MORITZ'S CURE FOR *LESESUCHT*:
LITERARY CULTURE, READING ADDICTION, AND THE ROLE OF THE PSYCHOLOGICAL NOVEL

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"These days, one lives and moves within the world of books, and only so few books lead us back to our world of reality."[1] The comment, published by the late eighteenth-century author and intellectual Karl Philipp Moritz in his *Magazin für Empfahrungsseelenkunde*—or the *Magazine of Experiential Psychology*, Germany's first journal of psychology[2]—paints a poignant picture of *Lesesucht*, or reading-addiction, a newly-diagnosable malady sweeping Germany's nation-states at the end of the Age of Enlightenment. The distance between the world of books and the world of reality, especially among impressionable adolescent readers, concerned Moritz both professionally and personally—his semi-autobiographical psychological novel *Anton Reiser*, written between 1785 and 1790 (the same decade as his editorship of the *Magazine*), por-

[1] Sandra Maike Christine Niethardt, "Narration and Consciousness in the Late Eighteenth-Century German Novel," PhD diss. (University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2016), 15. Cf. "Man lebt und webt in der Bücherwelt, und nur so wenige Bücher führen uns noch auf unsere wirkliche Welt zurück" (translation mine).

[2] Many scholars leave the name of Moritz's magazine unglossed, perhaps because the term "Empfahrungsseelenkunde" is difficult to translate. This essay will use "experiential psychology"—other translations include "auto-psychology" and "empirical psychology," though the latter can be misleading, as Moritz long predates Freud.

trays Moritz's own struggle with *Lesesucht* through the character of Reiser, who embodies the headache, indigestion, enervation, envy, isolation, and melancholia typical of those reading addicts who could be found equally "in straw-huts and in palaces."[3] In one memorable section of *Anton Reiser*'s second book, the reader encounters a Reiser so addicted to reading that he starves himself, electing to spend what little money he has available to him on a candle and a copy of *Ungolino*, which he reads, alone and freezing, in his bedroom, "forgetting himself and the world."[4]

As a commentary on reading-addiction, *Anton Reiser* offers a unique perspective on the phenomenon of reading-addiction at the end of the eighteenth-century, when the best efforts of the Enlightenment intelligentsia to transform the emergent middle-class into an ideal civil society increasingly conflicted with Germany's ever-expanding popular literary

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[3] Johann Georg Heinzmann, *Appel an meine Nation über Aufklärung und Aufklärer; über Gelehrsamkeit und Schriftsteller; über Büchermanufakturisten, Rezensenten, Buchhändler; über moderne Philosophen und Menschenerzieher; auch über mancherley anderes, was Menschenfreyheit und Menschenrechte betrifft.* (Bern: s.n., 1795), 450. „...Empfindlichkeit, leichte Erkältung, Kopfschmerzen, schwache Augen, Hitzblattem, Podagra, Gicht, Hämorrhoiden, Engbrüstigkeit, Schlagflüsse, Lungenknoten, geschwächte Verdauung, Verstopfung der Eingeweide, Nervenschwäche, Migräne, Epilepsie, Hypochondrie, Melankolie, die gewöhnlichsten Krankheiten; unsre Lebenssäfte stocken und faulen; häßliche Leidenschaften: Traurigkeit, Unwillen, Mißvergnügen, Eifersucht und Neid, Trotz und Eigendünkel; Müßiggang und Unzucht, findet man in Strohhütten wie in Palästen."

[4] Karl Philipp Moritz, *Anton Reiser: A Psychological Novel*, trans. John R. Russel (Columbia: Camden House, 1996), 111. Cf. Karl Philipp Moritz, *Anton Reiser: ein psychologischer Roman* (Verlag: Deutscher Taschenbuch, 1987), 152.

market.[5] The novel explores reading-addiction as not just a sickness of the mind but a sickness of selfhood, a departure from the free, autonomous individuality Kant would describe in his *Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals*, published in the same year.[6] And thus, *Anton Reiser* can be read as continuing in the footsteps of Enlightenment rationalist social reformers who, like Goethe, viewed the Enlightenment as "critical thinking with practical purpose" and who, like famous pedagogues Lessing and J. H. Campe, wrote and advocated for German-language literature that would guide young readers to construct a rational view of their own selfhood and thereby reach individual and social maturity.[7] *Empfahrungsseelenkunde*, Moritz's brand of rigorous, introspective self-analysis that would serve as the foundation for

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[5] George S. Williamson, "What Killed August von Kotzebue? The Temptations of Virtue and the Political Theology of German Nationalism, 1789-1818," The Journal of Modern History 72, no. 4 (2000), 942.

[6] The expression "autonomous, free individual" derives from Immanuel Kant's *Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals* (1785), which offered a framework for evaluating the moral nature of practical laws according to so-called "categorical imperatives." Kant formulated categorical imperatives by considering the constraints a "pure will" would place on the natural human inclination. This concept of the pure will—belonging to a particular (or individual), driven completely by reason and unfettered by animal desire (a free individual), that dictated law unto itself as "sovereign in the realm of ends" (an autonomous, free individual)—became the characteristic potential of the modern subject as postulated by the German middle-class, allowing it to distinguish itself, in dignity, authority, and moral character, from the other estates.

[7] Henning Wrage, "Jene Fabrik der Bücher. Über Lesesucht, ein Phantasma des medialen Ursprungs und die Kinder- und Jugendliteratur der Aufklärung," *Monatschaft* 102, no. 1 (2010), 2-3. Also Ruth-Ellen Boetcher Joeres, "The German Enlightenment (1720-1790)," in *The Cambridge History of German Literature*, ed. Helen Watanabe-O'Kelly (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 151.

