The Narrative Modes of Modern Paintings

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1 The Perspectives of Novels and Paintings

In the article 'Kunstwissenschaft und Rezeptionsästhetik' (1985)[1] Wolfgang Kemp, realizing that since the 1970s theories of literature have been very successful in the new field of Rezeptionsästhetik and narratology, criticizes art history or art theories which have almost neglected such new movements. On this reflection, he has been eagerly engaged in the analysis of the relationship between paintings and beholders. The question here is which position a beholder is supposed to take toward a painting, in other words, from which viewpoint or whose viewpoint a painting narrates the incidents and situations depicted in it. It concerns the problem of what Gérard Genette calls 'mode narratif'[2] or 'perspective' of narration. This analyzing device which has been developed by narratology and applied to film studies has not been adequately discussed so far in the field of painting, and there seems to be still less thematic analysis of how much the pictorial composition of modern paintings reflects the narrative mode characteristic of modern novels[3]. I will search for the possibility of new arguments on this subject through critically examining Kemp's texts which are among those rare texts taking on this subject. My criticism is that Kemp considers beholders as eyewitnesses being physically present at the events depicted in a painting, though he does rightly find a change of narrative mode in modern painting. In the perspective of narration, 'viewpoint' is not identical with 'optical angle of vision'. By distinguishing clearly between the two we will be able to find ways of composition in modern painting which are parallel to narrative modes of the novel.

According to Kemp, the geometrical perspective of the Renaissance fixed beholders at the pure and abstract point of a single eye and aimed at "the construction of ideal visibility" by transcendental seeing which constructs the world from outside. In the nineteenth century, though based on the same perspective, a different kind of composition appeared which is conscious of "the standpoint of beholders"[4] seeing the depicted objects and space. As a typical example of this kind of composition Kemp gives Hummel's *Berlin, von der Marienstraße aus* (1835, fig. 1), the view of which appears to be seen by a camera

fig. 1 Johann E. Hummel, *Berlin, von der Marienstraße aus*, 1835. in: G. Hummel, *Johann Erdmann Hummel*, Leipzig 1958.

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[1] Wolfgang Kemp, Kunstwissenschaft und Rezeptionsästhetik(1985), in: W. Kemp (Hg.), *Der Betrachter ist im Bild*, Dietrich Reimer Verlag, Berlin, 1992, S. 8.

[2] Gérard Genette, *Figures III*, Seuil, 1972, p.183.

[3] The analyses of historical paintings by Max Imdahl, Hans Belting, or Sixten Ringbom seem partially to treat the narrative modes, but not thematically, and besides their subjects are Renaissance paintings. The recent article of Werner Wolf (Narrative and narrativity: a narratological reconceptualization and its applicability to the visual arts, in: *Word and Image*, vol.19, No.3, 2003) does not treat the narrative modes.

[4] W. Kemp, *Der Anteil des Betrachters*, Mäander Verlag, München, 1983, S. 45.

eye which must stand not transcendentally outside but at a particular position inside the world, though painted before the invention of photography. Yet as the second form of the new type of composition in the nineteenth century, he mentions such paintings indicating an unreal standpoint of beholders as Friedrich's *Das Kreuz im Gebirge* (1808). Friedrich here sets up for beholders a "virtual stance" floating in the air by connecting the background in long shot with the foreground in close-up, which results in the multi-angle composition with plural vanishing points and gives the painting the effect of unreality.

Kemp says that this new stance of reception "has been already standard for readers since the eighteenth century"[5] and is now actualized for beholders as well. In the genre of the modern novel the narrator has lost the absolute relationship to the narrated world and acquired in turn "the multiperspective device" for the "multilevel and multiangle" narration. Then an author can show things and actions multifaceted "as an 'Olympian narrator', as a fictive reporter or from the perspective of a character"[6]. With the 'Olympian narrator' Kemp seems to conceive of that narrative mode of an 'omniscient' viewpoint as typically found in classical epics; with a 'fictive reporter' he seems to conceive of the first person narration through a character. As to the narration 'from the perspective of a character', we can plausibly suppose this as the narrative mode characteristic of the modern novel since the nineteenth century, what Pouillon and Todorov call the third person narration of "la vision≪avec ≫"[7], or what Genette calls the narration of "focalisation interne"[8]. La vision≪avec≫is the mode of narrating from the viewpoint shared≪with≫a particular character only what he or she experienced, felt, and thought. With this narrative mode, in fact, modern novel made it possible to tell the story of the internal reality of an individual as our like who takes its own particular position in the world, lives in the world as its own surroundings, and comprehends the situation of its own being in a particular mood or with a particular feeling (as Heidegger says, 'Befindlichkeit'). It would be these circumstances which Kemp supposed when he referred to the parallelism between "the perspective of story-teller and that of painter"[9] in the nineteenth century,.

