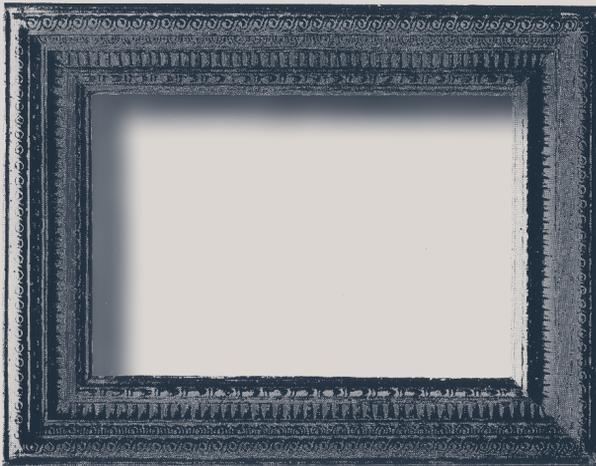


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Simone Heller-Andrist

The Friction of the Frame

Derrida's *Parergon* in Literature



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For Daniel, Luis, and Emma

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Every limit is a beginning as well as an ending.

George Eliot *Middlemarch*

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1. Introduction: Frameworks, or the Frame at Work

Frames not only protect; they also expose. The significance of frames in frame narratives traditionally equals that of the wooden frame that surrounds a painting. It needs to be traversed in order to reach the centre of attention, either the literary core text or the visual artwork. The process of traversing—the scanning and skimming of frames or pages—resembles a journey at the end of which there is an encounter with the work of art. As a result of this well-established process, the spectator or reader heeds the frame less than the work and hence automatically places it in a subordinate position to it. According to Newman, however, framing is a complex process that contains a “double logic,” namely “the tendency of the frame simultaneously to establish boundaries and to announce, even to invite, their violation” (154). In this study, attention is focused on the literary frame and its workings and on disclosing the frame’s significance by tracing its double logic and the mechanisms it triggers.

The literary frame is the entity that often—as we traverse it in our reading—almost unnoticeably endows this reading with a particular direction. Such frames create an undercurrent that can only be tackled when we understand how it is generated. This understanding makes the reader aware of any sort of friction, which is often effected by incompatibilities between work and frame, or, as Theodor W. Adorno puts it: “What crackles in artworks is the sound of friction of the antagonistic elements that the artwork seems to unify” (177).¹ The reader’s awareness, in turn, helps him or her to navigate the treacherous waters of textual manipulation. Derrida’s *The Truth in Painting* describes the concept of the *parergon*, which, when transposed from the visual arts to literature, provides a tool with which to investigate, understand, and interpret the workings of literary frames that hold the power to influence our reading. This transposition re-enacts Derrida’s appropriation of the concept in Kant: the *parergon* “must, if it is to have the status of a philosophical quasi-concept, designate a formal and general predicative structure, which one can transport *intact* or deformed and reformed *according to certain rules*,² into other

¹ The German wording adds to our understanding of this kind of friction: “Was an den Kunstwerken knistert, ist der Laut der Reibung der antagonistischen Momente, die das Kunstwerk zusammenzubringen trachtet” (264). It might be worth noting that the German verb “trachtet” carries the element of intention (as opposed to the verb “seems” in the English translation).

² Unless otherwise specified, italicization in quoted passages is as used in the original.

fields, to submit new contents to it” (55).³ In this sense, my study also transports the *parergon* into another field in order to submit new contents to it. Friction becomes a symptom: it is the main indicator of parergonality in literature.⁴ Even though Derrida’s concept has previously been used in literary criticism (cf. section “The Parergon Today” below), no systematic study of the *parergon* in literature has so far been conducted.

Since the origin of painting, the frame and the artwork have been an inseparable unit: the frame is the boundary between the painting and its surroundings, for instance the work’s historical context or an event such as a vernissage. The frame as a boundary needs to be transcended by the beholder in order for the work to be taken out of its isolation and placed within a context. Throughout the ages, frame and artwork have always made their appearance together. In his work *La vérité en peinture*, which was first published in 1978 and then translated and first published in English under the title *The Truth in Painting* in 1987, Jacques Derrida investigates concepts that belong to the visual arts. Derrida weaves a complex pattern of puns and allusions; formally, his text often remains a collection of lemmata or notes. He inquires into concepts such as the *passé-partout*, the *ergon* (the work), the *hors d’oeuvre* (its surroundings, often translated as surrounds), and the *parergon* (the frame). According to the *OED*, the word *parergon* means “by-work, subordinate or secondary business” and derives from Greek “πάρεργος beside or in addition to the main work, f. παρά beside + ἔργον work” (11: 225). In *On Deconstruction*, which lucidly summarizes Derrida’s notion of the *parergon*, Jonathan Culler also translates *parergon* as “hors d’oeuvre,” “accessory,” or “supplement” (193). While the *parergon* forms the intermediary between *ergon* and surrounds, the *passé-partout*, according to Derrida, constitutes the site of communication between work and frame.

