

When the Author Is Not the Author of Passions

J.J. Engel's *Herr Lorenz Stark* and the Pathognomy of Style

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In the eyes of the 18th century, physiognomic portraits work in a twofold way: They reveal the character and affects of the *portrayed*, while also shedding a light on the soul and passions of the *portrayer*. Johann Caspar Lavater discussed this epistemic problem in his *Physiognomische Fragmente*, a protoscientific bestseller of the 1770s. However talented an artist might be, he is creating a person's portrait in his own very distinctive way, inevitably lending it his own characteristic style.¹ Lavater showed how differently a portrait, for example of Isaac Newton, would be carried out by different artists, providing a list of all the spots that would be “zu unbestimmt schattirt” or “verschliffen”.² Indeed, he never tired of mentioning that a silhouette or a drawing might be faulty, “um etwas verschnitten” or “etwas verzeichnet”.³ Thus, he warned his readership that the various modes of imagination as well as the different aesthetic abilities of distinct painters could change the portrait of one and the same man (“wie sehr die verschiedenen Vorstellungsarten der Mahler, und ihre verschiedenen Fähigkeiten ein und ebendenselben Mann umbilden und verschieben”).⁴ For

1 Cf. Arburg 2016: 28, 34-35.

2 “Too indeterminately shaded” or “blurred”. Lavater 1775-1778/vol. 2: XXXIV. Fragment, 277. *Physiognomische Fragmente* was preceded by *Von der Physiognomik* (1772). Translations, if not otherwise indicated, by Y.M.

3 “Slightly miscut” or “slightly misdrawn”. Lavater 1775-1778/vol. 3: XII. Fragment, 313; vol. 2: XII. Fragment, 116 i.a.

4 Lavater 1775-1778/vol. 2: 276.

Lavater and his contemporaries, there is no way around the fact that a portrait is inevitably showing the soul of the portrayed *and* of the portrayer.

This knowledge seems to be shared by literary portraits as well. In the anthropological novel *Herr Lorenz Stark. Ein Charaktergemälde* (1801), Johann Jakob Engel shows how portraits of characters can be (involuntarily) corrupted by their author's character and passions. However, an author's influence on a portrait is not only a major topic in the story told in the novel, but is also mirrored in the novel's style itself, as will be elaborated in the course of the essay.

But let us recall some biographic facts first:⁵ Johann Jakob Engel, author of various theatre plays, held the prestigious post of director of the Royal Theatre in Berlin until 1794. When he was sacked by King Frederick William II of Prussia over a quarrel about Mozart's *Magic Flute* without even being granted a pension, he found himself in financial difficulties. Just in time came an offer from Schiller that he contribute to the newly founded literary magazine *Die Horen*. From the very beginning, the aesthetic ambitions of Schiller's magazine collided with economic realities. Like his friend Goethe and many others, Schiller made disparaging remarks about Engel's literary qualities, but now he was in need of a 'popular' author for his magazine to suit the taste of the general public. It was out of economic necessities on both sides, that, beginning in 1795, the first seventeen chapters of Engel's novel *Herr Lorenz Stark* started to appear as a series in the magazine. The complete novel was eventually published in 1801 – and it became a huge success. The novel was staged in 1802 in the Royal Theatre in Weimar under the directorship of Goethe and with Iffland as the main actor. During the 19th century, sixteen editions of the novel were published in the German language alone, not counting translations into English and French and so-called “*Klassiker-*” or “*Miniaturlbibliotheken*”. As early as 1806, the French translation became part of the school curriculum, and in 1870 the novel even became part of the literary canon of Reclams Universalbibliothek.

Engel's novel centres on the merchant and housefather Lorenz Stark. Holding strong beliefs in economic and moral virtues, Stark misjudges the characters of his son and his son's bride-to-be badly, until the end of the novel brings about a kind of characterological *anagnorisis*. The novel's subtitle is: *Ein Charaktergemälde* (“a character portrait”).⁶ The metaphor “character portrait” is not only referring to anthropology and physiognomy as the novel's subjects, but also stresses the connection between physiognomy and the visual arts, between phys-

5 For the following biographical account as well as the history of publication cf. Košenina/Wehrhahn 1991: 99-105. Cf. furthermore Košenina 2005: 1-26.

