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PSYCHOTRAUMA, NARRATION IN THE MEDIA, AND THE LITERARY PUBLIC— AND THE DIFFICULTIES OF BECOMING INTERDISCIPLINARY¹

1. Introduction

In what ways and under what conditions can narration contribute to the therapeutic process of coming to terms with traumatic experiences? How might we improve our concept of narration, be it in the context of therapy, the public domain, creative writing, or the reception and production of media output, in order to describe more effectively and understand better the processes of narrative interaction that we know to alleviate emotional suffering and reduce social tension? Why are narration and its counterpart, the equally narrative act of reception performed by conversation partners, readers, and the audience of the media, therapeutic in the sense that narration helps prevent further emotional suffering and aggression? On closer consideration, it is clear that the question of the relationship between psychotrauma, narration, and therapy expresses nothing more (and nothing less) than the central concern of bourgeois artistic and literary production since Goethe and, more particularly, since Schiller's theory of the aesthetic education of humanity: how can art improve the lot of humanity, individuals, and communities alike?

My approach to this question is based on the study of psychotrauma, part of the wider field of psychotherapy. Psychotraumatology is the science of mental injuries and how they can be healed. The study of psychotrauma draws on the findings of developmental and cognitive psychology, especially child and infant psychology, and thus has a scientific, experimental basis. However, the study of psychotrauma also draws on qualitative social psychology and psychotherapy studies in which methods of narrative analysis are employed, so it is also based on textual analysis.² This implies working under the theoretical assumptions of what in German is generally called *Handlungstheorie*, probably best described as an approach to cultural phenomena that is based on the study of action and interaction.³ This approach is much less a theory of texts than a theory of how the human mind interacts with texts. Methodologically, it encompasses textual analysis and qualitative reader-response research.

The above position has an unusual effect on the way in which I work in that my thoughts seem to speak with two voices. It is as if I had two different intellectual selves—which is probably not that uncommon among Germanists well-acquainted with the Faustian experience of "zwei Seelen, ach!, in meiner Brust". One of the inner voices seems to belong to a literary theorist, the other to someone engaged in research on psychology and human interaction. From time to time, these voices conflict because the analysis of interaction not only treats narration as a text with content and form but also, and primarily, focuses on the specific affect-related psychological functions that narration has for its author and readers. The psychologist's voice in me says that if people tell stories to other people, whether orally or in writing, they do not do so because they

¹ The fifth section of this article originally included a narratological close reading of a sequence of interaction between participants in the conference itself. Since the editors decided that this section was not appropriate for inclusion here, I have omitted it from this article. Instead, the close reading will appear in *Forum: Qualitative Social Research* (<http://www.qualitative-research.net>) in autumn 2004.

² See Fischer/Riedesser (1998). On the applications of psychotrauma studies in the cultural sciences, see Mauser/Pietzcker (2000). Hirsch (1988) focuses on interaction-based microtraumas and object-relation traumas, and Weilnböck (2001) discusses the use of the concept of trauma in literary theory.

³ For examples of the analysis of literature from a psychological perspective, see Pietzcker (1992), Raguse (1994), and Weilnböck (2004a, 2005).

want to create a particular form or implement certain textual features in order to stimulate cognitive responses in the recipient. From what we have learnt from developmental and infant psychology, we know that the human mind simply does not work in this way. We have only to think of young children when they tell stories, when their eyes widen and they start breathing heavily, finding it difficult to draw enough air into their lungs to express the narratives they want to express. The narratives of these children do something more than produce content and form or transmit units of cognitive information. Narrating children have feelings, strong feelings—and thoughts at the same time. And they manage to bring those feelings across to their listeners. If you listen to a child telling you a story, you end up having some of the same feelings that the child had while narrating. These feelings and affects migrate, so to speak, from the child to you: they are transferred. If this does not take place, there is something seriously wrong with the way in which you and the child interact with one another, for the entire affect-related psychological development of the child is dependent on this kind of narrative exchange and affect transference.⁴ As we intuitively know since the tales about Casper Hauser, children cannot develop properly without telling narrative stories.

The admirably lucid and helpful introduction to literary narratology by Martinez and Scheffel can be seen as representing my literary self. When I read their definition of narration as a process in which 'someone tells a certain something to someone else', and when I see them proceed to concentrate on the 'certain something' of narration, my literary self is content (Martinez/Scheffel 1999:9). But the psychologist in me protests at once; he wants to focus on the 'someone' and 'someone else' of narration as well. And he wants to do textual analysis at the same time. It is here that my difficulties begin, because, for some reason that is not yet entirely clear to me, the psychologist's focus on the affect-related psychological functions of narration seems a dangerous methodological addition rather than a useful one. It threatens the voice of the literary theorist in me. And here the conflict begins.

If we ignore this inner conflict for a moment, the main question can be stated as follows: how can the study of psychotrauma be of assistance to literary theory? In this context the concept of the subjective traumatic experience is of crucial importance. Mental injuries and psychotraumatic effects are caused not by the event itself, even if it leads to physical injury, but by the subjective impact of the event. In this respect, we can conceive of trauma as a person's subjective trauma narrative about an event (or about a continuing situation of interaction-related microtraumas).⁵ A subjective trauma narrative of this kind clearly has everything that, from a psychological point of view, narratives would appear to require. On the level of its content, there are subjects and objects (in this case, perpetrators, bystanders, and victims), and there are intentions and actions (i.e. processes of interaction and consequences of actions). On the level of the narrative act itself, the subjective trauma narrative creates a process of interaction with a listener. Narration is thus a key concept of psychotherapy, which can reasonably be expected to be of benefit to the study of narratological questions.

In order to arrive at a more precise understanding of the potential benefits of the conceptual interface between narratology and psychotherapy, we can begin by asking how trauma narratives work. It is clear that they are a particular kind of narrative with certain characteristics. They are horrifying because of the experience narrated in them, and they are always incomplete and

⁴ See Dornes (1993), Pantoja (2001), and Bohleber/Drews (2002:304–346).