Germany's earliest form of psychology, represented a psychological extension of the *Bildungsprozess*, a process of "education" and "cultivation" illustrated in novels like Wieland's *Agathon* and Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship.*[8] According to the *Bildungsprozess*, selfhood arises out of the tension between inner desires and aspirations and external, social necessities. His or her faculty of rational judgment mediates between the forces of freedom and socialization by creating a distinct, autonomous, reflexive category called the self, and as the individual's self-conception matures across a number of life experiences, he or she lives into a better understanding of how his or her selfhood can serve a particular role in society.[9] Thus Moritz's critique of reading-addiction through the eyes of a psychologist-narrator and his disapproving portrayal of Reiser's infatuation with theatre and popular novels cannot be separated from a social and ideological context that condemned reading-for-reading's-sake and that often used the threat of reading-addiction as a valid excuse for the intellectual

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[8] Jeffery Sammons, in Jeffery Sammons, "The Mystery of the Missing *Bildungsroman*, or: What Happened to *Wilhelm Meister*'s Legacy?," *Genre* 14, no.2 (1981), argues that the genre-category of *Bildungsroman* is essentially nonexistent, a mythical designation attributed to a scattered assortment of nineteenth-century novels that attempted to incorporate elements of *Wilhelm Meister*'s *Bildung* model in a social context that could no longer imagine the ideal civil society the *Bildung* model existed to create. But despite the contested usefulness of the term *Bildungsroman* for later centuries, the *Bildungsprozess* remains a profitable tool for understanding Enlightenment novels like *Agathon* or *Wilhelm Meister* that employ rational theories of selfhood formation.

[9] Anja Lemke, "Bildung als *formatio vitae*—Zum Verhältnis von Leben und Form in Judith Schalanskys *Der Hals der Giraffe*," *Internationales Archiv für Sozialgeschichte der deutschen Literatur* 41, no. 2 (2016), 395-396 and Sammons, "The Mystery of the Missing *Bildungsroman*, or: What Happened to *Wilhelm Meister*'s Legacy?," 231. See also Goethe's "*Urworte. Orphisch.*"

censorship of the Sentimentality movement—known in Germany as *Empfindsamkeit*—which, according to Campe, relied too heavily on imaginative fancy and therefore modeled a theory of selfhood antagonistic to the self-enclosed, rational, *Bildung* ideal.[10]

But while Moritz's portrayal of reading-addiction does appropriate a kind of rationalist ideology in the eyes of its narrator, this essay will also argue that many formal characteristics of *Anton Reiser*, including Romantic irony and third-person autodiegesis, consciously subvert the *Bildungsprozess*. In order to do so, it will draw on the narratological work of Sandra Niethardt, Wilhelm Vosskamp, and Stevens Garlick, three scholars who have devoted specific attention to the complexities of *Anton Reiser*'s formal structure. In building off of their observations, it will demonstrate how Moritz's decision to complicate *Reiser*'s narration undercuts the narrator's methodology of experiential psychology, thereby introducing doubt into the established reading contract and fostering a phenomenological awareness of the reading process in Moritz's readers. By placing his readers outside the fabric of narration instead of submerging them in it, Moritz achieves his goal "to direct man's attention more to man himself and to make his individual existence more significant."[11]

When read this way, *Anton Reiser* becomes more than a careful documentation of reading-addiction and its effects on the life of young Moritz—it is also Moritz's attempted vaccine. Moritz counteracts the spread of reading-addiction by

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[10] Joachim Heinrich Campe, *Wörterbuch der deutschen Sprache*. Bd. 3. (Braunschweig: s.n., 1809), 105. "Leselust: die Lust, oder große Neigung zu lesen, weil man Vergnügen daran findet."

[11] Karl Philipp Moritz, *Anton Reiser: A Psychological Novel*, trans. John R. Russel (Columbia: Camden House, 1996), 1. Cf. Karl Philipp Moritz, *Anton Reiser: ein psychologischer Roman* (Verlag: Deutscher Taschenbuch, 1987), 7. „...die Aufmerksamkeit des Menschen mehr auf den Menschen selbst zu heften, und ihm sein individuelles Dasein wichtiger zu machen."

cultivating a critical consciousness of literary culture and its societal function in his readers. He encourages them to assume agency within literary culture instead of being passively shaped by it, and in so doing, he offers a new vision of selfhood capable of preserving the autonomy of the self while creating space for a shared bourgeois society.

Reiser, *Empfahrungsseelenkunde*, and the Psychology of *Lesesucht*

In *ΓΝΩΘΙ ΣΑΥΤΟΝ, oder Magazin für Empfahrungsseelenkunde als ein Lesebuch für Gelehrte und Ungelehrte* (*KNOW THYSELF!, or the Magazine of Experiential Psychology as Reading for Scholar and Layman*, edited between 1783 and 1793), Moritz laid the foundation for what he called *Seelenkrankheitslehre*, or a theory of mental illness. The *Magazine*'s debut coincided with the height of Moritz's writing career—in one decade he published a number of aesthetic treatises, the novels *Anton Reiser* and *Andreas Hartknopf*, two popular travelogues, and of course, multiple psychological essays.[12] Through the *Magazine*, Moritz hoped to spearhead a branch of scientific research, *Empfahrungsseelenkunde*, which approached the human psyche introspectively. Through the observation of his or her own psychological responses to external stimuli, the practitioner of experiential psychology gleaned a more precise understanding of how he or she had been shaped by exceptional or traumatic events throughout his or her lifetime. Working together, the wider community of experiential psychologists could then

[12] Martin L. Davies, "The Theme of Communication in *Anton Reiser*: A Reflection on the Feasibility of the Enlightenment," *Oxford German Studies* 12, no. 1 (1981), 19.

pool their personal observations of human psychological processes and thereby establish a basic framework for what could be considered psychologically-sound selfhood.[13]

