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Plotting Memory. What Are We Made to Remember When We Read Narrative Texts?

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Abstract: While the general link between storytelling and remembering has often been underlined with regard to such topics as traumatic experience or the construction of identity, there are hardly any studies that analyse the mnestic performance that underpins the reading of narrative plots in literary texts. In order for a story to create meaning, the reader has to remember earlier events, thus becoming able to understand how conflicts arise and are resolved. If this fact seems much too obvious to require any questioning, the process of plot-related remembering takes on considerable complexity when it comes to long novelistic texts. In these cases, reading amounts to an exercise in remembering and writing becomes a way of addressing and guiding the reader's memory. This article proposes a theory of emplotted memory, i. e. of how narrative texts create a sequence of events in the memory of the reader. It argues, furthermore, that emplotted remembering is a dimension of implied readership and that it can be analysed on a textual level.

Gathering elements and cues for such a theory, the first section of the article begins with an examination of the rule laid down in Aristotle's *Poetics* that the *mythos* of tragedy has to be easily rememberable (*eumnēmoneuton*). As the famous analogy of the animal body suggests, both the limited extension and the holistic structure of the ideal tragic plot prevent the audience from forgetting how events tie in with each other. The very intelligibility and the cathartic effect of tragedy hence depend on a mnestic activity. But whereas tragedy has to become rememberable by means of the plot's inner structure and limited size alone, epic can use narrative techniques such as flashbacks and summaries in order to comprehend a much longer time span. In his theory of narrative desire, Peter Brooks builds on these insights and conceives plot as a dynamic process of anticipation and retrospection that heavily involves the reader's memory. For Brooks, emplotted remembering amounts to a passionate quest for meaning: Narrative tension implies that a psychic need prevents the reader from forgetting as long as the end of the plot has not been reached. The more coherent the narrative structure of the text, the more intense the activity of emplotted remembering will be. The

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theoretical section of the article concludes with a review of some studies from the field of empirical psychology that have addressed the recall of stories. It turns out that the basic assumptions derived from Aristotle and Brooks – such as the importance of remembering for the comprehension of narrative, the correlation between structural coherence and memorability or the strife for meaning – are in tune with empirical findings. The goal of the article, however, is not to develop a theory that is able to predict the mnestic processes triggered by a given text. On the contrary, it uses theory as a heuristic tool that is meant to be transformed by each reading.

Whereas the first section constructs a heuristic model of plot-related remembering, the second aims to account for its particularity in different texts and contexts. Its purpose is to flesh out the theory of emplotted remembering by examining the interaction of plot and memory in three romances and novels. Narrative texts give rise to various processes of remembering and forgetting that depend on plot structure, narrative technique and cultural factors. The first case study is dedicated to *Yvain ou le chevalier au lion* by Chrétien de Troyes. This 12th-century romance not only tells a story of forgetting and remembering – Yvain fails to respect a deadline set by his wife Laudine and then strives to redeem himself – but also addresses the problematics of memory on a narrative level. While the protagonist begins by forgetting his engagements to Laudine, the reader's perspective is always firmly located on the side of remembering. This effect, which is achieved by diverging measures between discourse and story time as well as by mirroring relationships between the part and the whole, testifies to the great axiological and ethical prestige of remembering in Chrétien's text. Rodríguez de Montalvo's lengthy romance *Amadís de Gaula* is at the centre of the second case study. It can be shown that the *Amadís* involves two kinds of emplotted memory and two corresponding sets of narrative strategies. The episodic elements of the romance invite the reader to remember minor incidents over hundreds of pages, but they are accompanied by almost no mnemotechnic hints because the intelligibility of the plot is guaranteed – even in the case of actual forgetting – by the permanent recurrence of the same schematic pattern. However, in the case of narrative strands that build up a coherent chain of causation, remembering is not an option but an absolute necessity. This is the reason why the narrator then gives extensive mnemotechnic comments in order to help the reader to tie the corresponding events together. The last case study focuses on Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship*. The hero's development is contingent on the fact that he vividly remembers certain incidents from his childhood and makes new experiences in the light of his infantile impressions. While the reader is made to remember alongside Wilhelm on the level of psychological causation, Goethe's novel also creates a network of symbolic relationships between the

characters that is fully accessible to the reader alone. This network involves a sense of simultaneity and complements the linear order of the plot with a synchronic memorial dimension.

The conclusion of the article suggests perspectives for further inquiry and argues that emplotted remembering is likely to respond to cultural discourses on memory. Narrative texts encourage certain practices of remembering and forgetting and can thus be understood as interventions in cultural and political debates.

Keywords: plot, memory, narrative theory, reader-response theory, coherence

In the 20th chapter of the first part of *Don Quijote*, Sancho tells how the goatherd Lope Ruiz tries to ferry a flock of 300 animals across the Guadiana River in order to escape from his former mistress Torralva. Given that the boat of the fisherman whom Lope has hired can only contain one animal at a time, Sancho begins to enumerate each goat that crosses the river and admonishes his listener, Don Quijote, not to forget a single one: »Your Grace must be sure to keep count of the goats that the fisherman rowed across the stream, for if a single one of them escapes your memory [si se pierde una de la memoria], the story is ended and it will not be possible to tell another word of it« (Cervantes 1949, 150, and 2015, 234). Don Quijote immediately interrupts Sancho and asks him to pick up the thread of the narrative at the moment when the whole flock will have reached the opposite bank of the river, but the squire objects that his story has come to an end since he cannot remember how many goats have completed their journey: »at that very instant everything that I was about to say slipped my memory [se me fue a mí de la memoria]« (Cervantes 1949, 151, and 2015, 235).

One could – as Don Quijote does – dismiss Sancho's refusal to skip the crossing of the river as a basic misunderstanding with regard to the art of storytelling. This is, after all, what the iterative mode has been invented for: to summarize a series of similar events. This article will argue, however, that Sancho has a point, even if he applies his insight to the section of the story where it is most out of place, and that this little episode provides some basic teachings concerning the relationship between narrative and memory. As a matter of fact, for a plot to create meaning both the narrator and the reader have to remember certain incidents. While it is difficult to see why keeping track of each goat should matter, other information given by Sancho might have been crucial for the end of his story: the fact that Lope Ruiz and Torralva were lovers, or that he left her because she drove him to jealousy. This is the first point I would like to underline: Narrative requires memorial retention. And there is a second insight we can gain from Sancho's tale: Certain narrative structures and techniques make it easier both for the

producer and for the recipient of the story to retain what has been told, whereas others make it nearly impossible to keep in mind the sequence of events. The love story between Lope Ruiz and Torralva does not require much mnemotechnic effort because it involves not only temporal succession, but also causation: He leaves her because she makes him jealous, she follows him because she is more in love with him than ever before, he makes haste because he sees her approaching, etc. One element is enough to recall the whole chain. The crossing of the 300 goats as told by Sancho, however, poses a terrible mnemotechnic challenge since it consists of identical repetitions. This leads to the third lessen which Sancho's communicational failure yields. Narrative does not always require memory, and it sometimes also allows for or even requires oblivion. Some events are indispensable for the understanding of the plot, whereas others can be forgotten. Unlike Sancho, a ›good narrator‹ will help the reader to devote memorial energy to the information that really matter.

