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Imaginative Empathy in Literature: On the Theory of Presentification in Husserl and its Application in Literary Reading

Abstract

This paper provides an account of the experience of empathizing with the fictional characters of literary works, through the lens of Husserl's theory of presentification. Via a critical analysis of Husserl and other phenomenologists, I argue that fictional characters, though lacking embodied presence, can be presentified *to the reader in the mode of "as if." Moreover, I claim that imaginative empathy is a guided creative reproduction of sedimented past bodily experiences. This explains why, motivated by imaginative empathetic presentification, not only aesthetic feelings, but also "as if" existential feelings come to the fore. Finally, it shows to what extent presentation and the different modes of presentification are interwoven and function together.*

1. Introduction

Reading a literary work, we often have the impression that we can peer into the imagined world and "perceive" it from the perspective of its characters. By doing so, we empathize with their feelings, thoughts, and emotions, and this in turn influences our emotional response to the literary work. I call this phenomenon *imaginative empathy*. This kind of empathy is *imaginative*, since the fictional characters are not present "in person" in the reader's actual world, such that in this case empathy is grounded in the reader's imagination, instead of on her actual perception. The phenomenon deserves to be called *empathy* because, firstly, we take the fictional characters as subjects rather than mere objects, and what's more, in normal cases, we as readers do not *completely* identify ourselves with the characters. We don't think we *are* the characters; rather, we retain a certainty of being affected by "*someone else*'s" feelings and emotions.

But how exactly are imagination and empathy interwoven each with the other in the appreciation of literary works? How are they related to the reader's "real" life and actual perceptions? In what way is it really pertinent to conceive of imagination as a crucial element of empathy which unfolds in the reader's "real" life? What characteristic of the reader's subjectivity is shown during the process of imaginative empathy? These issues call for a phenomenological study of the experience of imaginative empathy.

The notion of "empathy" is used by Husserl to designate the subject's experience of *another* subject's perspectives and emotional states. For Husserl, "originally present" means that the object is given "in person" or "in the flesh" (*leibhaftig*) [1] (Husserl 1976, 51). For him, the act in which the object is originally present is *perception*. However, that which is not originally present, that which is not given in the flesh – such as, for example, an object which is not there in the presently given field of perception, or such as, equally, *another subject's* lived experience – have their way of manifesting themselves too: they can be made present to the subject through *presentification* (*Vergegenwärtigung*). Beside memory and imagination, empathy is one of the main intentional acts classified by Husserl as a presentification.

In the *Cartesian Meditations* and in many manuscripts, Husserl takes memory as the model of empathy. He thinks that just as, in memory, a past experience can be reproduced and its object presentified to the present subject, so in empathy the perspectives and emotional states of the other, which the subject cannot originally experience, can be presentified (Husserl 1963, 145; Husserl 1973a, no. 15c, no. 16; Hua 1973b, attachment 32 etc.). Husserl's comparison of memory with empathy is so pervasive that one has to agree with Iso Kern that there is in Husserl a repeated "parallelization of empathy to memory" (Husserl 1973a, XXX). Nevertheless, while the similarity between empathy and imagination is indeed widely discussed by Husserl, he does hold some reservations. For comparing empathy to imagination risks falling back into the traditional interpretation of empathy as imaginative projection (Ferencz-Flatz 2014, 87–118), and this would make empathy a mere imagining according to myself and of myself, rather than an understanding of the "Other," of what the Other really thinks. In this scenario, it seems that whether or not the Other really exists wouldn't matter. In a word, an "imaginative projection" ignores the alterity of the Other. But in order to refute solipsism and explain the objectivity of the world, as Husserl wants to

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[1] In order to ensure a terminological consistency, all translations will be mine.

do, the alterity of other subjects must be taken into account. The appeal to reality of the Other thus leads to Husserl's reservations regarding the comparison between empathy and imagination.

How can this setup shed light on the empathic experience (*Einfühlungserlebnisse*) (Husserl 1980, 468) which takes place in the mode of imagination and which we have called *imaginative empathy*? In the second part of this essay, I'll discuss the differences and relations holding between the distinct modes of presentification in Husserl. In my third part, I will give a critical analysis of certain key features of imaginative empathy and will thereby seek a phenomenological explanation of it, drawing upon the Husserlian discussions explored in the second part.

