

Anmerkungen

¹ Preece 177-94.

² Als Beispiele führt Preece hier u. a. die seiner Meinung nach größere Menschlichkeit von Gieshübler und Roswitha, den Identitätenwechsel der Trippelli und den Widerspruch zwischen Afras Namen und ihrer Persönlichkeit an.

³ Davon muß man bei einer reinen Neubewertung der einzelnen Kategorien, die Fontane laut Preece vornimmt, ja ausgehen.

⁴ Der Ausdruck „typisch skandinavisch“ steht im Text ebenfalls in Anführungszeichen.

⁵ Damit bildet Italien eine wichtige und unbequeme Ausnahme, was wahrscheinlich auch der Grund dafür ist, daß Preece darauf nicht näher eingeht.

⁶ Gute Beispiele hierfür sind der Berliner Reichstag und das Brandenburger Tor.

⁷ Preece bezieht sich hier speziell auf die Szene, in der Innstetten Preußen mit Afrika vergleicht.

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Melancholia, Masturbation, and *Lesesucht* in *Anton Reiser*

Tom Stewart

Karl Philipp Moritz created in 1785 a character that has come to be classified as one of the most prominent melancholics in German literature (Wagner-Egelhaaf 349). Written in four parts, Moritz's psychological novel *Anton Reiser* recounts Anton's trials and tribulations from his birth in 1756 to the year 1778. Although Moritz himself described the novel as "psychological," he admits that the work could be considered biographical and that the observations made in it, for the most part, were taken "aus dem Wirklichen Leben" (6). Readers and critics of the book have typically viewed it as autobiographical and have identified Anton Reiser as Moritz's alter ego: "Reiser ist als Erzählender Patient und Analytiker zugleich, das Buch ist die Couch, auf die sich Karl Philipp Moritz als Anton Reiser legt" (Dyck 178). Anton Reiser suffers from melancholia and the symptoms of the sickness are found throughout the novel. More specifically, Anton suffers from acedia, a particularly debilitating form of melancholia, the symptoms of which, according to Schimpf, can be recognized "an ihrem Protagonisten überall" (52). Moritz does not simply describe the symptoms of the disease, but attempts to find its root cause in the novel. He therefore describes in detail Anton's homelife and his experiences at boarding school. Anton's innermost thoughts and feelings are revealed to the reader, and Moritz, the narrator, makes positive or negative judgments about them. Using this detailed information concerning Anton's mental state and his environment, critics also have attempted to discover the causes of Anton's melancholia. In fact, the search for the cause of the sickness is one of the primary fascinations of the book: "Die Faszination des *Anton Reisers* beruht nicht zuletzt auf der insistierenden Suche nach den Ursachen der Melancholie" (Schings 242). Boulby attributes Anton's melancholia to an "inferiority complex" (11), Wagner-Egelhaaf to "nicht mehr die schwarze Galle [. . .] sondern die Unterdrückung" (349), and

Schings to "Religionsschwärmerey" (228) or to the atmosphere of hate and fear in Anton's early life at home (229). Wagner-Egelhaaf goes on to cite Anton's excessive reading (*Lesesucht*) as a cause of his melancholia: "Anton Reisers Melancholie ist von Anfang an als eine Melancholie des Lesen ausgezeichnet" (Wagner-Egelhaaf 356).

The intent of this paper is to further explore the causes of Anton's melancholia, in particular his oppression by the control structures developed and used during the Enlightenment. These structures were instituted as counter measures to the developing sexuality of children, namely to discourage masturbation. These structures were a factor in Anton's melancholia. He developed defense mechanisms to cope with the oppressive environment in which he lived. He physically removed himself from the zone of surveillance through walking, and through reading, he escaped mentally. As a result of his coping strategies, Anton was labeled by his peers and by himself as an outcast or outsider. Reading in excess, for example, according to the wisdom of the day, could in itself lead to melancholia and immoderate sexual behavior. Although theater also played a significant role in Anton's coping strategy, it will not be considered in this paper due to size limitations. The paper will deal with Parts I and II of *Anton Reiser*; from Anton's early childhood up to the age of twenty.