The narrative emplotment of memory reaches another level of complexity when it comes to long novelistic texts. How to make the readers retain certain antecedents over hundreds or even thousands of pages? How to make him or her understand what will have to be recalled and what can be forgotten? The famous failures of memory in *Don Quijote* testify to the fact that forgetfulness can cause serious hermeneutic trouble. In the first part of the novel, Sancho's donkey is reported stolen even though the theft has never been told. Trying to repair his mistake, Cervantes added the episode of the theft, but didn't notice that the donkey is still there after the point where he inserted the new scene. In the second part, Cervantes has his characters discuss the narrator's double failure to tell the story as it ›really‹ occurred, thus demonstrating his awareness that he disappointed the readers' desire for narrative coherence (cf. Cervantes 2015, 273 sq., 296, 306, 714, 1343). Conversely, long narrative texts will confront their audience with certain minimum memorial requirements. If the recipients do not live up to these standards, they will be puzzled by the plot.

Narrative can thus be conceived as a way of ›plotting‹ memory, i. e. of creating a sequence of events not only in the text but also in the memory of the reader. Given how fundamental this process is for the understanding of narrative, it might come as a surprise that a theory of emplotted remembering has – at least as a tool for the analysis of literary texts – never been explicitly elaborated.[1]

1 Some partial exceptions deserve to be mentioned: Peter Brooks' theory of narrative desire comes closest to the kind of narrative remembering I am interested in and will be discussed extensively below. Studies from the field of empirical psychology have tested the recall of simple stories in order to confirm basic intuitions about memorial retention. Some of these studies will be mentioned in the theoretical section of this article. Daniel Fulda (2004) has suggested that

Numerous contributions from the field of cultural memory studies implicitly take for granted that such a kind of plot-related remembering exists, but very little has been done to explicate these assumptions. Aleida Assmann, for instance, argues that traumatic experience unhinges the ›normal‹ mechanisms of both memory and emplotment:

> The tried and trusted backbone for fiction is a storyline – a constructed plot that moves phase by phase through a linear chain of events, which according to Aristotle is made up of beginning, middle, and end. This narrative structure is as basic as it is unavoidable; only with an enormous effort can one circumvent it, and in order to do so one requires some kind of counter-model (Assmann 2011, 270).

Numerous contributions from the field of trauma studies share these presuppositions and focus on how trauma transgresses or at least complicates the traditional principles of plot (cf. Pederson 2018). It seems as if a borderline case or at least a phenomenon typical of modern literature had come to dominate narratological approaches to memory, thus preventing us from analysing the relationship between remembering and emplotment in all its dimensions. This article will address an apparently much more trivial, but all the more fundamental function of memory in storytelling: the importance of remembering for the creation of narrative coherence that has been tacitly presupposed by the predominant tendencies of contemporary memory studies.

I will explore this problem in two steps: Drawing on a variety of reflections from ancient poetics to modern psychology, the first section of the article aims to gather elements for a theoretical analysis of the mnestic processes involved in the reading of narrative. The second section will put this theory to the test and will try to refine it by proposing some case studies. I have chosen three long narrative texts that are structurally different and historically remote from each other: *Yvain ou le chevalier au lion* by Chrétien de Troyes (c. 1177–1181), Rodríguez de Montalvo's *Amadís de Gaula* (1508) and Goethe's *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* (1795/1796). What these romances and novels have in common is that they involve memory

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different genres involve different memorial economies: Comedy usually ends with a reconciliation that implies forgetting, whereas tragedy is characterized by the impossibility to forgive and forget. Each genre's relationship to memory entails a specific structure: episodic in the case of comedy, much more coherent in the case of tragedy. Epic forgetting and remembering participates in both poles. Some of my conclusions converge with Fulda's characterization of comedy and tragedy, but I will focus much more on the significance of memory for the intelligibility of plot and on the narrative techniques that prevent (or encourage) forgetting. A search on Google tells me that the terms »emplotted memory« and »emplotted remembering« have hardly ever been used before (cf. however, Broeck 2010, 289, who follows the predominating current in cultural memory studies by showing how trauma negates the emplotment of memory).

both on the level of the *histoire* and on the level of the *discours*. The memorial performance requested from the reader can thus be studied against the backdrop of how characters remember and forget.

1 Prolegomena to a Theory of ›Emplotted‹ Memory

The activity of remembering in the very process of reading narrative can be regarded from two perspectives: as an empirical psychological problem or as one of implied readership. It goes without saying that a narrative text can give rise to a variety of actual mnestic processes. It can be read with an attitude of distracted forgetfulness or be accompanied by mnemotechnic activities such as notetaking. I will argue, however, that memory is also an aspect of implied readership, i. e. of the conditions of reception provided by the text itself (cf. Iser 1987, 34). This becomes particularly apparent when a narrator explicitly recapitulates prior events in order to make his readers understand what is about to happen, but we will see that there are also more elegant and indirect ways of guiding the recipient's memory in such a way that the plot can be grasped as a meaningful structure. Implied remembering as a dimension of implied readership means that the text appeals to the memory of its readers, that it employs devices that make them recall what has already been told or make them anticipate that what is being told will have to be recalled later. I will try to show that this kind of ›implied‹ narrative memory can be reconstructed by means of textual analysis.

The earliest and still the most productive comment on this kind of remembering can be found in Aristotle's *Poetics*. To be precise, Aristotle writes but one word on the topic and it refers in the first place to the *mythos* of tragedy, but in the context of the whole treatise it is so rich in implications that it can serve as a starting point for my inquiry.[2] In the crucial seventh chapter of the *Poetics*, Aristotle

2 My reading of the *Poetics* is based on and guided by the following commentaries and monographs: Lucas in Aristotle 1968, Halliwell 1987, Fuhrmann in Aristotle 2006, Guastini in Aristotle 2010, Schmitt in Aristotle 2008, Ette 2010. Some of the passages under consideration still pose problems, and even recent commentators claim to clear basic misunderstandings. Surprisingly, the term *eumnēmoneuton*, which is at the center of my interest, has attracted little attention: The corresponding annotations barely go beyond a simple paraphrase. The Aristotelean corpus being highly complex and heterogeneous, I will not undertake the task to relate the term *eumnēmoneuton* found in the *Poetics* to other theories of memory put forward by Aristotle in such texts as *De memoria et reminiscentia* or *De anima*. For a general assessment of the Aristotelean concept of memory cf. Bloch 2007, who does not, however, take into consideration the *Poetics*.

highlights two features of tragic emplotment (*systasis*): wholeness (*holon*) and magnitude (*megethos*). Whereas wholeness is described as a structure consisting of beginning, middle and end, Aristotle uses a comparison in order to determine the accurate magnitude of tragedy. Animals or other objects »with a structure of parts« (Aristotle 1995, 1450b) are beautiful when they are neither too small nor too big and can thus be contemplated as a whole. Having established this analogy taken from the field of visual perception, Aristotle draws the corresponding conclusion for the accurate magnitude of the tragic plot: »So just as with our bodies and with animals beauty requires magnitude, but magnitude that allows coherent perception [*eusynopton*], likewise plots require length, but length that can be coherently remembered [*eumnēmoneuton*]« (Aristotle 1995, 1451a).

