempts to gain control over his life stand in stark contrast to the sovereignty with which the narrator positions himself as the psychological authority.

48. Moritz, *Anton Reiser*, 91.

49. See Fürnkäs, *Der Ursprung*, 50–53.

The critical innovation of Moritz's psychological novel is to be found in this discrepancy between a protagonist—who keeps failing because he cannot distinguish his reading from his world, the fiction he reads from the reality in which he lives—and a narrator, who by means of sociopsychological analysis exposes Anton's attitude from the perspective of a cold observer. The novel's plot is completely subordinated to a rigorous regime of observation. Although Blanckenburg's ideal novel could still be understood as a moral example of a life well pursued, the meaning of the psychological novel does not simply emerge from the hero's life story but results from the relation between the protagonist's story and the critical perspective by which the narrator claims analytic and interpretive sovereignty. Thus, *Anton Reiser* accomplishes much more than being just an individual case in the context of *Erfahrungs-seelenkunde*: by aligning the narrative of an individual life story with general psychological cognition, it establishes a model for writing about cases. At the same time, the use of narrative for the representation of observation and the choice to engage a literary genre for the production of psychological knowledge give new meaning to literary discourse and assign to literature essential cognitive qualities.