Derrida investigates the relationship between the work of art, its frame, and its surroundings in the visual arts. He uses the characteristics of the wood of the frame in order to better understand the frame’s function: “The frame labors [*travaille*] indeed. [...] Like wood. It creaks and cracks, breaks down and dislocates even as it cooperates in the production of the product, overflows it and is deduc(t)ed from it. It never lets itself be simply exposed” (75, square brackets enclosing French wording in the original). The wooden frame is the

³ If no other indication is made, the page number after quotations from Derrida refers to *The Truth in Painting*.

⁴ Even though Derrida uses various expressions, such as to “abut onto,” to “brush against,” to “rub” or “press against,” or to “intervene in the inside” (56), to refer to the less-than-smooth interaction between work and frame, the term *friction* does not appear in the translation of his work. For a more detailed discussion of the above expressions in their original context, cf. section “Mechanisms, Functions, and the Effect of the Parergonal Framework” below (69–70).

archetype of all frames: its materiality, the characteristics of wood, its creaking and cracking, make it an organic unit which surrounds the work. Wood usually creaks, cracks, and finally snaps when it is put under great strain. It is able to adapt to a certain extent; it creaks when it is subjected to a certain level of distortion, and it cracks when this distortion becomes too great. The distortion originates in what surrounds the wood, be it the water surrounding a boat,⁵ or a sunbeam that illuminates it. The texture of the archetypal wooden frame makes it accessible to a symbolical reading of its working: it surrounds the work and creates a boundary between the work and its surroundings. This boundary, however, is flexible to a certain extent; the frame causes and allows for movement within a restricted space.

The notion of the frame also appears in literature, first of all with the physical aspects of a book. Usually, a book consists of written pages embedded between two cover-sheets, which are generally made of a different material than the pages, such as leather, linen, or cardboard. The pages customarily consist of paper. Then, the frame also opens up in terms of the chronology of reading; the book consists of a front cover bearing a title, followed by a few pages containing information about the publishers and printers. Sometimes a dedication, an acknowledgement, an epigraph, or a table of contents precedes the introductory text. The main work follows, literally framed by footnotes. It is rounded off with a conclusion; sometimes there is an index, an appendix, or other pages of information added to the work before it is closed again by the back cover. Just as the wood of the archetypal frame around a work of art can be used symbolically to describe the working of a frame, the materiality and the different parts of a book can be read in the same symbolical manner.

The sequence in which the various parts of a book were written does not necessarily reflect the chronology in which it is read. In analogy to architecture, cleverly combining the writing and reading process, Derrida points out that “[t]he introduction follows, the foundation comes after having come first” (50): the foundation is the first part of a building in terms of the sequence in which it was built. Just as we do “not necessarily gain access to a piece of architecture by following the order of its production, starting at the foundations and arriving at the roof-ridge” (50), we do not necessarily read a literary work in the order in which it was written. In terms of writing, the introduction often only comes into being once the work itself is there; this is clearly the case with editorial

⁵ Derrida also links the wood of the frame to that of a boat or other vessel: “The *bord* is made of wood, and apparently indifferent like the frame of a painting” (54). The use of the word *bord* originates in Derrida’s playing with the French word *bord*: the frame designates a (flexible) border around the work; it is therefore “[l]ike an accessory that one is obliged to welcome on the border, on board [*au bord, à bord*]. It is first of all the on (the) bo(a)rd(er) [*Il est d’abord l’à-bord*]” (54, square brackets around French wording in the original).

introductions, for example. The work needs to be there first, before its introduction, since the latter sums up the former. Kant, according to Derrida, thus wrote the introduction to his third critique, the *Critique of Judgment*, after having finished the book in a “most powerful effort to gather together the whole system of his philosophy” (50). The introduction follows the work in the writing process, even though, on a formal level, it always precedes it: it follows, after having come first. On a level of content, the introduction usually contains information that the reader will only fully understand when reading the work itself. Since the introduction presents the putative essence of what is to follow, this essence can only be grasped after one has read the work: the foundation comes after having come first in the form of an introduction. This describes exactly the way in which the frame moves, adapts, creaks, and cracks: it introduces the reader to the work, it offers an approach to the work, and then keeps interacting with it: it keeps coming after having come first. Considering the fact that the work has generally been created first, the introduction to it assigns a certain direction to the way in which the work is to be read. This is the framework at work: the frame mediates between the work and the reader, and between the work and its surroundings. In order to do so, the frame, the *parergon*, becomes an organic unit that interacts with the *ergon*, the work. Thus, Derrida’s concepts of *ergon*, *passe-partout*, *parergon* and *hors d’oeuvre* (the surroundings) can be transferred (back)⁶ and applied to literature. Furthermore, a function can be assigned to the interaction between work, frame and surroundings.