While the adjective *eusynotpon* is applied to the structure of events merely by analogy, *eumnēmoneuton* tells us what this is literally meant to say: The magnitude of the plot should not exceed the limits of human memory. We might infer that the size measured by visual perception refers to space, whereas the magnitudes comprehended by memory refer to time, but Aristotle immediately cautions his readers that the discipline of poetics is not concerned with the empirical duration of the performance. Critics have wondered whether »it is the text or the plot which is in question«, quoting passages that seem to confirm both options (Heath 1989, 44). Given that Chapter 17 of the *Poetics* considers a similar problem from the perspective of poetic production and asks tragedians to begin by devising an abstract of the *mythos* that can be contemplated (*theōreisthai*, Aristotle 1995, 1455b), it seems more likely that the requirement of memorial comprehensibility concerns a skeletal version of the plot that can easily be retained. What is at stake then is not the perception of real time but the comprehension of a structure with a defined *telos* (cf. Halliwell 1987, 99, and Schmitt in Aristotle 2008, 364).

Chapter 7, however, actually begins with the discussion of another feature of the tragic plot, which is not explicitly related to memory: wholeness. Magnitude concerns the size of the *mythos*, wholeness defines its inner structure as one of necessity and of probability. When Aristotle, in the second half of the chapter, moves on to discuss magnitude and draws the analogy between the animal body and the tragic plot, the question of inner structure is not completely lost since »beauty consists in magnitude and order [*taxei*]« (Aristotle 1995, 1450b). Commentators agree that *taxis* refers back to what has just been discussed, i. e. to the requirement of wholeness (cf. Schmitt in Aristotle 2008, 363; cf. Heath 1989, 41). This implies that the order of the body's parts corresponds to the concatenation of events *ex anankēs* and that the holistic structure of beginning, middle and end is another prerequisite of plot-related beauty. The last sentence of the section will draw an even closer tie between magnitude and wholeness: »the size [*megethei*] which permits a transformation to occur, in a probable or necessary sequence of

events, from adversity to prosperity or prosperity to adversity, is a sufficient limit of magnitude« (Aristotle 1995, 1451a). Using wholeness as a standard of magnitude, Aristotle emphasizes once more that the extension of the plot is subject to inherent structural principles and not to the external measure of time.

The question I would now like to raise is one that Aristotle does not explicitly answer, namely how wholeness and ›memorability‹ impact each other. Within the conceptual framework provided by the *Poetics*, it is possible to argue that the coherent order *ex anankēs* facilitates the memorial retention of the plot. To take up Aristotle's biological analogy, an animal of a comprehensible size would still be difficult to contemplate if its inner order (*taxis*) was excessively complex, for instance if it consisted of a huge number of arbitrarily arranged parts. A labyrinthine plot constructed on this model would be difficult to retain due to its inner structural properties, not due to its extension. According to this line of argument, both the requirements of completeness and of proper magnitude have to be met for a plot to be easily rememberable.

The *Poetics* enables us to draw yet another conclusion that is not overtly stated. As Stephen Halliwell points out, one can »establish a clear association in [Aristotle's] theory of poetry between unity and *intelligibility*« (Halliwell 1987, 100). The structure *ex anankēs* enables the spectator to understand how the sudden reversal (*metabasis*) comes about. The cathartic effect of tragedy depends on this process and is best produced »when events occur both contrary to expectation and yet on account of one another« (Aristotle 1995, 1452a). But at the moment of the reversal only the final situation of the tragic concatenation of events can be seen on stage while the series of causes that have led to the catastrophe has to be supplemented by the spectator's memory. This is, as I think, the major reason why Aristotle wants the tragic plot to be *eumnēmoneuton*: The rational intelligibility and the emotional effect of tragedy are contingent on the spectator remembering the events that bring about the change.[3]

One last question remains to be discussed with regard to section 7 of the *Poetics*: Does the requirement of *eumnēmoneuton* also apply to epic, i. e. to a narrative genre? After all, both have *mythos* as their central qualitative element in common. The parallels between epic and tragedy have often puzzled readers

3 A passage from Aristotle's *Rhetoric* also corroborates the fundamental importance of remembering as well as the link between ›memorability‹ and wholeness: The »style united by connecting particles« (*lexin [...] tō syndesmō mian*) is not only *eusynopton* and *eumnēmoneuton*, like the plot of tragedy, but also *eumathēs*, i. e. easy to learn. Following up the parallel between plot and syntax, we can conclude that remembering also ties in with the process of learning (*mathēsis*) that makes artistic mimesis so pleasurable (Aristotle 2006, 1409a–b, 1448b; cf. Ette 2010, 39–43, and Lucas in Aristotle 1968, 114).

of the *Poetics* since Aristotle states in section 18 that epic has a »multiple plot« (*polymython*), but then, in section 23, applies the rules of the tragic plot to epic, including the requirements of completeness and proper magnitude as well as the analogy of the animal body. In section 5, we are told that tragedy and epic differ in length (*tō mēkei*, ibid., 1449b). The tragic plot should not exceed »a single revolution of the sun« (ibid.), whereas epic time is unlimited. And yet, again in section 23, Aristotle praises Homer for not having told the story of the entire Trojan war because such a plot would have been »too large and incoherent [*megas kai ouk eusynoptos*], or else, if kept within moderate scope, too complex in its variety« (ibid., 1458b).