What Kemp considers a counterpart in literature corresponding to the first above type of new perspective composition (e.g. the Hummel painting) is the following description at the beginning of the novel *Zwischen Himmel und Erde* (1856) by Otto Ludwig, known as a German realist writer in the nineteenth century.

> The little garden lies between the dwelling-house and the slated shed; whoever goes from one to other must pass it. As you go from the house to the shed it is on your left; on the right there is a yard with a woodshed and a stable, separated from the neighboring house by a trellisfence.[10]

It is certain that this description resembles closely the depiction of Hummel's painting. And Ludwig himself made a conscious effort at such a way of narration. In his theory of the novel he determines this type of narration as "objective"[11] narrative mode and calls it also "an epic medium" in which the

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[5] ibid., S. 49.
[6] ibid., S. 49f.
[7] Jean Pouillon, Temps et roman, Gallimard, 1946, p. 74. Tzvetan Todorov, Littérature et signification, Paris, 1967, p. 80.
[8] Genette, op. cit., p. 206.
[9] Kemp, *Der Anteil des Betrachters,* S. 50.
[10] Otto Ludwig, *Between Heaven and Earth*, translat. by Paul Weigand, New York, 1965, p. 1.
[11] *Otto Ludwigs gesammelte Schriften*, hrsg. v. Adolf Stern, Leipzig, 1891, 6Bde., Bd.VI, S. 202ff.

narrator describes objects and events just as he sees with his own eyes. But what Ludwig finds "objective" is no more the classically epic≪omniscient≫viewpoint, i.e. the divine viewpoint which transcends and overlooks all the world, nor the transcendental omniscient viewpoint which constructs the unified world in perspective. According to Blinckmann, the following paragraph at the beginning of Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship* is narrated from the transcendental omniscient viewpoint.

> The play was late in breaking up: old Barbara went more than once to the window, and listened for the sound of carriages. She was waiting for Mariana, her pretty mistress, who had that night, in the afterpiece, been acting the part of a young officer, to the no small delight of the public....The muslin, with the ribbons half unrolled, to set it off by their colors, lay like a Christmas-present on the small table; the position of the lights increased the glitter of the gift; all was in order, when the old woman heard Mariana's step on the stairs, and hastened to meet her.[12]

Here, the window of Mariana's room, her small table, the stairs are not described as really experienced, but just presupposed as the evident and fixed elements constructing the narrated world, which are the "transcendental conditions"[13] for the occurrence of incidents. In this respect this work of Goethe is a descendant of Fielding's *Tom Jones*. Ludwig's narrator, in contrast, takes a particular position inside the scene and describes the spaces seen from the standpoint 'between', 'on the left' or 'on the right'. It is the scene seen with someone's eyes standing at a certain position.

This scene is to be lived by a particular character in the narrated world who is not a transcendent subject commanding an universal world nor a transcendental subject integrating an empirical world, but an individual subject taking over the scene as its own situation. The scene is then experienced with "characteristic coloration"[14] of its inner filter. Ludwig is conscious of this as well. What he calls "the scenic narration", which leads readers to share the experiences, impressions, feelings, and thoughts of the character, is very close to the narration from the shared viewpoint. It is as follows:

> Now the road turned; the mountain ridge which had closed it in up to this point was now left behind to one side and the top of a spire appeared above the young growth. It was the top of St. George's steeple. The young wanderer paused. ...Again he stopped. There stood his father's house with the slate shed behind it, not far from it the house where she had lived at the time he went away....His heart beat harder at the thought of her.[15]

Ludwig intends to exploit the complex mode of both 'objective' and 'scenic' narrations. In fact, his novel is so composed, and the 'multiperspective narration' is usual with modern novels.

