

Ronja Tripp

## Mirroring the Lamp

Literary Visuality, Strategies of Visualizations,  
and Scenes of Observation in Interwar Narratives

Walter Göbel, Therese Fischer-Seidel, Klaus Stierstorfer (Hg.)

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Wir haben uns bisher mit der Phänomenologie der Wahrnehmungen beschäftigt. [...]

Unser nächstes Ziel ist die Phänomenologie der Phantasien.

E. Husserl, *Phantasie und Bildbewusstsein*

Die Psychologie der Sinneswahrnehmung hat uns gelehrt, daß wir ohne den Gebrauch beider Augen, ohne das binokulare Sehen, die dritte Dimension des Raumes nicht wahrnehmen könnten. Im gleichen Sinne beruht die menschliche Erfahrung und Erlebnisfähigkeit darauf, daß wir imstande sind, verschiedene Sehweisen einzusetzen und unsere Anschauung der Wirklichkeit zu variieren. Das "rerum videre formas" ist keine geringere und eine ebenso notwendige Aufgabe wie das "rerum cognoscere causas".

E. Cassirer, *Versuch über den Menschen*

I shall not rely on the distinction between causal connections and accidental correlations, or on the distinction between essential and artificial kinds, or on the distinction between analytic and synthetic statements. You may decry some of these scruples and protest that there are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamt of in my philosophy. I am concerned, rather, that there should not be more things dreamt of in my philosophy than there actually are in heaven and earth.

N. Goodman, *Fact, Fiction and Forecast*



## Danksagung

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# Contents

List of Abbreviations .....	xi
1 Introduction .....	1
1.1 Of Mirrors and Lamps .....	2
1.2 Interwar Visual Culture: Ocularcentric Crisis, New Observers, and Shining Stars....	7
1.3 Beyond the Scope of Modernism .....	11
1.4 Interactions of the Verbal and Visual in Literature – Towards Literary Visuality ...	20
2 Visual Culture, Literary Visuality and Narrative Strategies of Visualizations ....	27
2.1 Cultural Semiotics: Boundaries and Transgressions.....	28
2.1.1 The Semiosphere .....	30
2.1.2 The Emergence of Culture: Cassirer’s <i>Symbolic Form</i> .....	36
2.2 Phenomenological Picture Theory: Of Ducks and Rabbits .....	43
2.2.1 Apperception, <i>Geltung</i> and “Responsive Difference” in between .....	44
2.2.2 Metapictures and Hypericons .....	53
2.3 The Iconicity of Reading.....	56
2.3.1 Iser’s ‘Imagistic’ Syntheses – Towards Strategies of Visualizations.....	59
2.3.2 “Meaning imagistic in character”: Diagrams, Asymmetry and Suddenness .....	62
2.4 Cognitive Narratology: Frames and Mediating Metaphors .....	69
2.4.1 Narratology’s Visual Metaphors .....	70
2.4.2 Re-framing Focalization.....	76
2.5 Seven Working Definitions.....	80
2.5.1 Literary Visuality, Visualizations, and Narrative Strategies of Visualizations.....	81
2.5.2 Constellations, Logic of Disruption and Scenes of Observations .....	82
3 Semiotic Accidents: Evelyn Waugh’s <i>Vile Bodies</i> (1930).....	85
3.1 An Ear for an Eye? Binary Oppositions Reconsidered.....	86
3.2 Making Sense.....	91
3.2.1 A Commodity Stares Back .....	91
3.2.2 Radical Instability – Signaling See-Sickness.....	95
3.2.3 Religiously Looking for Meaning.....	100
3.2.4 ...Signifying Nothing (but Names) .....	104
3.3 Worldmaking.....	109
3.3.1 The Consumer Angle.....	111
3.3.2 A Fatal Hunger to be Photographed .....	116
3.3.3 Poetics: Eidetic Inventions .....	119
3.4 Arrested Development.....	121
3.4.1 The Lamp Behind the Mirror .....	122
3.4.2 At the Movies.....	126

3.4.3	Imagine Yourself Watching .....	130
3.5	Telling Accidents .....	134
3.5.1	Flickering Words.....	136
3.5.2	Headlines and White Lines.....	142
4	The Detection of Meaning: Graham Greene's <i>Brighton Rock</i> (1938) .....	147
4.1	"Between the Stirrup and the Ground..." .....	148
4.2	Detecting Hypericons .....	151
4.3	Reading Unworldly Evidence.....	156
4.4	Telling Media Traces .....	162
4.4.1	Written Texts, Spoken Words .....	162
4.4.2	Essential Images .....	164
4.4.3	Disembodied Voices.....	167
4.5	Visual Negativity, Negative Visuality .....	172
4.5.1	Blinds and Dead Ends .....	175
4.5.2	Broken Glass and Glassy Eyes .....	177
4.5.3	Mirrors and Echoes .....	179
4.6	The Narrative Eye in the Sky .....	183
4.6.1	Quomodo? .....	183
4.6.2	An Ambiguous Object – Reading <i>Brighton R/rock</i> .....	186
5	The Tell-Tale Sign: George Orwell's <i>Burmese Days</i> (1934).....	193
5.1	On Visual Metaphors, Memories and Movies .....	194
5.2	Mediating the Colonial Gaze.....	203
5.2.1	Hideous Bodies .....	209
5.2.2	Landscapes .....	214
5.2.3	Interiors .....	220
5.3	Framing Orientalism .....	222
5.3.1	Scenes of the Observer .....	223
5.3.2	Barbaric Images.....	228
5.3.3	Naturalized Differences, Black on White .....	233
5.4	Reading Perceptions .....	237
5.4.1	"In Solitude What Happiness?" .....	238
5.4.2	Talking "like a character in a novel" .....	240
5.4.3	"like a splash of ink" .....	244
5.5	Telling Re-imaginings.....	247
5.5.1	Standing on the Shoulders of "gigantic dwarfs" .....	247
5.5.2	Three Marks of Existence.....	252
5.5.3	Grafting a Stereoscopic Vision.....	257
6	Conclusion and Outlook: The Eye in the Text and Transvisualizations .....	259
7	References .....	264

