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***FREMDE PFLANZEN: THE GENDERED GARDENS***  
**OF ADALBERT STIFTER AND THEODOR FONTANE**

**DISSERTATION**

**Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for**  
**The Degree Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate**  
**School of The Ohio State University**

**By**

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**\*\*\*\*\***

**The Ohio State University**  
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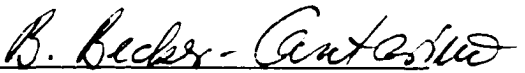
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## ABSTRACT

Since antiquity, human conceptions of gender have been projected upon nature, and nature, in turn, used to legitimize societal gender constructions. In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, scientists sought to justify qualities and behaviors attributed to men and women as biologically – i.e., naturally – determined. According to such “science,” God and nature had created woman as the weaker sex, imbuing her with characteristics that, in turn, dictated her place in society and in the family. This dissertation focuses upon a setting uniquely suited for exploring issues of gender and gendered nature: the garden, a landscape that lies suspended between nature and culture. In my study I consider four nineteenth-century works in which the garden image is central, Adalbert Stifter’s Brigitta and Nachsommer and Theodor Fontane’s Irrungen, Wirungen and Effi Briest. In addition to focusing on images and aspects of the specific literary gardens as gendered, I explore the garden itself as a gendered space, a place where societal or personal projections of gender roles and expectations are at play. For Stifter’s Brigitta, the garden provides the haven necessary for the heroine to transform herself and the landscape, and to transcend the stultifying gender expectations of her time. In the garden in Nachsommer, however, safety and “order” are achieved only by the enforcement of a strict gender hierarchy. Equated with flowers and statuary, the principal female characters are deprived of

agency, their personal needs and desired, stifled. Fontane's gardens prove fragile and ineffectual refuges. When the "Naturkind" Effi Briest surrenders to natural passions, she is expelled from the Edenic garden of her childhood home, and in Irrungen, Wirungen, Lene's and Botho's garden of love ultimately cannot withstand the strictures of class and gender. Stifter's and Fontane's treatments of the garden image – whether as Horatian "beatus ille," garden of love, Eden, or paradise lost – illustrate the varied and often negative repercussions of the age-old connection of women with nature. My analysis reveals the female protagonists in each of these works to be "fremde Pflanzen," plants out of place in the landscape of nineteenth-century German and Austrian society.

**In loving memory of my grandfather,  
Dr. Charles Herman Winkler**

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## FIELDS OF STUDY

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

- B** Adalbert Stifter. "Brigitta." Studien. Buchfassungen. Ed. Helmut Bergner and Ulrich Dittmann. Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1978. 409-75.
- BSV** Adalbert Stifter. "Vorrede." Bunte Steine. Buchfassungen. Ed. Helmut Bergner. Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1978. 9-16.
- EB** Theodor Fontane. Effi Briest. Ed. Christine Hehle. Berlin: Aufbau, 1997.
- FB** Theodor Fontane. Briefe. Ed. Walter Keitel and Helmuth Nürnberger. 5 vols. Munich: Hanser, 1976.
- IW** Theodor Fontane. Irrungen, Wirrungen. Ed. Christine Hehle. Berlin: Aufbau, 1997.
- NB** Adalbert Stifter. "Nachgelassene Blätter." Sämtliche Werke. Vol. 3. Ed. Hannsludwig Geiger. Berlin: Tempel, 1959. 1290-94.
- NS** Adalbert Stifter. Der Nachsommer. Ed. Wolfgang Frühwald and Walter Hettche. 3 Vols. Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1978.
- SB** Adalbert Stifter. Briefe. Tübingen: Wunderlich, 1947.
- WA** Theodor Fontane. "Willibald Alexis." Aufsätze und Aufzeichnungen. Ed. Jürgen Kolbe. Munich: Hanser, 1969. 407-62.

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Gender, Nature and Landscape

In an Edward Koren cartoon published in the New Yorker in October 2000, two backpackers, a man and a woman, look out over a mountainous landscape. The man cheerfully remarks, “What, may I ask, does landscape have to do with gender?” The woman does not reply, but looks out unsmilingly, her arms crossed over her chest. Why is the woman frowning? Is she annoyed with her companion for his inability to simply enjoy the landscape, to “be in the moment,” without retreating behind academic questioning? Or is she frustrated because the answer to his query is so obvious? Landscape has everything “to do” with gender. The view portrayed in the cartoon proves the point: the landscape is sketchy, its features difficult to discern, but two clearly recognizable components are mountains (towering, penetrating the sky, rising above nature – attributes which, historically, have been attributed to men) and lakes (bodies of water, which, with their outwardly placid appearance and unknown, potentially dangerous depths, have often been identified with women and female sexuality). Is the woman in the cartoon angry or saddened? Perhaps she

realizes that although she and her partner may be hiking in the twenty-first century, the associations of landscape with gender remain much the same as they have for hundreds of years.