Framing, according to Altman, is the central device that separates “‘some’ narrative,” such as soap operas or descriptions of daily life experience, from “‘a’ narrative” in the closer sense, namely written pieces of narrative fiction (17–18). In *Theory of Narrative*, which was published in 2008, Altman tries to fathom the nature of narratives and comments on their common characteristic of framing as follows:

How do the texts touted as narrative by theoreticians differ from soaps? That is, how does “a” narrative differ from “some” narrative? The main difference at work here is the process of framing. In deciding whether a text is narrative, we are usually concerned only to know whether it contains characters, action, and following. But when theorists concentrate on a common narrative pattern, they are analyzing questions of framing, not content. (18)

⁶ Since Derrida bases his terminology on an observation made in Kant’s *Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone*, his *parergonal* constellation originated in (philosophical) writing, was then transferred to the visual arts and—in this study—is transferred back to literature, even though there is a great difference between the two types of writing (philosophy versus literature). For a discussion of Derrida’s formal procedure, cf. “Derrida’s Parergon and Kant” below (28–34).

This means that it is not sufficient to focus on typical elements of narratives, such as characterization, time, or the causal or temporal connection of events; one also needs to take a step back and look at the overall structure of the writing in question. Narrative is a matter of textual arrangement: “By itself, daily life cannot be said to constitute narratives, however much narrative material it may provide. But when a naturalist novelist cuts daily life into slices, thus delimiting and framing it, the narratives implicit in daily life may be revealed” (18). Thus, the limits and borders of narratives are of central interest in their qualification as such. It is the central aim of this study to find a way of describing the workings in these liminal sites. According to Altman, it is easy to recognize some narrative by detecting elements that are typical of narratives. It is, however, not so easy to put one’s finger on “a’ narrative.” The latter “is recognizable only when it has been fully framed. In one sense, then, it is the very process of framing that gives a text its beginning and end” (18).⁷ In addition, the process of framing also heavily influences the dynamics of reading. Interestingly, Altman speaks of frames as being active, as being processes that take place in the border region of the written text, even though he does not specify these processes further. Unlike the seemingly static wooden frame, frames in literature are at work in the process of framing. It is the aim of this study to explain this very process and to provide a method of analyzing and interpreting it.

The idea that the analysis of processes in a liminal space (for instance the one between work and frame or the one between various strands of scientific research) is central to the understanding of their cooperation also lies at the basis of Derrida’s entire work. Mark Currie states that “[i]n Derrida’s work literature’s boundary with philosophy, linguistics and criticism is transgressed in a way that imputes to literary language a new epistemological import” (*Metafiction* 8). Derrida’s *The Truth in Painting* applies a philosophical concept to the visual arts and plays heavily on the capacity and associative force of language itself. Derrida’s practice of transgressing borders in his own writing is thus broached as a topic in his analysis of frames and mirrored in his close analysis of border processes.

In contrast to Altman, who is very particular about the difference between various kinds of narratives, the narrator in *Tom Jones* openly asks: “for why should writing differ so much from all other arts?” (647; bk. 14, ch. 1). In

⁷ This idea of framing might remind the reader of Jurij Lotman’s notion of the narrative frame in *The Structure of the Artistic Text* in a sort of inversion. In the first part of chapter 8, Lotman speaks of the beginning and ending of an artefact as a ‘frame.’ For a more detailed discussion of Lotman and this notion of boundary, cf. the section entitled “Frames, Paratexts, and Typology” below (22). This first impulse is apparently qualified by Altman’s reference to narrative patterns as frames. Furthermore, the framing “gives a text its beginning and end.” It is not the beginning and end that constitutes the frame.

structure, framing is indeed applicable to various arts. If writing does not differ so much, and if writing also displays formal structures which are similar to those in the other arts, Derrida's work can, in part, be transferred to literary writing. The border between visual arts and literature can be transgressed, and the creaking and cracking of a frame in literature can be detected and interpreted. In order to understand such a frame, it is necessary to closely follow its interaction with the work and thus to trace its interaction with the core text. This interaction works dialogically in both directions, from frame to work and back, or vice-versa. Thus, it takes the form of an oscillation.

Derrida offers the image of play for the ongoing oscillation between work and frame. It is a pleasurable enterprise to track these oscillating movements and to indulge in the play of language as such. J. Hillis Miller, also an exponent of post-structuralist thought, takes a more pessimistic stance on the very same mechanism, however. For him, interpretation is as unstable as the text itself and therefore leaves the critic at a loss, in aporia, whilst the text assumes a subversive and threatening pose through its "self-undermining form of language" ("The Search for Grounds" 576). Furthermore, critics are forced to use the same system of language used in the object of their criticism in order to approach texts. Thus, the critic enters the abyss of an infinite *mise-en-abyme*, which places "within the larger sign system a miniature image of that larger one, a smaller one potentially within that, and so on, in a filling in and covering over of the abyss, gulf or *Kluft* which is at the same time an opening of the abyss" (576). In short, and hence in somewhat dramatic terms, the critic cannot reach the ground of the abyss and thus is unable to fathom a text. M. H. Abrams mitigates this bleak outlook for criticism by redrawing the image of the abyss in a slightly modified form:

There are, I want to emphasize, rich rewards in reading Miller, as in reading Derrida, which include a delight in his resourceful play of mind and language and the many and striking insights yielded by his wide reading and by his sharp eye for unsuspected congruities and differences in our heritage of literary and philosophical writings. But these rewards are yielded by the way, and that way is always to the ultimate experience of vertigo, the uncanny *frisson* at teetering with him on the brink of the abyss; and even the shock of this discovery is soon dulled by its expected and invariable recurrence. ("The Deconstructive Angel" 560–561)

On the one hand, Abrams points out that, through our multiple confrontations with this kind of aporia, our fear of it is taken away and we get used to the threat of the abyss. On the other hand, the by-the-way manner in which Miller's language unfolds itself upon the reader provides his writings with "a charm that is hard to resist" (561) and allows us to dispose of the threat his theory holds. Even though, as Culler points out, "[d]econstruction has often been associated with the principle of the indeterminacy of meaning," this general idea(l) is undermined by practice: "if one reads Derrida's interpretations of texts it is

actually quite difficult to see how people could claim this is his teaching” (*Framing the Sign* 147). The application of one of Derrida’s concepts is therefore allowed to make sense. Juvan describes the post-structuralists’ conception of language as “pure negativity structured on distinctive features” (81). The expression *pure negativity* is ambiguous: not only does it denote the evasive nature of meaning in its slippage towards what it is not, which Juvan originally meant to describe; it also aptly describes the effect of deconstruction in texts, namely the impossibility of fixing textual meaning. It leaves the critic at a loss, entangled in the pure negativity of language. My study thus contends that deconstruction yields meaning when texts are interpreted on the basis of their mechanism of oscillation. The possible interpretations—of which there are always many—constitute a necessary critical pluralism, which presents the alternative to the unfathomable nature of text in general.

Critical pluralism as such allows for a harmonious co-existence of contradicting interpretations of the same work of fiction. This harmonious co-existence, in turn, endorses personal convictions and the ensuing authoritative position towards the text. In the context of this study, however, it is vital that one continually reflects upon one’s own position towards a text: if we approach the same text or textual constellation from various angles, we might encounter various stages of the same oscillating mechanism. Thus, we should try to ensure that we are still aware of mechanisms of manipulation and are not unknowingly caught in them. We often understand our position as literary critics as one that is ‘superior’ to the text under scrutiny. Our experience and routine make us believe that we are in control of the text. However, a text’s reputation precedes it, and as soon as it reaches us, we are already entangled in its parergonal force. Thus, it is imperative to constantly reassess our position and reflect upon it, as we are exposed to the manipulative force of the text usually even before we begin our reading. This awareness of one’s position is the best one can achieve, given that it is probably not possible to evade manipulation as such.

Just as the position of a literary critic towards texts in general raises the question of power and control, so does the oscillation between various parts of a text: is the *parergon* subordinate to the work it surrounds? Even though its name shifts its position to the periphery of the *ergon*, it has already been pointed out that introductions often hold the essence of the works they precede. Furthermore, they are aimed at channelling the reading in a certain direction. All of these aspects place such an introductory text, or *parergon*, in a rather central position. Without the work, however, *parerga* would not exist. It is therefore necessary to scrutinize the potency of each member in such a parergonal constellation. This means that an analysis will not merely follow a formally paratextual pattern, but rather be based on any parergonal structure where interactive force is at work.

The aim of this study is to demonstrate the transposition of Derrida's concept of the *parergon*⁸ (back) to literature, to assign specific functions to the framework, to illustrate them with carefully chosen examples and, finally, to discuss the power relations at work in such a parergonal constellation. Before engaging with and categorizing a particular kind of frame, however, it is important to realize that some formal typologies of frames have already been established. The following chapter will shed light on the most renowned of these typologies and will discuss the purpose of typologies and their role with regard to Derrida's concept.

⁸ From now on, the terms *parergon* and *ergon* will no longer be italicized, given that they are the core concepts of this study.

2. Frameworks and Paratexts: From Typology to Function

This study focuses on one specific concept used to describe work-frame interactions. For this reason, the term *frame* and its uses first need to be clarified. Such a clarification not only attempts to provide an overview of various frame theories in literature, but it also illustrates why a specific concept such as Derrida's parergon is necessary and useful for a critical analysis of literary works. The *OED* lists 16 numbered entries for the noun *frame*, arranged in a tripartite structure ranging from its obsolete meaning of "[a]dvantage, benefit, profit" to the "[a]ction or manner of framing" and finally to a particular "framed work, structure" (6: 139–141). The American expression "frame-up" listed in the second of the three parts (140; def. 2.c.) shows that the action of framing tends to be evaluated. The question of what frames do to the things they frame is generally central to frame theories, and particularly to this study. One reason for this is the question of ranking. A logocentric view of framed objects would clearly deem the core item to be more important and more powerful than any sort of frame surrounding it. Certain theories, among them Derrida's theory of the parergon, prove otherwise, however. In Derrida's theory, a specific kind of frame holds the power to initiate "a scheme or plot" and potentially makes the item it frames "the victim of a 'frame-up'" (*OED* 6: 142, def. 10.).