Like Kant, Moritz believed that the autonomy of the individual subject grounded moral activity on both the personal and societal level; the experiential psychology promoted in his *Magazine*, therefore, was a tangible step in rebuilding the public sphere, which he believed, due to "pedagogics not grounded in particular observations and experiences," had begun to lose its grasp of rational individuality, and hence its grasp on morality.[14] He posited a human nature defined by both mentality and emotion, and the relationship between the psychology of the mind and the autonomy of the will would become the Holy Grail of both the *Magazine* and, in his mind, all other edifying works of literature.[15] Moritz's focus on the pedagogical function of literature did not occur in a vacuum. By the end of the eighteenth century, the role of novels in the education of children and adolescents had steadily grown in prominence, due to the perceived ability of writing to make an

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[13] Niethardt, "Narration and Consciousness in the Late Eighteenth-Century German Novel," 21-24.

[14] Karl Philipp Moritz, "Vorschlag zu einem Magazin zur Empfahrungsseelenkunde," in *Dichtungen und Schriften zur Erfahrungsseelenkunde*, ed. by Heide Hollmer and Albert Meier, Deutscher Klassiker Verlag im Taschenbuch 8 (Frankfurt am Main: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 2006), 794-795. „Was ist unsere ganze Moral, wenn sie nicht von Individuis abstrahiert ist? Der Grundriß eines Gebäudes im Sande, den ein kleines Lüftchen zerstört, ein ohngefährer Umriß ohne innern Gehalt, eben so wie alle Pädagogik, sie sich nicht auf spezielle Beobachtungen und Erfahrungen gründet" (translation mine).

[15] Wilhelm Vosskamp, "*Poetik der Beobachtung. Karl Philipp Moritz'* Anton Reiser *zwischen Autobiographie und Bildungsroman*," *Études Germaniques* July-Sept, no. 51 (1996), 474.

impression on young imaginations and to give concrete examples of how to live one's life.[16] But an increase in the importance of edifying fiction came with a renewed focus on defining what, exactly, was edifying—as Moritz believed that popular literature and the German school system failed to foster the rational self-understanding integral to the *Bildungsprozess*, he introduced experiential psychology and novels inspired by it as a supplement (or perhaps even a cure) for the institutions in place.

But why did Moritz find the popular novels of his day insufficient? The answer lies in an exploration of the difference between the *Bildungsprozess* and the theory of selfhood espoused by Sentimental novels. The concept of *Bildung* drew on an earlier rationalist theory of selfhood, the *tabula rasa* theory of John Locke, which posited a self that "came into being as it took in sensations from the outside world and, of that material, composed first the ideas and then the judgment and moral sense that gave it a self-enclosed and internally coherent identity."[17] The self undergoing *Bildung* related to the outside world sympathetically—because reason arbitrated between life experiences and emotional impulses, (at least theoretically) external stimuli could be internalized without jeopardizing the "self-enclosure" of the individual's subjectivity, without which the self could not be considered autonomous.

Sentimental theorists, however, doubted that an individual reliant upon external stimuli could truly remain separate and closed-off from the external world that supplied them—for, "if, by the same token, the knowledge one acquires…comes from outside then who is to say that the subject

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[16] Wrage, "Jene Fabrik der Bücher. Über Lesesucht, ein Phantasma des medialen Ursprungs und die Kinder- und Jugendliteratur der Aufklärung," 5-7.

[17] Nancy Armstrong, *How Novels Think: The Limits of Individualism from 1719-1900* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 1.

is not permeable to sensations already packaged as ideas, invested with value, and charged with feeling? Who is to say that either our ideas or feelings are in fact our own?"[18] Thus the Sentimental movement developed its own philosophical anthropology influenced by moral sense philosophy and the neurophysiology of Albrecht von Haller,[19] and it rejected moral systems prioritizing reason over emotion, arguing that the alienation of the human individual from his or her emotions, often identified as animalistic impulses, would inevitably divorce human nature the very *nature* that sustains it. *Empfindsamkeit* adopted a theory of nervous sympathy that attributed emotional experiences to the interplay of liquid-esque "vital spirits" travelling back and forth from the outside world and the brain in hollowed-out tubes, the nerves.[20] Just as streams of liquid converge, diverge, swell, and overflow their containers, emotions spread and grew as individuals made contact with nature and each other. Therefore, in contrast to the rational separation of the self and other created through the *Bildungsprozess*, Sentimentality sacrificed the uniqueness and autonomy of the self in favor of an easier channel between its interior and exterior, a move which would hopefully resolve the greatest problem of the *Bildung* model—so long as the self remained self-enclosed and distinct from its immediate surroundings, how could individuals ever bridge the gap of their subjective experiences and create a shared experience upon which to build civil society? Sentimental neurophilosophy offered a system in which the individual would no longer be forced into isolation behind the wall of his or her own mind, thereby allowing for the creation of community—but it did so

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[18] Armstrong, 10.

[19] Catherine J. Minter, "Literary *Empfindsamkeit* and Nervous Sensibility in Eighteenth-Century Germany," *Modern Language Review* 96, no. 4 (2001): 1016-1017.

[20] Minter, "Literary *Empfindsamkeit* and Nervous Sensibility in Eighteenth-Century Germany," 1050.

at a price. Behind "nervous sympathy" lay the danger of absolute *empathy*: the self existed in constant and immediate contact with its surrounding environment, and, by virtue of the self's constant exposure, the relationship between interiority and exteriority could only be described as "assimilation"[21] or, more menacingly, as "contagion."[22]

Moritz feared that the absolute empathy modeled by characters in popular Sentimental novels would be replicated to such a degree in their readers that young audiences would lose the ability to distinguish between reality and fiction. Sentimentality thus became the pathogen of reading-addiction—the experience of reading Sentimental literature favored imagination over reason, and when taken to extremes, this imagination would so exaggerate the discrepancies between the titillating fantasies of Sentimentality and the harsh reality of eighteenth-century Prussian autocracy that the reading-addict increasingly escaped into novel reading instead of facing everyday life. The pull of fantasy transformed his or her behavior, and when reality failed to supply the pristine, empowering, and exciting vision promised by the latest novel—when the surge of affectation and emotional stimulation ran dry—the patient dwindled into a state of melancholy and enervation.