Prior to the eighteenth century, masturbation was considered a morality problem and not a health risk. By 1800, however, "the belief that masturbation caused serious physical illness was accepted by many doctors. Problems as unrelated as epilepsy, and premature ejaculation were ascribed to it" (Neuman 5). Semen was considered to be a vital fluid and most medical writers of the eighteenth century considered its loss "as a serious threat to mental and physical health" (Neuman 2). In addition, masturbation was thought to cause insanity: "[. . .] with the confinement of those defined as insane to institutions, eighteenth century doctors actually saw the insane masturbating, and drew a false causal connection between masturbation and insanity" (Neuman 3). Masturbation was thought to be especially harmful to young boys, who were still in the early phases of their development. The sex of the schoolboy, therefore, "became in the course of the eighteenth century—and quite apart from that of adolescents in general—a public problem" (Foucault, *History* 28). Schools were to play a significant role in protecting the schoolboy against this harmful vice and the schoolhouse was to "be a mechanism for training" (Foucault, *Discipline* 172). Continuous surveillance became "integrated into the

teaching relationship" (Foucault, *Discipline* 175). Even though sex was hardly mentioned in the school environment, according to Foucault "one only has to glance over the architectural layout, the rules of discipline, and their whole internal organization: the question of sex was a constant preoccupation" (*History* 27). The goal was to keep the students occupied and supervised throughout the school day. Moritz describes a typical day at school in Hanover:

Die Lehrstunden nahmen ihren Anfang: der Konrektor lehrte die Theologie, die Geschichte, den lateinischen Stil und das griechische Neue Testament.— Der Kantor den Katechismus, die Geographie und die lateinische Grammatik. Des Morgens um sieben Uhr fingen die Stunden an und dauerten bis zehn, und des Nachmittags um ein Uhr fingen sie wieder an und dauerten bis um vier Uhr.— Hier mußte nun also Reiser nebst zwanzig bis dreißig andern jungen Leuten einen großen Teil seines damaligen Lebens zubringen. Es war also gewiß kein unwichtiger Umstand, wie diese Lehrstunden eingerichtet waren. (151)

Not only were the students organized according to time, they were also located in space. The location of the student in the space indicated his status in the school. As students begin arriving, Moritz comments on their seating arrangements:

Nun kam in Prima außerordentlich viel auf den Platz an, wo man saß: höhere Plätze konnten nur durch langen fortgesetzten Fleiß erlangt werden. Gemeiniglich rückte man alle halbe Jahre nur eine Bank in die Höhe.— Die ersten vier Bänke machten den untern und die letztern drei den obern Cötus aus.— Wer nun bei den halbjährigen Versetzungen zurückblieb, für den war dies eine der grössten Erniedrigungen. (192-93)

Besides the physical discipline that was imposed on the students, there was also a subtle system of reward and punishment through the ranking of the students in the classroom. Students who were unable to keep pace were separated from the rest. Foucault comments that this distribution according to rank fulfills a double role: it not

only marks the gaps, hierarchizes qualities, skills and aptitudes; but it also punishes and rewards. It is the penal functioning of setting in order and the ordinal character of judging. Discipline rewards simply by the play of awards, thus making it possible to attain higher ranks and places; it punishes by reversing the process. (*Discipline* 181)

Anton was initially attracted to this system of reward and punishment. His first encounter with the schoolroom was a positive one: "er glaubt [. . .] in der Schule immer mehr Gerechtigkeit, als bei seinen Eltern zu finden" (43). When he was forced to leave his first school, he even took advantage of the system to impose a form of punishment upon himself. He intentionally performed poorly so that his ranking would be lowered, until finally he achieved "den untersten Platz" (48). Although initially thriving at his new school in Hanover, Anton began to suffer under the constant supervision. Even facial expressions were to be controlled during the class time. As one student was reading a prayer, another made a comment to Anton that caused him to smile. The director, noting Anton's change in expression, stared at him with a look of "Zorn" and "Verachtung" (193).