⁵ This definition goes beyond and is more specific than some of the more recent psychological definitions of the narrative, which assume that mental activity in general is best described in terms of the constant production and modification of mental narratives (see Geißler 2002:37–84 and Pantoja 2001). These more recent concepts are of great significance for literary theory and the cultural sciences since they indicate that the ability to form narratives is present at a very early stage in development.

disfigured narratives: when the point is reached at which the mental injury becomes subjectively unbearable and turns into an unspeakable horror ('namenloser Schrecken'), the narrative collapses and the story can no longer be told in its entirety. The traumatic part of a person's life experience loses its narrativity (see Marie-Laure Ryan's article in this book).⁶ This does not mean, however, that the traumatized person ceases to speak; shock and speechlessness do not last significantly longer than the traumatic situation itself. After that, in one form or another, narration takes over.⁷ From a narratological point of view, then, trauma is the presence of an uncompleted narrative, a narrative process gone astray. At this point, however, the literary theorist in me voices his dissent: how can we conceive of an incomplete narrative in the first place? Is such a thing even possible? We are compelled to treat every literary text as a complete one, no matter how disjointed and fragmented it may seem—who are we to say whether someone's narrative is less complete than it could be, let alone should be?⁸ Psychologists adopt an entirely different position. Their work is based on the assumption that narratives are by their very nature continuously changing works in progress and always bear the potential for further development. The voice of the psychologist in me, in fact, describes my role as a psychologist as follows: I interact with incomplete narratives, helping the narrator to make the narrative more complete so that its suppressed and/or forgotten parts lose their negative impact on the narrator's life.⁹

If one assumes that the psychologist is right, that narratives can indeed go astray and be more or less complete, we have then to ask what an incomplete narrative looks like and how it can be completed. It will be helpful to introduce the concepts of trauma compensation patterns and trauma defence mechanisms at this point. These mechanisms are psychological and narrative devices that suppress or distort memories originating in the traumatic situation. They function by means of screen memories, which are emotionally endowed with screen affects, thus generating screen narratives. A screen memory does not represent the actual scene of traumatic interaction itself; it does not contain the core narrative of the experience. Instead, it focuses on a marginal aspect of the experience, separates this aspect from its context,¹⁰ and thereby avoids the memory of the traumatic context altogether and sidesteps the unbearable affects of panic and horror.¹¹ It should be stressed that, although (or indeed because) screen memories and screen narratives suppress and cut off crucial parts of the traumatic experience, they enable the person concerned to keep going—at least for a time, for, in the long run, they prevent that person from recovering properly, from becoming less traumatized by arriving at a more complete trauma narrative. This process of reaching narrative closure is what therapists mean by the therapeutic process of coming

⁶ Werner Wolf has suggested introducing Wolfgang Iser's (1975) concept of the *Leerstelle* to help conceptualize the incompleteness of the trauma narrative in more precise narratological terms.

⁷ In fact, it is possible that the absence of an end from a person's account might increase in prominence in proportion to how speechless the person was when terrified. Such a narrative, then, is endless and incomplete at the same time.

⁸ This reservation is all the more pressing if we want to avoid following literary critics who make judgements of taste (e.g. Marcel Reich-Ranicki). Steering clear of such an approach is not as easy as it might seem; for example, scholars often choose what they study on the basis of their own aesthetic preferences.

⁹ This is why the well-known therapist Roy Schafer once defined psychotherapy as the process of telling the same story over and over again—but ultimately telling it in a different and more complete way.

¹⁰ The defensive mechanisms of screening and dissociating the screen memory's content from its traumatic context resemble what is known in classical rhetoric and poetics as metonymic shift (contrasted with the metaphorical association of images). In this respect, integrating psychotherapy and the cultural sciences could result in metonymy and metaphor being seen not only as different rhetorical techniques but also as reflecting differences in the processes by means of which the human mind comes to terms with its experiences (see Weiböck 2004e).

¹¹ Bearing in mind the debate concerning the pictorial or iconic turn in the humanities, it should be highlighted that screen memories often take the form of visually intensified images (see Rohde-Dachser 2000:88, 96). As early as 1973, Heinz Kohut spoke in terms of super-intense Polaroid memories.

to terms with something. The second major aspect of the role of narration in the context of trauma and therapy is now apparent: not only is trauma really a narrative, albeit an incomplete one, therapy is a narrative process too, the process of completing the narrative. Narration holds the key to dissolving the destructive impact of a traumatic experience.

It is now more clear what the concept of a complete narrative might mean. It requires that a recounted story completely fulfil its author's individual needs for the purposes of trauma therapy. In general, this means that the narrative should be factually complete (i.e. the roles of perpetrator and victim, their intentions, and the actual events should all be accounted for and psychologically processed). It also means that the narrative should be emotionally rich (it should include even the most unpleasant and horrifying affects attached to the traumatic experience).

Once more, the voice of the literature-lover in me protests. Violently disagreeing with the above view, it responds that the literary text is a work of art, belongs to the realm of the spiritual, and thus by its very nature exists on a level above that of the utilitarian satisfaction of the needs of an author undergoing trauma therapy in particular and the mundane or egotistic intentions of an author in general. Otherwise, it is not art but something more trivial. But the psychotraumatologist in me retorts that all storytelling, whether in oral speech or written literature, is in some way associated with and dependent on the personal needs and intentions of its author, and if an author or critic thinks otherwise, it can only be due to a refusal originating from psycho-cognitive screen-processes.

No one would dispute that narration, like therapy, only functions in conjunction with another person who listens or reads with empathy.¹² The recipient does this by receiving the narrator's transferences of affects and associations and engaging with them personally.¹³ In order to prevent us from losing sight of this fact, I propose extending our conceptual apparatus with two new terms: narrative trauma association and empathetic narrative resonance. These concepts are intended to allow us to grasp better the fact that people who listen to trauma narratives can do so in a therapeutic manner only if they tap into their own trauma associations and trauma narratives. This means becoming aware of the personal experiences and associations that resonate with the account of violence and injury told to them. Although the associations of trauma and violence made by the listener may vary in kind and in psychotraumatic magnitude, it remains the case that therapeutic storytelling and listening cannot take place without listeners having their own trauma narratives completed and placed in a position where their emotional aspects can begin to be considered. It is by no means easy to achieve this, for it is hard to remember traumatic scenes in which one has been a victim, and even harder to remember scenes in which one has been a perpetrator. This latter condition is the second major prerequisite for the success of the process of transference. By definition, narrative trauma associations consist of scenes of interaction that contain not only the victim but also the perpetrator. And, being psychological phenomena, trauma associations always introduce both aspects at once, no matter whether we are listening to the

¹² The literary theorist in me often forgets about the listening other; this reflects the general situation in literary theory, which has seen very little qualitative sociological research on the reception of the media (see Charlton 1997, Weilnböck 2003e, and Weilnböck et al. 1999).