And so, Moritz's exploration of his personal relationship with reading-addiction, his observations of the relationship between reading-addiction and Sentimentality, and his desire to reform the literary-pedagogical system using the principles of experiential psychology coincided in the creation

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[21] Minter, 1022. "In *Allwill*, Sylli describes the act of 'sympathizing' with something in the external world, here a flower, as a process of physical *assimilation* of the other into the self..." (emphasis mine).

[22] Armstrong, 20. "...what was to stop feelings from flowing in the opposite direction from spectacle to spectator, making us the ones to be infused with another's feelings? In this event, the radically individualistic logic of sympathy would capitulate to the antagonistic logic of *contagion*" (emphasis mine). Cf. Minter, 1021.

of his semi-autobiographical novel *Anton Reiser*, published anonymously (though with Moritz listed as editor) in four parts over five years. Each installment included a preface, written by Moritz, introducing the current book and guiding the reader's reception of it. Though subtitled "a psychological novel," Moritz instructs his readers that it "could just as well be called a biography because for the greatest part the observations are taken from real life,"[23] and unlike other novels which "dispersed the power of the imagination" across a number of characters and locations, *Anton Reiser* would "concentrate it and focus the view of the soul into itself," in order "to direct man's attention more to man himself and to make his individual existence more significant."[24] The psycho-biographical nature of the novel is further reinforced by the presence of an unnamed heterodiegetic narrator (a narrator external to the plot) who functions as a model experiential psychologist, observing the impact of childhood and adolescent occurrences on the psychological development of Anton Reiser, the titular character. Sections of the text have been italicized, resembling a lab report with underlined facts and findings, and occasionally Moritz inserts selections of Reiser's poetry as if sampling the work of a psychiatric patient. Taken together, *Anton Reiser* resembles less a novel and more a case

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[23] Moritz, *Anton Reiser: A Psychological Novel*, 1. Cf. Moritz, *Anton Reiser: ein psychologischer Roman*, 7. "Dieser psychologische Roman könnte allenfalls eine Biographie genannt werden, weil die Beobachtungen größenteils aus dem wirklichen Leben genommen wird."

[24] Moritz, *Anton Reiser: A Psychological Novel*, 1. Cf. Moritz, *Anton Reiser: ein psychologischer Roman*, 7. "Auch wird man in einem Buche, welches vorzüglich die innere Geschichte erwarten: denn es soll die vorstellende Kraft nicht verteilen sondern sie zusammendrängen, und den Blick der Seele in sich selber schärfen....wenigstens wird doch vorzüglich in pädogogischer Rücksicht, das Bestreben nie ganz unnütz sein, die Aufmerksamkeit des Menschen mehr auf den Menschen selbst zu heften, und ihm sein individuelles Dasein wichtiger zu machen."

study. Proceeding largely chronologically, the novel traces Reiser's life from birth through his developmental years and his adolescent education. It chronicles his intense need for affirmation, his only somewhat successful literary career, his dogged pursuit of the theatre, his growing shame of poverty, and, of course, his melancholia and unshakeable reading-addiction.

Moritz allows *Anton Reiser*'s candid display of experiential psychology to function as a field guide for laymen and future psychologists alike. The prefaces situate the reader alongside the narrator, allowing him or her to examine the narrator's methodology and incorporate it into the reading experience. Identifying the traumas in Reiser's psychological history and connecting them to the effects on his psyche prepares the reader to apply this practice reflexively and, in so doing, to reveal any latent psychological deviations in his or her own life that might have hampered healthy self-development and which otherwise manifest themselves in illness like reading-addiction. And thus, under experiential psychology, the *Bildungsprozess* becomes inextricably linked to autobiographical self-narration. Moritz considers autobiography an invaluable tool for comprehending oneself teleologically and treats past selves as meaningful iterations on the way to the autonomous, free individuality that, if not realized presently, could certainly be achieved in the future. Experiential psychology's introspective analysis transformed history into a narrative by which the self related back to itself, empowering the subject to make sense of the life experiences that, per the *Bildungsprozess*, guided its journey from innate potentiality to personal and social actuality.

Moritz conjectured that neglecting to analyze oneself autobiographically would result in a murky, ambiguous, ambivalent, and deeply problematic relationship to the chains of causality that bridge one's past and present personalities. Because such a student would remain unaware of the role of traumatic events and external stimuli in his or her mental development, he or she would be unable to realize the power of the

will's autonomy to overcome psychological determinism. The past would not appear as a series of choices, steps toward or away from the path of healthy mental development, but would instead seem to be something that merely happened. This problem plagues Reiser for the entirety of the novel, and it is no coincidence that the same man whose *Magazine* called out from its cover "Know thyself!" writes a character whose fatal flaw is self-ignorance. Anton Reiser has no self-awareness or, at best, a deeply flawed one. Consider the following excerpt from the third book of *Anton Reiser*:

> But just as a person always searches for the most compelling reasons for doing what he wants to do as if to justify his conduct to himself, so Reiser tried to regard paying the small debts he had been led to incur as an impossible matter and revealing the same as so embarrassing that solely on account of this he believed he had to leave Hannover. But his actual motivations were the irresistible urge to change his situation and the desire to perform publicly in some way as soon as possible in order to gain fame and approval. To him nothing could seem better suited for this than the stage where it isn't even regarded as vanity when a person wants to display himself in public to his advantage as often as possible, but where, on the contrary, an addiction to applause is, so to speak, privileged.[25]

Here, instead of acknowledging his desire to escape triviality and to accrue the accolades demanded by his vanity, Reiser deceives himself, spinning some story of a young man overcome by insurmountable debt with no further recourse but to remove himself from the presence of his creditors. Crucially, this leads to a decision which is neither autonomous nor moral:

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[25] Moritz, *Anton Reiser: A Psychological Novel*, 204. Cf. Moritz, *Anton Reiser: ein psychologische Roman*, 274-275.