The teacher played a very significant role in the exercise of surveillance. The student was to consider the teacher as an *Ersatz*-father. The student's insecure and immature psychological state was taken advantage of. "Away from the house, the teacher became the central authority figure; separated from the family, the child was in unfamiliar circumstances and as a result psychologically vulnerable. Under these conditions the child was more likely to bond to the teacher" (Sumser 463). The teacher for Anton was almost godlike. He is surprised and disappointed when he later finds out that they are human, just like everyone else: "Der Nimbus um ihre Köpfe verschwand allmählich, und er sahe an ihnen zum ersten Male Menschen, wie andre Menschen sind" (191). How Anton felt concerning the school environment is probably best summarized by his comments upon seeing the tower near the school:

Insbesondere war ihm der hohe, eckige und oben nur mit einer kleinen Spitze versehene Marktturm, da er ihn jetzt wieder sahe, ein fürchterliche Anblick— dicht neben diesem war die Schule— das Spotten, Grinsen und Auszischen seiner Mitschüler stand mit diesem Turm auf einmal wieder vor seiner Seele da— das große

Zifferblatt an diesem Turm war er gewohnt, zum Augenmerk zu nehmen, sooft er die Schule besuchte, um zu sehen, ob er auch zu spät käme. (217)

Even beyond the confines of the school property and environment, Anton continued to suffer the effects of constant surveillance and correction. His father had arranged for Anton to live with a colleague in Hanover, and in addition to his stipend for his studies, and a series of free meals were also organized. The original intent of the free meals was to save Anton money. The result, however, was that he had to endure even more intense observation:

Denn alles beeiferte sich zwar, auf die Weise ihm Wohltaten zu erzeigen, aber jeder glaubte auch dadurch ein Recht erworben zu haben, über seine Aufführung zu wachen und ihm in Ansehung seines Betragens Rat zu erteilen, der dann immer ganz blindlings sollte angenommen werden, wenn er seine Wohltäter nicht erzürnen wollte. (133)

Anton was unable to escape scrutiny even while eating. Frau Filter, the wife of his father's colleague, chided him for over-eating (144), while at other homes the talk centered around the shortage of food. It was at the sexton's house where his first breakdown occurred. During his free meal at the sexton's house, the sexton's wife made repeated comments about the hard winter, the shortage of wood and their own meager food supply. While listening to her complaints, Anton accidentally dropped a piece of bread and was unable to hold back his tears. This unleashed a tirade from the wife which made it clear that he was no longer welcome at her table (164-65).

The surveillance of Anton extended into his sleeping area as well. The Filters did not have a separate room for Anton, requiring that he sleep in the living room. This arrangement disturbed the otherwise orderly Filter household, and Anton was sensitive to this fact:

Anton merkte dies bald, und der Gedanke, lästig zu sein, war ihm so ängstigend und peinlich, daß er sich oft kaum zu husten getraute, wenn er an den Blicken seiner Wohltäter sahe, daß er ihnen im Grunde zur Last war. (136)

At a time in his sexual development when it was especially necessary, Anton could find no peace or personal space in his new home. Anton undoubtedly was beginning to experience the early stages of puberty, and although Moritz does not explicitly discuss it, was probably undergoing a period of sexual awakening. Frau Filter may have been aware of this; after all, Anton slept in the open living room, and perhaps due to his behavior, decided to warn him against his dangerous new feelings:

Die Frau Filter hielt ihm an dem Tage, da er zum Abendmahl ging, eine lange Predigt über die bösen Lüste und Begierden, die in diesem Alter zu erwachen pflegten, und wogegen er nun kämpfen müsse. Zum Glück verstand Reiser nicht, was sie eigentlich damit meinte, und wagte es auch nicht, sich genauer darnach zu erkundigen, sondern nahm sich nur fest vor, wenn böse Lüste in ihm erwachen sollten, sie möchten auch sein von welcher Art sie wollten, ritterlich dagegen anzukämpfen. (149)

Although the teenager Anton Reiser apparently did not know what Frau Filter was talking about, Moritz mentions a few lines later the “Laster der Selbstbefleckung” (149), the code words for masturbation. Another indication that Anton is struggling with oncoming puberty is his decision, after visiting the old *Greis*, to change his life and to become a better person. He resolves “sich ganz wieder zu Gott zu wenden, das hieß bei ihm, unaufhörlich an Gott zu denken” (179). Anton’s namesake St. Antonius used exactly the same strategy when confronted by “filthy thoughts” or when confronted by “lust” (Meyer 22).