¹³ Transference means an unwitting exchange of affects and associations that takes place between two individuals interacting verbally and non-verbally. Feelings, even fantasies, associations, and thoughts can move from one person to another, without either party consciously intending or even being aware of it (this is also true of mediated interaction such as that between authors and readers, authors and texts, and texts and readers). There is no reason to treat processes of transference as miraculous or occult phenomena. They happen all the time when people interact, and they are historically and biographically developed, based on real-life events and historical and personal experiences shared by a community or society. See Racker (1978), Bohleber/Drews (2001:347), Mertens/Waldvogel (2000:226–232, 758–771), Kernberg et al. (2000:87–97), and Tschuschke (2001:160–163).

narrative of a victim or perpetrator. So, having a trauma narrative completed and ready to be confronted emotionally really means being aware of our experiences—be it as victims, or be it as perpetrators.

Given that the stimulation of empathetic narrative resonance is such a complicated and vulnerable process, and given that it can fail or be distorted, we need to ask when empathy (and therapeutic transference) can fail, and what we are left with when this happens. At this point, I would like to introduce the concept of screen empathy, which I define as a special kind of listener response in which the screen affects of the traumatized person, and not the traumatizing affects themselves, are shared and reaffirmed. The listener who experiences screen empathy does not realize that the story provided is incomplete and that some traumatizing experiences and affects have not been expressed. Such a listener cannot and does not want to help complete the story. Screen empathy is, as it were, empathy with a person's defence rather than with that person's suffering. In psychoanalytic terms, experiencing screen empathy with a traumatized person means engaging in a process of parallel (counter-)transference ('*konkordante [Gegen]-Übertragung*'; see Racker 1978:124–134). The affects of narrator and listener function in parallel, serving the common function of fending off unpleasant affects; consequently, the therapeutic process of coming to terms with what happened cannot take place properly. For the process to be successful, a different kind of transference, which we can call complementary (counter-)transference, is necessary. In it, the interacting pair of narrator and listener/reader can move beyond screen affects and touch on the suppressed affects and associations that the traumatized person, initially unable to feel and articulate them, transfers by means of non-verbal (and verbal but non-explicit) interaction. In this manner, the interactive process of working through and complementing the trauma narrative unfolds. Screen actions and screen empathy, therefore, inhibit what is potentially the most productive, creative, and healing of all forms of human interaction: the construction and sharing of a common narrative about the experience of mental injury.

A few words on trauma dependency and compulsive repetition should be said here. Screen affects never truly fulfil a person's need to come to terms emotionally with experienced events; they substitute for this by providing the necessary degree of self-stimulation without actually removing the oppressive burden of the unarticulated traumatic experience. The need for the substitute can become so great that people strive continuously to repeat parts of the traumatic situation in order to feel the associated screen affects. For this reason, they often turn to forms of interaction characterized by addiction. The object of addiction might be a chemical substance or a certain form of personal interaction. In the case of the media, an activity such as reading books or watching films might be performed because it had the effect of stimulating controlled retraumatization.¹⁴

2. Face-to-face and/versus mediated narration

As far as its function is concerned, mediated narration is no different in any fundamental sense from therapeutic trauma narrative. Nonetheless, there are inevitable secondary differences with associated methodological and procedural consequences. In literary and/or mediated interaction, there is no direct contact with the listening other. The readers of literature or the audience of a film cannot react directly in an attempt to influence the author, and even hypertext is not significantly

¹⁴ In the case of interaction with literature and the media in the public sphere, adopting a pattern of screen empathy and trauma dependency might involve an institutionalized form of reader-author relationship in which author and audience interact primarily through screen actions, thereby strengthening their psychological defences.

different in this respect.¹⁵ Even so, all authors write against the background of internalized mental representations of themselves and their readers, a fact inherited from direct face-to-face interaction, which is also guided by internalized representations and ultimately pre-structured to a far greater degree than is generally assumed in the context of ideological traditions based on individual liberty and autonomy. Another secondary difference lies in the fact that mediated interaction bridges a time gap, for the point in time of narration is temporally different from the point in time of listening, thus adding a second time gap to that contained in the link between an event or experience and its narration. This increases the probability that the trauma associations of historically distinct traumatic themes will overlap and intersect. But this is also true of face-to-face interaction, for, by definition, psychological associations are not constrained by restrictions of chronology and thematic coherence. It would appear, therefore, that the dichotomy between face-to-face and mediated narration is less clear-cut than is generally assumed.¹⁶ The functional question posed by mediated narration is essentially the same as that posed by its face-to-face counterpart: what kinds of associations and affects are activated by the author of a mediated narrative and transferred to its readers, and in what ways does this transference help or hinder the process of coming to terms with personal traumatic experiences and issues of communal trauma? Indeed, the presence of the (twofold) time gap helps to show that mediated narration, rather being totally different from face-to-face narration, as is frequently assumed, actually adds another highly significant aspect to the way in which we consider the functioning of the interactive processes in which narratives enable us to come to terms with (traumatic) experiences. Because it is located in the public rather than the private sphere, media narration reveals collective processes of coming to terms with things. In these processes, an entire community or nation deals with publicly present traumatic issues regarding its past (this, of course, implies that legal and political questions have to be dealt with at the same time as the emotional issues).

In view of the above, it would appear heuristically more sensible to treat face-to-face and mediated narration as dissimilar but not ontologically different. The difference between face-to-face and mediated narration on the one hand and narration in therapy on the other has been widely ignored. It must, however, be considered in order to develop further my belief that the study of therapy can provide considerable conceptual benefits for narratology. Because of the at times almost obsessive attention given to the distinction between face-to-face and mediated narration (often the result of efforts to defend against interdisciplinary tendencies), it has been largely ignored that narration in therapy differs from face-to-face and mediated narration in four ways. It takes place in a relational setting that is (1) asymmetric, (2) intended to achieve a specific goal, and (3) designed to ensure a continuous process of narration and narrative construction by means of interaction over an extended period of time; furthermore, (4) consensual validation is available as a means of evaluation. These properties are discussed in the following paragraphs.