It is not the Ludwig, however, but a paragraph of Wordsworth's 'A Guide through the District of the Lake' that Kemp gives as a counterpart of the second type of pictorial composition with multiperspective as in the Friedrich.

> I know not how to give the reader a distinct image of these more readily, than by requesting him to place himself with me, in imagination, upon some given point; let it be the top of either of the mountains, Great Gavel, or Scawfell; or, rather, let us suppose our station to be a cloud hanging

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[12] J. W. von Goethe, *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship and Travels*, translated by Thomas Carlyle, 3 vols, London, 1888, vol. 1, p. 1f.
[13] Richard Brinckmann, *Wirklichkeit und Illusion*, Tübingen, 1957, S. 149.
[14] *Otto Ludwigs gesammelte Schriften*, S. 206.
[15] Ludwig, *Between Heaven and Earth*, p. 6f.

> midway between those two mountains, at not more than half a mile's distance from the summit of each, and not many yards above their highest elevation; we shall then see stretched at our feet a number of valleys, not fewer than eight, diverging from the nave of a wheel.[16]

We can certainly see the parallelism between Friedrich's painting and Wordsworth's description which are yet rather unusual examples, both as modern painting and as modern literature. It is strange that Kemp does not mention the multiperspective narration found in Ludwig's novel which is much more standard than Wordsworth's description, while mentioning 'the perspective of a character', i.e. the shared viewpoint; still more problematic that he gives no pictorial counterpart of this standard narrative mode of the modern novel. Sure, he does so with reason. He warns that the comparison between novelists and pictorial narrations must not be taken too far because painters address "the physical presence of beholders" in front of a canvas and have no possibilities of such a multiple-faceted narrative mode as authors. So, Kemp does not allow the pictorial counterpart of the narration from 'the perspective of a character', i.e. the shared viewpoint characteristic of the modern novel.

2 'Angle' and 'Viewpoint'

This way of thinking is also recognizable when Kemp compares Prudhon's painting *Divine Vengeance and Justice pursuing the Crime* (1808, fig. 2) with Gérôme's *The Death of Marshal Ney* (1868, fig. 3). The Prudhon shows Nemesis and Dike who are pursuing a murderer running away from the victim's body, and is based on the tradition of classical rhetoric with the allegory of universal poetic justice. The diegetic space depicted in the picture is so closed in itself, and the viewpoint of beholders is channelled through "the panoptic eye (das allsehende Auge)" of the personified goddesses of Nemesis and Dike, i.e. the omniscient divine viewpoint.

fig. 2 Prudhon, *Divine Vengeance and Justice pursuing the Crime*,1808, Musèe du Louvre.

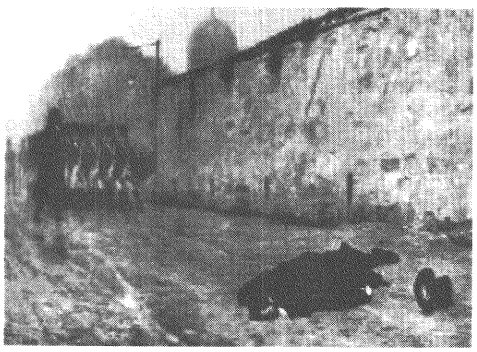

fig. 3 Gérôme, *The Death of Marshal Ney*, 1868, Graves Art Gallery.

On the contrary, the moment depicted in the Gérôme, showing a man's body just shot on the road seen on the foreground of the picture and a platoon on the left side of the picture, tells by itself no causal and universal meaning of the story. The road stretches forward diagonally across the picture from left to right and comes so close to beholders that they feel as if involved into the depicted situation. So, the

[16] W. Wordsworth, Guide to the Lakes, in: *The Prose Works of W. Wordsworth*, ed. by the Rev. Alexander B. Grosart, 3 vols, London, 1876, vol. 2, p. 235f.

painting does not tell the story any more with a sense of "absolute visibility"[17] which orders and signifies the total picture on the basis of universal value system, but just shows the situation of an accidental moment.