2. Presentification and its Different Modes

At first sight, the notion of "presentification" might seem to confirm Derrida's criticism that Husserl advances a certain kind of "metaphysics of presence" (Derrida 1993, 3, 120). If presentification is the process of making present something that is not there in the flesh, of giving the non-present a presence, does it not boil down to a denial of the irreducibility of non-presence? Indeed, according to Husserl, presentation, whose standard form is present perception, has a certain priority. Presence is original (*ursprünglich*), while presentifying acts are just modifications of presentations. However, it must be noted that the presence of perception is never "full": it never attains a simple plentitude. Husserl's analysis of inner time-consciousness already shows that every present has a threefold microstructure of retention-impression-protention. Retention and protention equate to a certain kind of de-presentation, and this is indispensable to the threefold structure of the present. The non-present element is so essential that we have to say that the so-called present is only an "ideal limit" (Husserl 1966, 40). Rather than sticking to the priority of presence, Husserl in fact devotes plenty of research to investigations of non-presence and of the interwovenness between presentation and presentification, as well as between different presentations.

2.1 Interwovenness with Presentation

The interlacement of presence and non-presence reflects the interwovenness of the act of presentation with the acts of presentification.

This interwovenness consists, first of all, in the fact that presentification presupposes presentation as its basis of modification, and thus has presentation as its constitutive element. My memory is my remembrance of my past perceptive experiences, such as for instance the landscape I saw on the train, or a hotel room I have stayed in. Imagination itself also functions on the basis of perceived elements, as is apparent when one considers the case of the imagined centaur, which has the head of a human being and the body of a horse. My empathy towards another subject presupposes my perception of the countenances and bodily gestures of the Other. The body similar to mine that appears in my perceptive field "reminds" me of myself as a psychophysical unity, and it is for this reason that I am able to recognize this other body as an expression of another psychophysical unity. When I see someone smiling, for example, what I grasp is the Other's happiness.

However, our own experience testifies that presentified elements are just as equally integrated into actual perception, which presupposes them. For example, when I look at people, my perception of their bodies is not separated from my empathy towards them. Their bodies are not perceived as mere physical appearances, but rather as expressions of lived experience. Likewise, our "look" at, or gaze upon, a thingly material object also entails more than a perception of the *hic et nunc* of the object. For example, when I look at a blue wall, it may remind me of a trip that I made to the seaside with my friends or make me imagine the vast blue sea – it may even thereby have an appeasing effect upon me. Here the perception of the blue wall is not an isolated act effectuated independently of remembrance and imagination. In fact, imagination or phantasy characterizes consciousness *per se* (Husserl 1966, 45). In a broad sense, imaginative elements accompany and enrich almost every kind of experience, including sensation, memories, the intending of wishes, feelings, etc. (Lohmar 2008, 169).

Husserl's earlier conception of imagination as image-consciousness (*Bildbewusstsein*) very well reveals the interwovenness in question. According to this conception, on the basis of the occurrent perception of an actual real object, to which Husserl gives the name "image-thing" (*Bildding*), this thing is not perceived only as a *mere* thing. It is rather understood more deeply as a certain type of meaningful object called an "image-object" (*Bildobjekt*), and through the mediation of this understanding the *theme* of the image, the "image-subject" (*Bildsujekt*), can be presentified. Undoubtedly, this model is useful for explaining cases of imagination which have actual perception as their stimulus, such as when we are looking at a painting. But how then are we to understand cases belonging to the free imagination, in which there is no actual perceived "image-thing" to serve as the "trigger"? There

must be an essential difference here, since free imagination is a thematical act which does not rely on any actual perception of an object.