(1) The first feature captures the fact that, because one of the participants in therapy is there to receive therapeutic help from the other, both participants have fundamentally different positions, different functions, and different responsibilities. (2) For the same reason, the procedures and functions of this kind of interaction have a certain degree of constraint and focus, since its sole objective is the provision of therapeutic assistance. The participants in

¹⁵ It is impossible to say conclusively whether we should conclude that defence mechanisms can be preserved more easily in mediated interaction or whether it is rather the case that mediated interaction, because it has more substantial content and greater imaginative potential, makes it easier to access and modify defence mechanisms.

¹⁶ The same may be true of the distinction between factual and fictional narration. When approached from the point of view of sociology and therapy, it is easier to see the extent to which a factual story can be fictitious in the sense that it did not take place as an actual event, even though it is factual in the subjective perception of the narrator due to the effects of over-coding and various defence mechanisms.

cultural/mediated and face-to-face interaction, on the other hand, have symmetric positions (and responsibilities), and there is no predefined focus for the functions of each of these forms and the ends that individuals can try to achieve with them. For example, the principal objective of therapy lies in dismantling and restructuring the client's psychological defences, for it is the defence mechanisms activated in response to traumatic experiences that cause the client to suffer. There is no place for reinforcing and reaffirming (pathological) defence mechanisms in a therapeutic context. In cultural/mediated interaction, on the other hand, reaffirming defence mechanisms can often be the main objective of individual authors/narrators and readers/listeners in writing and reading/listening. To put it another way, the therapist bears a certain amount of responsibility, but the participants in cultural interaction are not subject to any responsibility whatsoever, for they are protected by the rights of free expression and reception that form the indispensable foundation of modern western societies.

(3) The third important difference between therapy and most cases of face-to-face and mediated narration is that the latter do not obtain or even seek the stable continuation of a particular process of narration; they permit the participants to withdraw from it at any time (this contrasts with the life-long process of mentally constructing biographical narratives, from which there is no escape). Client and therapist, however, agree that they will, for a certain period of time, regularly return to the task of continuing their shared process of narration whether they feel like it or not. This has productive consequences for the process. Readers and writers, on the other hand, are not required to go back to a particular reading or writing process (this does not, of course, mean that they will not sometimes feel drawn to return to it, even if against their will).

(4) The fourth feature concerns the evaluation of the process of narration. In (psychoanalytically based) textual analysis, the literary critic is forced to reject the procedure of consensual validation with which therapist and client together can investigate and evaluate their understandings or interpretations of the process. The critic is faced with a concrete text rather than a process.

When these differences between narration in therapy and face-to-face as well as mediated narration are considered, it becomes clear that the context will affect the way in which we approach the question of when narration is successful in the sense of being completed for the purposes of trauma therapy. The issue must be viewed differently depending on whether the situation is one of therapeutic or literary interaction. In addition, without even introducing methodological considerations, it should be clear that literature requires more than just the creation of a character or narrator who provides a complete (for the purposes of trauma therapy) narrative. Therapeutic progress has been made when patients undergoing therapy reach the stage of being able to provide a factually accurate, logically consistent, and emotionally rich account of traumatic experiences in their past. The literary presentation of such a patient as a character or narrator, however, need not produce an aesthetically pleasing result. Furthermore, there is no guarantee that such a literary presentation will not be given in a form that triggers defensive affects because of the reader's own trauma associations.¹⁷ In other words, when putting an individual experience of successful trauma therapy into writing in the sense of turning it into literature, it would not seem particularly desirable for the account to include verbatim reports of the interaction that took place in the therapy sessions. In conclusion, certain methodological and conceptual means of describing and evaluating a therapeutic process of coming to terms with

¹⁷ In my conference presentation, I developed this argument using the example of James Moll's non-fiction Shoah film *The Last Days*, which was produced by the Steven Spielberg Foundation and won an Oscar for best documentary in 1998 (see Weilnböck 2004d).

something are applicable in the context of therapy, but they are no longer sufficient when applied to cases of mediated narration.

It is important to note, however, that this does not, as might otherwise be assumed, point to the presence of fundamental theoretical differences. The same theoretical tools can be used to look at whether and how narratives ease trauma in both literary/mediated and therapeutic interaction alike. Nonetheless, the differences described above do have methodological consequences, and these we must consider. Once more, we find that the core of the problem lies in the fact that literary theory deals with static texts, concrete representations of the outcomes of psychological processes, rather than with the processes themselves. If we were to leave the text and its analysis in order to concentrate on reader response (and author input) and measure the effects of a process of literary reading or writing on an individual reader (or author), perhaps by means of narrative interviews, we would use more or less the same methodological procedures and evaluative criteria as are employed in qualitative research on psychotherapy. However, the literary theorist looks at the text rather than the way in which people interact with it. This has the important conceptual benefit of showing us that there is no such thing as a successful and complete trauma narrative in the substantialist sense of a complete printed text. A trauma narrative is not a text in the true sense of the word; it is a heuristic concept for a mental narrative process. Thus, we should speak only of complete and/or successful trauma-easing processes (not texts). When dealing with texts, this means that it is not appropriate to ask whether a text as a whole should be regarded as a complete and successful trauma narrative. Instead, we should ask whether the text contains features that can have the function of triggering trauma-easing processes, in particular complementary transference reactions, in people when they read the text (or in an author while writing it).

3. Literary working through of traumatic experience

Having clarified to some extent what we should look for in order to understand what it means for a trauma narrative to be completed and ease trauma in a literary context, we can illustrate our findings with a concrete example. This is "Hunter-Tompson-Musik", a short story by the contemporary German author Judith Hermann. Its main character, Hunter, seems to be entirely without family and home, and is caught in a dependency on the ramshackle hotel resembling a retirement home in which he lives, listening to music in his melancholy and radically withdrawing from most forms of social contact even though the desire to form friendships has not entirely died within him. Hunter's behaviour, in particular his associations and fantasies, show that the narrator is depicting his personal situation as one characterized by dissociation (evident in his intense aggressiveness and rejection of social contact), double-binding, a deep-seated conflict between dependency and autonomy, and melancholy and depression. For example, when he speaks to the main female character for the first time, one of the narrative's central events, Hunter suddenly associates with her the image of a cartoon duck strangled by another character (see Weirnböck 2002g). This does not make any sense, either narratologically or psychologically, unless we assume that the situation implicitly reflects a certain amount of prior traumatic experience. Combined with our knowledge of the way in which a character like Hunter interacts with others, we can conclude from this that his unsuccessful encounter with the young woman is a retraumatizing experience. The reasoning involved here takes place on the level of what I would call the implied biographical and psychological experiences of a literary character, which corresponds to Alan Palmer's concept of the fictional mind in action (see Palmer's article in this book).