Anton Reiser finds himself, therefore, in a most unpleasant and confusing situation. He comes from a home where he received very little emotional or financial support. Considering their difficult relationship, it is extremely unlikely that his father explained human sexual development. Also, the manner in which sex was described in the school was so metaphorical and abstract, that he undoubtedly had no idea what sex was—although he no longer believed that the stork brought children (149). He lived in an environment where he was under constant supervision by the surveillance structures which were set in place to prevent or control his sexual drives, drives which he did not and could not understand. It is small wonder, therefore, that he preferred the isolation of a dungeon to

his current situation, “[. . .] die Schule, das Chor, das Haus des Rektors— in diesen Kreisen, wovon ihn immer einer noch mehr wie der andre einengte und alle seine Strebekraft hemmte, sollte er sich von nun an wieder drehen— wie gern hätte er in diesem Augenblick seinen ganzen Aufenthalt in Hannover gegen den dunkelsten Kerker vertauscht” (218). Neuman’s comments concerning adolescents describe Anton’s subsequent behavior quite well:

Faced with the prospect of a lengthy period of sexual repression and with parents who regarded masturbation by their offspring as pathological, it is not surprising that some adolescents actually manifested bizarre behavior in an attempt to maintain some modicum of personal autonomy or to escape personal dilemmas. (20)

Anton, unlike his namesake, cannot retreat into the desert to resolve his personal dilemmas. He does employ two defense mechanisms to maintain some modicum of personal autonomy. Both reading and walking involve an escape from the constant surveillance. The former provides mental or spiritual relief, the latter physical relief. It is during these times of walking or reading that Anton was the happiest.

Instead of feeling disappointed at losing his free meal at the sexton’s house, Anton is relieved. In fact, he is happy, because it gives him the opportunity to take an unsupervised walk around the city walls: “wie glücklich fühlte er sich, da er am ersten Sonntage, nachdem er den Tisch bei dem Gamisonküster verloren und es zu Hause noch nicht hatte sagen wollen, ein Dreierbrot verzehrte und dabei einen Spaziergang um den Wall machte” (165). This is not the first time that Anton experienced pleasure in walking. Moritz mentions the joy of walking when the eight year old Anton visited Herr Fleischbein in Pymont with his father (27-28), during his time in Braunschweig (93), and later in the novel when as an outcast he wanders the streets of Hanover (214). In describing the experience of walking, he writes: “es war ihm, als ob er aus dem engen Kreise seines Daseins einen Sprung gewagt hätte; die alltäglichen Ideen verloren sich, und große angenehme Aussichten, Labyrinth der Zukunft eröffneten sich vor ihm” (93). During his walks, Anton is no longer under the watchful eyes of his benefactors and is released from the constraints that they place on his space and time. Reading is also used as an escape from the ever-

present scrutiny. Through reading Anton forgets not only himself but also the world. As Anton loses himself in a book, he loses as well the internalized boundaries that control him.

Reading and its role in Anton's melancholia have been discussed and commented on by several critics (cf. Polster, Schings, Wagner-Egelhaaf, Weber). Most tend to agree that Anton's excessive reading was a cause of his melancholia, often quoting Moritz's description of reading as drug: "wie es den Morgenländern das Opium sein mag, wodurch sie ihre Sinne in eine angenehme Betäubung bringen" (qtd. in Weber 58, Kreuzer 67). Arnim Polster believes that Anton's reading was beneficial, and that "Anton develops through his own reading experience, an ability to distinguish good from bad" (475). Moritz himself describes the hours spent reading as "die glücklichsten, welche er gleichsam aus dem Gewirre der übrigen herausriß— seine Denkkraft war vollkommen wie berauscht— er vergaß sich und die Welt" (202). Opinions regarding reading in the eighteenth century were mixed. Reading was recognized as a tool for the development and the education of children. At the same time, however, there was a tendency to regard reading as a dangerous addiction. According to Polster, the fear of child sexuality was "frequently projected by the eighteenth century pedagogues onto an eroticized interpretation of children's reading" (471). The novel was a particular source of concern, because as it developed in the course of the eighteenth century, "it enabled its readers, particularly the newly literate, to discover other models for sexual behavior than those prescribed by Christian theology" (Price 174). It is no surprise then, that many of the negative consequences attributed to *Lesesucht* were the same as those attributed to masturbation:

The "Vielleserei" resulted in "grosse Empfindlichkeit, leichte Erkältung, Kopfschmerzen, schwache Augen, Hitzblattern, Podagra, Gicht, Hämorrhoiden, Engbrüstigkeit, Schlagflüsse, Lungenknoten, geschwächte Verdauung, Verstopfung der Eingeweide, Nervenschwäche, Migräne, Epilepsie, Hypochondrie, Melancholie." (qtd. in Kreuzer 64)

The results of *Selbstbefleckung* were described as follows:

"Der Körper wird geschwächt, das Wachstum gehemmet, und manchmal verunstaltet. Das Gesicht wird bleich, gelblich, der

ganze Leibe dürre, der Magen verdaut schlecht, die Hände zittern, die Füßen verlieren ihre Kraft, die Brust wird beklommen und der Athmen schwer. Bald kommen allerlei Beschwerden und Schmerzen dazu, vornehmlich in den Hüften und in dem Rackgrade, bis endlich die Auszehrung dein elenden Leben ein End macht. 2. Der Verstand leidet so viel als der Leib an die Stelle des Verstandes tritt Mitzelei, List, Verschlagenheit [. . .] weil der Verstand durch die allgemeine Schwächung die Kraft verliert. [. . .] Andre, minderbegabte, werden dumm, schwerfällig— Verstand. Gedächtnis, Einbildungskraft, alles geht verloren." (qtd. in Sumser 465)

Further complications included "schwarze Melancholie," "hypochondria, epilepsy and nervous disorders" (qtd. in Sumser 465).

According to the medical science of the eighteenth century, therefore, both excessive reading and masturbation could result in severe physical and mental disorders. When one considers the sexual content in some of the novels of the day,¹ it is not difficult to understand why Anton's father was "ein abgesagter Feind von allen Romanen" (33). Although he encouraged Anton to read religious texts, he threatened to throw into the fire any novels that he might find in the house. Anton's mother and aunt, however, recognized Anton's love affair with books and allowed him to read them in their presence. These hours of reading at home were described as "einige der süssesten Stunden in seinem Leben" (34). Anton was able to combine two of his great loves: his love of books and of his mother. It is, therefore, no surprise that during his time of greatest stress Anton turned to reading as a means of escape. His life reached a low point while living with the rector of his school. Although he was initially overjoyed at the opportunity to live with the rector and at the prospect of having his own room, Anton almost immediately began to suffer one humiliation after another. The other students referred to him as the "Rectors Famulus" (192) and his status as, more or less, a servant in the household became clear when he was required to serve wine to a fellow student (204). His *Lesesucht* began after the arrival of the rector's mother who sought her son's "Wirtschaft auf das genaueste einzurichten" (201). Anton's dreams of living on a deserted island with the rector (189) were destroyed, replaced by the opium (201) of reading. His appearance during this time deteriorates, "seine Kleidung und Wäsche wurden immer schlechter" (224).

He no longer regularly partakes of his free meals. Acedia has set up a temple in his soul and "[er] sahe seinen Körper eben so gleichgültig wie seine Kleider von Tage zu Tage abfallen" (228). Undoubtedly, a medical person of the eighteenth century would attribute Anton's state to *Lesesucht* or *Selbstbefleckung*, because he certainly exhibited many of the symptoms of both. Today Anton would be considered malnourished.

