

NARRATIVE STRUCTURES OF EMOTIONS
IN NINETEENTH-CENTURY PROSE:
HOFFMANN, KIERKEGAARD, STIFTER, EBNER-ESCHENBACH

By

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Introduction: The Constructed Self

How close does man, despite all his knowledge, usually live to madness?
What is truth but to live for an idea? When all is said and done, everything
is based on a postulate; but not until it no longer stands outside him, not
until he lives in it, does it cease to be a postulate for him.

— Søren Kierkegaard, *Journals and Papers*

Emotions are such a ubiquitous part of everyday experience that they are often referenced in a kind of shorthand that obscures their underlying complexity. This can be illustrated using the case of a person who encounters a snarling dog and feels afraid. This example, or a similar variation, is used frequently by philosophers as a basic case; and, indeed, on the surface it does seem like a very simple emotional response. But stating it as I have just done is a form of abbreviation. If we unpack what is happening in the situation, the level of complexity quickly increases. The person in the example sees the dog; so far, this occurs on the level of sensory perception, a complex subject in and of itself. The person further perceives details about the dog's body language, such as bared teeth, growling, a crouching pose, etc. These details are compared with existing knowledge that the person has about animal body language and are interpreted as a threatening posture. Here again, there is a complex evaluation of multiple sensory inputs occurring. In addition, the person evaluates the snarling dog as a possible source of bodily harm; this judgment is based on stored knowledge of the physical capabilities of dogs in general. This evaluation of the animal as a threat to the self is involved—in ways that are still debated among scholars—with physiological changes in the person, such as adrenaline release, elevated heart rate, tensing of muscles, and potentially other responses that prepare the body to fight or flee, or at the very least keep a close eye on the dog.

Thus, even the seemingly simple case of fearing a dog involves multiple levels of comparison, evaluation, and judgment—that is, cognitive work. In an emotional response, certain sets of cognitive operations interact in ways that can be identified as characteristic of the specific emotion in question; this is particularly true of more complex emotions, which may even involve other emotions as subcomponents of the overall operation. These properties of emotion are integral to the way human beings not only feel but also think about a situation. Arrangements of information and the order and method by which it is processed structures thought.

The precise details of how the mind functions are potentially useful for understanding a wide variety of situations that occur in the world, but this project focuses specifically on a set of literary works operating in accordance with certain properties of emotion. For fictional narratives seeking to represent human beings as characters, the text must implicitly posit some form of mental architecture in order to simulate real human interactions. Both emotions and texts function according to an internal logic. Arrangements of cognitive operations, which I will call the signature structure of an emotion, help to define a specific emotion and distinguish it from others — what makes fear fear, or sadness sadness, for example. A text likewise has a structure, which manifests itself both through visual divisions such as paragraphs and through semantic cues that signal how different parts of a text relate to one another. This project traces out structural similarities between the thought processes by which cognitive evaluations are reached and the presentational methods of this group of fictional works. The correlation between narrative structures in these texts and the logical structures underpinning emotions allows the texts to serve as abstract models for commonly occurring personal and interpersonal situations.

I. Conceptualizing Mental Operations

The tendency to regard reason and emotion (formerly often known as the ‘passions’) as polar opposites has shaped the discourse around these two aspects of mental reality since antiquity.¹ Although there are excellent arguments for not considering reason and emotion to be a true pair of opposites, their entrenchment as such in both historical accounts and, in many cases, the popular imagination of today, lends this notion considerable persuasive if not explanatory power. However, particularly the realization that not only reason but also emotion has cognitive aspects calls this polarity into question. Recent discussions of emotion acknowledge that the cognitive operations involved are important, but opinions differ widely as to the relative importance of cognitive elements, physiological changes, and the subjective experience of feeling. To some extent this is a question of how an emotion is defined; for example, one could argue that the cognitive evaluation is what causes the emotion, but not part of the emotion itself. Or, conversely, some contend that the cognitive side is a mere rationalization subsequent to a physiological reaction triggered by sensory perception.

The latter view dates back to the philosopher and pioneer psychologist William James, who in the late nineteenth century theorized that perception caused bodily change, and that the feeling of the bodily change was the emotion. James used the example of encountering a bear to illustrate what he meant, saying that, contrary to the popular belief that one runs away because

¹ Furthermore, at least since Plato’s decision to cast reason as the charioteer and divide the passions between the subordinate horses in his Chariot Allegory, emotions have had a tarnished reputation. The Chariot Allegory represents Plato’s view of the human soul. One horse embodies ‘rational,’ moral passions and pulls the chariot obediently, while the other embodies ‘irrational’ passions such as appetites and is unruly. The charioteer must attempt to drive straight despite the divergent behavior of the two horses. Emotions fared little better with the early moderns. David Hume is led to remark that “Nothing is more usual in philosophy, and even in common life, than to talk of the combat of passion and reason, to give the preference to reason, and assert that men are only so far virtuous as they conform themselves to its dictates”; see Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, ed. David Fate Norton and Mary J. Norton (Oxford: UP, 2000), 265. Yet even though Hume himself states that the passions “ought” to be supreme, he nevertheless casts them in an unappealing light by describing reason as their “slave” (ibid., 266).

one fears the bear, actually one fears the bear because one runs away.² James's counterintuitive (and, on my view, incorrect) description of the chain of causality set off discussions which have yet to be fully resolved today about the chronological order of as well as the connections between the intellectual content, the bodily changes, and the subjective experience of emotions.

Reason likewise presents some definitional questions. Jon Elster, in *Reason and Rationality*, elucidates an important distinction in the concepts used to talk about mental operations: "reason is objective, whereas reasons are subjective."³ Despite the tradition of casting of emotions as antithetical to reason, they have the potential to be either reasonable or unreasonable in the subjective sense. Reason, in the objective sense, is an ideal standard; to avoid confusion with the thought operation commonly referred to as such, this project inclines to the term 'logic' to refer to the ideal. The original advantage of 'logic' that makes it appealing — which ideally also applies to 'reason' — is that it renders complex and impenetrable mental operations transparent and comprehensible. The danger, however, is that in the process details are eliminated that could turn out to be pivotal, thereby oversimplifying matters.

When we refer to 'using one's reason,' we are actually talking about a type of thinking, one that is usually sequential as well as conscious. When the brain is primarily employing sequential thought operations, the results are readily accessible to conscious oversight, and thus it is relatively easy to analyze the results to determine whether they live up to the ideal of logic; for

² I do not subscribe to James's theory because it seems to me that the uncertainty about whether non-mental bodily components of emotion precede mental ones or vice versa is the result of the high speed at which many of these changes occur, such that an order is not discernible through self-observation. James's example of the bear brings up the issue of reflex. Since reflexes function to preserve the well-being of the experiencing subject in a critical moment, they need to be fast; they are a type of mental shortcut in which a sensory input triggers a bodily response without first being consciously evaluated. Affective elements — in this case most likely a fear response — would logically also be triggered so that the body can cope with the demands being placed upon it by the brain, but since physiological responses such as elevated heart rate and adrenaline release take effect more slowly than the muscle contractions of running away, it makes sense that this example would seem to show that affect follows action. On my view, both affect and action are subsequent to some type of cognitive evaluation — even if it is the simplified and unconscious evaluation that a certain sensory stimulus is cause for a pre-programmed reflex response.

³ Elster, *Reason and Rationality*, trans. Steven Rendall (Princeton: UP, 2009), 3.

simultaneous evaluations, this is considerably more difficult.⁴ While one can in some cases retrospectively dissect the evaluation to sort out the individual calculations that produced it, there is a much greater chance of introspective insufficiency. And it is these simultaneous evaluations that typically give rise to emotions. However, the difficulties involved in understanding emotions do not make them inherently ‘worse’ than sequential thought operations. Recent scholarship on emotions has tended to view them as being on an equal footing with other types of thought operations; for example, Martha Nussbaum stresses that “emotions are not just the fuel that powers the psychological mechanism of a reasoning creature, they are parts, highly complex and messy parts, of this creature’s reasoning itself.”⁵ To a great extent, then, both ‘reason’ and ‘emotion’ are concepts that are used to describe types of mental operations. Part of the difference which we believe that we perceive is a function of our introspective experience of whether the mental operation is conscious or unconscious, and whether it is accompanied by physiological changes such as adrenaline release, increased heart rate, etc. But it is important to keep in mind that both have mental processes at their root.

Thus, sequential thought operations have traditionally been identified with reason, while simultaneous thought operations have been associated with emotion, or sometimes intuition. This division was solidified considerably during the eighteenth century, in which Enlightenment thinkers such as Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten and Christian Wolff turned to logic as the expression of what they considered the ‘higher’ cognitive functions.⁶ While it is not within the capacity of a biological system to process information truly instantaneously, the brain does have

⁴ Richard S. Lazarus discusses conscious and unconscious thought operations in *Emotion and Adaptation* (New York: Oxford UP, 1991), 152–159.

⁵ Nussbaum, *Upheavals of Thought: The Intelligence of Emotions* (Cambridge: UP, 2001), 3.

⁶ See Hans Adler on Enlightenment thinkers’ “attitude toward logic as the master of the senses.” Adler, “Aesthetics and Aisthetics: The Iota Question,” in *Aesthetics and Aisthesis: New Perspectives and (Re)Discoveries*, ed. Adler (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2002), 11.

the capacity for speeds that would be subjectively perceived as such.⁷ At this degree of rapidity, the computations that constitute thought operations mostly elude the monitoring of the conscious mind, and it is this that lends an air of impenetrability to the operations that function in a simultaneous manner. Conversely, the subjective feeling of increased control that accompanies conscious monitoring has contributed to the historical bias in favor of the type of thought operation known as reason. As to how, exactly, consciousness relates to other mental operations occurring in the brain, the plethora of research on the topic of consciousness shows that this phenomenon remains an open field of inquiry despite significant interest in understanding it.⁸ Insofar as simultaneous mental operations are conscious, it is due to their being analyzed retrospectively in a sequential manner.

What would a simultaneous thought operation look like? Given the current level of understanding of the brain at a cellular and synaptic level, a biological answer to this question is unsatisfyingly indeterminate at this point in time. A conceptual approach to answering this question, however, is suggested by Oliver G. Selfridge's pandemonium model. His seminal essay "Pandemonium: A Paradigm for Learning" from 1959 proposes a system to explain perception and a mechanism by which such a system could learn to perceive more efficiently.⁹ Selfridge's model

⁷ "Based on experimental observations and theoretical considerations, it was postulated early on that information processing in the brain occurs in chunks in the time range of subseconds. Stepwise changes of brain electric activity in the sub-second range were observed also using other methods than the presently reviewed functional microstate analysis." Dietrich Lehmann, "Consciousness. Microstates of the Brain's Electric Field as Atoms of Thought and Emotion," in *The Unity of Mind, Brain and World. Current Perspectives on a Science of Consciousness*, ed. Alfredo Pereira Jr. and Dietrich Lehmann (New York: Cambridge UP, 2013), 209.

⁸ Among the numerous recent publications dealing with consciousness are: Douglass Godwin, Robert L. Barry, and René Marois, "Breakdown of the Brain's Functional Network Modularity with Awareness," *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 112, no. 12 (2015): 3799–3804; Stanislas Dehaene, *Consciousness and the Brain: Deciphering How the Brain Codes Our Thoughts* (New York: Penguin, 2014); Dimitris Platchias, *Phenomenal Consciousness: Understanding the Relation between Experience and Neural Processes in the Brain* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's UP, 2011).

⁹ Oliver G. Selfridge, "Pandemonium: A Paradigm for Learning," in *Mechanisation of Thought Processes; Proceedings of a Symposium Held at the National Physical Laboratory on 24th, 25th, 26th and 27th November 1958* (London: H.M. Stationery Off., 1959), 511–529.

posits an arena full of demons, each of which is attuned to a specific variant of the sense perception at hand. In the case of vision, for example, this would mean different shapes. Sensory input arrives at all of the demons simultaneously, and each demon lets out a shriek of a loudness proportional to the degree of similarity between the incoming input and the input to which it is attuned. A decision demon selects the loudest of the subdemons, and thus processing occurs without the need to sequentially test the input against each demon individually. This simplest version of the model can be expanded to include multiple tiers of demons capable of performing more detailed interpretations of input. The model supposes furthermore that learning occurs through a mechanism of self-monitoring that reinforces or undermines individual components of the model based on the accuracy of their performance.

While the original article belongs to the field of artificial intelligence, it was printed along with a discussion by several other researchers, one of whom (John McCarthy, who had coined the term ‘artificial intelligence’ in 1955) comments that pandemonium could serve as “an actual model of conscious behavior” in the brain.¹⁰ Selfridge’s ideas have since been appropriated by psychologists and cognitive scientists studying human perception, notably in models of how reading occurs.¹¹ Pandemonium was put forward as a model of parallel processing in visual perception, but scholars have recognized its explanatory potential for other parallel mental operations, as well. The model’s spheres of influence are evident in the work of psychologists David Rumelhart and Jay McClelland: they developed a theory of reading influenced by the demon concept and later produced computer models mimicking human perception that explicitly draw on concepts of parallel processing.¹² Additionally, John V. Jackson suggested in his 1987 essay “Idea for a Mind” that levels and sublevels of demons could be a useful representation of mental

¹⁰ John McCarthy in response to Selfridge, “Pandemonium,” 527.

¹¹ Stanislas Dehaene, *Reading in the Brain: The New Science of How We Read* (New York: Viking, 2009), 44f.

¹² D.E. Rumelhart, J.L. McClelland and the PDP Research Group, *Parallel Distributed Processing: Explorations in the Microstructure of Cognition*, 2 vols. (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1986).

architecture in general.¹³ Jackson's paper discusses parallel processing in a way that blurs the boundary between computers and living organisms, which is revealing of the nature of this line of inquiry: namely, that the more closely the field of artificial intelligence approaches its most basic objective of imitating intelligence, the less applicable the distinction between the 'artificial' and the 'human' becomes. The ways in which intelligence per se functions are describable by concepts, which is the area of strength of the pandemonium model.

The type of modeling carried out by Selfridge is not a mere metaphorical overlay, though it does derive much of its explanatory force from the vivid figurative terms in which it is presented. The possibilities of the concept are manifest in the word 'pandemonium' itself, since its literal meaning — 'the place where all the demons reside' — evokes both the chaos of a multitude of wayward beings and a sense of order due to their all being gathered together. Similarly, emotions have a reputation in the cultural imagination for being unruly and oftentimes destructive, yet there are distinguishable patterns in their modes of operation. In the case of mental operations that manifest this type of dissonance, Selfridge's model illustrates a means of conceiving of a system in which chaos and order coexist in close proximity.

This project extends the pandemonium concept to the simultaneous thought operations involved in emotions. Since the model itself is built on the idea of multiple, hierarchically arranged tiers of demons, there is no great leap necessary to suppose that higher-order cognitions might also function according to pandemoniac principles of parallel processing. In fact, one of the most profound implications of contemporary scientific inquiry for emotion studies may be the inevitable cultural idea of the brain as a computer — that is, as a network of electrical circuits that

¹³ John V. Jackson, "Idea for a Mind," *SIGART Newsletter* 101 (July 1987): 23–26.

perform computations.¹⁴ The notion of similarity functions in both directions: perhaps it is not that the brain is like a computer so much as that humanity has built computers in quasi-imitation of the brain. The comparison is inevitable because computers and brains have a common basis in electrical signals. When one adopts a definition of emotions that accords a central role to cognition, as this project does, there is then no reason to privilege either ‘reason’ or the ‘passions’ — they are simply two different types of thought operations, one primarily sequential, the other primarily simultaneous. Either may be judged to function correctly or incorrectly in terms of logical coherency, appropriateness, or some other criterion.

II. Examining Emotions in a Literary Context

The following chapters deal with four narrative fictions by nineteenth-century authors, all of which are ‘psychological novellas’ in the sense that readers have commonly noted their particular attention to the internal lives of the characters. The authors were selected because they are exceptional, not because they are representative; both authors and texts are distinguished by their thoughtfulness, nuance, and careful crafting of situations in order to provide a basis for the emotions that are produced. Describing the emotions of characters is a staple of fictional texts, but these four works do more: the form of the text has a structure that replicates the logical structure of the emotion being represented. In the following chapters, I undertake a particular type of close reading of these four narratives in order to bring out the textual features that functionally resemble the cognitive operations involved in emotion.

This project is concerned with other questions than the ones that are usually asked by literary scholars. The reader of this project, therefore, should not be surprised at the scope of

¹⁴ This analogy finds traction not only in the cultural imagination but also in scholarly literature on artificial intelligence; see, for example, the chapter entitled “The Mind Is a Computer Program” in Eric B. Baum, *What Is Thought?* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2004), 33–65.

these textual analyses. Rather than seek to produce comprehensive interpretations of the works it deals with, it focuses instead on those aspects of the texts that relate to the mental phenomena under investigation. The questions that I am asking of these texts center around understanding psychology; gaining insight into the logical structures that undergird emotions; and sorting out what cognitive components combine to produce a composite evaluation, and how they combine. Contemplating the intersection of emotion and literature brings also up a question about the direction of influence. Do we read in order to understand emotions? Or does knowledge of how emotions work inform our reading? This project operates under the supposition that the answer is both. Emotions and literature are mutually illuminating: approaching a text from the perspective of its emotional content provides a means of opening it to fruitful interpretation; and, in equal measure, narrative can offer a better understanding of how emotions come into being, develop, and have consequences.

The approach to texts taken in this project departs from the modes of literary criticism that prevailed during the late twentieth century and draws on older conceptions of why we read that have often taken to be more or less self-evident. Just as the pandemonium model uses computer processes to simulate human mental operations, my readings approach literary characters as if they had a psyche—that is, as legitimate simulations of human beings. Simulating the mind of a fictional character has the potential to serve as training in the skill of empathizing. As philosophers point out, the ability to approach another being as if it had a mind, and to simulate and try to anticipate its emotional reactions, is a core feature of empathy. Because empathy is important in motivating individuals to behave ethically, this type of simulating is crucial to the development of individuals within the social framework.¹⁵ Investment in characters and their fictional fates is a subject that is still discussed in the creative writing seminar, but rarely

¹⁵ Philosophers have long noted the connection between empathy and ethical behavior, two examples being Rousseau and Schopenhauer (who called it ‘compassion,’ according to the terminology of their time).

in literary studies. A postmodern attitude might hold that such ways of reading are naïve, but if querying texts in this way opens up new possibilities of knowledge, then the theoretical paradigms should accommodate these readings, rather than the other way around. The potential that this project seeks to develop is through the application of current ideas about how thinking functions to a method of reading texts. This method is not so different from what readers can do intuitively, but it attempts to be more explicit about what goes on and thereby shed light on how reading interacts with the reader's interior operations and personal makeup. The impulse comes from an older type of literary criticism, but the method draws on insights from recent work in philosophy, artificial intelligence, and cognitive science.

Approaching literary passages in the manner of this project — that is, as models of emotion — sheds light on questions of how emotions are constructed in readers, what justifications are given for their appearance in characters, how they are modulated over time, and what significance their very structure and composition has for the central themes of the work. In addition, the study of literary emotions raises the question of their relationship to narrative. The focus of this project is on the formation of emotions — in other words, it is more concerned with how emotions are caused than with their effects once they are in existence. It is widely recognized in the scholarly literature that narratives are important because they let readers see how possibilities are played out and how emotions interact with the world. There is another reason, however, for paying attention to narrative: its role in forming emotions in the first place.

The project takes a closer look at the specific arrangements of context to see precisely how these contribute to emotions. These analyses pull in all sorts of information that seems to have little to do with whatever emotion is under analysis, but because emotion is bound up in narrative, it is absolutely relevant; contextual data is essential. This is part of what makes emotions hard to define and classify: they are very difficult to separate from other mental operations — and the

more complex the emotion, the more this holds true. Emotions are something that must be understood as networks of meaning. The connections and mutual influences between an emotion and judgments, beliefs, sensory data, and other emotions must all be counted as part of the composite evaluation. Their composite nature enables various possible configurations that increase overall complexity; for example, an emotion might be caused by a belief while simultaneously involved in the alteration of a second belief, or an emotion might be one of the factors involved in producing a second emotion. The mental framework allows for second-order encapsulations such as these, which are also suggestive of ways in which the brain could function self-reflexively according to checks and balances, rather than strictly hierarchically.

In the 1990s and early twenty-first century, the study of emotions has seen much development among philosophers and psychologists, as well as in the hard sciences. The insights of the former are more useful for literary studies, as the results that can currently be obtained by brain researchers seem to have little to say about emotions at the level of complexity which is relevant for the study of fiction.¹⁶ There are many lenses through which one can view the topic of

¹⁶ One example of the limitations of brain research is provided by a recent study that set out to determine whether fictional versus factual texts produce different patterns of brain activation. Subjects were presented with a series of short texts of approximately 48 words that were arbitrarily labeled either as fictional or as factual; the content of these texts — “events as regularly reported in the daily news, in TV documentaries and newspaper reports” (25) — was of a nature that might plausibly have been either. The fMRI results showed differing levels of brain activation for the two scenarios: ‘fictional’ texts showed activation patterns that “support the assumption that reading fiction invites for mind-wandering and thinking about what *might* have happened or could happen” (26), whereas ‘factual’ texts showed activations consistent with “higher personal relevance to the reader” and “more autobiographical memory retrieval” (25). This example proves unsatisfying for literary analysis, for one thing because the extreme brevity of the texts (necessitated by the nature of the fMRI measurements being collected) limits the experiment to testing a hypothesis about fictionality, not literariness, as pointed out by the authors themselves in the introduction. For another thing, the activation patterns merely serve to confirm what one would already intuitively suspect about how readers engage with fact vs. fiction. While it may be of interest that our ideas about how we process information have a physiological manifestation in the brain, the mere fact that fMRI registers activity level in certain areas does not tell us anything specific about what is going on there (e.g., “mind-wandering” does not reveal to where the mind wanders); this information is thus likely to be of more use to

emotion; especially sociological and historical views — including how emotions play out in social settings, how emotions are grouped together versus differentiated, and how societies assign value to emotion and/or its expressions — are major areas of inquiry in the current intellectual landscape.¹⁷ However, since my goal is to engage with the complexities presented by narrative forms on a level that is meaningful for understanding individual psychology, my focus in this project is on the internal workings of the mind, the nuts and bolts of what makes an individual experience a particular emotion in a particular situation. Sometimes we read literature to understand the world around us, and sometimes we read it to understand ourselves. The analyses in this project address primarily the latter concern.

Particularly the branch of philosophy of emotion known as cognitivism proves to be applicable to the questions being asked in this project. The main alternative to cognitivism, according to Mette Hjort and Sue Laver, is social constructivism, which considers emotions to be primarily the result of large-scale cultural factors more so than individual mental realities.¹⁸ Other views on emotions are represented by Richard Wollheim, who draws heavily from psychoanalytical models;¹⁹ and by Peter Goldie, who holds a semi-cognitivist hybrid view that particularly emphasizes the role of narratives.²⁰

While the philosophy of emotions has flourished during the last decades, literary scholars have been slow to incorporate its insights into their own discipline. The study of emotions has by no means been neglected, but although there are many studies that examine emotions in literature from a historical or sociological perspective, seeking to relate them to large-scale

neurologists than to literary scholars. See Ulrike Altmann et al., “Fact vs fiction — how paratextual information shapes our reading processes,” *Social Cognitive and Affective Neuroscience* 9, no. 1 (2014): 22–29.

¹⁷ A recent sociological study on emotions is Eyal Winter’s *Feeling Smart: Why Our Emotions Are More Rational Than We Think* (New York, NY: Public Affairs, 2014). A historical survey is Jan Plamper’s *The History of Emotions: An Introduction*, trans. Keith Tribe (Oxford: UP, 2015).

¹⁸ Mette Hjort and Sue Laver, introduction to *Emotion and the Arts* (New York: Oxford UP, 1997), 6.

¹⁹ Richard Wollheim, *On the Emotions* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1999).

²⁰ Peter Goldie, *The Emotions: A Philosophical Exploration* (Oxford: UP, 2000).

cultural and societal forces, far fewer approach them from an individual perspective by looking at what philosophy and psychology can reveal about their internal workings. Though there are many philosophers who support their arguments with excerpts from fictional works — with the qualification that these explications tend to be less developed than work done in the field of literary studies — examples of literary scholars who apply philosophy of emotion to interpret texts are rare. A notable exception is Patrick Colm Hogan, an English literature scholar whose work is heavily influenced by the cognitivist philosophical view of emotions, as well as drawing on neuroanatomical information. In *What Literature Teaches Us about Emotion*, Hogan focuses primarily on basic emotions — including love, grief, mirth, guilt, shame, jealousy, and empathy — in important works of world literature.²¹ Another literary scholar who draws on philosophical theories is Charles Altieri, though his book *The Particulars of Rapture*, which addresses emotions in works of art and literature, is highly critical of the cognitivist position.²² Calling his view expressivism, he stresses the value of emotions as ends in themselves, as opposed to the emphasis by cognitivists on intentional or goal-directed behavior. Martha Nussbaum's *Upheavals of Thought* might well also be considered part of this group, since even though the author is a philosopher, the book's (quite substantial) latter half focuses on interpreting emotions in literature. While her analyses hypothesize about broad cultural shifts from Antiquity to Modernism, there seems to be untapped potential in Nussbaum's work in that many of the concepts she puts forward could contribute to a close-reading type of literary criticism.²³

²¹ Patrick Colm Hogan, *What Literature Teaches Us about Emotion* (New York: Cambridge UP, 2011).

²² Charles Altieri, *The Particulars of Rapture* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 2003).

²³ In the second half of her book, Nussbaum uses selected literary works to make a historical argument containing notions of progress which seem highly problematic. The section on love, for example, concludes by casting *Ulysses* — and Modernism more generally — as the culmination of two millennia of reflection on romantic attachment. Yet even the literary analyses themselves seem to undermine the notion of progress: areas of advancement in one era exhibit retrogression in another, and vice versa; the advantages shift but do not accumulate. Indeed, the use which she makes of the literary texts seems disconnected from the interpretive implications more directly suggested by her theoretical framework. Hypotheses about broad trends in the history of thought are difficult to defend using insights garnered from the cognitivist

Cognitive approaches to literature seem to be gaining ground, especially in the English-speaking world. The complexity of mental functioning likely means, however, that the ‘approach’ aspect will in most cases be specific to the texts under analysis; in other words, there are numerous ways in which a literary text can make use of how the brain functions in order to achieve its aesthetic effect, and scholars will therefore likely need to tailor to the individual texts their ‘approaches’ rather than trying to come up with a theory and apply it broadly. The specificity of individual instances of emotions precludes the possibility of simply borrowing another approach and applying it to the texts that I consider in this project; I instead come up with an approach based on the specific mental processes that, as I will argue, are at work in producing resonances between brain and text in these instances.

III. What Is an Emotion?

The approach to emotions taken in this project is most closely related to cognitivism, one of the major schools of thought in philosophy of emotions. Cognitivism holds that a belief or desire is necessary for an emotion; its appeal lies in the promise that emotions can be made fully intelligible. While simple, early versions of the position consider emotions to be more or less identical with a belief or desire, later accounts further emphasize the intentionality of emotions, which is usually expressed with the help of a preposition: emotions are *about* something, are directed *towards* something, etc. Thus, intentionality clarifies that emotions have to do with the relationship between the emoter and his environment, broadly conceived (for example, ‘environment’ could include the emoter’s own body). Cognitivism has been heavily criticized by those who argue that it does not adequately account for the role of the physiological side of

principles in the first section of the book, which provide ways of understanding aspects of a specific instance of an emotion, but seldom deal with patterns across time. But for these same reasons, I have found the insightful analyses of the first half of the book to be well suited to providing interpretive impulses on the smaller, more individual scale that applies to my project.

emotional response, and who point to borderline cases such as moods, to which beliefs and desires do not necessarily apply; and cognitivism has again been defended by proponents who seek to revise and expand it so as to meet the charges of its critics, while maintaining the position that beliefs and desires are a central, defining factor in emotions.²⁴

Many of the arguments in the following chapters are informed by a particular conception of mental architecture; this is thus a basic assumption in the text and must be explained and clarified right at the outset. Interpreting emotions in literature first requires a working definition of emotion. As the lively discussions²⁵ in the fields of not only literary studies but also film and media studies, history, sociology, philosophy, psychology, cognitive science, and neuroscience show, there is no consensus on what an emotion is.²⁶ In this situation, it seems reasonable to take a position which proves itself to be effective in yielding better understandings of texts, provided that it can be supported by a significant body of evidence.

The lack of consensus among disciplines and schools of thought regarding the definition of emotion — even in terms of how to differentiate it from mood, sensation, thought, etc. — is the result of how the boundaries of the concept are delineated. Because mental operations are

²⁴ Proponents of cognitivism include Martha Nussbaum (*Upheavals of Thought*, 2001) and Robert Solomon (“Emotions and Choice,” in *Explaining Emotions*, ed. Amélie Rorty (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1980)); prominent critics include Aaron Ben-Ze’ev (*The Subtlety of Emotions* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2000)); Richard Wollheim (*On the Emotions*); and, to some extent, Peter Goldie (*The Emotions: A Philosophical Exploration*), although the latter’s work also has much in common with the cognitivist position.

²⁵ Large, interdisciplinary, government-funded centers for emotion studies are an indication of the strong contemporary interest in the subject. Examples include “Languages of Emotion” at the Freie Universität Berlin, funded by the German Universities Excellence Initiative between 2007 and 2014 (Languages of Emotion homepage, Freie Universität Berlin, accessed March 25, 2015, <http://www.loe.fu-berlin.de/>); “The Affect Project,” supported since 2011 by a Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada Partnership Development Grant (“About,” The Affect Project, accessed March 25, 2015, <https://affectproject.ca/index.php/home/aboutap>); and the Centre for the History of the Emotions at Queen Mary University of London, which has received funding from numerous sources including the Arts and Humanities Research Council of the UK as well as the European Union (“Funding,” The Centre for the History of the Emotions, accessed March 28, 2016, <http://qmul.ac.uk/emotions/funding/>).

²⁶ For example, Carroll E. Izard alludes to the lack of consensus in the field of psychology in “More Meanings and More Questions for the Term ‘Emotion,’” *Emotion Review* 2, no. 4 (2010): 384.

ultimately inseparable from one another, there are no objective criteria for deciding on a 'best' account of where emotion ends and something else begins. In the absence of a compelling reason to prefer any particular definition over others, this project will define emotion in a way that leads to a productive interpretation. The definition will be broad, encompassing many thought operations that are calculative in nature. However, one property that distinguishes emotion in this context is that it consistently manifests itself as a composite evaluative operation, whereas logical reasoning tends to deal with a limited and more manageable quantity of factors. Complex logical evaluations are built upon a combination of numerous calculations, each of which could be viewed as a distinct step, since they occur sequentially. Emotions, on the other hand, are usually the result of multiple calculations occurring simultaneously, and thus may have a qualitatively different character than logical evaluation. The precise nature of this difference will vary according to circumstances, a few examples of which will be pursued in the chapters to follow.

A fundamental assumption behind this project is that emotions are intelligible operations whose causes are determinate, although practically speaking it may not be possible to determine them in all cases. An emotion may be considered irrational if it is based on a false belief; it may be considered inappropriate if its intensity is out of proportion to the circumstances. (This could be due, for example, to individual psychological causes or to interference from other emotions which the subject is experiencing.) However, the emotions in both of these cases are nevertheless intelligible; in other words, one can uncover the causes that brought the emotion into existence, despite the problematic nature of some of these causes.²⁷

²⁷ Jon Elster's lecture *Reason and Rationality* contains a lucid discussion of reason, rationality, irrationality, and intelligibility, which he develops in the context of the long-standing debates about reason versus passion.

This project employs a functional concept of emotion; that is to say, an emotion is distinguishable by what it does. Emotions are about assigning value and importance to mental contents and constructs. They are an integral part of a human being's mechanisms for interacting with its surroundings; in the most basic terms, an organism living under the conditions of finitude, in which it is impossible to perceive or to know everything, must have a system for navigating existence as effectively as possible despite limited information if it is to survive and thrive. On a mental level, that means sorting information — both external perceptions and internally generated thoughts — according to importance, so that limited attention resources can be allocated effectively. Emotions are necessary for an individual to generate goals and then pursue them.

This project takes the position that the thought-content of an emotion, as opposed to somatic aspects, is necessary for an emotion. Thus it draws a distinction between emotions and moods, the latter of which might conceivably be the result of endocrine fluctuations and external stimuli without any contribution from higher-order thought operations. Based on critical views on cognitivism, one could easily suppose that a reading of a literary text based on a cognitivist-type model would result in an interpretation that oversimplifies emotions and thus ignores the interesting complexity of literary texts. However, taking into account the central role of narrative, one can see why the thought-content of emotions is of primary importance. Especially the complex emotions to be dealt with here are not the result of only a single belief or desire; rather, they arise from entire networks that may include multiple beliefs and desires, as well as thoughts, memories, and sensory perceptions, all of which are evaluated in terms of the individual's latent belief system.

Since the primary focus of my project is on the part of emotions that is intellectually comprehensible, at times it may seem as though the physiological dimensions of emotion do not

receive due consideration. That is, there are certain bodily processes that are part of the affective nature of emotions; that contribute to the subjective ‘feeling’ of an emotion. Of course, mental operations are also bodily functions; nevertheless, it is possible to draw a distinction because mental operations allow for intellectual discussion in a way that, for example, endocrine fluctuations do not. The means of representing affective intensity in a text are different from the means of representing cognitive components of emotion. Physiological (in the sense I am delineating) processes must be discussed in more descriptive, less precise terms. They do, however, factor in to the current project: when I make the claim that emotions establish the value attached to mental contents or that well-trodden mental pathways can be rewritten, the chemistry of emotion is involved in the process of reinforcing or undermining the existing cognitive infrastructure.

IV. Concepts and Organization

Emotion is a type of thinking. In order to work out the consequences of this idea, these analyses will continually draw upon the conception of emotions as composite evaluations. I sometimes also refer to the concept of judgment, which is a subtype of evaluation: typically, judgments are a comparison of a given situation against existing ideas about how the world works. Furthermore, an emotion is time-dependent, establishes a hierarchy, is involved in the formation and modification of ‘latent beliefs,’ and has a signature structure. These are the core concepts that inform this project. They emerge — not necessarily in these exact words but in conceptually similar form — from cognitivist discourses on emotions; and, as the following chapters aim to demonstrate, their potential applicability to literary interpretation is high because of their nontrivial link with the organization and aims of narrative. In order to highlight the recurrence of

these concepts in multiple texts and contexts throughout this project, I include a number of cross-references to other inter- as well as intrachapter locations.

That emotions have a relationship to time is unsurprising, since time is one of the basic parameters of existence. Time-dependence, in the context of this project, is significant because of its influence on affective intensity, which tends to increase when evaluations are temporally compressed. The simultaneity versus sequentiality of evaluations, which have already been mentioned, thus have consequences for the level of affective response to a situation.

The establishment of hierarchies is the means by which attention is allocated. Brain researchers have developed concepts of a mental ‘foreground’ and ‘background’ in order to conceptualize the way in which mental data seem to be relatively more or less present to consciousness at different moments.²⁸ Research supports the assertion that a human being’s capacity to function in everyday situations in the world is dependent on emotional responses, which underlines the importance of emotion as a form of thought and an intellectual matter.²⁹

The term ‘latent belief’ will be used in this project to signify a notion that has been practiced or established sufficiently to become long-term mental stock. Its facticity or provability are irrelevant for the purposes of this classification; the belief that two plus two equals four is to be considered just as much a latent belief as the belief that one political party is better than another. The reason for assigning the qualifier ‘latent’ to this term is to underline the role of a set of propositions against which more transient data is compared in order to evaluate it. Put another way, latent beliefs encompass all of an individual’s ideas about how the world works, and any new data is processed in accordance with this basis. Beliefs also tend to occur in sets because of

²⁸ Richard Loosemore and Trevor Harley, “Brains and Minds: On the Usefulness of Localization Data to Cognitive Psychology,” in *Foundational Issues in Human Brain Mapping*, ed. Martin Bunzl and Stephen José Hanson (Cambridge, MA: Bradford, 2010), 221f.

²⁹ For example, Antonio Damasio found that people with brain injuries that disrupted their emotional responses had difficulty prioritizing tasks in a way that would allow them to handle practical matters effectively; see *Descartes’ Error: Emotion, Reason, and the Human Brain* (New York: Penguin, 1994).

narrative interrelations with one another; in chapter two, a particular kind of belief collocation will be analyzed, which will here be termed a 'script.'³⁰ Scripts are mental shortcuts that are established through repetition. Because of this, they tend to reflect the cultural conditioning through an individual's environment to a high degree.

The signature structure of an emotion, which has already been mentioned above, refers to recurring arrangements of cognitive data and the logical operations that are performed on them. In the case of fear, for example, the signature structure includes at least two clusters of data: information about a situation in which the individual presently finds itself, and latent beliefs about types of situations that are or may be harmful. The logical operations that are performed are a comparison of the situation with the latent beliefs, and the judgment to the effect that the situation is indeed of a type that represents a threat.

Chapter one of this project deals with two emotions, trust and sympathy, in E.T.A. Hoffmann's novella *Das Fräulein von Scuderi* (1820). In the first portion of the chapter, I show how the relative prominence of various narrative elements at different moments maps onto fluctuations in the main character's level of trust in three other characters, which in turn affects her efforts to gather information from them. This illuminates the interplay between emotions and mental hierarchies. In addition, I also consider the role of intuition in these interactions; although not an emotion, intuition is a form of composite evaluation and therefore a closely related thought operation. The second portion of the chapter looks at a particular scene in which the main character carries out a plan designed to elicit the emotion of sympathy from another character. This provides an opportunity for the reader to observe how an emotion is narratively constructed, both in the sense of being recorded in a fictional text and in the sense of occurring in

³⁰ See page 90.

the target character as a result of external and internal narrative strands interacting in his cognitive landscape.

Building on the latter example from the first chapter, the second chapter is about a character who performs an even more elaborately constructed plan to generate an emotion. In *The Seducer's Diary*, which is part of Søren Kierkegaard's work *Either/Or* (1843), the seducer chronicles his implementation of a true emotional manipulation that results in a young woman becoming profoundly infatuated with him. The emotion of infatuation involves accessing a wide spectrum of the latent beliefs which a person holds; for this reason, it is complicated to produce — as evidenced by the intricacy of the seducer's plan — as well as rendering those who experience it vulnerable to alterations of core beliefs about themselves. The seducer's method includes replicating certain signature aspects of infatuation such as obsessive mental preoccupation with a person, as well as playing to cultural scripts about romantic love.

In the third chapter, I examine the surprise ending to Adalbert Stifter's *Brigitta* (1847). This chapter, unlike the others, ventures to speculate about the emotional response of the reader; however, these speculations are closely based on features of the text, particularly the order in which information is presented. This specific instance of surprise has a highly articulated intellectual content because it involves a collision of two well-developed narrative strands which necessitates re-evaluations of both. The signature structure of surprise is thus laid out for the reader in the structure of the text. The fact that the novella is constructed in such a way that the collision can take place within a very brief timespan greatly increases the emotional intensity for the reader: a considerable amount of cognitive work over a short duration results in a more concentrated affective response.

The fourth chapter deals with the emotion of regret in *Die Resel* (1883) by Marie von Ebner-Eschenbach. Here, the text has the same structure as the emotion: just as regret involves a

might-have-been that refuses to leave one's mental stage, *Die Resel* confronts a character with a story that could (almost) have been her own. I focus on persistence because that is what pushes regret into the territory of a complex emotion. Regret follows some choice, and this choice is the result of an evaluation. The complexity of the evaluation, however, may not be fully clear; for example, choices about which actions to take in life involve weighing various predictions of future outcomes. Once a choice is made, an actual outcome comes into being; in the process of regret, an alternative possible outcome persists in the mind and is held up to the actual outcome, resulting in a dissection of the pros and cons of each. Regret thus has the signature structure of a revelatory engine, a means of uncovering repressed, suppressed, or nonapparent information, which makes it an excellent lens through which to interpret a story.

Chapter One: The Ordering of the Mind in E.T.A. Hoffmann's *Das Fräulein von Scuderi*

Anxiety comes first; it discovers the logic before it arrives, just as one can sense in one's bones that a storm is approaching.

— Vigilius Haufniensis, *The Concept of Anxiety*

Since attention is a limited resource, the way in which it is allotted has a significant impact on the constitution of mental life. Emotions are the core mechanism for directing the activity of the mind: their intensity signals what is important and thus worthy of attention; yet at the same time, the relative prominence or obscurity of thoughts, ideas, memories, and other information has an impact on which emotions form at a given time. The question of whether a given piece of information is prominent or not is subject to internal as well as external, and to intentional as well as accidental circumstances. One may try to remember, or be reminded by another; one may choose to pursue a line of thought, or it may be associatively suggested by events in one's environment. Thus, in matters of hierarchization — that is, of the establishment of priorities in the mind — there is a degree of mutual influence between emotions and the available information.

These dynamics are a central element of E.T.A. Hoffmann's novella *Das Fräulein von Scuderi*, which appeared first in an almanach and then in the third volume of his *Serapions-Brüder* collection in 1820.¹ The drama of this story lies in the process of untangling that is carried out over the course of the novella by the main character, Magdaleine von Scuderi, a seventy-three-year-old

¹ The novella was well received, earning Hoffmann an addendum of fifty bottles of wine in addition to his honorarium from the almanach publisher. For more information on the reception history of Hoffmann's novella from its publication to the present era, see Detlef Kremer, *E.T.A. Hoffmann: Erzählungen und Romane* (Berlin: E. Schmidt, 1999), 144–147; or Rolf Meier, *Dialog zwischen Jurisprudenz und Literatur: Richterliche Unabhängigkeit und Rechtsabbildung in E.T.A. Hoffmanns "Das Fräulein von Scuderi"* (Baden-Baden: Nomos Verlagsgesellschaft, 1994), 18–20.

writer who finds herself playing the role of detective and ultimately solves a case of serial murders and jewel thefts.² Although legal proceedings and legal discourse, which traditionally frown upon emotions as lacking the logical precision appropriate to judicial matters, are continually present throughout the text, they prove again and again to have limitations that are only overcome through precisely such means as they would eschew. At the end of the novella, for example, Scuderi manages to secure the release from prison of the jeweller's apprentice, Olivier Brußon, partly through an appeal to sympathy; although the legal system would consider him guilty (as an accomplice), setting him free is more satisfying to the conscience of Scuderi — as well as, one may easily suppose, to the consciences of many readers. For right and wrong are neither clear-cut, nor do they belong exclusively to the domain of judicial reasoning.³

In addition to questions of hierarchization, a second issue with regard to emotions that greatly affects how this novella develops is the nature of emotion as a form of composite evaluation. Scuderi is effective, both as a literary character and as an amateur detective, because

² Scuderi's status as a detective has been the subject of much debate. Richard Alewyn argued in 1963 that *Das Fräulein von Scuderi* was the first detective story, pre-dating Edgar Allen Poe's work ("Das Rätsel des Detektivromans," in *Definition. Essays zur Literatur*, ed. Adolf Frisé (Frankfurt a.M.: Vittorio Klostermann, 1963)), but revised his position with respect to the claim that Scuderi is a detective-figure in *Probleme und Gestalten. Essays* (Frankfurt a.M.: Insel, 1974), 351–360. Many concur, however, with his assessment of the novella as a whole; see, for example, Maximilian Bergengruen, "Das monströse Erbe (der Literatur): Ehebrecher, Verbrecher und Liebende in E.T.A. Hoffmanns 'Das Fräulein von Scuderi,'" in *Monster: zur ästhetischen Verfassung eines Grenzbewohners*, ed. Roland Borgards (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2009), (219). Friedrich Kittler attributes Scuderi's success as a detective to her "psychologischen Einfühlungskraft" ("Hoffmann: Eine Detektivgeschichte der ersten Detektivgeschichte," in *Dichter, Mutter, Kind* (Munich: Fink, 1991), 198) — in other words, to her skill in gaining insight into the emotional landscapes of others. Arguments against viewing her as a detective are found, for example, in Kremer, *Erzählungen und Romane*, 157; and Hartmut Steinecke, *Die Kunst der Fantasie: E.T.A. Hoffmanns Leben und Werk* (Frankfurt a.M.: Insel, 2004), 389. Ulrike Landfester acknowledges both sides and therefore situates the novella somewhere in between ("Um die Ecke gebrochen: Kunst, Kriminalliteratur und Großstadtopographie in E.T.A. Hoffmanns Erzählung 'Das Fräulein von Scuderi,'" in *Die Stadt in der europäischen Romantik*, ed. Gerhart von Graevenitz (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2000), 110). For more extensive summaries of the debate, see Achim Küpper, "*Poesie, die sich selbst spiegelt, und nicht Gott*": *Reflexionen der Sinnkrise in Erzählungen E. T. A. Hoffmanns* (Berlin: Schmidt, 2010), 70–73; or Claudia Liebrand, *Aporie des Kunstmythos: die Texte E.T.A. Hoffmanns* (Freiburg im Breisgau: Rombach, 1996), 177.