The narrator does not tell us anything about the biographical history of Hunter prior to his present situation. However, readers see and sense Hunter's state of mind via trauma associations of their own that resemble the experiences implicit in the presentation of Hunter as a character. Readers' associations even include images and thoughts pertaining to biographical issues inherent in the character of Hunter. Most importantly, the text is structured in such a way that it permits and supports readers in coming to terms with trauma associations of their own that resonate with it. This is by no means self-evident, for Hunter and the narrator do not engage in or relate such a process of coming to terms. Nonetheless, although the protagonist of the narrative does not manage to alleviate his own suffering, the text gives readers the opportunity of reading it in a way that will help them come to terms with and increase the completion of their own personal trauma narratives.

How does the author of the text provide readers with this opportunity? The narrative is constructed in such a way that it activates two kinds of transference. One is defensive in nature, containing screen effects, primarily aggression and melancholy. The other serves to create a space in which the defended-against affects can appear, thereby furthering the process of coming to terms with what has happened. The author presents a seemingly independent third-person (authorial or extra- and heterodiegetic) narrator. In actual fact, however, the narrator's perspective coincides with the subjective perspective of the main character (Hunter). This fusion of perspectives, although almost imperceptible to readers, helps them to develop empathetic resonance with the state of mind depicted in Hunter. The fusion of the third-person narrator with the most privileged narratorial voice maximizes both the impression made by Hunter on the reader and the transference that occurs. Reading about Hunter provides readers with the opportunity to activate effectively the trauma associations to which they have access because of their own biographical experiences.

However, the fusion of the perspectives of character and narrator is by no means a necessary condition for this to take place. Something else is going on as well. The author, Judith Hermann, does not allow readers to know for sure at any point in the narrative that the perspectives of narrator and protagonist have merged; in this sense, she deceives the reader. By doing so, she brings about the transference of particular affects to the reader. Through her narrator, she makes the reader experience the affects of being in an illusory or unfaithful relationship. Furthermore, by deceiving the reader regarding crucial questions of self and other, she initiates a destructive double-binding relationship between reader and text/narrator of the very same kind as that which is an implicit part of Hunter's previous history. As a result, the dependency-autonomy conflict depicted in Hunter is likely to be re-enacted between reader and text/narrator. In a way, then, the reader is offered a relationship with the same structure and, for the purposes of psychotraumatology, the same causes and effects as the relationships Hunter must have lived through (the implied biographical experience of his character) in order to reach the situation he is in when the narrator presents him to the reader.

We cannot tell whether or to what extent the author does this consciously. It does not matter anyway, for, irrespective of the intentions behind it, the most likely outcome of the situation is that readers will be tempted to adopt Hunter's frame of mind without even realizing that they are doing so. The reader, to put it in Alan Palmer's terms, 'constructs the fictional mind' of the narrator or Hunter 'as a continuous mind' (see Palmer in this volume), and does so in a way that involves entering into a double-binding relationship with that mind. Thus, through the narrator, the author is able to bring about (parallel) defence transference between herself and the reader. This means inducing in readers screen affects and screen associations of the same kind as those that characterize the emotional state depicted in Hunter. Consequently, readers are likely to fend off

certain memories and feelings attached to their individual trauma associations, just as Hunter and the narrator avoid dealing with the associations of Hunter's personal history.

Several possible consequences for the reading process itself can be identified (this is done here for heuristic purposes only). First, readers will abandon critical distance in order to closely follow the evaluations and suggestions of the narrator, which ultimately means adopting Hunter's perspective in each and every scene that involves him. For example, when the narrator shows Hunter getting angry with Leach, the owner of the hotel, for (in his view) not looking after his post properly and being a generally egotistic person (116f.), readers believe Hunter and become angry like him. Another example occurs when Hunter states in the closing sentences of the story that the young woman is bound to leave the hotel early the next morning, taking with her the cassettes he gave to her as a present (119). Readers are likely to be convinced that this is what will happen. Finally, when the narrator shows Hunter enjoying his evening routine of listening to his music (137), readers will themselves slip into a melancholy mood and perhaps even think to themselves that this is the best possible way of listening to music.

It follows that readers will not conceive of Hunter's situation as a state of suffering at all. There is nothing to make them do so; Hunter clearly does not see himself as a suffering person in any way. The most important consequence of this is that the reader does not even begin to reflect on what is perhaps the most intriguing aspect of the plot, the earlier biographical history and actual life experiences that brought about Hunter's situation in the first place. When readers fail to reflect in this way, the defence strategy of the narrator (and perhaps even the author as well) has served its purpose successfully. Readers who forget to reflect in this manner do so due to the defensive transference brought about by the narrator, who seems determined not to tell us anything about Hunter's previous history. In doing so, the narrator creates the conditions that allow readers to avoid realizing and sensing any trauma associations of their own that are touched on by the story. Hence, they will not come to terms with the traumatic experiences concerned. All empirical readers, of course, will perceive the text in their own individual subjective ways, but, as individual subjective perception is never completely isolated or different from that of other individuals, we can still assume that there is a limited number of probable reader responses. When faced with Hunter as depicted in the narrative, readers have, one way or another, to decide in their hearts and minds whether to accept these transferences and whether and when to escape from and/or come to terms with them.

Having ascertained that there is a narrative device able to cause defensive parallel transference, we can now focus on the second kind of transference at work in "Hunter-Tompson-Musik". While the narrator collaborates, as it were, with the main character for reasons of psychological defence, it can be shown that the author has built a small number of inconsistencies, however subtle, into the narrator's perspective. When these inconsistencies appear in the narrative, they give readers the chance to realize that the perspectives of narrator and protagonist have merged. If readers recognize these subtle clues in the narrative, they can transcend the (parallel) transference directed at them and enter into a process of complementary transference instead. They can loosen the grip of the screen affects and become capable of feeling with empathy the affects and associations that the narrator tries to keep at bay, that the narrative transfers all the more intensely to readers, and that readers defend themselves against when dealing with their own trauma associations. In summary, the narrator strives to implement (parallel) defensive transference, but the author of the text, in giving the reader a certain amount of opportunity to detect inconsistencies in the narrator's perspective, creates a space in which complementary transference can take place, thereby supporting the therapeutic process of coming to terms with trauma associations, defence mechanisms, and defensive transferences.