6 The subtitle of the 19th century English translation (cf. Engel 1826) is inaccurate: *Lorenz Stark, A Characteristic Picture of a German Family*.

iogonomy and pictorial representation. In accordance with the metaphor “character portrait”, Stark is depicted both as a judge of customs (“*Sittenrichter*”⁷) and of art; indeed, when judging a person’s character, he is doing nothing else than judging a piece of art, i.e., “strenge [...] *kunstrichtern*”⁸.

To a certain extent, drawing a character portrait involves drawing one’s own portrait. Engel’s novel exemplifies this by a scene in which Stark’s daughter is drawing his portrait for the widow Lyk. Of course, she is not really drawing a character portrait but rather evoking one mentally – but it is no coincidence that metaphors deriving from the sphere of visual arts are being used. Since it is distorted by her own perception as well as by the intention of drawing a favourable ‘picture’, the validity of such a ‘portrait’ is rather limited:

Und nun fing sie an, ein *Gemälde* zu entwerfen, das zwar wirklich dem alten Herrn [Lorenz Stark, Y.M.] ziemlich ähnlich sah, das aber gleichwohl für ein *Bildniß*, wofür es doch gelten sollte, zu wenig Eignes und Unterscheidendes hatte. Eine zu gerührte kindliche Dankbarkeit, und eine zu lebhaft Begeisterung, die immer idealisirt und verschönert, hatten die *Farben gemischt* und den *Pinsel geführt*. Indessen war eben durch diesen Fehler das *Gemälde* um so geschickter, der Witwe ein unbedingtes Vertrauen einzufloßen, und eine lebhaft Begierde nach einer so vortrefflichen Bekanntschaft bei ihr zu wecken. Wäre mitten unter den schönen Zügen des verständigen, menschenfreundlichen, großmüthigen Mannes, auch die ernste Falte des Sittenrichters und das heimliche Lächeln des Spötters, die doch sehr zur *Physiognomie* des Herrn *Stark* gehörten, sichtbar geworden: so würde freilich jenes Vertrauen sehr geschwächt, und diese Begierde sehr gedämpft worden seyn.⁹

7 Engel 1991: 7 i.a.

8 Ibid.: 16. The verb “*kunstrichtern*” (“*judging a piece of art*”) is a neologism.

9 Ibid.: 50. “Here she began to *sketch a picture*, and although it resembled the old gentleman tolerably well in the main points, still as a *portrait*, for which it was intended, it had too little distinctness of feature, too little of the peculiarity of his manner to be perfect. Filial love warmed into fervour, and that too vivid enthusiasm, which always embellishes and idealises, had *mixed the colours*. However, these very faults rendered *the picture* better calculated to inspire the widow with unlimited confidence, and to awake in her bosom a strong desire to form so excellent an acquaintance. Had there also appeared among the finer features of the sage, benevolent, generous old man, the severe air of the moralizer [*Sittenrichter*, Y.M.], and the smile of the satirist, traits so predominant and characteristic in the *physiognomy* of Mr. Stark, her confidence would undoubtedly have been much weakened, and her desire to see him considerably diminished.” (emphasis Y.M.) Engel 1826/vol. 1: 187-188.

Physiognomy – the art of looking into a person’s soul by analyzing his or her facial traits – was one of the virulent ideas of the late 18th century; and, in fact, Engel was acquainted with Lavater. However, as an author of various theatre plays and former director of the Royal Theatre in Berlin (1787-1794), Engel’s *professional* interest lay in the field of pathognomy rather than physiognomy, i.e. in the field of an actor’s changing facial expression rather than his unchangeable facial features, in the exhibition of passions rather than firm character traits. While some of Engel’s contemporaries used the term ‘physiognomy’ as an umbrella term, others – most prominently: Lavater – made a more or less sharp distinction between physiognomy and pathognomy.¹⁰ In the strict sense of the word, physiognomy was called the cultural technique of reading a person’s basic character traits by his or her outward appearance, while pathognomy was understood as the art of deriving a person’s momentary affects from his outward appearance. Engel dedicated two volumes and almost 700 pages to the cultural technique of pathognomy as an *eloquentia corporis* in theatre plays when he wrote a treatise entitled *Ideen zu einer Mimik*, published in 1785 and 1786.¹¹ Here, Engel states:

Ich nenne die Physiognomik eine der Mimik ähnliche Kunst; denn beyde beschäftigen sich damit, den Ausdruck der Seele im Körper zu beobachten: nur daß jene die festen bleibenden Züge, woraus sich das Allgemeine eines Charakters abnehmen läßt, und diese

10 “*Physiognomik*, im eingeschränkten Sinne des Wortes, ist *Kraftdeutung*, oder *Wissenschaft der Zeichen der Kräfte*. / *Pathognomik*, *Leidenschaftsdeutung*, oder *Wissenschaft der Zeichen der Leidenschaften*. Jene zeigt den *stehenden* – diese den *bewegten* Charakter. / Der *stehende* Charakter liegt in der *Form* der *festen*, und in der *Ruhe* der *beweglichen* Theile. Der *leidenschaftliche* – in der *Bewegung* der *beweglichen*. [...] / *Physiognomik* zeigt die *Summe der Caputalkraft* – *Pathognomik* das *Interesse*, das jene abwirft. Jene, was der Mensch *überhaupt* ist; diese, was er in dem *gegenwärtigen Moment* ist.“ [Emphasis in original.] Lavater 1775-1778/vol. 4: II. Fragment, 39. “Physiognomy, opposed to pathognomy, is the knowledge of the signs of the powers and inclinations of men. Pathognomy is the knowledge of the signs of the passions. / Physiognomy, therefore, teaches the knowledge of character at rest; and pathognomy of character in motion. / Character at rest is displayed by the form of the solid and the appearance of the moveable parts, while at rest. Character impassioned is manifested by the moveable parts, in motion. / Physiognomy may be compared to the sum total of the mind; pathognomy to the interest which is the product of this sum total. The former shows what man is in general; the latter what he becomes at particular moments: or, the one what he might be, the other what he is.” Lavater 1804/vol. 1: 20.

11 Cf. Engel 1785-1786.

die vorübergehenden körperlichen Bewegungen untersucht, die einen solchen und solchen einzelnen Zustand der Seele ankündigen.¹²

Overall, Engel's novel *Herr Lorenz Stark* pays close attention to the meticulous description of facial expressions and gestures that bear pathognomic or affective significance. It is no wonder that contemporary critics praised the detailed observations of facial expression and gestures in the novel that build upon the treatise *Ideen zu einer Mimik*.¹³ August Wilhelm Schlegel complimented Engel on being an experienced observer of mankind.¹⁴ In particular, critics praised the novel's dialogues for their ability to add vivacity.¹⁵

Thus, in the case of Engel's novel *Herr Lorenz Stark*, 'writing affects' means finding linguistic descriptions of facial traits that can be interpreted in a pathognomic way. On the other hand, 'reading affects' means paying attention to facial traits and gestures that disclose affective states. Although the novel aims at depicting protagonists as individuals (not as types), their facial expression and hence the form of their affective expression is in a paradoxical way far from being individual.

In *Ideen zu einer Mimik* Engel aimed at systematising all possible facial expressions; he believed in finding a kind of grammar or morphology of feelings that could be taught and learned (by theatre actors):

Es ist mir unwahrscheinlich, daß Sie die Arten der Seelenveränderungen selbst, die sich durch den Körper ausdrücken lassen, für so unendlich, so unbestimmbar sollten gehalten haben. Der gemischten zusammengesetzten Empfindungen ist ohne Zweifel die größte Anzahl; aber wenn man nur die reinern, einfachern, und für jede derselben einen bestimmten Ausdruck angeben könnte, so müßte dadurch, wie es scheint, auch für jene Mischungen

12 Engel 1785-1786/vol. 1: 6-7. "I see physiognomy as an art similar to facial expression [Mimik]; both observe the expression of the soul in the body: only that the first examines the firm, permanent traits that reveal the general character, and the latter examines the temporary physical movements that announce such and such a single state of the soul".