³ Whether one agrees with the assessment that mercy is greater than justice, or not, the very existence of this debate is proof of a significant grey area.

she employs every faculty at her disposal.⁴ Logical reasoning, emotions, intuitions, and even the nocturnal process of dreaming are all a part of Scuderi's mental landscape, and it is through paying heed to these things and seeking to reconcile the seeming conflicts between the various parts that she eventually, bit by bit, uncovers the entire story behind the jewel murders. In keeping with its detective-story features, *Das Fräulein von Scuderi* involves questions of who can be trusted and who cannot. The example of trust highlights the way in which emotions are a composite evaluation: one considers (either instantaneously as intuition or over time as deliberation) various aspects of an individual's character, which results in a feeling as to whether his words correspond to his thoughts and actions.⁵ How precisely one moves from characteristics to feeling will be a subject of this chapter. The way in which the term feeling ("Gefühl") is used to describe the effect of Scuderi's mental processes brings it into close proximity with the idea of intuition. The text provides numerous opportunities to examine how intuition blurs the boundaries between affect, evaluation, and cognition.

⁴ Scuderi's use of all her faculties is discussed by Alewyn, *Probleme und Gestalten*, 353; Birgit Röder, *A Study of the Major Novellas of E.T.A. Hoffmann* (Rochester: Camden House, 2003), 52; as well as, from a feminist perspective, by Anita McChesney, "The Female Poetics of Crime in E.T.A. Hoffmann's 'Mademoiselle Scuderi,'" *Women in German Yearbook* 24 (2008): 4.

⁵ Truthfulness — or, at any rate, telling things the way one sees them — is at stake in this story, as opposed to reliability — i.e., if an individual says he will do something, how likely is it that he will follow through and do it — which is a different kind of trust.

Olli Lagerspetz does not consider trust an emotion because it "rather seems to be characterized by the fact that a number of beliefs and emotions — such as certain suspicions or fears — fail to appear" (*Trust: The Tacit Demand* (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1998), 15). This objection, however, is an argument precisely for considering trust to be an emotion according to the parameters of this project: firstly, the multiplicity of factors to which Lagerspetz alludes is an indication that trust should be counted among the composite processes that are the focus here; and secondly, if fear or suspicion is the result of a composite evaluation of a situation to the effect that it is somehow threatening to one's well-being, then the opposite evaluation (or judgment) that it is not threatening is of the same nature, and therefore they both ought to be considered emotions. The absence of suspicion need not entail the absence of emotion if there is an opposite affective response in the positive spectrum, something akin to the feeling of well-being or satisfaction — in this case, satisfaction that the decision to rely on a person will lead to a good outcome.

This chapter deals with the generation, course of development, and consequences of two emotions: trust and sympathy.⁶ Scuderi's level of trust or mistrust at various points in the narrative has an influence on her progress in unraveling the mystery of the jewel murders. The king's sympathy or lack thereof affects his decision regarding the Brußon case. Composite evaluations are especially influential for Scuderi in matters of trust, while hierarchization is a decisive factor in her supplication to the king; but there is also significant crossover of the issues in both instances.

I. Whom To Trust? — Questions of Intuition

Trust can be based on an empirical observation to the effect that since an individual has historically behaved in a certain way under given circumstances, one may reasonably expect him also to behave in this way under the present, similar circumstances.⁷ Yet this simple formulation fails to capture the complexity of trust; it is in fact a leap from a generalized set of circumstances to a specific instance. The mind must, as a first step, identify a pattern of behavior; and as a second step, it must make the judgment that the present situation meets the criteria for belonging to the behavior pattern.⁸ This process is a composite evaluation whose multiple steps mean that there are many points at which it could go wrong. It involves sorting through a large

⁶ Whereas the the judicial elements and the portrayal of artists in *Das Fräulein von Scuderi* have received widespread scholarly attention, less has been paid to the internal psychological processes that are at the center of this chapter. Critics often describe Scuderi's process as 'intuitive' but do not analyze the nature of the intuition (see notes 9 and 19 below).

⁷ Empirical observation of behavior patterns is one major basis for trusting; another, which lies beyond the scope of this project, is mutual self-interest, or, as Russell Hardin calls it, "encapsulated interest" (*Trust and Trustworthiness* (New York: Russel Sage Foundation, 2002), 3).

⁸ Hardin discusses the potential for both cognitive and noncognitive (e.g., affective) components to contribute to trust (*Trust and Trustworthiness*, 68), as well as the central role of judgement and the formation of rational expectations in trust (ibid., 113f.).

amount of information to select out salient details or reduce it down to a manageable conclusion.⁹ Several parts of Hoffmann's novella show how composite evaluations help or hinder the understanding of a situation, depending on the circumstances; but on the whole, Scuderi's intuitive feelings of trust or mistrust do much to aid her understanding by alerting her to salient details about the other characters' personalities, whereas her reasoning — at least initially — is inconclusive or even mistaken.

Before turning to Scuderi's interactions with the other characters, it is appurtenant to survey how she becomes entangled in a murder mystery. The plot of *Das Fräulein von Scuderi* is loosely based on historical events during the reign of Louis XIV, and the titular character is modeled after Madeleine de Scudéry, a popular and successful author of novels. In the novella, lovers carrying gifts of jewelry after dark are being stabbed in the heart or else knocked unconscious, their jewels are stolen, and the attacker always seems to vanish despite the best efforts of the authorities.

The story opens with a nocturnal visit to Scuderi's home by a mysterious man, whom the servants deny an audience with Scuderi herself but who insists on leaving a small box for her. The man's exit is complicated by the fact that there is a citywide curfew in effect, and Hoffmann takes this opportunity to enter a flashback mode that recounts a string of poisonings initiated by Madame de Brinvilliers and the subsequent involvement of the *Chambre ardente*, a special tribunal charged with discovering who is behind the crimes.¹⁰ This narrative provides background

⁹ For further thoughts on how large quantities of information — particularly of the visual and aural variety — are handled in the novella, see Sheila Dickson, "Devil's Advocate? The Artistic Detective in E.T.A. Hoffmann's *Das Fräulein von Scuderi*," *Forum for Modern Language Studies* 29, no. 3 (1993): 246–256. Dickson recognizes the important role of intuition in Scuderi's investigations but views it as subjective, prejudiced, and inferior to more 'rational' — or, in my terms, linear and conscious — thought processes.

¹⁰ An analysis of how early nineteenth-century discourses on the topic of criminal proceedings relate to Hoffmann's depictions of such things in the novella can be found in Antonia Eder, "'Welch dunkles Verhältnis der Dinge': Indizienlese zwischen preußischer Restauration und französischem Idealabsolutismus in E.T.A. Hoffmanns 'Das Fräulein von Scuderi,'" in *Spiegelungen — Brechungen. Frankreichbilder in deutschsprachigen Kulturkontexten*, ed. Veronique Liard (Berlin: Trafo, 2011), 263–285.

for the main plot as well as illustrating the inquisitorial nature of the *Chambre ardente*, which becomes significant later. The exposition of the poisoning affair transitions naturally into an explanation of the circumstances surrounding the murders taking place in the narrative present, which have all of Paris uneasy. King Louis XIV is initially hesitant to give free reign to the — in his eyes overzealous — *Chambre ardente* in the matter of the murders; however, a group of concerned citizens belonging to the class usually targeted by the attacker sends him a poem depicting in dramatic fashion the dangers currently faced by Parisian lovers. Wanting a second opinion on the poem, the king consults first the Marquise de Maintenon, his second wife, and then Scuderi, who also happens to be present at court due to her friendship with Maintenon. Requesting Scuderi's opinion is a logical move, since she is a writer herself, and indeed she replies in writerly fashion with a provocative couplet: "Un amant qui craint les voleurs / n'est point digne d'amour."¹¹ (A lover who fears thieves is not worthy of love.)

The novella then explains that this event had occurred on the day before Scuderi was visited by the insistent stranger, thus bringing the narrative back to the present. The stranger's box turns out to contain a magnificent necklace and bracelets, as well as a letter that begins by quoting the very same couplet which Scuderi had uttered the day before, followed by a message from "die Unsichtbaren" (797) thanking her for influencing the king not to step up the efforts to halt the nighttime attacks. She is quite upset by the interpretation of her "Worte, halb im Scherz hingeworfen" (797) as an apology for the murders. Perhaps she meant them only as a literary device, displaying "ritterlichen Geist" (795), but they had a real-world effect on the king. That the

¹¹ E.T.A. Hoffmann, *Sämtliche Werke in sechs Bänden*, ed. Hartmut Steinecke and Wulf Segebrecht with the cooperation of Gerhard Allroggen, Friedhelm Auhuber, Hartmut Mangold, and Ursula Segebrecht, vol. 4, *Die Serapionsbrüder*, ed. Wulf Segebrecht with the cooperation of Ursula Segebrecht (Frankfurt a.M.: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 2001), 795. Subsequent page numbers given in parentheses within this chapter refer to this volume.

latter is subject to being influenced through narrative forms plays an important role later in the novella, when Scuderi attempts to convince him to pardon Brußon.

Seeking counsel, Scuderi shows the box and its contents to Maintenon, who immediately recognizes the jewelry as the work of René Cardillac, the most renowned artisan in Paris. They summon Cardillac in the hopes that he can name the person for whom he crafted these pieces and thereby provide a lead in the murder case. He tells them that he made these particular pieces only for himself and that they subsequently disappeared from his workshop, whereupon Maintenon and Scuderi assume that they were stolen. Cardillac then offers them as a gift to Scuderi and leaves abruptly in great haste.

This is how Scuderi, somewhat accidentally, finds herself involved in the matter of the murders. She eventually manages to find out what is really going on: there is no band of robbers, as the civil authorities believe, but rather just one, very well-informed killer: René Cardillac himself, whose extreme obsession with his own creations had driven him to commit murder to get them back.¹² Yet although Scuderi unravels the case, she faces at the end of the novella a trying situation in which the plain facts are of little use: Cardillac is fatally stabbed, and his apprentice, Olivier Brußon, who was with him when he died, is incorrectly blamed for his death and imprisoned. Eventually, Brußon's release is secured, though not without considerable difficulties which will be discussed later in this chapter. First, however, it is worth taking a look at Scuderi's interactions with three of the major characters in particular, since the ways in which they affect her are revealing of how intuition functions as a means of evaluating people. The

¹² Cardillac's obsession is, among other things, a reflection of his ideal of radical autonomy in art. Scuderi, whose works garnered broad popular appeal but were generally considered to lack true genius, embodies the other extreme of a highly sociable artistic ideal. However, Burkhard Dohm argues that, albeit modern and radical, Cardillac lacks autonomy as a result of the aftereffects of his prenatal trauma ("Das unwahrscheinliche Wahrscheinliche: zur Plausibilisierung des Wunderbaren in E.T.A. Hoffmanns 'Das Fräulein von Scuderi,'" *Deutsche Vierteljahrsschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Geistesgeschichte* 73, no. 2 (1999): 316).

emotion of trust — which is about deciding whether someone should be believed — is crucial to working out the details of the mystery. Prior to the resolution, Scuderi has cause to question her trust in each of these characters, in some cases due to a conscious thought process and in others due to her intuition. She uses her feelings to guide her towards the solution to the mystery, but not in a vague sense; rather, these “feelings” are actually, on closer analysis, evaluations of character. However, because they are composites based on narratives, they may seem to lack a basis in reason though they actually do not.

The concept of ‘intuition’ certainly applies whenever Scuderi’s “Ahnungen” are mentioned, but in addition, this faculty is often referred to in common speech as a ‘feeling’ that such and such was the case, which seems to apply to several of the usages of “Gefühl” in the novella.¹³ The slightly ambiguous terminology actually suggests productive ways of thinking about intuitions and emotions. While the two can be differentiated in that intuition can be purely cognitive and need not necessarily have an affective component, quite often it does. Furthermore, a defining characteristic of intuition is that it seems to ‘come out of nowhere.’ While some have attributed this to outside influences or supernatural causes, there is no need to do so: intuitions with this quality can be explained as products of evaluations that occur on a subconscious or semiconscious level. Because the subject is not consciously aware of the cognitive steps taken in order to arrive at the conclusion, it seems mysterious. Emotions can and often do occur in the same way.¹⁴

¹³ Examples of “Gefühl” being used to refer not to an affective state, but rather to a cognitive evaluation that something is the case, include la Regnie’s statement about Scuderi’s trust in “Euerm Gefühl, der innern Stimme” (816), as well as the narrative instance’s reference to Scuderi being betrayed “vom innern Gefühl” (817), which had indicated to her that Brußon was innocent; and Brußon’s use of “Gefühl” (824) to refer to his dawning awareness during childhood of his parents’ desperate financial straits.

¹⁴ Both intuitions and emotions, as subconscious processes, fall under the category of what Daniel Kahneman discusses as “System 1,” whereas reasoning, linear thinking is a conscious process that falls under the category of “System 2.” However, Kahneman tends to regard unconscious processes as less complex than conscious ones; for example, he mentions cases in which System 1 erroneously substitutes the answer to a simpler, related question for the more complex answer, which is not readily calculable, but leads to the correct result. While this type of thought error is very helpful in explaining biases, which are a major focus of Kahneman’s research, it constitutes only a subset of the possible ways in which unconscious thought

Intuitions represented in literature can fall anywhere on the scale between the rationally explicable and the outright supernatural, but they usually have at least some degree of mystery to them — again, this sense of ‘coming out of nowhere.’ While it is the case that the origins of Scuderi’s “Ahnungen” are obscure, Hoffmann’s text does in fact provide the necessary components to construct an explanation for them, and thus there is no need to surrender intelligibility.¹⁵ In part, this is the nature of a good detective story: the clues are present all along, but one does not immediately see them. On subsequent readings, with the benefit of hindsight, details that before seemed unimportant take on a new significance.

A. The Guilty One

This is nowhere more applicable than in the case of René Cardillac, the first such character about whom Scuderi has intuitions of a mixed nature. Immediately after Maintenon names Cardillac as the only possible creator of the jewelry delivered to Scuderi, the novella makes a digression (delivered by the third-person omniscient narrative voice) in order to give a general sketch of this character, including a strikingly quotable epithet: “einer der kunstreichsten und zugleich sonderbarsten Menschen seiner Zeit” (799). This not only serves to fill in the reader on some interesting details about this particular character; it is also information about Cardillac’s reputation, which is known “in ganz Paris” (799) and therefore — and most importantly in this

processes can function. This project operates according to the hypothesis that the reverse is very often the case — that unconscious processes, being the result of evaluations on multiple levels, can be just as if not more complex than conscious ones — and explores several examples of this. See Kahneman, *Thinking, Fast and Slow* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2011), 20f. and 12.

¹⁵ The rational explicability of events in the novella is emphasized by Henriette Herwig, “Das Fräulein von Scuderi’: zum Verhältnis von Gattungspoetik, Medizingeschichte und Rechtshistorie in Hoffmanns Erzählung,” in *E.T.A. Hoffmann. Romane und Erzählungen*, ed. Günter Saße (Stuttgart: Reclam, 2004), 208. The opposite claim of irrationality is usually directed at Cardillac’s psychological makeup, not at the internal causal chain of the novella.

context — by Scuderi.¹⁶ This information is in fact what forms the background — the mental landscape, so to speak — for how Scuderi perceives Cardillac in the following scene, Cardillac's audience with Maintenon and Scuderi, which follows directly after the digression.

The description of Cardillac presents a clash of perspectives: on the one hand, one's reputation in society, and on the other hand, the issue of how to read personality through physiognomy, as in this example: "Wäre Cardillac nicht in ganz Paris als der rechtlichste Ehrenmann, uneigennützig, offen, ohne Hinterhalt, stets zu helfen bereit, bekannt gewesen, sein ganz besonderer Blick aus kleinen, tiefliegenden, grün funkelnden Augen hätte ihn in den Verdacht heimlicher Tücke und Bosheit bringen können." (799) In hindsight, of course, this passage has quite a different meaning, since the generally agreed-upon perception of Cardillac turns out to be false. However, it is not entirely clear to whom the other perspective should be attributed. On one level, these are the words of the omniscient narrator, though it is important to note that the narrative instance performs the function of delivering the 'general opinion.' This can be deduced from the fact that the narrator gives Cardillac all of these positive bywords despite 'knowing' that he turns out to be the murderer in the end. However, another possibility is that the subjunctively suggested "Verdacht heimlicher Tücke und Bosheit" actually does exist in people's minds subconsciously but is merely being ignored due to Cardillac's impeccable reputation. This reputation is stronger than any suspicions and is at the forefront of people's thoughts because it is consistent with certain latent beliefs they hold about what constitutes an upstanding citizen. Cardillac creates — with great skill — jewelry that is both pleasing to the eye and useful for winning over a lover; because the Parisians hold the latent beliefs that beautiful objects are

¹⁶ Further discussion of the way appearances drive the society that populates Hoffmann's novella can be found in Landfester, who discusses the reality-distorting aspects of the "Großstadt" as a setting ("Um die Ecke gebrochen," 112); Röder, who examines the hypocrisy of multiple societal factions (*Study of the Major Novellas*, 39–47); and Hartmut Mangold, who describes the atmosphere as "ein Klima allseitigen Mißtrauens" (*Gerechtigkeit durch Poesie: rechtliche Konfliktsituationen und ihre literarische Gestaltung bei E.T.A. Hoffmann* (Wiesbaden: Deutscher Universitäts Verlag, 1989), 262).

valuable and that a man who brings a gift of jewelry is worthy of affection, they hold the creator in high esteem. This is an example of a common social phenomenon whereby an individual who does something of which society approves is therefore automatically assumed to have good character. The cognitive activity behind it constitutes an irrational thought process, since it is based on a false premise that equates the pleasurable with the ethical, thereby shortsightedly confusing individual utility with the general good. Such an assumption indirectly points to a danger in placing too much emphasis on unreflected, unquestioned values: by superficially focusing on their own pleasure to the exclusion of other considerations, the Parisians overlook important aspects of Cardillac's character which have serious consequences. The epithets applied to Cardillac are so similar that they start to sound hollow after a few repetitions, as if people were merely reciting from a memorized, internalized script. A stark contrast forms when Count Miossens then inverts the practice near the end of the novella by calling him "der verruchteste, heuchlerisch[s]te Bösewicht" (845), an epithet that emphasizes the discrepancy between expectation and actuality.

Returning to the passage quoted above that describes Cardillac's eyes and gaze, it is interesting to note the way that physical appearance is presumed to be connected with certain personality characteristics.¹⁷ Such references are quite problematic: on the one hand, the notion that people with beady green eyes are any sneakier or more malevolent than others is obviously outdated and absurd; on the other hand, there is no clear line in the text between description of physical characteristics and interpretation. Specifically, the comment about "sein[en] ganz besondere[n] Blick" seems to be less about how Cardillac's eyes are than about how he uses them — in other words, it is about his expression, which could potentially give information about his

¹⁷ On the role of physiognomic evaluations in the novella, see also Kremer, *Erzählungen und Romane*, 157; and Caroline Gommel, *Prosa wird Musik: von Hoffmanns "Fräulein von Scuderi" zu Hindemiths "Cardillac"* (Freiburg im Breisgau: Rombach, 2002), 114.

inner state. Although there is not enough information in this particular passage to make any definitive claims, a usual interpretation of body language is that a person who has something to hide might tend to look around carefully in order to notice anything that has the potential to expose him. This could suggest a sneaky disposition, though only in combination with other aspects of behavior, since there might be other reasons for an individual to cast about his gaze. Reading appearances can thus also, like intuitions and emotions, be an issue of making a composite evaluation.

By providing an extended digression on Cardillac's various personal characteristics, what the narrative in effect accomplishes is to share with the reader the information available to Scuderi, and thus allow for an understanding of why she reacts to him in the way that she does. Basically, she attributes his strange behavior to artistic eccentricity, since he has a reputation for that, and neither finds it suspicious nor feels compelled to look deeper into the matter. But as it turns out, Cardillac's particular form of eccentricity has all along been linked to the aspect of his personality that drives him to become a murderer and a thief.¹⁸ Cardillac is rather a case of an individual being misinterpreted by society in general. His 'reputation' is based more on how people want him to be than on his behaviors and actions. Society fits him into its pre-existing idea of 'the artist.' Cardillac is particularly susceptible to this sort of simplistic categorization because, as artists go, he is of a variety that is particularly welcome to society: he makes objects that are a source of pleasure to all, not just to a select few, and he is not the sort of artist who provokes people or makes them feel uncomfortable and question themselves. Even eccentricity can become a stereotype in the hands of a thoughtless society. Society fits what it sees into its vision of 'the

¹⁸ The question of whether Cardillac is accountable for his actions is beyond the scope of this analysis, but has been dealt with in numerous other studies; see, for example, Herwig, "Gattungspoetik, Medizingeschichte und Rechtshistorie," 209; Christian Jürgens, *Das Theater der Bilder: ästhetische Modelle und literarische Konzepte in den Texten E.T.A. Hoffmanns* (Heidelberg: Manutius, 2003), 79–81; and Röder, *Study of the Major Novellas*, 46f.

eccentric artist,' all the while failing to recognize the specific features of this particular eccentric — namely, the element of dangerous pathological compulsion.

After Cardillac's abrupt departure, Maintenon teases Scuderi about having an admirer, since Cardillac's behavior towards her did bear a certain superficial resemblance to that of an infatuated lover. (Or, at any rate, it seemed to indicate that he was experiencing a strong passion; however, the characters are not able to differentiate romantic passion from an artistic passion that has become twisted into a pathological obsession.) By so doing, Maintenon imagines Cardillac's awkwardness as fitting into a familiar category, even though she knows that this cannot be the real reason behind it. Scuderi is less sanguine about aspects of his behavior that seem not to fit the situation, though she, too, feels compelled by her established favorable opinion to mistrust her own misgivings:

Und nun hat selbst Cardillacs Betragen, ich muß es gestehen, für mich etwas sonderbar Ängstliches und Unheimliches. Nicht erwehren kann ich mir einer dunklen Ahnung, daß hinter diesem allem irgend ein grauenvolles, entsetzliches Geheimnis verborgen, und bringe ich mir die ganze Sache recht deutlich vor Augen mit jedem Umstande, so kann ich doch wieder gar nicht auch nur ahnen, worin das Geheimnis bestehe, und wie überhaupt der ehrliche, wackere Meister René, das Vorbild eines guten, frommen Bürgers, mit irgend etwas Bösem, Verdammlichem zu tun haben soll. (805)

With the benefit of hindsight, this passage is revealing of possible ways in which an intuitive thought process can coexist with an operation of conscious reasoning. Scuderi's "Ahnung" is her intuition about Cardillac's behavior. Because his apparent turmoil while presenting Scuderi with the jewelry is out of proportion to the immediate surroundings, it is reasonable to conclude — assuming intelligibility — that Cardillac has some other, internal cause for his agitation. That this should occur in the present situation — that is, in the context of the jewelry murders — is a coincidence that Scuderi's intuitive thought processes might well regard as suspicious. However, her intuition coexists with her regard for Cardillac, which, as noted, is based on his reputation. Scuderi can reach no conclusion in her conscious thoughts because her intuition to mistrust

Cardillac conflicts with her belief in his reputable character; and as yet, she can see no cause for favoring either interpretation over the other.

The novella does not simply present Scuderi's intuition as fact; rather, it is possible to reconstruct from the text the thought processes behind it. The narrative perspective follows Scuderi closely, and much of the information it imparts may be attributed to her; so, for example, in the scene with Cardillac, there are a number of details to unsettle her. Cardillac displays "ein häßliches Lächeln" (802) as he acknowledges that he made the jewelry; and when he adds that he made it for himself, Scuderi is "voll banger Erwartung" (803), presumably because she fears that this connects him with the string of murders. However, she is all too ready to believe Cardillac's lie that the jewelry disappeared from his workshop. In some sense, the jewelry did "disappear," though of course Cardillac knows very well who is responsible; and it is Scuderi, not Cardillac, who labels it "das Eigentum, das Euch verruchte Spitzbuben raubten" — as if she were completing the tale that the general populace would wish to believe about Cardillac. After all, he is seen as "das Vorbild eines guten, frommen Bürgers." Furthermore, after Scuderi explains how she came into possession of the jewelry, Cardillac shows physical signs which, because the narrative perspective revolves around Scuderi, we may presume are perceived by her as well: "Als nun die Scuderi geendet, war es, als kämpfe Cardillac mit ganz besonderen Gedanken, die während dessen ihm gekommen, und als wolle irgend ein Entschluß sich nicht fügen und fördern. Er rieb sich die Stirne, er seufzte, er fuhr mit der Hand über die Augen, wohl gar um hervorbrechenden Tränen zu steuern." (803) These gestures are signs of internal emotional turmoil, and would likewise factor into Scuderi's intuition that something is amiss with the jeweller. There is nothing in the passage to indicate what these "thoughts" are, but the "decision" turns out to consist in presenting Scuderi with the jewels as a gift. This action, however, triggers a rapid string of emotionally laden reactions, which the text conveys in a visually arresting manner through dashes: "nun stürzte

Cardillac nieder auf die Knie — küßte der Scuderi den Rock — die Hände — stöhnte — seufzte — weinte — schluchzte — sprang auf — rannte wie unsinnig, Sessel — Tische umstürzend, daß Porzellan, Gläser zusammenklirrten, in toller Hast von dannen. —” (804) Nevertheless, Scuderi is, at this point in the novella, not yet able to connect her suspicions with anything concrete. Her conflictedness persists into the following evening: although she makes light of the incident in poetic form for the amusement of the court, the text describes her state of mind while doing so as: “alle Schauer unheimlicher Ahnung besiegend” (806). Otherwise, however, there are no further immediate consequences, since the narrative jumps ahead several months to the next relevant occurrence.

B. The Innocent One

The second character about whom Scuderi has specific intuitions is Madelon Cardillac, daughter of the jeweller. Madelon is in love with and engaged to Olivier Brußon, and is convinced of his innocence. The intensity of her feelings for him is what initially persuades Scuderi to concern herself with his fate. Scuderi’s intuitions about Madelon are unequivocally positive. She, the narrative instance, and Brußon are all of one accord in extolling Madelon’s beauty, virtue, piety, youth, and innocence; she is described as “den unschuldsvollen Engel” (810), an “Engelsbild” (825), “das fromme, engelsreine Kind” (830), “das Himmelskind” (847), and an “Engelskind” (849). Trusting that Madelon really is as sweet and innocent as she appears is important because it forms the origin of Scuderi’s interest in Brußon’s fate and provides the motivation for her engagement on his behalf. The fact that Madelon loves Brußon lends credibility to his claims of innocence; in other words, if Madelon is a guileless person, then her attraction to him suggests that he possesses a similar character. She might be mistaken and have fallen for a scoundrel, of course, but more often, like attracts like, as Scuderi tries to explain to Chambre ardente president

la Regnie as a reason for her belief in Brußon's innocence: "Madelons tugendhaftes Herz, das gleiche Tugend in dem unglücklichen Brußon erkannte!" (848)

The hierarchization of ideas also plays a role in Scuderi's consideration of whether to trust in Madelon or not. Scuderi not only listens to Madelon's account of the events on the night of Cardillac's death, but also makes inquiries of the servants and the neighbors. With all of this information at her disposal, she seeks to form an idea of the relationships between the three people involved in the incident. As a result, she contemplates two ideas: on the one hand, the possibility that Brußon might possess a violent temper, and on the other hand, the image of domestic harmony presented by Madelon: "Doch je begeisterter Madelon von dem ruhigen häuslichen Glück sprach, in dem die drei Menschen in innigster Liebe verbunden lebten, desto mehr verschwand jeder Schatten des Verdachts wider den auf den Tod angeklagten Olivier." (812)

This passage describes how Scuderi's thought process is ultimately swayed in the direction of believing Madelon. It is necessary to use a word like 'sway' rather than something more decisive such as 'convince' because Scuderi's mental landscape includes inclinations both trustful and mistrustful. To 'convince' suggests that one idea displaces another, thus leaving no room for the coexistence of multiple, conflicting ideas. Here, the first possibility — that Brußon might have struck Cardillac down in a moment of anger — is a stock idea based on generalizations about what people sometimes do. It is only salient insofar as it might provide a motive for a vicious deed; however, this depends on that interpretation being valid, and there turns out to be nothing to corroborate it in any of the testimonies which Scuderi collects. Since it receives no sustenance or confirmation through actual facts, it fades into the background. Based on these initial interactions with Madelon, Scuderi decides to try to intervene on Brußon's behalf, but her view of the case faces further challenges.

During her audience with la Regnie, in which she pleads Brußon's case and asks to speak with him, Scuderi must also acknowledge that the legal — that is, predominantly reason-based and linear as opposed to intuitive and composite — view of the case has a certain compelling quality:

In der Tat konnte sich die Scuderi von der Schuld des jungen Menschen nicht überzeugen. Alles sprach wider ihn, ja kein Richter in der Welt hätte anders gehandelt, wie la Regnie, bei solch entscheidenden Tatsachen. Aber das Bild häuslichen Glücks, wie es Madelon mit den lebendigsten Zügen der Scuderi vor Augen gestellt, überstrahlte jeden bösen Verdacht, und so mochte sie lieber ein unerklärliches Geheimnis annehmen, als daran glauben, wogegen ihr ganzes Inneres sich empörte. (817)

Once again, Scuderi's inner evaluation of events conflicts with an alternative conclusion — here, one which lays claim to a higher degree of legitimacy on the grounds that conclusions reached according to the methods of legal discourse are based on linear reason, that it is therefore clear what their terms are, and that they are therefore transparent. The legal viewpoint does not have the messiness of intuition. It purports to create order out of untidy facts. In this case, however, the facts available to the legal mode of evaluation are not exhaustive — as becomes clear by the end of the novella.¹⁹ The composite evaluation formed by Scuderi's interior may well be persistent in her mind — “outshining” every suspicion — because, in comparison to the ‘factual’ evaluation, it has room to accommodate more data: impressions of Madelon, statements of neighbors, etc. But her intuitions are severely shaken upon recognizing Brußon as the mysterious person who had given her the letter in her carriage, and thus also identical with the mysterious visitor who had delivered the jewels. This connection appears to her as a nearly certain proof that he must be a member of the band of murderous thieves. This causes an inversion of her perspective: instead of relying on intuitions generated by personal interviews with Madelon to assure herself of

¹⁹ The contrast between Scuderi, whose investigative method relies heavily on intuition, and the *Chambre ardente*, which claims to have ‘reason’ wholly on its side, is explored in Thiemo Jeck, *Die Anfänge der Kriminalpsychologie: zur Verbindung der schönen Literatur und der Kriminologie in der Romantik und dem Sturm und Drang* (Berlin: Köster, 2010), esp. 73.

Brußon's innocence, Scuderi now believes based on her contact with Brußon that he must be guilty, which would mean that she was mistaken about Madelon:

Sie gab Raum dem entsetzlichen Verdacht, daß Madelon mit verschworen sein und Teil haben könne an der gräßlichen Blutschuld. Wie es denn geschieht, daß der menschliche Geist, ist ihm ein Bild aufgegangen, emsig Farben sucht und findet, es greller und greller auszumalen, so fand auch die Scuderi, jeden Umstand der Tat, Madelons Betragen in den kleinsten Zügen erwägend, gar Vieles, jenen Verdacht zu nähren. (818)

This and the following passage describe how Scuderi reinterprets the data she had previously gathered as hypocrisy, shifting the meaning of each detail that had contributed to her evaluation of Madelon's character in order to make them all fit the opposite evaluation of Brußon as guilty. Yet the composite image that emerges does not have enough persuasive power to settle her mind, even though the seeming proof of Brußon's guilt continues to present a significant obstacle to alternative views:

Ganz zerrissen im Innern, entzweit mit allem Irdischen, wünschte die Scuderi, nicht mehr in einer Welt voll höllischen Truges zu leben. Sie klagte das Verhängnis an, das in bitterm Hohn ihr so viele Jahre vergönnt, ihren Glauben an Tugend und Treue zu stärken, und nun in ihrem Alter das schöne Bild vernichte, welches ihr im Leben geleuchtet. (818f.)

The belief that she has been mistaken about Madelon sets off an internal crisis for Scuderi because she believes her intuitions about people to be consistently accurate: "So bitter noch nie vom innern Gefühl getäuscht [...] verzweifelte die Scuderi an aller Wahrheit" (817f.) — so certain is she of her own abilities. Although some people are not so skilled at judging the character of others, Scuderi has empirical experience, gathered over many decades, that her intuitions are reliable. However, her evaluation changes again as she hears Madelon's exclamations of despair: "Die Töne drangen der Scuderi ins Herz, und aufs neue regte sich aus dem tiefsten Innern heraus die Ahnung eines Geheimnisses, der Glaube an Oliviers Unschuld." The consequence of Scuderi's stirrings of intuition is that she agrees to Brußon's (and the Chambre ardente's) request for a private interview. The audience with Brußon ultimately allows Scuderi to refine her intuitive

evaluation of his character, thus providing her with more concrete data than a second-hand trust based on Madelon's assurances.

In the case of Madelon as opposed to that of Cardillac, both Scuderi and the 'eye of society' or 'general opinion' come up with what, in the end, proves to be an accurate evaluation: Madelon is an innocent. Only the authorities are suspicious of her; however, this view is not shared by the populace, and merely reflects poorly on the *Chambre ardente*. Comments by the police officer Desgrais show a tendency, not lost on Scuderi, to care more about producing results in his police work than about serving justice: "Nun weint und heult sie, und schreit einmal übers andere, daß Olivier unschuldig sei, ganz unschuldig. Am Ende weiß sie von der Tat und ich muß sie auch nach der *Conciergerie* bringen lassen.' Desgrais warf, als er dies sprach, einen tückischen, schadenfrohen Blick auf das Mädchen, vor dem die Scuderi erbebte." (809) La Regnie, while not as overtly bloodthirsty as Desgrais, remains, in his own restrained way, just as unmoved by Scuderi's methods of inquiry: "Gewiß, sprach er, gewiß wollt Ihr nun, mein würdiges Fräulein, Euerm Gefühl, der innern Stimme mehr vertrauend als dem, was vor unsern Augen geschehen, selbst Oliviers Schuld oder Unschuld prüfen." (816f.) La Regnie implies here that he would sooner trust what he sees, and there is just a hint of condescension in his statement, because even though he uses the formula "mein würdiges Fräulein" to indicate that his respect for Scuderi's reputation predisposes him to acquiesce to her request, the fact that he points out her gender suggests that it is partly to humor her, and that he buys into the dichotomy according to which men reason and women feel. But the eyes can be deceptive. The eyes merely see, but the inner 'feeling' evaluates information from all sources. What is relevant is not merely what is happening before one's face — for this is a kind of superficiality — but the way in which present events fit into larger contexts and patterns of behavior. La Regnie's attempt to discount Scuderi's efforts is a bit absurd: she is using all of her faculties to analyze the case, and the text immediately preceding

this scene contains a page-long description of the detective-like steps she took to interview people and gather evidence.

Madelon is somewhat troubling as a character because she appears to be little more than a concentration of nineteenth-century (and older) stereotypes about young women.²⁰ However, there is reason to think that her character is not — or at least has the potential not to be — quite as flat and straightforward as it at first appears. Although Desgrais's suspicion of Madelon seems to be motivated by his own *schadenfreude*, the somewhat less hasty la Regnie does have a point: "Was ist ihr an dem Vater gelegen, nur dem Mordbuben gelten ihre Tränen." (816) Indeed, she does seem more upset about Brußon's imprisonment than about her father's death. Her single-minded focus on her lover was noted by her father as well, who explained it to Brußon thus:

Gleich als du fort warst, fiel sie mir zu Füßen, umschlang meine Knie und und gestand unter tausend Tränen, daß sie ohne dich nicht leben könne. Ich dachte, sie bilde sich das nur ein, wie es denn bei jungen verliebten Dingen zu geschehen pflegt, daß sie gleich sterben wollen, wenn das erste Milchgesicht sie freundlich angeblickt. Aber in der Tat, meine Madelon wurde siech und krank, und wie ich ihr denn das tolle Zeug ausreden wollte, rief sie hundertmal deinen Namen. Was konnt' ich endlich tun, wollt' ich sie nicht verzweifeln lassen. Gestern Abend sagt' ich ihr, ich willige in Alles und werde dich heute holen. Da ist sie über Nacht aufgeblüht wie eine Rose, und harrt nun auf dich ganz außer sich vor Liebessehnsucht. (829)

Interestingly, Cardillac's comment about infatuated young people demonstrates that this novella does not take place in a completely unskeptical universe, totally taken in by the notion of 'the first love.' The fact that Madelon actually does pine for Brußon — against her father's expectation — suggests that there is something out of the ordinary about her attachment. Since the Cardillac arc of the plot is concerned with issues of hereditary transmission, it is therefore incumbent to

²⁰ Helmut Müller notes the "klischeehafte Idealität" of the character Madelon in *Untersuchungen zum Problem der Formelhaftigkeit bei E.T.A. Hoffmann* (Bern: P. Haupt, 1964), 88.

wonder whether Madelon may not have inherited something of her father's obsessiveness, just as he inherited it from his mother.²¹

The family trait — or curse, or “böser Stern” (832) — is essentially a tendency to form a fixation. On the surface, the fixation seems to apply only to objects, specifically jewels. However, on closer inspection, there is a narrative element involved. It cannot be a coincidence that the jewel to which Cardillac's mother finds herself drawn is hanging around the neck of a man with whom she has a history: “Derselbe Cavalier hatte vor mehreren Jahren, als meine Mutter noch nicht verheiratet, ihrer Tugend nachgestellt, war aber mit Abscheu zurückgewiesen worden.” (832) Now, Cardillac's mother suddenly sees the cavalier as “ein Wesen höherer Art, den Inbegriff aller Schönheit” (832), supposedly due to the visual effects of the jewel. The implausibility of such a dramatic transformation, however, is an invitation to read the scene as desire displaced onto the jewel.²² Her “Abscheu” was perhaps as much an abhorrence of her own desire for someone willing to take advantage of her without regard for the societal consequences as it was a disgust for the man himself.

In *Das Fräulein von Scuderi*, the repressed desires of one generation are transferred to the next, becoming even more twisted and warped in the process.²³ Cardillac narrates his history as if his obsession were simply inborn, citing a piece of wisdom about transference from pregnant women to their progeny; while that seems to have been a contributing factor (according to the

²¹ Jürgens (*Das Theater der Bilder*, 36f.) offers one perspective on the transferral from mother to son. Dennis Lemmler points out the similar process of “inheritance” that had occurred among the poisoners who occasioned the creation of the *Chambre ardente* (*Verdrängte Künstler, Blut-Brüder, Serapiontische Erzieher: die Familie im Werk E.T.A. Hoffmanns* (Bielefeld: Aisthesis, 2001), 334).

²² Jewels in this text function as highly effective symbolic repositories; see, for example, the way in which Scuderi comes to view Cardillac's gift as stained with the blood of the murder victims (805). See James M. McGlathery for a discussion of the transferral of desire to the jewels in the story about Cardillac's mother (*Mysticism and sexuality, E.T.A. Hoffmann* (Las Vegas: Lang, 1981), 121). Stefan Bergström points out that “stone and metal” likewise serve symbolic functions in Hoffmann's tale *Die Bergwerke zu Falun*, which he wrote around the same time as *Das Fräulein von Scuderi* (*Between real and unreal: a thematic study of E.T.A. Hoffmann's "Die Serapionsbrüder"* (New York: P. Lang, 1999), 83).

²³ A discussion of historical understandings of prenatal influence that may have informed Hoffmann's novella can be found in Dohm, “Das unwahrscheinliche Wahrscheinliche,” 300–311.

logic of this novella, anyway), he has also left something out: his mother, or someone else, evidently told him the story of the encounter with the cavalier during her pregnancy. In other words, there is an environmental influence at work on Cardillac as well, since he has knowledge of this narrative.²⁴ The power of suggestion may thus also have contributed to the direction which his obsessive tendency ultimately took.²⁵ It is therefore not unreasonable to fear that if Madelon were to learn the narrative of her father's obsession, it might awaken in her a similar twisting and warping of her own passionate nature.²⁶ But if, on the other hand, she can be kept from this knowledge, then her obsession can be lived out in a more or less innocuous way by possessing its object: Brußon — that is, if his life can be saved. Brußon's rigid determination that Madelon should never learn her of her father's misdeeds, even at the cost of his own life, might seem excessive. One might think: surely she would get over it eventually; or, surely the loss of her lover would be a comparable emotional blow. However, the logic of the narrative suggests that Brußon might be justified. This represents an exploratory moment in which the narrative puts forth a hypothesis about how the mind functions, thus making the hypothesis available for consideration of its plausibility. The concerns of those closest to Madelon crisscross: Cardillac was convinced that she would die without Brußon, while Brußon is convinced that she would die if she learned the truth about Cardillac. And perhaps they are both correct. If this is the case, then there is an urgency to Brußon's concern that she be kept ignorant.²⁷ Supposing that she does carry in her the

²⁴ Lothar Pikulik ("Das Verbrechen aus Obsession: E.T.A. Hoffmann, 'Das Fräulein von Scuderi' (1819)," in *Deutsche Novellen. Von der Klassik bis zur Gegenwart*, ed. Winfried Freund (Munich: Fink, 1993), 49) and Kremer (*Erzählungen und Romane*, 149f.) also note the narrative basis for Cardillac's obsession. Bergengruen argues that hereditary transference in the novella functions according to a narrative rather than a biological logic ("Das monströse Erbe," 235–237).

²⁵ See page 88 for further discussion of the mechanics of suggestion.

²⁶ As Röder argues, Cardillac also seems concerned that Madelon could inherit the family curse, and for this reason instructs Brußon to destroy the jewels upon his death (*Study of the Major Novellas*, 46).

²⁷ Compare Lemmler, who sees more potential danger for Madelon in being kept ignorant (*Verdrängte Künstler*, 339).

potential for obsession that ruined her father and grandmother, then Brußon's worries would not be out of proportion.

C. The Suspicious One

Olivier Brußon, as the third primary player in this family drama, is likewise an object of Scuderi's evaluation, and his case is fraught with the most difficulty. Although Scuderi's intuitions also generate conflicting evaluations about Cardillac, by the time she realizes the need to contemplate these in earnest, he is already dead. Her intuitions about Madelon tend in one direction only, and she can scarcely entertain the idea of them being mistaken. Brußon, on the other hand, is entangled in several narratives that swing Scuderi's level of trust back and forth between extremes. Her reactions to him are shaped by two recognitions: recognizing Brußon as the mysterious stranger who had delivered two messages, and recognizing him as the son of her foster daughter with whom she had lost contact years earlier.