Determining the probability of such complementary transference taking place in practice (in other words, calculating the percentage of a group of Judith Hermann readers that we would expect to reach the stage of coming to terms with their screen affects) is a somewhat complex qualitative empirical problem. As far as Hermann's text is concerned, it boils down to the question of how effective or recognizable the breaks in the narrator's perspective are (or how easy it is for readers to overlook them). The breaks are extremely subtle, so subtle that we cannot be absolutely sure that they were consciously constructed by the author. The least subtle of the three breaks I have identified occurs when Hunter gets angry with Leach, the hotel owner, because he does not want to go and check whether Hunter has received any post (116f.). Such behaviour is, indeed, rather impolite and annoying, but our view of the situation changes considerably when we note that it is implied in another scene that Hunter can see from the counter whether or not he has received any post. But this is not explicitly stated; it takes a highly analytic (or unreliable) reader to notice the inconsistency.

It is difficult to answer the qualitative empirical question of the likelihood of readers initiating psychological processes in which they come to terms with their affects. Difficult—but not, the literary theorist in me says, impossible. We have simply to recognize that the best way of dealing with the question lies in exchanging textual analysis for a multidisciplinary research context of which qualitative reader-response studies are a part and in which methods from the social sciences are used. In the last few years, I have participated in the development of two research frameworks for reader-response studies, one involving individual interviews and the other group interviews. The former developed out of a Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (German Research Foundation) project (1999, 2003e), the latter I derived from the context of a group-analytic training (Weiböck 2002f/g, 2003d). The reader responses that I introduced above as heuristic concepts were actually observed in a group analysis of Hermann's text. Some of these responses turned out to be of central importance for understanding the text and the analysis session itself. It would be desirable, I would argue, to integrate such methods into our research, even though we can also make considerable progress without going beyond textual analysis—what I have said here, for instance, is based entirely on textual analysis.

4. Interactional narratology

Having taken Judith Hermann's text as a concrete example of how the concepts of psychotraumatology can be applied to the study of a literary narrative, it is perhaps appropriate to take a step back and ask how this interaction-based perspective on aesthetic products and media output relates to literary narratology proper. In more general terms: what specific difficulties arise when we try to create an interdisciplinary narratology? Postulating that interaction-related functions and transferences connect a narrative text or film to its recipients clearly takes us beyond the world of descriptive systems that classify types of narrator and situations of narration on the basis of purely formal criteria. On the functional level, all narrators are different. One way of analysing Hermann's narrative in terms of formal description would be to employ Wayne C. Booth's concept of the unreliable narrator in order to describe its narrator systematically. Additional assistance can be found in the introduction to literary narratology by Martinez and Scheffel. Drawing on Martinez-Bonati's distinction between mimetic and theoretical sentences in the words of the narrator, Martinez and Scheffel (1999:99–100) make the following comment in parentheses: 'we shall also treat cases in which the narrator provides subjectively coloured evaluations as instances of theoretical unreliability [unreliability that occurs in the narrator's more

abstract and philosophical statements]'.¹⁸ This draws attention to the most important interaction-related function of texts (both for psychotraumatology and in a general sense). Just as in face-to-face narrative interaction, it is this kind of subjective colouring that allows a textual author/narrator to convey a narrative and/or interact with a certain motive, process experiences of conflict-ridden and/or psychotraumatic interaction, and perhaps try to re-enact such conflicts on the level of transference between text and reader. Martinez and Scheffel, though, touch on the subjective colouring of narratives in an aside, as if it had nearly been forgotten and was not considered of sufficient narratological importance to merit systematic treatment.

Nonetheless, the introduction by Martinez and Scheffel stands out because it tries to point the way towards an interdisciplinary approach to narratology and explicitly attempts to go beyond purely descriptive systems for analysing narratological phenomena: 'unlike Stanzel's closed typological circle, which aims to subsume an imaginary totality of types, we present a descriptive model designed to operate with an inventory of freely combinable features (to which more can always be added) rather than a limited number of typical forms of narration' (Martinez/Scheffel 1999:94). Putting this into practice, Martinez and Scheffel provide a chart of different narrative situations based on a set of three distinctions: hetero-/homodiegetic, extra-/intradiegetic, and (for focalization) author/character/neutral. Certain combinations of these features produce types that cannot be illustrated with concrete examples in the form of complete narrative texts (Martinez/Scheffel 1999:95). The system of Martinez and Scheffel is clearly an open one (in the sense that further features could be added to produce further types) but it is still based on forms rather than interaction-related patterns and functions. It covers criteria of time (order, duration, and frequency), mood (distance and focalization), and voice (time of narration, level of embedding, involvement of the narrator in events, and the subject and addressee of narration). Although the consideration of subject and addressee nominally reflects the nature of narration as a process of interaction, the system does not offer a way of describing or explaining the functions of narrative interaction. Any approach based on an inventory of features (even if an extendable one) and lacking functional criteria will, by its very nature, be limited to describing labels for formal types. If we are to adopt an interdisciplinary approach to narratology, we must assemble criteria for defining the affect-related psychological functions of narrative interaction.

Although they fail to adopt such a functional approach, Martinez and Scheffel do identify different degrees of narratorial involvement in the narrated events (Martinez/Scheffel 1999:82). Following Lanser, their scale extends from the third-person (heterodiegetic) to the first-person (homodiegetic) narrator and includes a total of six types of narrator: (1) the uninvolved narrator, (2) the uninvolved eyewitness, (3) the witness-protagonist, (4) the minor character, (5) the co-protagonist, and (6) the sole protagonist. The concept of narratorial involvement, indeed, would make an ideal functional/interaction-related criterion (as would the idea of subjective colouring). This would, of course, require the formulation of specific criteria with which to measure involvement, something that Martinez and Scheffel do not attempt. Also, the third-person/heterodiegetic narrator is not fully integrated into the scale. Identified with the uninvolved narrator, it constitutes one extreme of the scale; the other five types are all variants of the first-person/homodiegetic narrator. This is perfectly acceptable as far as the internal structure of the text is concerned, for a third-person narrator is not normally part of the narrated world and thus cannot normally have the same position relative to the characters as a first-person/homodiegetic narrator. When we study interaction outside the text, however, we concentrate not on the