Symptomatically, the term *frame* in literary and cultural theory has come to mean many different things as well. In his introduction to *Framing Borders*, Werner Wolf comments that "it has become a received notion that there is no human signifying act, no meaningful perception, cognition and communication without 'frames' and [...] frames are practically everywhere" ("Frames, Framings and Framing Borders" 1). Since the publication of Erving Goffman's *Frame Analysis* in the mid-1970s, Wolf states, the concept of the cognitive frame has been established and accepted in various scientific disciplines, among them "cognition theory, psychology and psychotherapy, artificial intelligence research, sociolinguistics and [...] discourse analysis" (1). Wolf, in turn, attempts to establish a theory of frame and framing in literature and other media. The different frame theories are responsible for "a plethora of divergent and occasionally conflicting meanings" of the same term (Wolf, "Frames, Framings and Framing Borders" 2): *frame* in *frame narrative*, for instance, refers to a different kind of frame than the one used in *frame of reference*. In addition, there are physical frames, mostly around works of art, as well as paratextual frames around texts. To complicate the situation even more, frames in literature do not necessarily manifest themselves materially at all: textual frames need not

necessarily be paratextual. What frames have in common, however, is that they occur around something, framing another entity, embedding other material or data in a whole and usually doing something to the thing they surround. However, they differ in terms of the level on which and the overtness with which they do so: some frames, such as contexts, are seemingly exterior to the written pages of a work, some are interior to the work, some are characterized by their mixed quality, and some frames have no homogeneous material manifestation at all. In addition, the temporal reception of frame and work also plays an important part in the analysis of such a constellation. In the first section of this chapter, I would like to introduce a selection of literary frame theories that seem relevant to Derrida's concept of the parergonal frame. Some of these theories use taxonomies, while others simply refer to a range of phenomena termed frames. None of the following theories describe in much detail, however, exactly what happens in the course of the interaction between frame and work. It is the mechanism of such interaction that makes Derrida's parergon a valid methodological tool which allows for a close analysis of the mechanisms involved in the reading process. In this sense, Derrida's parergon complements the following frame theories in that it focuses particularly on the dynamics of frame-work interaction as well as on their effect on the reading process. In my overview of frame theories, I would like to proceed from the more general towards a more specific notion of frame. The sequence of theories follows the principle of contiguity, not of chronology.

Frames, Paratexts, and Typology

Frames are so much a part of our everyday life that we hardly notice their presence consciously. If we walk through a gallery, we usually focus on the paintings or pictures themselves, not on the frames that surround them. If we read a book, we may skip the introduction or preface, since we want to start with the core text right away. If a character in a book 'goes to the bathroom to drink a glass of tap water,' we automatically imagine her pressing the door handle, pushing the door open, briefly glancing at her reflection in the mirror as she stands in front of the basin, turning on the water tap, filling the glass and drinking from it. Interestingly, the sequence of pictures we draw in our minds depends heavily on our own frame of reference, our "set of standards, beliefs or assumptions governing perceptual or logical evaluation or social behaviour" (*OED* 6: 140, def. 4.d. (ii)). Conversely, our personal set of images can provide a considerable amount of information about our cultural background as well. For instance, not all cultures are familiar with the idea of tap water. In addition, tap water is not always drinkable. The kind of information we produce after the input of textual data is provided by a very general sort of frame, namely the

reader's frame of reference (e. g. Mieke Bal 82). This is the kind of frame we resort to in order to process data in general: not only data about the interior design of a character's home (influenced by indicators of the social class she belongs to), but also data about the character's motivation to drink water, the way she dresses, and so on.

Since texts are never fully explicit about their fictional reality, Reader-Response Theory claims that readers need frames, simplified models of everyday reality, in order to construct a textual reality (Rimmon-Kenan 124). These frames provide information that "relates to the non-textual situation," usually a "section of reality" (Bal 82). Neumann and Nünning put it as follows: "According to the so-called frame and script theories, people actively impose 'frames' and 'scripts' in their interpretations of texts. Frames and scripts are the cognitive models that are used in the process of reading narratives" (157). Frames of reference thus qualify as very general kinds of frames, shaped individually in their application. In a similar vein, John Frow, who focuses on political aspects of textual transmission in *Marxism and Literary History*, argues that "[r]ather than reproducing the text's official value, the reader must undertake a negative revalorization by 'unframing' it, appropriating it in such a way as to make it subversive of its own legitimacy" (228). Textual reception is thus an act of unframing the text's initial context and potential intention, and it ideally contests "the authority of the textual frame" instead of simply confirming it (228). At the same time, as stipulated by Reader-Response Critics as well, reading, according to Frow, is "an act of production (or of reproduction) on the basis of previous acts of readerly production and reproduction" (228). This is also an interesting aspect of written appropriations and the ensuing intertextual relationships. Apparently, original texts form one sort of contextual framework around their rewritings. In addition, textual signals prompt expectations in the reader that are founded in his or her frame of reference. Generic frames thus also qualify as specific frames of reference in the reading of texts. This textual manipulation is crucial for Derrida's parergon as well.