## List of Abbreviations

A note on quotations: any omission, comment etc. *in square brackets* is mine. If not noted otherwise (“emphasis added”), italics are in the *original* version of the text.

- “Author’s Note” Preface to the American edition of *VB* (1958)
- AH* Aldous Huxley, *Antic Hay*
- BD* George Orwell, *Burmese Days*
- BM* Nathaniel Hawthorne, “The Birthmark”
- BR* Graham Greene, *Brighton Rock*
- CE* Aldous Huxley, *Complete Essays* (Vol. 1):
- “Film with a Warning” (1922; pp. 40-45)
  - “Fashions in Visual Imagery” (1924; pp. 153-157)
  - “Movies Moving” (1925; pp. 174-177)
  - “The Best Picture” (1925; pp. 209-215)
- CEJL* *The Collected Essays, Journalism and Letters of George Orwell*, ed. Orwell/Angus
- Vol. I: “Why I Write” (1946; pp. 23-30)
  - “A Hanging” (1931; pp. 66-71)
  - “My Epitaph by John Flory [part of unpublished draft of *BD*]” (p. 166)
  - “[On Kipling’s Death]: New English Weekly, 23 January 1936” (pp. 183-84)
  - “Review, New English Weekly: 24 September 1936” (pp. 259-262)
  - “Letter to Henry Miller: 26 August 1936” (pp. 257-259)
  - “Shooting an Elephant” (1936; pp. 265-272)
  - “Marrakech” (1939; pp. 426-432)
  - “Charles Dickens” (1940; pp. 454-504)
  - “Inside the Whale” (1940; pp. 540-578)
  - Vol. II: “New Words [written 1940?]” (pp. 17-27).
  - “The Frontiers of Art and Propaganda” (1941; pp. 149-153)
  - “The Art of Donald McGill” (1942; pp. 183-195)
  - “Looking Back on the Spanish War” (1942; pp. 286-306)
  - Vol. IV: “In Front of Your Nose” (1946; pp. 150-154)
  - “Politics and the English Language” (1946; pp. 156-170)
  - “Politics vs Literature” (1946; pp. 241-261)
  - “George Gissing” (1948; pp. 485-493)
  - “The Sanctified Sinner. Review *The Heart of the Matter*” (1948; pp. 497-501)
- CS* *The Complete Stories of Evelyn Waugh*
- “The Balance” (1926; pp. 3-42)
  - “Excursion in Reality” (1932; pp. 78-92)
- Diaries* *Diaries of Evelyn Waugh*, ed. Michael Davie.

- EAR* *The Essays, Articles and Reviews of Evelyn Waugh*, ed. Donat Gallagher  
 “My Favorite Film Star” (1930; pp. 68-70)  
 “For Adult Audiences” (1930; pp. 89-91)  
 “Why Hollywood is a Term of Disparagement” (1947; pp. 325-331)
- HoD* Evelyn Waugh, *A Handful of Dust*
- Labels* Evelyn Waugh, *Labels*
- Letters* *The Letters of Evelyn Waugh*, ed. Mark Armory
- LJ* Joseph Conrad, *Lord Jim*
- LL* Evelyn Waugh, *Little Learning*
- LO* Evelyn Waugh, *Little Order*  
 “Ronald Firbank” (1929; pp. 77-80)  
 “People Who Want to Sue Me” (1930; pp. 13-15)  
 “Fan-Fare” (1946; pp.29-34)  
 “Felix Culpa” (1948; pp. 160-167)  
 “Youth at the Helm and Pleasure at the Prow” (1955; pp. 103-105)  
 “The Death of Painting” (1956; pp.70-74)
- MB* Rudyard Kipling, “The Mark of the Beast”
- PCP* Aldous Huxley, *Point Counter Point*
- “*Preface*” Preface to the 1965-ed. of *VB* (reprinted in the 1996-ed.; pp. 191-192)
- VB* Evelyn Waugh, *Vile Bodies*
- WGG* Evelyn Waugh, *When the Going Was Good*