Kemp compares the Gérôme to "the tense and realistic novel of the nineteenth century" which Dickens is typical of. This sort of novel leaves the relations between incidents indeterminate or blank through the narrative mode of "artificially restricted perspective"[18], which excites the reader's imagination. Consequently, as Iser says, "the blanks make the reader bring the story itself to life—he lives with the characters and experiences their activities. His lack of knowledge concerning the continuation of the story links him to the characters to the extent that their future appears to him as a palpable uncertainty".[19]

Kemp seems to touch on the shared viewpoint in realistic novels by using the term 'artificially restricted perspective'. He also seems to refer to the narrative 'viewpoint' (concerning from which standpoint and from whose position the event should be comprehended), aside from the 'angle' of geometrical perspective at which the beholder's eyes are located toward a canvas, by saying that "the meaning of the beholder's standpoint results not from geometry but from his stance on the event". Yet when Kemp says that the beholder "comes across" the occurrence of the depicted situation and "must get it into his own head"[20], we realize that the beholder's stance in comprehending the depicted situation here is essentially the 'angle' of the eyeshot witnessing the occurrence, not the 'viewpoint' of narration. The beholder is, for Kemp, no other than the eyewitness who takes up the road coming from within the picture close to him as he stands before it and who thus stands readily on the road himself[21].

In 1996, Kemp treated again Gérôme's painting *Consummatum est. Jerusalem* (1867, fig. 4). This picture shows a troop from the back returning to the town of Jerusalem after executing Christ, which is similar to van Eyck's miniature *the Cross* (fig. 5). In the former, however, three figures crucified including Christ can be seen only as the shadows shed on the right corner of the picture, while in the latter Christ on the cross and two Marias, one each side, are depicted largely in the foreground. The van Eyck "demands that the beholder take an appropriate and privileged position toward the

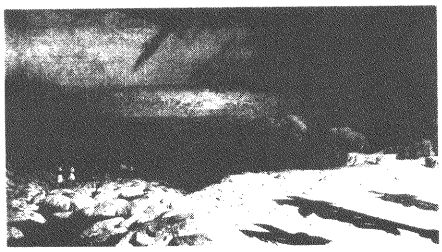

fig. 4 Gérôme, *Consummatum est. Jerusalem*, 1867, Musèe d'Orsay.

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[17] Kemp, *Der Betrachter ist im Bild*, S. 326.

[18] ibid., S. 324.

[19] Wolfgang Iser, *The Act of Reading*, The Johns Hopkins U. P., 1978, p. 192.

[20] Kemp, *Der Betrachter ist im Bild*, S. 327.

[21] According to Kemp (*Der Betrachter ist im Bild*, S. 20), it is Alois Riegl that found the beholder ≫presupposed≪ inside the picture as a counterpart of Iser's "implied reader" in the text. Riegl (*Das Holländische Gruppenporträt* (1902), WUV-Universitätsverlag, 1997, S. 280.) says that in Dutch group portraits the beholder standing before the canvas is supposed to be present at the depicted meeting and make eyecontact with its members, and that the work is composed as "the external unity (die äußere Einheit)" with the beholder. In this regard too, beholders are for Kemp no other than eyewitnesses. Imdahl also mentions Riegl's 'external unity' in his article (Sprechen und Hören als szenische Einheit. Bemerkungen im Hinblick auf Rembrandts ≫Anatomie des Dr. Tulp≪(1984), in: *Gesammelte Schriften*, Bd.2, STW, 1996), and here a beholder is thought of as one of the eyewitnesses present at the dissection.

subject"[22], but such a position is not assumed as occupied by a real person witnessing the event. As opposed to it, Kemp says, the beholder standing before the Gérôme looks after the troop and feels left at Golgotha alone with the crucified, which makes him more directly feel present at the site and comprehend the meaning of the event through personal experience.

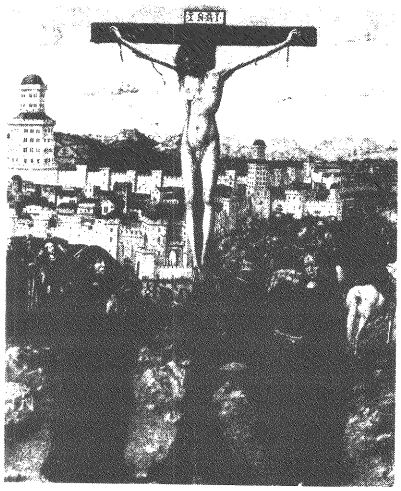

fig. 5 Jan (?) van Eyck, *the Cross*, miniature, The Book of Hours, Turin, Museo Civico, fol. 48v.