2. 2 Positing of Existence

The difference between free imagination and perception does not lie in the general difference between presentation and presentification, since elements from both sides are always intricated together. Rather, the difference lies in the different positions taken up concerning the ontological status of the objects intended by the two sorts of act. While perception is an act which posits the real existence of its objects – we believe that the perceived *is*, *was* or *will be* – free imagination does not effectuate this positing. The existence of the freely imagined holds rather under the mode of the "as if": by proceeding by thinking "*as if* it were actually existent", the question of the real existence of the imagined is skipped over. When we perceive a horse walking in a field, we naturally believe that the perceived horse exists. But we don't have this belief about the centaur, nor about a flying horse – to the contrary. When the horse I just saw disappears suddenly from my vision, I might rub my eyes and ask myself where the horse went or whether I did in fact really see a horse. The same does not happen in free imagination. If I imagine right now that a horse were flying outside my window, and then at the next moment I don't possess this imagination anymore, I don't wonder where the flying horse went and I don't doubt as to whether or not I had really imagined it.

This non-positionality of the object also distinguishes imaginings from illusions (understood as deceptive perceptions). Illusion is a mistaken perception. We realize that we have had an illusion when a perceived thing does not conform to other perceived appearances. The illusion is in conflict with certain other appearances and we have to cross it out, for it implies a positing of the existence of the object that is incompatible with the positings entailed by the other perceptions. We receive – so to speak – a request submitted by one single perception to be confirmed by the other perceptions, which all together form a system. This system is what we call reality, and anything that does not conform to it is identified as wrong or illusory. Such is, however, not the case in a non-posited imagining. Freed from the positing of existence within a univocal reality, the imagined object appears only under the guise of "as if", and so we don't demand of an imagination that it should conform to all the other imaginations. There is, therefore, no motivation to say which imagination is

wrong or right. Non-consistent and contradicting elements can be combined together; different imaginary "worlds" can overlap with each other.

The positionlessness of imagination distinguishes it from memory too. When we remember something, we suppose that the objects in our memory once existed, that the events really happened in the past. If I remember that I saw a steeple in a certain spot on my journey to another city, I suppose that it exists, and I can even expect to see it next time when I pass by. If I cannot see it anymore next time when I pass by, I will wonder where this steeple has gone. And I would be even more surprised if the people with whom I remember travelling tell me that they never saw such a steeple or that this journey in fact never happened. In a more delicate case, one can have a remembered imagination. For example, I might remember imagining a horse flying over a Gothic steeple similar to the one I saw. Whereas I don't posit the real existence of the flying horse, nor of the Gothic steeple, and wouldn't wonder if I were told that there was never a horse flying over the Gothic steeple, I would be amazed if someone else told me that I never remembered such an imagination. The real existence of the act of imagination in itself is posited in and by the higher-order act of memory in this case. The positionlessness proper to imagination also explains why Husserl expresses certain reservations when it comes to comparing imagination with empathy. Indeed, contrary to the non-positing attitude of the imagination, we *do* pose the existence of the Other with whom we empathize. When we see the grimace on another person's face, we think that the person might be suffering pain. We are aware that we might be wrong regarding what exactly the person is feeling, but we don't think that the grimace and the possible pain are just "as if".

2.3 The Discrepancy of the "I"

We can therefore understand why Husserl shows a preference for memory in the description of empathy. Firstly, both acts pose the real existence of their objects. Secondly, just as memory demands experience previous to memory as its basis, empathy with the Other equally demands previous self-experience as preparation. According to Husserl, I can experience the unity of my own psychophysical selfhood. And when a body similar to mine appears in my perceptual field, a passive analogy is effectuated, endowing that similar physical body with the sense of a lived body which is invisible to me. The taking place of the passive analogy is similar to that of remembrance, as if the bodily gestures and facial expressions "remind" me of my own psychophysical experience and thus allow me to un-

derstand the psychophysical experience of the Other: "it (the foreign body) indicates to me a modification of my own memory as concrete present" (Husserl 1973c, 642).

Nonetheless, this comparison is problematic. Husserl himself realizes that "the pure I of a memory is identical with the remembered pure I, but the pure I of empathy is not identical with the empathized pure I." (Husserl 1976a, 434; cf. also Husserl 1976a, 318-319; Husserl 1976b, 139) In memory, what is presentified is my own past original experience – it is something to which I myself have had direct access earlier on. The remembered experience is taken as *mine*. The identification of the "I" guarantees the continuity of the past experience and the present memory. By contrast, in empathy what is presentified is not my own experience, but rather that of the Other. That is to say, what is presentified is not in any way anything to which I have ever had direct access. Indeed, if I could have direct access to the Other's experience, then I would be her and she would be me, and in that case we would no longer be dealing with an instance of empathy with the Other. In a word, the discrepancy of the "I" in empathy shows that memory is not the optimal model via which to explain the functioning of empathy.