The notion of context in itself is a tricky one. It does not refer only to the perception of a reader's reality as in the sense of frame of reference. In *Framing the Sign*, Jonathan Culler disposes with the idea that contexts are given. He clarifies this misconception by explaining that they are always produced. Davis and Schleifer comment that "Culler poses, above all, the institutional nature of frames as opposed to the seemingly natural occurrence of contexts which, as products of institutions, necessarily call for their own analysis rather than suggesting a natural explanation" (ix). Culler argues that "context is not given but produced; what belongs to a context is determined by interpretive strategies" (xiv). Using the term *frame* guarantees a conscious decision for and constitution of an analytical framework. Goffman's *Frame Analysis* presents

“another analysis of social reality” (2). Generally, he is interested in the organization of experience (13), in the cognitive parameters, or frames, necessary for us to experience something as real, for instance (2). More specifically, he investigates what he calls the frames that influence our experience of, for instance, an artwork:

I assume that definitions of a situation are built up in accordance with principles of organization which govern events—at least social ones—and our subjective involvement in them; frame is the word I use to refer to such of these basic elements as I am able to identify. That is my definition of frame. My phrase “frame analysis” is a slogan to refer to the examination in these terms of the organization of experience. (10–11)

Goffman investigates various frames that make up our everyday experience, one of which is the theatrical frame (123–155). This theatrical frame is constituted by a set of conventions which tell both audience and actors how to react when, and how to perceive what. If the conventions in the theatrical frame are broken, friction occurs between the work on stage and the reality surrounding it: in this sense, the theatrical frame is of interest in my analysis of Shakespeare’s *Midsummer Night’s Dream*.

These more general theories of framing have their counterpart in those theories that engage with closely specified occurrences of framing. For Mieke Bal, the spatial context serves as a frame to situate literary characters: “With the aid of these three senses [i. e. sight, hearing, and touch][...] relations may be suggested between characters and space. The space in which the character is situated, or is precisely not situated, is regarded as the *frame*” (94). These frames often function symbolically, in that enclosed spaces stand for safety or confinement, for instance. In *The Structure of the Artistic Text*, Jurij Lotman defines the frame as being constituted by “two elements: the beginning and the end” of a text (215). This frame, according to Wolf, “marks the border between the infinite world and the finite artefact as a model of the world” (“Frames, Framings and Framing Borders” 26). Mary Ann Caws’ definition of frame in modernist fiction denotes specific textual passages that stand out from the rest of the text. Even though her definition of frame stands on its own, she focuses—in line with many other critics—on its effect on the reading process. In addition, she notes that “[t]o frame in is also to frame out” (5) and hence engages with “notions of grid and selection, of inclusion and exclusion [that] are constantly in play” (5) in a similar way to Derrida. Brian McHale’s frame-breaking in postmodernist fiction, such as metafictional narrative intrusions, also presents a rather specific use of the term *frame*.¹ In the latter case, the field

¹ An example of such frame-breaking can be found in the metafictional narrative intrusions in Fielding’s *Tom Jones* (cf. section “The Hybrid: Fielding’s *Tom Jones*” below, 137–138).

of postmodernist fiction, which experiments with “recursively nested” narrative structures (114), *trompe-l’œil* occurrences of inversed diegetic hierarchies (115), or tangled hierarchies of strange internal loops (119), to name only a few, requires such specific terminology. Apparently, this kind of terminology is only needed in specific context, but then it is indispensable.

In a more structural approach to the notion of the frame, critics have been concerned with narrative levels and their interrelation. In her essay “Identity/Alterity,” Monika Fludernik points out how the concept of alterity also manifests itself in the formal structure of narratives. According to her, the “alterity of much third-person literary narrative consists, precisely, in the fabulous access that it affords to another person’s (the protagonist’s) mind” (265). But not only that:

Alterity plays a role even formally in narratives. This is the case most strikingly in paratextual formats and framing techniques. Paratexts such as title pages and chapter headings, marginalia and annotations or footnotes provide a frame that gives access to, or mediates between, the world of the reader and the interior of the (fictional) world. Frames, editorial introductions, and critical comments in appendices likewise ease the reader into or out of the text. In particular, the deployment of framing techniques often serves to prevaricate on the truth conditions of the tale, thereby thematizing the alterity of the narrative. (266)

Not only do paratexts form the threshold between the reader’s and the fiction’s reality, but they also constitute the textual portal through which we access a piece of fiction. Thus, they can not only ease our access, but also manipulate and channel our reading. If paratexts hold the power of prevaricating on the core text’s truth conditions, they also potentially mislead the reader and influence his or her perception of the entire work. This idea is crucial to Derrida’s parergon in literature.