# 1 Introduction

This book investigates the complex interferences of visual culture and literature in general, and in particular with regard to English narratives of the interwar period by Evelyn Waugh, Graham Greene, and George Orwell. Since the proclamation of a “pictorial turn” (Mitchell) as well as “iconic turn” (Boehm) in the mid-1990s, visual studies and visuality has become a buzz-word in the humanities.<sup>1</sup> The prolific field of visual studies also affected literary studies. However, literary research has so far only dealt with the topic of visuality and visual culture in the traditional slant of the sister art-debate, rhetoric and tropes, ekphrasis and description. Or, literature was treated as a discourse – at best an “inter-discourse” (Link) – negotiating issues of visual cultures exclusively on a discursive level. Finally, a vast amount of research is dedicated to tracing the influence of popular visual media on literature. In all cases, literature is attributed a parasitic quality in its relation to visual culture, only passively receiving (and profiting) from visual culture but never actively contributing to it on any of the three levels of culture: the material, mental and social.

Hence, the field of ‘literary visual studies’ is so far concerned mostly with ‘literature *and* visual culture,’ and this paratactic arrangement suggests a mutually exclusive and, at best, non-hierarchical side-by-side relation. In contrast to this, the present study argues that literature actively participates in visual culture. It neither just parasitically takes up medial aspects of visual culture – for example, by developing certain (e.g. ‘cinematic’) techniques –, nor is its engagement with visuality purely discursively. Literature is participating in visual culture in its materiality as an artefact, as a discursive contribution, and finally, as involved in social practices. Thus, this study understands the relation not just as paratactic *and*, but at least threefold as ‘visual culture or visuality *and/in/of* literature.’

One central element of literary visuality is the reader who is frequently referred to, if only implicitly. However, the role of the reading process and reception aesthetics has so far been not been discussed systematically. On the contrary, the reader is often emphatically excluded from studies concerned with the topic, although most of the studies concerned with the topic of ‘literary visuality’ speak (rather negligently) of notions such as the ‘reader’s gaze’ or ‘readerly ideations.’ This study, however, sets out to delineate the role of the reading process for literary visuality, to conceptualize analytical tools for the iconic elements of reception aesthetics and to systematically integrate readerly “visualizations” into a model of literary visuality.

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<sup>1</sup> To provide an overview of publications is almost impossible. A bibliography of the proliferating field of visual (culture) studies is an impossible endeavor for reasons also rooted in certain characteristics of this heterogeneous ‘discipline.’ Instead, in the following I will only mention the most recent publications and most relevant to the particular topics under discussion. For introductory overviews, see Frank (2006) and Liebsch (2007).

Hence, the aim of the present study is both theoretical as well as historical: Firstly, it seeks to provide a theoretical framework and conceptualizations of central concerns of *literary visual (culture) studies*. Secondly, with its literary case studies, this study not only puts its own theoretical premises and designs to the test but also contributes to a *literary history of visual culture*.

## 1.1 Of Mirrors and Lamps

An eminent philosopher among my friends, who can dignify even your ugly furniture by lifting it into the serene light of science, has shown me this pregnant little fact. Your pier-glass or extensive surface of polished steel made to be rubbed by a housemaid, will be minutely and multitudinously scratched in all directions; but place now against it a lighted candle as a centre of illumination, and lo! The scratches will seem to arrange themselves in a fine series of concentric circles round that little sun. It is demonstrable that the scratches are going everywhere impartially, and it is only your candle which produces the flattering illusion of a concentric arrangement, its light falling with an exclusive optical selection.

G. Eliot, *Middlemarch*

In his renowned study *The Mirror and the Lamp* (1953), Abrams identifies the shift from neo-classicism to romanticism as a change from mimetic to expressive poetics. For Abrams, this shift in romantic theory and its critical discourse correspond with a shift from one dominant metaphor to its antithetic counterpart. Whereas before, the mirror was the central “metaphor of the mind” (1953/1971: Preface, no pag.), with the beginning of the romantic period the lamp began to take its place in philosophical and poetological discourse. According to him, however, in neo-classical criticism, the metaphor of the mirror, which in Western empiricist tradition reduces “the mind to a reflector of external objects”<sup>2</sup> and corresponds to the concept of art as an imitation of life, had already given up the simple analogy of the classical source:<sup>3</sup>

Art, it was commonly said, is an imitation – but an imitation which is only instrumental toward producing *effects upon an audience*. In fact, the near-unanimity with which post-Renaissance critics lauded and echoed Aristotle’s *Poetics* is deceptive. The focus of interest had shifted, and [...] this later criticism is primarily oriented, not from work to universe, but *from work to audience*. (14, emphasis added)

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<sup>2</sup> For an extensive discussion of this metaphor in Western philosophy, see Rorty’s study *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* (1979), and most recently the extensive study by Kacunko (2010, esp. 493-625).

<sup>3</sup> This seemingly simple analogy stems from a notorious misunderstanding of Aristotle’s *mimesis*-concept, on the one hand, and the equation of verbal and visual art, on the other. On this historical aspect of *mimesis*, cf. Gebauer/Wulf (1992, esp. Part 1), Auerbach (1946/2001: chapter XVIII), and Petersen (2000: chapter VIII).