On this account, using imagination to help understand empathy has an advantage: it connects the imagining subject and the presentified content without presupposing the identification of this subject with the content, as in the case whereby I imagine a group of people making a journey to another city and seeing a Gothic steeple outside the window of the train, such that it's not necessary that I identify myself as any of them. To some extent, we can say that imagination (re)produces the "discontinuous unity of consciousness" (Depraz 1995, 262). For this reason, Husserl in some texts (such as Husserl 1973b, 186) takes imagination or fantasy as the model for explaining empathy. At some point, he even replaces empathy with fantasy: "Instead of 'empathize,' we can also say 'think into' (*sich hineindenken*), 'fantasy into' (*sich hineinphantasieren*)" (Husserl 1973a, XXVI).

In fact, imagination is not only a general model that helps one to understand empathy, but is also in fact a constitutive component within the experience of empathy. Husserl's own description of "foreign experience" (*Fremderfahrung*) reveals the role that imagination plays in the functioning of empathy. Even though empathy implies the positing of the existence of the Other, it nevertheless takes place under a special form of the "as if". If it's true that in empathy I do not take myself to be the Other, I do nonetheless feign (*fingieren*) as if I were another (Husserl 1963, 106). This feigning can be considered a phantasy modification of myself (Husserl 1973c, 640).

In empathy with real people, if the interwovenness of imagination and empathy is overemphasized, there will loom the danger of projecting oneself into the Other, such as to risk that the alterity of the Other will end up being ignored. This concern is less menacing in the case of imaginative empathy, since here we are not submitted to a consciousness of reality but instead to an aesthetic consciousness, where "we ask no questions about the being or non-being of that which directly appears or appears in an image" (Husserl 1980, 387). However, this does not mean that imaginative empathy is a simple projection of myself. It counts rather as a comprehension of perspectives and emotional states which are not mine, under the mode of the "as if". Fictional characters themselves possess an "as-if" alterity set in the literary text.

3. Imaginative Empathy in Literature

The most striking feature of imaginative empathy is that while it on the one hand relinquishes the ontic claim to reality and to the existence of the fictional figures, on the other hand it does still maintain a clear distinction between the "I" and the Other. Taking the experience of reading fairytales as an example, we "sympathize emotionally with the persons in the fairytale; we rejoice and are sad; we experience fear and pity, and so on" (Husserl 1980, 383): we imaginatively "empathize into" the work and this imaginative empathy draws out affective effects in us. In this part, we will concentrate on the description and analysis of the characters who stimulate imaginative empathy in the reader, drawing support from Husserl's theory of presentification, as well as from some of Husserl's discussions of aesthetic experience.

3.1 The Poles of Imaginative Empathy

There are two poles of the empathic experience when it takes place in *actual reality*, namely a real "I" and a real Other. In *imaginative* empathy, there are also two poles. When I'm absorbed in reading, the attention which I direct towards my actual real life is, to a degree, abated, and I become engrossed (*versinken*) into imagination. When I read that Gregor Samsa's father throws apples at him and that one apple strikes his back really hard, I can imagine his pain and I feel pity for him. In other words, I somehow "co-live" (*mitleben*) the episode and the fictional figure's experience. However, in normal circumstances I neither think that I myself am in the scene as a third person, nor that I am Gregor. That is to

say, if there is a "transfer into" (*Hineinversetzung*) happening in imaginative empathy, it is not, as Husserl thinks, effectuated by way of locating oneself in the imagined world or placing oneself into the fictional figures (Husserl 1973a, 298-301; cf. Bernet 2012, 7-8). *Contra* Husserl, there is no phantasy-I, not in the sense whereby I would appoint myself a role in the imagined world. The "I" qua the reader is unthematically aware of her reality and actual life, and thus unthematically aware that she is empathizing with *someone else*, instead of *being* that figure. Otherwise, we would be dealing with a daydream or a hallucination and not literary reading in the normal sense.