The recognition of her personal connection to Brußon does not occur to Scuderi consciously until the scene in which he is brought to her residence to "confess." Unconscious stirrings of recognition, however, begin as soon as she sees his face — when he delivers a message urging her to return the jewels to Cardillac, which she is unable to accomplish on the following day. As the mind continues to work even in sleep, an intuition that the situation is extremely urgent asserts itself in her dreams, demanding her attention: "Den leisesten Schlummer störten ängstliche Träume, es war ihr, als habe sie leichtsinnig, ja strafwürdig versäumt, die Hand hilfreich zu erfassen, die der Unglückliche, in den Abgrund versinkend, nach ihr emporgestreckt, ja als sei es an ihr gewesen, irgend einem verderblichen Ereignis, einem heillosen Verbrechen zu steuern!" (808) The terminology used in this passage is suggestive of Scuderi's thoughts revising themselves from a general to a judicial context: "leichtsinnig" is intensified to "strafwürdig" and

the “verderbliches Ereignis” becomes a “Verbrechen.” The discovery on the following day that Cardillac has been killed during the night and Brußon arrested is confirmation that her intuition was right to fear an impending crime, though not of the sort the authorities suspect.

The mysteriousness attendant upon Scuderi’s interactions with Brußon has salience because mystery entails the promise or threat of a narrative behind it, which assures that it is apt to receive attention. The ways in which the situation presents itself to Scuderi — as a “dunkles Verhältnis der Dinge,” “die leiseste Ahnung” (807), or “eine dunkle Erinnerung” (808) — are all signs of her mind attempting to reach a conclusion about what is going on around her; however, some key information is not yet available. In the case of the latter — the “dunkle Erinnerung [...] als habe sie dies Antlitz, diese Züge schon gesehen” — the circumstances have not quite aligned so as to pull the memory of Brußon the child from the unconscious, temporally distant background into the conscious, present foreground of her mind. And before this recognition can take place, the other one intervenes. When she sees Brußon in the setting of the prison, which is more suggestive of sinister goings-on, it triggers her recognition of him as the same person who delivered the message and the jewels. Prior to this moment, her mental narrative about the mysterious but vaguely familiar nighttime visitor was entirely separate from the mental narrative she had been forming about Madelon’s fiancé. The moment in which these two ideas collide gives Scuderi a shock because if the messenger and Olivier Brußon are the same person, then the messages prove that he knew something about the jewel murders, which causes the *Chambre ardente*’s tale to make a leap in plausibility.²⁸

²⁸ The collision of two narratives that occurs here bears some resemblance to the superimposition of two narratives at the conclusion of *Brigitta*; see page 120. Scuderi’s shock is akin to a feeling of surprise (i.e., the topic of chapter three), but mixed with strong feelings of revulsion under these circumstances. Another significant difference, of course, is that one of Scuderi’s narratives proves to be inaccurate and the shock therefore unfounded.

The authorities had come up with an explanation of how the slaying of Cardillac transpired that is possible, but they do little to test whether it is likely. As long as it fits the most prominent facts, they are satisfied and demand no more; Scuderi, on the other hand, approached them on the suspicion that there might be obscure facts which would turn out to have more bearing on the matter: “Sie gedachte, sich von Olivier noch einmal Alles, wie es sich in jener verhängnisvollen Nacht begeben, erzählen zu lassen, und so viel möglich in ein Geheimnis zu dringen, das vielleicht den Richtern verschlossen geblieben, weil es wertlos schien, sich weiter darum zu bekümmern.” (817) During the interrogations, Brußon breaks down because there seems to be a hole in his story, since he cannot reveal why exactly he was following Cardillac without giving everything away, which he is determined not to do for Madelon’s sake. La Regnie is correct in suspecting that Brußon is hiding something, but he guesses wrong as to what it is. Without asking the question of whether a person’s character is trustworthy, the distinction between a malicious and a benign secret is elided entirely. From an idealized legal standpoint, trust does not count, only facts. However, trust is what motivates and guides Scuderi along paths of inquiry that eventually allow her to uncover all of the pertinent facts.

Of course, this also depends on other characters trusting her, too. Brußon confides in her his story, trusting that she will honor his request to keep Cardillac’s true nature from becoming publicly known. His confidence in her is based on their personal connection, which he remembers, though Scuderi cannot consciously bring it to mind until he is brought to her house to tell his story. Scuderi’s second moment of recognition in regard to Brußon is thus in the setting of her home, rather than a prison, which is much more conducive to memories of and associations with familial relationships such as that of her long-lost foster daughter. Even though the actual recognition only occurs when Brußon says the name of his mother (though one

probably ought to make some allowance for Scuderi's age), just seeing Brußon in these surroundings brings her to the verge of remembering, before he opens his mouth:

Selbst bei den entstellten, ja durch Gram, durch grimmen Schmerz verzerrten Zügen strahlte der reine Ausdruck des treuesten Gemüts aus dem Jünglingsantlitz. Je länger die Scuderi ihre Augen auf Brußons Gesicht ruhen ließ, desto lebhafter trat die Erinnerung an irgend eine geliebte Person hervor, auf die sie sich nur nicht deutlich zu besinnen vermochte. Alle Schauer wichen von ihr, sie vergaß, daß Cardillacs Mörder vor ihr knie, sie sprach mit dem anmutigen Tone des ruhigen Wohlwollens, der ihr eigen (821).

This scene is the first time Scuderi has a chance to examine Brußon's features for any duration; at their first meeting, he merely threw a note into her carriage and vanished into the crowd, and at the second, she fainted. Since the relevant information is buried in the background of her mind, recalling it is a gradual process. The use of "hervortreten" to describe how the memory returns emphasizes the metaphorical 'distance' between cognitive components that are present to consciousness and those that are not, such as this half-remembered connection with the three-year-old Olivier Brußon.

After listening to the adult version tell what transpired between himself and Cardillac, Scuderi forms a fervent desire to see Brußon exonerated in spite of her shock and mistrust upon recognizing him in prison, and in spite of the case being unclear from an ethical standpoint. Although Brußon is not guilty of murdering Cardillac, the crime of which he is accused, he could be held responsible for the jewel murders, since he had learned that Cardillac was the killer and did not go to the authorities — indeed, he would likely be deemed an accomplice according to the law. There are two main issues to consider regarding Brußon's decision not to report Cardillac. Firstly, Brußon himself attributes it to the fact that he is in love with Madelon and believes that if she found out the truth about her father, it would wreck her emotionally and lead to her death. Of course, this is ethically problematic to place the well-being of one beloved person over the lives of numerous strangers. The second consideration, though, is that reporting Cardillac to the

authorities might not have halted the murders at all, since Brußon's accusation might well be disbelieved. Several factors support this thesis: the reputation of the *Chambre ardente* as an inquisitorial body, Count Miossens' unwillingness to let his actions become known, and the threat Cardillac makes that any accusation would fall back on Brußon's own head. In doing so, Cardillac can rely on the strength of his reputation with the citizens of Paris: "Eigentlich, spricht Cardillac weiter, eigentlich, Olivier, macht es dir Ehre, wenn du bei mir arbeitest, bei mir, dem berühmtesten Meister seiner Zeit, überall hochgeachtet wegen seiner Treue und Rechtschaffenheit, so daß jede böse Verleumdung schwer zurückfallen würde auf das Haupt des Verleumders" (829). Reputation is not granted on the basis of virtue, yet it grants the recipient immunity to claims of lacking it.²⁹ Even belonging to the nobility and being an officer of the king's guard does not give Miossens — Cardillac's actual killer, though it was in self-defense — the confidence that his reputation could stand up to that of the master artisan; plus, he shares with many Parisians a fear of overzealous authorities: "Hätte la Regnie, überall Verbrechen witternd, mir's denn geradehin geglaubt, wenn ich den rechtschaffenen Cardillac, das Muster aller Frömmigkeit und Tugend, des versuchten Mordes angeklagt?" (844) Thus there are sufficient grounds to take seriously Cardillac's blackmailing of Brußon. However, one could argue that the latter ought to have made other attempts to halt the murders prior to his visit to Scuderi. Despite the fact that Scuderi does not hesitate to refer to Brußon's execution as "das himmelsschreiende Unrecht" (840), his actions are ethically ambiguous enough that they could reasonably be expected to appear blameworthy to a third party. Furthermore, the belief that Brußon does not deserve execution depends on a trust in his intentions, because even though the available

²⁹ In this context, it is interesting to consider Liebrand's discussion of the ambiguities of Cardillac's relationship to society (*Aporie des Kunstmythos*, 183f.); the parallels between his activities as a murderous artist and the activities of the aristocratic poisoners described at the beginning of the novella show that he is a reflection of this society, thus providing yet another factor in explaining society's profound resistance to and denial of the truth about the goldsmith's nature.

evidence — specifically Miossens' testimony and the presence of the secret passage and jewel cabinet in Cardillac's house — is compatible with Brußon's story, a version of events in which Brußon was an accomplice is equally possible, if he were lying. By this point in the novella, however, Scuderi can cite numerous bits of evidence that speak to Brußon's character: her own memories of him as a toddler, the fact that he was the son of caring parents, Madelon's recommendation, the openness he displays during the interview in her home, and the "selige Vergessenheit" (840) of the two lovers. These things, taken together, form a basis for trusting that Brußon is a well-meaning person. The question then becomes whether she can bring a third party — King Louis XIV, as it turns out — to look favorably on him despite lacking access to these pieces of knowledge. On the disadvantageous side, there is his handling of the Cardillac situation to consider, which was not irreproachable. Scuderi's belief that he should not be punished is a composite evaluation of these factors, some of which are positive, some negative, and some ambiguous. In addition, several of these factors are themselves based on narratives and thus have an inherent complexity to them. Traditionally understood reason, as a form of thinking, would attempt to express these in a logically precise statement, and in so doing, would have to somehow quantify the influence of each the factors on Scuderi's evaluation of Brußon.³⁰ This would quickly run into absurdities because the evaluative weighting involved here is a matter of relative, not absolute, intensities. There are no clear-cut relationships between the various terms, so they cannot be expressed as an equation, but instead only as a narrative which describes the relative intensities of the factors and their relation to one another. For example, Scuderi's familial tie to Brußon carries a lot of weight with her, but not with the king, because this factor draws its salience from its numerous interconnections with the history of how she raised her foster daughter from a child and the investment of time and care that went into this relationship, all of

³⁰ The insufficiencies of logic and their consequences for the narrative strategy of the novella are discussed in Gommel, *Prosa wird Musik*, 53.

which the king does not share. Mental connections such as these form the basis for meaningfulness, which is essentially the condition of being interwoven with one's individual narratives.³¹ They also form the substratum for emotional intensity, since a large part of emotion's function is to hierarchize mental components and direct attention to what is important.³²

II. Whether To Pardon? — A Question of Sympathy

The interchange between Scuderi and King Louis XIV in which she attempts to secure a pardon for Olivier Brußon reveals much about how the mental 'foreground' and 'background' can have effects on the formation of emotions.³³ Scuderi knows that despite her firm conviction that Brußon deserves to be pardoned, his situation presents a different face to others, at least initially. And even apart from the king's disgust at the whole situation, there are reasons for him not to want to pardon Brußon. It has already been mentioned that Cardillac's reputation has a great power to resist any accusations; in fact, even the king would hesitate to challenge this reputation, since it would be unpleasant if public opinion turned against him on the belief that he had let Cardillac's murderer go free. The lawyer d'Andilly sums up Scuderi's task, which is not to make an argument, but rather to engage the king's sympathy: "Keinen Rechtsspruch, aber des Königs Entscheidung, auf inneres Gefühl, das da, wo der Richter strafen muß, Gnade ausspricht, gestützt, kann das alles begründen." (846) Thus this is a case of making an emotional appeal, which is an operation that has historically been the target of much criticism; and in fact, Scuderi's story is explicitly called a "Falle" (848) at one point. Before dismissing it as manipulative, however, it ought at least to be subjected to a thorough analysis of what is happening in terms of cognitive

³¹ See page 123.

³² "The emotions in life and in art have the function of focusing attention." Noël Carroll, "Art, Narrative, and Emotion," in *Emotion and the Arts*, ed. Mette Hjort and Sue Laver (New York: Oxford UP, 1997), 192.

³³ See page 20.

work.³⁴ Two opportunities to better understand mental hierarchies present themselves: not only does Scuderi proceed in accordance with the way hierarchies are established, thereby calling attention to their mechanisms, but also the momentary shifts in the king's attitudes enable inferences into how information is hierarchized within the brain according to properties of association, temporal immediacy, and emotional intensity.

What is at stake in a mental hierarchy is the distribution of attention. In a pandemonium model, the most emotionally charged cognitive component receives the most attention, thus allowing for a non-binary decision between multiple cognitive elements competing for attention simultaneously. The scene between Scuderi and the king is an exemplary demonstration of how, in Noël Carroll's words, emotions "cognitively organize our perceptions of situations in light of our desires and values, and thereby prepare the organism to act in its perceived interests."³⁵ Because interests are a matter of perception, they are both subjective and contingent upon circumstances. Thus, in undertaking to influence the king, what Scuderi is attempting is to present him with circumstances in a form and order such that he decides that it is in his own interests to pardon Brusson — that is, he evaluates the act in this way, based on the interaction of circumstances with his own desires and values. Bringing him to evaluate Madelon as worthy of sympathy would form an intermediate step on the way to a favorable evaluation of Brusson's case, thus illustrating how emotional evaluations can become compounded when one feeds into another.

Eliciting sympathy from the king entails leading him to an understanding of Madelon's situation, since this emotion "requires people to make imaginative leaps into what others are

³⁴ Sheila Dickson, for example, goes so far as to call it an "abuse." I find this a rather harsh word for the act of, in Dickson's own words, "seeking to change the king's mind," even if it is "from one prejudiced view to another"; in the end, all views are prejudiced, but not all are merciful ("Black, White and Shades of Grey: A Reassessment of Narrative Ambiguity in E.T.A. Hoffmann's 'Das Fräulein von Scuderi,'" *New German Studies* 17, no. 2 (1992/93): 140, 140n16).

³⁵ Carroll, "Art, Narrative, and Emotion," 201.

thinking and feeling.”³⁶ A second requirement, that the sympathizer “care about their pain and problems,” can take a number of forms; for example, anger at what has happened to the affected person(s), anxiety for their well-being, regret at how things turned out for them, and sadness at their plight are all possible specific affective responses that can be attached to a feeling of sympathy. The fact that these are emotions in themselves is an indication that sympathy is a complex, or ‘higher-order,’ emotion. The terms ‘sympathy’ and ‘pity’ are usually used to denote the same thing; ‘empathy’ is sometimes also used as a synonym, or else may be used to distinguish a related phenomenon in which the empathizer simulates the pain, sorrow, etc. of the individual being empathized with. In that sense, empathy involves identification with the target’s actual feelings, whereas sympathy has more to do with a feeling directed at the situation of the target. Another related term, ‘empathic accuracy,’ is used to describe successful comprehension of another’s mental state; thus, it designates a cognitive suboperation that is also involved in sympathy, minus any accompanying affective responses. Sympathy’s narrative intertwinement reveals itself not only in the cognitive portion, in which the sympathizer reconstructs the mental state of another, but also in the social dimension of the emotion. Social conditioning plays a major role in determining what situations elicit sympathy; the emotion is learned, not inborn, though children exhibit a marked aptitude to develop the capacity for it.³⁷ Differences across cultures as well as genders are particularly pronounced for this emotion. Because of this, the specific cultural narratives and latent beliefs held by an individual are crucial factors in its appearance and progression. These are precisely what Scuderi, through her acquaintance with the king and knowledge of court dynamics, understands thoroughly; she is in an excellent position to apply this knowledge in crafting her plea for sympathy.

³⁶ David Levinson, James J. Ponzetti Jr., and Peter F. Jorgensen, eds., *Encyclopedia of Human Emotions* (New York: Macmillan, 1999), 652.

³⁷ See Levinson, Ponzetti, and Jorgensen, *Encyclopedia of Human Emotions*, 652.

Scuderi sets out to structure an encounter that presents the Brußon case from an unusual and unfamiliar angle so that the king, instead of re-treading the pattern of thought already in his mind, produces a second, parallel, competing evaluation of it. Basically she is showing him a second side — and maybe the different sides are equally valid. To say otherwise would be to assume either that the king’s first evaluation ought to be privileged for some reason, or that his first evaluation was arrived at by a more valid mental operation, which would again involve privileging this over other types of mental operations, for which the justification is not immediately obvious.

In contrast to the way the novella describes many emotions in terms of extremes, often employing the polarity of the divine versus the hellish in order to enhance their impact, this scene works by means of relatively subtle modulations of emotion — which is not to say, however, that their consequences are insignificant. Scuderi finds herself in a situation that almost resembles a game, due to the veneer of elaborate, upper-class social conventions that surrounds it; however, the levity of the courtly setting in which it plays out is undercut by the fact that Brußon’s liberty and probably life are at stake. Aristocratic social interactions can seem like chess under any circumstances, but here the effect is intensified because the ethical complexity of the situation necessitates that Scuderi make her plea to the king “auf die geschickteste Weise” (846). But she, of all people, is up to the task: being successful as an author requires a keenly developed sense for what will move people.³⁸ Thus it is reasonable to infer that Scuderi is, both by natural inclination and by long years of practice, highly skilled at eliciting a certain emotional response from others. Her formation of a plan is described as a kind of inspiration: “Nach langem Sinnen faßte sie einen Entschluß eben so schnell, wie sie ihn ausführte.” (846) On the one hand, the trickiness of the

³⁸ “In fact, our our responses to works of fiction are, not uncommonly, more highly charged emotionally than our reactions to actual situations and people of the kinds the work portrays.” Kendall Walton, “Spelunking, Simulation, and Slime: On Being Moved by Fiction,” in *Emotion and the Arts*, ed. Mette Hjort and Sue Laver (New York: Oxford UP, 1997), 38.

situation does necessitate some reflection; on the other hand, her mind is practiced at creating scenarios and does not find itself at a loss to flesh out the details of how it will work, once the framework has occurred to her.

Scuderi's staging of a dramatic scene unfolds in two phases. First, she arrives at court attired in a way that will start the conversation off in the way she wants. She needs to approach the issue from the right side so as to bring up the associations that are acceptable to the king and not those that annoy him. Picking up once again on the narrative of herself as the bride of the master jeweller, which she had jestingly spun into verse earlier in the novella for the amusement of the court, Scuderi costumes herself in imposing black robes, complete with a black veil. She even wears Cardillac's jewelry, despite having sworn never even to consider such a thing, as it seemed to her to be symbolically stained with the blood of the murder victims.³⁹ This novella highlights how jewels may function as objects of power; they are supposed to have an influence over people. This is the case when a lover tries to use jewels to help him win over his beloved, and it is true in a distorted sense in the case of Cardillac's and his mother's obsessions. Scuderi attempts to use this effect in her audience with the king, with partial success: the jewels do catch his attention and steer the conversation in the desired direction, though they do not exercise any extraordinary powers of influence, as evidenced by the outcome of the scene. Power of a symbolic variety such as this is only as strong as the narrative which supports it. The tale of the "drei und siebenzigjährigen Goldschmidts-Braut" (806) has a lightheartedness matched by the moderate

³⁹ Scuderi's wearing of the jewels symbolically links her to Cardillac. These two characters are strong dramatic foils for one another as well as having quite a few similar attributes. Some of the numerous discussions of the dynamic between them can be found in Gerhard Neumann, "Ach die Angst! die Angst!": Diskursordnung und Erzählakt in E.T.A. Hoffmanns 'Fräulein von Scuderi,'" in *Diskrete Gebote. Geschichte der Macht um 1800; Festschrift für Heinrich Bosse*, ed. Roland Borgards and Johannes Friedrich Lehmann (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2002), 198; and Irmgard Roebing, "Mütterlichkeit und Aufklärung in E.T.A. Hoffmanns 'Das Fräulein von Scuderi' oder: Geistergespräch zwischen Berlin, Paris und Genf," in *Mutter und Mütterlichkeit. Wandel und Wirksamkeit einer Phantasie in der deutschen Literatur; Festschrift für Verena Ehrlich-Haefeli*, ed. Irmgard Roebing (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 1996), 217.

response it awakens in the king, whereas the Cardillac family tendency towards obsession comes from the depths of their psychological makeup and has a correspondingly intense effect.

By using the jewels as a conversation starter, Scuderi begins a suspenseful narration of how she herself became entangled in the murder case, then introduces the topic of Madelon, and then gradually moves on to others. This phase of the plan proceeds as Scuderi had hoped: “Mit immer steigendem und steigendem Interesse begannen nun die Szenen mit la Regnie — mit Desgrais — mit Olivier Brußon selbst.” (847) As the succession in this sentence indicates, by availing herself of the power of narrative to awaken interest, Scuderi is able to proceed along an indirect path — though of course these events are all interconnected — to the topic of Brußon, all the while avoiding the king’s negative associations. In spite of the fact that it is Brußon for whom Scuderi is pleading and although he does receive mention, her indirect approach means that the person she wants the king to pity is actually Madelon; the latter’s fiancé stands to benefit by an act of displacement. The suspense of the story is an important emotional element which depends on timing the mention of details in such a way that there is continually some new question about the fate of those involved.⁴⁰ It further depends to a large extent on presenting details that make the people in the story vivid — such as “Madelons wilden Schmerz” (847) — so that the listener cares about their fate.⁴¹ In describing the king as “hingerissen von der Gewalt des lebendigsten Lebens, das in der Scuderi Rede glühte” (847), the novella uses a repetitive phrase to emphasize how Scuderi uses her storytelling skills effectively. Life is full of change, conflict, and precariousness, which engages the mind on multiple levels, and this is why one can get carried away — because many channels of thought are simultaneously being directed at what is being narrated. In fact, Scuderi intentionally overwhelms the king with information in order to take

⁴⁰ Timing as a narrative strategy for producing emotional effects is further discussed in chapter three; see page 137.

⁴¹ An especially effective example of this is analyzed in chapter three on page 125.

advantage of that very phenomenon: “Ehe er sichs versah, ganz außer sich über das Unerhörte, was er erfahren und noch nicht vermögend, alles zu ordnen, lag die Scuderi schon zu seinen Füßen und flehte um Gnade für Olivier Brußon.” (848) With all of his faculties in use, there is hardly room for the king’s earlier aversion to Brußon to resurface, creating an excellent opportunity for Scuderi — just as she had planned.

As the king is considering this turn of events, however, one of his ministers interrupts. Since suspense is dependent on the pacing of the narration, this gives Scuderi cause for concern. Emotions have a temporal trajectory, and the king would feel sympathy most strongly shortly following the point at which the various cognitive elements that contribute to it are brought to the foreground of his conscious mind. The more he thinks about unrelated business, the less he can contemplate Madelon’s plight. After the initial surge of feeling has passed, the vividness — that is, the foregrounding⁴² — of the relevant details begins to wane. However, the king soon returns, requests to meet Madelon, and can be obliged without any delay because Scuderi has thought through the possibilities of the encounter carefully and has brought along Madelon: phase two of her plan. Thus, she is able to avoid any further pauses that could interrupt the atmospheric effect of the encounter on the king and can let Madelon’s appearance work its effects:

In wenig Augenblicken lag sie sprachlos dem Könige zu Füßen. Angst — Bestürzung — scheue Ehrfurcht — Liebe und Schmerz — trieben der Armen rascher und rascher das siedende Blut durch alle Adern. Ihre Wangen glühten in hohem Purpur — die Augen glänzten von hellen Tränenperlen, die dann und wann hinabfielen durch die seidnen Wimpern auf den schönen Lilienbusen. Der König schien betroffen über die wunderbare Schönheit des Engelskinds. Er hob das Mädchen sanft auf, dann machte er eine Bewegung, als wolle er ihre Hand, die er gefaßt, küssen. Er ließ sie wieder und schaute das holde Kind an mit tränenfeuchtem Blick, der von der tiefsten innern Rührung zeugte. (848f.)

⁴² See also page 20.

The series of emotional states separated by dashes is reminiscent of the earlier passage describing René Cardillac's rapid succession of states at one point during his meeting with Scuderi and Maintenon. Here is yet another suggestion that the daughter possesses the same kinds of potential as the father, though of course manifesting in a different form. Madelon is compared to a lily, an angel, and a child — images which, in this cultural context, characterize her as delicate, innocent, and youthful.⁴³ The recurrence of these characterizations of Madelon throughout the novella suggests that she is reliably certain to be perceived in this way under a variety of circumstances. The text likewise makes clear that Scuderi has noticed the effect that Madelon has. Therefore, for the second phase of her plan, Scuderi counts on Madelon also having this effect on the king and thus eliciting sympathy in the form of feeling protective of weakness and vulnerability; and of course, the logical next step in protecting her would be to spare her feelings — which are clearly disturbed, as is apparent from her face and body language — by pardoning her lover. But the king's "tiefste innere Rührung" is a stronger reaction than mere sympathy; as soon becomes evident, there is something else at work here. For a moment, the king seems very favorably disposed to grant Scuderi's request; however, the next moment brings about a significant change in his emotional state:

Leise lispelte die Maintenon der Scuderi zu: Sieht sie nicht der la Valliere ähnlich auf ein Haar, das kleine Ding? — Der König schwelgt in den süßesten Erinnerungen. Euer Spiel ist gewonnen. — So leise dies auch die Maintenon sprach, doch schien es der König vernommen zu haben. Eine Röte überflog sein Gesicht, sein Blick streifte bei der Maintenon vorüber, er las die Supplik, die Madelon ihm überreicht, und sprach dann mild und gütig: Ich will's wohl glauben, daß du, mein liebes Kind, von deines Geliebten Unschuld überzeugt bist; aber hören wir, was die *Chambre ardente* dazu sagt! (849)

⁴³ The use of emotionally laden language that conjures up extremes of good and evil, angels and devils, black and white is by no means limited to Madelon, but is applied to most of the characters; in fact, often both extremes are applied to the same character at different times. For a thorough and convincing discussion of how these extremes ironically underline the inability of characters to grasp the ambiguities and nuances of their situations, see Dickson, "Black, White and Shades of Grey," 133–157.

The king's association of Madelon with la Valliere, a former mistress, is a significant factor in his emotional state and complicates Scuderi's plan that he feel sympathy for Madelon. The issue of reading appearances arises again in this scene, as Scuderi's plan is to draw on commonly recognizable ideas of youthful innocence in presenting Madelon to the king; the unanticipated association with la Valliere is much more ambiguous, and it transforms her appearance into an unpredictable factor that can be turned either way. At first, the king appears to have a more or less subconscious sense of the resemblance, but Maintenon's comment brings it to his conscious awareness. Madelon's appearance has been calculated to arouse sympathy in the king, but Maintenon disrupts this process. Lacking Scuderi's skill with narrative, she proves to be likewise less adept at directing emotion. In addition, her own bias may have moved her to commit a subconscious sabotage: a few days later, when Scuderi goes to make discreet inquiries about the status of the Brußon case, Maintenon shows signs of a jealousy that could contribute nothing good to Scuderi's aims: "Fragte sie nun noch mit sonderbarem Lächeln, was denn die kleine Valliere mache? so überzeugte sich die Scuderi, daß tief im Innern der stolzen Frau sich ein Verdruß über eine Angelegenheit regte, die den reizbaren König in ein Gebiet locken konnte, auf dessen Zauber sie sich nicht verstand. Von der Maintenon konnte sie daher gar nichts hoffen." (850) Scuderi demonstrates here once again that she is skilled in reading people, and wisely decides to avoid any further actions that could bring the precariously ambiguous associations with la Valliere into the mental foreground of those involved.

The sorts of images which one comes to associate with a person have an impact on judgments as to whether they are worthy of sympathy. Association involves a belief; in this case, the king believes that Madelon looks like la Valliere. However, to capture what is significant about association requires further description; one could believe that two people resemble each other without experiencing any emotion as a result, but in the case of an association, one's

emotional disposition towards the first object is transferred to some extent to the second object. In order for this situation to arouse the king's sympathy, he must believe on some level that Madelon and la Valliere are similar in some way, such that tender feelings towards the latter are transferred to the former. It could presumably function by the king believing that Madelon has a similar character to la Valliere, if his latent beliefs about how to read a person incline him to equate exterior with interior resemblance. Earlier passages on René Cardillac's appearance suggest that in the universe of this novella, people do tend to hold these sorts of beliefs.

Such would be the conditions for sympathy to occur in conjunction with the la Valliere association, and the evidence suggests that this does occur initially, as the king appears deeply moved. It appears, furthermore, that the association only retains its influence so long as it remains unreflected, because as soon as Maintenon calls attention to it and thus propels the king into self-awareness, his sympathy towards Madelon receives a check: "Die Scuderi gewährte zu ihrem Schreck, daß die Erinnerung an die Valliere, so ersprießlich sie anfangs geschienen, des Königs Sinn geändert hatte, so wie die Maintenon den Namen genannt." (849) By putting a name on the king's association, Maintenon seems to have prompted him to remember other details about his history with la Valliere which are unfavorable to Madelon's case: "Vielleicht sah er nun nicht mehr seine Valliere vor sich, sondern dachte nur an die Soeur Louise de la miséricorde (der Valliere Klostername bei den Carmeliterinnen), die ihn peinigte mit ihrer Frömmigkeit und Buße." (849) The crucial detail turns out to be how exactly the king is affected by the extremely ambivalent memory of an ex-lover; that is, someone for whom he has felt, at different points in time, both great affection and great disaffection. That the recollection of la Valliere's name could sway the king's attitude towards Madelon shows how one's mental landscape can be influenced by the specific cognitive factors that are present at a given time, which is, as this episode shows, subject to outside influences and chance. The text also suggests two other explanations for how

Maintenon's comment could have contributed to the unfavorable turn in the king's evaluation of Madelon: "Mocht' es sein, daß der König sich auf unzarte Weise daran erinnert fühlte, daß er im Begriff stehe, das strenge Recht der Schönheit aufzuopfern, oder vielleicht ging es dem Könige wie dem Träumer, dem, hart angerufen, die schönen Zauberbilder, die er zu umfassen gedachte, schnell verschwinden." (849) There are two equally good possibilities here, and perhaps both of them coexist with the king's recollections of la Valliere. The latter, in particular, describes a situation in which the mechanics of the mind have an appreciable influence on the thoughts and feelings that are being produced; that is, the element of surprise causes the mild, dream-like thoughts to retreat from consciousness more rapidly than they otherwise would so that attention can instead be directed to what seems more urgent. Yet while one idea may be at the forefront of the mind, that does not exclude the possibility of other thoughts having an influence on the total evaluation. An array of narrative strategies is necessary in order to accommodate the multiplicity of evaluative operations that are involved. For this episode as a whole, that includes the lengthy, detailed descriptions of the characters' gestures and expressions as well as the subjunctive conjectures that discourage the pursual of only one line of interpretation.

The resultant ambivalence of the king's emotion towards Madelon is reflected in the action he takes: although he does not grant the pardon, he makes discreet inquiries and eventually has Brußon released.⁴⁴ So, in the end, the plan sort of worked, which is evidence that this is not merely a case of a negative association eclipsing a positive one. Instead, it seems that both continued to coexist in an uneasy tension, especially when one considers the way the king both made a wedding gift to Madelon and requested that she and Brußon leave the city. The intellectually sticky part of this story is ultimately neither how emotion influenced the king's

⁴⁴ Although some critics, such as Gerhard Neumann ("Diskursordnung und Erzählakt," 203), have considered Scuderi's attempt a failure because the king did not pardon Brußon on the spot, this view does not account for the possibility of the scene having an influence over time that contributed to the ultimate outcome.

decision nor the answer to the question of what the king will do, but rather the shifting of mental images that results in his ambivalent feelings. The fact that the encounter does not go as planned actually makes it more interesting because the interference of the la Valliere association creates a situation in which two narrative strands compete for dominance in the king's mind, all the while influencing his evaluation of Madelon, an unrelated person — or only associatively connected, to be precise. The scene encompasses two levels of tension: the king's attitude towards Madelon competes with his attitude towards la Valliere, and, at the same time, his image of la Valliere as she was during the pleasant phase of their relationship competes with his image of her as "Soeur Louise de la miséricorde," a representation of the unpleasant phase of the relationship.

III. Conclusion

Although there is a marriage near the end of *Das Fräulein von Scuderi*, it is surrounded by such ambiguities that its inclusion in the novella seems rather to underscore the fact that this is no neat resolution in the style of the comedic genre.⁴⁵ The lovers have been ordered to depart the city quietly, Olivier Brußon is keeping a huge secret from his new wife, and evidential truth has been compelled to ally itself with the tide of public opinion; against this backdrop, the conclusion appears thoroughly at odds with the traditional 'happy ending.' If one can speak of a resolution to the story, then it consists not in resolving tensions but rather in bringing them fully to light. *Das Fräulein von Scuderi* is a detective story in two senses: it concerns itself with both the external mystery of an unusual crime and the internal mysteries of human emotions.

Scuderi's doubts, false steps, curiosity, and ultimate unraveling of the mystery are all a function of how the simultaneous thought operations of emotion and intuition steer cognitive activity; even when she is mistaken, Scuderi is working to arrive at a solution. The uncertainty of

⁴⁵ For an overview of ambivalences of the ending, see Achim Küpper, "Poesie, die sich selbst spiegelt", 73–75.

reality makes it inevitable that an individual will not always respond to circumstances in the most ideal manner; but Scuderi, in possession of highly developed emotional and intuitive faculties, re-evaluates the situations with which she is confronted in an ongoing attempt to construct a coherent narrative out of seemingly contradictory indicators. Scuderi's success in forming an accurate intuition varies from character to character: in the case of Cardillac, the discrepancy between society's reputation-narrative and Scuderi's intuitive evaluation of him results in her incorrectly dismissing her suspicions; regarding Madelon, she makes a correct intuition that receives and rebuffs a challenge (when it seems Madelon is involved in a complot with Brußon), ultimately becoming a central motivation in her continued pursuit of the solution to the case; and concerning Brußon, the collision of two incompatible, independently formed narratives sets off a cognitive crisis in which she is unable for a time to produce a coherent intuitive evaluation of him. The end result of Scuderi's intuition-driven quest to find out the truth about the jewel murders is a sequential narrative that is easier to comprehend than intuitions, which are formed on the basis of simultaneous impressions from multiple sources being evaluated against one's own beliefs about the larger significance of behaviors and appearances. These factors are present in the text, though it requires significant interpretive effort to reconstruct their interrelationships, since they have a tendency to be evaluated as the characters evaluate them: more or less unconsciously as part of a larger composite operation.

Similarly, the scene between Scuderi and Louis XIV involves numerous mental computations occurring simultaneously. The way Scuderi's narrative construct interacts with other narratives that belong to the king's store of memories and beliefs determines the outcome of the encounter. The name of his former mistress acts as a connection point to narratives in the king's memory banks that have both positive and negative — but in any case unanticipated due to their personal nature — consequences for Scuderi's undertaking. Since the combination and

relative prominence of cognitive factors at the surface of the king's consciousness affects how he evaluates them, the mechanisms of hierarchization play a decisive role in this encounter.

Hierarchies are not about power structures used to manipulate people (although this type of abuse does occur); instead, they are an essential tool for understanding anything. This was as much true in E.T.A. Hoffmann's time as it is in the digital age, in which hierarchies help us to locate information, and competence is not so much about what one knows as about knowing how to find the information needed for a particular situation.

Das Fräulein von Scuderi is an example of a text that operates according to rationally comprehensible principles with respect to how it portrays mental states. Hoffmann includes in his text the indicators that are evaluated to produce the intuitions and emotions experienced by the characters. It is therefore possible to reconstruct the cause-and-effect relationships behind these states. Emotions and intuitions form on the basis of narrative structures, several examples of which have been analyzed in this chapter; as such, the author, as creator of narrative, is ultimately the master of emotional dynamics. In portraying an emotion complexly, the author executes a two-directional process: in order to lay the groundwork that will be evaluated in a certain way by characters or readers, it is first necessary to work through the material in reverse by deconstructing it so as to uncover the relevant cognitive factors.

Chapter Two: The Origins of Infatuation in Søren Kierkegaard's *The Seducer's Diary*

You have often said that it would be “absolutely superb” to go around and ask every one individually why he got married, and one would discover that usually the deciding factor was a very insignificant circumstance, and you then explore how ludicrous it is that such an enormous effect as a marriage with all its consequences can emerge from such a little cause. I shall not dwell on the mistake implicit in your looking at a little circumstance altogether abstractly, and on the fact that most often it is only because the little circumstance joins a multiplicity of factors that something results from it.

— Judge William, *Either/Or II*

Probably no other emotion in the history of literature has been at once so frequently portrayed and yet so ill reflected as infatuation.¹ The astonishing quantity of works that seem to have taken the cliché of “love at first sight” as dogma suggests that most authors are at a loss to provide an explanation that goes deeper than abstract indicators of beauty and goodness applied to the object of admiration, the latter being an associative procedure lacking psychological nuance. The absence of understanding of the mechanisms behind infatuation is an endless source of adverse outcomes for literary characters, who, in the absence of a self-critical perspective, are wont to blame fate, the social order, or other distant powers for their misfortunes, instead of looking closer to home. What renders the ordinary lovers helpless, however, the seducer finds rather less inscrutable. The ability to influence the feelings of one's object in the direction of one's

¹ Sebastian Susteck identifies two common patterns employed in nineteenth-century Realist literature that serve as the reason for the development of an infatuation: childhood love and similarities. Interestingly, although these two phenomena would on the surface seem to suggest potential for deeper psychological significance, as Susteck's study shows, that is not the way they play out in literature. The similarities Susteck discusses refer not to personality but merely to physical appearance. Even shared childhoods generally remain psychologically undeveloped, since their primary mode of action is to evoke ideas of fatedness or a continuity that appeals to a sense of order — that is, in either case, a kind of metaphysical structure of inevitability that guides characters, providing reassurance as it purports to reduce the uncertainties of existence. See Susteck, “Liebesgründe: zum Beginn von Liebe in Erzähltexten des deutschsprachigen Realismus,” *Jahrbuch der Raabe-Gesellschaft* (2006): esp. 143–146.

choosing presupposes a thorough understanding of the mechanisms of infatuation, such as is on display in Søren Kierkegaard's *The Seducer's Diary*, a novella-like narrative that forms a part of his larger work *Either/Or*.² Johannes the Seducer targets a young woman named Cordelia who, at the beginning of the diary, does not even know him. By engineering the scripts of romantic love through a variety of schemes, letters, feigned attitudes, and seeming coincidences, he manages to convince her that she is madly in love with him. Since his aim is not merely to inspire a "naïve passion," but to move beyond it to a "reflected passion,"³ Johannes pursues a thoroughly intellectual method, stating that "the interesting" is the law for "all my moves with regard to Cordelia." (365)⁴ This "higher form of the erotic" (411) results in a "poetic afterglow" (366) — that is, a pleasurable recollection (such as the diary affords him), which is the nature of the prize that Johannes desires. Although his character belongs to the tradition of the Don Juan story, which has a long history in print and on the stage, Johannes's higher demands make him above all a contrast to the traditional seducer.⁵

In the following, I will first contextualize *The Seducer's Diary* in order to show how infatuation is appropriated for the larger aesthetic project being undertaken in *Either/Or*. I then discuss several aspects of the seducer's method which illuminate the ways in which an individual's

² The seducer's ability to deconstruct a complex composite mental process is like the authorial ability discussed in the last chapter (see page 65), except that in the case of the seducer, who is himself a character, his deconstruction process is also part of the text and thus readily available for analysis.

³ Søren Kierkegaard, *Either/Or*, Part I, trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton: UP, 1987), 411. Subsequent page numbers given in parentheses within this chapter refer to this volume.

⁴ See also 345f.

⁵ The first major Don Juan piece was the play *El burlador de Sevilla y convidado de piedra* (*The Trickster of Seville and the Stone Guest*) from around 1630 by Tirso de Molina. Molière and Lord Byron also found inspiration in the subject matter. One of the most prominent reworkings, and the one that inspired Kierkegaard, is Mozart's opera *Don Giovanni* (1787); an aesthetic essay included in Part I of *Either/Or* also deals with this work. Whereas the earlier work *Les Liaisons dangereuses* (Pierre Choderlos de Laclos, 1782) resembles *The Seducer's Diary* in that it delves into the psychological dimensions of seduction on a more profound level than, for example, the dramatic renditions of the seduction tale, Ronald Grimsley notes that "the *Diary* [...] differs from *Les Liaisons dangereuses* in so far as its portrayal of 'reflective' seduction dispenses with those social, ethical, and even sexual factors which help to give shape and coherence to Laclos's novel"; see "Kierkegaard and the Don Juan Theme: Kierkegaard and Laclos" in *Søren Kierkegaard and French Literature: Eight Comparative Studies* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1966), 43.

becoming infatuated depends on the formation of connections to latent narratives relating to the future and to expectations in a relationship, originating both from personal preference and from social conditioning. At the end of the diary, Johannes engineers multiple aesthetic elements that draw on all of his foregoing interactions with Cordelia to produce one moment of concentrated intensity. Finally, I take a look at how the steps in the process of becoming infatuated involve accessing core elements of personality, and how infatuation therefore results in changes or the potential for change in Cordelia and Johannes, respectively. *The Seducer's Diary* portrays infatuation in a way that removes its inexplicability by affording the reader an opportunity to witness the mental connections being made which, in combination, produce the emotion.⁶

I. The Context of the Seduction

This chapter treats *The Seducer's Diary* as an independent work — with reference, however, to other parts of *Either/Or*. Purely in terms of narrative coherence, it is able to function by itself as a novella, and indeed it has been stripped of its context and published more than thirty times.⁷ This practice, though undeniably problematic, is at least more obviously so than the insidious distortions and oversimplifications that creep in when Kierkegaard's pseudonymous works are cited without proper consideration of their literary character; this, too, is a pervasive

⁶ Previous scholarship on emotions in Kierkegaard's work has focused largely on the relationship of his thought to notions of passion from Antiquity. By contrast, this chapter approaches the topic in order to explore individual psychological dynamics. Rick Anthony Furtak in *Wisdom in Love: Kierkegaard and the Ancient Quest for Emotional Integrity* (Notre Dame: UP, 2005) casts the emotion of love as central to Kierkegaard's oeuvre, emphasizing the contrast with Stoicist views, though Daniel Greenspan rightly points out that Kierkegaard's work displays a strong affinity for passions from ancient thought that are diametrically opposed to love; see *The Passion of Infinity: Kierkegaard, Aristotle and the Rebirth of Tragedy* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2008).

⁷ In "Søren Kierkegaard's Diary of the Seducer: A History of Its Use and Abuse in International Print," Bradley R. Dewey recounts the publication history of this text as a stand-alone work, separate from *Either/Or*; he also analyzes the cover art that has accompanied it, which has tended to suggest misleadingly that the work belonged to the genre of trivial popular romances, or sometimes to imply indefensible correspondences between Kierkegaard and his text (*Fund og Forskning i Det kongelige Biblioteks Samlinger* 20 (1973): 137–157).

practice, particularly in the field of literary studies (ironically enough). Many of Kierkegaard's writings are simultaneously philosophy, theology, and literature. The literary dimension, however, has been least explored in scholarship. Literary scholars have appropriated his ideas as theoretical frameworks for literary criticism;⁸ have explored his intersection with later authors;⁹ and have traced the influence of earlier authors on his work.¹⁰ Notably, however, there is a dearth of scholarship dealing with Kierkegaard's texts themselves as literature, despite the strong fictional character of many of them.¹¹ Although numerous scholars point out the literary character of Kierkegaard's writings,¹² far fewer actually engage with the task of interpreting them as such;¹³ for the most part, philosophers merely mention his literary character while literary scholars apply

⁸ For instance, George Pattison, "Kierkegaard and Genre," *Poetics Today* 28, no. 3 (2007): 475–497; and Eva Kit Wah Man, "What Is An Author? A Comparative Study of Søren Kierkegaard and Liu Xie on the Meanings of Writing," *Journal of Chinese Philosophy* 40, no. 1 (2013): 123–142.