13 "[K]leine[] Bemerkungen des Ausdrucks in Minen und Geberden, in denen man den Vfs. der *Mimik* wiederfindet", were praised by a review in: *Allgemeine Literatur-Zeitung* 271 (1801), 657-660, quoted from Košenina/Wehrhahn 1991: 103. The reviewer is referring to Engel's *Ideen zu einer Mimik*.

14 "Ein[] geübte[r] Beobachter der Menschen". Review in: *Allgemeine Literatur-Zeitung* 6 (1796), quoted from *ibid*.

15 "Lebhaftigkeit und anschauliche[] Wirkung". Review in: *Neue allgemeine deutsche Bibliothek* 87.1 (1804), quoted from *ibid*.

der Ausdruck schon so ziemlich bestimmt seyn. So wie diese selbst Zusammensetzungen der einfachen sind; so würde auch vermuthlich ihr Ausdruck mehrere einfache Ausdrücke verbinden: und es käme darauf an, ob sich nicht gewisse Regeln, nach welchen diese Verbindung geschehen müßte, entdecken ließen.¹⁶

In particular, Engel aimed at depicting the ‘nature’, ‘the very essence’ of affects. It is quite revealing that he gave actors the advice not to strive for a mimesis of real feelings, but rather to aspire to mimic ideal feelings:

Nachahmung, Darstellung der Natur ist, wie man schon so oft erinnert hat und noch immer von neuem zu erinnern Ursache findet, ein Grundsatz, der nirgends hinreicht. Der Natur gelingt Manches in einer Vollkommenheit, daß die Kunst nichts weiter thun kann, als es sorgfältig aufzufassen und getreu wieder darzustellen; aber manches, auch wo sie am besten wirkt, erreicht bey ihr den Grad der Vollkommenheit nicht, den es sollte; manches geräth ihr falsch, manches zu schwach oder zu stark: Und da erfordert denn die Pflicht der Kunst, aus einer gesammelten Menge von Beobachtungen, oder nach Grundsätzen, die aus diesen Beobachtungen gezogen sind, die Fehler der Natur zu verbessern [...].¹⁷

To cut a long story short: Although there is much talk of ‘nature’ and ‘naturalness’ (‘Natürlichkeit’) throughout the 18th century, and in Engel’s writing in particular, there is nevertheless some rhetoric repertoire of feelings that can be taught and learned. Writing affects by describing facial expressions relies on a

16 Engel 1785-1786/vol. 1: 27-28. “It seems unlikely to me that you should have considered the types of changes of the soul, which can be expressed by the body, as that infinite, indeterminate. There is undoubtedly a great number of mixed composite feelings; but if one could characterize the purer, simpler feelings and their characteristic expression, one could, as it seems, easily determine the expressions of composite feelings. Composite feelings are mixtures of the simpler ones, and their expressions would probably combine several simple expressions; it would depend on discovering the rules of their combination”.

17 Ibid.: vol. 1: 16-17. “Imitation, representation of nature is, as has often been stated and finds reason to be repeated anew, a principle that does not suffice. At times, nature succeeds in creating things of such perfection that art cannot do anything but faithfully imitate these things; but at times, even where it works best, nature does not achieve the necessary degree of perfection; some things turn out faulty, some too weak or too strong: And in this case the duty of art requires to correct the errors of nature, in accordance with collected observations or principles that are drawn from these observations [...]”.

readership that is able to interpret the applied grammar of feelings. Indeed, it involves a rather complex mental operation when affective states are not named explicitly or described, but can be traced back mainly by reading facial signs: One is then obliged to read symptoms. The protagonists in Engel's novel *Herr Lorenz Stark* pay very close attention to facial expressions and gestures that are of pathognomic meaning – and, in a way, the novel is teaching its readership to do the same, it obligates its readers to interpret facial expressions *as symptoms* of affective states. If the author wants his readership to understand these symptoms, he has to apply more or less conventional facial and affective expressions in his writing process; he has to choose a code of affective signs that is – with some probability – known to his readership. In fact, a certain conventionality of a 'language of emotions'¹⁸ serves as the very basis of interpersonal as well as of literary communication. After all, we are talking of a novel, not a riddle.