It is therefore important to get clear about the two poles of *imaginative empathy*. The two poles are not "real I – real Other", since everything is taking place in imagination, rather than in reality. The poles are not "imagined I – real Other" either, since it's not a daydream that is in question. Nor are they "imagined I – imagined Other", since "I" don't have a role in the story. The two poles are rather "real I – imagined Other": it is the real "I" who is reading, taking the fictional characters as fictive subjects, and empathizing with them. As a result, the question as to whether or not empathy is merely a projection on the part of the empathizing subject, failing as such to reveal what the other really feels or thinks, is here *not* at issue. For we don't suppose that there is an actual mental state there to be grasped. Even though there may still be a certain kind of "as if" truth and error at stake in literature, according to the instructions of the written text, there is no standard stipulating how exactly the readers ought to understand the works: the reader has the freedom of interpretation, and thus there are a thousand Hamlets in a thousand different people's eyes.

3.2 Creative Reproduction of Sedimented Elements

Although Husserl clearly distinguishes imagination from memory, in that the latter posits the existence of its object, whereas the former does not, he also acknowledges that in fact imagination could hardly function without sedimented past experience. The contents of imaginative empathy are anchored in one's past experience (Husserl 1973a, 299; Husserl 1980, 522). Here we can draw a distinction between a memory of a past experience and the *sedimented elements* of past experience. A past experience, as vague and obscure as it may be, is in memory presentified in its integrity, usually in holistic *episodes*, such as is the case in my memory of a trip I once took during the winter, at a temperature of under minus 50 degrees, to the northernmost village of China, where I touched a freezing steel door in the open air. By contrast, the *sedimented elements* of past experience usually take the form of unthematic fragments, like the sensation of

coldness, or the feeling of thrill I might have had then. Imaginative empathy is a creative reproduction of these sedimented elements of past experience into new experiences.

It is a reproduction instead of a production, since it presupposes the sedimentation of my past experience and "therefore runs necessarily according to my habitual self or towards him" (Husserl 1973b, 187). For example, to be able to empathize with the strange sensation, the confusion and the awe that little Aureliano feels in *One Hundred Years of Solitude* when he touches ice for the first time and exclaims "it's boiling", we don't need ourselves to have ever experienced the depicted episode as a whole, we don't need to have ever lived in a remote tropical Columbian village and to have touched some ice there. But we *do* need to have had some experience with something that is very cold and something boiling. Concrete empathy varies according to different personal experiences. As a person who once touched a steel door in an extremely cold winter, when I read this passage, my own similar sensation of extreme cold is called forth: it was not "cold", but instead exactly "boiling": the "heat" on the palm of the hand, the fear and the immediate withdrawal of the hand, etc.

This is nevertheless not a repetition of some already well-made complete experience in its integrity. The sensations or impressions are unthematically sedimented in the lived body (*Leib*) and can be activated even without our thematic, deliberate recollection of holistic episodes. "The elements are still memorial elements. The intentional whole, however, is characterized as 'free invention'" (Husserl 1980, 250), since if not then the subject would experience it as a memory rather than an imagining. In fact, all reproductive acts, including memory, possess a creative power. And not even the remembered object can be claimed to be the *original* object, for the temporal distance adds new layers and modifications of sense to the so-called original object – that's why, at a certain point in his reflections, Husserl even surmises that memory is founded in imagination (cf. Bernet 1997, 291).

The specificity of the creativity at work in imaginative empathy is to be located in its being guided and shaped by the depictions of the literary work. Although the reader's understanding of the words on the page and the judgments made in the work's sentences may well play a part in imaginative empathy in literature, reading literature does not involve *merely* such understanding, nor *only* the making of theoretical judgments, nor *simply* the performance of predicative acts. The depictions in a literary work function rather as the triggers of the reactivation and the instruction of the imaginative reproduction of the sedimented elements. The readers are appealed to (*gefordert*) (Husserl 1973b, 187) by the depictions: the text can wake up what is sedimented in the retentional process (cf. Husserl 2013, 39ff.), and, because the attention paid by the reader to their real actual life is abated, this awakening is not decided by the reader's real