⁹ A few recent examples include Allard den Dulk, "Beyond Endless 'Aesthetic' Irony: A Comparison of the Irony Critique of Søren Kierkegaard and David Foster Wallace's *Infinite Jest*," *Studies in the Novel* 44, no. 3 (2012): 325–345; J. A. G. Ardila, "The Origin of Unamuno's *Mist*: Unamuno's Copy of Kierkegaard's *Diary of the Seducer*," *Modern Philology: Critical and Historical Studies in Literature, Medieval Through Contemporary* 109, no. 1 (2011): 135–143; William D. Buhrman, "The Narrative Testimony of Kierkegaard and Rowling: Fidelity as the Basic Criterion in Substitutionary Atonement," *Renascence: Essays on Values in Literature* 63, no. 4 (2011): 273–286; Géza Kállay, "'What Wilt Thou Do, Old Man?' — Being Sick unto Death: Scrooge, King Lear, and Kierkegaard," *Partial Answers: Journal of Literature and the History of Ideas* 9, no. 2 (2011): 267–283; and Siegfried Weing, "Kierkegaardian Reflections in Martin Walser's *Ein fliehendes Pferd*," *Colloquia Germanica: Internationale Zeitschrift für Germanistik* 25, no. 3/4 (1992): 275–288.

¹⁰ Notable scholarship in this regard are the series edited by Jon Stewart: *Kierkegaard and His German Contemporaries*, 3 vols. (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007); *Kierkegaard and His Danish Contemporaries*, 3 vols. (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009); *Kierkegaard and the Roman World* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009); and Jon Stewart and Katalin Nun, eds., *Kierkegaard and the Greek World* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010).

¹¹ Even so promising a title as "Kierkegaard and the Novel" turns out not to be about "Kierkegaard as novelist," though the essay is interesting in its own right as a discussion of what it means to write novels as opposed to other literary forms, as well as how Kierkegaard regarded this type of writing activity. See Gabriel Josipovici, "Kierkegaard and the Novel," in *Kierkegaard: A Critical Reader*, ed. Jonathan Rée and Jane Chamberlain (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998), 114. Similarly, Henning Fenger focuses primarily on the literary culture that influenced Kierkegaard, giving less attention to individual works — though his brief discussion of *Either/Or* does include the salient observations that "no one able to read a text can persuade himself that Kierkegaard's own heart was occupied with the ethical stage" and that "if ever there were a Kierkegaardian aesthete in Copenhagen, it was Kierkegaard himself." See "Kierkegaard: A Literary Approach," in *Kierkegaard and His Contemporaries: The Culture of Golden Age Denmark*, ed. Jon Stewart (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2003), 314.

¹² Fenger, for example, refers to *The Seducer's Diary*, *Repetition*, and *Guilty/Not Guilty* as "novels on love" in "Kierkegaard: A Literary Approach," 315.

¹³ One exception is the volume *Kierkegaard and Literature*, though its publication date as well as its fealty to poststructuralist literary criticism begin to make it outmoded. See Ronald Schleifer and Robert Markley, eds., *Kierkegaard and Literature: Irony, Repetition, and Criticism* (Norman: U of Oklahoma Press, 1984).

him as a philosopher.¹⁴ Scholars have analyzed certain aspects of his writing, such as irony or indirect communication, that have literary implications — but then again, are also philosophical issues. Prominent traditional aspects of fictional writing such as character development and plot, on the other hand, have gone largely uncommented; it is thus unusual in the context of Kierkegaard scholarship that these things play a major role in this chapter and doubly unusual precisely because it is so commonplace to deal with them in regard to the majority of literary works.

Søren Kierkegaard's authorship has two parts: one pseudonymous and the other under his own name.¹⁵ At the beginning of his writing career, the pseudonymous works formed the majority; gradually, the signed authorship increased in proportion, until at the end of his career it predominated. The pseudonyms are a signalling mechanism used to indicate that a piece of writing represented a position, and not the opinion of the author — that is, Kierkegaard. In this way, Kierkegaard was able to present and to explore perspectives, such as the aesthetic outlook and the ethical outlook represented in the two halves of *Either/Or*. This enabled a form of indirect communication whose goal was to convey, performatively, ideas that could not be stated directly.¹⁶

¹⁴ One finds, for example, a volume of philosophical essays being introduced with the affirmation that Kierkegaard has an originality that is “of a mode more literary than philosophical.” See Harold Bloom, ed., editor's note to *Søren Kierkegaard* (New York: Chelsea House, 1989), viii.

¹⁵ In Kierkegaard scholarship, ‘dual authorship’ refers to whether works are signed or unsigned, and should not be confused with ‘first’ and ‘second’ authorship, which refer to two chronologically sequential periods of productivity.

¹⁶ As one might well expect from such an intricate, convoluted form of communication, there is more to be said on the matter. A particularly illuminating essay that looks at this issue with reference to many of Kierkegaard's works is Joakim Garff's “The Eyes of Argus: *The Point of View* and Points of View on Kierkegaard's Work as an Author,” trans. Jane Chamberlain and Belinda Ioni Rasmussen, in *Kierkegaard: A Critical Reader*, ed. Jonathan Rée and Jane Chamberlain (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998), 75–102.

Either/Or, published in 1843, is the first major work in Kierkegaard's authorship (other than his dissertation¹⁷). It was written by the pseudonym Victor Eremita, who serves as the 'editor.' In the preface, Eremita explains that the text which constitutes *Either/Or* comes from a collection of papers that he discovered inside of a desk he bought from a second-hand dealer. As he was trying to open a stuck drawer, a secret compartment sprang open instead. The story about the desk, besides allowing Victor Eremita to distance himself from the papers, introduces the motif of chance that runs throughout the work, as well as serving as a metaphorical explanation for the structure of the text that follows. The papers, according to Eremita's fictional account, were written by two authors whom he designates A and B. Eremita's preface plus A's writings form Part I of *Either/Or*, while B's writings form Part II. A remains nameless, and his portion consists of a bunch of loose scraps of paper, several aesthetic treatises, and *The Seducer's Diary*. The latter, which is placed at the end of Part I, will be dealt with shortly; as for the scraps of paper, Eremita places them at the beginning under the heading of "Diapsalmata" (that is, "aphoristic, lyrical reflections in a range of substantive refrains"¹⁸), which was written on one of the scraps. Eremita emphasizes that he leaves the order to chance, though it could be debated whether it was actually chance, since he says in another place that he leaves them in the order in which he found them in the drawer. Eremita justifies his editorial decision to put them first thus: "it seemed to me that they could best be regarded as preliminary glimpses into what the longer pieces develop more coherently" (8). Coherence is a relative term here; it is very much in keeping with the aesthetic viewpoint contained therein that these papers do not lay out a systematic argument, but instead manifest it indirectly. B's papers, on the other hand, are quite coherent in arguing for an ethical

¹⁷ Kierkegaard's dissertation, *On the Concept of Irony with Continual Reference to Socrates* (1841), is usually considered as falling outside the scope of his main authorships (Kierkegaard himself also regarded it this way), though it retains a relevance to them, since irony would become a pervasive component of his later works (Socrates, too, to a lesser extent).

¹⁸ Editorial note to Kierkegaard, *Either/Or* I (604).

viewpoint. They take the form of two long, persuasive letters addressed to A, plus a sermon whose authorship B attributes to a pastor friend of his. Towards the end of the preface, Victor Eremita explains how the structure of the work relates to its interpretation: “We sometimes come upon novels in which specific characters represent contrasting views of life. They usually end with one persuading the other. The point of view ought to speak for itself, but instead the reader is furnished with the historical result that the other was persuaded. I consider it fortunate that these papers provide no enlightenment in that respect” (14). Thus the ‘either/or’ of the work is meant sincerely; that is, the two parts are given with as much equality of presentation as possible, and neither one is intended to ‘win’ — neither by Eremita nor, one may presume in this instance, by Kierkegaard. In view of Kierkegaard’s authorship as a whole, neither the aesthetic nor the ethical sphere is alone sufficient to the task of living.¹⁹ The religious, a third category in his thinking, is not even represented in *Either/Or*, except inasmuch as it is indirectly present as an absence. The aesthetic, the ethical, and the religious have been variously referred to as spheres or stages. Although certain aspects of these categories are hierarchical in nature, they are largely coextensive with one another, such that it would not make sense to say that one leaves behind the aesthetic stage and enters the ethical or leaves behind the ethical to reach the religious.

Furthermore, regarding them as spheres enveloping one another is likewise too reductive.²⁰ None

¹⁹ The titles of the B’s two letters — notwithstanding the fact that they were given by Victor Eremita, not B — both include mention of aesthetics: “The Esthetic Validity of Marriage” and “The Balance between the Esthetic and the Ethical in the Development of the Personality.” This suggests that the ethicist was not able to make his point without reference to the aesthetic sphere, thus revealing some limitations to his viewpoint. In places where the ethicist remains more or less exclusively within ethical categories, his narrative becomes rather dull, conventional, and bourgeois. The more interesting moments of the narrative bring in elements of the aesthetic; this demonstrates performatively that a life lived ‘purely’ in the ethical sphere is somehow lacking. The aesthete’s text likewise contains elements that undermine his own viewpoint. Even if Johannes and A are not identical, *The Seducer’s Diary* represents the aesthetic viewpoint carried out to its extremity. The relationship depicted therein is highly disturbing because Johannes, in abstracting himself from the situation, goes so far as to abstract himself from the pain he causes Cordelia; the social nature of human beings recoils at this, thus exposing a flaw in the ‘purely’ aesthetic viewpoint.

²⁰ Kierkegaard’s *Fear and Trembling*, which depicts a conflict between the ethical and the religious, provides an example of why a system of enveloping stages likewise fails as a conceptual model.

of Kierkegaard's works sets out to dictate a specific relationship of the individual to any of the categories.

The Seducer's Diary is at an even further level of remove from the 'author' of *Either/Or* than the rest of the text; Victor Eremita — with a great deal of irony in light of Søren Kierkegaard's relation to the text — calls attention to this in his preface: "Here we meet new difficulties, inasmuch as A does not declare himself the author but only the editor. This is an old literary device to which I would not have much to object if it did not further complicate my own position, since one author becomes enclosed within the other like the boxes in a Chinese puzzle."²¹ (9) By so doing, Eremita presses the reader to reflection on the indirect nature of the communication which makes it very clear that this piece of writing is meant to be considered as a viewpoint, from a critical distance. The unnamed author A, in turn, provides another preface specifically to *The Seducer's Diary*; like Eremita's, it evinces a strong skepticism towards Johannes, the author of the diary.²² Victor Eremita discusses the possibility that A and Johannes are the same person (it would not be dissonant with A's personality for him to have distanced himself from his own text), but that question is left deliberately unanswered — this being the option which is most conducive to critical reflection.

The first three entries in the diary do not pertain to Cordelia, the one being seduced, but rather to some of Johannes's "actiones in distans." These provide a foretaste of Johannes's methods as well as an illustration of what he wants; as A has told us in the introduction: "One sees from the diary that what he at times desired was something totally arbitrary, a greeting, for example, and would accept no more at any price, because that was the most beautiful thing about

²¹ Opening a puzzle box requires that one press on the correct parts, turn the box a certain way, etc.; usually an entire sequence of such moves is required to solve it.

²² A's editorial treatment of the diary mirrors to some extent Victor Eremita's handling of A's papers. A includes the three letters from Cordelia — written after the end of the incident and the only ones in his possession — at the end of his preface; otherwise, he has attempted to interleave the letters from Johannes to Cordelia between the appropriate diary entries.

the other person.” (306) In the first diary entry, the plain summary of events is that Johannes sees a girl exiting a carriage; passes her on the street while casting a piercing glance at her, which makes her blush; follows her into a shop; indulges in an extended philosophical musing inspired by the sight of the girl’s reflection in a mirror; and decides to take no action at the moment, with the remark: “No impatience, no greediness — everything will be relished in slow draughts; she is selected, she will be overtaken.” (317) The sinister sound of these words puts an utterly misleading spin on what he intends to do: in fact, all his plan involves is that he pass her on the street sometime and glance sideways at her in such a way that it triggers her memory of his face on this evening and causes her a little surprise. So far, he seems like a stalker, but not yet a seducer.

What does he like about these encounters? — The same thing that makes them interesting to read: he enjoys imagining what passes through the girls’ heads as they interact with him. His method is to occasion a slightly out-of-the-ordinary social encounter, which produces a heightened emotion in them, even if subtle; this is what excites him. A meticulous, almost detective-like observer, he uses his exceptional powers of observation to construct a narrative about these girls’ lives. Could he be wrong? Perhaps, but that is of little import. Whether the servant’s name is really Jens or whether the girl is in fact going to visit Aunt Jette does not matter; the stories contain in themselves their own interest for him. Actuality merely provides the occasion for imagination. Indeed, Johannes revels in the large measure of independence which this gives him, for the flip side of his imaginings’ distance from actuality is that they are safe from most types of intrusion by unpleasant realities. The editor of *The Seducer’s Diary* — that is, A — remarks of Johannes: “His life has been an attempt to accomplish the task of living poetically.” (304) To live poetically involves existing in the realms of possibility and imagination; Johannes does this so thoroughly as to exclude necessity and actuality almost entirely. This becomes apparent to the reader through a comparison of what is written in the diary and what one can

reconstruct of the actuality of his relationship with Cordelia. Johannes himself is the pre-eminent illustration of the theme first introduced by Victor Eremita's thought "that the outer is certainly not the inner" (6).

Only in the fourth diary entry does Johannes catch sight of Cordelia for the first time, and there his infatuation begins. It looks as though he chooses her at random, since his interest is set off by a very brief sighting in a public space. The fact that she turns out to have superior personal qualities (which make her especially suitable to Johannes's purpose) appears, on the surface, to be a matter of chance. While the initial encounter did indeed happen by chance, Johannes's recognition of something special in Cordelia is not chance at all, but rather the result of long practice in the evaluation of strangers. After all, wandering about in public places observing people is Johannes's specialty.

II. The Concept of Infatuation

For the purposes of this chapter, 'infatuation' will be used to refer to the condition of being in love. It is simpler to use a single term than an entire phrase; plus, it avoids confusion with regard to a distinction that will be drawn in the chapter between, on the one hand, 'love,' and on the other hand, being 'in love' or 'falling in love.' Since all of these terms have 'love' as the primary element, it would be easy to lose sight of the difference. (Further distinctions can be drawn between different types of love — agape and eros, for example.) Infatuation is sometimes considered a separate process from falling in love, particularly if it is regarded as belonging to the more pathological end of the spectrum. However, such cases might be more properly classified as 'obsession' or 'fixation.'

A disadvantage of this choice of terminology is that 'infatuation' has negative connotations, as is immediately clear from its etymological root, *fatuus*, which means 'foolish.'

Infatuation has an ambiguous history, having often been known to overwhelm a person and drive him or her to perform uncharacteristic actions; on balance, it is doubtful whether it has resulted in more benefit or harm. Foolishness implies, at the very least, a mistake or error. It would be too severe to claim that infatuation always leads to error. However, the other terminological option — “falling in love” — employs the metaphor of *falling*, which itself suggests, among other things, the possibility of personal injury. Given the choice between harsh terms, ‘infatuation’ seems to be the less ambiguous and more versatile.

By contrast, ‘love’ will be defined here as a long-term attitude towards a person; love has more of a history. Infatuation can — though not necessarily must — lead to love through a process of transition. It will suffice merely to mention this distinction, since love is not the main focus here, but rather serves as a contrasting term, bracketing out some things that are not part of the present discussion. Of course, love is a very complicated emotion in itself, and has been the exclusive topic of numerous studies.²³ The concept of love as distinct from infatuation does also exist in the universe of *Either/Or*, as evidenced by the fact that Judge William from Part II declares himself a strong advocate of marital love, which would fall into this category of a long-term emotion.²⁴

To some extent, these romantic processes are not merely a matter of definition, since they have roots in biology. Experimental results have shown that infatuation correlates to increases in hormone levels, and that these increases have a limited duration.²⁵ However, because the current

²³ Philosophical works dealing with love include, among others, Martha Nussbaum, *Upheavals of Thought: The Intelligence of Emotions* (Cambridge: UP, 2001); Robert Solomon, *About Love: Reinventing Romance for Our Times* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1988); and Aaron Ben-Ze’ev and Ruhama Goussinsky, *In the Name of Love: Romantic Ideology and Its Victims* (Oxford: UP, 2008).

²⁴ Judge William emphasizes several times that love has a history; for example: “Marital love manifests itself as historical by being a process of assimilation; it tries its hand at what is experienced and refers what it has experienced to itself.” Søren Kierkegaard, *Either/Or*, Part II, trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton: UP, 1987), 97.

²⁵ Donatella Marazziti and Domenico Canale, “Hormonal Changes When Falling in Love,” *Psychoneuroendocrinology* 29, no. 7 (2004): 933f.

state of scientific understanding cannot provide lines of demarcation for these terms, a more speculative, conceptual definition will serve the present purpose. Attempts to explain the phenomenon of infatuation solely in terms of biological sexual drives fail to do justice to the cognitive intricacies involved and can come to seem like a means of blaming the body and vindicating the mind in a dubious dualism, or of shifting responsibility entirely onto genetics while ignoring the individual's powers of self-creation. On the other hand, it is justifiable to consider infatuation as an intellectual–emotional matter without reference to the physicality of love: hormones, pheromones, beauty, attractiveness. Contemporary society has ample empirical evidence from the phenomenon of online dating that an infatuation can form in the absence of physical interaction with its object. Even before the present era, fictional texts had the power to inspire states of infatuation in their readers. Thus, while physical characteristics can and often do contribute to the formation of an infatuation, they are not a prerequisite.

The Seducer's Diary is heavily skewed towards the cognitive aspects of infatuation, which is not surprising considering the non-physicality of the literary medium. Yet the reasons for the seduction being constructed in this way go deeper: in an essay in Part I of *Either/Or* entitled “The Immediate Erotic Stages or The Musical Erotic,” the author A mentions the possibility of an “intellectual–spiritual”²⁶ seduction, as opposed to the “sensuous” seductions being discussed in his piece on Mozart's *Don Giovanni*. (97) This is just such a possibility to pique the interest of the aesthete, since it would be much more complex and interesting than a merely sensuous seduction, so it is no wonder that A becomes entangled (to whatever degree one wishes to believe) in the narrative of Johannes the Seducer. When Johannes describes his budding infatuation as being “in

²⁶ In the original Danish, this is one word, *aandelig*, which has both of these meanings. (For readers familiar with German but not Danish, it may be helpful to mention that this word corresponds to *geistig*.) Søren Kierkegaard, *Søren Kierkegaards Skrifter*, vol. 2, *Enten – Eller. Første Del*, ed. Niels Jørgen Cappelørn, Joakim Garff, Johnny Kondrup, Alastair McKinnon, and Finn Hauberg Mortensen (Copenhagen: Søren Kierkegaard Forskningscenteret and Gads Forlag, 1997), 101.

motion within oneself” (326), he is describing the activity of creating narratives; the content of these narratives centers around interactions with the object of one’s infatuation.²⁷ Infatuation involves an evaluation of another person in relation to one’s own latent beliefs about what one wants out of life. The *Encyclopedia of Human Emotions* identifies passion and physiological arousal as key features of infatuation, but also acknowledges that cognitive factors play a role, particularly “intrusive thinking and preoccupation with the other,” “intense longing for union with the other,” and “idealization of the other.”²⁸ These are some of the patterns of thought that Johannes simulates in himself and encourages in Cordelia in order to further her infatuation with him. The emotion develops from a critical mass — varying widely according to individual psychological makeup — of evaluations to the effect that associating with the person under consideration will produce desirable outcomes. This could mean anything across a broad range of possibilities, both actual and anticipated, including but not limited to: the fun of engaging in activities of mutual interest; enjoyment derived from the partner’s sense of humor, wit, charisma, sociability, kindness, inventiveness, or other personal qualities; stimulating conversation; sexual gratification; financial security; pride in the physical appearance, success, accomplishments, social standing, etc. of one’s partner; the possibility of raising children together; a reduction in loneliness; ego gratification due to compliments, attention, or affection given by the partner. Whether these things have the potential to contribute to an infatuation and to what extent depends on how highly a particular individual values them. The diversity of this list attests to the complexity of the set of evaluations that indicate whether or not a person is viewed as a good fit with one’s romantic aspirations; when it is furthermore considered that many of these evaluations

²⁷ According to Joseph Kupfer, infatuation involves daydreams, which would be a form of imagined life (narrative). See Kupfer, “Romantic Love,” *Journal of Social Philosophy* 24, no. 3 (1993): 112.

²⁸ David Levinson, James J. Ponzetti Jr., and Peter F. Jorgensen, ed., *Encyclopedia of Human Emotions* (New York: Macmillan, 1999), 402.

may take place at a subconscious level, it becomes easier to understand why infatuations often seem to arise suddenly and out of nowhere.

For Johannes, Cordelia provides the occasion for aesthetic enjoyments of various kinds, and he recognizes immediately that she can be that occasion. For Cordelia, on the other hand, the infatuation which she gradually develops for Johannes is based on concrete beliefs about her life. Therefore, seducing her requires that Johannes become very well acquainted with her psychology.

III. The Methods of the Seducer

A. “The Highest Enjoyment”

In the introduction to the diary, A claims to be acquainted with Cordelia in real life and to have observed what she was like after the incident with Johannes. His description, however, refers to a “they,” suggesting either that he is generalizing from Cordelia’s specific case, or that he knows more about the seductions than he wants to admit — the latter being consistent with the possibility that he himself is the seducer: “No visible change took place in them; they lived in the accustomed context, were respected as always, and yet they were changed, almost unaccountably to themselves and incomprehensibly to others. Their lives were not cracked or broken, as others’ were, but were bent into themselves; lost to others, they futilely sought to find themselves.” (307)

Two factors help to explain what A means by describing their lives this way. The first is that Johannes manipulates the situation such that at the point when the seduction finally occurs, the engagement with Cordelia has already been broken — by her, not him. Thus she cannot make an accusation on the grounds of the universal because there is no social contract to which she can appeal; an outside observer would not recognize that he had any obligation towards her. The second has to do with the nature of Johannes’s goal; he holds that “the highest enjoyment imaginable is to be loved, loved more than anything else in the world” (368). The seduction is

actually not so much an event as the entire process narrated in the diary: for one thing because of the enormous effort involved in bringing an individual to the point of “absolute abandon” (335), and for another thing because Johannes enjoys the interactions all throughout, “in slow drafts” (334).

As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, this goal is best reached through “the interesting.” The interesting is not only what Johannes seeks, but also what is best suited to captivate Cordelia. In that sense, the two of them have, as is commonly looked for in romantic relationships, ‘something in common.’ However, Johannes uses the interesting for his own aesthetic satisfaction, to “rejuvenate” himself,²⁹ whereas Cordelia expects the interesting to be a force to strengthen the bond between them. This dissonance of expectations would be present even with an ordinary seducer, but the aesthetic seducer produces, when successful, an even greater disproportionality. Since he is of the opinion that “mere possession is very little” (335), the additional psychological disappointment of the one seduced compounds the problem. Johannes says of his engagement to Cordelia: “I do not care at all to possess the girl in the external sense but wish to enjoy her artistically. Therefore the beginning must be as artistic as possible. The beginning must be as nebulous as possible; it must be an omnipossibility.” (372) Later in the entry, he adds: “It is precisely this infinite possibility that is the interesting.” (372) Possibility is thus closely linked to his central guiding principle, and is something that he values in his own life as well as finding it a useful means of manipulating Cordelia.

What Johannes wants for himself and what he wants for Cordelia are, to a great extent, in alignment.³⁰ Just as he wants to live in infinity, Cordelia “must discover the infinite, must experience that this is what lies closest to a person. This she must discover not along the path of

²⁹ Johannes uses the word in reference to himself (435), and A likewise uses it in describing him (308).

³⁰ For a discussion of the precise extent to which they align and where the alignment breaks down, see page 108.

thought, which for her is a wrong way, but in the imagination [...]” (391). Johannes’s positive view of the infinite, which he associates with imagination, corresponds to his dismissive view of their opposites, the finite and actuality; he plans to “escape all this finite nonsense” (427) in regard to the social baggage surrounding broken engagements and cause Cordelia to “lose sight of marriage and the continent of actuality” (428). To term actuality a “continent” places it in contrast with the many water metaphors which Johannes uses to describe the conditions he aims to foster. Near the beginning, soon after sighting Cordelia, he muses at length on the way in which his inner state, under the influence of his budding infatuation, resembles a boat, concluding with the line: “How enjoyable to ripple along on moving water this way — how enjoyable to be in motion within oneself.” (326) A boat is typically used as a means of conveyance, for transporting a person from one point to another; but in this case, the emphasis on the rocking obscures any linear movement. An increase in mental activity — in Johannes’s words, a mood — is also what pleases him about a chance observation of a fisherman’s daughter in the woods while he is sitting on a fence smoking a pipe; he describes the situation and the glance as “abundant in inner motion” (403), but once again, this motion is not going anywhere, but merely having a stimulant effect — volatilizing his personality, as A says in the introduction (305).

Not just any girl will do for the type of seduction Johannes has in mind: “[...] it is dismaying that it is no art to seduce a girl but it is a stroke of good fortune to find one who is worth seducing.” (334f.) Johannes names “imagination, spirit, passion” as “the essentials” (343) with which Cordelia is endowed. Although A says, after presenting her letters, that she “did not possess the admired range of her Johannes” (313), she nevertheless has “a need for the unusual” (360) that sets her apart from most people. Johannes is very complimentary of her, calling her “sound” and “remarkable” (359) and noting that she readily perceives irony — “exactly what I want.” (353) These traits are signs of the latent potential in her personality; they enable him to

work her up to a higher pitch of passion than would be possible with a simpler mind: “The majority enjoy a young girl as they enjoy a glass of champagne, at one effervescent moment — oh, yes, that is really beautiful, and with many a young girl that is undoubtedly the most one can attain, but here there is more. If an individual is too fragile to stand clarity and transparency, well, then one enjoys what is unclear, but apparently she can stand it.” (341f.) It is significant to the development of the relationship that Cordelia possesses these qualities, as well as that Johannes notices them. His claim that he has managed “to plot so entirely accurately the history of the development of a psyche” (359) is not only evidence of his own infatuation with her; it is a hint as to how he brings about her infatuation so effectively. Knowledge of her internal narratives will later allow him to say and do things that correspond to specific elements of her interiority, giving the impression that there is a secret connection between them. His realization that “the ideal hovering before her is certainly not a shepherdess or a heroine in a novel, a mistress, but a Joan of Arc or something like that” (344f.) lets him know what sort of images, myths, and metaphors will appeal to her — information which he later puts to use in his letters.

B. Operations in the “Campaign”

Although Johannes often relies on “chance” (330) or on actuality providing “the occasion” (334) for aesthetic enjoyments, once he has formed an intention with respect to Cordelia, he proceeds according to a well-thought-out plan — “method I do have” (387). The overall course of the seduction unfolds in several phases; it involves some seemingly counter-productive motions, but these ultimately help to manoeuvre Cordelia’s mental state into the condition in which Johannes wants it.³¹ A prime example is the beginning of the seduction: Johannes acts in a way

³¹ My claim that infatuation is caused by reasons also extends to love and therefore diverges from Furtak’s characterization of love as “prior to all other emotions” and the basis for significance (*Wisdom in Love*, 10). On my view, significance precedes attachment; in other words, the construal of an individual as connected

that is calculated to bore her. He seemingly ignores her, leaving her to converse with the infatuated but hopelessly outmatched ‘rival suitor,’ Edward. It would never occur to a simplistic seducer to repel the seduced, but in Johannes’s case, this is all part of a larger plan, for he can use these negative feelings to create a sense of surprise and confusion when he takes an action that seems completely contradictory to his previous behavior. Cordelia becomes curious about the old–young man who converses eagerly and animatedly about agronomy with her middle-aged aunt. Curiosity results in her taking notice of him and finding out more about him, but at this stage, it mostly produces a kind of alienation:

Our relationship is not the tender and trusting embrace of understanding, not one of attraction; it is the repulsion of misunderstanding. There is actually nothing at all in my relationship with her; it is purely intellectual, which for a young girl is naturally nothing at all. The method I employ has nevertheless its extraordinary conveniences. A person who plays the gallant arouses suspicions and stirs up resistance to himself; I am exempt from all that. I am not being watched; on the contrary, I am marked rather as a dependable man fit to watch over the young girl. (351)

At first glance, it would seem that Johannes and the hypothetical gallant would equally drive away their object; yet the aesthetic seducer is full of nuances. Misunderstanding is a conflict of the intellect — that is, a gap in knowledge causes the repulsion. The words in the original text, *Attractioner* and *Repulsioner*,³² have Latin roots and strong associations with the field of physics, which makes them suggestive of abstract forces. On the other hand, *Modstand*,³³ the word translated as ‘resistance,’ has a Danish root that literally means ‘to stand against’ and thus evokes a more concrete, palpable variety of opposition. The misunderstanding is an absence of accurate knowledge, and without comprehending what it is against which one reacts, one cannot actually be reacting against that thing. In the first case, Cordelia believes herself to be reacting against

with one’s latent networks of meaning is a causative factor in any affective reaction directed at this individual.

³² Kierkegaard, *Skrifter 2*, 34of.

³³ The German equivalent is *Widerstand*.

Johannes, yet it is not Johannes, but merely a persona he projects. The gallant, on the other hand, is described as inspiring a resistance “to himself,” and since he presumably does not operate behind a persona in quite the same way as the aesthetic seducer, this resistance disadvantages him, plain and simple.

These dynamics show up in the other phases of Johannes’s plan, which also involve an element of contradiction: “The contradiction in these movements will evoke and develop, strengthen and consolidate, the erotic love in her — in one word: tempt it.” (386) The quote refers specifically to the point at which Johannes shifts to the overtly erotic phase, but the entire plan is executed with the end goal of the erotic in mind, and therefore a similar principle is at work in modified form throughout. The contradiction of the erotic is: two strive to be one. Tension is the friend of the erotic because it also contains a contradiction: forces both of attraction and repulsion between two entities. Tension and the erotic thus have a structural affinity for one another.

The next part of the plan is the engagement, which is further broken down into two phases: the motions of infinity, then the erotic. Johannes tends to use military metaphors throughout the diary, most especially when he is describing the two phases: “The greater the abundance of strength she has, the more interesting for me. The first war is a war of liberation; it is a game. The second is a war of conquest; it is a life-and-death struggle.” (385) Johannes describes the steps in his plan as though Cordelia only became infatuated with him towards the end of the engagement, but in fact a force of counterintuitive attraction is at work already by the time he proposes. The proposal itself is a thorough surprise to Cordelia, since Johannes had shown her none of the typical signs of romantic interest up to that point; rather, it had always been: “I romance with the aunt” (350), such that the occasion of the engagement inspires Johannes to comment: “The one I almost feel most sorry for is the aunt, for she loves me with

such a pure and upright agronomical love; she almost worships me as her ideal.” (371) This is meant to be funny, of course; however, actually he does seduce her to a certain extent, and in so doing reveals how values are involved in forming an infatuation. The aunt’s head is filled with thoughts of agronomy; it clearly occupies a central position in her mental landscape. By involving himself in discussions of this topic, Johannes makes it appear as if he shares her values, which is what allows them to get along so well. In an infatuation, one compares one’s own values to those of the object, seeking similarity or compatibility. This process can be susceptible to error if there is too much projection of one’s own reality onto the other person, but this scarcely even has a chance to arise in the case of the seducer, since he forestalls any friction by simulating in himself the other person’s values.

Immediately following the engagement, Johannes presumes to know that something Cordelia “would very likely say” about him to a confidante is that “he has a strange power over me” (375). Although the erotic only fully manifests itself in the second phase of the engagement, the first phase prepares her for it: “When the turn is made and I begin to pull back in earnest, then she will summon up everything in order to really take me captive. She has no other means for that than the erotic itself, except that this will now manifest itself on an entirely different scale. Then it will be a weapon in her hand that she swings against me. Then I will have reflected passion.” (411) Johannes makes this “turn” very subtly, so that Cordelia does not become so alarmed as to disrupt the plan. Instead, in response to her vague sense of an increased emotional distance from Johannes, she begins actively trying to draw him closer to her. The turn occurs when Johannes starts talking animatedly about an unspecified subject which interests them both — harmless enough. But talking about an interesting subject has a different directionality than the erotic; the one is a parallel movement, whereas the other is the drawing together of the two parties.

In the final phase of the plan, Cordelia breaks off the engagement based on hints from Johannes that he will only love her more for having done it. He maintains contact through letters, but they are full of double meanings, such as in the statement: “Now I truly call you *my*; no external sign reminds me of my possession. — Soon I shall truly call you *my*.” (440) To Cordelia, this letter implies that they will remain committed to one another — whether through the emotion of love, or through marriage. Johannes is very careful to suggest this without ever mentioning marriage or anything concrete. What the words mean to him is something entirely different, and he is aware of the deception: to him, the lines mean that once the seduction is complete, Cordelia will be ‘forever his’ as a poetic recollection, as an aesthetic experience which he can relive at will in memory or through the diary. Johannes owns a house in the country; he has the furnishings there arranged to resemble locations where their relationship developed. Cordelia has made plans to visit a family in the country. Johannes arranges for the carriage to bring her, instead, first to his country house. What happens next is not entirely clear and will require lengthier analysis below,³⁴ but what is certain is that the next day Johannes breaks off all contact without explanation and never has anything to do with her again. Thus concludes the seduction.

In addition to these larger phases, Johannes uses numerous sub-strategies. Sometimes the aim is to create erotic tension through a combined attraction and repulsion; sometimes it is to produce the appearance of a separate, parallel world inhabited by only Johannes and Cordelia; and sometimes it is to draw on the forces that repose in common romantic scripts.

There is a particular phenomenon that occurs when one is infatuated: one is acutely aware of the presence of the object of infatuation; in a room full of people and busy with activity, nevertheless no movement of that particular person goes unnoticed. Johannes simulates a version

³⁴ See page 98.

of this: “I place myself before Cordelia everywhere; her eyes see me continually. To her it seems like sheer attentiveness from my part, but on my side I know that her soul thereby loses interest for everything else, that there is being developed within her a mental concupiscence that sees me everywhere.” (403) The feature that marks this practice as seduction and differentiates it from ordinary infatuation is that it reverses the direction of causation: instead of relying on Cordelia’s mind to take notice of him continually, Johannes places himself in the position to catch her notice. The idea is to produce the corresponding emotion of fascination by reproducing — from the other side, as it were — the structure which is typical of it. This is part of Johannes’s method right from the beginning of his interactions with Cordelia. After his first meeting with her at the home of Mrs. Jansen, Cordelia and the Jansen girls depart for a cooking lesson. Johannes avoids the obvious action and instead opts for the unexpected: “I could have offered to accompany them, but that already would have sufficed to indicate the gallant suitor, and I have convinced myself that she is not to be won that way. — On the contrary, I chose to leave right after they had gone and to walk faster than they, but along other streets, yet likewise heading toward the royal kitchen so that when they turned onto Store Kongensgade I passed them in the greatest haste without greeting them or anything — to their great astonishment.” (338) The surprise has the effect of making Cordelia take particular notice of him, though in an entirely unromantic context. He does not wish to be viewed as a suitor because it would activate Cordelia’s latent scripts about how love is ‘supposed’ to work; this would be counter-productive because Johannes, after sizing Cordelia up as a person, has decided that, with her personality, “a good match in the bourgeois sense [...] does not mean anything to her” (362). In fact, Johannes later puts the infatuated suitor Edward in her path just so that “through him she will acquire a distaste for plain and simple love” (361). One sighting of Johannes would not be sufficient to produce “the first web into which she must be spun” (341), so he coordinates his movements to hers: “today I met her three times.” (341)

However, these meetings are tangential and extremely brief; he passes by her, for example, as he is leaving and she arriving at Mrs. Jansen's. This is important to prevent her from developing any specific ideas about what it means: "On the street, I do not stop her, or I exchange a greeting with her but never come close, but always strive for distance. Presumably our repeated encounters are clearly noticeable to her; presumably she does perceive that on her horizon a new planet has loomed, which in its course has encroached disturbingly upon hers in a curiously undisturbing way, but she has no inkling of the law underlying this movement." (341) Merely maintaining a tension between the disturbing and the undisturbing, as precursors to other tensions, is enough. The "law" and the aforementioned "web" give an indication of the theory behind Johannes's continual appearances. By causing his interactions with Cordelia to seem like they occur according to a "law," he removes his own agency, or at least appears to do so. Cordelia gets the idea that an outside force draws the two of them together — as if it were fate. The temptation to invoke fate where infatuation is concerned is very strong because, for one thing, the emotion may appear inexplicable to the person it affects; and for another thing, fate provides the comforting illusion that it is 'meant to be.' One does not like to consider the possibility that a relationship could be a mistake because the stakes are so high when one is dealing with a process that changes an individual at basic levels of personality. As Kierkegaard writes in a note to the draft of *The Concept of Anxiety*, "the Seducer's secret is simply that he knows that woman is anxiety."³⁵ Just as Judge William accuses A of wanting to "play the role of fate,"³⁶ playing fate appeals to the latter's fellow-aesthete and/or alter ego, Johannes.

One of Johannes's most effective tactics is to suggest thoughts to Cordelia. People generally find it invasive if someone tells them what to think directly, but if an idea is simply

³⁵ Søren Kierkegaard, *Journals and Papers: Volume 5, Autobiographical Part One 1829–1848*, ed. and trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong assisted by Gregor Malantschuk (Charlottesville: InteLex Corporation, 1995), 256. [5730]

³⁶ Kierkegaard, *Either/Or* II, 13.

presented, they are inclined to consider it more neutrally. Johannes plants resistance to the engagement in Cordelia's mind very early, in his second letter to her. As yet, he does not say anything about breaking it, but he suggests that this external sign is at odds with internal feeling. At this early stage, Cordelia is above all curious about Johannes, which inclines her to be receptive to information about him. Later, when the engagement is about to break, Johannes writes a letter asserting that she — not he! — thinks “our love does not need an external bond, which is only a hindrance” (424). This more direct suggestion would likely be well received by Cordelia because she already has an earlier precedent for this line of thinking; it would occur to her as something familiar, and immediately she would be favorably disposed towards it.

The first letter is also an example of suggestion, and it further illustrates how Johannes uses the technique, which he is not reticent to describe: “A little epistle today describing the state of my soul will give her a clue to her own inner state.” (387) This letter especially confuses the boundaries between the two individuals. If Cordelia does not know where she stops and Johannes begins, then it is easier for him to mold her into an aesthete like himself, as well as to suggest to her the ideas he wants her to have. The beginning runs thus: “You say that you had not imagined me like this, but neither did I imagine that I could become like this. Is not the change in you? For it is conceivable that I have not actually changed but that the eyes with which you look at me have changed. Or is the change in me? It is in me, for I love you; it is in you, for it is you I love.” (387) By considering both options — that Johannes or that Cordelia is the one changed — Johannes posits a relationship of mutual influence at a time so early that no such relationship could exist. But there is a self-fulfilling aspect to the suggestion, for Cordelia's very contemplation of it changes her in the way that any new idea changes a person. So she is indeed changed by Johannes — though perhaps not quite in the way the letter claims. In an entry after the first set of letters, Johannes uses parallel grammatical constructions to mimic the process of thought

transfer: “She listens; she understands. She listens to the familiar saying; she understands it. She listens to another person’s talking; she understands it as her own. She listens to another person’s voice as it resonates within her; she understands this resonance as if it were her own voice that discloses to her and to another.” (388) The repetitions of “listen” paired with “understand” are a representation of the mental process that occurs when one is receptive: one adopts that which is heard, incorporates it into oneself. The boundary between the recipient’s own mental framework and the outside idea becomes permeable; the incoming thought reproduces itself, as a “resonance,” in the recipient and is stored in memory.

C. Aesthetic Principles in Romantic Scripts

The last chapter discussed mental hierarchies as a means of dealing with the nature of existing; another way in which individuals cope with the problems of needing to make decisions within limits of time and knowledge is through mental shortcuts. In this section, I will refer to a particular type of shortcut as a ‘script.’³⁷ My use of the word ‘script’ is meant to evoke both the theatrical sense of a series of predetermined procedures and the digital-age metaphorical sense of an executable section of code. Scripts are collocations of latent beliefs that have become established in the mind through repetition. They function as mental shortcuts: when a situation is identified which the brain evaluates as belonging to a particular category, the cognitive response is channeled along a pre-established pathway that has proven to be effective in the past. The establishment of scripts is often due to repetitions of cultural inputs, however, and thus they may be socially efficacious while not necessarily situationally or individually efficacious.

³⁷ James Russell uses the term ‘mental scripts’ in a similar way (“Core Affect and Psychological Construction of Emotions,” *Psychological Review* 110 (2003): 145–172, 151); and Ronald de Sousa’s ‘paradigm scenarios’ are likewise related (*The Rationality of Emotions* (Cambridge, MA: MIT, 1987), 181–184).

Since, as mentioned earlier in this chapter, infatuation is based on an evaluation of its object in terms of compatibility with one's own expectations,³⁸ scripts are a feature of mental architecture that has significant potential to contribute to a feeling of infatuation. Johannes employs a multitude of common scripts related to romantic love. Nearly all of the letters he writes to Cordelia are based on one of these scripts, and they surface in other places in the diary as well. Although many of these are (or have in the interim become) clichés, it is to the credit of the aesthete that he merely uses them as a starting point for some quite thoroughly literary-artistic reflections. The typical form of the letters is to place the script in the first or second sentence and then develop it further, often by bringing in a metaphorically charged image. Johannes's particular application of scripts casts them as part of the aesthetic lifestyle; his treatment of them brings out dimensions of: imagination, ideality, the infinite, the eternal, and possibility. A Kierkegaardian aesthete strives to take a specific slant on life. In *The Sickness Unto Death* (1849), edited by "S. Kierkegaard," the pseudonym Anti-Climacus defines a human being in terms of three syntheses: the finite and the infinite, the necessary and the possible, the temporal and the eternal. The titular sickness is despair, which can result from an individual being in improper relation to any of these six dimensions of self. These ideas about the self form a deliberate part of Johannes's thinking in *The Seducer's Diary*, though they only receive systematic development in the later work. Notably, one dimension of each synthesis is about being unrestrained, unrestricted — these dimensions are what appeal to the aesthete. In keeping with one of the broad motives of *Either/Or*, which is to expose deficiencies in the aesthetic viewpoint, Johannes the Seducer would qualify, according to the criteria in *Sickness Unto Death*, as being in despair, since his philosophy too exclusively favors one particular side of the self.

³⁸ See page 78.

For him to use scripts in seducing Cordelia is in some sense counterintuitive: on the one hand, these scripts propagate themselves through the medium of culture, being learned through socialization; on the other hand, Johannes states that he has “never known any family that lived so much apart” (338) as Cordelia’s, and that she is “an isolated person” (339). Additionally, she is only seventeen, has never been in love before, is “proud,” and finds the “chatter” of other girls boring (342). Cordelia is therefore far from being susceptible to a device with merely conventional validity. Most likely there are certain narratives about love and engagement which Cordelia knows just by having been raised in this society, regardless of her sheltered upbringing. But the fact that Johannes’s tactics are highly effective with her suggests that these scripts contain something compelling that is independent of any veneer of legitimacy conferred by their being repeated over and over again in society.

