

CONCLUSION

Literary Reference and Authorship

Chapters 1 through 3 implicitly presupposed that the novels and novellas discussed have literary status, and I have developed my argument under the assumption of their affiliation with an established literary system. Without any doubt, Goethe's and Moritz's novels as well as Schiller's and Kleist's novellas are part of today's German literary canon. But just as certainly, this literary canon did not yet exist around 1800. It cannot even be assumed that the writers of these texts considered themselves literary authors. The common practice of mentioning an editor where we expect to find the name of an author testifies to this. *Werther* and *Anton Reiser* conceal Goethe's and Moritz's authorship, and instead frame their novels by means of a fictitious editorship. In Schiller's and Kleist's novellas, the reference to the truthfulness of the story and the historically documented origin of the material have a similar function. If not as literature, how else should we be reading *Werther*, *Anton Reiser*, *The Criminal of Lost Honor*, and *Michael Kohlhaas*?

In other words, what might have been the premises of and motivations for writing about cases for Goethe, Moritz, Schiller, and Kleist when we assume that they did not write as literary authors? After all, Goethe and Kleist had studied law; Schiller was trained as a medical doctor; and Karl Philipp Moritz was inspired by the philosophical doctors of the Enlightenment period and held important pedagogical positions in Berlin. The reading of their cases as literary fiction obscures the fact that these novels and novellas might just as well be understood as vehicles for lawyers, medical doctors, pedagogues, and philanthropists to inform each other about the legal and mental status of the individual and, thus, to continue the medical and legal traditions of thinking, arguing, and writing in cases.

And yet the close reading of these texts shows that in them the representation of cases began to change, in two respects in particular. First, they could no longer be clearly attributed to a single disciplinary context. Although *Werther* seems to be a pertinent case from a moral and legal perspective, the novel takes a different direction when it develops the case primarily from the point of view of psychological development. Karl Philipp Moritz's *Erfahrungsseelenkunde* followed medical categories and also claimed to be suited for legal applications. The new focus on the inner history and the psychological motivation of the individual—which also frames Schiller's story of the criminal Christian Wolf—results in a blurring of the lines between legal, moral, and medical areas of expertise.

Second, a new narrative perspective develops in these cases, which further complicates the position of authorship. In the final part of *The Sufferings of Young Werther*, the editor takes over the narrative voice and significantly intervenes in the interpretation of the case. The same is true of the psychological novel *Anton Reiser*, which I read as an exercise in cold observation that Moritz had claimed to be the methodological foundation for practicing *Erfahrungsseelenkunde*. In Schiller's *The Criminal of Lost Honor*, the problem of narrative for the representation of cases becomes the central theme of the frames in which the case of the murderer Christian Wolf is narrated. And Kleist's *Michael Kohlhaas* further com-

plicates the narrative distinctions that lead in Schiller's novella to the claim that historical storytelling is the only appropriate choice for the composition of cases.

These two changes regarding the disciplinary affiliation and narrative perspective of cases are interconnected: the change in narrative perspective answers to the problem of disciplinary uncertainty. Insofar as cases no longer refer to a specific system of reference guaranteed by their disciplinary context—whether that is law, medicine, or moral philosophy—they develop their own frame of reference for the representation of cases. They do so by establishing a narrative perspective that allows access to the inner motivation of the protagonist, and at the same time marks the position of an omniscient psychological narrator as a mediator between the outer circumstances and the inner history. Concurrently with the establishing of such a narrative perspective a different form of reference emerges that can be called *literary*, because it coincides with the emerging principles of literary authorship around 1800. The two versions of Goethe's *Werther* document this development in exemplary fashion when the second, revised version strengthens the position of the editor as omniscient narrator and, thus, reframes the case of Werther as a story of psychological development. Behind the fiction of editorship the contours become visible of an author who testifies not only to the authenticity and originality of the historical circumstances but is also the conduit to the inner history of the protagonist.¹ It is the negotiation of narrative reference and, as a result, the development of an omniscient psychological perspective, related to the emergence of literary authorship around 1800, by which these “new” cases set themselves apart from earlier forms of casuistic reasoning and contribute to the formation of an autonomous concept of literary fiction.

1. Uwe Wirth has discussed this transformation from editorship to authorship in Goethe's *Werther* in regard to the development of the narrator in chapter “6.5.1 Der Herausgeber-Erzähler des *Werther* als Geschichtsschreiber und Dichter” of his book, *Die Geburt des Autors aus dem Geist der Herausgeberfiktion: Editoriale Rahmung im Roman um 1800: Wieland, Goethe, Brentano, Jean Paul, E. T. A. Hoffmann* (Munich: Wilhelm Fink, 2008), 273–276.