In “The Critic as Host,” J. Hillis Miller engages with the prefix *para*: “Para’ as a prefix in English (sometimes ‘par’) indicates alongside, near or beside, beyond, incorrectly, resembling or similar to, subsidiary to” (441). The paratext is thus the text that appears alongside the work and is usually considered subsidiary to it. “In borrowed Greek compounds [such as the parergon], ‘para’ indicates beside, to the side of, alongside, beyond, wrongfully, harmfully, unfavorably, and among” (441). In general, according to Miller, *para* as a prefix signifies “something simultaneously this side of the boundary line, threshold, or margin, and at the same time beyond it, equivalent in status and at the same time secondary or subsidiary, submissive, as of guest to host, slave to master” (441). Miller intimates that the practice of ranking can be highly deceptive when dealing with, for instance, paratexts. They are simultaneously equivalent in status yet subsidiary to the main text. In addition, a paratext, for instance, is

not only simultaneously on both sides of the boundary line between inside and outside. It is also the boundary itself, the screen which is at once a permeable membrane connecting inside and outside, confusing them with one another, allowing the outside in, making the inside out, dividing them but also forming an ambiguous transition between one and the other. (441)

Miller thus articulates a crucial characteristic of paratexts in general and the parergon in particular: they are not fixed entities, but dynamic structures able to master and deploy the liminal space they hold.

Probably the most famous theoretical work that exclusively deals with paratexts is Gérard Genette's *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation*. Even though one might nowadays consider works consisting of vast typologies to be slightly outdated and superficial in terms of interpretative force, much is owed to Genette's typology of paratexts. As he says himself in the preface to *Paratexts*, his work "consists of bringing into focus categories that, until now, have been disregarded or misperceived" (14). Up to that point, paratexts had been regarded by many as subordinate to the texts they surrounded. Genette's two major works (*Paratexts* and *Palimpsests*²), which investigate the illocutionary force of the paratext and the types of intertextual relations respectively, brought the issue of ranking to many critics' attention and thus managed to bring the periphery into focus. In 2007, Sherman comments that even though "'paratext' does not yet appear in the standard lexicons of the English language, [...] it has so successfully entered the scholarly vocabulary that it is now applied—without quotation marks or pause for thought—to texts of every period and genre" (68). This statement illustrates the impact of Genette's work. Hence, a study of the interrelation between text and paratext and a discussion of the powerplay at work would be difficult without the structuralist basis Genette provided.

In his introduction to *Framing Borders*, Wolf presents a typology of frames which follows various criteria of differentiation. These criteria are potential agencies (senders, recipients, message or work, and its context), the extent of the framing (total framing of the entire work or partial framing), the number of media deployed in the framing (restricted to contextual framings), the question of an original unity of framed and framing (are they authorized by the same entity?), saliency (covert or implicit framings versus overt and explicit ones), paratextual or intratextual framings (paratexts belong to the work, but not to the text proper; intratexts are embedded within the text proper, as in the case of

² For a more detailed account of the contents of these two works, cf. section "Mechanisms, Functions, and the Effect of the Parergonal Framework" below for Genette's *Paratexts* (66–69), and the section entitled "Textual Dialogues: The Reader as a Mediator," the introduction to the third part of my analysis, for Genette's *Palimpsests* (181–182 below).

metafictional comments, for instance), and the temporal location of the framings in the reception process of the first reception (since it is in the first reception that the particular temporal location of the frame plays an important part) (“Frames, Framings and Framing Borders” 15–21). Wolf differentiates between initial, internal, and terminal framings. Especially explicitly intertextual relationships call for reflection on the order of reception: which of two texts in a work-rewriting relationship, such as the one between *Jane Eyre* and *Wide Sargasso Sea* (if such a relationship qualifies for the concept of framing at all), for instance, figures as frame and which as text proper? This question will be of interest in the third part of my analysis.

Wolf’s typology seems very useful in situating a particular kind of framing within the huge field of possible framing practices. It is indeed essential to understand that frames do not necessarily form a textual unit, but that they can also be discursive and thus contextual, or constituted by a higher narrative level (such as the metafictional intrusions in *Tom Jones*). Hence, these criteria, independent of a larger scheme of interrelations as outlined in Wolf (25), also come to bear on my analysis. Wolf defines the common function of all framing borders as being that “they help the recipient to select frames of interpretation or reference relevant for the work under consideration” (26), and he also provides a typology of functions (26–32). Apparently, this runs along the same lines as Culler’s proposition that the term *context* should be replaced by *frame* so as to guarantee a conscious frame of reference in, for instance, literary interpretation. The application of the concept of the parergon also demands that the frame under scrutiny is first delimited and defined before its mechanism is analyzed. In this sense, Wolf’s typology might be a useful tool in preparing material that qualifies for an analysis of parergonality.