Scripts of this nature are a type of cultural abbreviation: a quick way to transmit a particular idea. Problematically, the idea — or at least the majority of its implications — is often forgotten in the process. Johannes’s letters bring the ideas behind the scripts to light again. In order to avoid becoming too laudatory of the letters, it is incumbent to point out that for all their compositional merits they are nevertheless oddly impersonal. This has to do with the tenets of the aesthete. His affinity for the realms of imagination and possibility crowds out actuality to such a degree that the letters become very abstract. They have to do with Cordelia inasmuch as the flights of imagination which they contain are specifically tailored to promote her ‘progress’ and she is carried along by these. Yet they remain distant from her in many ways because they are usually lacking in details from everyday life and/or details about Cordelia as a specific existing individual.

Upon examining the scripts, and most especially upon seeing them expanded out in Johannes’s reflections, it becomes apparent that each of them has some variety of underlying

narrative. These narrative elements are constitutive of the emotion of infatuation, as will emerge from the analyses of the letters.

Before turning to the letters, there are a few scripts relating to the engagement that demonstrate Johannes's awareness that some formulas have little potential in the poetic realm. His dismissive attitude in several instances shows that he is vehemently opposed to bourgeois conventionality; it is thus inconceivable that he would settle for an unreflected adoption of flat, ordinary formulas in his later correspondence with Cordelia. First, there is Johannes's entry contemplating how best to shift the dynamic of the relationship:

Various means of surprising Cordelia are conceivable. I could try to raise an erotic storm capable of tearing up trees by the roots. By means of it, I could see if it is possible to lift her off the ground, to lift her out of the historical context, and through secret meetings to generate her passion in this unsettled state. It is not inconceivable that it could be done. A girl with her passion can be made to do anything one pleases. But it would be esthetically incorrect. I do not relish romantic giddiness, and this state is to be commended only when one is dealing with girls who are able to acquire a poetic afterglow in no other way. (366)

Johannes's reluctance to settle for "romantic giddiness" shows that he differentiates between various degrees of intellectual-emotional depth in romantic dealings. Merely overwhelming Cordelia with passion is not enough, as it would not be the kind of "absolute abandon" he desires; the former would not reach as deep and significant a level of her personality as the latter. He eventually concludes that an engagement would best suit his purposes: "yes, a good match, the aunt will say" (371). Here, he pokes fun at a stereotypical way of describing a romantic partnership: the "good match" is such a conventional evaluation that he can already foresee that the aunt will say just something of this sort — and it will be based on the completely erroneous assumption that Johannes is the agronomy-loving, comfort-seeking persona that he has presented thus far. Of the proposal itself, he says: "I kept very strictly to the usual formulas" (374), but in this case that is a form of calculated restraint; the proposal is not supposed to be romantically charged, since he plans to use the engagement to repel Cordelia in order to attract her by other means: "As

for my engagement, I shall not boast that it is poetic, for in every way it is utterly philistine and bourgeois. The girl does not know whether she should say 'Yes' or 'No'; the aunt says 'Yes,' the girl also says 'Yes,' I take the girl, she takes me — and now the story begins."³⁹ (375) Those romantic scripts which are particularly conventional prove to be an effective means of suppressing that which they are supposed to encourage — namely, the romantic. Johannes's method here is counterintuitive: "A double-movement is necessary in relation to Cordelia." (386) That is, in person, "irony and hoarfrost make her doubtful," whereas "in a letter I can throw myself at her feet in superb fashion etc. — something that would easily seem like nonsense if I did it in person, and the illusion would be lost" (386).

An excellent illustration of Johannes's point that one can pull off effusions in letters that would seem comical in person is a letter containing a long string of lines of this sort: "This girl I love more than my life, for she is my life; more than all my desires, for she is my only desire; more than all my thoughts, for she is my only thought [...]" (398). Making the beloved the most (or even only) important thing in the world is not a realistic move for an individual who must continue to exist in the world; it removes the beloved to the realm of imagination, away from the 'intrusion' of actuality. This works for Johannes because his seduction has a pre-established life expectancy, but for Cordelia, who expected a continued relationship, this idea is impractical. In addition to this expression, which might be described as the 'one and only'-script, the same letter contains the 'no

³⁹ This contrasts with the usual idea, according to which the 'story' would end with the engagement — or at the latest with marriage. Both the aesthete Johannes and the ethicist Judge William feel that culture has failed to recognize which part is most interesting in a romantic relationship, though the latter's opinion differs as to when this is: "Over the centuries have not knights and adventurers experienced incredible toil and trouble in order finally to find quiet peace in a happy marriage; over the centuries have not writers and readers of novels labored through one volume after the other in order to end with a happy marriage, and has not one generation after the other again and again faithfully endured four acts of troubles and entanglements if only there was any probability of a happy marriage in the fifth act? But through these enormous efforts very little is accomplished for the glorification of marriage, and I doubt very much that any person by reading such books has felt himself made competent to fulfill the task he has set for himself or has felt himself oriented in life, for precisely this is the corruption, the unhealthiness in these books, that they end where they should begin." Kierkegaard, *Either/Or* II, 17.

one understands me but you'-script: "You have understood me, you have understood me correctly, literally; not one jot or tittle has escaped you!" (398) And another letter repeats the phrase "you and you alone know" (417) three times. This points to a basic, common desire in love relationships. Understanding in human relationships in general is difficult to achieve, but it is especially important in a romantic context because of the expectations that necessarily arise from the prospect of a shared life. Of course, this is much less applicable for a seducer; the Johannes-Cordelia relationship only lasted about six months, from April to September. (The seasonal symbolism fits the poetic quality of the incident perfectly: in spring it blossoms, in fall it withers, by winter it is over.) However, since only Johannes knew that this would be the case, Cordelia quite naturally did form such expectations. Although this script is thus based on a central, valid issue in a relationship, the particular form it takes here and elsewhere is an example of operating in extremes. While understanding is needed in a romantic relationship, perfect understanding is not humanly achievable. Judge William from Part II would view understanding as a process: "it is every human being's duty to become open."⁴⁰ Johannes's appropriation of the script both suggests its deeper narrative significance and makes an ironic commentary on the seducer's actions. The line is a denotatively empty utterance, coming from a seducer, because of course Johannes has not opened himself — that is, his self, not his persona — to be understood by Cordelia at all. The ethicist would again have something to say about this: "My young friend, suppose there was no one who cared to guess your riddle — what joy would you have in it then?"⁴¹

Access to knowledge is one parameter that helps to define an infatuation. Johannes's second letter begins with: "Erotic love loves secrecy — an engagement is a disclosure" (388). Secrecy creates an informational boundary around the two participants that helps to foster their exclusive interest in one another: when only two people share in a secret, then each one is the sole

⁴⁰ Kierkegaard, *Either/Or* II, 322.

⁴¹ Kierkegaard, *Either/Or* II, 160.

possible conversation partner for the other within the territory of that subject. Johannes claims that an engagement is a way to “deceive the enemies” (388); this evokes the ‘us versus the world’-script, which is a way of establishing, in a more antagonistic fashion, a separation of the two lovers from the rest of society. This idea occurs again in a later letter’s rhetorical suggestion that they use Johannes’s carriage to fly away “out of the world” (395). A corollary of ‘us versus the world’ is the ‘all I need is you’-script, which is also suggested by the ending of this letter: “if the world passed away, if our light carriage disappeared beneath us, we would still cling to each other, floating in the harmony of the spheres.” (396) Johannes uses imagination to create parallel realities: here, one that defies the laws of physics; and elsewhere, one that elevates their relationship to mythological status. He ‘rewrites’ a painting of Theseus and Ariadne, changing the configuration of Cupid and Nemesis to tell his own tale of love’s absolute priority and repeating the line: “As if I could forget you!” (403) in order to evoke the ‘eternal love’-script. Eternity is likewise a key element in Johannes’s letter developing the theme of longing: “My longing is an eternal impatience. If only I had lived through all eternities and assured myself that you belonged to me every moment, only then would I [...] have enough assurance to sit calmly at your side.” (395) The idea of love’s transcendence of time shows up in the ‘loved you all my life’-script and the ‘never truly loved until now’-script, which show up in a letter comparing Johannes’s experience with a palimpsest: “I allow forgetfulness to consume everything that does not touch on you, and then I discover a pristine, a divinely young, primitive text” (401). Love, as it is portrayed in Johannes’s letters, is bound by neither time nor space; the rhetorical question, “To love you, is it not to love a world?” (399), which concludes a letter full of examples of the pathetic fallacy, expresses a longing for the infinite.

As Johannes transitions from the phase in the engagement in which he teaches Cordelia about infinity to the phase in which he teaches her about the erotic, he sends a quick succession

of six letters (406–407). These also contain romantic scripts, but with a particular emphasis on power dynamics within the relationship: “Sometimes one must place oneself very high, yet in such a way that there remains a place still higher; sometimes one must place oneself very low. The former is more proper when one is moving in the direction of the intellectual; the latter is more proper when one is moving in the direction of the erotic.” (400) These letters contain many variations on the ‘you are my everything’-script. The first letter contains the line, “I have ceased to be, in order to be yours”; Johannes’s self-abasement is continued in the third letter, where he describes himself as “body, substance, earth, dust, and ashes” and Cordelia as “soul and spirit.” In the second letter, Johannes inverts the meaning of “my Cordelia” in order to claim that it designates Cordelia’s ownership of him, rather than the other way around. An earlier diary entry contains Johannes’s opinion that a potential love interest should “make such a deep impression on a person that she awakens the ideal” (335). Indeed, ideality is usually projected onto the object of infatuation. By rhetorically elevating Cordelia and lowering himself, Johannes simulates the gesture of idealizing her, thus giving her reason to suppose that he is infatuated with her. (Perhaps he is, in a sense, but in any case not in the way Cordelia would expect.) This makes her more likely to reciprocate because she does not need to fear rejection; she would perceive it as safe to allow the feelings she already has to grow.

The latter three letters in this group of six have especially strong mythical elements. In the fourth, Johannes claims that his interactions with the world are mere representations of his love for Cordelia: “life acquires another meaning for me — it becomes a myth about you.” (407) In the fifth, he transforms himself and Cordelia into mystical forces: “I wrap my thoroughly reflective soul, like a manifold mobile frame, around your pure, deep being.” (407). And in the sixth letter, he compares himself to a river that fell in love with a maiden, just as “we read in old stories” (407). Implicit in these letters is the promise that love has the power to transcend actuality and access a

metaphysical realm; based on the contents of the previous letters, this is the realm of aesthetic values.

D. Worlds Apart

Although Johannes's aesthetic method of seduction produces moments of enjoyment for him throughout its entire course, it does also have a climactic moment of sorts at the end when Cordelia visits Johannes's country house. After Johannes has talked Cordelia into breaking their engagement, he undertakes an elaborate redecoration of this house, which he describes in a diary entry. Soon after the break, Cordelia is to visit a family in the country; however, Johannes has his servant intercept her coach and bring her to his country house instead, where he has carefully prepared the appearances that will meet her gaze. This encounter refers back to an earlier diary entry in which Johannes observes that "surroundings and setting do have a great influence upon a person and are part of that which makes a firm and deep impression on the memory or, more correctly, on the whole soul" (389). In the same entry, he describes the room at the home of Cordelia's aunt where they frequently spent time together. He asserts that the surroundings are "entirely appropriate" for Cordelia and then compares this with the setting of another of his seductions, which was "earthbound" but also appropriate because "Emily was lovely but of less significance than Cordelia." (390) Johannes's evaluation of the different settings imbues them with metaphorical significance: "Cordelia's surroundings must have no foreground but rather the infinite boldness of the horizon. She must not be earthbound but must float, not walk but fly, not back and forth but eternally forward." Johannes is able to realize this ideal at his country house, where the view, as he describes it in a later entry, harmonizes with his vision of what is suitable:

The location is just as she would like it. Sitting in the center of the room, one can look out on two sides beyond everything in the foreground; there is limitless horizon on both sides; one is alone in the vast ocean of the atmosphere. If one moves nearer to a row of windows, a forest [Skov] looms far off on the horizon like

a garland, bounding and inclosing. So it should be. What does erotic love [*Elskov*] love? — An enclosure. Was not paradise itself an enclosed place, a garden facing east? — But it hedges one in too closely, this ring. One moves closer to the window — a calm lake hides humbly within the higher surroundings. At the edge there is a boat. A sigh out of the heart's fullness, a breath from the mind's unrest. It works loose from its mooring, glides over the surface of the lake, gently moved by the soft breeze of ineffable longing. Rocked on the surface of the lake, which is dreaming about the deep darkness of the forest, one vanishes in the mysterious solitude of the forest. — One turns to the other side, where the sea spreads out before one's eyes, which are stopped by nothing and are pursued by thoughts that nothing detains. What does erotic love love? Infinity. — What does erotic love fear? Boundaries. (442)

Johannes acknowledges the appeal of enclosure in a relationship, yet his aesthetic ideals cannot entertain it as more than an adornment; thus, his ideal landscape evokes the mood of enclosure while actually opening out into infinite space. This landscape, as viewed from the large room in the house, forms Cordelia's first impression upon entering the country house. Next, there is a smaller room, which Johannes has carefully outfitted with the same furniture that is at her aunt's house — willow matting, sofa, tea table, lamp — plus a piano like the one in the home of her friends the Jansens. In the music holder, Johannes places a copy of the "little Swedish melody" that he once observed her playing (442). The final touch is a book of poetry — nothing too profound, just something to set the mood — lying on the table with a sprig of myrtle between its pages, "more than" a "bookmark": a symbol of love (442).

Partly because the house is a physical location, and partly because this encounter is the most thoroughly planned of all, this episode in the seduction is the best example of how an infatuation feeds on the creation of a separate world, inhabited only by two, distinct from the rest of society. Infatuation involves the creation of a private sphere under any circumstances; but Johannes, in keeping with the ethos of the aesthete, carries this to an extreme by creating a space containing all sorts of visual references to the narrative of their love. When Cordelia sees the significant objects, she associates them with events in her relationship with Johannes, which calls up the relevant thoughts and memories to her conscious mind. Johannes evinces an

understanding of the temporal dimension of emotions, whose intensity is enhanced when evaluations and connections are made within a brief period of time: “nothing has been forgotten that could have any significance for her; on the other hand, nothing has been introduced that could directly remind her of me, although I am nevertheless invisibly present everywhere. But in large part the effect will depend upon how she happens to see it the first time. In that regard, my servant has received the most precise instructions, and in his way he is a perfect virtuoso.” (442)

Thinking about all of these things within a very brief space of time produces a moment of concentrated intensity which forms the high point of her infatuation; here, everything that has pulled her towards Johannes combines to produce an overwhelming emotion to which she is ready to submit her entire being. Infatuation can do this because it is an emotion having to do with relationships, and a relationship always contains the possibility of change: whenever two people interact, their distinct individualities are brought into proximity, creating tensions that either have to be resolved through one or both of the people changing, or else the tensions will dissolve the relationship. The extent of the tensions is ultimately dependent on how close the relationship is; in the case of a romantic relationship like this one, that potential is very great. The stronger Cordelia’s infatuation, the more vulnerable her personality is.

The separate world is demarcated not only by its visual qualities but also by its secrecy. What is at stake in the secrecy of love is the private space of the two participants in the relationship. Johannes states at the outset of the diary that “all love is secretive” and then emphasizes that he means this unconditionally by adding: “even the faithless kind, if it has the appropriate esthetic element within it” (336). The ethicist from Part II agrees: “I have no hesitation at all in declaring secretiveness to be the absolute condition for preserving the esthetic in marriage, not in the sense that one should aim at it, pursue it, take it in vain, let the only real enjoyment be in the enjoyment of secretiveness. One of the favorite fancies of first love is that it

will take flight to an uninhabited island.”⁴² By staging the final scene of the seduction at his house out in the country, away from Copenhagen, Johannes creates a version of the uninhabited island that the ethicist describes. A private sphere is important because it marks infatuation as something distinct even from other kinds of love, such as the familial variety, which Johannes finds an unsuitable subject for his purposes: “What do engaged people ordinarily talk about? As far as I know, they are very busy mutually weaving each other into the boring context of the respective families. No wonder the erotic vanishes.” (38of.) This is the case because of what distinguishes a romantic attachment from all others: its exclusivity. Erotic love can be focused on one person in a way that other kinds of love, including familial, cannot. Johannes’s dismissal of familial context can be read as a consequence of his desire to separate out only those aspects of romance that he can enjoy aesthetically, since these contexts would likely constitute two of the narrative strands that the participants must interweave in order to fortify a love relationship of the more enduring variety. On the other hand, his claim functions as a critique of “boring” bourgeois customs, which can crowd out precisely that which is most conducive to strengthening an infatuation. Being by nature more or less an obsessive process, an infatuation bends every story back onto its participants, so that it becomes a story about the relationship; any story that points outward, away from the relationship, is a distraction: “public information is irrelevant to the mysteries of love” (381). And by “mysteries,” Johannes likely means the kind of webs he himself spins, rather than the unknown.

Of all the elements which Johannes uses to produce the utmost upwelling of Cordelia’s feeling of infatuation, the most important is memory. The intense, climactic moment requires that multiple preparatory moments be stored in memory so that they can be recalled at once: “The surroundings are always of great importance, especially for the sake of recollection

⁴² Kierkegaard, *Either/Or* II, 104.

[*Erindring*]. Every erotic relationship must always be lived through in such a way that it is easy for one to produce an image that conveys all the beauty of it.” (390) Since an image conveys information in a simultaneous manner, it is well suited to evoke all of the factors which, evaluated together, produce an overwhelming infatuation. Johannes makes a visual citation of locations and objects that Cordelia associates with emotionally charged events in the course of their relationship; in so doing, he calls to mind its entire ‘history’ for Cordelia to relive in her imagination as she explores the rooms. Whereas a love relationship has a history that gives it strength through the accumulation of reasons for affection between the partners, Johannes exploits the course of events that have constituted the seduction up to that point in order to simulate a ‘history.’ These events cannot qualify as a history for two reasons. Firstly, they involve not two individuals in a relationship, but rather Cordelia and a persona. Secondly, many of them — the letters in particular — operate at a level of abstraction that precludes meaningful participation by concrete, existing individuals.

There is more than one way to read Johannes’s two final diary entries from the 24th and 25th of September, which bookend the night when Cordelia is conveyed to the country house. On a denotative level, the entry from the 24th focuses on the Johannes’s reflections as he strolls through Copenhagen around midnight. If one supposes that he is taking on the more traditional role of the seducer for this final stratagem, then these entries can be read as nineteenth-century avoidance of sexuality, with the implication that Johannes travels to the country house and spends the night with Cordelia in the intervening gap. However, the possibility that the passage is not playing coy after all points to two other potential readings. It is conceivable that Johannes makes no omission at all, and that the final act in the seduction does in fact consist merely of him taking a stroll while Cordelia explores the country house: of her experiencing the height of her infatuation while he imagines her experiencing the height of her infatuation. In a previous entry,

Johannes explains that his presence would ruin the effect of the surroundings: “I myself do not wish to participate in her surprise and in her joy over it; such erotic episodes would only weaken her soul.” (440) Given the way Johannes speaks of demanding more than an ordinary seducer, the “everything” that Cordelia has “given away” (445), according to the entry on the 25th, might very well refer to her emotions, her intellect, her personality — after all, the main feature that sets this seduction apart is that Cordelia’s virginity is the least that is at stake. So certain is Johannes of the effects the house’s furnishings will have on her that he does not actually need to be there in order to know how she will react. A reliance on imagination to this degree would be a manifestation of the aesthetic lifestyle carried to its utmost extreme.

The third reading suggested is that the passage is deliberately ambiguous⁴³ — that both of the aforementioned readings are meant to occur to the attentive reader, who is then even more poignantly confronted with the question of Johannes’s priorities; in other words, does the aesthetic seducer even have any use for physical consummation, or is it made superfluous by the pleasure in having obtained complete intellectual–emotional surrender from the victim? In the latter case, having sex with Cordelia might even be a distraction, an unwanted intrusion of actuality into his realm of purely aesthetic imagination. The text of the entries is unclear at several points; when he asks on the 25th “why cannot such a night last longer?” (445), does he mean spending the night with Cordelia, or spending the night with his own thoughts? The introduction to the diary, in which the editor A relates that the seducer’s victims could not decide whether they had grounds to reproach Johannes and therefore never made their grievances public, favors the interpretation that the seduction was mental and not physical, since that society would have difficulty recognizing a psychological event as a seduction according to its norms. Another comment makes one wonder whether Johannes is speaking literally when he alludes to the coach

⁴³ A similar move is employed with regard to the authorship of parts of *Either/Or*, as I have pointed out on page 73.

that is to drive him to Cordelia: “Everything is a metaphor; I myself am a myth about myself, for is it not as a myth that I hasten to this tryst?” (444) On the one hand, this statement may be read as lending support for the second reading if it is taken to mean that Johannes does not actually go to meet Cordelia; on the other hand, it could indicate that Johannes does travel there in body but not in spirit — in other words, that he remains personally detached from the event in order to experience it according to his aesthetic ideal of enjoyment. Notwithstanding Kierkegaard’s dislike of prudery, indirectness in this case fits his vision of Johannes’s *modus operandi*: “the esthetic is always hidden: if it expresses itself at all, it is coquettish.”⁴⁴ On the whole, considering that Johannes truly wants everything from Cordelia, it seems more likely that he does actually show up at the country house. However, the language of Johannes’s final two diary entries, by suggesting other possibilities, is an invitation to the reader to consider the implications of a psychological seduction.

IV. Pedagogical Considerations

Throughout Kierkegaard’s works, emotions are taken very seriously as a core aspect of self. Robert C. Roberts identifies an Aristotelian vein in Kierkegaard’s thinking with respect to emotions, pointing out the central importance of “educating the emotions.”⁴⁵ In *The Seducer’s Diary*, an ‘emotional education’ of sorts also takes place; however, in keeping with the twisted nature of the seducer’s activities, that which is thereby learned cannot be said to benefit the learner. The educational process does, on the other hand, provide a textual basis for exploring the

⁴⁴ Kierkegaard, *Journals and Papers* 5, 224. [5634]

⁴⁵ Robert C. Roberts, “Existence, Emotion, and Virtue: Classical Themes in Kierkegaard,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Kierkegaard*, ed. Alastair Hannay and Gordon D. Marino (Cambridge, England: UP, 1998), 179. Roberts states that Kierkegaard’s writings are “all about proper and improper emotions and action, and he stresses, as strongly as Aristotle does, the role of choice in acquiring and exemplifying these. If we may paraphrase Aristotle as saying that genuine existence, or subjectivity (when it is truth, and not just ‘subjectivity of a sort’) is proper pathos.”

nature of the 'instructional methods,' so to speak, that can effectively change emotions, as well as how changing the emotions changes the self.

Johannes adopts the language of education when describing the scenes between the two 'couples': Cordelia and Edward plus Johannes and Cordelia's aunt. This configuration also forms a 'love square,' as opposed to the paradigmatic 'love triangle.' In common with Goethe's *Wahlverwandtschaften*, which also contains a foursome, the initial pairings are soon exchanged for others; however, the innovation of *The Seducer's Diary* is that the reconfiguration happens not because of elemental forces of nature but rather by the design of Johannes the Seducer, who possesses knowledge of human nature that removes the mysteriousness of attractions, both romantic and other. He merely wishes to arrange matters to seem as though impersonal forces were the cause:

She must owe me nothing, for she must be free. Only in freedom is there love; only in freedom are there diversion and everlasting amusement. Although I am making arrangements so that she will sink into my arms as if by a necessity of nature and am striving to make her gravitate toward me, the point nevertheless is that she should not fall like a heavy body but as mind should gravitate toward mind. Although she will belong to me, yet it must not be in the unbeautiful way of resting upon me as a burden. She must be neither an appendage in the physical sense nor an obligation in the moral sense. (36of.)

The seducer's practice is a powerful yet restrained display of agency which forms a stark contrast to the relationships portrayed in *Die Wahlverwandtschaften*, in which characters are propelled hither and thither by forces which they are inadequate to oppose. (Cordelia's ineffectual suitor is accordingly named "Edward," like the character in Goethe.) One reads Goethe to witness the aesthetic tour de force on display in the novel, not in order to learn about the human psyche. His characters are not equipped with a plausible psychology, whereas Kierkegaard goes to great lengths to provide a reconstructible set of reasons for characters' thoughts and actions, grounded in their histories, so that his characters can function as adequate simulations of interpersonal dynamics.

Johannes's description in the above passage of gravitating minds is dissonant with several other places in the diary where he is dismissive of female intellect, but such inconsistencies are typical of the aesthete.⁴⁶ If one interpretation fits his purpose at one moment and another at the next, he is not inclined to be overly punctilious. It suits his pursuit of the infinite to keep all possibilities open. Many of the dismissive passages are part of a rationalization of his ethically questionable behavior, whereas numerous places in the diary demonstrate that what makes Cordelia so able to be seduced in this way is precisely her intellect; moreover, that that is what Johannes develops in her: "She must be strengthened within herself before I let her find support from me. [...] She herself must be developed within herself; she must feel the resilience of her soul; she must come to grips with the world and lift it." (360) Notably, however, this passage uses passive grammatical constructions that allow Johannes to go unmentioned. He calls Cordelia's responses to the curious social situations which he engineers "exercises that must be done" (351), yet he disavows his own role in bringing them about. The use of the first-person plural pronoun "we" in the following passage is interpretable as Johannes's attempt to obscure his personal involvement behind a vaguely defined company which might perhaps include the entire foursome, or perhaps his agronomical persona as a separate entity from himself:

This is the first false teaching; we must teach her to smile ironically, but this smile applies to me just as much as to the aunt; for she does not know at all what to think of me. But it could just be that I was the kind of young man who became old prematurely; it is possible; there could be a second possibility, a third, etc. Having smiled at her aunt, she is indignant with herself; I turn around and, while I continue to speak with the aunt, I look very gravely at her, whereupon she smiles at me, at the situation. (351)

It might seem like an odd variety of confession for Johannes to call his own teaching "false," since that immediately suggests he is leading her astray. The text, of course, contains precisely that suggestion. However, there is also an explanation for why Johannes would describe it that way.

⁴⁶ Johannes states that "the woman is the weaker sex" (339); the ethicist is the one who asserts that "woman is just as strong as man" (Kierkegaard, *Either/Or* II, 113).

The teaching is not false in the sense that it is ineffective in reaching its aim. From Johannes's perspective, it is not only the teaching that is false: he is teaching Cordelia to be false herself. To smile ironically is to have two opinions of a situation, one on display, the other hidden. Once Cordelia learns to do this, she is no longer transparent, and in that sense there is a falseness in her smile.

This is more evidence that this is no ordinary seduction, for here the seduced, not just the seducer, is false. Another of Johannes's pedagogical reflections gives a hint as to the dynamic between the two of them: "But now she is going to learn what a powerful force erotic love [*Elskov*] is. [...] And this will take place through me; and in learning to love, she will learn to love me; as she develops the rule, the paradigm will sequentially unfold, and this I am." (377) Learning not only to love in general but also to love Johannes specifically involves becoming similar to him: Cordelia develops the reflective capacity of the aesthete. Additionally, the educational aspect operates in both directions, at least according to Johannes: "My love affairs, therefore, always have a reality [*Realitet*] for me personally; they amount to a life factor, an educational period that I definitely know all about, and I often even link with it some skill or other." (346) The idea that the relationship with Cordelia produces no more than the nebulous "some skill or other" is likely to produce ethical repugnance in the reader: a skill, a mere tool for the seducer's repertoire is an impact entirely out of proportion to the impact on Cordelia; this goes against the widespread belief that there ought to be mutuality in a relationship of this nature. On the other hand, there is reason to suspect that the impact on Johannes is greater than he himself claims. One of Johannes's entries tells of a conversation in which a licentiate friend of his tells about the girl to whom he has become engaged:

He confided to me that she was lovely, which I knew before, that she was very young, which I also knew; he finally confided to me that he had chosen her precisely so that he himself could form her into the ideal that had always vaguely hovered before him. Good lord, what a silly licentiate — and a healthy, blooming,

cheerful girl. Now, I am a fairly old hand at the game, and yet I never approach a young girl other than as nature's *Venerabile* [something worthy of veneration] and first learn from her. Then insofar as I may have any formative influence upon her, it is by teaching her again and again what I have learned from her. (39of.)

The contrast between the conception of men and women on display in this passage versus the one above gives a good idea of the capriciousness of Johannes's mind. These vacillations between idolization of and condescension towards women blur the distinction between teacher and student — even, one suspects, inside his own head. The dual directionality of the educational aspect of the diary parallels the likewise mutual attentions inherent to the erotic. To have personal involvement to this extent also has implications for evaluating Johannes's degree of detachment — from Cordelia, from the situation, from his own emotions — at the end of the seduction. This is significant because Cordelia's personality changes over the course of the relationship, showing that infatuation makes one susceptible to alterations at a basic level of self and raising the question of the incident's effect on Johannes.

V. The Asymmetries of Seduction

Whereas there is an expectation of reciprocity in a romantic relationship, a seduction posits asymmetry; for that reason it may be considered a betrayal of the romantic relationship. Infatuation is ordinarily about two people inhabiting the same narrative, yet in this seduction, it is only one. This one, Cordelia, inhabits a space along with a simulation; it is the false persona Johannes projects, which he describes as if it were an invisible copy of himself: "I myself am almost invisibly present when I am sitting visible at her side. My relationship to her is like a dance that is supposed to be danced by two people but is danced by only one. That is, I am the other dancer, but invisible." (38o) The use of a simulation makes it easier to see what causes Cordelia to become infatuated because the simulation becomes whatever is most likely to be effective with

her. While this is going on, Johannes sits back at a remove and delivers commentary on the development of the relationship between Cordelia and the simulation; it is not only his brief encounters with random women in the streets of Copenhagen that can be termed “actiones in distans.” Inasmuch as Johannes’s presence in the relationship is only as a simulation, he maintains a distance between himself and his persona that would theoretically enable him to cast off the persona after the relationship ends and thus avoid any unpleasant thoughts or emotions. For a Kierkegaardian aesthete, who values the dimensions of self that are freeing and unrestricting, an escape from consequences is highly appealing.

It should be remembered, however, that the aesthete is an unreliable narrator. His resolution at the end of the diary that “from now on she can no longer occupy my soul” (445) is little deterrence to questions about the effects of the incident on him, which even A, the editor, recognizes: “But how may things look in his own head? Just as he has led others astray, so he, I think, will end by going astray himself.” (308) Johannes intends to use infatuation for his own aesthetic ends, but one may wonder whether the emotion does not turn the tables on him.⁴⁷ Does he really succeed in keeping himself outside of the relationship he has created? A sign of Johannes’s entanglement in the situation is that what he wants for Cordelia is basically the same as what he wants for himself. That is, he wants to instill in her the same aesthetic principles that he values, and he invests as much time in her as she in him. At one point, Johannes hides a note in Cordelia’s knitting, with the explanation: “It always seems as if I were the one who paid attention to her; the advantage I have is that I am placed in her thoughts everywhere, that I surprise her everywhere.” (410) On one level, the implied deception is real, since the note does not signify what Cordelia believes it to signify: while she takes it as a sign of Johannes’s affection, he intends it as means of appearing to have affection for her and thereby encouraging her affection

⁴⁷ See also Bradley R. Dewey, who makes the case that Johannes is “demonically entrap[ped]” by his own practices. “The Erotic-Demonic in Kierkegaard’s ‘Diary of the Seducer,’” *Scandinavica* 10 (1971): 2.

for him. On another level, however, Johannes is only deceiving himself here: he in fact does pay attention to Cordelia, since a great deal of thought and planning is required both to compose the note and to arrange for its 'delivery.' Another sign that Johannes is not as much in control of his own practice as he imagines is this double-edged statement: "She will believe me, partly because I rely on my artistry, and partly because at the bottom of what I am doing there is truth." (384) The "truth" is to be found not only in the (very compelling) appeal of aesthetic values, but also in the nature of Johannes's seduction. Whereas in an 'ordinary' seduction, infatuation is absent on one or both sides, in this intellectual-spiritual seduction, it is present on both sides — that is its "truth." And it is an actual infatuation, not a simulation, despite the amount of manipulation used to generate it.⁴⁸

When Johannes knows that the end of the relationship is approaching, he engages in some lengthy reflections on the nature of women, which are actually a blatantly obvious rationalization of his behavior in seducing them. Johannes, ever the master of reflection, demonstrates what philosophical acrobatics are possible through the power of 'deliberation': "The more I deliberate on the matter, the more I see that my practice is in complete harmony with my theory. My practice, namely, has always been imbued with the conviction that woman is essentially being-for-other." (432) Although he is not quite so obvious as to say it explicitly, the clear implication is that woman exists so that man can do what he wishes with her — seducing her, for example. These prime examples of self-deception show why Kierkegaard is considered a forerunner of existentialism, with its close scrutiny of 'bad faith.' Despite having just finished teaching Cordelia to think like an aesthete, despite having "awakened multiple-tongued reflection" (309), Johannes claims that women are basically vegetables: "Woman's being (the word 'existence' already says too much, for she does not subsist out of herself) is correctly designated as gracefulness, an

⁴⁸ Even Johannes himself realizes and acknowledges that his infatuation is real: "That I actually am in love I can tell partly by the secrecy with which I treat this matter, almost even with myself" (336).

expression that is reminiscent of vegetative life; she is like a flower, as the poets are fond of saying, and even the intellectual [*aandelige*] is present in her in a vegetative way.” (431) By dehumanizing women, Johannes can pretend that the seduction will not have emotional, mental, or other significant consequences for Cordelia. As offensive as it is to seduce a person, and as doubly offensive as it is to claim that it was all right to do it, nevertheless this rationalization also seems to indicate some stirring of the ethical in him — otherwise, why would he demonstrate such strong signs of a subconscious effort to avoid imagining Cordelia as a person? Neither Johannes’s disavowal of his own responsibility nor his devaluation of Cordelia remains coherent in the face of his earlier statements — for example: “Do I love Cordelia? Yes! [...] I am one of the few who can do this, and she is one of the few qualified for it; so are we not suited to each other?” (385) Although contradictions like these can be explained away by again returning to the argument that aesthetes do not insist on consistency, it is this very type of circular reasoning that leads A to suspect in his preface that all is not well with Johannes. In this way, *The Seducer’s Diary* is a demonstration — as opposed to an explanation — of a flaw in the aesthetic viewpoint.

The outcome for Johannes suggests, further, that infatuation is so close to a person’s fundamental beliefs, desires, and conception of self that when one becomes as deeply involved in it as both Johannes and Cordelia do during this relationship, it is impossible not to be affected by the specific processes that characterize the emotion. In so doing, *The Seducer’s Diary* proclaims its own impossibility as a narrative; it postulates a situation which must on some level appear absurd to the reader. How could Johannes’s degree of empathetic involvement in another person’s interiority coexist with such a lack of ethical scruples? The text only makes sense as a thought experiment. The seducer makes a comment about himself that applies equally well to the diary as a whole, as well as to Kierkegaard’s texts in general: “I am a friend of freedom of thought, and no thought is so absurd that I do not have the courage to stick to it.” (369) Since emotion is an

evaluation capable of accommodating many factors at once, sometimes it can provide insight into complex interconnections which one's linear thought operation cannot comprehend; as Cordelia writes in one of her letters to Johannes after the end of the relationship: "That you did love me, I know, even though I do not know what it is that makes me sure of it." (313)

VI. Conclusion

The exercise of rational agency in one's own romantic affairs is an ideal that is often aspired to but seldom achieved. *The Seducer's Diary* offers a rare opportunity to examine in detail what goes into creating an infatuation, thereby making transparent its groundedness in numerous simultaneous evaluations that can otherwise appear as an incomprehensible jumble. Infatuation, like many complex emotions, arises from a multitude of little circumstances which, though insignificant in themselves, in combination produce far-reaching effects. Contriving an infatuation depends on accessing and working in accordance with a person's internal scripts.

In the early stages, even what seem like distancing motions move Cordelia closer to Johannes's goal: his play with alternations of attraction and repulsion, through appearing warm and cold in unexpected succession, catches her attention and makes her curious and therefore receptive to learning more of the details he feeds her. The more she notices him, the more she is going through the mental motions of infatuation, since a heightened awareness of the love object is one of its typical features. Johannes awakens Cordelia's latent potential to appreciate aesthetic values, and the promise that being with him will result in the pleasure of living in infinity, possibility, and eternity — the aesthete's preferred halves of the syntheses⁴⁹ that constitute a person — contributes to her infatuation. With his use of romantic scripts, Johannes at once taps into these new desires and connects to latent ideas which Cordelia holds about relationships, thus

⁴⁹ See page 91.

providing an anchor in familiar ideas. At the country house, Johannes ties together all of his previous efforts through the use of visual references that serve as shortcuts to access the different parts of her mental framework that he has carefully built up. This is the composite basis for the emotion that she feels on this occasion.

Infatuation is an evaluation of another person in relation to our own existent beliefs about what we want out of life, to the effect that this person will contribute positively. Johannes both plays to Cordelia's wants and instills in her new ones to which he can then appeal. Because of the way the structure of infatuation is, it permeates virtually all aspects of a person's interiority, and that is why this emotion, even more so than others, is such a powerful force. Becoming infatuated is ordinarily an involuntary process that happens according to one's individual scripts about what is desirable in a partner, whereas the seducer turns infatuation into something voluntary — but according to his volition, not that of the seduced. The reader of his diary may learn the causes of Cordelia's infatuation because Johannes is consciously aware of his own method.

Chapter Three: The Meaning of Surprise in Adalbert Stifter's *Brigitta*

If one just knows how to surprise, one always wins the game. The energy of the person involved is temporarily suspended; one makes it impossible for her to act, and this happens whether extraordinary or ordinary means are used.

— Johannes, *The Seducer's Diary*

An individual who wants to exercise agency in life might well ask the question: How can I change the nature of my emotions? This is not a matter of altering the external circumstances that give rise to an emotional response; indeed, these often cannot be influenced. Rather, it is a matter of changing the internal structures involved in producing the particular manifestation of the emotion. The previous chapters have repeatedly encountered the dependence of emotion on an individual's latent beliefs. In *Das Fräulein von Scuderi*, for example, the titular character's belief — based on society's general opinion — that Cardillac is a respectable citizen causes her to have a misplaced trust in him; and in *The Seducer's Diary*, Johannes acts in accordance with Cordelia's latent beliefs — obtained from common scripts — about what love is in order to make her become infatuated with him. Since latent beliefs such as these have so much influence on the human emotional landscape, they are centrally involved in the issue of how an individual can change the nature of his emotions: altering one's latent beliefs can result in a different emotional reaction to the same stimulus.

Surprise is a highly effective way of accessing the latent scripts by which one lives one's life. In the wake of a surprising event, scripts are vulnerable to alteration. The emotion of surprise is characterized by a discrepancy between what has been expected and what actually turns out to be the case. In the context of emotion research, surprise often figures in lists of the 'basic

emotions,¹ though some have even suggested that surprise is too simple to be considered an emotion. One imagines in that context a feeling such as results from suddenly hearing a loud noise, or seeing a person when one believed oneself to be alone. However, such a phenomenon might better be classified as ‘startlement’ in order to emphasize its brevity and simplicity, as well as to differentiate it from more complex forms of surprise.² Another challenge to the notion of surprise as an emotion results from a property it has that is somewhat unusual among emotions: surprise may be positive, negative, or neutral, depending on the circumstances surrounding it. Researchers who consider either a positive or a negative valence to be a prerequisite for an emotion resist classifying surprise as such, considering it a cognitive state instead;³ however, since this chapter is very much concerned with including surrounding circumstances, this objection is inconsequential for the present purpose. Here, complexity and the role of surprise in altering beliefs constitute the starting point for a literary interpretation. On closer inspection, ‘what has been expected’ is actually a narrative which an individual forms around future expectations based on available information; likewise, ‘what actually turns out to be the case’ is also explicable only as a narrative. When a discrepancy between the two arises, the mind is prompted to compare them and to correct misconceptions, especially if the content of these narratives has a significant bearing on how the individual perceives his environment.⁴ *The Encyclopedia of Human Emotions*

¹ The argument for counting surprise as a basic emotion gains impetus from the fact that it has a typical facial expression that is easily identifiable and cross-cultural — a characteristic that makes it easy to classify; this expression was used to define surprise as early as Charles Darwin’s *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals*, first published in 1872 (3rd ed., ed. Paul Ekman, Oxford: UP, 1998, 278).

² This is consistent with the cognitive vs. sensory distinction which the psychologist William R. Charlesworth uses to differentiate surprise from startle (“The Role of Surprise in Cognitive Development,” in *Studies in Cognitive Development: Essays in Honor of Jean Piaget*, ed. David Elkind and John H. Flavell (New York: Oxford UP, 1969), 269–273).

³ For example, Andrew Ortony, Gerald L. Clore, and Allan Collins, *The Cognitive Structure of Emotions* (New York: Cambridge UP, 1988), 127.

⁴ See Michael Niepel, Udo Rudolph, Achim Schützwohl, and Wulf-Uwe Meyer, “Temporal Characteristics of the Surprise Reaction Induced by Schema-Discrepant Visual and Auditory Events,” *Cognition and Emotion* 8, no. 5 (1994): 434; and Joachim Stiensmeier-Pelster, Alice Martini, and Rainer Reisenzein, “The Role of Surprise in the Attribution Process,” *Cognition and Emotion* 9, no. 5 (1995): 8f.

describes surprise in terms of expectations, attention, and evaluation, all of which are important in the analysis of literary emotions:

The defining feature of surprise is that it involves the violation of an individual's expectations. This violation serves a clear function. It interrupts ongoing thought processes, and this interruption results in an involuntary focus of attention toward the surprising event. This process of selective attention leads to an evaluation of the event in terms of its implications for an individual's goals or well-being.⁵

The element of interruption, which has already been referenced in the epigraph to this chapter, is part of the strategy of Johannes the Seducer, who can claim that surprise is an obstacle to action precisely because it has the opposite effect on thought: namely, surprise prompts re-evaluations of information, and it is this flurry of mental activity that distracts a person from acting in the exterior world.⁶ The person becomes focused on the surprising event, which is something else entirely than the objective of the “game” Johannes is playing; thus, surprise serves him as a tool of misdirection. He exploits a structural property of the emotion in order to create an opportunity to further his own aims. In effect, by rendering the surprised person's re-evaluations unimportant — a mere distraction —, he undermines what is normally the most salient feature of surprise.

This chapter discusses the emotional dynamics of the surprise ending to *Brigitta*, by the Austrian writer Adalbert Stifter. Any reader unfamiliar with the novella who wishes to experience the phenomenon that will be systematically analyzed in this chapter is advised to stop and read *Brigitta* before continuing with this text (spoiler alert!), especially since the way in which the experience of reading differs qualitatively from its analysis is also part of the subject of this chapter.

⁵ David Levinson, James J. Ponzetti Jr., and Peter F. Jorgensen, eds., *Encyclopedia of Human Emotions* (New York: Macmillan, 1999), 645.

⁶ Psychologists likewise recognize the nature of surprise as interruption; see, for example, Silvan S. Tomkins, who characterizes surprise as “a general interrupter to ongoing activity” in *Affect Imagery Consciousness: The Complete Edition*, ed. Bertram P. Karon (New York: Springer Publishing Company, 2008), 273.

When an event is as “herzerschütternd”⁷ as the scene witnessed by the narrator at the end of *Brigitta*, it shakes loose one’s latent beliefs such that they become subject to rewriting. The adjective chosen by the narrator is particularly trenchant because the “Herz” is the metaphorical seat of emotion; when the emotions are stirred up, beliefs are destabilized as well. Whereas an affective scene such as this is more intense when it is witnessed firsthand, a reader does not have the advantage of personal presence; however, the narrator of *Brigitta*, as compensation, employs his craft in order to make the effect of reading the narrative intense for the reader. Literary technique and narrative structure are thus intrinsically involved in the manner and degree to which the reader responds emotionally to the story.