Anton, when confronted and overwhelmed by the control structures in the schools and at home, resorted to walking and to reading in order to escape them. He was undoubtedly experiencing a sexual awakening in an environment that attempted to suppress and control every aspect of a schoolboy's life. Moritz himself did not recognize the detrimental nature of prolonged surveillance on Anton's development. In fact, his solution to Anton's problem is increased surveillance. The instructor should become more involved with the student:

Möchte dies alle Lehrer und Pädagogen aufmerksamer und in ihren Urteilen über die Entwicklung der Charaktere junger Leute behutsamer machen, dass sie die Einwirkung unzähliger zufälliger Umstände mit in Anschlag brächten und von diesen erst die genaueste Erkundigung einzuziehen suchten, ehe sie es wagten, durch ihr Urteil über das Schicksal eines Menschen zu entscheiden, bei dem es vielleicht nur eines aufmunternden Blicks bedurfte, um ihn plötzlich umzuschaffen, weil nicht die Grundlage seines Charakters, sondern eine sonderbare Verkettung von Umständen an seinem schlecht in die Augen fallenden Betragen schuld war. (205)

Moritz does understand, however, how the system of reward and punishment worked within the school environment. Anton's suffering could have been relieved somewhat if the teacher had taken the time "ihn bei seinen Mitschülern wieder in Achtung zu setzen" (216).

Anton Reiser was a victim of his inadequate upbringing at home and of the structures setup by eighteenth century society to control and suppress his emerging sexuality. The system of reward and punishment had a detrimental effect upon him. Unable to thrive in an environment of constant surveillance, Anton became melancholic. Even without the strict controls, Anton's sexual development would have been difficult. Tobin points out the "hints of homoeroticism in Anton's exaggerated friend-

ships" (250) and Anton's belief that "he could not be loved by any woman" (251). He coped with his almost unbearable situation by reading and exercise. Reading was not a cause of Anton's melancholia, but rather a refuge from overzealous control structures: "At fault is not an idle disposition in need of discipline, but rather the conditions that reinforce his alienation from himself, his self-contempt, his inability to identify with himself directly" (Polster 474). Reading and walking both played crucial roles in Anton's healing process.

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Notes

¹ *Insel Felsenburg* has some suggestive scenes. An encounter with a beautiful pagan girl is recounted as follows: "[...] so nahm ich ihre Hand und küsste dieselbe. Dies schien sie zu verdrießen; daher schloß ich sie in meine Armen und küsste sie mehr als hundertmal, wodurch so völlig aufgeheitert wurde. Als ich ferner auf ihre Brust Küsse zudrücken wagte, wäre sie vor Entzücken fast in Ohnmacht gesunken [...]" (38). Even in the sanctioned *Telemachus* appear sexually suggestive scenes. One example is Telemachus' affair with the nymph Eucharis (Fenelon 80-96).

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Von Kreisen und Brücken: Jeannette Landers *E in Sommer in der Woche der Itke K.*

Markus Wust

Kritiker, welche sich mit Jeannette Landers 1971 erschienenen Erstlingsroman *E in Sommer in der Woche der Itke K.* befassten, wiesen wiederholt auf die enge Verbindung zwischen Landers Biografie und der ihrer Heldin Itke hin: beide wuchsen während des zweiten Weltkrieges in einem jüdischen Elternhaus auf und beider Väter besaßen einen Lebensmittelhandel in einem Schwarzenviertel von Atlanta. Wie Itke erlebte Lander das zu diesem Zeitpunkt noch meist friedvolle Zusammenleben zweier von der weißen Gesellschaft ausgeschlossener Gruppen, und es war eben dieses Zusammenleben, das als Anstoß für *E in Sommer in der Woche der Itke K.* diente. Auf die Frage nach dem Motiv für ihren Roman antwortet sie in einem 1998 geführten Interview:

I was trying to paint a picture. I didn't know anything, and these were all authentic experiences, the people in the store, and the parents, these were all experiences which actually, as an ulterior motive, I was saving from oblivion for myself. I wanted to recreate this world, which I had left, and which no longer existed. When I was writing it in 1970, I wanted to save something from this world of the last years of the second world war. This was a completely different world, a complete turnover of interactions between different cultures. *A case in point were the Jewish immigrants who had their stores in Black neighborhoods. They don't exist any longer. They are not allowed to exist, and the Blacks themselves don't want them to. Whereas Itke paints a picture of a time when the people of different cultures helped each other and when they actually liked each other.* This is something that I experienced, but which is fading out of my memory. (Kraft 134-35, meine Betonung)