It is clear that the 'privileged position' Kemp recognizes in the van Eyck is, narratologically speaking, the omniscient viewpoint. What he tries to find different in the Gérôme is a turn-around of experience from the general contemplation of the depiction of external incidents to the personal comprehension of the internal meaning. Kemp considers it as parallel to the process of internalization of mocern Christianity which can be traced from Schleiermacher to Kierkegaard. Important here is the inner reality of personal experience of the modern world. And yet the beholder of the Gérôme remains one of the eyewitnesses who are directed to stand before the canvas and be present himself at the occurrence, but not to stand by a character in the narrated world and to take on the shared viewpoint the character which is what makes modern novels modern.

Kemp says: "the successors of Gérôme's narrator are cameramen and film directors. Eisenstein found the cutting technique and story telling of Griffith anticipated in the realistic narration of Dickens; it is not so difficult to extend the parallel to the painting of the nineteenth century"[23]. In fact, in one scene of Griffith's *The Birth of a Nation* (1915) where Fil, the elder son of Stoneman, is reading the brother his letter to Ben, the elder son of Cameron, after the shot of Fil holding the letter, the camera shows the face of the letter in close-up and suggests that it is a view Fil himself has, which is named 'subjective camera' or 'optical point-of-view shot' and one of the most early example of the shared viewpoint in the history of film. In his *Intolerance* (1916) there is also a scene where the exchange between a Babylonian Rhapsode and a girl from the mountain is constructed with the shot of the girl and its countershot. The narrative mode of such a shared viewpoint typically as the shot-countershot, has been standard for the cinematic narration of Hollywood ever since.

But when Kemp claims the parallelism between novels and paintings in the nineteenth century with reference to the parallelism between novels and films, what he has in mind is again the physical presence of narrators, i.e. 'cameramen and film directors' witnessing the incidents, and not the narrative mode of the shared viewpoint. Besides, as a lot of film theorists did, he also made an error in taking the camera eye (which is in fact no more than an apparatus for providing the screen with images) for 'the invisible observer' witnessing the incidents, and a further error in identifying its physical-optical 'camera angle' with the narratological 'viewpoint' of telling the story by using the images as material for

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[22] Kemp, *Die Räume der Maler. Zur Bilderzählung seit Giotto*, Verlag C. H. Beck, München, 1996, S. 186.
[23] Kemp, *Der Betrachter ist im Bild*, S. 328.

cinematic syntax[24]. In a feature film the camera can not be a witness, and beholders also can not become witnesses even though they are set against the screen at the same angle as that of the camera eye. Every shot the camera shows is edited by the combination of narrative viewpoints according to the cinematic syntax. To 'tell' a story is not to 'see' incidents directly; nor the 'viewpoint' of narration the 'angle' of an eyewitness.

3 The Gesture of Demonstration, the Figure with its Back to Us

It is not true that Kemp never recognizes a narrative apparatus close to the shared viewpoint which indicates that readers or beholders should take a particular stance in the narrated world. For example, Kemp notices in Daumier's *Ecce Homo* a figure with its index finger pointing toward Christ. This is an apparatus for inviting the beholder to look at Christ and for making him stand at that particular position in the narrated world as an accomplice. This apparatus is not new; Alberti already recommended it to painters, as Kemp himself cites.

> In an *istoria* I like to see someone who admonishes and points out to us what is happening there; or beckons with his hand to see; or menaces with an angry face and with flashing eyes, so that no one should come near; or shows some danger or marvellous thing there; or invites us to weep or to laugh together with them.Thus whatever the painted persons do among themselves or with the beholder, all is pointed toward ornamenting or teaching the *istoria*.[25]

Kemp also mentions figures with their back to us, looking into the depth of the picture, often depicted in Friedrich's paintings (fig. 6) which might be representatives for beholders to view the landscapes from a particular standpoint in the depicted world. He says very rightly that this motif is employed as "an attempt to stand in the midst of nature and to experience the reality in contemplation" in place of observing nature in the distance as an object; Kemp adds that Friedrich tried to guide beholders to "the individual and internalized seeing"[26] of nature and the world.