Although the ending depicts favorably the negation of passion,⁸ this “trübe Lohe der Leidenschaft” (474) is not meant in the sense of emotions more generally, but of a particular form of emotion that predominates in the younger versions of the characters. As just noted, the final scene produces strong emotions in the narrator as well as providing the prerequisites for them to be likewise produced in the reader; the work as a whole, therefore, does not valorize unemotionality. As I will argue, although the actualization of emotions for the reader ultimately depends on factors inherent to that individual reader and therefore external to the text, the novella contains the components that, upon being evaluated, are necessary and sufficient to produce surprise, potentially accompanied by other emotions such as the narrator experiences. My analysis in the following will focus on textual features that set up the conditions for a reader

⁷ Adalbert Stifter, *Werke und Briefe: Historisch-kritische Gesamtausgabe*, ed. Alfred Doppler and Wolfgang Frühwald, vol. 1.5, *Studien; Buchfassungen; Zweiter Band*, ed. Helmut Bergner and Ulrich Dittmann, Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1982, 471. Subsequent page numbers given in parentheses within this chapter refer to this volume.

⁸ As noted by Jens Stüben in “Naturlandschaft und Landschaftskultur: zur Symbolik des Schauplatzes in Adalbert Stifters ‘rumänischer’ Erzählung ‘Brigitta’” *Transcarpathica* 2 (2003), 150f.; as well as Robert C. Holub in “Adalbert Stifter’s ‘Brigitta,’ or the Lesson of Realism,” in *A Companion to German Realism*, ed. Todd Kontje (Woodbridge: Camden House, 2002), 48–49.

to follow along with — in other words, re-create in their own minds — the cognitive pattern that results in being moved by the ending of the novella.

What sets Stifter's text apart from many works of fiction is that the surprise at the end has great intellectual depth. Surprise twists do not have much of a reputation as a high-culture art form, being associated more with trivial literature than with literary fiction.⁹ They often serve as a plot device to hold the reader's attention through little more than novelty. In *Brigitta*, however, the surprise prompts the reader to re-evaluate the characters and their psychology, not simply the plot; the result of these contemplations is an increase in knowledge, which makes the surprise nontrivial. The reader of the novella also undergoes a process that parallels in certain key ways the emotional development of the characters, and the surprise ending is an important element of this emotional arc. These effects will be further explored in the following sections.

This chapter thus operates under the assumption that the reader experiences an emotional reaction — most likely involving surprise — to the climactic scene at the end of the novella. Although there are limitations to what can be imputed about readers and no universal claims may be made, there is nevertheless significant documentation in the reviews and secondary literature on *Brigitta* to support the assertion that reacting with surprise, finding the novella moving, and feeling sympathy for the characters is a common response. The first reviewer of the journal version praised it as an "Erfindung, die sich besser auf innere Zustände als äußere Begebenheit versteht,"¹⁰ thus setting an early precedent for recognition of the novella's psychological depth. Hieronymus Lorm wrote in a letter that although the landscape depictions were well done, nevertheless "die ganze psychologische Welt, die Sie in Ihrer Brigitta umsegeln

⁹ While surprise, per se, has certainly found a place in aesthetically sophisticated texts, the surprise twist does not enjoy the same status.

¹⁰ "Almanach-Schau für 1844" in supplement to *Sonntagsblätter, Literaturblatt*, November 26, 1843.

und erforschen, wirkt tiefer und nachhaltender” by comparison.¹¹ Stifter’s own self-assessment of his novella likewise favored the latter two sections, in which the human drama is more in focus; and in a letter to the editor during preparation of the third and fourth volumes of the *Studien*, he writes, “Ich glaube sogar, daß Brigitta weit aus das Beste in den 2 Bänden sein muß.”¹² Reviews of the book version tend to focus more on the picture of Hungarian life which the story supposedly offers (Stifter himself had travelled through western Hungary, but not the eastern part, where the novella takes place).¹³ Yet this is not dissonant with the emotional concerns of the novella, since, as will be further discussed in section II, the landscape becomes intertwined with the psychological elements of the story.

The more recent work on *Brigitta* has continued this trend, with a number of scholars emphasizing the ways in which the landscape underscores the thematic elements.¹⁴ The psychological dimension of the novella has remained a focal point for researchers; in fact, the first scholarly publication focusing specifically on *Brigitta*, which was published in 1929, appeared not in a literary journal but in the *Internationale Zeitschrift für Individualpsychologie*.¹⁵ The emotional dimensions of the text have also received consideration, such as the influence of Herder’s concept

¹¹ Hieronymus Lorm [Heinrich Landesmann] to Stifter, March 14, 1845, in Adalbert Stifter, *Sämtliche Werke*, vol. 23, *Briefwechsel* 7, ed. Gustav Wilhelm, (Reichenberg: Franz Kraus, 1939), 22.

¹² Stifter to Gustav Heckenast, October 18, 1846, in Adalbert Stifter, *Sämtliche Werke*, vol. 17, *Briefwechsel* 1, ed. Gustav Wilhelm with the use of preliminary work by Adalbert Horcicka (Reichenberg: Franz Kraus, 1939), 176.

¹³ See Ulrich Dittmann, “Brigitta. Rezeption” in Stifter, *Werke und Briefe*, vol. 1.9, 317f.

¹⁴ Rosemarie Hunter-Lougheed, for example, characterizes this in terms of a connection between the inner and the outer (“Adalbert Stifter: *Brigitta* (1844/47)” in *Romane und Erzählungen zwischen Romantik und Realismus: Neue Interpretationen*, ed. Paul Michael Lützeler (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1983), 358). Albert Meier discusses the effects of the surroundings on the characters and their development (“Diskretes Erzählen: Über den Zusammenhang von Dichtung, Wissenschaft und Didaktik in Adalbert Stifters Erzählung ‘Brigitta,’” *Aurora: Jahrbuch der Eichendorff-Gesellschaft* 44 (1984): 215). An exception is Richard Block, who argues that the *Studienfassung* was supposed to make *Brigitta* less of a “tale about the flowering of two souls late in life” and more of a tale about Hungary and Europe. However, Block’s analysis neglects to consider that the agrarian components of the novella, which metaphorically represent processes occurring within the characters, could allow both possibilities to coexist without one predominating over the other. (“Stone Deaf: The Gentleness of Law in Stifter’s ‘Brigitta,’” *Monatshefte* 90, no. 1 (1998): 18.)

¹⁵ Hans Bauermeister, “Zum Problem der häßlichen Frau: Adalbert Stifters Novelle ‘Brigitta’ als charakterologische Studie,” *Internationale Zeitschrift für Individualpsychologie* 7 (1929): 436–442.

of empathy (“Einfühlung”) on Stifter’s text, which sheds light on the way characters relate to their surroundings, suggesting that it is an organic, complicated interplay, and more than a merely intellectual level of engagement.¹⁶ Whether explicitly or implicitly through character analyses, a large proportion of scholars acknowledge the emotional depth of the novella, though there are exceptions.¹⁷

I. An Instantaneous Superimposition of Narratives

In the years leading up to *Brigitta*, Stifter had been publishing regularly in the journal *Iris*, but this novella appeared instead in the 1844 issue of *Gedenke Mein!* (published in November 1843). The change of venue likely had to do with political considerations: the novella takes place in Hungary and presents the region in a favorable light, which might not have found favor with Austrian censors, since the tensions that would soon lead to the Hungarian Revolution of 1848 were already quite high; fortunately, however, the editor of *Gedenke Mein!*, Johann Gabriel Seidl, was himself a censor. *Brigitta* subsequently appeared in the fourth of six volumes of the *Studien*, a collection of Stifter’s novellas that was published between 1844 and 1850; this version, from 1847, will be the primary source for this chapter, excepting a few comparative forays into the earlier text. Although the plot elements and structure remain essentially the same, Stifter made extensive revisions to the book version. He recast the wording of passages thoroughly, making numerous changes at sentence-level which improve the sense of place in the novella by increasing the precision of the language: whereas the journal version often contains meandering sentences joined indiscriminately by dashes, in the book version the clauses are carefully punctuated and

¹⁶ See Meier, “Diskretes Erzählen,” 216.

¹⁷ Block’s claims that the characters act irrationally, are unemotional, and do not react to affective scenes is a gross misreading of the gestural language of the novella (“Stone Deaf,” 19–22). Brigitta’s supposed unemotionality — for example, when she asks for a divorce — is clearly feigned, as it is explained unequivocally as a defense mechanism developed in childhood to protect herself, since an uncontrolled expression of pain would leave her vulnerable to ridicule and thus further emotional harm.

conjoined so that there is a sense of relationship between the parts. Piquant details are not buried in the middle of a string of clauses, but rather placed at prominent positions in the sentence. As a counter-motion to this increase in linguistic concreteness, however, the book version tends to present in a more subtle fashion details pertaining to characters' psychological dispositions; one example is the passage on the child Brigitta's affinity for stones and sticks, which will be analyzed later in this chapter.¹⁸

Setting the tone for the psychological elements of the story, the novella begins with a brief reflection on "Dinge und Beziehungen im menschlichen Leben, die uns nicht sogleich klar sind" (411), at the end of which the first-person narrator informs us that these thoughts were inspired by the events which he is about to relate. His narrative begins in the modus of a "Reisebericht," telling of a friend, the Major, whom he met during travels in Italy and who subsequently invited the narrator to visit him at his estate in Hungary. Throughout the novella, the male protagonist is only ever referred to as "der Major," never by name. This is an important point. The text is divided into four sections of nearly equal length: "Steppenwanderung," "Steppenhaus," "Steppenvergangenheit," and "Steppengegenwart." The narrator's journey to Uwar, the Major's estate, as well as his reflections on how they got to know each other, form the first section. The second section deals with how the Major lives in Hungary, details of how he manages his estate, and how the narrator occupies his time during his stay there. Along the way, the narrator engages in some speculation about why the Major never married; learns that the latter harbors a passion for the titular protagonist, Brigitta Marosheli; and is told by the neighbor Gömör that Brigitta cannot marry the Major because she had a husband who abandoned her long ago without divorcing her. The third section, which contains a lengthy flashback, tells the story of Brigitta's childhood and early life: how she was neglected for being ugly in appearance; how all her faculties

¹⁸ See page 134.

turned inward; how the attractive and sought-after Stephan Murai courted her; how they married and had a child; how Stephan became attracted to the outwardly beautiful Gabriele; and how Brigitta divorced him and moved to Marosheli with the child Gustav. (The latter detail contradicts what the narrator had been told earlier, downgrading that story to the status of hearsay and speculation.)

The narrative thus establishes the history of three characters, besides the narrator: the Major, Brigitta, and Stephan Murai. In the climactic sequence at the end of the novella, Brigitta's son, Gustav, is wounded, though not life-threateningly, by a pack of hungry wolves. The Major and the narrator come to his rescue and the three of them escape back to Uwar. Word is sent to Brigitta, who arrives the same night. The next morning, as she tends to Gustav, the narrator comes to check in with them, sees the Major standing at the window in the next room, and realizes that he is crying. When the narrator asks him what is the matter, he replies: "Ich habe kein Kind." Brigitta apparently overhears this, enters the room, and says a single word: "Stephan." (472) She and the Major embrace, and the reader realizes that Stephan is his name. Thus, with only one word, the novella reveals that the two narratives of Stephan and the Major are actually part of one history, because they are the same person.

This turn of events is both emotionally and intellectually laden. The reason the twist works is that the information needed to unravel the plot strands is compact enough that its effect happens in a near-instantaneous moment. The temporal compression is indispensable for producing the reader's emotional reaction because the effect depends on a multitude of realizations crowding in all at once. The first three sections of the novella set the reader up to make a positive evaluation of the Major and a negative one of Stephan Murai; when it is revealed that they are the same person, one of the immediate results is that the reader has to re-evaluate the Major/Stephan character and try to reconcile opposing attitudes towards him. Brigitta, too, is

due for a re-evaluation, since her character appears in a different light once one realizes that, by her choice, during the entire time in which the Major has lived at Uwar, the actual nature of their relationship has been acknowledged neither to their neighbors nor to Gustav, who had a rightful claim to know.

The textual medium has a certain type of linearity in that words are arranged sequentially. There are a number of ways in which this linearity can be disrupted — for example, visually, in works of poetry as well as experimental literary forms. *Brigitta's* surprise twist is a different type of disruption, not visual, but simulated. The novella establishes two layers, one belonging to the present and the other to the past; the present-layer encompasses the first, second, and fourth sections of the novella, and the past-layer is developed in the third section. Both possess the linearity of a written text; each is read and experienced in imagination as a sequential narrative. The revelation that “der Major” and “Stephan Murai” are the same person superimposes the past-layer onto the present-layer; as a consequence, the reader must re-evaluate numerous aspects of the present-layer according to information about the psychology of the characters that can only be logically deduced after the relationship between the two protagonists has been clarified.

II. Paradigms of Rational Order

The surprise ending would not have the effect that it does without the preparatory narratives that precede it. Two such narratives, naturally, are the Major's and Brigitta's personal histories. However, it is not just the information directly pertaining to the characters that contributes to this effect; in this novella, the images of enlightened agricultural practices form an additional layer that makes an indirect comment on the human drama. The narrative strands pertaining to the estates at Uwar and Marosheli, as well as to the alliance of the four neighbors in the area, function as an external manifestation of internal developments within the characters.

The various narrative strands provide the prerequisites for the reader to perceive the ending as highly meaningful. Connectedness with an individual's internal narratives is the essence of meaningfulness. The preliminary sections of *Brigitta*, by presenting the reader with narratives to which the final climactic scene refers back, lays a necessary groundwork so that the reader will care.

The narrative lingers in particular over the description of Uwar. From the narrator's observation "daß alle Zweige seiner Thätigkeit ihre eigene Geldverwaltung haben" (436), it can be deduced that the Major's estate is carefully ordered. The narrator's tour through numerous specialized divisions supports this claim. These "branches" are the smaller subdivisions of a larger organizational structure resembling a tree: they are all a part of Uwar, which is one of the four "Musterhöfe" that makes up the agricultural "Bund" (441); and these, in turn, are involved not only in an outreach to other, smaller operations in the area, but also in an overarching concept of economic development that includes all of Hungary, as expressed by the Major: "Dieses weite Land ist ein größeres Kleinod, als man denken mag, aber es muß noch immer mehr gefaßt werden. Die ganze Welt kömmt in ein Ringen sich nutzbar zu machen, und wir müssen mit. Welcher Blüthe und Schönheit ist vorerst noch der Körper dieses Landes fähig, und beide müssen hervorgezogen werden." (436) This developmental concept is like a hardy plant: it begins at the bottom, with the workers — even encompassing some "Bettler, Herumstreicher, selbst Gesindel" (428) enticed by a reliable wage — and ends with a "Blüthe." In this botanical schema, Brigitta is like a root,¹⁹ which is a fitting role for the one who originally came up with this method of cultivation.

¹⁹ The text brings Brigitta into a metaphorical association with roots in the passage describing how she became suspicious of affectionate displays during childhood: "Die Mutter aber wurde dadurch noch mehr zugleich liebend und erbittert, weil sie nicht wußte, daß die kleinen Würzlein, als sie einst den warmen Boden der Mutterliebe suchten und nicht fanden, in den Fels des eigenen Herzen schlagen mußten, und da trotzen." (447)

The narrator's comparisons of cultivation activities at Uwar with the "alten starken Römer" and the "Sage von dem Paradiese" (437) create an atmosphere of mythological significance that seeks to elevate agriculture and animal husbandry — which are indeed useful and necessary to humanity — to a higher status. These vocations might otherwise be considered 'below the station' of someone from an aristocratic background such as the Major. Nevertheless, the estates maintain a hierarchy with their owners at the apex, though the workers are depicted as being fully satisfied with their place in the arrangement.²⁰ Everyone seems to have their proper place, including those persons neither at the bottom nor the top of the social hierarchy, such as the managers of the *Schäferei*: "Er hat einige Leute dort, die bedeutende Bildung verrathen, und mit ihm in das Wesen der Sache, die sie lieben, einzugehen scheinen." (436) The overall picture is idealized to the point of being rather unrealistic;²¹ nevertheless, it presents an image of a useful vocation that fits into the total aesthetic vision of an integrated life that the novella seeks to promote, and which is not complete until it also includes familial harmony.

Without the support of the preparatory narratives, there would likely still be some affective component to the reconciliation between the two main characters, but it would not be as strong. A reader might perhaps be moved by an extremely simple version of events — presented, for example, thus: "Two people were estranged for many years and then became reconciled." In this pared-down rendition, any affective response would be subject to associations with an individual's existing stock of narratives pertaining to reconciliation; it would therefore be largely based on generalizations pertaining to similar situations, rather than on details specific to the novella *Brigitta*. Specific details have greater potential to result in an intense emotional response because the author of the text provides the components that are evaluated to produce the

²⁰ See page 135.

²¹ Wilfried Thürmer, for instance, calls the estates "utopian" in "Die ganze Welt kömmt in ein Ringen sich nutzbar zu machen, und wir müssen mit': Zur Ambivalenz der Liebes-Geschichte in Stifters Erzählung *Brigitta*," *Wirkendes Wort* 57 (2007): 231.

emotion, rather than these components being drawn from whatever an individual's personal experience happens to be. Thus, the more detail and development present in the preliminary narratives of a text, the more opportunity the author has to influence the emotional response generated by the narrative as a whole.

The extent to which something is perceived as meaningful increases in proportion to its degree of interconnectedness with other mental data, which is precisely what the network of specific details in *Brigitta* provides. Something that is well-connected, by relating either to a large number of other data, or to a datum that is rated as highly important within the overall hierarchy of the mind, becomes meaningful by extension. Emotions play an important role in these meaning networks, since they are the mechanism for hierarchizing cognitive information: the greater the emotional intensity attached to a cognition, the higher its perceived importance is.²² An intense emotion experienced at the end of the novella is thus part of a two-part reinforcement of meaningfulness: the preparatory narratives provide the conditions for the ending to be meaningful and therefore emotionally intense, and the emotional intensity, in turn, underlines the significance of the themes of forgiveness and reconciliation, thereby priming them to be re-evaluated and perhaps upgraded in the overall order of the mind's belief system. In this way, an effectively affective literary text can gain access to the mind's internal mechanisms for making sense of the world.

III. Narrative Reflections

At the beginning of *Brigitta*, the narrator reflects explicitly on the overall narrative strategy of the text. The first sentences state a problem that occurs repeatedly throughout the story: "Es gibt oft Dinge und Beziehungen in dem menschlichen Leben, die uns nicht sogleich klar

²² See the section in chapter one on Scuderi's audience with the king, beginning on page 52.

sind, und deren Grund wir nicht in Schnelligkeit hervor zu ziehen vermögen. Sie wirken dann meistens mit einem gewissen schönen und sanften Reize des Geheimnißvollen auf unsere Seele.”

(411) The narrator indicates his awareness of these half-understood operations, then goes on to re-create for the reader just such a one in his text.²³ The issue is presented here as a mystery of sorts, but it is important to note that the phrase “nicht sogleich klar” implies that the ignorance does not persist: these “things and relationships” eventually do become clear — namely, over the course of the story.²⁴ The phrase has multiple applicabilities: the character of Brigitta is not immediately clear to the Major, and vice versa; the relationship between the two main protagonists is not immediately clear to the narrator; and the connection between the different storylines presented by the narrator is not immediately clear to the reader. The presence of these parallels on multiple levels — between protagonists, narrator, and readers — is a part of the overall narrative strategy whereby Stifter provides the structural prerequisites for readers to share in experiences that are conveyed through the text. The mirroring of the characters’ situation in the reader creates the potential for empathy and thus gives an experiential insight into the phenomenon laid out by the narrator at the beginning of the novella. A further parallel between the characters’ situation and that of the reader involves the tempo of the story, which is also alluded to in this passage: “Schnelligkeit” as well as *Langsamkeit* play a major role in how

²³ For a thorough analysis of the narrator’s strategies of divulging and withholding information and how these affect the reading experience, see Stefanie Kreuzer, “Zur ‘unerhörten’ Erzähldramaturgie einer realistischen Novelle: Adalbert Stifters ‘Brigitta’ (1847),” *Der Deutschunterricht* 59, no. 6 (2007). Gunter H. Hertling discusses names and the significance of them being withheld (“Adalbert Stifters ‘Brigitta’ (1843) als Vor-‘Studie’ zur ‘Erzählung’ seiner Reife: ‘Der Nachsommer’ (1857),” *Jahrbuch des Adalbert-Stifter-Instituts des Landes Oberösterreich* 9/10 (2002/2003): 27).

²⁴ Ulrich Dittmann notes that Stifter constructs his story less naively than the narrator’s opening remarks about the “kindliche Unbewußtheit” (412) of literature might lead the reader to believe (“Brigitta und kein Ende. Kommentierte Randbemerkungen,” *Jahrbuch des Adalbert-Stifter-Instituts des Landes Oberösterreich* 3 (1996): 27f.).

characters perceive each other and also in how the reader experiences the narrative, which will be discussed further in the next section.²⁵

The narrator, on the one hand, acknowledges the mysteriousness of human emotional dynamics, and on the other hand, makes a modest and tentative assertion that literature has a relevance in the exploration of these dynamics. As part of his introductory reflections, the narrator considers the claims of psychology — in nineteenth-century terminology, “Seelenkunde” — versus the claims of literature:

Die Seelenkunde hat manches beleuchtet und erklärt, aber vieles ist ihr dunkel und in großer Entfernung geblieben. Wir glauben daher, daß es nicht zu viel ist, wenn wir sagen, es sei für uns noch ein heiterer unermesslicher Abgrund, in dem Gott und die Geister wandeln. Die Seele in Augenblicken der Entzückung überfliegt ihn oft, die Dichtkunst in kindlicher Unbewußtheit lüftet ihn zuweilen; aber die Wissenschaft mit ihrem Hammer und Richtscheite steht häufig erst an dem Rande, und mag in vielen Fällen noch gar nicht einmal Hand angelegt haben. (411–412)

In the original journal version, the introductory reflections were influenced by Jean Paul’s essay *Muthmaßungen über einige Wunder des organischen Magnetismus* (1814); in the book version, these references have been cut, with the one slight exception of the neighbors’ speculation that the Major used “magnetism” to heal Brigitta of her severe illness (444). The later version was instead inspired by the *Lehrbuch der ärztlichen Seelenkunde*, which Ernst von Feuchtersleben had published in 1845.²⁶ In keeping with the latter’s greater concern with scientific verifiability, the book version omits mention of unexplained operations such as “Geisterfurcht,” “Somnambulismus,” “Elektrizität,” and premonitions of death.²⁷ Nevertheless, in a more convincing if less concrete manner, since these phenomena no longer have quite the same aura of

²⁵ See page 137.

²⁶ The influence of Jean Paul and Feuchtersleben on *Brigitta* is discussed in Ulrich Dittmann, “Brigitta. Erläuterungen” in Stifter, *Werke und Briefe*, vol. 1.9, 321f.; as well as Christian von Zimmermann, “‘Brigitta’ — seelenkundlich gelesen. Zur Verwendung ‘kalobotischer’ Lebensmaximen Feuchterslebens in Stifters Erzählung,” in *Adalbert Stifter: Dichter und Maler, Denkmalpfleger und Schulmann; neue Zugänge zu seinem Werk*, ed. Hartmut Laufhütte and Karl Möseneder (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1996).

²⁷ Stifter, *Werke und Briefe*, vol. 1.2, 211f.

the unexplained, the narrator touches on the gap between the explanatory abilities of scientific research and the way individuals experience mental realities — a gap which still exists today, manifesting itself, for example, in the context of fMRI (functional magnetic resonance imaging). This type of brain scan measures relative blood flow in different regions, with increased circulation implying increased neuronal activity. However, its use in cognitive studies in order to draw conclusions about the connections between mental operations and specific brain regions has been criticized for falling into the *cum hoc ergo propter hoc* logical fallacy, in which correlation is assumed to prove causation.²⁸ In addition, poor experimental design calls into question conclusions drawn from the deceptively compelling colored brain diagrams generated from fMRI scans; for example, the tasks given to experiment participants in order to ‘locate’ emotions are often unacceptably reductionistic or make indefensible assumptions about how people ‘typically’ react to a given stimulus.²⁹ Studies have shown — in this case unambiguously — that within the (undamaged) human brain, all areas are active at all times.³⁰ Without providing any specific or profound information about the nature of heightened activity relative to base activity levels, brain scans cannot lay claim to anything more than superficial conclusions about the connection between emotions and physiology. Just as, in Stifter’s time, scientific inquiry into the nature of the human mind was fraught with difficulties, so it is to this day. Introspective

²⁸ “What is not possible, even when great care is taken, is for imaging to have a revolutionary effect on cognitive psychology.” Christopher Mole and Colin Klein, “Confirmation, Refutation, and the Evidence of fMRI,” in *Foundational Issues in Human Brain Mapping*, ed. Stephen José Hanson and Martin Bunzl (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2010), 110. On the fallacy of drawing reverse inferences about cognitive processes from activated brain regions, see Russell A. Poldrack, “Can cognitive processes be inferred from neuroimaging data?” *Trends in Cognitive Sciences* 10, no. 2 (2006): 6of.

²⁹ For some examples of criticism leveled at experimental design, see Jean-Baptiste Poline, Bertrand Thirion, Alexis Roche, and Sébastien Meriaux, “Intersubject Variability in fMRI Data: Causes, Consequences, and Related Analysis Strategies,” in *Foundational Issues in Human Brain Mapping*, ed. Stephen José Hanson and Martin Bunzl (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2010).

³⁰ See, for example, Craig E. L. Stark and Larry R. Squire, “When Zero Is Not Zero: The Problem of Ambiguous Baseline Conditions in fMRI,” *Proceedings of the National Academy of Science* 98, no. 22 (2001): 12760; as well as Mole and Klein, “Evidence of fMRI,” 103: “Neuroimaging is a noisy business, and the brain is a noisy place.”

reflection on the narrative structures of mental reality was and still remains the only fruitful means of exploring certain questions which are of great importance to an existing individual.

Despite the hindrances to understanding emotional dynamics, the narrator insists on their ultimate intelligibility, declaring that there are “reasons” behind them: “Daß zuletzt sittliche Gründe vorhanden sind, die das Herz heraus fühlt, ist kein Zweifel, allein wir können sie nicht immer mit der Waage des Bewußtseins und der Rechnung hervor heben, und anschauen.” (411) He suggests here that a specific form of understanding is needed in order to comprehend the events which he is about to relate — namely, one that makes use of composite processing faculties. The narrator’s reference to the “heart” — the metaphorical seat of the emotions — as well as his claim that the reasons must be “felt out” are indications of an awareness that emotions are composite operations: to ‘feel something out’ suggests not only ‘feelings’ in the sense of emotions but also an operation whereby different facets are taken into account in order to form an overall impression. This notion contrasts with the “scale of consciousness and calculation,” which would represent that which has been traditionally termed ‘reason’; as I have argued earlier, reason in this sense is a particular type of thought operation that occurs consciously and as a binary comparison, hence the image of the scale.³¹ This type of precise but pared-down thinking shows up also in the image of “die Wissenschaft mit ihrem Hammer und Richtscheite,” quoted above. These sorts of metaphors suggest a kind of judgment that is clear-cut, as opposed to the less decisive determinations that create suspense in *Brigitta*. The narrator explains that the mystery of his anecdote relates to the difference between inner and outer beauty:

In dem Angesichte eines Häßlichen ist für uns oft eine innere Schönheit, die wir nicht auf der Stelle von seinem Werthe herzuleiten vermögen, während uns oft die Züge eines andern kalt und leer sind, von denen alle sagen, daß sie die größte Schönheit besitzen. Eben so fühlen wir uns manchmal zu einem hingezogen, den wir eigentlich gar nicht kennen, es gefallen uns seine Bewegungen, es gefällt uns seine Art, wir trauern, wenn er uns verlassen hat, und haben eine gewisse

³¹ See page 4.

Sehnsucht, ja eine Liebe zu ihm, wenn wir oft noch in späteren Jahren seiner gedenken: während wir mit einem Andern, dessen Werth in vielen Thaten vor uns liegt, nicht ins Reine kommen können, wenn wir auch Jahre lang mit ihm umgegangen sind. (411)

The language of this passage construes like or dislike of a person as a matter of composite evaluations, which may not be immediately — “auf der Stelle” — transparent, since they depend on the multiple factors that combine to make up the “Art” of a person. Furthermore, if someone is underappreciated even though his value is apparent “in vielen Thaten,” it suggests a situation in which the components for a positive evaluation are present, but the manner in which they are evaluated turns the result in an unfavorable direction. A composite evaluation may not ultimately do justice to the character of the one being evaluated, if, for example, it is swayed by elements specific to the evaluator’s psychological makeup — as is retrospectively implied by the novella in regard to both Brigitta and the Major. By noting that an individual’s evaluation may differ from that of society, the narrator maintains that the qualities that make a person likeable are not objective; and, one could add, neither is the thought operation by which the evaluation is made.

The third section, “Steppenvergangenheit,” also begins with the narrator reflecting on his storytelling method. The order in which the narrator learns the details of his hosts’ history is not the same order in which he presents them to the reader. Most conspicuously, the fictional narrator would not experience the ending as a surprise, since one can infer that he did not know any of the details in “Steppenvergangenheit” when he witnessed the reconciliation: from his perspective, it would simply have appeared as though Brigitta and the Major had finally allowed themselves to give a more open expression to their longstanding affection for one another — only later would he have discovered the other tensions at work in that scene. The discrepancy between the narrator’s versus the reader’s experience underlines the fact that the novella unfolds according to a well-considered narrative strategy, which is also well reflected in the text:

Ehe ich entwickle, wie wir nach Marosheli geritten sind, wie ich Brigitta kennen gelernt habe, und wie ich noch recht oft auf ihrem Gute gewesen bin, ist es nöthig, daß ich einen Theil ihres früheren Lebens erzähle, ohne den das Folgende nicht verständlich wäre. Wie ich zu so tief gehender Kenntniß der Zustände, die hier geschildert werden, gelangen konnte, wird sich aus meinen Verhältnissen zu dem Major und zu Brigitta ergeben, und am Ende dieser Geschichte von selbst klar werden, ohne daß ich nöthig hätte, vor der Zeit zu enthüllen, was ich auch nicht vor der Zeit, sondern durch die natürliche Entwicklung der Dinge erfuhr. (445)

The narrator's concern that he not reveal details "vor der Zeit" indicates that interventions in the chronology of the story are explicitly meant to create the effect of a surprise twist; not the actual order of events, but rather a narratively — meaning, in this case, emotionally — effective sequence is employed. This passage also provides further clues to the role of tempo in the story; here, the third section is functioning as a moment of retardation, since it, as both a flashback and an interruption, delays the arrival of the narrative at the climactic scene.

IV. Narrative Revisions

In the earlier journal edition of *Brigitta*, there were more clues that might allow a canny reader experienced with the ways of literature to guess that Stephan was the Major. For example, the journal version contains more information about the Major's past love life in the second section, including mention of a "junge Gräfin"³² who could easily be connected with Gabriele (she is a countess in the journal version) from the third section dealing with Brigitta's past life. This and other details that could potentially link the Major to Brigitta have been removed from the book version of the novella, in which the narrator consciously adheres to a policy of circumspection with regard to prying into his friends' personal lives.³³ One correspondence between the narratives of the two protagonists that was not omitted in the book version is the

³² Stifter, *Journalfassungen*, vol. 1.2, 230.

³³ "Wer viel reiset, lernt schon die Menschen schonen, und läßt sie in dem inneren Haushalte ihres Lebens gewähren, der sich nicht aufschließt, wenn es nicht freiwillig ist." (439)

“Bild [...] eines häßlichen Mädchens” (440) which the Major keeps in his private study. The framed picture alone might be enough to give away the surprise, but more likely, it would only serve the reader as a sign of affection whose full meaning only becomes clear in retrospect or upon a second reading. Certainly there are some hints to the ending scattered throughout the text, but far fewer than in the journal version, which suggests that Stifter may have taken steps to ensure that the surprise was preserved.³⁴ In the journal version, the narrator also gives too many advance warnings that an emotionally laden scene is going to occur; since the reader is better prepared in that version, the scene loses some of its surprise value. The plot events are basically the same in both versions, so the emotions attendant on witnessing human drama are still there; but with less surprise, the reader is affected to a lesser degree.

Another factor influencing the degree of surprise is whether the novella is being read for the first time, or reread for a second or subsequent time. Although the novelty is lost in the latter case, the preconditions for readers to re-evaluate their assessments of the characters at the climactic moment remain in effect. The act of reading refreshes the reader’s cognizance of the pertinent narrative features, bringing them to the foreground of consciousness in the sense described in Loosemore and Harley.³⁵ Thus, *Brigitta* is no longer surprising but still moving, since the narrative walks the reader through the elements of the thought pattern that is being modeled in the text. Going through the (mental) motions is sufficient to reproduce much of the affective intensity of a first reading.

³⁴ A few recent scholars (e.g., Hunter-Lougheed, “Adalbert Stifter: *Brigitta*,” 369; and Meier, “Diskretes Erzählen,” 219) have assumed that the reader guesses the ending, which would eliminate the surprise. While there are indeed hints present in the text, their subtlety makes it seem more likely that they are there to be noticed on a second reading; thus, I tend to share Kreuzer’s opinion that it is overly optimistic to expect the typical reader to figure out the ending in advance. For a convincing discussion of the dynamics of information delivery by the narrator in this regard, see Kreuzer, “Zur ‘unerhörten’ Erzähldramaturgie,” 32.

³⁵ Richard Loosemore and Trevor Harley, “Brains and Minds,” 221f.; see also page 20.

Being moved is central to the discussion of this novella: it involves accessing deeply held inner states, such as latent beliefs. These are what ‘moves’ when one is ‘moved,’ and they do so through the power of affect, which must reach a high level of momentary intensity in order to effect such a shift. Brigitta is a difficult character in part because her latent beliefs are based on an individualistic system of values, developed when she was left to her own devices as a child, that appears impenetrable or even bizarre to others. An anecdote about her childhood playthings illustrates her inner makeup while also showing how Stifter improved the psychological complexity of the novella from the journal to the book version. The journal version reads:

Dort aber, so wie sie einst, wenn man ihr wohl aus Mitleiden eine schöne Puppe gegeben hatte, dieselbe nach kurzer Freude wegwarf, und schlechte Dinge in ihr Bettchen trug, z. B. Steinchen, Hölzchen, und eifersüchtig über ihnen wachte, so hing ihr Auge nun einzig und allein über der Wiege ihres Sohnes, und so hegte und so hütete sie ihn.³⁶

Here it is clear that Brigitta’s focus on her son is as intense as her focus on the sticks and stones that she once preferred over a pretty doll; however, the comparison seems like a rather arbitrary metaphor for intensity, since it gives no clues as to the connection between the objects. The part about the child Brigitta appears to do little more than illustrate her idiosyncrasy. The book version, on the other hand, contains details that suggest a particular reading of the objects:

So wie sie einstens, wenn man ihr wohl aus Mitleiden eine schöne Puppe gegeben hatte, dieselbe nach kurzer Freude wieder weg warf, und schlechte Dinge in ihr Bettchen trug, als Steine, Hölzchen und dergleichen: so nahm sie jetzt auch ihr größtes Gut, das sie hatte, nach Marosheli mit, ihren Sohn, pflegte und hütete ihn, und ihr Auge hing einzig und allein über dem Bettchen desselben. (461)

This version contains a pair of opposites: “schlechte Dinge” versus “ihr größtes Gut.” The ‘bad’ things are the sticks and stones, while the ‘good’ is her son; however, it is precisely these two things that are being compared in the simile in this passage. There is thus a repurposing of language here, since the word ‘bad’ actually designates something of value. In fact, on further

³⁶ Stifter, *Journalfassungen*, vol. 1.2, 245f.

consideration, sticks and stones are basically neutral objects, with nothing inherently ‘good’ or ‘bad’ about them; their ‘badness’ must therefore be the product of conventional expectations — in other words, these are dirty things that belong outdoors, not in the bed of a little girl from a respectable family. But what is conventionally considered ‘bad’ is, in Brigitta’s eyes, good. Comparisons usually function in a forwards direction in which the first-mentioned object has a certain quality in abundance, while the comparison claims that the second-mentioned object possesses that quality also. But in this case, viewing the comparison backwards yields the best clue as to the significance of “schlechte Dinge”: just as the baby is a person who has not yet developed, the sticks and stones are raw materials whose potential to be made into something has not yet been realized. The passage thus illustrates Brigitta’s prodigious capacity to create value, but in ways that are not recognizable according to conventional measures.

Another change to the book version at content-level that affects the emotional effect of the novella is the expansion of the description of Uwar. In the journal version, the narrator spends a couple of pages describing his tour of Uwar with the Major on the day after his arrival before concluding: “Und so ritten wir am andern Tage wieder herum, und ehe acht vergangen waren, hatte mich das gleichförmig sanfte Abfließen dieser Tage und Geschäfte so eingesponnen, daß ich mich wohl und ebenmäßig angeregt fühlte [...]”³⁷ Instead of this condensed summary, the book version includes descriptions of several subsequent days, on which he sees, among other things, a hay meadow, various crop fields, greenhouses, herds of cattle and sheep, horses, and a swamp in the process of being drained.³⁸ At each station, the Major has some business to conduct with his workers there, and he checks to see that everything is in order. The narrator depicts the Major as interacting with his “Leuten” (e.g., 435) in an approachable and noncondescending way, promising, for instance, that he would soon come and share a meal with them; and the Major, in

³⁷ Stifter, *Journalfassungen*, vol. 1.2, 227.

³⁸ In the Kohlhammer edition, these descriptions take up about six or seven pages (vol. 1.5, 430–436).

turn, comments more than once on their loyalty to him — for example: “Diese würde ich sogar zum Blutvergießen führen können, sobald ich mich nur an ihre Spitze stellte. Sie sind mir unbedingt zugethan.” (438) Although there is a definite hierarchy in this relationship — the Major is known as the “Grundherr” and at one point addresses his people as “Kinder” (434) — the devotion of the people is a response to the Major’s sense of responsibility towards them and genuine concern for their welfare; the relationship is mutually beneficial. One thing that prevents this image of benevolent authority from becoming all too patriarchal is the fact that the Major originally learned to manage his estate in this way from Brigitta, as did Gömör and the other presumably male member of their agricultural association. The expansion of the passages on estate management in the book version creates an increase in the narrative time (*Erzählzeit*), which produces more of a feeling in the reader that the narrator’s visit extends for quite some duration before he is introduced to Brigitta. Of course, both versions make it clear that a considerable amount of narrated time (*erzählter Zeit*) elapses, but the book version actually slows down the narrative tempo, thus causing the reader’s immersion in the details of Uwar’s management to last longer. As a consequence, the reader who reaches the climax of the book version has, firstly, more of an experience of *Langsamkeit*, and secondly, more details about the nature of this form of rational land management in his short-term memory. This is significant because *Langsamkeit* is coded to Brigitta; as I will argue in the next section, her character is geared in such a way that she has a deep-seated affinity for and sympathy with gradual processes. The form of land management depicted in the novella, which is likewise characterized by gradual developments, is an outwardly visible manifestation reflecting the nature of Brigitta’s inner self. This portion of the novella thus provides the reader with an experience of time that puts him in sync with the protagonist in a certain respect.

V. Fast and Slow Processes

The passage in the narrator's introduction in which he notes that sometimes the reasons behind an emotion cannot be discovered "in Schnelligkeit" (411) is significant for the whole work: the differing dynamics of fast versus slow processes are the driving force behind the conflicts in the novella. While Brigitta is attuned to *Langsamkeit*, the Major is attuned to *Schnelligkeit*. This difference is a factor in the discord that develops between them as young people, leading to their divorce. It plays a role in the Major's attraction to Gabriele, whom he first glimpses while on a hunt, but only for a moment before she "flog über die Ebene zwischen den leichten Büschen davon." (458) Her eyes are compared to those of a gazelle, and her name also evokes this animal, which helps to characterize her as swift and wild. The sylvan encounters between her and the Major are repeatedly characterized by rapidity and suddenness, including the final, decisive one, in which he "riß [...] sie plötzlich an sich, preßte sie an sein Herz, und ehe er sehen konnte, ob sie zürne oder frohlocke, sprang er auf sein Pferd und jagte davon." (459)³⁹ Gabriele's beauty and the *Schnelligkeit* of her manner strike a chord with aspects of the Major's inner constitution, harmonizing with certain of his latent beliefs about what is valuable and desirable, causing a "Taumel unbeschreiblichen Entzückens" (459) within him. Exterior beauty, as the result of a composite evaluation of sensory perceptions, is something that can be recognized instantly — that is, quickly. It is an attribute which the Major also possesses, and thus he has a natural sympathy for others like himself.

Gabriele represents a certain type of feminine ideal, usually encountered in the woods; one could easily imagine Wilhelm Meister, Franz Sternbald, or some other Bildungsroman-protagonist encountering a Gabriele during his wanderings. In spite of a certain flatness inherent

³⁹ Compare this to the Major's slow courtship of Brigitta, which stretches across several pages (451-454) and includes further textual indicators of its considerable duration, such as "Dies dauerte längere Zeit" (452) and "eine Gelegenheit [...], deren manche früher schon ungenützt vorüber gegangen waren" (453).

in the portrayal of a type such as this, Stifter develops a psychological background to this encounter that serves to motivate what follows;⁴⁰ in other words, there are deeper narrative-psychological reasons for why Stephan is drawn to Gabriele in addition to her physical beauty. As I argued in the previous chapter, it is worth asking the question of why an individual develops an infatuation; in this novella, one major factor is the similarity of their childhoods. The beginning of a romantic relationship usually includes the discovery of shared aspects of one's life narrative (which can serve as a starting point for a future shared narrative), and this is of such importance that participants may even construe elements of their histories as aligned, even if the similarity is in fact tenuous.⁴¹ Conversely, individuals with a similar history often have an affinity for one another before they are aware of their commonalities, which would fall under the category of mysterious psychological dynamics mentioned in the narrator's introductory reflections. In the case of the Major, "sein Vater hatte ihn auf dem Lande auferzogen, um ihn für das Leben vorzubereiten." (449) Following his education, his father first sends him to travel abroad and then introduces him to society, giving the impression that there was a carefully thought-out plan to his upbringing. Gabriele was likewise raised in the country according to her father's wishes; she is described as "die Tochter eines greisen Grafen, der in der Nachbarschaft wohnte, ein wildes Geschöpf, das ihr Vater auf dem Lande erzog, wo er ihr alle und jede Freiheit ließ, weil er meinte, daß sie sich nur so am naturgemähesten entfalte, und nicht zu einer Puppe gerathe, wie er sie nicht leiden konnte." (458) Gabriele thus shares childhood narratives, which are highly influential since they are acquired during formative years, with the Major; however, an important difference is that her father purposefully avoided any kind of set plan in her upbringing. Nevertheless, the

⁴⁰ Dittmann recognizes that Gabriele has a positive side in "ihrer Spontaneität" ("*Brigitta* und kein Ende," 25) and thus that her character is not exclusively limited to representing the "Klischee der Verführerin, die vordergründig eine Ehe zerstört" (ibid., 24).

⁴¹ This tendency plays a part in the 'loved you all my life'-script as well as its close relative, the 'known you all my life'-script; see page 96.

idea that too much exposure to society ruins a young person is an influential one, being shared not only by these two fathers, but also by Johannes the Seducer, who remarks that there is “not much to steal” from girls raised in a “very sociable house.”⁴² Even society would seem to agree, judging by the way it responds to the young Major/Stephan Murai:

Hier wurde er bald der fast einzige Gegenstand der Gespräche. Einige rühmten seinen Verstand, andere sein Benehmen und seine Bescheidenheit, wieder andere sagten, daß sie nie etwas so schönes gesehen hätten, als diesen Mann. Mehrere behaupteten, er sei ein Genie, und wie es an Verläumdungen und Nachreden auch nicht fehlte, sagten manche, daß er etwas Wildes und Scheues an sich habe, und daß man es ihm ansehe, daß er in dem Walde auferzogen worden sei. (449–450)

The description of the Major as having something “wild” and “shy” about him further underscores the affinity between him and Gabriele. In addition, society seems to have virtually the same impression — in a masculine version — of him as he has of Gabriele: “hier führte ihm das Schicksal ein ganz anderes Weib entgegen, als er es immer zu sehen gewohnt war.” (457–458) The difference that he perceives in her is not merely external, for there had also been beautiful women in Vienna, whom he blithely ignored in favor of Brigitta;⁴³ it has to do with Gabriele’s demeanor, which is free of conventional, bourgeois romantic scripts. Notably, however, Brigitta was also

⁴² Kierkegaard, *Either/Or*, Part I, 339.