One can try to reconcile these statements by arguing that epic – like tragedy – centres on a coherent plot, but that – unlike tragedy – it achieves greater magnitude by integrating episodes that entertain a loose connection to the main strand of the plot without being completely independent. This would also imply that epic can preserve its unity even when its length exceeds that of tragedy. But how is this possible? Why is tragedy unable to contain episodes that are hierarchically subordinate to the main plot? Arbogast Schmitt (in Aristotle 2008, 304) has suggested that the reason for this difference lies not so much in the structure of the *mythos* itself as in the mode of mimesis: Epic involves both narrative (*apagellia*, Aristotle 1995, 1449b) and character speech, whereas tragedy shows all characters in direct action. Due to the presence of a narrative voice, epic can preserve the comprehensibility of its plot even when the limits of a tragic *mythos* have been exceeded both in length and complexity. The epic narrator can, for instance, recall what has already been told, summarize a long span of time in a few verses or announce the future relevance of the events that are being told. In other words, what is *eumnēmoneuton* in epic would not be *eumnēmoneuton* in tragedy because narrative devices can help to extend the »upper limit imposed by the memory« (Heath 1989, 44). In contrast, the memorability of the tragic plot has to be achieved through its limited scope and its holistic structure alone, i. e. (in Aristotle's terms) through the ›what‹ of mimesis, not through the ›how‹ (cf. Aristotle 1995, 1447a).

I will now turn to a 20th-century reader of Aristotle, Peter Brooks, whose concept of narrative plot is similarly predicated on the holistic structure consisting of beginning, middle and end. Brooks also concurs that narrative is a »form of understanding and explanation« (Brooks 1992, 10), but while some passages of the *Poetics* suggest that Aristotle conceives *mythos* as a synchronic structure that can be abstracted from its successive unfolding in the play (cf. Aristotle 1995, 1455a–b), Brooks endorses a dynamic vision of plot, arguing that »plotting« is the activity that pulls the reader through the text. The engagement with plot involves a passionate quest for meaning that mimics the desire of the intradiegetic pro-

tagonists and whose goal is the end as the moment when the plot's potential for meaning will be fully realized. Brooks refers to the Aristotelean *eumnēmoneuton* at the beginning of his study:

> Just as in the visual arts a whole must be of a size that can be taken in by the eye, so a plot must be ›of a length to be taken in by the memory‹. This is important, since memory – as much in reading a novel as in seeing a play – is the key faculty in the capacity to perceive relations of beginnings, middles, and ends through time, the shaping power of narrative (Brooks 1992, 11).

Building on Aristotelean teachings, Brooks emphasizes the teleological orientation of narrative by pointing out that the meaning of plot always emerges retrospectively and that both the beginning and the middle of a story have to be reinterpreted once the end has been reached. In other words, the understanding of plot involves a permanent oscillation between anticipation and retrospection. The end is the moment when we will have to look back on previous parts of the plot, but as competent readers we know that this moment will come and thus anticipate the retrospective reassessment of what we read. Brooks calls this activity the »anticipation of retrospection« (ibid., 23), but we could equally call it the anticipation of remembering since the retrospective restructuring of meaning presupposes that the reader be capable to recall what has been told. By consequence, the awareness of having-to-remember accompanies the entire process of reading.

Brooks thus empowers temporality with regard to what is being told and – even more importantly – with regard to the activity of reading itself. Quoting Gérard Genette's reflections on discourse time, Brooks underlines that narrative »depends on its being gone through in sequence and succession, and that it thus metonymically ›borrows‹ a temporality from the time of its reading« (Brooks 1992, 20; cf. Genette 1972, 77 sq.). Reading unfolds in a linear sequence, but it is also characterized by the movements of remembering and anticipation. The longer the narrative and the more coherent its structure, the longer the temporal intervals that have to be bridged and the more intense the activity of retrospection.

We should not imagine this process as a laborious mnemotechnic exercise, though. Even if narrative plots only grant their meaning to readers who are able to rise to the mnestic level of the text, the process of remembering as conceived by Brooks involves desire and pleasure. What enables the reader to return to previous moments of the plot is the narrative tension that has been induced by the beginning. Drawing on Freud's *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, where the ›plot‹ of life begins when a traumatic shock creates the properties of animate matter, Brooks writes: »For plot starts (or must give the illusion of starting) from that moment at which story, or ›life,‹ is stimulated from quiescence into a state of nar-

ratability, into a tension, a kind of irritation, which demands narration.« (Brooks 1992, 103) With a playful move typical to his practice of theoretical bricolage, Brooks combines the coherent structure of the Aristotelean *mythos* with the psychoanalytical concept of trauma. The plot-related compulsion to repeat is thus endowed with a teleological orientation and serves to absorb the tension of the beginning until the end has been reached.

What matters to the question of memory, though, is that the stimulus of the beginning induces a state of tension within the reader and that this state subsists as long as the end is being deferred. This bio-psychological process serves a mnemonic function in so far as it signals that something past remains to be resolved. On the diegetic level, the tension stimulated by narrative can arise from an unsolved conflict, from a desire that has been denied or from a painful experience of separation. In each case, the readerly experience of unrest points back to something that cannot be forgotten. Narrative tension means that a psychic need drives the reader to continue remembering. It is high time to abandon the idea that reading simply requires a storage of information. In fact, emplotted remembering is entangled with the most basic driving forces of storytelling.

I would like to conclude the theoretical section of this article by briefly glancing at some empirical psychological studies that have examined problems related to emplotted remembering. Since Frederic Bartlett's pioneering studies in remembering (cf. Bartlett 1954 [1932]), psychologists have been conducting experiments on how stories are comprehended and recalled. The experiments consistently show that some types of stories and certain narrative events are more frequently remembered than others. Arguing that readers encode and retrieve stories using a basic plot schema, studies from the 1970s use a narrative grammar modelled on the one proposed by Vladimir Propp in order to predict which kind of narrative structure will be better recalled (cf. Thorndyke 1977, Mandler/Johnson 1977, Mandler 1978). The more a story conforms to this ideal schema, which consists of simple building blocks such as setting, beginning, reaction, attempt and ending, the more it is likely to be adequately remembered. Studies that followed up on this approach pointed out that causal concatenation and a high density of causal relationships increases the recall of narrative events (cf. Black/Bower 1980, Trabasso/van den Broek 1985).

While the papers mentioned so far examine retrospective recall, studies on inference have probed into the activity of remembering during the process of reading. By means of inference, »information that was not explicitly stated in a text [...] becomes part of the readers' discourse representation« (Gerring/Wenzel 2015, 363). Numerous experiments confirm that inferred connections between information given in different sections of the text are of fundamental importance to comprehension. Memory-based processing theories argue that by means of

›resonance‹, stored information is automatically retrieved from the long-term memory and becomes once again available in the working memory when it is triggered by cues in the text segment that is currently being read (cf. McKoon/Ratcliff 1992, Gerring/McKoon 2001, Gerring/O'Brien 2005 and also Ericsson/Kintsch 1995, 223). While ›resonance‹ takes place without awareness, constructionist theories of inference assume that a number of inferences are made ›on-line‹ (i. e. during the process of reading) because readers engage in a conscious »*Search (or effort) after meaning*« (Graesser/Singer/Trabasso 1994, 371; italics in the original). The advocates of this view also point out that comprehension is challenged when coherence depends on information that cannot easily be provided:

> Access to generic information in LTM [= long-term memory] is very quick and executed in a parallel, rather than a serial, fashion. Access to specific information sources in LTM is accomplished more slowly (in parallel); the utilization of content within a specific information source is comparatively time consuming and, at times in a serial fashion, places more demands on WM [= working memory]. Therefore, it takes a noticeable amount of time to reinstate information that appeared much earlier in the text being read, after the information exits WM. Comprehension processes, including inference generation, slow down to the extent that the demands on WM approach the upper bound of capacity limitations. When demands on the WM exceed the upper bound, there is a catastrophic deterioration of comprehension, and few inferences are constructed (Graesser/Singer/Trabasso 1994, 380).