In fact, one possible way of reading *Herr Lorenz Stark* is to read it as a 'doctor novel' that combines pathognomic or affective symptoms with medical or psychological symptoms. Stark's son-in-law is a family doctor; his wife (i.e. Stark's daughter) is referred to as "die Doctorinn".¹⁹ Stark's son-in-law is not merely a doctor of the body, but also and most particularly a doctor of the human soul. He visits his patients "theils, um sich nach der Gesundheit, theils – oder wohl eigentlich und hauptsächlich – um sich nach der Gesinnung [...] zu erkundigen".²⁰ The doctor's semiotics ("Semiotik des Doctors"²¹) are directed at the 'lovesickness' of his brother-in-law and his bride-to-be and his indication ("Indication"²²) is based on pathognomic symptoms such as averted glances (e.g. "Niedersinken ihres bis dahin aufgehobenen Blicks in den Busen"²³). Not only the doctor but also his wife, "die Doctorinn", is well versed in the art of reading affective symptoms ("Anzeichen"²⁴). Indeed, this art of symptom interpretation is not the reserve of male scholars and professional doctors only, but is open to everybody, i.e. women. When drawing a parallel between the medical symptoms of a *facies hippocratica* and the affective symptoms of a person in love, the doctor's wife is claiming the latter as a female domain:

18 *Languages of Emotion* was the name of a Cluster of Excellence at the Free University of Berlin (2007-2014).

19 The female form of "Doctor". At the time, it was common to address a woman by her husband's title.

20 Engel 1991: 59.

21 Ibid.: 17.

22 Ibid.: 39.

23 Ibid.

24 Ibid.: 83.

Sage mir doch: wie nanntest Du jüngst ein Gesicht, woran Du gewiß vorher weißt, daß Dein Kranker Dir sterben werde?

Ein hippokratisches etwa?

So ungefähr. Ja, so klangs. – Nun, die Freiheit der armen Mädchen und Witwen, wenn sie im Abfahren begriffen ist, hat eben ein solches hip – hip – wie heißt es?

Hippokratisches Gesicht.

Richtig! – Und darauf verstehen nun wir Weiber – wir klugen, mein' ich – uns eben so gut, als Ihr Euch, Ihr gelehrten Herrn Doctoren, auf jenes.²⁵

Scenes like these can be understood as an appeal to the reader to undertake interpretations of affective symptoms on his or her own.

Like Christian Friedrich von Blanckenburg, who published the first German theory of the novel, *Versuch über den Roman* (1774),²⁶ Engel thought that the plot of a novel should focus primarily on the soul and the changing affective states of a protagonist, not on mere exterior events. But, let us recall, this paper began with the problem that by drawing another person's portrait, one is involuntarily drawing one's own portrait, that – according to the epistemology of the time – character portraits can be (involuntarily) corrupted by their author's characters and passions. This meant an aesthetic dilemma for Engel, who did not plan at all to depict *his* own affective state in the novel, but wanted to show the affective states of his literary protagonists instead. The writer found a technical solution to this dilemma.

In *Über Handlung, Gespräch und Erzählung*, a poetological text dating back to 1774, Engel had given his fellow writers the advice to switch to dramatic dialogue for representations of the soul: “Der Erzähler gehe [...], sobald es auf Schilderungen der Seele ankömmt, ins Dramatische über.”²⁷ To put it more simply, Engel proposed the integration of dramatic – that is, dialogic – parts in a novel, as he believed that the form of unmediated dialogue would be much more

25 Ibid.: 77-78. “[...] Tell me, if you please, the name which you lately gave to that cast of face, by which you know before-hand with certainty that your patient will die?’ / ‘A Hippocratic face. – Was that the name?’ / ‘Something of that kind. Yes, it sounded something like it. – Well, the liberty of poor maidens and widows, when on the point of expiring has just such a hip – hip – how do you call it?’ / ‘A Hippocratic face.’ / ‘Exactly so. – And on this point, we women – I mean to say, we sensible ones – understand these matters just as well as you learned doctors with respect to your patients. [...]’” (emphasis in original) Engel 1826/vol. 2: 101-102.