When the man in the Koren cartoon speaks of gender, he is not referring to sex as a biological category. Instead, he is evoking the concept of gender as defined by contemporary feminist theory, as a social construct. The Dictionary of Feminist Theory identifies gender as “a culturally shaped group of attributes and behaviours given to the female or to the male,” and points to Margaret Mead’s 1935 Sex and Temperament in Three Primitive Societies as the foundation for the distinction between biological sex and socially-constructed gender (106). This distinction is significant, for it undermines the assumption that culturally accepted feminine and masculine norms are biologically determined, or “natural.”<sup>1</sup>

Since antiquity, humans have projected their conceptions of gender upon nature. According to Carolyn Merchant, author of The Death of Nature, premodern man identified nature “with a nurturing mother: a kindly beneficent female who provided for the needs of mankind in an ordered, planned universe” (2). Women, because of their ability to bring forth life, were seen as having a unique connection with nature, with its fertility, its life-giving and life-affirming powers.

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<sup>1</sup> As will be discussed in a later section of the Introduction (1.6), it became a primary goal of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century science to justify the characteristics and behaviors identified as “female” or “male” as biologically determined, i.e., grounded in “natural law.”

The ancient Greek earth-goddess Demeter was revered not only as the bringer of the harvest, but also because of her unwavering devotion to her daughter Persephone: in pursuing her abducted child to the depths of Hades Demeter proved herself to be the consummate mother. To the Greeks, in fact, the earth itself was female. In their creation myth, Gaia (earth) emerged from chaos, and gave birth to all life, including her own mate, Ouranos (sky). In Western society, the personification of the earth as female persisted for centuries.

Nature, however, could be unpredictable, and this “fickleness” was also identified with the female sex. Because they were seen as closer to nature than men, women were considered to be “subordinate in the social hierarchy to the men of their class, and imbued with a far greater sexual passion. . . . Like wild chaotic nature, women needed to be subdued and kept in their place” (Merchant 132). Thus women, elevated for their connection to “Mother Nature,” were simultaneously denigrated as destructive and uncontrollable, their “alliance” with nature a threat to the stable forces of civilization. The witch trials of the sixteenth century serve as a chilling illustration of the perceived need to subdue women’s “natural” wildness: these “witches” were charged with using nature’s forces to bring sickness or destroy crops.

In the early modern era, man began to view nature itself as controllable, as he developed methodologies and technologies to harness nature to his own ends. For example, in the sixteenth century, agricultural production in the Netherlands was dramatically increased through the introduction of specialized organic fertilizer (manure). A century later English landowners “reclaimed” farmland by draining

fens and cutting down forests. Through these and other modern methods nature could be “perfected,” and mother earth “encouraged” to provide ever-increasing bounty to her human children.

In England in particular, the advances of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries had extremely negative environmental consequences. In addition to clearing land for farming, the English felled forests to supply lumber for shipbuilding. The English fleet may have flourished, but timber supplies dwindled, and the resulting dependence upon coal as a fuel source led to choking pollution and poisoning of both land and water (Chambers 66). Modern day ecofeminists draw a direct connection between the exploitation of nature and its resources and the historical treatment of women, seeing “the uses and abuses of the environment” as “largely due to a patriarchal environmental ethic that has conceptualized . . . nature as female” (Legler 228). This theory, if true, renders the association between women and nature a veritable “Teufelskreis”: women, because of their affinity with nature, are controlled and repressed, and nature, in turn, is exploited because it is perceived as “female.”

There is, clearly, a connection between nature and gender. But what of landscape? In contemporary society, we tend to associate the word “landscape” with, in the words of the Oxford English Dictionary, “a view or prospect of natural inland scenery, such as can be taken in at a glance from one point of view.” The words “view,” “prospect” and “glance” emphasize that landscape is not nature, per se, but a human perception of nature from a particular point of reference. In its earliest use,

the word “lantschaft” connoted a region or political territory, but by the late Middle Ages, it had come to be used exclusively as a term in painting, referring to the artistic representation of a scene from nature (Gruenter 193). The word “Landschaft” contains the root “schaffen” (to create), and the act of creation is integral to the concept of the “landscape.” In their landscape paintings, artists such as Claude Lorrain and Jacob von Ruisdael projected their own ideas and preconceptions upon nature, creating on their canvases a more “perfect” version.