It should not be forgotten that psychological experiments operate with sample texts that hardly ever surpass a few lines. In long narrative prose, the critical storage limits of working memory are frequently stretched to the limits, and the information to be retrieved from long-term memory is often quite specific. During the case studies, it will be crucial to observe how comprehension is enabled even when inferences are difficult to make or how inferences are facilitated by certain narrative techniques.

Conceiving comprehension as a search, the constructionist view quoted above stresses the finalistic orientation of reading. The teleological impulse of narrative that we have found in Aristotle and Brooks also resonates with other empirical inquiries. In a classical study from the early days of Gestalt psychology, Bluma Zeigarnik argued that test persons are more likely to recall activities when they have been interrupted while performing them. This held true in particular when the activity was interrupted at the moment of maximum affective engagement and when the task itself had a holistic structure that led up to a superordinate goal (»Endhandlungen«). Continuous activities (»fortlaufende Handlungen«) that simply consisted of repetitive steps were less likely to be recalled even when they had been interrupted (cf. Zeigarnik 1927, 54). The so-called Zeigarnik effect has been difficult to reproduce and thus subject to much criticism (cf. MacLeod 2020,

1080). Experiments in the recall of stories, however, suggest at least that causally connected events are more likely to be remembered than purely additive sequences (cf. Mandler/Johnson 1977, 116). Furthermore, the hypothesis that there is a general human need for closure is still on the table (cf. Kruglanski/Webster 1996).

It turns out that some of our basic theoretical assumptions – the importance of remembering for the comprehension of narrative, the correlation between structural coherence and memorability as well as the strife for meaning – are in tune with the present findings of empirical psychology. But this is not the crucial point of this article. As has already been pointed out and as will become even clearer in the course of the case studies, I am focussing on implied readership and not on the average mnestic performance of 20th- and 21st-century readers. Furthermore, my model of emplotted memory does not serve as a hypothesis to be confirmed or disproved by the case studies, but as a tool that is necessarily transformed by each reading. After all, it would be an unproductive result – at least from the perspective of literary studies – to discover that a theory is simply able to predict what happens in a given text.

It should thus be clear that the theories discussed so far were helpful to conceptualize some hermeneutic intuitions, but that they also aim to raise new questions. Above all, the suggestions I have gathered aim to open a field for textual analysis. It will be easier now to focus our attention on how the reader's implied memory is guided by narrative and how it contributes to the construction of plot. The requirement that the plot be *eumnēmoneuton* neither defines a timeless aesthetic standard nor serves as a prediction of potential empirical results, but fulfils a heuristic function. A closer look into the workings of emplotted remembering has become indispensable in order to push the inquiry forward.

2 Memory Plots: Chrétien, Montalvo, Goethe

The question that most urgently needs to be addressed is probably the one concerning the specifically narrative techniques that help to enhance the memory of the reader. Why are narrative texts able to surpass the memorial horizon of tragedy? I would like to use this question as a starting point in order to embark on a series of three case studies. The texts I have selected all deal with male protagonists faced with mnestic problems that tend to arise in the context of erotic relationships: faithfulness, keeping promises, avoiding distraction, meeting deadlines, etc. Covering a period of more than 600 years and representing key moments in the history of the novel, they provide a useful sample for an exploration of plot-related memory.

2.1 Fighting Forgetfulness: Chrétien's *Yvain*

In the chivalric romance *Yvain, ou le chevalier au lion*, written in the late 12th century by Chrétien de Troyes, the eponymous hero's forgetfulness triggers an existential crisis: Having asked his wife Laudine to grant him a leave during which he plans to gain more honour as a knight, he misses the agreed-upon deadline of one year. Laudine bans Yvain from her presence and the protagonist goes mad, but then gradually rehabilitates himself and eventually recovers his lady's favours. Given that forgetfulness equals failure, it does not come as a surprise that remembering enjoys great axiological prestige in this text. To cite but one example, the emblematic figure of the Lion never forgets how Yvain rescued him from a dragon: »Remembering Yvain's goodness [de la grant bonté li menbre], | and his generous help« (Chrétien 1987, vv. 5596 sq. and 1994, vv. 5592 sq.). In order to redeem himself, Yvain has to learn to remember the favours he received and to meet the obligations he has accepted.

The shift towards the problematics of remembering also means that the physical risks of knightly combat turn out to be much less daunting than the dangers located inside the character. This is what Yvain, to his great disadvantage, fails to understand at the moment when he leaves Laudine. The narrator underlines the turn towards interiority with a word play on *avenir* and *souvenir*, the first of which refers to chivalric adventure, while the second designates the activity of remembering. Yvain fears that external obstacles such as imprisonment might prevent him from respecting the time limit of one year (»Who knows what will happen?«, »je ne sai qui m'avenra«, Chrétien 1987, v. 2589, and 1994, v. 2589), but Laudine gives him a magic ring that will protect him from such dangers as long as he does not forget her: »nothing | Will stand in your way as long | As you never forget me [Tant com vous souvenra de moi]« (Chrétien 1987, vv. 2597–99, and 1994, vv. 2598–99). Instead of watching what lies ahead, Yvain should have kept in mind what lies behind him. We can thus observe a movement that interiorises the central conflict.

Having left Laudine, Yvain travels from tournament to tournament in the company of his bosom friend Gavain and fails to notice that the time limit of one year is drawing to a close. This point of the plot allows us to switch from the level of character psychology to the level of emplotted memory. Whereas the protagonist gets lost in seriality – one successful combat is followed by so many others – the narrator firmly locates the reader's perspective on the side of remembering. Up to this moment, most events have been told in the singulative mode: The couple has just married and received a visit from King Arthur's court, but it has not yet begun to share a courtly life of its own. The presentation was mostly scenic, and if summaries were used, they only covered a few days. But as soon

as Yvain has sallied forth, narrative speed suddenly increases: One year of story-time is summarized in less than ten verses. In these few lines, the narrator also detaches the perspective of readership from the point of view of the protagonist by signalling his own presence and by anticipating a result that has not yet been achieved: »And I think he will stay too late | For Gawain won't let him go« (Chrétien 1987, 2667 sq.). Whereas Yvain experiences his leave as a time of joyful distraction and realizes his forgetfulness only when it is too late, the reader cannot help regarding the same interval as a disastrous failure to remember. What the narrator anticipates with this playful prolepsis is the protagonist's painful retrospection, which will take place a few lines after (cf. Chrétien 1994, vv. 2695–703).