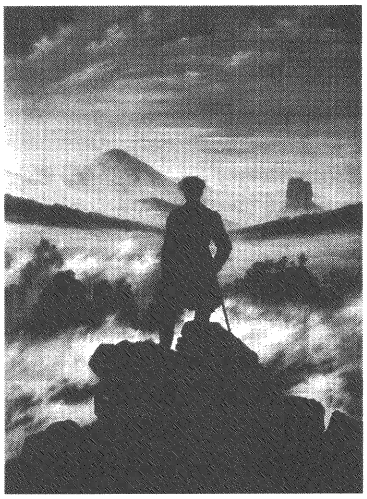

fig. 6 Friedrich, *Wanderer above the Sea of Fog*, 1818, Kunsthall, Hamburg.

But once again, the point at issue here in Kemp's argument about representatives or demonstrators for the beholder is a 'virtual stance' and its 'angle' in the depicted world suggesting that the beholder is present himself at the event as an eyewitness. And it is essentially different from the 'viewpoint' standing by a character, seeing together with its own eyes, and experiencing its situation with sympathy. After all, Kemp came short of recognizing in modern painting the narrative mode of the shared viewpoint essential for the modern novel and its realism, though he noticed the pictorial composition with 'a virtual stance' or the 'multiangle' composition not bound by the single angle of geometrical perspective and made a narratologically very important claim of the parallelism between

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[24] cf. the criticism of David Bordwell, *Narration in the Fiction Film*, The U. of Wisconsin Press, 1985, p.9f.
[25] Leon Battista Alberti, *On Painting*, transl. by John R. Spencer, London, 1956, p. 78.
[26] Kemp, *Der Anteil des Betrachters,* S. 52.

novel and painting in modern times. The reason for it is that he did not think of the difference between optical 'angle' and narrative 'viewpoint' and consequently found it necessary for paintings as visual art to address 'the physical presence of beholders' standing before the canvases. But if so, novels also should address the physical presence of readers facing the letters on pages.

According to Gandelman, the gesture of demonstration which was recommended by Alberti and in fashion in Italian painting of the fifteenth century (fig. 7) tries to indicate to the beholder how to read the painting, which is in the tradition of classical rhetoric. And in parallel with this, many medieval and Renaissance manuscripts contain sketches of pointing hands and fingers drawn by scribes which point to particular words or particular passages in a text. Gandelman considers "this pointing hand to be equivalent to the direct address to readers used by many authors. The overt telling of a story by a self-designating author corresponds to pointing with the finger"[27], which is often found in premodern literature. Still in the eighteenth century, for example, Fielding's *Tom Johnes* or Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship* succeeds to this tradition. But this was gradually disappearing in modern realist novels based on the aesthetic illusionism of an autonomous narrated world just as in the case of modern painting.

fig. 7 Fra Angelico, *Virgine and Child with Saints Peter Martyr, Damiano, John the Evangelist, Laurence, and Francis* (detail), San Marco Museum.

To the contrary, the figures with their back to us were often found in Dutch paintings of the seventeenth century such as paintings by De Hooch which, though not always, can on occasion be a narratological pictorial sign indicating to us to take the shared viewpoint with that figure. The characters that we stand by and take on the viewpoint with are not always, however, standing with their back to us and viewing the landscapes in depth. If so, then the pictorial narration of the shared viewpoint could be no more than something like the first-person narration of the optical point-of-view shot by a subjective camera, just as Stuart Sillars claims. He gives as such an example an illustration by John Cameron for Florence Warden's *Lady Ann's Trustee* (1905, fig. 8). This novel has the first-person narration of Miss Purley who is employed by Lady Ann Smeeth as companion and secretary. The first illustration shows two female visitors to Lady Ann's soirée sitting talking about Miss Purley, while the story tells that Miss Purley accidentally hears it. Sillars claims that this illustration is the image of Miss Purley's optical point-of-view and that "thus we are identified with the narrator by

fig. 8 John Cameron for Florence Warden's Lady Ann's Trustee, in: *The Windsor Magazine*, 1905.