One of the most common notions of the narrative frame is certainly the one found in frame stories. Baldick defines a frame narrative as “a story in which another story is enclosed or embedded as a ‘tale within the tale’, or which contains several such tales” (101). According to Rimmon-Kenan, “narratives within narratives create a stratification of levels whereby each inner narrative is subordinate to the narrative within which it is embedded” (92). Embedded narratives may have functions in relation to the narratives that enclose them. They may, for instance, mirror the events in the frame narrative and comment on them literally on a different level (93). The narrator of each narrative level is always above “or superior to the story he narrates” (95). He or she is termed extradiegetic if the first narrative is the diegesis, or (intra)diegetic, if his or her narrative is the hypodiegesis. In “Framing Borders in Frame Stories,” Wolf points out that the constellation of an extradiegetic narrator telling his tale, which occurs very often, does not qualify as a classic frame narrative. Framings in frame stories constitute “intradiegetic parts of the main text. This excludes

[...] narratorial comments [...] since they are located on the extradiegetic rather than on an intradiegetic level” (181; original bold print omitted). Such comments do not constitute a narrative of their own: the frame of the frame story needs to be the first narrative. Even though it is called an “Introductory,” “The Custom-House” in Hawthorne’s *Scarlet Letter* is part of the main text and thus qualifies as the frame in a frame narrative. This labelling triggers a possible reading for analogies or contrasts between frame and second narrative, which is also crucial to my analysis of Hawthorne’s novel.

Formal typologies of texts undoubtedly provide a structural tool for textual analysis. They often circle around analytical exhaustiveness, however, before reaching the level of interpretation. In addition, the term *frame* in literature is by no means reserved for paratextual entities as Wolf aptly demonstrates in his typology of literary frames; he takes into consideration the fact that interspersed passages such as comments made by an intrusive narrator create an intratextual framework within a literary work as well, even though they would not fall into a typology of paratexts. All kinds of contexts—from frames of reference, through the entirety of critical output, to the hall of a library or a museum—qualify as frames and need to be taken into consideration in literary analysis if they influence our perception of a work. This notion probably even exceeds the limits set by Wolf; typologies, however, lose their point if they lack an initial defining feature. There is no need for an additional label if everything qualifies for a certain typology. Typologies separate certain types from others and make them accessible for further analysis.

Derrida’s concept applies to many kinds of frames, but it only yields exceptional results when applied to selected textual constellations: when it is applied to certain constellations and the ensuing mechanisms and functions, no additional typology is needed. A typology might, however, still be useful in preparing the data for such an analysis. The detection of literary parergonality in itself offers the ground for fruitful interpretation. Before Derrida’s parergon can be applied to literary writing, however, the concept and the terms related to it have to be introduced and thoroughly discussed.

Derrida’s Parergon and Kant

Derrida’s work *The Truth in Painting*³ is concerned with specific characteristics of the visual work of art: in it, Derrida writes “around painting” (9). Through

³ This title is borrowed from a promise Cézanne made to Emile Bernard on October 23, 1905: “I OWE YOU THE TRUTH IN PAINTING AND I WILL TELL IT TO YOU” (*The Truth in Painting* 2). In the course of analyzing Cézanne’s words, Derrida interprets the “idiom ‘of the truth in painting’” (4) in various ways: among the meanings he lists are “the truth

association, he plays with technical terms usually applied to the visual arts and, at the same time, opens them up to a more general discourse around the work of art. Through philosophical mediation, the *passé-partout* and the frame around a specific work become more general concepts that can also be applied to other works than those of the visual arts. In the present section, two concepts, the *passé-partout* and the frame, the parergon, will be introduced, traced back to their origins, and related to one another. Furthermore, a first attempt to transfer the concept of the parergon from the visual arts to literature will be made. The aim is to inquire into the interplay between the frame, the work and its surroundings. For this reason, the *passé-partout*, the line of demarcation between the work and its frame, and the parergon, the frame which outlines the work against its surroundings, are the central concepts of this section. The emphasis, however, is on the parergon, to which this study is dedicated. After all, it is this concept which is responsible for the interaction between frame and work.

In the section entitled "Passe-Partout" at the beginning of *The Truth in Painting*, Derrida alludes to the interface between the work and what surrounds it as a "partition of the edge" that "occurs everywhere [*se passé partout*]" (7, square brackets in the original). This word-play leads the reader into a world of concepts which apply to the visual arts, but which are not restricted to them. The *passé-partout* which the reader is provided with when reading Derrida's text "must not pass for a master key"; it is not "a password to open all doors" (12), but is what occurs between the frame around the work, in many instances called a parergon, and the work itself. "Passe-Partout" as the name of the first part of *The Truth in Painting* thus becomes self-explanatory: it denotes what happens at the edge of the work, it is the "emblem" (12) of "the place for a preface [...] *between*, on the one hand, the cover that bears the names [...] and the titles [...] and, on the other hand, the first word of the book" (12–13). What is important about this location is not its capacity of providing the reader with a device, a master key, but the movements that take place at this very site. The transition that happens within it, the act of passing through it, always has a direction. The movement, be it from the inside or the outside, starting from the outer skin of the work towards its surroundings or from the inner skin of the frame towards the work, comprises mechanisms that are crucial for the understanding of parergonal interaction. The movements that occur at this location lead in opposite directions. The polar opposition of outside and inside, which is displayed in this space, and the nature of the interaction between the outside and the inside is one of the central issues of this study.

faithfully represented, trait for trait, in its portrait" (5) or "the truth, as shown, presented or represented in the [...] pictorial mode" (6).