A different narrative mode predominates, however, in the following section of the romance: The encounters and adventures that occur during and after Yvain's madness are all told in the singulative mode and in scenic presentation. By consequence, the perspectives of the character and of the reader once again begin to converge, and new strategies have to be adopted in order to sustain the narrative tension that arises from the separation between the knight and his lady. Even if Laudine is absent from most of Yvain's trials, the episodes are constructed in such a way that they all refer to the central conflict of the text in so far as they involve the necessity to remember. At one point, for instance, Yvain has accepted to meet a deadline in order to rescue Lunete from execution, but then he becomes entangled in another adventure that risks costing him too much time. While he is fighting his enemy, the giant Arpin de la Montagne, Yvain is not completely absorbed by the present situation, but continues to think of the time limit that is drawing to a close (cf. Chrétien 1994, vv. 4188 sq.). Chance – or rather narrative providence – also serves Yvain's memory too well: In the course of his adventurous wanderings, he happens to return to the magic fountain where his relationship with Laudine first started. This painful experience almost costs him his life, but it also functions as a reminder that he has not yet recovered what he has lost.

In sum, all these adventures contribute to a mnemotechnic training. As more and more discourse time elapses, the negotiation of memory on the level of the episodes also serves to remind the reader that the central conflict of Yvain's existence still remains to be resolved. The mnemonic significance of the episodes in the second part of the romance can be read as a successful compromise between *avenir* and *souvenir*. As we saw, Chrétien begins by pitting these two terms against each other: Yvain forgets the deadline because he is too keen on the adventures and challenges that might be waiting for him. But then *avenir* and *souvenir* are once again made to coincide since adventure itself is turned into a memorial practice. By consequence, the inner problem of remembering is once again externalized and thus made tellable.

Chrétien has often been celebrated for his capacity to craft a unified plot and to resist the pitfalls of seriality (cf. Köhler 1970, 236–261). Even a very short reading of the *Yvain* has enabled us to identify at least two mnemonic techniques that create coherence: the varying ratio between story and discourse time and the mirroring relationship between the overarching narrative syntagma and the episodes. The very way the story is told thus underlines the ethical dimension of remembering in Chrétien's romance. In order to live up to the ideals of courtly society and achieve individual happiness, Yvain has to learn how to endow his memories with enduring intensity. He thus participates in a cultural and civilizational process that transforms fleeting into permanent, i. e. memorable affects (Koppenfels 2007, 28 sq. and Heinrich 1982, 95). Whereas epic foregrounds emotions such as the desire for revenge or the loyalty to one's comrades in war, the mnemonic training of the romance hero revolves around love.

2.2 Storing Stories: Montalvo's *Amadís*

According to a graph obtained by Hermann Ebbinghaus in 1885 and still to be found in modern manuals of psychology, the rate of forgetting is about 60 % in the first eight hours. Then the amount of information retained is almost constant up to the second day, before it begins dropping once again (cf. Baddeley 2013, 100). For the reading of narrative, this means that discourse time is also a potential time of forgetting. The longer the text, the less likely we are to remember it accurately. In *Amadís de Gaula*, written by Rodríguez de Montalvo in the late 15th century, textual length becomes a poetic principle. The four books of this romance in prose contain some 1500 pages in modern editions, but Montalvo then wrote a sequel, the *Sergas de Esplandián*, and many other authors did so after his death, building up a series that eventually consisted of no less than 24 volumes (cf. Schaffert 2015, 21 sq.). But while the potentially endless time of discourse seems to invite forgetting, the *Amadís* is also written in a narrative tradition that gives massive importance to memorial retention. As Ferdinand Lot and Eugène Vinaver have pointed out with regard to narrative interlace in the *Lancelot-Grail*, on which the *Amadís* is modelled, the medieval romances in prose seem to presuppose a reader with an absolute memory since unfinished episodes are often taken up after hundreds of pages (cf. Lot 1918, 17, and Vinaver 1971, 82 sq.).

The astonishing accuracy of the narrator's memory in the *Amadís* becomes most apparent when minor details are recalled. To cite an example, as a small child the protagonist has to be abandoned in a little chest, and the one to carry out this delicate task is Darioleta, the chambermaid of Amadís' mother Elisena. More than 800 pages later, Amadís' and Darioleta's paths cross once again: In the

meantime, he has become a famous knight and she a wife and mother (cf. Montalvo 2012, 244–247 and 1063). In other cases, past events are recalled because they continue to provoke new adventures. In Chapter 13, for instance, Amadís slays the haughty knight Dardán. Even though this exemplary punishment seems to settle the problem, a series of avengers now begins to haunt Amadís: In Chapter 17, he happens to meet two knights who espouse Dardán's cause; in Chapter 33 a lady who wants to revenge Dardán's death lures him and his brother Galaor into a trap. Having served for some time as a pretext to introduce new episodes, the retaliations then come to an end.

These incidents with a strong anaphoric dimension testify to the mnemotechnic mastery of the narrator and to the permanent memorial appeal to the reader. It is also striking, however, that this kind of narrative memory primarily supports the episodic structure of the text. What the reader has to recall are self-contained episodes that have not yet been finished or object-like items like characters or weapons. The act of remembering does not refer to a chain of causation, but to isolated incidents. Moreover, these events are all located on the same temporal plane. Even if they ›happened‹ and were told in a certain order, there is no need to retain that order because the episodes are barely related to each other. It is enough to know *that* something happened, but it does not matter *when* it happened and *how* it came about. In other words, the memory of episodes in the *Amadís* functions like a container in which stories are stored irrespectively of their temporal relationships.

The adequate metaphor for this kind of memory would be the storeroom or the thesaurus (cf. Weinrich 1964, 23 sq.): a type of memory driven by a strong desire for accuracy and completeness, which allows for past events to be retrieved unaltered at any moment. In Montalvo's romance, this model of remembering is also represented by places which serve as memorial storage spaces: King Lisuarte's court, for instance, where characters whose fate has been completed can be ›archived‹, or the coats of arms of the champions who have tempted the adventure of the forbidden chamber on the *Ínsula Firme*. Very much like in a football league table, the shields of the more or less successful knights are suspended in hierarchical order according to their accomplishments in courtly love (cf. Montalvo 2012, 667 sq.). This hierarchy is also one of mnemonic reliability: Amadís, being the best lover, is constantly absorbed by the »delightful memory of his lady« (Montalvo 2003, 434) and never misses a deadline he has accepted to meet (cf. Montalvo 2012, 604 sq. and 1180).