[27] Claude Gandelman, *Reading Pictures, Viewing Texts*, Indiana U. P., 1991, p. 34.

seeing what she sees"[28]. Then another three illustrations in which Miss Purley appears would show the third-person narration of the omniscient viewpoint seeing her from outside. So Sillars says that of their nature illustrations "function best in that kind of narrative fiction where there is the constant presence of a central directing consciousness, an omniscient narrator"[29].

In reality, the shared viewpoint in modern novels is not restricted to the first-person narration, nor is its visualization achieved only by the optical point-of-view shot by a subjective camera. And the third-person shot showing a protagonist does not always correspond to the narration by the camera angle from the omniscient viewpoint. As Boyum says, "a good deal more congenial to film is a stance approximating literature's third-person restricted vantage point"[30], i.e. the third-person shared viewpoint. In film which must show characters anyhow, the third-person narration is more natural than the first-person narration, and the third-person shared viewpoint is possible in a variety of manners. When a novel tells with the third-person shared viewpoint: 'He was just looking at the sea. The sea was calm and he felt sad.', the camera can show first the objective close-up of a man standing still and then the view of the calm sea as his subjective optical point-of-view shot. Apart from such subjective shots, when the camera is closely following a chief character, this often also provides the shared viewpoint. By following always this character together with the camera we really stand≪with≫it, and our knowledge and experiences are restricted with those of the character.

So in historical painting and illustration, the narrative modes of the omniscient viewpoint and the shared viewpoint can be differentiated according to the pictorial syntax which consists of composition, close-up, spotlight effect etc. and indicates to beholders what and how to focalize. The sympathy to which the narrative modes arouse beholders is nothing like empathy as mere subjective projection but a function of the objective syntactical structure of pictures.

4 The Pictorial Shared viewpoint

As an example of the pictorial shared viewpoint, we take a triptych of etchings by Max Klinger entitled *A Mother* (1883). This work was motivated by an item in a Berlin newspaper reporting that a poor mother, trying to drown herself together with her son, survived and was charged with the child's murder. Now, let us see the first scene (fig. 9). At the foreground of the picture part of the ruined wall is seen as a repoussoir which functions as the partition between the space of the beholder on this side and the narrated world on the other side. In the middle, a backyard is seen like a deep labyrinthine gorge surrounded by shabby apartment houses which are densely built-up. And at the corner of the cramped balcony on the right side of the picture a mother and her son stand cowering before her husband who is being held back from hitting her by two women.

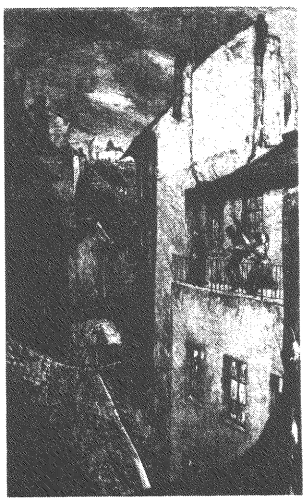

fig. 9 Max Klinger, *A Mother*, 1883, Prefectural Modern Museum of Hokkaido.

There is an analysis of this picture in an article written in

[28] Stuart Sillars, *Visualization in Popular Fiction 1860-1960*, Routledge, 1995, p. 80.
[29] ibid., p. 113.
[30] Joy Gould Boyum, *Double Exposure. Fiction into Film*, Penguin Books, 1985, p. 103.

collaboration by Kurlander, Wolohojian, and Wood which seems to be under the influence of Kemp as follows: "we beholders are supposed to be spies or voyeurs because we steal a side glance at the enacted scene on the cramped balcony"[31]. The compositional resources for it are the perspective indicating to beholders to take the vantage position of an eyewitness and the repoussoir securing the place for a voyeur. As our eyes are led into the depth of the picture, however, "the vanishing points are multiplied and layered: the vanishing lines do not come together at one unified point, rather seem to come into collision with each other", which makes the composition unstable and confuses us. This unstableness does not permit us to stay at ease in the position of voyeurs or eyewitnesses. We are forced "to set ourselves in the situation of the protagonist standing on the balcony opposite to us", and so "the composition develops a centrifugal movement expanding from the central figure of the mother to the surrounding outside", while the way to her is cut off to us who are physically present in front of this picture and hide ourselves behind the repoussoir. Consequently, "our relation to the mother is so ambivalent"[32].