26 Cf. Blanckenburg 1965.

27 Engel 1964: 63. Foliation as in the facsimile edition.

capable of showing characters than mediated narrative.²⁸ He stated that dialogues were a mirror of the soul and he ascribed to dialogues a great ability to show characters and their affective states. He elaborated on an idea already put forward by Johann Jakob Sulzer that dialogues were the ideal form for displaying anthropological knowledge as well as for gaining psychological insights.²⁹ And, indeed, the novel *Herr Lorenz Stark* contains such an abundance of dialogues that it is considered to be a “dialogue novel” (“Dialogroman”).³⁰

But why dialogues, of all literary forms?

To get a complete understanding of Engel’s poetics of dialogue one has to consult his former essay *Über Handlung, Gespräch und Erzählung* a bit further. Here, Engel differentiates between dialogue and narrative, between – what he calls – “Gespräch” and “Erzählung”. Engel states: “[D]er Dichter spricht entweder ganz in seiner eigenen Person, oder legt seine Gedanken andern in den Mund, sein Werk ist entweder fortgehende Rede, oder es ist Gespräch [...]”.³¹

Unlike modern literary scholars, Engel does not differentiate between author and narrator. And this is of consequence, indeed. For Engel, there is *either* the voice of the author *or* the voice of a literary character, *either* the author’s speech *or* the character’s speech. According to Engel, while characters are speaking themselves, while they are “selbstredend”, the author is not present, “dann ist er nicht mehr Erzähler”.³² As the word already implies, direct speech is *direct*; it is, according to Engel, unchanged and unadulterated by anyone else. This is touching on a distinction that Henry James would later describe as *showing* versus *telling*.³³

However, direct speech is not only considered to be a mirror of the soul and passions of a literary protagonist because it is attributed to the literary protagonist exclusively (not to the author or narrator). The specific style of an utterance is also considered to possess physiognomic, or rather pathognomic, qualities. While the basic idea of style as the ‘expression’ of character can be traced back even to ancient Greece,³⁴ the term *physiognomy of style* was first coined in the

28 Cf. *ibid.*: 70.

29 Cf. Sulzer 1771/vol. 1: 473-476.

30 Cf. Seidel 2014: 207-225; Winter 1974. Cf. furthermore Tarot 1990: 241-287.

31 Engel 1964: 5. “The poet either talks entirely in his own person, or he puts his thoughts in another person’s mouth, his work is either continuous speech, or it is dialogue [...]”.

32 *Ibid.*: 60.

33 James’ ideas were popularized by Percy Lubbock (cf. 1921).

34 Cf. Müller 1981.

18th century, (presumably)³⁵ by Lichtenberg. Quite ironically, it is Lichtenberg (of all people), the harsh critic of Lavater's physiognomy, who embraces the idea of a physiognomy of style. While Lichtenberg deeply mistrusts the semiotics of the physical body, he advises paying close attention to the 'body' of a text:

[W]enn du einen verzerrten Menschen von dir widriger Physiognomie siehst, so halte ihn nur um Himmels willen nicht für lasterhaft ohne die genaueste Untersuchung. [...] Allein einen klaren Satz der Physiognomik will ich dich lehren, es ist Physiognomik des Stils. Spricht jemand mit dir in der männlichen Prose Mendelssohns oder Feders oder Meiners oder Garves und du stößest auf einen Satz der dir bedenklich scheint, so kannst du ihn allemal glauben bis zu weiterer Untersuchung. Hingegen redet jemand mit dir im Wonneton der Seher, plündert und stolpert Dithyramben daher mit konvulsivischem Bemühen das Unaussprechliche auszusprechen, so glaube ihm kein Wort, wo du es nicht strenge untersucht hast.³⁶

The belief in a physiognomy of style was wide-spread at the time. To list but a few names: Sulzer,³⁷ Karl Philipp Moritz³⁸ and Gellert³⁹ claimed to distinguish a person's character by his or her specific style. For these authors, style was *characteristic* in the very sense of the word.