¹⁸ An essential difference between text-based and interaction-based theories may lie behind the use of the word 'sentences' by Martinez and Scheffel, which implies written language printed on paper. I suggest using the term 'utterances' instead in order to reflect the mental and interaction-related nature of narration processes.

narrator's formal position relative to the characters but on the narrator's involvement with the reader implicitly addressed by the narrative. In this context, it is indisputable that a heterodiegetic/third-person narrator can be a highly involved narrator (i.e. the implied psychic situation of the narrator can be highly involved affectively with the events and interactionally with the addressee), clear that we must be prepared for different levels of involvement when dealing with first-person and third-person narrators alike, and clear above all that we should expect different affect-related psychological situations in each individual case. Interaction-related criteria for measuring narrative involvement are not defined in the models of Lanser and Martinez and Scheffel, nor is adequate attention given to the third-person narrator. Such models cover only the relation between the narrator and the narrated world and its characters. They do not account for the different types and functions of interaction between a narrator/text and addressees/readers (let alone the mediated interaction of author and reader), and if they do consider the relation between the two sides, it is implicitly treated as one that does not involve interaction.

Their genuine desire to open the way to an interdisciplinary approach to narratology means that Martinez and Scheffel (1999:84–89) give consideration to the subject and addressee of narration. They observe tellingly that 'research in literary theory has previously focused on the role of the fictive narrator or the role of the reader and neglected the interaction of the two sides of the communication situation created in a fictional narrative' (Martinez/Scheffel 1999:85; somewhat surprisingly, no mention is made of the author here). They go on to say that an attempt to rectify this imbalance can be found in recent work that approaches literary theory from the perspective of social history and considers the communicative function of texts. Martinez and Scheffel, however, do not refer to any specific examples (they proceed to discuss historical ways in which narrators have explicitly addressed their readers). This leaves us with the wide field of social history in general to consider. We find research on the macrosociological, ideological, and demographic features of historical epochs and audiences. But, interesting as it may be to learn about the macrosociological features of historical audiences, it does little to help us identify the affect-related psychological functions that influenced how readers read and interacted with a text; the question posed by Martinez and Scheffel (1999:84), 'who narrates to whom?', cannot be approached effectively in this way. The fact that Martinez and Scheffel (1999:85) assert that social history can provide a way to complement their primarily intratextual approach to narratology with a means of approaching the issue of text-reader interaction shows us just how little we know about the mental and affect-related psychological aspects of how people interact with texts. To their credit, Martinez and Scheffel do give extensive consideration to narratological models employed in disciplines other than literary theory, albeit in a chapter on "Further Horizons" at the end of the book (Martinez/Scheffel 1999:145–159.). Their introduction marks the limit of the extent to which narratology is prepared to go in becoming interdisciplinary at this point in time—a truly interdisciplinary integration of the intratextual and interaction-based perspectives remains a task for the future.

5. The difficulties of becoming interdisciplinary

It was the objective of the Hamburg Conference on Narratology beyond Literary Criticism to rectify this shortcoming, and the contributions from researchers working on various narratological issues (narratology being treated as a broad, inclusive discipline) certainly provoked inspired, intense, and productive discussion. However, it seems to me that throughout the two days of the conference, we completely failed to talk and think about just how difficult the task confronting us is, about how challenging, sometimes even nerve-wracking, it can be to go beyond the familiar

and build interdisciplinary bridges. Each of us, trained in a particular academic field, is profoundly moulded by her or his home discipline. As our home disciplines are fully-developed institutions with little inclination to encourage forays beyond their borders, it is up to their individual members to make the effort to venture into unfamiliar territory. The representatives from outside the Anglo-American countries must have felt this more than most, for they work in environments where the borders between academic disciplines generally seem more rigid than they are elsewhere. Becoming interdisciplinary (and international), then, is by its very nature a process of conflict in which we are torn between wanting to step into the unknown and, more or less consciously, wanting to shy away from leaving the secure ground of our academic home disciplines. Our position is, as it were, an ambivalently (anti-)interdisciplinary one.

In his famous and much-quoted book *Anxiety and Method*, Georges Devereux was, as far as I am aware, the first person to highlight the extent to which hermeneutic disciplines are troubled by the fact that the researching subject is a subjective one. The researching subject is constantly plagued by subjectivism and thus longs to obtain a (self-)reflexive external view of its observations and conclusions. Devereux also emphasized that the necessity of (self-)reflection, which has long been known in philosophical hermeneutics, albeit mostly as a theoretical problem in the form of the hermeneutic circle, is not just an intellectual issue; it is also, and primarily, an issue of affects and concerns the affect-related psychological structures and patterns behind the habits of the individuals and institutions that engage in scientific and critical activity. The title of his book itself shows that Devereux sees methodological issues (the selection or rejection of certain methods and theories) not just as a matter of epistemological reasoning but primarily as the expression of the affect-related psychological anxieties, needs, and interests of the subjects involved in performing research.¹⁹ One source of anxiety lies in the fact that reconstructive/hermeneutic research always means trying to obtain knowledge about oneself as a subject in relation to the objects being studied. We have since learnt (and will no doubt continue to learn) that such methodological anxieties can hinder rather than encourage the process of acquiring knowledge in the humanities. Ultimately, they can even subvert what may start life as the intention to pursue an interdisciplinary approach using multiple methodologies. We all know that if anxiety is not consciously accepted and dealt with as such, it tends to turn into aggression that generally triggers psychological defence mechanisms. In any case, one's field of view narrows, which is not a particularly productive epistemological consequence. Moreover, as Stavros Mentzos has since pointed out, this kind of semi- or unconscious process of affect defence occurs in both individuals and institutions/structures. Institutions too have habits and behavioural patterns, that is, they have mechanisms of (inter)action and defence, and they foster mentalities.²⁰ Thus, engaging in interdisciplinary work in the social sciences after Devereux (whose book was first published as early as 1973) and Mentzos means engaging with the anxieties that methods and changes of method can arouse in individuals and institutions. It also depends on our being prepared to focus self-reflexively on the process by which the subject carries out research on objects, with the result that the research process itself and its institutional administration become objects of metaresearch.