The authors of this article certainly touched on the narration of the shared viewpoint and the sympathy of beholders aroused by it. Nevertheless, their partially very correct and thought-provoking analysis shares the same error as we pointed out in Kemp, that is the error of confusing perspective 'angle' with narrative 'viewpoint'[33]. Certainly for the perception of this picture we have to assimilate ourselves to the 'angle' set behind the repoussoir which is right opposite the vanishing point, but the perspective angle of perception is not enough for us as 'beholders-readers' to comprehend the incidents in the narrated world.

Klinger himself intended to express a pictorial counterpart of the realism of modern novels which tried to describe even ugly reality as opposed to the traditional painting for beauty's sake, and thought that media like sketches and etchings have an advantage over traditional paintings. For sketches which have only chiaroscuro and no coloring present themselves to "the poetic comprehension and association rather than to the eyes", and "can direct our attention to the not-beautiful (das Unschöne)"[34] in a similar way as does literature. The standard of Klinger's reading of novels, who admired Zola and confessed that he "wanted to devote"[35] his etching series *Dramen* including *A Mother* to Zola, must have been the shared viewpoint. How to visualize this reading with composition and chiaroscuro might be his chief concern in drawing this series.

It is true that in each scene of the triptych *A Mother* there is no such typical pictorial composition

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[31] A. Kurlander, S. S. Wolohojian, Ch. S. Wood, Das erzählte Drama in Bildern: Adolph von Menzel und Max Klinger, in: Kemp (Hg.), *Der Text des Bildes,* München, 1989, S. 49.

[32] ibid., S. 50.

[33] The article of Stefan Germer (In Search of a Beholder: On the Relation between Art, Audiences, and Social Spheres in Post-Thermidor France, in: *The Art Bulietin*, Vol.124, No.1, 1992) also shares the same error under Kemp's influence. According to Germer, Pierre-Narcisse Guérin's *The Return of Marcus Sextus* (1799) constituted a decisive break with the tradition of historical painting by "the choice of a narrative mode that stimulated the beholder's active participation" in the depsicted event. Guérin offered his audience a character "as a "screen" onto which their collective experience could be projected". But the point at issue here is again "the presence of an audience in front of the canvas". He says, after Benbeniste, that Guérin's painting has the mode not of a *récit* of traditional historical painting but of a *discours* which addresses the present beholder directly (p. 29).

[34] Max Klinger, *Malerei und Zeichnung,* 3. Aufl., Leipzig, 1899, S. 25.

[35] *Max Klinger. Zeichnungen · Zustandsdrucke · Zyklen*, hrsg. v. Jo-Anne B. Danzler und Tilman Falk, Prestel, 1996, p.118.

of the shared viewpoint as, say, a close-up of the mother or a figure seen from the back as motif of the first-person optical point-of-view shot. But in each scene the figure of the mother who shrinks with her head bent down from people around her and shuts herself up in her fate catches all the more our eyes, that wander the dark empty space of the picture, and lead them to her interior. Now we stand by her situated at the empty center, and then we ourselves feel the darkness and depth of the space which is centrifugally surrounding and suppressing her in silence. We understand that the closed empty space is really her own situation, and what it is like to live in her world. In this respect, her introvert posture might function as a narratological sign which indicate to us to share a viewpoint with her; the suppressing world around her, when seen from this viewpoint, could become a visual expression of the desperate affection (Befindlichkeit) experienced through her inner filter.

In order to penetrate this labyrinthine depth, the perception of the beholder's eyes and the perspective 'angle' are necessary conditions. But insofar as the darkness and emptiness is the emotive quality of the world in which the mother is situated, in order to feel it, it is necessary for the beholder to set his stance for participating in the story near to that of the mother, i.e. to share the viewpoint with her, in addition to the angle of his physical eyes. The narrative mode which modern painting invented in parallel with modern novels is indeed a 'viewpoint' which can not be reduced to the optical 'angle'.