personal interests; and besides, the text also functions as the guide which modifies, arranges, and reshapes the sedimented elements. For example, contrary to the normal cheerful feeling of spring, when reading Eliot saying "April is cruel", or when Dickinson calls blossom "the Queen of Calvary", the reader may have a totally different, new feeling: the spring now can be felt as a mixture of the past (death) and the newly born. By determining and filling in the horizon of indeterminacy (*Unbestimmtheitshorizont*), literary writers bring form (*Gestalten*) to this horizon (Husserl 1980, 540). Imaginative empathy is not a passive reception of something already finished, but a guided positive re-creation. By reading, every reader co-participates in shaping a particular work.

3.3 Effects of Imaginative Empathy

Imaginative empathy takes place in the mode of imagination, which neutralizes the question of existence. This neutralization prevents conflicts between the real world and the fictional world, but it does not prevent the fictional world from affectively influencing the reader who lives in the real world. Like in the above example of Kafka's *Metamorphosis*, even though we don't at all presuppose that a young man named Gregor lives or once lived in the world in which we live, we are still able to comprehend the hardships that he experiences, and some of us might even shed tears for him.

Husserl distinguishes such actual affections into two groups: aesthetic feelings (*ästhetisches Gefühl*) and existential feelings (*Existentialgefühl*).

Aesthetic pleasure is an instance of aesthetic feeling: it is the actual pleasure the real subject takes in the manners of the appearing (*Erscheinungsweise*) (Husserl 1980, 388) on show in the works – the beautiful form and appearances of the imagined objects (Husserl 1980, 386ff., 439ff.), rather than the content of the object itself. An existential feeling is an emotion, such as fear or pity, which the imagining subject has during imagination. Since these are emotions which the imagining subject has for the imagined, and not her emotions in and for her own real life, Husserl calls them quasi-feelings (*quasi-Gefühle*; Husserl 1980, 389). In keeping with this, he thinks that they are *modified* emotions. Inasmuch however as they are indeed the acts that the real subject actually carries out, they are "modified and yet actual" (Husserl 1980, 393). Husserl thinks that they are the real acts of the affections (*wirkliche Gemütsakte*) in which we live and through which we react to the aesthetic works (Husserl 1980, 383).

The literary character's emotions are imagined and presentified, but the joy or sadness I feel while reading is yet real and actual. The imagining subject "actually feels" (*aktuell fühlen*) (Husserl 1980, 375), astonishment, fear, or desire. These emotions are "not reproductive, but real acts, grounded in the really performed phantasy" (Husserl 1980, 375). The presentified empathy towards the fictional characters and the present affections felt by the reader always go hand in hand. In my view, it is not the "quasi-being" quality of the imagined world which grounds the imagination's affective influence on reality. On the contrary, it is the presently felt affective influence which motivates the imaginer to confer a quasi-being quality upon the fictional characters. It's not because I believe that the figures quasi-exist that I'm affected by them, it is because they have such a strong influence on me that I cannot but think that they somehow exist, that it's "as if" they exist.

In addition, imaginative empathy in literature also deploys a structural influence on the reader's experience of reality: once the imagination, guided by the literary work, has reconfigured the sedimented sensory and impressional elements into the elements of the current imagining, which thereby becomes that which is being lived by the real subject, such a new imagining can in its turn provide experiential elements that will be sedimented in the lived body of the real subject. Not only do the present or ever-present sensations and impressions serve phantasy, phantasy may in turn be interwoven into them. That's why literary imagination can serve as a training and an enrichment of personal experience. The newly acquired sediments can contribute to shaping my future perceptions. For example, before reading Emily Dickinson's lines "Not all Pianos in the Woods/Had power to mangle me", few people would experience the twitters of the birds in the forest as pianos, and few would experience this as a power destructive of the personality, but after reading this poem, after having empathized with the "me" in it, maybe one day when we walk into a forest, we will be reminded of this poem and thus feel the birds' twitters to be like music, and feel how the spring can depersonalize us, remove our self-sufficiency and dissolve us into pure elements belonging to nature. In this sense, imaginative empathy not only "revises (objects) beyond easy recognition", but also "redefines" even "recreates" the objects of our experience.