But back to Engel. It is no coincidence that Engel is elaborating on the physiognomic and pathognomic qualities of direct speech; he is devising dialogues, or rather their style, as the mirror of the soul and passions of their originators. Engel writes:

35 Cf. Mautner 1968: 150.

36 Quoted from Müller 1981: 102. “[W]hen you see a distorted human being with a repellent physiognomy, for God’s sake, do not consider him to be vicious without the closest examination. [...] But one clear rule of physiognomy I will teach you, it is physiognomy of style. If anyone speaks to you in the masculine prose of Mendelssohn or Feder or Meiner or Garve and one sentence strikes you as questionable, then you may believe it without hesitation until further investigation. By contrast, if anyone speaks to you with the voice of a seer, puts forth dithyrambs in a convulsive effort to express the inexpressible, do not believe him a single word without strict examination”.

37 Sulzer 1774/vol. 2: 1047-1045.

38 Cf. Moritz 1793-1794.

39 Cf. Gellert 1751.

Die Erzählung [...] kann von dem jedesmaligen Zustande einer handelnden Seele; sie kann auch von dem ganzen genauesten Zusammenhange aller in ihr vorgehenden Veränderungen [sic!] nie eine so specielle, bestimmte, vollständige Idee geben, als das Gespräch. Es ist unglaublich, wie sehr sich die Seele den Worten einzudrücken, wie sie die Rede gleichsam zu ihrem Spiegel zu machen weiß, worinn sich ihre jedesmalige ganze Gestalt bis auf die feinsten und delikatesten Züge darstellt. Der logische Satz, oder der bloße allgemeine Sinn, aus den Worten herausgezogen, ist immer das Wenigste; die ganze Bildung des Ausdrucks, die uns genau die bestimmte Fassung der Seele bey dem Gedanken zu erkennen giebt, ist alles.⁴⁰

Interestingly, Engel is using metaphors deriving from the sphere of physiognomy and visual representation to make his point. While he compares an author's or narrator's utterance ("gesagte Idee") to a mere silhouette, he compares direct speech ("ausgedrückte Idee") to a colourful canvas: "[D]ie schlechthin gesagte Idee zeigt uns kaum den Schattenriß, kaum die äußersten Linien von dem Zustande der Seele; die so bestimmt ausgedrückte Idee ist das ausgeführte, lebendige, colorirte Gemälde selbst."⁴¹

And Engel pushes the metaphor of style as the mirror of the soul, the metaphor of physiognomic or pathognomic visibility even further. With reference to dialogues, he uses metaphoric expressions of visualisation and envisioning such as "vors Gesicht bring[en]"⁴² or "vor Augen stellen".⁴³ For Engel, a dialogue is not a mere representation of a person's soul; rather, it is the very soul itself with all its feelings. This turns dialogues into perfect objects for anthropological observations, into data ("Fakta"⁴⁴) that can be assessed and reflected upon by the readership.

40 Engel 1964: 57. "The narration [...] can never give such a specific, precise, exhaustive idea about the state of an active soul as the conversation; unlike the conversation, it can never give a complete and accurate account of the relations of all the changes occurring in the soul. / It is incredible how the soul is capable of moulding the words, how the soul is able to turn them into a mirror, which represents its entire figure down to the finest and most delicate traits. The proposition or the mere general sense, extracted from the words, is always the least; the whole form of the expression, which shows us the exact state of the soul, is everything".

41 Ibid.: 58. "The 'said idea' [=narrator's utterance, Y.M.] shows us hardly a silhouette, hardly the outermost lines of the state of the soul; the 'expressed idea' [=direct speech, Y.M.] is the completed, vibrant, coloured painting itself".

42 Ibid.: 74.

43 Ibid.: 75.

44 Ibid.: 79.

In summary, in a practical way, Engel recommends dialogues as a literary technique of ‘writing affects’, as a technique of presenting affective states of literary protagonists in a very direct and immediate form.⁴⁵ According to Engel’s poetics, dialogues are produced by the literary protagonists ‘themselves’. In other words: While dialogues reveal their author’s passions, their author is not the real author, but the fictional protagonists ‘themselves’.

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45 For the rhetoric heritage of Engel’s poetics of dialogue cf. Finsen 2004: 366-389.

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