One could thus say that the memory in which the reader of the *Amadís* participates is huge in quantity, but not very complex in structure. What also ensures intelligibility is the schematic nature of the plot, which draws on a limited set of patterns such as the problematic birth of the hero, the reconquering of his iden-

tity through adventure and the code of courtly love. Disorder continues to erupt, but it can be taken for granted that it will also be overcome (cf. Lugowski 1976, 28–30). If the reader's supposedly absolute memory should fail, he or she will not be at a loss since what is about to happen repeats what has happened before. One could even go so far as to argue that schematic and episodic narratives like the *Amadís* invite forgetting. According to a hypothesis put forward in modern psychology, the more similar the material to be retained, the more likely we are to forget (cf. Baddeley 2013, 111–113). This tendency – which is called retroactive interference – is certainly very strong in the *Amadís*, where most sections of the plot very much resemble each other. Repetition in narrative thus ensures intelligibility, but it also encourages forgetfulness, at least in so far as empirical readers are concerned.

There are, however, a few exceptions to the magazine-like memory I have described so far. Like most chivalric romances, the *Amadís* is not a pure addition of episodes, but also uses syntagmatic structures that provide some degree of cohesion. As Horst Weich has shown, this is the narrative function of the love story between Amadís and Oriana (cf. Weich 1989, 164). Upon closer examination, it turns out that the narrative of love systematically builds up relationships of causation on at least two occasions: Oriana's jealousy at the beginning of Book II and the erotic rivalry between Amadís and the Roman Emperor Patín in Books III and IV. The narrator prepares each of these conflicts by carefully planting the causes that will trigger them. Oriana's jealousy arises much later than the misunderstanding that provokes it (cf. Montalvo 2012, 470 and 606). The first hostile encounter between Amadís and Patín takes place in Chapter 47, but the conflict only develops some 23 chapters later (cf. ibid., 694 and 1083). These narrative strands are of particular structural importance since they provide the organizing lines of the plot.

The fact that the corresponding sections contain extensive mnemonic commentary is telling with regard to the question of emplotted remembering. At the beginning of the chapter that reports how Oriana grew jealous, we read a lengthy recapitulation of the antecedents that took place much earlier: »The history has related to you how Amadis was in the castle of Grovenesa« (Montalvo 2003, 369). Conversely, the narrator also anticipates that the fatal misunderstanding will provoke a crisis: »what [...] this great story will recount to you later« (Montalvo 2003, 406). Using the terms suggested by Peter Brooks, one could say that the anticipation of retrospection as well as the retrospection itself are made explicit and spelled out by the narrator: The reader is told that he or she will have to remember and is then reminded of what has been told much earlier. The same device recurs when the conflict with Patín is taken up and developed in Book III (cf. Montalvo 2012, 1127 sq.).

This confirms some of the hypotheses mentioned before. When it comes to events that are related by a chain of causation, the narrator of the *Amadís* no longer trusts the supposedly absolute memory of his reader and gives additional mnemonic help. The storehouse-like memory of episodic incidents, in contrast, operates with implicit and very brief memorial hints: In most cases, the characters that return to the stage are simply named, and the reader is left with the task to recall that they have appeared before. Different narrative structures require different kinds of remembering: The episodic elements of interlace presuppose important quantities of storage and retrieval, the holistic narrative strands demand the reconstruction of motivations.

2.3 Indelible Impressions: Goethe's *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*

In his 1774 *Versuch über den Roman*, Christian Friedrich von Blanckenburg draws on Aristotle's *Poetics* and in particular on the requirement of comprehensibility in order to devise his concept of what would later be called the *Bildungsroman*. Like epic, the plot of the novel should be based on a coherent chain of causation, but it can attain a much greater length since it depicts the development of one protagonist (Blanckenburg 1774, 8 sq.). While the Aristotelian hero must have a fixed *ēthos* and *dianoia* (Aristotle 1995, 1449b–1450a), the process of formation typical of the novelistic character functions as a mnemonic device and thus redefines the possible maximum extension of narrative plot. As Blanckenburg points out throughout his treatise, the events the character is confronted with in the novel leave behind traces (»Spuren«, Blanckenburg 1774, 319) and modify his personality. Given that the protagonist soon begins to react differently to new impressions, the reader will have to recall (ibid., 296) the incidents that have previously modified the character in order to account for changing modes of behaviour. Whatever the hero does at the present moment hence refers back to what he has already experienced. Blanckenburg even goes so far as to argue that, reading a novel, we cannot help remembering: »The poet was able to force me to do this« (ibid., 322; [English translation mine, MM]).[4]

Some of the poetic principles formulated by Blanckenburg can be observed at work in the text that came to define the genre of the *Bildungsroman*: Goethe's *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* (1795/1796). In the first book of the novel, the protagonist is most of the time engaged in sharing his childhood memories, which he is

4 German original: »Der Dichter hat mich dazu zwingen gewußt«.

able to recollect with a great amount of detail. As his mother observes, Wilhelm's outstanding mnemotechnic skills stem from the fact that he is easily affected by what he sees: »I am not surprised that you remember these things so vividly, you were so interested in them from the beginning« (Goethe 1995, 4). If emotional involvement is one reason why Wilhelm easily retains what he has experienced, the exceptional power of his imagination is another: The texts he learns by heart as a child are always accompanied by images (»Bilder«) that linger in front of his inner eye (Goethe 2015, 26). Affect meets image: This combination ties in with a basic mnemotechnic lesson to be found in ancient rhetoric, namely that *imagines agentes* – images with a strong impact on the viewer – can be used to stabilize memories that would otherwise be lost (cf. Assmann 2011, 210–213). In Wilhelm's case, however, we are not dealing with a conscious art of memory, but with infantile images that accompany him throughout his life and that increase his receptiveness to new impressions. In line with Blanckenburg's theory of the novel, we can infer that Wilhelm's early fascination with the female knight Clorinda from Torquato Tasso's *Jerusalem Delivered* is one of the reasons why the appearance of the »beautiful Amazon« in Book IV – his future fiancée Natalie – produces such a profound effect on him (Goethe 2015, 226–228 and 235 sq.). One of the novel's basic conditions of intelligibility is that the reader keep track of what Wilhelm calls his ›indelible impressions‹ (»unauslöschlichen Eindruck«, ibid., 70 and 235). The corresponding metaphor of memory would not be the storeroom, but a solid surface into which images are engraved (cf. Weinrich 1964, 25).