⁴³ “[S]ein Auge ging an den größten Schönheiten, die ihn umringten, vorüber, das ihre mit sanfter Bitte zu suchen.” (454) In an otherwise highly insightful article, Dittmann inexplicably claims that Brigitta’s ugliness is an “ärgerlicher Lesefehler” (“*Brigitta* und kein Ende,” 28). Yet contrary to his assertion that the narrator does not communicate to the reader the impression that Brigitta is ugly, the narrator does indeed comment on her ugliness when he sees the portrait of her as a young woman; in fact, his recognition of it despite the painter’s attempts at “Verschleierung” emphasize that it was very obvious. While it is noteworthy that the narrator never describes the 40-year-old Brigitta as ugly, this is likely due to the influence that her inner qualities have already begun to exert on his faculties of perception; namely, the Major’s high praise has predisposed the narrator to think well of her, and this in turn would influence how he perceives her physical appearance through mechanisms of subjective distortion. Also, in the reconciliation scene, when Brigitta’s features “in unnachahmlicher Schönheit strahlten” (473), the choice of verb suggests not that they *are* beautiful, but rather that their expression is beautiful. Also, the implication is that this forms a stark contrast to her usual appearance. By making the contrast extreme, the narrative implies that the power of inner beauty and forgiveness is very great indeed to have been able to overcome such an aesthetic obstacle. So when Kreuzer agrees with Dittmann that Brigitta’s ugliness cannot be “unumstritten angenommen” (“Zur ‘unerhörten’ Erzähldramaturgie,” 27), this is based on a misreading that conflates the very two properties which the story — according to the narrator’s reflections at the beginning — seeks to differentiate: inner versus outer beauty.

raised apart from society, though the circumstances were different: her family lived in town, but she herself maintained a separation that was not so much spatial as emotional. This has disadvantages that come to the fore over the course of the novella, but also one advantage that makes her attractive to the Major: “Weil sie ihr Herz nicht durch Liebesgedanken und Liebesbilder vor der Zeit entkräftet hatte, wehte der Odem eines ungeschwächten Lebens in seine Seele.” (455) This, too, is freedom from the romantic scripts of society; although Brigitta and Gabriele initially appear to be opposites, they are similar in many ways, as well. The “großen wilden Augen” (447) of the young Brigitta attest to the fact that all three characters — Gabriele, Stephan, and Brigitta — belong in the category of the wild.⁴⁴

The Major’s infidelity to Brigitta appears in this light not as an outright reversal in what he values in a woman, but rather as a confusion over which variety of wildness best matches up with his own.⁴⁵ For in spite of the similarities, Gabriele’s unchecked development into “gleichsam ein Abgrund von Unbefangenheit” (458) contrasts starkly with Brigitta’s introversion. They represent two variations on wildness: Gabriele is the beautiful version and Brigitta the ugly; Gabriele suffers from having been raised with too few boundaries, Brigitta from having had too many. And in the final scene, when the narrator sees Gabriele’s grave, it implies a statement about their relative resilience: Gabriele is like the lilies that adorn her tombstone, frail and doomed to an early death; whereas Brigitta is like a root which, though the foliage be cut away, can still sprout anew. The “kleinen Würzlein” which once “in den Fels des eigenen Herzens schlagen mußten, und da

⁴⁴ Another example is the portrait of Brigitta in the Major’s study: “der Blick war wild.” (440) See also Sima Kappeler, who likewise argues that Brigitta and Gabriele have striking similarities despite the contrast in their appearance (*First Encounters in French and German Prose Fiction, 1830–1883* (New York: Lang, 1996), 153f.). In addition, Ortrud Gutjahr’s observation that Stephan has certain feminine characteristics suggests another similarity that binds the three characters together (“Das ‘sanfte Gesetz’ als psychohistorische Erzählstrategie in Adalbert Stifters ‘Brigitta’” in *Psychoanalyse und die Geschichtlichkeit von Texten*, ed. Johannes Cremerius and Wolfram Mauser (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 1995), 289).

⁴⁵ For an interesting alternative take on the relation between the three characters, see Christine Oertel Sjögren, “The Allure of Beauty in Stifter’s *Brigitta*,” *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 81, no. 1 (1982): esp. 50.

trotzen" (447) are known in later life not for their subterranean, unprepossessing nature, but rather for what they are able to achieve in the world through hard work.

Comparable dynamics of speed and slowness operate on the reader of *Brigitta*, who is initially presented with a series of long descriptive passages in a style very typical of Stifter. This particularly applies to the descriptions of landscape in the two sections that constitute the first half of the novella. Many readers of works by Stifter have deplored such expanses of text, complaining that there is not enough action to hold their interest. The second half, by contrast, offers more plot- and character-driven sequences, culminating in the two suspenseful moments of the confrontation with the wolves and the reconciliation of Brigitta and Stephan. These passages offer a 'fast' reading experience, both in the sense that the reader's awareness of the passage of time decreases in response to a high level of engagement, and in the sense that these portions of text are actually shorter.

IV. Re-Evaluations of Surprise

As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, surprise hinges on a discrepancy between expectation and actuality: an individual holds a certain evaluation of a situation, and then an event occurs that proves this evaluation to be inaccurate in some way. There is thus an initial cognitive state that is subsequently contradicted. This can be as simple as the expectation that something will occur based on the knowledge that, historically, it has usually occurred under similar circumstances; if it then does not occur, surprise results. In *Brigitta*, the reader's expectations are based on the narratives that constitute the story; the surprise twist at the end necessitates that the reader re-evaluate these narratives based on the new information that Stephan Murai is the Major. It retrospectively adds a level of irony to all previous events. Leading up to the revelation, the reader has learned of two distinct histories, which he presumably

evaluates in an opposite manner. On the one hand, there is the history of the person known as “the Major”; based on this character’s obvious devotion to Brigitta, his enlightened management of his estate, and his friendliness and hospitality towards the narrator, the probable evaluation of his character is a decidedly positive one. A reader is likely to feel sympathy for him because he cannot marry Brigitta. On the other hand, there is the history of the person known as “Stephan Murai”; based on his unfaithfulness to Brigitta and his abandonment of his infant son, this character is likely to be evaluated as a contemptible person. Although he at first seems sympathetic because he appreciates Brigitta when no one else does, that makes his betrayal of her even more despicable: betraying a person with whom one has previously fostered an emotional connection is even more devastating to the one betrayed, as is likewise demonstrated in *The Seducer’s Diary*, because it involves the negation of a greater quantity of hopes, expectations, and beliefs regarding the trustworthiness, reciprocal affection, and so on of the betrayer. The reader of *Brigitta*, on learning that these two histories belong to the same person, is instantaneously confronted with the task of reconciling the positive and the negative character evaluations.

The surprise twist necessitates a further re-evaluation: up until that point, the reader has no solid reason to think ill of Brigitta; although the young Brigitta is often more prickly towards people than necessary, the third section of the novella provides a psychological basis for her behavior that makes it intelligible as a defense mechanism learned in early childhood. However, there is indeed something callous about carrying on a friendly association with the Major, visiting with him often, consulting with him on matters pertaining to the management of their estates — basically sharing life with him in a significant way, in the manner of romantic partners — and yet holding him at an emotional distance. In addition, Brigitta would have observed the development of the close bond between Gustav and the Major — and yet she withheld from Gustav the identity of his father, and withheld from the Major her consent to his openly acknowledging the

relationship. Brigitta is thus not the blameless character which she might, until the reconciliation scene, have been supposed to be.

This, in turn, is likely to sway the reader's evaluation of the Major/Stephan in a positive direction due to the realization that the Major has been willing to suffer over a period of several years in order to have as much of a relationship as possible with Brigitta and Gustav; in other words, he has given proof of his dedication by enduring the emotional pain of being frequently in the company of people he loves while simultaneously being denied the more intimate connections he desires.

Being confronted with many things to consider in a short span of time also increases the potential affective intensity of the reconciliation for the reader. Since knowing the histories of the characters marks them out as meaningful to the reader, having an accurate evaluation of them is important in the overall scheme of the mind. When the reader is confronted with data that are challenging due to the ambiguities of the characters as well as the sheer amount of reprocessing in light of the new information, the probable result is a strong emotional response, which would signal that this matter will require a large amount of mental energy to resolve. The details of the story that are stored in the reader's short-term memory would be brought up for conscious contemplation once again. This is a strong encouragement to think critically about the plot of the novella — in other words, a likely indirect effect of the emotional ending is an increased intellectual engagement. Instead of the reader merely thinking about the narrative during the process of reading and perhaps afterward — or perhaps not —, the text has a built-in cue in the climactic scene to elicit a further round of reflection. *Brigitta* thus presents an excellent example of an emotional thought operation and a reasoning thought operation mutually stimulating one another.

That both Brigitta and the Major need to be re-evaluated, and that both turn out to be ambiguous personalities, are among several structural symmetries of the novella. This reinforces the emotional impact of the novella because symmetry of form is aesthetically pleasing, as is an onslaught of new knowledge — assuming that the reader has an appreciation for knowledge. Another symmetry is that each protagonist undergoes over the course of the novella a process of becoming acclimated to the tempo to which the other is attuned. As mentioned in the previous section, the Major's affinity is for *Schnelligkeit*; during his years at Uwar, in which he learns the process of land cultivation from Brigitta, he both experiences and acquires an appreciation for *Langsamkeit*. Brigitta undergoes the inverse process: since her natural affinity is for slow-type processes, she initially lacks sympathy for the Major's attunement; however, the dramatic scene at the end, in which Gustav is attacked by wolves⁴⁶ and then the Major is overcome with grief at not being able to act as the boy's father in the full sense, is an encounter characterized by speed and intensity. It is this experience of the power — and also, in the case of the Major's outpouring of feeling, the positive value — of fast-type processes that breaks through her resistance to them and results in her likewise learning to empathize with the other's attunement. The reconciliation of

⁴⁶ When Wolfgang Oppacher claims that the wolves represent “die verdrängte wilde Sinnlichkeit,” it is an example of an interpretive overreach (“Schicksal und Schöpferfiguren in Adalbert Stifters Erzählung ‘Brigitta’” *Literatur in Bayern* 21, no. 81 (2005): 29). The viciousness of wolves is here irreconcilable with sensuality, especially since this novella as a whole codes sensuality as a positive value to be developed and encouraged; for example, the kiss is depicted as a positive step in the young Brigitta's development. Attaching sensuality to the wolves is furthermore disadvantageous for interpretive efforts because it obscures the emotional dynamics driving the reconciliation scene. The wolves, of course, function as a threat to the relational balance that has become established over time between Brigitta, the Major, and Gustav. The threat to Gustav's life places stress on the emotional bonds that tie them together, shaking them out of a balance that has become a rut, a habit that no longer quite corresponds to the strength of their affection for one another. The external pull at these bonds, which the wolves represent, results in a counter-pull — that is, an upsurge of affection — which disrupts the restrained relationship that had for a long time prevailed between Brigitta and the Major. Through the catalyzing function of the wolves, the characters end up settling into a new balance that better suits their individual development.

Oppacher's interpretation is an anachronistic application of psychological ideas drawn from twentieth-century literary criticism to this nineteenth-century work. Stüben comes much closer to a time-appropriate depiction of the worldview informing the text when he describes the wolves' aggression as a merely temporary disruption of a divine balance that was thought to order the natural world (“Naturlandschaft und Landschaftskultur,” 145).

the protagonists thus also involves their differing temporal affinities being brought into alignment. The developmental arcs of the characters underscores that the mind is most readily shaped by repetition or by intensity. In the case of the reader, the ending functions as a synthesis of the fast and the slow processes: the twist itself is a fast-type process, but it relies, for its depth of effect, on the preparatory narratives, which illustrate slow-type processes of cultivation. The novella promotes an acknowledgment of the value of both types of process.

The emotion of surprise is particularly suitable for reinforcing the major values advocated in the novella, notably forgiveness and constructive exertion. Since surprise inherently involves a correction to one's latent beliefs, it is especially effective at destabilizing existing mental constructs. During the process of correction, the reader is open to new beliefs, since the old ones are being rewritten; this is an ideal time for the values in the novella to take root. Here again, the experience of the reader mirrors the experience of the characters, particularly Brigitta, since her beliefs about the Major are shifted in the climactic scene.

A distinctive feature of the way Stifter structures the surprise is that, while the reader already has a great deal of information about the characters which has been acquired over an extended period while reading the prior sections of the novella, only a brief moment — the time it takes to read the word “Stephan” — is required to alter the significance of virtually every passage involving the protagonists. Once the reader makes this connection, suddenly it is possible to make the whole range of consequent connections that have just been discussed, and which had previously been unacknowledged: from the Major's paternity to the overlay of suffering attendant on his residence in Uwar, from Brigitta's unabated affection for the Major to the real reason why she has avoided a relationship with him. Since emotions are time-dependent, the onslaught of new realizations heightens the impact to a greater degree than would a slow process of recognition.

By the time of the narrator's visit to Marosheli, the Major has already, through long practice, changed his lifestyle habits as well as his assessment of Brigitta, such that his recommendation of her to the narrator is altogether rhapsodic: "Sie werden in meiner Nachbarin Marosheli das herrlichste Weib auf dieser Erde kennen lernen." (442) By applying himself to Brigitta-esque forms of "Thätigkeit" over and over, he has gradually rewritten the internal scripts — the "sittlichen Gründe" (411) which guide behavior — that drove him to be a flighty spouse, and then to travel the world aimlessly. For latent beliefs about how life ought to be lived are a type of pathway, and the ones that are used more become better established. Brigitta, however, suffers from a willful misconception of the Major, in that she holds two opposing views of him which she has failed to reconcile. On the one hand, the narrator has the distinct impression that Brigitta regards the Major as "der Mann [...], der ihr Wirken und Schaffen zu würdigen verstand." (464) Yet although she recognizes his goodwill towards her, and even consults him as an equal partner in matters pertaining to the management of their estates, her prejudice prevents her from allowing the emotional gap between them to close. She still clings to a pride based on the requirement which she had imposed on the young Stephan when he asked why she told him not to court her: "weil ich keine andere Liebe fordern kann, als die allerhöchste." (454) The intense emotionality of the scene at the end is what shakes her out of her mental rut and leads to a reassessment of her stance towards the Major. She finally realizes her mistake — "ich habe nicht geahnt, wie gut du seist" (473) — and makes a more balanced evaluation of him as a flawed yet vastly improved human being: "Wie bist du gut geworden, jetzt kenne ich dich" (473).

Brigitta's forgiveness of Stephan stands in contradiction to the idyllic constructions (of landscape, for example) in the story and rescinds Brigitta's own demand for absolute love which she made as a young woman, replacing it rather with a love that is strong enough to absorb betrayal — that is, to forgive. In addition, a reader who experiences a strong emotion at the twist

of the story is rendered more open to adopting the belief that a love capable of withstanding injury is superior to a love that demands to remain unspoilt and flawless.

V. Conclusion

It is possible to change one's beliefs, and *Brigitta* demonstrates two ways in which this occurs. The activities of the Major in Hungary — his cultivation of the land on his estate, his winning over of the Hungarian populace, and his emulation of Brigitta — exemplify the slow method by which an individual, through repetition, entrenches a mental habit. The climactic scene of the novella, on the other hand, presents the fast method by which beliefs can be displaced through the element of surprise. Because the order and pace at which information is perceived plays a role in how it is evaluated, the narrative strategies of a text are central to how it evokes an emotion. This chapter in particular shows what is lost in an explanation of a literary emotion, as opposed to the experience of the emotion in the work itself. The developmental trajectory of an emotion, a temporal phenomenon, is affected by the timing of the presentation of the factors that produce it. In the case of an intellectually profound surprise such as the one in *Brigitta*, where there is a high degree of informational density in a very brief moment, the difference between the aesthetic delivery of the emotion in the novella and its literary analysis in a text like this one is especially striking.

Chapter Four: The Dynamics of Regret in Marie von Ebner-Eschenbach's *Die Resel*

Marry, and you will regret it. Do not marry, and you will also regret it. Marry or do not marry, you will regret it either way. Whether you marry or do not marry, you will regret it either way. [...] Hang yourself, and you will regret it. Do not hang yourself, and you will also regret it. Hang yourself or do not hang yourself, you will regret it either way. Whether you hang yourself or do not hang yourself, you will regret it either way. This, gentlemen, is the quintessence of all the wisdom of life. It is not merely in isolated moments that I, as Spinoza says, view everything *aeterno modo*, but I am continually *aeterno modo*. Many believe they, too, are this when after doing one thing or another they unite or mediate these opposites. But this is a misunderstanding, for the true eternity does not lie behind either/or but before it. Their eternity will therefore also be a painful temporal sequence, since they will have a double regret on which to live.

— A, *Either/Or* I

Experiencing regret entails a host of accompanying phenomena related to how the emotion is perceived. The aesthete in *Either/Or* is alluding to one of the pervasive correlates of regret when he describes it as causing pain; and as his reflections suggest, an individual's reactions to regret can have just as significant an impact as the emotion itself. Janet Landman provides a succinct, trenchant definition of regret in the title of her book: "the persistence of the possible."¹ The idea of persistence forms a good starting point, since an experience of regret is an irritant, something not so easily ignored, something that demands to be dealt with. However, this can present quite a challenge, since the causes of regret lie in the past: usually there is no way to undo the event in question. This quite naturally gives rise to discourses that regard regret as more or less irrational and as something that ought to be avoided if possible, or else put aside as soon as one is able. But regardless of whether the emotion is assessed positively or negatively, the

¹ Landman's book *Regret: The Persistence of the Possible* is the only major contemporary study dealing specifically with this emotion in a systematic fashion; as she points out in her introduction (p. 6), most books about regret perform the function of advising people on how to attenuate it. (New York: Oxford UP, 1993)

discomfort of regret ultimately sets off a series of complex cognitive operations. This chapter examines the story *Die Resel* by Marie von Ebner-Eschenbach, which depicts a ‘persistent possibility’ in the life of a Gräfin through the indirect means of confronting her with the life story of a young woman named Resel, who faced a very similar possibility. Although much remains implicit, there are sure signs that Resel’s story triggers the Gräfin’s contemplative faculties.

The cognitive dimension of regret is essential; it is an emotion that cannot be adequately explained in terms of physiological states. Regret, even more so than surprise, is sometimes not considered an emotion. In fact, it is absent from both of the ‘encyclopedias of emotion’ published in recent decades.² One possible explanation is that regret could be regarded as a mental state comprising numerous cognitive operations, including one or more other emotions, and thus viewed as an aggregate state rather than an emotion in its own right. It might be considered as having been adequately accounted for in the descriptions of the sub-emotions that form a part of it. However, for the present purposes, regret fits the profile of an emotion excellently, since this investigation seeks to deal in an integrated fashion with the affective states and thought operations involved in complex emotions.

One defining feature of regret is that it is a backwards-looking emotion directed at some past event. This event remains a subject for contemplation in the present — in some cases asserting itself quite forcibly on the conscious mind — due to the human capacity to imagine that circumstances or a different choice might have resulted in a different outcome. Accounts differ as to whether a necessary condition for the emotion is that the agent had — or believed himself to

² Namely, the *Encyclopedia of Human Emotions* (1999) and the *Encyclopedia of Emotion* (2010). On the other hand, Jesse J. Prinz refers to regret as an emotion despite his focus on bodily states and dismissal of pure cognitivist positions in his theory of emotion. See *Gut Reactions: A Perceptual Theory of Emotion* (Oxford: UP, 2004), vii.

have had — the ability to steer the outcome in a different direction.³ This chapter focuses on situations in which the involved individuals arguably did have this kind of choice; for that reason, the specific manifestation of regret to be discussed here is closely tied to issues of decision-making.

A second defining characteristic of regret is the presence of a counterfactual situation in the mind of the person who experiences the regret. The counterfactual is likely tied to an alternate history — specifically, a projection of how things would have developed up to the present moment if an alternate choice had been made. It is thus also dependent on the past event, since the event is imagined to be the cause that would have resulted in the counterfactual.

Thirdly, regret involves a sense of discomfort; there is always some variety of negative emotion directed at either the non-existence of the alternate reality, or the present state of actuality, or both. This discomfort can take many forms, depending on the particular circumstances of the situation: sadness, disappointment, hopelessness, anger, doubt, shame, guilt. These constitute secondary affective states resulting from the overarching process of regret. This is the origin of regret's reputation as something that ought to be avoided. As unpleasant as the experience of regret may be, however, it can have certain useful functions for an individual. Some of these may not be immediately apparent, especially while the subject is under the influence of these negative emotions. Two significant potential benefits resulting from regret that are

³ One major context for the study of regret is that of economic decision making; in this type of regret, it is assumed that the agent could indeed have acted otherwise. See, for example, Scott Rick and George Loewenstein, "The Role of Emotion in Economic Behavior," in *Handbook of Emotions*, ed. Michael Lewis, Jeannette M. Haviland-Jones, and Lisa Feldman Barrett, 3rd ed. (New York: Guilford, 2008), 141. In other situations, regret may be felt even though the causative event was out of the agent's control entirely: "It is appropriate for me to regret the damage that a recent fire has caused to my neighbor's house, the pain that severe birth defects cause in infants, and the suffering that a starving animal experiences in the wilderness"; see Terrance McConnell, "Moral Dilemmas," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta, Stanford University, fall 2014 ed., <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2014/entries/moral-dilemmas/>.

documented in Landman's extensive study of the emotion are its role in decision making and in the transformation of the self. (The latter will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter.)

Regret thus involves a past event, an imagined alternate reality, and some sense of discomfort with the outcome. However, regret does not necessarily imply a conviction that another path should have been chosen. For example, an individual who had once been presented with two good opportunities might regret not having been able to take advantage of the one not chosen, even though the one that was chosen came to fruition in a thoroughly beneficial way. Such an individual need not wish that things had been different in order to feel sadness over the loss of the other opportunity.

As the above example shows, regret may entail considerable ambiguity. In addition, the involvement of an imagined alternate reality introduces a narrative element into the phenomenon. This is a spur to comparisons with actuality as well as a major reason why regret is a dynamic process: the narrative element, as a fictional representation, is fluid, which allows for an infinite string of what-ifs. The result may not necessarily be an infinite loop, however, since it depends on how the individual deals with the emotion — whether conclusions are drawn, behaviors changed, thought operations suppressed, etc. The situation in *Die Resel* is that a character is presented with a narrative that serves as a concrete manifestation of an alternate reality. The scenario narrated to the character bears such a striking resemblance to her own counterfactual scenario that even she, at times, confuses the two. Although this setup places a limit on the fluidity of the imagined counterfactual, it nevertheless suggests numerous paths of inquiry into the conflicts that dominate the character's life.

The three properties of regret listed above, as well as its narrative element, together form the signature structure of the emotion. In the preceding chapters, I have continually emphasized the importance of evaluations as causative factors in an emotion; here, they are also important,

but the causative side is less important in terms of unpacking the complex narrative interconnections surrounding an instance of regret. Instead, the element of persistence, which operates as a backwards-looking impetus to reflection, provides the sustained attention necessary to uncover retrospectively the factors that have previously been evaluated and relate them to counterfactual possibilities which, significantly, may have been generated after the decision. Thus, the production of information and its evaluation occurs not only in the moment of decision but also to a great extent in its wake. In this chapter, I show how the setup of *Die Resel*, with its inner and outer narratives, creates a simulation of the signature structure of regret; the main character is confronted with this simulation, which produces affective resonances in her. This situation becomes an externalization of what are normally internal thought operations, and thus this representation lays open regret to be analyzed by the reader from an unusual perspective. However, this setup is not so different from the ordinary case: regret is generally prompted by one's own mind, often seemingly against one's own volition; likewise, in this text, the narrative situation acts as an unasked-for prompt to the character. The sections that follow use the structural features of regret as a lens with which to interpret the story and explore how regret sets in motion reflections by both readers and characters on issues of choice, loss, societal pressure, and self-actualization.

I. Framing Regret

Die Resel was published as part of Ebner's *Dorf- und Schloßgeschichten* in 1883.⁴ Ebner's work in general has not received a great deal of scholarly attention,⁵ and *Die Resel* is relatively less

⁴ The author's preferred form of her name was "Marie Ebner"; hence, she will be referenced as such in the remainder of this chapter.

⁵ To point out a particularly conspicuous example, the only critical scholarly edition of her works, dating from 1978 to 1989, is incomplete; the *Dorf- und Schloßgeschichten* and *Die Resel* are not among the included texts. The quotes in this chapter are therefore taken from the collected edition of Ebner's works that was

popular than a number of her other works, such as her novels *Božena; Lotti, die Uhrmacherin*; and *Das Gemeindekind*. Even within the *Dorf- und Schloßgeschichten*, *Krambambuli*, a tale of canine loyalty, has overshadowed the other stories in the collection. *Die Resel* is a frame narrative in which the story of Resel forms the inner part. The fact that the title refers to Resel, the heroine of the framed narrative, rather than the (otherwise unnamed) Gräfin, reinforces the indirect nature of the tale; in other words, the Gräfin's experience is communicated almost entirely by means of Resel's tale, through both similarities and contrasts. The identity of the Gräfin is obscured behind her title as well as behind her attempts to repress her past, but Resel's story provides the occasion for her to confront the circumstances of her life. In the outer frame, a Graf and a Gräfin, both of whom are only referred to by their titles, are spending some time at their newly renovated lodge in order to take advantage of snipe-hunting season.⁶ They invite the Oberförster over to dinner with them, and afterwards, the Gräfin asks him about a strange hunter who has accompanied her earlier in the day and about a grave in the middle of the forest. This prompts the Oberförster to relate the story of Resel, who is buried outside the cemetery because she took her own life. The remainder of the text consists of the Oberförster's narration, and thus Resel's story predominates in terms of the amount of space it occupies; however, the outer frame remains conspicuously present throughout due to numerous interruptions by the Gräfin. The fact that the Gräfin reads into Resel's story a connection with her own history attests to the persistence of counterfactual possibilities in her mind.

Right from the beginning, the Gräfin signals her identification with the 'protagonist' of the story being told to her. The basic conflict at the outset of each their histories turns out to be the

printed by her publishers, the Gebrüder Paetel in Berlin, during her lifetime. Scholarship on *Die Resel* is mostly confined to the occasional brief discussion of this text within a broader survey of the *Dorf- und Schloßgeschichten*.

⁶ The absence of names in the framing narrative contrasts with the framed narrative, in which almost all of the characters have names. Much of what can be learned about the characters in the outer portion is not stated directly but rather inferred from the inner portion.

same: the young woman is in love with a man who is young, poor, and of a lower social standing, but her family pressures her to marry a suitor whom they have chosen instead. The text reveals that the Gräfin complied — the Graf is the socio-economically advantageous partner, not the man she loved. Resel, on the other hand, ran away from home to the cabin of her lover, Toni. When her parents and the local priest, Pater Vitalis, discover what she has done, they are dismayed at her breach of their behavioral code, but they decide that forgiving her, rather than casting her off, and arranging for her to marry Toni as soon as possible, is the best course of action. The priest carries this news to Resel, who is only too happy to oblige, since she feels moral — if not social — pangs of conscience for her actions. However, Resel insists that Toni must accompany her to her parents' house to request their forgiveness. After the priest's departure, Toni returns home in a bad mood. When Resel explains the situation, he insists that he does not want to get married. Resel becomes increasingly frantic, and when he does not relent, she grabs his pistol and aims it at herself. Toni tries to take the pistol from her, but she fires. Fatally wounded, Resel is carried to the home of her parents, where they reconcile; however, just as Pater Vitalis is about to pronounce absolution, Toni bursts into the room and begs Resel to forgive him. The priest, seeing that she has very little time, tries to continue the rite, but she halts him, forgives Toni, and then dies. The frame narrative returns just long enough for the Gräfin to express her wish to meet Toni, whereupon the Oberförster informs her that she has already done so: he was the strange hunter who accompanied her earlier in the day. The final sentence of the story draws a parallel once again between Resel and the Gräfin, as the latter thinks to herself that Toni had reminded her of the man with whom she was in love prior to her marriage: "Einen, den zu vergessen ihre Pflicht war."⁷

⁷ Ebner-Eschenbach, Marie von, *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 2, *Dorf- und Schloßgeschichten* (Berlin: Gebrüder Paetel, 1893), 373. Subsequent page numbers given in parentheses within this chapter refer to this volume.

Ebner's story *Die Resel* contains a literary representation of regret in which the cognitive structure of the emotion is inscribed into the structure of the text. The counterfactual situation which is a constitutive part of any experience of regret is represented in this text by the framed narrative; because it takes on this explicit form, it allows for a close examination of the relationship between the individual who experiences regret and the regretted content. The sustained analysis of a regretted action sets up a situation of intellectual ping pong in which the subject's focus vacillates between the counterfactual condition and the actual condition. This parallels the setup created by the frame narrative in *Die Resel*, since the reader has many opportunities and inducements to bounce back and forth between the Gräfin's story and Resel's, as does the Gräfin herself.

At a textual level, this is accomplished through the aforementioned interruptions by the Gräfin, which, though numerous, are brief; thus, the reader learns relatively little about her life compared to Resel's. What one does learn is mostly in the form of hints, such as when the text mentions that the Gräfin chooses the largest cigar — and this is while they are having an after-dinner black coffee; clearly, the Gräfin is in need of stimulants. Through caffeine and nicotine, which produce a biological arousal detached from any deeper humanistic meaning, she seems to be trying to compensate chemically for the greater lack in her life: the opportunity to have a relationship with a partner who is on her level.

The Gräfin has in common with Resel not only a romantic conflict but also an energetic temperament. The Oberförster begins characterizing Resel as a fine young woman by comparing her appearance with the Gräfin, but with the caveat “aber ein Feuerteufel” (355); his listener, however, finds nothing so out of the ordinary in this: “Ja, ja, so wilde Hummeln giebt's, ich habe auch eine gekannt” (355), and it is implied that she is referring here to herself — her former self, at any rate. Besides bumblebees, several other winged animals are compared with Resel: she

seems like “ein Fink oder ein Kanari,” and the Oberförster describes her as “flying” over the meadows (356). He says it is “gegen ihre Natur” (356) for her to stay indoors, even though this is what her parents, he himself, and, by extension, society in general would consider most appropriate. And that touches on the major underlying conflict in this narrative: Resel is a person with a strong impulse towards self-actualization living in a highly restrictive society. When the Oberförster misinterprets this as “eine Passion, ihr Leben zu riskiren, als ob sie’s nicht früh genug los werden könnt” (356), the Gräfin feels compelled to make one of her interruptions, again showing her identification with Resel: “Nein, nein, daran hat sie nicht gedacht, sie hat die Gefahr geliebt, das kommt vor, auch Mädchen haben Heldenblut in den Adern ... Vielleicht war ihr Großvater Soldat wie der meine.” (356)

Resel is not only heroic, but also impetuous — even to a fault, since shooting herself was the act of a moment, not carefully considered. But as a personality trait, it also helps to explain her affinity for Toni, whose temperament is described as mercurial, moody, and jealous; that is, he, too, has an apparent tendency to let his emotions go unchecked and unreflected. The Gräfin also gives off signs that she recognizes Toni’s personality type and understands why Resel was in love with him, as opposed to the Oberförster, who, with his stolid and respectable outlook, finds it baffling. Meanwhile, her husband is “bereits im Halbschlafe” (355), showing himself to be quite the foil to the youthful lovers.

At times, the Gräfin carries her identification too far and ends up attributing to Resel facts that are actually from her own history. This happens when the Gräfin assumes that Resel’s suitor is bald — after the reader has been told just a few paragraphs earlier about the reflection of candlelight on the Graf’s bald head.⁸ It occurs again when she presumes to continue the story

⁸ In some editions, such as the Nymphenburg Press’s collected works, one or both of these passages instead indicates that the Graf had grey hair. The commentary on his age remains in effect either way, but this discrepancy is a further indication that Ebner’s oeuvre is in need of editorial attention.

herself (“Nun, soll ich Ihnen einsagen?” (361)) and in so doing substitutes her own grandparents for Resel’s elderly parents. She is a little embarrassed when the Oberförster corrects her — in the former case, presumably because she is worried that her husband might realize that she was disparaging him. However, the Graf is fast asleep by this point in the narrative, which serves as a signal that he is not a suitable companion for the Gräfin in terms of age and temperament.

Textual evidence suggests that the similarities to Resel are not merely a product of the Gräfin’s imagination. There are several factual correspondences between the two lives, such as the circumstance of their both indeed having elderly guardians and of having faced the dilemma of wanting to marry one person while their guardians want them to marry another. In addition, the similarity receives outside confirmation from the Oberförster on more than one point. When asked to describe Resel’s appearance, he replies, “Sie wird beiläufig eine Person gehabt wie Hochgräfliche Gnaden, nur nicht so mager da herum” (355), indicating his waist. Later, he remarks to her unprompted: “Jetzt haben grad so g’schaut wie die Resel” (360). Nevertheless, there are significant differences between the two that create the possibility of sketching out a theory as to why their life paths diverged — one that goes beyond the mere circumstance of their belonging to different social classes. The Gräfin once again identifies with Resel when the Oberförster tells a couple of anecdotes to illustrate her propensity for heroic deeds:

“wenn ich denk’, daß sie als ein zwölfjähriges Ding ein Wickelkind aus dem lichterloh brennenden Haus gerettet hat und ein paar Wochen drauf bald ersoffen wär’. Ist nämlich ins Wasser gesprungen einem jungen Hund nach, der hätt’ ertränkt werden sollen.”

“Einem Hund? — Förster, das hätt’ ich auch einmal gethan bei einem Haar! aber die Gouvernante, die dumme Gans, hat mich am Kleid erwischt und festgehalten” (356f.)

In this case, the Gräfin’s claim to similarity must be read with skepticism. Firstly, of the two anecdotes here, there is considerably more at stake in the first one; although a drowning puppy is apt to arouse sympathy, it does not belong to the same valuation category as a baby in a burning

house.⁹ Tellingly, the Gräfin only lays claim to the lesser of the two grand deeds — and even then, it is only as an ‘almost.’ Secondly, it is doubtful whether a governess is in fact capable of physically restraining a healthy twelve-year-old — that is, nearly fully grown — child, assuming that the child was sufficiently determined. Even if the governess were strong enough, it seems as though she would need to do more than catch hold of the child’s dress. Ultimately, the Gräfin’s implication that she had the will but lacked the opportunity to be like Resel is unconvincing; these anecdotes contain signs of her insufficient personal mettle. After all, the governess has an analogy in the Pater Vitalis character, and Resel establishes early on a pattern of acting contrary to his wishes. If *Die Resel* seems like the story of someone who missed her chance to have a story, this passage suggests that in fact the Gräfin has been chronically missing her chances all along. In light of these insights into the Gräfin’s psychology in moments of peril, it comes as no surprise that she and Resel likewise diverge in the very grave matter of the marriage. As for the role of social class, it might indeed be a factor after all, but in a more indirect way having nothing to do with governesses: namely, one could view the Gräfin’s confined outlook and Resel’s impetuosity as personality attributes that are partially socially conditioned. In that case, hearing Resel’s story would serve the function for the Gräfin of confronting her with an alternative outlook on life and cuing her to engage in critical self-reflection.

A. The Outer Frame: Attitudes of the Gräfin

The collision of the two frames that plays out on the level of the outer frame is a tangible feature of the text that highlights regret’s revelatory function. It is at the points of tension between the Gräfin’s mental outlook and Resel’s that the decisive psychological factors leading to differing decisions become apparent. The Gräfin’s brief interruptions and snippets of commentary

⁹ Admittedly, this is a normative statement; however, it is a persistent norm, and one which it probably would not even have occurred to Ebner’s nineteenth-century audience to challenge.

provide the necessary clues to infer what sorts of reasons are behind her behavior. In addition to the mental life of the Gräfin, the contextual information that is brought out into the open helps to identify the major forces to be reckoned with in this society, such as class differences.

The Gräfin represents herself as having had no choice about many aspects of the course of her life. Yet no matter how strong the familial pressure might be — and there might very well be severe social and economic consequences attached to a refusal to comply with the wishes of one's guardians — nevertheless, one could not actually be forced to marry against one's will. In the late-nineteenth-century Austrian Empire, the colluding institutions of the monarchy, the aristocracy, the Catholic Church, and the patriarchy, though still dominant, were on the verge of decline. Ebner's own life is evidence that resistance to institutional pressures was possible. Ebner's family — even including her husband Moritz once he realized the potential for negative reviews of Ebner's plays to become associated with 'his' name — disapproved of her authorial occupation, but she persisted and, ultimately, not only produced a large body of work but also garnered widespread public acclaim. Therefore, it was not the case that a woman had 'no choice' about her life — though the available alternative might be hard to take.

The Gräfin's immediate response on learning that Resel's death was a suicide is to make assumptions about what must have happened to her: "Umgebracht!' rief die junge Frau erregt — 'gewiß aus unglücklicher Liebe, sie hat ihren Geliebten nicht heiraten dürfen, oder er hat sie sitzenlassen, der Lump ... Ist's so? Sagen Sie's, wenn Sie's wissen.'" (255) The Oberförster neither confirms nor denies the Gräfin's speculations, choosing instead to answer her last question by stating that he is in fact acquainted with the details of Resel's history, since she was his niece. The readiness with which the Gräfin comes up with these possibilities shows that her head is full of scripts about why people commit suicide — scripts that seem heavily influenced by literary models. Due to such iconic examples as Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* and Goethe's *Die Leiden*

des jungen Werther, the notion of characters committing suicide in the wake of romantic frustrations has been an established feature of the public imagination for quite some time. Although neither of the Gräfin's suppositions is exactly right, Resel's story does contain elements of both. This is not the only instance in which the framed narrative displays such strong signs of traditional literary and/or dramatic structures that it verges on openly flaunting its fictitious character through the contrast with the more 'realistic' framing narrative inhabited by the Gräfin.¹⁰

Another dimension of the Gräfin's character that is hinted at in this passage is that she seems a little too excited about the prospect of a sensational story. While Charlotte Woodford has read this as a sign that the Gräfin's interest in Resel is little more than a desire to reap entertainment from the dramatic tale of her demise,¹¹ it is also a sign of her profound boredom. Woodford's claim that the Gräfin "has no real feeling for Resel"¹² has a certain plausibility on the surface. The Gräfin's repeated urgings that the Oberförster continue with the tale of Resel could be construed as an indication that she is merely interested in deriving entertainment from the story. This could be considered an insincere form of emotional engagement, since it does not involve empathy with Resel. One could read it as an apparent lack of sadness at Resel's fate; at any rate, the Gräfin does not engage in effusive expressions of it — this, however, is in keeping with the overall gesture of the story, which is to achieve its impact by conspicuously not saying all that could be said, and instead letting the reader fill in the gaps.

This touches on the question of what constitutes an appropriate emotional response to a situation. If the (ultimately normative) judgment is made that the 'appropriate' response to Resel's story involves feeling pity, sadness, distress, outrage, etc. on account of its tragic elements,

¹⁰ See also page 180.

¹¹ Charlotte Woodford, "Suffering and Domesticity: The Subversion of Sentimentalism in Three Stories by Marie von Ebner-Eschenbach," *German Life and Letters* 59, no. 1 (2006): 55.

¹² Woodford, "Suffering and Domesticity," 56.

then the Gräfin's response may well appear inadequate. However, her failure to show any such emotions can be explained more fully by viewing her as being in a state of ambivalence. On the one hand, she does pity Resel. On the other hand, she also admires her.¹³ The Gräfin thus inhabits a state of tension because the positively valenced emotion of admiration is a check to negatively valenced feelings of pity and sadness.

What constitutes an 'appropriate' response also factors into how one interprets the two protagonists, which in turn determines one's overall interpretation of the text along the continuum of optimism and pessimism. *Die Resel* is a story that derives its narrative suspense from unresolved tensions. It presents significant ambiguities — the suicide, the Gräfin as a character, and the effect of the experience on the Gräfin — without providing an interpretive foothold. In fact, the structure of the story lends itself to being open-ended; the two parts, framing and framed narrative, form a contrast that invites the reader to wonder whether one represents a 'better' path, or whether they counterbalance each other. Even the criteria on which such an evaluation could be based are left open, since the text itself reveals no indications of a partiality to a particular reading.

Is the Gräfin supposed to be unsympathetic? After all, she is a little bit silly for immediately wanting to run off and kill herself in the face of her romantic dilemma, a little cowardly for giving in to familial pressure, and a little pretentious for comparing herself to the decidedly more heroic Resel. Although Resel had a moment of weakness, it was only a moment, and only because circumstances demanded of her a strength that was beyond what can be humanly expected. The Gräfin, on the other hand, has no such excuse and could simply be interpreted as a weak personality. Ebner — especially in her younger years — had a critical eye for

¹³ The Gräfin's admiration for Resel is even stated explicitly at one point: Upon hearing that Resel had run away to Toni's cabin, she responds "mit einem Gemisch von Tadel und Bewunderung" (363).

human flaws and could pass harsh judgments on her contemporaries.¹⁴ However, she also seems to have believed in the value of renunciation and of presenting an appearance of harmony to the outside world. Perhaps the Gräfin represents a path of compromise with the flaws of society, necessary in order to get along with one's fellow human beings. But if so, why are Resel's parents depicted as acquiescing to a marriage with Toni as soon as she challenges them? By conceding too soon and too easily, the Gräfin never has the opportunity to learn whether her guardians might not have been brought to concede, particularly since it was her life at issue and not theirs. Resel's relationships with others support the notion that social ties pull both ways.

The Gräfin, on hearing that Resel ran away, once again tries to anticipate what happened in the story, presumably basing her guess on what she herself would have done: "Sie hat sich ins Wasser gestürzt oder in einen Abgrund," erklärte die Gräfin mit großer Bestimmtheit. 'Wohl ihr, daß sie es konnte, daß keine Gouvernanten da waren, sie zu hindern.'" (362) This second disparaging reference to governesses is another attempt to shift responsibility for the outcomes of her life. One cannot take entirely seriously the Gräfin's death-wish; it reads rather as if she wants to make a suicide attempt that she knows will fail, simply in order to elicit feelings of guilt from her grandparents. The Gräfin seems to have adopted the victim mentality of 'you'll be sorry when I'm dead,' which is a form of emotional manipulation in which one party attempts to instill guilt in another (a procedure known today as a 'guilt trip'). This shows through in the Gräfin's reply to the Oberförster when he reports what "die ordinären Leut'" (362) said to Resel's parents, which gives the reader a glimpse at the viewpoint of society: "Wenn man einem Kind von jeher seinen Willen gelassen hat, darf man nicht auf einmal Gehorsam von ihm verlangen. Die den Selbstmord am bittersten beweinen, brauchen nicht erst zu fragen, wer ihn verschuldet hat." (363) The Gräfin,

¹⁴ See Eda Sagarra, "Marie von Ebner-Eschenbach and the Tradition of the Catholic Enlightenment," in *The Austrian Enlightenment and Its Aftermath*, ed. Ritchie Robertson and Edward Timms (Edinburgh: UP, 1991), 123.

quick to express agreement with the prevailing opinion, responds by interjecting, “ganz richtig.” Perhaps this is an attempt to maintain the appearance of propriety by not expressing a view that deviates from the norm; however, her audience does not seem to necessitate such a move: the Graf is asleep, the Oberförster does not seem like the type to be that easily scandalized, and there is no one else present in the room. So perhaps it is herself whom she is trying to convince that she agrees with these views; by expressing them aloud, she ‘proves’ to herself that she can occupy the position of someone who thinks in this way. Both possibilities might play a role to some degree; the text does not even hint at an interpretive recommendation, thus leaving open a moment of thought-provoking ambiguity.