Reiser now "must" leave Hannover, believing that he has fallen into a situation over which he has no control, even though doing so amounts to cheating his lenders and benefactors. Had Reiser seriously questioned this storyline and made better use of rational thinking, he might have been able to find a small job, budget more effectively, and set himself up to pay off his debts before seriously pursuing theatre in a way that required neither secrecy nor deception. In fact, had he further observed that his dramatic inclinations were not a calling but psychological responses to the patterns of self-negation he had continuously fostered since childhood, he might have avoided acting in the first place, the pursuit of which, by the end of the novel, leaves him stranded in a distant town.

Reiser's autobiographical task has derailed, revealing the dangers of self-narration when it goes unconsciously and unquestioned—melancholy and reading-addiction are but two possible maladies that arise when the rational narrative impulse is hijacked by imagination. One's self-conception ripples and distorts in the circus-mirror of fantasy and self-aggrandizement, leading to the cognitive dissonance and chronic escapism characteristic of reading-addiction, and prolonged exposure to this state rends the self's coherency. As Moritz writes of Reiser:

> This produced a never-ending war within him. He did not think frivolously enough to follow every suggestion from his imagination and thereby be satisfied with himself. On the other hand, he wasn't strong enough to pursue steadfastly a realistic plan that was in conflict with his fanciful imagination....Within him, as within thousands of souls, there battled Truth and Illusion, Dream and Reality, and it remained undecided which of these two would come out on top.[26]

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[26] Moritz, *Anton Reiser: A Psychological Novel*, 215. Cf. Moritz, *Anton Reiser: ein psychologische Roman*, 289-290. Special atten-

Reiser self-narrates subconsciously—even unconsciously—and the resulting autobiography is perverted by an imbalance of reason and imagination. Because Reiser, unlike a good experiential psychologist, neglects to rationally interrogate and refine his storyline as he narrates it, he falls into a state of powerlessness and insignificance and begins to suspect that his free, autonomous individuality is in fact fictional. Thus the prefaces and the narrator suggest that Reiser's only hope for overcoming reading-addiction is to regain the internal coherency of the self through self-reflection in which reason, not imagination or emotion, is the governing faculty. Only by returning to the enclosure of sympathy could the melancholic patient rationalize how and why he responded to specific environmental conditions, knowledge that would restore power and autonomy to his will previously paralyzed by inclination.

Moritz presents experiential psychology as giving power to the powerless and significance to those burdened by insignificance. His portrayal of reading-addiction in *Anton Reiser* highlights a rationalist, *Bildung*-oriented view of self-development and indicates why proponents of the *Bildungsprozess* opposed the production and popularity of sentimental novels: mass consumption of Sentimental novels threatened to erode the modern ideal of subjectivity upon which the social, moral progress of the Enlightenment was

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tion might paid to subtleties in the original German which are easily lost in translation, such as the description of Reiser's imagination as being *schwärmerisch* and the contrast between *Wahrheit* and *Blendwerk*. The latter word, meaning "illusion," relates etymologically to *Blende*, which refers to a screen, covering, or aperture—Moritz is contrasting that which is directly observable in real life ("Beobachtung größenteils aus dem wirklichen Leben," p.7) and that which has been filtered through the literature and imaginative fantasy.

predicated and of which the bourgeoisie was supposedly constituted. As a fictive biography modeled after the principles of experiential psychology, *Anton Reiser* serves as a template for the kinds of literature Moritz hoped would right a careening literary culture.

The Failure of Autobiuography and the Role of the Psychological Novel

Despite its initial presentation, *Anton Reiser* is not simply a fictive biography, and the solution to reading-addiction is not as simple as telling oneself the right kind of story. Because Anton Reiser's story corresponds so closely to Moritz's personal history, and because the narrator often comments with such specificity on the internal workings of Reiser's mind—something he could not have known unless he had a deeply personal connection to Reiser from birth—there is good reason to suspect that the central character of Moritz's "biography" is either heavily based on Moritz's or is none other than Moritz himself.[27] This hypothesis is further supported by *Anton Reiser*'s formal similarity to Pietistic journaling and letter-writing—Moritz's employs Pietism's characteristic practice, with its mystical focus on interior life, even as he describes a character whose upbringing revolves around the writings of a French mystic concerned with the "Inner Word."[28]

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[27] Stevens Garlick, "Moritz's *Anton Reiser*: The Dissonant Voice of Psycho-Autobiography," *Studi germanici* 21 (1997), 42-43.