3.4 Pictorial Scenic Thinking as Mediation

An analysis of imaginative empathy can also shed new light on the relation between image-consciousness and pure phantasy. From 1909 onwards, Husserl distinguishes pure phantasy from image-consciousness and maintains that images are not necessary for the func-

tioning of pure phantasy. However, if we closely analyze imaginative empathy, the sundering between pure phantasy and image-consciousness again becomes obscure.

Unlike when appreciating a painting, when reading a literary work there are no present images, there is no image-thing and thus no image-object either. But still, in order to allow the reader to presentify the literary work, and especially in order that she be able to empathize with its characters, some kind of image-consciousness must come into play. Taking the examples above, the empathy with Aureliano's ice-touching and with "my" hearing the twittering are both accompanied and mediated by vague episodic images. Even when reading these very abstract poems, which are often defined as not easily visualizable, pictorial imagination can be very helpful in understanding them. For example, in Emily Dickinson's "Through what transports of Patience", picturing to ourselves the somber cathedral, the shadowed cloister, and the reclusive lady can help us to understand the "stolid Bliss", "bleak exultation", and so on, and it can help us to empathize with the placid resignation of the "I" in the poem. The embodied lived experience and the psyche are of course not directly presentified as images, but they are mediated through images, through the consciousness of "scenic thinking", which is a mode of thinking other than language. (Lohmar 2008, 171-177)

3.5 The *Ichspaltung* of the Reader

Another feature to be noted is that, although during imaginative empathy the really present subject is engrossed (*versinkt*) in the "as if" phantasy world, nonetheless the perceptual world and the real, embodied subject do not disappear. My attention is not devoted to this real world, it becomes unclear and unsharp, but I still feel it, and, if I want, I can compare the two worlds; at a certain moment, I can turn my attention back to the real world. I transfer my attention from one world to the other, or I have, to some degree, attention for both simultaneously (cf. Husserl 1980, 454).

Even when the reader sinks into or is absorbed in reading, and thus in the imagined world, her consciousness of her real self and her environment are still passively in process. The imagination and the affection motivated by the imagination draw to themselves so much of the reading subject's attention that her real self-awareness is attenuated. But it does not totally disappear; instead, it lurks in the background, ready to be activated. For example, when imaginatively empathizing with the feeling of little Hans in the dark "cabinet", the reader may still be affected by the uncomfortableness of her chair, or by the sunlight that is too bright, and when the uncomfortableness and the brightness reach a certain degree, the reader may be

"awoken" from her imagination to pay attention to her real state, and may even take action to change chairs or move into the shadow.

Different intentional acts function together during imaginative empathy. The reading subject experiences not only the present, but also the non-present, and even different modes of non-presence. The structure of the "inner-consciousness" of the subject is manifold (cf. Bernet 1997, 286-291). The "I" does not only split into two (Bernet, 2012, 6-7), but into many different levels. In imaginative empathy, there is a manifold splitting of the "I" (*Ichspaltung*): there is 1) the "I" that imagines; 2) the "I" that is sedimented in the past; 3) the "I" that is reformed and reconfigured by the imagining; 4) the "I" that inattentively experiences reality. And all these different levels of the "I" work together to empathize with an imagined Other. The subject is not only a *doppelgänger* of herself, but a *manifoldgänger* of herself and of the Other.

4. Conclusion

Through analyses of Husserlian texts and descriptions of concrete examples we have shown that in the appreciation of literature the fictional figures' emotional states, though possessed of neither the presence of a real body nor a posited existence, can be presentified to the reader through sedimented sensation and pictorial scenic thinkings under the mode of the "as if". Imaginative empathy is a guided creative reproduction of sedimented elements into new experience. Motivated by this imaginative empathetic presentification, not only aesthetic feelings, but also "as if" existential feelings come to the fore. In this case, the boundaries between imagination, empathy and memory, between imagination and reality, and between reproduction and impression become obscure. This shows how the different modes of presentification work together, how closely the present and the non-present life of the subject are interwoven, and how manifold the subjective life can be. Imaginative empathy reveals a chiasm which results from the structure of the subject itself as a "splitting of the ego" (*Ichspaltung*).

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