In the humanities, the study of literature (the home of text-based theoretical approaches) in particular stands out for its inexperience in considering and implementing measures of (self-)reflexive scrutiny and regulation. Thus, when students of literature engage in interdisciplinary projects that also involve the social and psychological sciences, it is all the more important to identify (self-)reflexive procedures that fit their particular needs. From the perspective of the

¹⁹ The ideas of Habermas on the interdependence of insight and interests should be recalled here.

²⁰ See Mentzos (1988) on the concepts of institutional defence and the institutional unconscious.

qualitative social sciences, which are more familiar with these procedures and have developed methods of narrative (group) interviewing,²¹ one step that could be taken is immediately apparent: undertaking a reconstructive close reading of critical interaction as it unfolds in real-life discussions between colleagues on interdisciplinary research in narratology. In addition, our theory would benefit because we would have the opportunity to consider whether narration in institutional interaction and narrative formation can be seen as a process that not only transcends the text or medium but also extends beyond individual subjects in some way, being generated by plural entities, groups, and discourses in group interaction and group narration.²²

At the end of the two-day conference in Hamburg, it seemed to me that (anti-)interdisciplinary anxieties had played a role at various points in the debate. Thus, I felt encouraged in attempting a provisional close reading of one particular sequence of interaction.²³ In general, I had two impressions. First, in spite of the desire to broaden its horizons, narratology, having developed out of the study of literature, is still somewhat inclined to confine the scope of its study to aesthetic and/or textual artefacts and treat social and psychological aspects of narration as belonging to an area of research distinct from narratology proper. Second, narratology appears to have a certain tendency to see itself as a discipline for others to draw on, and does not reciprocate in the sense that it would give systematic consideration to the possibility of looking for useful theoretical imports from other disciplines concerned with narration. I cannot say for certain whether these impressions are correct. In any case, I believe it would be worthwhile giving further attention to and systematically studying institutional (self-)reflection and the regulation of methodological processes. The highest level of institutional interaction, in Germany the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (German Research Foundation, or DFG), cannot be exempted from such an analysis. This is clear from the curious fact that the DFG, which until a few years ago attached considerable importance to encouraging and supporting interdisciplinary projects, has more recently made major funding decisions that seem to point in exactly the opposite direction. This top-level institutional phenomenon has already received a name: it is generally referred to as a *Rephilologisierung* (return to philological substance of the humanities). The DFG itself, however, does not appear to be paying much attention to the wider and long-term consequences of this (unarticulated) policy, let alone taking action to prevent interdisciplinary humanities from disappearing. What we do not know and need to understand better is how such a situation comes about. How do the individual and group (institutional) decision-making processes work? How do decisions relate to the objectives stated by those who make them? Are these processes subject to any procedures for performing (self-)regulation and preserving appropriate standards, and if so, how do such procedures function? In narratological terms, this amounts to asking what structures of interaction lie behind and what actions result from the institution's narrative about interdisciplinarity.

Knowing more about all this is desirable in the long run because there is one future development in the humanities that is not hard to predict: interdisciplinary research will grow. In part, this will take place in defiance of institutional resistance and our own individual uncertainties; it will take place, that is, by working with and making us reflect on those

²¹ For methods of narrative interviewing see Fischer-Rosenthal and Rosenthal 1997; for methods of group interviewing see Bohnsack 2000.

²² This introduces an area of research that has been ignored by narratologists and has not received much attention to date in the study of literature in general: group analysis and qualitative social research on the interaction and narration found in and performed by groups, networks, and institutions in which interaction occurs (see Tschuschke 2000, and Haubl and Lammot 1994 on group-analysis; on narrative group interviewing in the context of media studies see Weiböck 2002 f/g, 2003d).

²³ The close reading could not be included in this article and will be published separately (see note 1).

uncertainties, as my psychological self says to my literary self, and vice versa. It will take place because interdisciplinary research is not only worthwhile and promising in itself but also provides us with the best possible tools for approaching crucial social questions that by their very nature involve interaction (e.g. the interaction of individuals and groups/societies in culture and the media) and interdisciplinarity. Moreover, these social questions are increasingly being given high priority by international research-funding organizations such as the European Union.²⁴ So, it will happen! Interdisciplinary research will become an increasingly central aspect of the humanities of the future. The question is when and where this will happen. Being a literature studies person myself, I very much hope that it will not happen outside the field of literature. Psychology can probably manage without the narratology developed in the study of literature;²⁵ there is always art itself if we want to find a good poem or drawing with which to illustrate a psychological concept such as dissociation.²⁶ But the narratology developed in the study of literature, I believe, should not succumb to the temptation of isolating itself from sociology and psychology, for it will then be less well-equipped to help solve the social questions mentioned above. Instead, the study of literature should play an active role in revealing the enormous interdisciplinary potential of narratology, a potential evident when we consider that there can be few theoretical concepts that appear in as many fields of research as narration does. If this is to happen, it would appear that the study of literature must go beyond the realm of textual theory and develop an additional, interaction-based theory that focuses on how human minds interact in the writing and reading of texts. Returning to the basic definition of narration provided by Martinez and Scheffel (1999:9), we might say that such a narratology would deal not only with the 'certain something' of narration but also with its 'someone' and its 'someone else'.

²⁴ The European Union's research-funding system is organized on the basis of general themes concerning the present technological and social state of the society (or societies) of Europe. There are no quotas for particular fields of research. The only category open to the humanities is entitled 'Citizens and Governance in Knowledge-based Societies'. When investigating the FP6-2002-Mobility-5 programme (the 2003 Marie Curie Intra-European Fellowships with a budget of €110,000,000 for 2003-04), I was unable to find a single literature-related project among those funded in previous years (see http://fp6.cordis.lu/fp6/call_details.cfm?CALL_ID=28).

²⁵ When psychologists have considered language-related questions (as I believe they should do more often, making greater use of the study of literature as a stimulus and source of ideas), they have shown themselves capable of performing their own language studies; for a recent example, see Searles (2000:427-444).

²⁶ In the discussion at the conference, I pointed out that the literary concept of metalepsis (discussed by Werner Wolf in his article in this book) corresponds to the psychological concept of dissociation. I have since realized that a not inconsiderable number of psychologists working on dissociation use metaleptic paintings and drawings for illustrative purposes. This is one way in which an interdisciplinary bridge could be built between narratology and psychology.

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