[28] Cf. Wilhelm Vosskamp, "Poetik der Beobachtung. Karl Philipp Moritz' *Anton Reiser* zwischen Autobiographie und Bildungsroman," *Études Germaniques* July-Sept, no. 51 (1996), 475; Moritz, *Anton Reiser: A Psychological Novel*, 2; Moritz, *Anton Reiser: ein psychologische Roman*, 9; Barbara Becker-Cantarino, "Introduction: German Literature in the Era of Enlightenment and Sensibil-

Therefore, *Anton Reiser* might best be understood as *auto*biography, fictionalized and transposed into the third-person. But though the notion that a novel training its readers in *Empfahrungsseelenkunde* self-analysis would make heavy use of autobiography is unsurprising, the admission of autobiography into the formal characteristics of *Anton Reiser* raises a number of interpretative questions: (1) Is *Anton Reiser* a novel, biography, or autobiography? (2) Why use third-person instead of first-person? (3) If Anton Reiser is really to be understood as Moritz, and the narrator (by virtue of his deep knowledge of Reiser's inner-life and his explicit use of experiential psychology) is also to be understood as Moritz, and if Moritz names himself as editor on the novel's cover, why three Moritzes instead of one?

A number of have scholars have introduced possible explanations for *Reiser*'s internal structure. Vosskamp, for example, claims that Moritz differentiates his perspective between character and narrator so that both perspectives may then be consummated in the perspective of the reader—just as the novel pits Reiser's *schwärmerische*[29] imagination against

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ity," in *German Literature of the Eighteenth Century: The Enlightenment and Sensibility*, ed. Barbara Becker-Cantarino (Rochester: Camden House, 2005), 14.

[29] For more information regarding the term *Schwärmerei*—which connotes a "swarming frenzy" but whose long and complicated history leaves translations such as "excessive enthusiasm or sentiment" unsatisfactory—one might consult the anthology *Enthusiasm and Enlightenment in Europe, 1650-1850*, edited by Lawrence E. Klein and Anthony J. La Vopa—especially Anthony La Vopa, "The Philosopher and the *Schwärmer*: On the Career of a German Epithet from Luther to Kant," *Enthusiasm and Enlightenment in Europe, 1650-1850* (Huntington Library: San Marino, 1998), 85-116. Describing the efforts of philosopher Christian Garve, he writes: "Garve posited an 'essential difference' between *Schwärmerei*—as self-delusion, the mistaking of 'fictions' for 'real knowledge'—and *Enthusiasmus* (the creative inspiration that 'exalts desires, raises hopes, and beautifies what is really there') He

the realities of his everyday existence, Moritz pits Reiser against the narrator, allowing the reader to be a "third-order" party of observation.[30] Garlick, recognizing that "[Moritz's] is, accordingly, a pedagogically inspired intersubjective enterprise," sees the use of the third-person in autobiography as a way of inviting the reader to identify with Reiser and ensuring the novel, otherwise full of "unmitigated misery" and "maudlin recollections," actually sells.[31] But throughout his essay, Garlick also highlights the relationship between Moritz's transformation of his autobiography into a third-person work of fiction and autobiography-theorist Louis Renza's theory of "presentification." Renza considers autobiography a unique phenomenon, separate from both fiction and non-fiction, shaped by the act of presentification, an attempt to bring the unreachable past into the present moment.[32] In order to presentify, the author must separate his or her present self from the past iterations under scrutiny, a "split personality" that subtly pressures the linguistic structure of the text by destabilizing

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broke down *Schwärmerei* into the 'speculative' and the 'practical' (including the 'fanatical'); into separatists and the 'persecuting orthodox'; into politically agitating '*Religion-Schwärmer*' and the 'political *Schwärmer*' of the French Revolution" (86). He also discusses Martin Luther's use of the term, originally popularized as referring to the "mistaken conviction that one had become a receptacle of divine inspiration or an immediate revelation" (88) and Herder's belief that such "fanaticism" could apply equally to rationalist philosophers as to sentimentalists (91-92). *Schwärmerei* later came to be associated with radical German nationalism (see: Williamson, "What Killed August von Kotzebue? The Temptations of Virtue and the Political Theology of German Nationalism, 1789-1818," 920).

[30] Vosskamp, "Poetik der Beobachtung. Karl Philipp Moritz' *Anton Reiser* zwischen Autobiographie und Bildungsroman," 474; 477.

[31] Garlick, "Moritz's *Anton Reiser*: The Dissonant Voice of Psycho-Autobiography," 44.

[32] Louis A. Renza, "The Veto of Imagination: A Theory of Autobiography," *New Literary History* 9, no. 1 (1977), 3-5.

its main referential marker, the first-person pronoun. The author's split personality becomes an unspoken "split intentionality,"[33] which Renza summarizes in the following segment of his article:

> To acknowledge such a pressure and yet to persist in the autobiographical project, the autobiographer must come to terms with a unique pronominal crux: how can he keep using the first-person pronoun, his sense of self-reference, without its becoming—since it becomes, in the course of writing, something other than strictly his own self-referential sign—a de facto third-person pronoun?[34]

Here Renza invokes the distinction between *enunciation*, or the discursive message intended, and *utterance*, the form of message, or the particular arrangement of linguistic elements that carry it. He observes that in autobiography, despite consistent usage of *I* throughout the plane of utterance, the gulf between the past and present self widens in the plane of enunciation as the narrative progresses—what is signified increasingly diverges from its signifier. As a result, both past and present identities become fictionalized. The past self, lost to the present, narrows from the fullness of human being in all its complexity into a character circumscribed by the present self's understanding and intentions; meanwhile the present, now beholden to a constrained image of its own history, grows increasingly frustrated, fictionalizing itself in order to correspond more closely to the past. As soon as the autobiography

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[33] Renza, "The Veto of Imagination: A Theory of Autobiography," 9-10. "Autobiographical writing thus entails split intentionality: the 'I' becoming a 'he'; the writer's awareness of his life becoming private even as he brings it into the public domain or presentifies it through his act of writing."