Additionally, the Gräfin’s interjected response reveals her desire that Resel’s parents — and likely by extension, her own grandparents — be made to feel horrible for trying to coerce their daughter into an arranged marriage. A further ‘guilt trip’ has apparently been employed previously by Resel’s parents, whom she reports as having said to her: “Wenn Du uns lieb hast, heirathest Du den Andreas” (364) — that is, the suitor they had selected. The Gräfin, too, has been subjected to this by her grandparents, judging by her assumptions — presumably drawn directly from personal experience — about what Resel’s guardians must have said: “Du nimmst ihn, Du mußt! — Wir wollen, wir beschwören — der Frieden unserer alten Tage hängt davon ab. — Wie sanft würden wir sterben, wenn wir Dich wüßten in der Hut eines braven Mannes ... Kind, Kind! mach uns den Tod nicht schwer.” (361) When all of this is combined with the Catholic priest Pater Vitalis’ insinuations that by running away Resel has alienated God (“Du Gottverlassene”) and probably sent her parents to an early grave (“Weißt Du, ob Deine Eltern die Schand’ überleben?”), *Die Resel* evokes an image of a social order held in place by a system of mutual guilt, a lack of interpersonal boundaries, and emotional abuse (364). Authority figures fail to account for the personhood of their dependents and to accommodate their individual emotional

needs; if the dependents manage to retaliate, it is with methods analogous to those of the authorities. These tactics transcend the class divisions alluded to in the title of the collection, *Dorf- und Schloßgeschichten*, since they are employed by both the common people and the nobility.

As the Oberförster is explaining the outcome of the conversation between Resel and Pater Vitalis, the Gräfin interrupts him again, this time very obviously cutting him off mid-sentence in order to break out into a speech:

Die Gräfin fiel ihm erregt ins Wort: "Die Zucht hat ihr gefehlt, die Führung. Sie ist ganz allein dagestanden, Aug' in Aug' mit der Versuchung ... Arme Resel! — Von einer solchen Gefahr wissen wir freilich nichts; uns wird die Wahl zwischen Recht und Unrecht erspart — die Beschützer laufen uns ja nach auf Tritt und Schritt. Gar oft verdrießt einen die beständige Ueberwachung und ist am Ende doch Glück und Gnade. — Ach, wie wohl thut das reine Gewissen, das wir uns — nein, das man uns bewahrt! ... Weiter, Oberförster, warum unterbrechen Sie sich alle Augenblicke?" (364f.)

The irony of the Gräfin accusing the Oberförster of interrupting himself underlines the fact that there is a layer of falsity in her utterance, of which she is perhaps only half-aware. Indeed, this speech is altogether a reversal of her initial and probably less self-censored comment referring to the assumption that Resel had run off in order to commit suicide: "Wohl ihr, daß sie es konnte." And if there were any remaining doubt as to whether the Gräfin inwardly sympathizes with Resel for running away, her response to learning of how Toni insensitively dismisses the offer of marriage — "Ach, daß sie doch nicht zu ihm gegangen wäre!" (367) — must put it to rest. The inclusion of "doch" suggests both admiration of Resel and mixed feelings about that admiration. The questionable relationship of the Gräfin to her own words in these passages gives the reader reason to suspect that the above speech is merely a rationalization of her decision to accept the arranged marriage. For one thing, a governess cannot actually control her charges' lives to that extent, nor is it believable that a person such as the Gräfin has thus far been presented to be would want someone else to dictate her life choices to her. A governess would not present a

decisive hindrance to one sufficiently committed to a course of action. In addition, the contradictions in the Gräfin's commentary suggest that she is trying to talk herself into believing the socially acceptable 'line.' The notion that one can cause oneself to evaluate a situation according to a value system in which one does not believe, simply through repetition of the conclusion prescribed by that system, is a doubtful proposition, but a widespread one. If the previous chapter is any indication, such values are neither changed nor circumvented so easily.¹⁵ Furthermore, the Gräfin's use of the first-person plural "wir" in this passage is telling; it not only places her within a peer group of young women belonging to the upper class but also provides her with a collective behind which she can hide. The implied logic runs thus: 'since these others do not stand up for themselves, neither am I to blame for not standing up for myself.' The Gräfin seems to be trying to convince herself that she has had no choice in the way her life turned out; trying to evade regret and the pain she would experience if she confronted it directly. At any rate, it raises the question of the extent to which the Gräfin is responsible for what becomes of her when she complies with the dictates of society.

The story contains an important narrative choice at this point: the parents' offer is only revealed after the Gräfin finishes this speech. The Oberförster's narrative is mostly chronological, and thus it might have been more natural to explain that the parents decided to allow the marriage with Toni about a page earlier, in the context of telling how they found out that Resel was at his cabin; however, by delaying the exposition of this olive branch, the narrative gives the Gräfin the opportunity to say what is on her mind under the assumption that the powers that be are immovable.

¹⁵ See page 145.

B. The Inner Frame: Religious Critique

I will now turn to the inner frame, which must be explained in order to understand the Gräfin's engagement with it. This part of the narrative provides even more information on what this society is like; the dynamics of societal forces acting in the world are dominated here by collectively held religious values which are intertwined with familial authority. The ending suggests that Resel could easily also be thought to be subject to regret, but ultimately escapes it for the most part, as the path of confronting problems head-on is not the path of regret.

The presence of the "Herr Dechant von Marienhöhe" (369), who happens to be visiting his subordinate Pater Vitalis when Toni bursts in bringing news of Resel, provides Ebner with the opportunity to contrast the attitudes of two different agents of the Church. Pater Vitalis has known Resel for a long time and is genuinely fond of her; according to how the Oberförster describes him, his human sympathy has often restrained him from admonishing her on many occasions when she has tried his patience, just as it curbs his rebuke when she bursts into tears at Toni's cabin. The visiting Herr Dechant, however, is an outsider who is both unacquainted with the involved persons and seemingly of a less kindly nature than Pater Vitalis. He evaluates the situation solely according to the moral proscriptions he represents, without the influence of mercy, pity, or affection. In his pedantic adherence to religious forms, he objects to the idea that Pater Vitalis should travel to the dying Resel: "Wie? das Allerheiligste hinauftragen an die Stätte, wo alles Heilige mit Füßen getreten worden? Unmöglich. Bringt erst die Verwundete ins Elternhaus zurück, zu Buße und Entsühnung ..." (370). Instead of arguing with the Herr Dechant and wasting precious time, Pater Vitalis replies that indeed she should be brought to her parents' house to be reconciled with them, and that he can just as well administer the last rites there.

In spite of the Herr Dechant, Resel survives the trek to her parents' house. The parents once again show no scruples about forgiving their only daughter when circumstances are

sufficiently dire. Toni's forced entry results in a scene that stages a clash of institutional principles when the performance of the confession ritual conflicts with the religious principle of forgiveness. This time, it is Pater Vitalis whose evaluation of events is circumscribed by ritualism to the exclusion of other considerations; he does not seem to notice the signs being given off by Resel: "Alles Irdische war von ihr abgefallen, sie hat ihn mit so einem sanftmüthigen Mitleid angeschaut" (372). The Oberförster, as the narrator of this passage, gives a description which implies that Resel is at this moment concerned with higher principles than the merely earthly, thus inscribing into the text the distinction between human practices and divine law. Pater Vitalis' concerns have to do with Church practices and thus proceed solely from the human side of this consideration:

"Mein Kind, denke jetzt nur an den Ewigen, vor dem Du bald stehen wirst,"
beschwört Vitalis — "denk an das Heil Deiner Seele. —"

Aber sie sagt: "Mein Lebenlang habe ich um Verzeihung gebeten, jetzt
bittet Einer mich, und ich soll sie ihm verweigern?"

"Dein Heiland, mein Kind, begehrt einzuziehen in Dein Herz — empfang
Deinen Heiland, mein Kind." (372)

Since the ritual itself is supposed to be about forgiveness, the passage sets up a conflict between an individual forgiving another individual versus the Church forgiving (on behalf of God) an individual. The parenthetical in the previous sentence is an indication that the latter transaction is not straightforward, even though it is considered as such in the fictional society of this text. Pater Vitalis, however, clearly believes that an attitude of contrition is not enough for God and that the Church's ritual forms a prerequisite for divine forgiveness. The Oberförster evaluates the situation in the same way, since he concludes that Resel "hat über die Versöhnung mit einem Menschen die Versöhnung mit ihrem Schöpfer versäumt" (372). The extent to which the text may contain an implicit critique of the Catholic insistence on human intermediaries, as well as of the notion that an attitude — that is, an internal state — of contrition is insufficient unless accompanied by the official Catholic ritual, is open to speculation. There are, however, some inconclusive pieces of evidence in journals and letters showing that Ebner experienced spiritual

struggles during the period in her life during which *Die Resel* was written.¹⁶ Various forms of religious critique also show up in many of her other texts from this period, such as *Unsühnbar* (1889), “Glaubenslos?” (1883), and “Unverbesserlich” (1910), among others.¹⁷

Another interesting feature of the above passage is Resel’s comment that she has been asking for forgiveness her whole life. Such frequency implies that the society in which she lives basically finds fault with the very nature of who she is as a person. Nevertheless, everyone in Resel’s narrative is described as being unreservedly fond of her. This contrast is an implicit criticism of a society that causes one of its most beloved members to feel as though there were something inherently wrong with her.

In spite of Resel’s expression of doubt about whether God would forgive her, the tone of the text sends clear signals that the reader is supposed to feel that Resel’s forgiveness of Toni takes precedence under these particular circumstances. The affectively charged (perhaps even sentimental¹⁸) depiction of the deathbed scene makes a direct emotional appeal to the reader. In other words, the reader is supposed to sympathize with Resel and her compassion for Toni’s future conscience to the extent of questioning whether the neglect of a Church-mandated form would really result in her alienation from God. The conflict in this passage is thus also about the question of if and when extenuating circumstances exist for a situation involving religious principles.

As this scene is taking place, Resel is lying in bed, flanked by her parents, with one hand on her mother and the other outstretched towards Toni. The stylized spatial arrangement of the figures is reminiscent of poses from Christian iconography; as the central figure, Resel is thus

¹⁶ Klostermaier, *Victory of a Tenacious Will*, 190–193.

¹⁷ See Klostermaier, *Victory of a Tenacious Will*, 192.

¹⁸ Though noting that such scenes in Ebner’s work are often criticized as sentimental, Woodford argues that Ebner’s texts subvert conventional sentimentality for the purpose of social critique (“Suffering and Domesticity,” 47).

placed in the position of Christ. This connection is further strengthened by the Oberförster's description of Toni: "ich habe viel gesehen in meinem langen Leben, so etwas nicht wieder. Der rechte Schächer, wenn man den vom Kreuz abgenommen hätte, bevor der göttliche Erlöser ihm Vergebung verheißen — dem sein Ebenbild war er." (371) The "Schächer" is a reference to the Gospel of Luke, according to which there were two thieves crucified on either side of Jesus. The so-called penitent thief asks for mercy, whereupon Jesus assures him that he will be with him in paradise. To drive home the point that this is an important metaphor and not just a one-off comparison, the text has the Oberförster refer to Toni as a "Schächer" a second time when he tells at whom Resel was pointing (372). On the one hand, the reference points to the fact that Toni has *stolen* from Resel the opportunity of being reconciled with society after her breach of its moral code. To suggest that he is responsible for her death is going too far, but his refusal to marry her certainly would have had social consequences for her, if not for him. On the other hand, the allusion reinforces the idea that Resel's last act was noble, commendable, even Christ-like. The episode of the penitent thief has traditionally been interpreted to mean that it is never too late to be reconciled with God, and that a penitent attitude is all that is required, since the thief hanging on the cross had no opportunity before his death to take any action in accordance with his words.

This subtly undermines the official position of the Church. A further point of implicit criticism is articulated in the Oberförster's description of the scene immediately following Resel's death: "Wir stehen vor ihr, ich und die Eltern nämlich, und starren sie voller Entsetzen an, und doch wieder nicht, weil sie daliegt und lächelt, so friedlich wie ein unschuldiges Kind." (372) The contradictory feelings are the product of two separate modes of evaluating what has just taken place. The onlookers' horror results from viewing Resel's actions according to Catholic beliefs about the economy of forgiveness. Their contrary feelings, on the other hand, are a response to their affectionate feelings towards their daughter/niece: since Resel's peaceful smile implies that

she herself had no regrets about what she did, her relatives feel some sense of satisfaction that her human desire for reconciliation was realized, regardless of whether this might conflict with any divine ordinances. Thus, since there is a perceived conflict of feeling good versus behaving rightly, the contradiction is between positive human sentiment and religious condemnation.

Pater Vitalis, after having vacillated throughout the narrative between pity for human fallibility and adherence to Church doctrine, undergoes another shift of attitude in the wake of Resel's death. From the perspective of the Catholic tradition, there is ample cause for pessimism with regard to Resel's spiritual status; since this conflicts with the human sympathy of her loved ones, Pater Vitalis instead appeals to a Biblical text with a different implication by reciting from the Lord's Prayer — not the whole thing, but rather just the line that particularly applies to this situation: "Vergieb uns unsere Schulden, wie auch wir vergeben unseren Schuldigern." (373) This line, in this context, makes a reverse interpretation of what has just taken place: rather than viewing Resel as having forgiven Toni instead of securing God's forgiveness, the statement petitions God to forgive her precisely because she forgave Toni.

It is unclear whether Pater Vitalis himself is aware of the full implications of his exclamation in terms of the conflicting interpretations which it highlights; the Oberförster's earlier characterization of him as "einschichtig" (357) would suggest not. In any case, his characterization as "Einer, der geworden ist wie ein Kind" (353f.) after — and implicitly also because of — Resel's death suggests that his invocation of the Lord's Prayer may have been more of a wish than an expectation. Furthermore, the fact that Resel ends up being buried in the woods rather than the cemetery shows that the predominant feeling in society was that her actions irrevocably separated her from them. From a symbolic standpoint, however, it is interesting that the exclusion from the socially designated place of burial results in Resel's grave being placed in the element in which she felt most at ease. The remote location of her grave suggests a further

positive interpretation in that it represents an individual's standing alone, independent of society — that is, a successful resistance to the status quo. On the other hand, being dead precludes her rather conclusively from ever making any progress within the existing social sphere. Nevertheless, a person who can be viewed as a martyr to a cause may still have influence on the living. This is the possibility presented to the Gräfin, though it remains uncertain at the end of the story what, if any, effect Resel's narrative will have on her future actions or attitudes; but regardless of how she reacts, the same possibility of being influenced is implicitly also offered to the reader.

The Gräfin's regret, in the form of her persisting occupation with Resel's story, provides the occasion for examinations to take place that expose dark aspects of this society: the prevalence of emotional manipulation, stringent rules, and pressure to keep up appearances. Such contextual factors are necessary for an adequate understanding of what was at stake in the choices of these two women, and are prerequisite to any kind of evaluation of their situations.

II. Subversion and Its Lookalikes

Ebner's prose works display an intriguing mix of resignation and the unwillingness to put up with misery.¹⁹ The two opposite ends of this spectrum confront each other in *Die Resel* by means of the two protagonists. For despite certain similarities of circumstance, the Gräfin and Resel represent different ways of approaching societal pressures. This chapter has dealt thus far with the Gräfin's (potential for) regret, but the character Resel is likewise subject to this question. Resel is the Gräfin's opposite in the sense that, by forgiving Toni and thus relieving her conscience, her final moments tie up any loose ends that might result in regret; her death then seals off any

¹⁹ Anikó Zsigmond concludes, with reference to Ebner's novellas, "Auch die Protagonisten der unteren, ausgelieferten Schichten müssen zur Überzeugung und Bewährung ihrer Menschenwürde gelangen, indem sie die Duldung von Not und Elend als menschenunwürdig verurteilen. Sie müssen über ihre Resigniertheit hinaus wachsen: nur so können sie ihre Bestimmung in der Ebner-Eschenbachschen Welt erfüllen." See "Das Menschenbild in Marie von Ebner-Eschenbachs Novellen," *Jahrbuch der ungarischen Germanistik* 5 (1998): 172f.

further possibility. Although previously characterized as someone who felt “Reue” (358) quickly and often, the events that cause this are comparatively insignificant, usually involving a perceived neglect of her parents. It seems that Resel, in exchange for remorse over minor matters, is able to escape the anguish of regretting major life events.

Resel perhaps has the potential to subvert the social order, but Toni does not — and that is where Resel makes her big mistake: in misjudging him. In fact, it almost seemed as though Resel intuitively suspected that there might be trouble getting Toni to agree, as suggested by the otherwise unexplained “Frost” (365) that shakes her even as she is simultaneously elated to hear her parents’ offer to let her marry him. Failing to recognize the distinction between herself and Toni is her tragic flaw. Resel is a subversive; she thinks that Toni is, too, but he is not. Clearly, her parents and Pater Vitalis are planted firmly inside the social order; Toni represents the opposition to it. Submission and revolt are two established, if opposed, conventional patterns. Submission is acting in accordance with principles, and revolt acting in opposition to them. But to subvert means to undermine the principles of something from within. There is an important distinction between subversion and revolt. While obedience and revolt are opposites, subversion implies a third thing: questioning the very form of the system. Resel thinks that Toni would share in her aspiration to combine what their society firmly regards as a disjoint set: amorous attachment and the contract of marriage. Subversives do not want a completely different life; they want the same things as everyone else, but done differently.

Resel’s suicide could be attributed to desperation over losing her social status; however, something else less obvious may also be at play in her decision. It could be that once Resel fully understands Toni’s position, her deep disappointment and the realization that she is profoundly alone in her approach to life contribute to her despair. She seems to have aspired to an ideal love and is then confronted with the fact that Toni does not fit her ideal, since otherwise he would

scarcely be capable of speaking so dismissively of their relationship, no matter his mood. The song lyric he quotes, “Ich will dich ja lieben, / Aber heirathen nicht” (367), is indicative of an entirely conventional point of view; although a man who accepts sex while rejecting commitment might garner social censure (but then again, society might just find it easier to look the other way), he is adhering to a type of ‘bad’ behavior that is so firmly established that it might as well be culturally sanctioned — hence the existence of this folk song on the subject. It is therefore a moment of critique when Resel insists that Toni must accompany her to seek forgiveness from her parents on the grounds that he has also “gefehlt” (366); her determination that he share in the social blame constitutes an implicit rejection of the double standard for the sexes in regard to morality.

Initially it is not clear that Toni’s actions are incongruous with a subversive stance. But as soon as he rejects the option of marriage on the grounds that he wants to enjoy his freedom, he reveals himself to be just as much a part of the societal system as any of its other representatives — for example, Pater Vitalis. Such a sentiment is the sole privilege of male members of this society, who are not held to the same moral ‘standards’ as the females. In fact, it is even expected that men will not abide by the supposedly agreed-upon rules of chastity, fidelity, honesty, and so forth; an excellent example is given in Ebner’s story *Die Poesie des Unbewußten*, which is structured as a series of letters between a young woman, her husband, and her mother, the latter of whom arranged the match between the couple. Over the course of the narrative, it emerges that the husband has previously had an affair with a married woman, which the other characters all try to keep secret from the young woman. The affair, however, is only considered to be problematic inasmuch as it would be shameful if it were to be openly acknowledged to the new

wife; none of the characters expresses any genuine moral outrage.²⁰ The rigid societal system reflected in both this story and in *Die Resel*, a system ostensibly supposed to create harmony and order in human relationships, in reality creates its own opposite: Toni and Pater Vitalis are merely two sides of the same coin. Subversion would mean breaking the system, not just breaking the rules. The 'good, compliant' member of society and the 'bad, noncompliant' member in fact both serve on some level to uphold the system: the 'bad' element is needed so that the 'good' element can point to it as an example of what not to do. In order to truly subvert the system, Resel needs to redefine a romantic relationship in a way that is less hostile to her own personal expression. The text presents a solution: combining the commitment of marriage with the free choice of a marital partner. But such a combination was not self-evident at the time, nor is it to be realized in the text.

True subversion in this context would consist in a marriage relationship that did not conform to these patterns; this is an idea with which Ebner was familiar and which she tried to realize in her own life through her marriage to Moritz. She can reasonably have hoped to find in him a person who could share her interests, someone who could understand her intellectual impulses and her need for literary pursuits. Her cousin Moritz, who placed as much value on his professorship and his inventing than on his military career, was likewise very committed to intellectual activities and had been known to clash with others in the family who did not understand this. However, although this marriage plan looked promising enough in theory, it did not meet with great success in practice. In the biographer Doris M. Klostermaier's

²⁰ According to some recent interpretations which assume that the young wife is not as ignorant as she pretends to be in her letters, she, too, would be included in this number; to her, the affair is merely a tool she can use to manipulate her husband. See Karin S. Wozonig, "Marie von Ebner-Eschenbachs 'Novellchen' 'Die Poesie des Unbewussten.' Beziehungsgeflecht und Geschlechterstereotype," *Sborník prací Filozofické fakulty Brněnské univerzity* 11 (2006): 153f.; as well as R. C. Ockenden, "Unconscious Poesy? Marie von Ebner-Eschenbach's 'Die Poesie des Unbewussten,'" in *Gender and Politics in Austrian Fiction*, ed. Ritchie Robertson and Edward Timms (Edinburgh: UP, 1996), 39f.

characterization, several factors put a damper on the relationship, including jealousy on both sides; emotional as well as physical distance, since Moritz was often away due to his career; and Moritz's mother, who lived in their household.²¹ Although Klostermaier does see somewhat of a reconciliatory gesture, this only developed during the last years of the marriage. Ebner was thus well acquainted with the difficulties of prediction.

Resel fled her parents' home because everyone in it opposed her in a matter very important to her own happiness. Yet she was not despairing enough to take her life at that point because she still had one person on her side: Toni. When he turns his back on her, however, that is when her courage falters. Resel faces the dilemma of the subversive: while society is the source of her distress, she cannot completely detach herself from all other people. Her suicide is an ambiguous gesture. On the one hand, it can be viewed as a failure of courage and of her faith in other people. Death serves as an escape from a trying situation. And although the representatives of society — Resel's parents and Pater Vitalis — changed their stance to accommodate Resel after she ran away, she does not trust them to accommodate any further deviation from their dictates. On the other hand, her suicide can be seen as a final act of resistance.²² Regardless of how much a society may circumscribe the life paths available to its members, an individual still has the option of refusing to participate by dying instead. Death can be a signal of dissent — especially a literary suicide, which emphasizes an argument by driving a situation to an extreme conclusion.²³ Resel's decision to be alienated from the Church rather than forego reconciliation with Toni signals a willingness to forgive individuals but not the societal structures.

²¹ See Klostermaier, *Victory of a Tenacious Will*, 77 and 206f.

²² Agatha C. Bramkamp lists other examples from Ebner's work in which characters' decisions to commit suicide can be viewed "as a means of self-definition"; see *Marie von Ebner-Eschenbach: The Author, Her Time, and Her Critics* (Bonn: Bouvier, 1990), 78.

²³ See also page 159.

The story contains an implicit critique of the fact that there seems to be no tenable alternative for Resel in the mortal world. Her suicide can be read as an act of defiance, whereas the Gräfin's relief that she has been spared by the 'protections' that attend her high social station reveals her mindset to be a product of precisely that system. By refusing to bend to the oppressive social order, Resel demonstrates an integrity which the Gräfin lacks. The Gräfin is a compromiser, a self-denier, a renouncer.²⁴ Resel, on the other hand, is a committed idealist; her first impulse is to reject the whole situation once she sees that Toni is not as committed to her romantic ideal as she herself. The one thing she preserves above all else is her adherence to her own principles.

Resel's suicide reveals a point of vulnerability in the subversive stance, resulting from the fact that it does not entail a wholesale rejection of society. She kills herself because she is not quite able to stand alone in the world; for the same reason, she flees to Toni's house. Through most of the story, she cannot quite detach herself from all contact with society and realize a self-sufficient existence. However, her deathbed scene offers her a fleeting moment of transcendence of the oppressive societal sphere: in becoming alienated from the Church in favor of satisfying her own conscience, her independence reaches a height exceeding any previous point in the narrative.

While the suicide suggests this rather heroic interpretation, viewed from another angle, it is also a product of a particular character flaw of hers: impetuosity. Resel's moment of weakness perhaps shows that the Gräfin, by being less impetuous, is superior in one point. Because the latter pauses before acting, she has a potential to develop her reflective capacity — and because she survives beyond the end of the story, she also has the opportunity. But at the same time, an effectual personality presupposes that reflection remain in balance: informing

²⁴ Zsigmond identifies renouncers ("Entsagende") as a recurring character type in Ebner's fiction ("Das Menschenbild," 170). Edith Toegel's article on the topic emphasizes its positive side: "resignation and renunciation are critical gestures of disapproval, but also sources of enrichment and fulfillment"; however, this seems to be less applicable to the Gräfin than to the characters Toegel discusses. See "'Entsagungsmut' in Marie von Ebner-Eschenbach's Works: A Female-Male Perspective," *Forum for Modern Language Studies* 28, no. 2 (1992): 141.

action, not substituting for it. This could pose a challenge for the Gräfin, who remains in a contemplative state throughout the story. Furthermore, she shows some signs of denying responsibility for her actions, which would allow her to rationalize a dismissal of any perturbing issues brought up for contemplation by Resel's narrative. Whether she will ultimately take advantage of the opportunity to become reflective remains an open question at the end of the story.

III. Telling a Non-Story

The Gräfin presents a tremendous narrative obstacle: she has no story.²⁵ She caved in to the wishes of her parents. She married the old, rich suitor. She is living out her bored, understimulated, comfortable existence. These factual particulars lack a hook, an angle of suspense that could be woven into a gripping narrative, at least in the usual way. But just because they are unsuitable for traditional narrative modes does not mean they are not worth telling. What the Gräfin's story does have is internal tension, even though the tension neither breaks through to the surface nor comes to any resolution. Ebner finds a clever way to dramatize the Gräfin's life by means of narrative structures. This contrasts with the technique employed by Theodor Fontane in *Effi Briest*, which likewise tells the history of a bored young woman. Whereas Fontane approaches Effi's boredom directly by simulating it with long, uneventful text passages,²⁶ Ebner's indirect method makes fewer demands on a reader's attention span. An important function of the framing device in *Die Resel* is to provide a subsidiary form of narrative movement to the plot. It achieves this through steering the reader's attention back and forth between the

²⁵ Eugen Thurnher describes the narrative situation in *Die Resel* as "Poesie des Ungesagten" but does not pursue this thought further; see "Die Poesie des Ungesagten: Zu Stil und Weltanschauung der Marie von Ebner-Eschenbach," in *Marie von Ebner-Eschenbach: ein Bonner Symposium zu ihrem 75. Todesjahr*, ed. Karl Konrad Polheim (Bern: Peter Lang, 1994) 151.

²⁶ See Brian Tucker, "Performing Boredom in *Effi Briest*: On the Effects of Narrative Speed," *The German Quarterly* 80, no. 2 (2007): 185–200.

inner and outer narratives. Resel's narrative, which does contain a suspense arc, helps to hold the reader's attention; meanwhile, the frequent commentaries of the Gräfin are an invitation to imagine her as a similar character under opposite conditions.

Just as the Gräfin seems to inhabit a non-story, so too does the Graf seem like a non-character. He effectively removes himself from the narrative by falling asleep; in fact, the latter half of the story never even mentions him, even though he is technically still present in the room. What little the reader does learn about the Gräfin's undescribed existence must be inferred from brief snippets, such as the following: "Beim schwarzen Kaffee begann der Graf in seiner breiten und äußerst gutmüthigen Art den Stand der Waldungen zu loben. 'Das ist ein Unterschied,' sagte er, 'zwischen den meinigen und den fürstlichen, wo wir im Herbst gejagt haben.'" (351) Little as it is, this is the most revealing piece of information about the husband in the whole story. It apparently pleases him that he owns a finer piece of property than the prince, his social superior; this hints at the sort of thing that occupies his mind — namely, being able to one-up other members of the nobility. He also lacks any appreciation for his wife's attempts to be charming: the Gräfin's playful implication that the Oberförster has slighted her in claiming that Resel had the prettiest brown eyes ever elicits nothing more than a grunt from him, and thus the Gräfin's tease that the Oberförster does not recognize her superiority "comme il est bête" (355) — 'because he is stupid' — is revealed to apply in earnest to her husband.

The processes associated with regret bring up the Gräfin's inner life for re-evaluation. As in chapter three, the issue at stake is the alteration of beliefs and internal scripts. Although the Gräfin probably cannot (or, at any rate, is highly unlikely to, since it would involve radical social consequences) change many aspects of her exterior existence, her *attitudes* towards her existence can be altered. The narrative of the Oberförster creates in her an emotional turmoil that places her in a condition of readiness to re-evaluate her latent beliefs. Although not as sudden and

dramatic as the concluding scene of *Brigitta*, this situation is nevertheless powerful because of its thoroughness: the similarities with Resel which run through the entire tale call to the foreground of her attention all of the parameters of her romantic history, and they do so in a systematic and structured way due to the fact that Resel's history has a narrative arc paralleling that of the Gräfin. Whereas other types of associations might only draw a connection between two things based on one or two similar details, this association, which takes the form of a story, connects with her personal experience on multiple levels, thus increasing its affective potential.

Framing a narrative is a device that introduces a form of commentary into the text, since the characters in the outer frame have a perspective — whether explicit or implicit — on the story within the frame. Often this can serve the goal of steering reader reactions to the text by simulating, within the text itself, a process of analysis from a critical distance. This is not quite the dynamic in *Die Resel*, however. Obviously the Gräfin still has a reaction to the material with which she is being presented, but she does so from a position of closeness rather than distance. Her identification with the character of Resel coupled with the technical device of her frequent interruptions of the framed narrative blend the two narrative strands together. In addition, although the text suggests that the Gräfin is profoundly affected by the story she hears, it gives little specific information about how she evaluates it. For these reasons, the outer frame neither steers reader perceptions significantly, nor is it superior in this regard to the inner framed narrative.

Die Resel ends with an image of Toni which the Gräfin recalls to mind from earlier in the day: “Der hartnäckige Schweiger mit dem finstern Blick, in dessen Nähe ihr fast unheimlich zu Muthe gewesen, hatte eine flüchtige, rasch verjagte Erinnerung in ihr geweckt, — die Erinnerung an Einen, den zu vergessen ihre Pflicht war.” (373) By indicating that the association of Toni with her former lover was “rasch verjagt,” the text signals that the Gräfin has been committing

repression. The ending is left open: Will she continue to repress thoughts of the path she did not take, or will she begin to work through them in some way? The reference to her “duty” to forget underlines the fact that the story of Resel — a type of vicarious experience — is the only available socially acceptable outlet for her to work out her feelings. This is a society which is hostile to anything too direct.

The final moment of the story, in which the Gräfin reflects on Toni’s appearance, is quite ambiguous. Of course it has a high degree of salience for her, since he reminds her of her lost lover; but he also seems rather a wreck, raising the question of whether marrying him would even have had a better outcome. Though on the other hand, his current condition could be a result of the trauma that befell him. The reader’s evaluation of the ending is again another matter. *Die Resel* is a story that derives its narrative suspense from unresolved tensions. Resel’s suicide, the character of the Gräfin, and the effect of the story on the Gräfin are all open-ended elements that clamor for some sort of positive or negative evaluation, but this can only be supplied by the reader. The omniscient narrative instance abstains from commentary, and it cannot be ascertained to what extent Resel’s story is actually similar to the Gräfin’s. Nor does the reader know the specific details of the Gräfin’s story, just as the Gräfin herself does not really know how it would have turned out for her if she had pursued a different course of action.

Resel’s story contains a dramatic reversal that hints at Ebner’s long years of ultimately unsuccessful struggle to become a playwright: at the point when Pater Vitalis visits Resel in Toni’s cottage, her story, by all appearances, could have a happy resolution; that quite the opposite occurs is an example of peripeteia worthy of a stage play. By letting her experience as a would-be dramatist shine through in the Resel plotline, Ebner plays with the boundary between fiction and actuality. Although the events of Resel’s life may be considered to have actually taken place within

the world of the story, nevertheless, the Gräfin receives them in the form of a narrative.²⁷ She — as well as, one might argue, anyone who hears a story — may thus on some level be considering it as a piece of fiction, which is a type of reflection that has its own set of practices. The Gräfin, of course, also inhabits a fictional world, but its lack of any dramatic form or traditional markers such as those present in Resel's story causes its fictionality to fade into the background. By consciously or unconsciously viewing Resel's story as a fiction, the Gräfin's evaluation of it changes. She has more room to distance herself and to claim that she could not have done what Resel did, on the grounds that 'real' people cannot do what 'fictional' people do. However, the credibility of her claim is undermined by characters in other stories by Ebner, such as *Komtesse Paula*, in which a member of the nobility manages to marry her chosen partner instead of her parents' choice. Such precedents indicate that the Gräfin is in a situation of believing defiance of the social order to be impossible rather than its factually having been proven impossible.²⁸

Does the Gräfin regret not choosing otherwise? Or does Resel's story function for her as a cautionary tale?²⁹ 'Do not stray from the socially sanctioned path,' it intones melodramatically, 'or else you will end up *dead*.' (Such a view, of course, ignores the question of whether dying is always the worst thing that can happen to a person.) As noted at the beginning of this chapter, one need not necessarily wish that one had in fact chosen differently in order to regret a missed opportunity. The very persistence — or, mental salience — of a counterfactual alternative to one's actual past gives rise to the processes of self-examination that form the intellectual backbone of

²⁷ See also Woodford, "Suffering and Domesticity," 54f.: "Resel, in the eyes of her uncle, is a real figure whose death is sadly mourned. Yet, for the countess, she becomes an ideal figure, with representative value: a lens through which she sees her own fate."

²⁸ As Ockenden points out, characters in other works by Ebner whose families try to coerce them into marriages sometimes resist successfully and sometimes not ("Unconscious Poesy," 37).

²⁹ Gudrun Brokoph-Mauch comments on the warning qualities of Resel's story but does not consider the possibility that certain aspects of the text also undermine this view; see "Die Frauen haben nichts als die Liebe': Variationen zum Thema Liebe in den Erzählungen der Marie von Ebner-Eschenbach," in *Des Mitleids tiefe Liebesfähigkeit: Zum Werk der Marie von Ebner-Eschenbach*, ed. Joseph P. Strelka, (Bern: Peter Lang, 1997), 66f.

regret. Among other functions, regret is the counterforce to self-deception. It forces one to confront — no matter how painful — one's own inner scripts that have caused one to make the choices that brought one to this place in life. In the case of the Gräfin, feeling regret could cause her to acknowledge and work through rather than denying and repressing her choices; it could prevent her from setting herself up for problems down the road due to unresolved psychological issues; it could help her become aware of societal scripts that she has internalized about how to act in the world. The latter, in particular, has the potential to play a role in the transformation of the self, since awareness is prerequisite to deciding whether to accept or reject a particular script that influences one's behavior. Whether or not these positive functions will be realized depends on the Gräfin's response to the pang that Resel's story undoubtedly causes her. It is possible that her rationalizations have rendered her immune to any deeper examinations of her own motives; however, the fact that she takes great interest in Resel's story indicates that regret is nudging at her consciousness, prodding her to reflect on her situation, her choices, and her attitudes. The ending leaves room for the possibility that she will not remain unaffected by hearing Resel's story, though it remains uncertain as to whether she will break through her self-created illusions, confront her choices, and change herself in anticipation of future challenges.

IV. Conclusion

Die Resel is a dense story in which nearly every detail contributes something to the understanding of the psychology of the characters. Faced with the choice between integrity and agony or compromise and comfort, the two protagonists choose differently. The Gräfin is a young woman unsure of the extent to which she is committed to resisting the lifestyle that society has prescribed for her. Resel is a headstrong personality who actually gets away with everything — until it depends upon involving another person. Either, neither, or both may have cause to regret

her choice in the sense of wishing it undone, but the text leaves it up to the reader to make the final evaluation. Far from being simply a 'negative' emotion, regret operates as a vehicle for uncovering the hidden, subtle, or unacknowledged dimensions of the situation. The capacity of regret to have a beneficial function is instantiated by Resel's actions on her deathbed, which suggest that it is never too late to begin making sensible decisions. Other benefits of regret that feature prominently in this story are its functions as a deterrent against future repetitions of a mistake, as a catalyst to a change of one's operating procedures, and as an aid to self-knowledge. These last may or may not come to fruition in the Gräfin's life; but in any case, her confrontation with her past through the medium of Resel's story shows how regret operates as a process to open up such potentialities.

The framed nature of *Die Resel* makes possible two different evaluations of Resel's story that form a thought-provoking contrast. From the reader's perspective, Resel has a personality such as is encountered in stories — and perhaps only in stories. She almost seems too vivid for real life, as if no one could actually be that intense. But from the Gräfin's perspective, Resel is a historical person who acts with a heroism worthy of fiction but nevertheless existed. The inner narrative is in some sense a projection of the (Gräfin's) worst-case scenario, and yet, because of the way Resel held onto her integrity, it cannot be claimed that her life ended in unmitigated tragedy. She thus presents a challenge to the Gräfin's comfortable psychological equilibrium, since the contrast with the Gräfin reveals the latter's 'realism' to be an excuse for her faintheartedness. *Die Resel* provides an interesting look at the contrast between those who confront the challenges of life head-on and those who are content with imaginatively contemplating possibilities. By blurring the distinction within the context of the story, the differing perspectives of the reader and the Gräfin raise age-old issues of fiction versus reality;

issues of what can plausibly be expected of a fictional character, and of what can realistically be expected of an actual person.

Afterword: The Quest for Intelligibility

Reasons are curious things — when I do not have passion I proudly look down on reasons, and when I have passion reasons swell up immensely.

— Søren Kierkegaard, *Journals and Papers*

In the preceding chapters, I have largely refrained from commenting on historical interrelations between the texts being analyzed, choosing instead to focus on thematic connections and those that support the observations being made on the inner workings of emotion. However, given that the nineteenth century serves as a temporal boundary for this project, some comment on how the texts relate to their period of production, as well as on the relation of this literary era to the topic of emotion, is fitting.

When referring to a historical period of literary or artistic production in an academic context, it has become common to include in the same breath a self-critical commentary on the practice of periodization. There is not just one, but multiple Enlightenments; Realism was never truly realistic nor Naturalism naturalistic; the concept of Postmodernism is lacking in distinguishable characteristics.²⁰⁰ While on the one hand, qualifying these terms is a worthwhile practice because it reminds us of the particularities of the individual artists, works, and ideas that are being generalized about, on the other hand, periodization retains its appeal as a means of grappling with broad concepts of change over time. In the case of this project, the caveat could read: the techniques of Romanticism are still informing work being produced today. The reaction against Enlightenment rationalism no doubt spurred a uniquely pronounced concentration on

²⁰⁰ An unfortunate side-effect of periodization is the confusion it can cause between the everyday usage of language and its usage to describe movements; in an attempt to make the distinction clear, I have capitalized terms wherever they refer to specific periods and left them lowercase otherwise.

emotions, yet there is an element of universality in the human desire to understand itself which transcends historical boundaries.

Romanticism's emphasis on emotions would seem to make it a logical fit for a project like this one, though on the other hand, the period dealt largely with the expression of emotions, whereas I am concerned with their inner workings and causes. This presents no obstacle in the case of E.T.A. Hoffmann, however, as this author was meticulous about writing into his texts the causal chains attached to events; despite the initial appearance that supernatural forces are at work in *Das Fräulein von Scuderi*, there prove to be intelligible — if not entirely reasonable — causes behind all of the events in the story. Hoffmann is arguably the only true Romanticist author in the group. The character of René Cardillac alone is sufficient to position *Das Fräulein von Scuderi* firmly within the tradition of demonic Romanticism, the dark side of the movement. In the context of this project, Hoffmann's text constitutes a point of departure, to which the others may be compared in order to seek signs of the development across the century of Romanticism's legacy of interest in emotions.

Both Søren Kierkegaard's and Adalbert Stifter's periods of activity correspond to the middle of the nineteenth century, making them heirs of Romanticism. The circumstance of Kierkegaard's being Danish delayed the onset of his influence on the rest of the world — by decades, in the case of many languages. His response to the legacy of Romanticism can therefore be considered a side branch, whereas Stifter's work participated more in mainstream European intellectual development. Kierkegaard might be classified as a late Romanticist, and it is certainly the case that his seducer-figure draws heavily on the ideas of demonic Romanticism. However, on a certain level, *Either/Or* Part I is also a parody of German Romantic attitudes. Kierkegaard's philosophical objective — pseudonyms notwithstanding — of critiquing the aesthetic lifestyle pushes his text beyond the boundaries of the movement. Stifter's preference for the subtle powers

of nature over the dramatic, which he articulated in the well-known foreword to *Bunte Steine* (1853), predisposes him to turn his attention inward, to matters of individual psychology, such as emotions.

By the time Marie von Ebner-Eschenbach gained renown as writer, Modernism was on the horizon, as the collective cultural awareness started to catch up with the ongoing changes to everyday human existence that had been wrought over the course of the century by the rise of industry. Yet since her literary production remained disconnected from the attitudes, techniques, and concerns of Modernism, it fits better into a narrative about nineteenth-century intellectual tendencies. Besides, Modernism's preoccupations with acceleration and fragmentation favored a focus on external rather than internal matters. Nevertheless, at the end of this line of development, we see the literary exploration of emotions reaching out beyond the limits of individual interests, as the Gräfin's regret becomes externalized through the story of Resel.

Romanticism and its legacy constituted a current of introspective analysis in the artistic-intellectual landscape of nineteenth-century Europe; the twentieth century likewise experienced trends focused on individual life, but these differed in accordance with the particularities of the era. Starting at the dawn of the century, Freudian psychoanalysis worked its influence on the European cultural imagination; and before mid-century had arrived, the Holocaust had given people reason to question their selves — that is, the inner workings of human beings — with an intensity and desperation that was previously inconceivable. Inquiries into human interiority thus took on a qualitatively different character as compared with the previous century.

The nineteenth century offers its own idiosyncratic ways of grappling with the human experience, among which the exploration of emotions is especially prominent. What the topic of emotions lacks in broad political, historical, or socio-cultural implications, it seeks to recoup in the depth of its consequentiality for individual human well-being. The brain is constantly

performing multifaceted comparisons of new, incoming data with its own latent networks of belief, meaning, and memory. Because emotions are the cumulative result of action over time, because they are based on latent beliefs, and because they are intrinsically bound up with priorities, they reveal more about who we are than the sequential thought operations commonly referred to as rationality. Acting rationally or irrationally is the action of a moment, but acting emotionally is the result of a lifetime of actions that have shaped our belief systems.

The analyses presented in this project cannot indicate to the reader the specifics of his or her own individual emotions, but it is to be hoped that they may contain structural resonances with real situations and suggest ways of approaching the task of understanding. Since emotions often occur as very rapid, seemingly instantaneous evaluations, it can be difficult to determine the factors involved and how they were evaluated in order to reach the given outcome. Literature has the potential to portray emotions in a more accessible way. In the works examined in this project, the text contains detailed information about the given situation as well as the characters' former and current mental states, which is crucial to sorting out how a particular emotion forms; and because of the nature of the textual medium, the reader has the possibility of re-reading and analyzing these components until able to reconstruct the evaluative operations that constitute the emotion at hand. Literary representation can thus function as a means of learning through analogy about the genesis of emotions, thereby bringing about an awareness of one's own practices for the careful reader. The connection between textual narratives and mental narratives forms the basis for a productive and enduring dialog between literature and emotion studies.

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