It would be reductive, however, to read these iconic recollections on the level of psychological causation alone. As has often been pointed out, the *Lehrjahre* involve a symbolic dimension since Wilhelm's infantile impressions function like prototypes that anticipate their fulfilment. Though his phantasies sometimes meet disillusionment, they often converge with the real world, provoking what Hans-Jürgen Schings has described as »responding counter-images« (»antwortende Gegenbilder«, Schings 2011, 91). The symbolic and the causational nexus exist alongside each other (cf. Engel 1993, 275–299), but what distinguishes them is that causation is constructed like a chain, whereas (pre)figuration in *Wilhelm Meister* resembles a network – a network of memories, since all the images that are involved in this process arise from past experiences. The women Wilhelm encounters in the course of the novel are a case in point. They usually share some feature with Clorinda, and yet also refer to each other, thus becoming prototypes in their turn. Wilhelm's first mistress Mariane, for instance, makes him think of the Amazonian lady knight from Tasso's epic because she dresses up as an officer (cf. Goethe 2015, 9). The merry actress Philine evokes Clorinda through her blond hair (cf. ibid., 91). Mariane and Philine, however, are also directly linked because Wilhelm sees both of them wearing a white negligee (cf. ibid., 43 and 93). The

effect of this technique is to build up a multi-centred network of figures related to each other through iconic cross-references. Whereas causation requires the reader to reconstruct a linear sequence, the symbolic allusions involve a sense of simultaneity that heavily relies on accurate remembering. The images that are being recalled stand for stages of a morphological process and have to be held against each other (cf. Schings 2011, 97).

Even though the novel tells Wilhelm's life from childhood to the moment when he gets engaged, it is not easy to fix the starting point from which the symbolic network originates and the end towards which it moves. David Welberry has compellingly argued that the protagonist's infantile phantasies do not represent an ideal that is lost and then recovered, but rather disguise a fundamental void (cf. Wellbery 1996, 622). And Natalie, whom Wilhelm takes to be the ultimate figure of figures (»Gestalt aller Gestalten«, Goethe 2015, 445), is also a »supplement« that fills the emptiness left behind by others (cf. ibid., 565). As the novel problematises beginnings and ends, it also weakens narrative teleology: From the moment when the hero loses Mariane, he also loses the goal he is striving towards, and we see him being pushed around by fortuitous circumstances until he eventually happens to get engaged with Natalie. I would like to suggest that the lack of a clearly defined narrative telos – which is replaced by a series of substitutes – is a precondition for the symbolic network to unfold. By suspending, at least to a certain extent, the finalistic practice of reading for the plot, the text shifts the reader's attention to the level of symbolic meanings. Narrative remembering is no longer simply a question of before and after, of cause and effect, but comes to involve a new dimension. To understand the plot of Wilhelm's life amounts to reconstructing a network of dynamic relationships that largely surpasses the character's point of view and that provides an essential backdrop for everything that is about to occur. By following these iconic transformations, the reader performs the novel's implied memory.

3 Conclusion: Towards a Cultural History of Emplotted Memory

The case studies have helped to corroborate some assumptions of the present article. The first conclusion I would like to draw is that narrative remembering can be analysed on a textual level as a dimension of implied readership. Furthermore, narrative has to be understood as a way of ›plotting memory‹, i. e. of creating a temporal sequence of events that turns out to be meaningful only at the condition of being adequately remembered. While narrative plot structures memory

as a temporal process, remembering also aims at overcoming time: The Aristotelean notion of *eusynopton* implies that we simultaneously comprehend things that are told subsequently. Finally – and this is the point where conclusions become much less definite – different narrative structures and techniques embody different kinds of remembering. The mnemotechnic devices we have encountered in Chrétien, Montalvo and Goethe are not only diverse, but also located at different conceptual levels: diverging measures between discourse time and story time, mirroring relationships between the part and the whole, implicit continuations and explicit recapitulations, iconic cross-references. It seems hard, if not impossible, to determine what these narrative and poetic strategies have in common, apart from the obvious fact that they both demand and enhance narrative remembering.

This heterogeneity cannot be accounted for if we squeeze it into some abstract narratological taxonomy or if we reduce it to general psychological laws. Quite on the contrary, the next task for an inquiry into emplotted memory will be to link the analysis of narrative structure and of implied readership to cultural discourses on remembering and to embed it in particular historical contexts. The structures and devices that instantiate different processes of remembering could be interpreted, for instance, in relation to the recurring polemics against distracted reading. To mention but one example, in his *Brief über den Roman* Friedrich Schlegel criticises the female addressee for her excessive and oblivious consumption of novels and romances: »Your memory scorns this vulgar stuff which has become a necessity through an unfortunate habit of your youth; what has to be acquired so laboriously, is entirely forgotten« (Schlegel 1968, 95). Reading too much and without distinction means that nothing will be retained. Schlegel's half-ironic critique is directed against a practice that actually existed, namely massive and unsystematic borrowing from lending libraries. As Franco Moretti has pointed out, 18th-century readers reacted to the exploding production of novels and the increasing number of texts that were available on the literary market by renouncing their claim to narrative coherence (cf. Moretti 2010, 7).[5] They borrowed the volumes of a novel out of order and did not read the texts in their entirety. A novel such as *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*, with its minutely elaborated network of symbolic cross-references and the corresponding importance of implied remembering, clearly discourages such rapid consumption. Similar concerns surface in the 16th-century debate on the Italian *romanzo*: Torquato

5 Moretti follows Rolf Engelsing's study of the transformation of 18th-century readership. Interestingly, Engelsing concurs with Schlegel in so far as he characterizes the older form of »intensive reading« as a mnemotechnic practice, whereas the new form of »extensive reading« is oriented towards variety and newness (Engelsing 1974, 182 sq.).

Tasso laments that modern audiences desire an ever-increasing amount of variety (*varietà*) in narrative and notes that the romances that best satisfy this demand – Boiardo's *Orlando innamorato* and Ariosto's *Orlando furioso* – violate the Aristotelean prescription that the plot be *eumnēmoneuton* (cf. Tasso 1977, 26 and 41).

I would hence like to suggest that emplotted remembering is grounded in the structure of the text, but that it also responds to historical practices of reading and to discourses on the appropriate uses of literature. Texts that give massive importance to memory call for empirical readers that are able to retain what is narrated over long periods of time. The forms of subjectivity thus produced have a wider cultural resonance. Why were readers around 1500 requested to recall episodes over hundreds of pages, while the addressee of a *Bildungsroman* written in the late 18th century has to retrace connections between shifting positions in an iconic network? Is there a link between the contemporaneous crisis of rhetoric and the shift from narratives based on storage to narratives based on inscription? After all, the memorial metaphor of the thesaurus is inextricably entangled with the rhetorical art of memory that came under attack in modernity (cf. Weinrich 1964, 23). A much larger corpus and a much more sustained inquiry would be indispensable to really ask such questions. And in order to answer them, the approach adopted so far will have to integrate other methods such as discourse analysis, media history and the history of reading. The result could be a history of emplotted memory that accounts both for narrative structure and broader cultural concerns.

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