[34] Renza, 9.

engages with the past, nonfiction becomes impossible, and according to Renza, all autobiographers must attempt to circumvent this essential dilemma. They must accept the impossibility of authentically conveying the past to the present and instead preserve something of the present for the future.[35]

The impossibility of true presentification undermines Moritz's autobiographical *Bildungsprozess*. His attempt to analyze, using observations taken strictly from "real life,"[36] the progression of his psyche from past to present self inevitably creates wholly new figures all throughout the timeline. Since, in hindsight, these past iterations became conscribed by Moritz's "surplus of seeing," they retained more qualities of otherness than Moritz-ness, and therefore they could never serve as building-blocks for a self-enclosed subjectivity.[37] As constructs, they are robbed of their autonomy; their identity is defined by the imposition of the present Moritz upon them. Thus, ironically, because of presentification the autobiographical *Bildungsprozess* comes dangerously close to defining the self as an internalized community of personalities undergoing Sentimental assimilation and contagion. And while Moritz envisioned autobiographical introspection as a tool for reaching

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[35] Renza, 3-4.

[36] Moritz, *Anton Reiser: A Psychological Novel*, 1. Cf. Moritz, *Anton Reiser: ein psychologische Roman*, 7.

[37] This terminology can be traced to Bakhtin architectonics, a theory Cusack expertly applies to *Anton Reiser* in Andrew Cusack, "The Biographical Imagination in Moritz's *Anton Reiser*," *Orbis Litterarum* 70, no. 3 (2015), 253-259. Here a "surplus of seeing" refers ones ability to see in another what he or she cannot due to "blind spots" —"the world behind [one's] back" (qtd. in 253)—in his or her subjective perspective. To aesthetically engage with another person would require one to first enter into the other's perspective empathetically and then fill in its blind spots using one's own surplus of seeing (254). Thus in fiction, the character is "consummated" (254) in the author's and reader's full vision of him, a fact that establishes writing and reading as aesthetic acts.

a stable and comprehensive understanding of his present psychological makeup, he neglected to account for the fact that the self at the instance of achieving self-understanding transforms into a new person. The hand that draws the arrow moves the target, and the self remains as blind to its present self as before.

Because the self of teleological self-narration can be considered neither factual nor stable, autobiography can only ever be considered a failed exercise in personal *Bildung*. The problem of presentification forces Moritz to answer whether an individual can actually achieve autonomy when he or she may or may not be qualified to be his or her own authority. Niethardt, for this reason, devotes a third of *Narration and Consciousness in the Late 18 Century German Novel* to refuting the reliability of *Reiser*'s narrator, claiming that the manner in which the narrator narrates (the *discours*) is compromised by the nature of what he is narrating (the *histoire*). She believes that the novel fails to achieve its goals because of the impossibility of achieving "objective-subjectivity" presupposed by experiential psychology, which paradoxically asks its practitioners to objectively study their always-subjective personal history.[38]

If Moritz intends to create a suitable alternative to Sentimental literature, capable of critiquing and reforming literary culture from the inside out, he must first posit a new theory of self-development somehow independent of the introspective *Bildungsprozess* and must transform his first-person autobiography into a different, more complexly-structured narrative. Both Garlick and Vosskamp demonstrate that *Anton Reiser*'s genre-bending and use of the third-person are intrinsically connected. Their analyses follow on earlier work by Philipp Lejeune, who theorizes that shifting autobiographical narration from the first- to third-person may profitably engage

[38] Niethardt, 62-65.

the problem of Renza's split-intentionality by displacing it.[39] Lejeune demonstrates that "transposing" the first-person text into third-person opens up autobiography to shift fluidly between other related genres.[40] The presence of the *he*, in contrast with the spoken or un-spoken *I*, becomes a "figure of enunciation," or a figurative-language construct representing in the utterance the gap between the author's past and present identities in the enunciation.[41] Because this model acknowledges the *I*'s fundamental dissonance, it affords the author some degree of control over it. By privileging instances of the *I* in some cases and the *he* in others, the autobiographer shifts the reader's focus between two varying, temporally-situated perspectives, a process dubbed "applying the soft pedal."[42] Lejeune's theory offers solutions to many of the formal questions raised by the quandary of *Anton Reiser*'s autobiographicality—in *Anton Reiser*, biography and the psychological novel are transpositions of Moritz's autobiography mediated between three points in time: (1) Anton Reiser, or Moritz within his own history, (2) the narrator, or Moritz within the

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[39] Philipp Lejeune, "Autobiography in the Third Person," trans. Annette Tomarken and Edward Tomarken, *New Literary History* 9, no. 1 (1977), 40. "The problem of identity cannot be avoided, but it can be faced squarely by being displaced."

[40] Lejeune, "Autobiography in the Third Person," 39-40; 33. "Each transformation thus inscribes itself into the framework of *the figured movement from one genre to another*. This movement takes place all the more easily because the initial genre (autobiography) and the later genres (biography, novel) have many common characteristics and, throughout their history, have always developed by a series of reciprocal grafts and exchanges."

[41] Lejeune, 34.

[42] Lejeune, 29. "At the very moment of writing, I mold my sentences by means of a sort of scouring away and transposition of personal discourse. I write myself by silencing myself or, more precisely, by putting the soft pedal on myself. I would only have to raise my foot to increase the volume."

autobiographical act of remembering and writing, and (3) editorial Moritz, the speaker of the prefaces, situated beyond the autobiographical act and thus reflecting equally on his life and his life story.

Moritz uses *Anton Reiser*'s complicated diegetic structure as a mechanism separating himself from the autobiographical act and controlling his authorial intrusion on the novel's narration. Primarily, this allows him to interrupt an otherwise quiet reading experience with tremors of uncertainty, revoking the reader's suspension of disbelief and provoking him or her to take a closer look at the character of the narrator. Targeted instances of irony undercut the narrator's reliability and raise a meta-awareness of the reading process in Moritz's readers—which is to say, when Niethardt observes a breakdown between *histoire* and *discours* in which Moritz's narrator fails to live up to the ideal of experiential psychology, she reveals less a flaw in the system and more an intent behind the system itself. This technique is especially prevalent in *Anton Reiser*'s third installment, when Reiser's poetry comes under the direct scrutiny of both narrator and reader. Consider the narrator's evaluation of Reiser's poem "The Wise Man's Soul":

> He also again turned his hand to poetry which, however, always concerned general concepts and again inclined to speculation, which was always his favorite occupation.... Thus he was once walking in the meadow where the tall, scattered trees stood and his ideas gradually ascended to the concept of the infinite.[43]

The narrator quickly dismisses "The Wise Man's Soul" as the stuff of mere "speculation," too abstract to qualify as art. But the reader cannot move on so easily. Reiser's use of poetry is,

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[43] Moritz, *Anton Reiser: A Psychological Novel*, 164-5. Cf. Moritz, *Anton Reiser: ein psychologische Roman*, 224.

in its own way, a form of self-narration; he chooses poetry and drama as ways of articulating his daily struggles and observations. If Moritz had intended his readers to receive Reiser's perspective as nothing more than the empty speculation of a troubled mind, he could have simply omitted "The Wise Man's Soul," or included it as a footnote in the margins of an otherwise-larger story. But instead, dialing back the soft pedal, he consciously places Reiser's narration alongside that of the narrator. Accessing not only the narrator's comments but also to the full text of the poem unsettles the reader; he or she feels Moritz's cue to evaluate both the poem and the narrator's opinion of it, a demand which threatens to reverse the hierarchy of authority between reader and narrator and dissolve the stabilizing reading contract established by Moritz in the prefaces.[44] For perhaps the first time, the reader feels the presence of a third perspective, the editorial Moritz, beyond both character and narrator. The reader begins to suspect that he or she has entered into a false contract, is speaking a different "code," and has placed his or her trust in a narrator as misguided and unreliable as Reiser himself.[45]

In absence of a named author, the highest remaining authority, the suspicious reader is left to decide whether to

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[44] In Philipp Lejeune, "The Autobiographical Pact," in *On Autobiography*, trans. Katherine Leary (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988), Lejeune describes the "reading contract" as a shared "code" (29) between reader and author that, once established, governs the reader's relationship with the text. Reading contracts are part literary and part sociological—a reading contract affirms in text the generic expectations the reader brings to it according to writing and publishing conventions. The difference, then, between autobiography, biography, and fiction is not so much a matter of formal characteristics but of reading contracts, which affirm or deny certain "identities" (such as author-narrator or narrator-character) and which inform the reader's understanding of how characters in the text are meant to resemble "models" in reality.

[45] Cf. Lejeune, "The Autobiographical Pact," 29.

continue in the footsteps of an unreliable narrator and risk ending up stranded (like Reiser) in uncertainty or to assume authorship of the story's meaning his or herself. This ironic reversal of the author-reader relationship serves a vital role in achieving Moritz's stated aim for the novel: "to direct man's attention more to man himself and to make his individual existence more significant."[46] The startled reader awakens from a dreamlike emersion in Moritz's narrative and becomes conscious of his or her reading relationship with the text, a renewable container of discourse in which the reader is not only a very real participant but also the primary one.[47] By undercutting his reliability over his own life story, Moritz gives his readers a voice, and in so doing, he transforms his failed attempt at a psycho-autobiographical *Bildungsprozess* into a phenomenological experience that reinforces the autonomy of both author and reader. If thus unable to create a stable sense of his present selfhood through a teleological evaluation of his past, Moritz can still afford his past iterations value and meaning not by attempting to presentify some full, nuanced, complicated, and now unreachably-distant human being but by accepting memory's fictive nature and relating to it as a literary construct. Through the publication of *Anton Reiser*, Moritz invited readers to invest in his own troubled history, to reflect on their own past, to look deep into the workings of the human psyche, and to accept, even celebrate, its blind spots. He affirms an intrinsically-literary self but rejects that the self is a

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[46] Moritz, *Anton Reiser: A Psychological Novel*, 1. Cf. Moritz, *Anton Reiser: ein psychologischer Roman*, 7.

[47] V. E. Obima, "Literary Transactions and the Phenomenology of Language," *Ekpoma Journal of Languages and Literary Studies: EJOLLS* 5 (1992), 106-107. "...As the French poet, Paul Valery has indicated, ordinary discourse vanishes or dissolves as soon as it has communicated an idea and brought understanding but literature is preserved and interpreted again as if its usefulness can never be exhausted."

product of literature—the self does *not* gain autonomy and significance through self-narration, it *is* autonomous, is *utterly* significant, *because it can narrate to itself.*

This new conception of selfhood represents a radical departure from other rationalist notions of the self at the end of the eighteenth-century, which viewed it as a product to be built and not a freedom to be assumed. Anticipating the work of existential phenomenologists nearly a century after its publication, *Anton Reiser* reawakens its readers to a consciousness of their existence as autonomous beings within literary culture, not patients of some Sentimental assimilation or contagion from it. It demonstrates that a civil society of free, autonomous individuals can be achieved—if not in spite of literary culture, then through it—when individuals create meaning in-and-for-themselves from a shared set of aesthetic objects and, more broadly, the shared conditions of bourgeois existence: self-consciousness enables solidarity. Literary culture is then redeemed and reading-addiction prevented when readers no longer attempt to derive their selfhood and value from novels but rather reorient themselves as agents in the reading process. In a way, Moritz's solution to reading-addiction replaces reading addiction with a writing one—in *Anton Reiser*, he reminds his audience that freedom comes when chronic readers take up authorship of their own subjective identity. Only then, with both feet planted firmly in the world of reality, may they begin to venture into the world of books, and even venture boldly.

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