As an artistic concept, landscape entailed “framing” nature in a particular way, but nature remained unaffected by these endeavors. By the 1700’s, however, nature itself had become the canvas. Over the course of the eighteenth century, English gardeners, among them William Kent and Lancelot (“Capability”) Brown, placed increased emphasis upon organizing natural settings to emulate the works of great landscape artists. Soon, no gentleman’s country estate was considered complete without the appropriately landscaped surroundings. These lavish parks came to be seen as a sign of wealth, status, and aesthetic taste.<sup>2</sup> In Germany, Pückler-Muskau, inspired by study tours in England, created extensive picturesque parks, replete with

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<sup>2</sup> Such parks could include woods, game preserves, deer parks and pastures, in addition to ornamental gardens. Interestingly, the over-arching term used in the horticultural literature of the time was “garden.” For example, Stephen Switzer’s handbook The Nobleman, Gentleman and Gardener’s Recreation encouraged affluent readers to leave their “gardens” open to the surrounding countryside, and to eliminate walls, “by which the eye is as it were imprisoned and the feet fettered in the midst of the extensive charms of nature” (qtd. in Jellicoe 167). Of course, what Switzer referred to as gardens were in actuality parks.

statues, manmade water courses and lakes, and, at his family's estate at Branitz, three pyramids (commemorating his earlier travels to Egypt). Like landscape artists, landscape architects envisioned their handiwork as an improvement upon nature: nature's most pleasing qualities were encouraged, and its less desirable aspects, repressed.

As the preceding brief history of the term and concept illustrates, landscape – whether in painting or gardening – is the artist's projection of how nature “should” be. In this regard, landscape has a great deal “to do” with gender, for gender, too, is a projection, a construction of how women and men “should” behave. This dissertation focuses upon a particular landscape – the garden – as portrayed in fictional works of two nineteenth-century authors, Adalbert Stifter and Theodor Fontane. As my analysis of the four works reveals, the “landscape” of the garden is, itself, a frame for gender.

## 1.2 The Genesis of the Garden

The history of the garden, unlike that of “Landschaft,” may be traced to ancient times. For in the beginning, or soon thereafter, there was the garden. Here, at least according to western religion and philosophy of later centuries, human beings experienced non-reflective, paradisiacal oneness with nature, a oneness that came abruptly to an end with “the Fall.” The association of the garden with the concept of “paradise” did not originate in the Judeo-Christian tradition. The relationship can be



traced etymologically to ancient Persia, where the monarchs created “pairidaeza,” private royal pleasure gardens. Xenophon, a historian and student of Socrates, introduced the term to the Greek language as “paradeisos,” where it came to be associated with both Eden and the Elysian fields, the realm of the blessed dead (Schnack 45).

The first gardens in ancient cultures “evolved out of the primitive beginnings of man’s grubby attempts to farm” (Adams 18), but as the preceding brief examination of the term “paradise” suggests, the garden’s significance extends far beyond its agricultural function to encompass aesthetic, ideological and political meanings. Common to almost all early cultures is the notion of the garden as a walled, or at least protected, place. The ancient Hebrew word for garden, “gan,” connotes shelter and safety; it suggests being “passed over and . . . surviv[ing] as one survives a storm in the desert” (Francis 38). This etymology points to the conception of nature, in premodern times, as something unpredictable and potentially threatening. As humans began to modify and adapt the natural environment, gardens took on additional significance: as an expression of control and power. Just as the rulers of the Persian empire erected magnificent royal parks as symbols of their power, so did members of later aristocracies order and control natural settings to create a “visible hierarchy in the landscape” (Adams 24). The strict geometric plantings of the classic French garden at Versailles, for example, were a horticultural reflection not only of man’s victory over nature, but of the monarch’s military and political potency.

From early times, the garden has also been associated with sexuality, particularly female sexuality. In the Old Testament's Song of Solomon the garden is an enclave for erotic encounter as well as a metaphor for the female body. This elevation of female sexuality is overshadowed by the events in the "first garden": through the introduction of sexual awareness and the advent of shame (the man and woman, after eating from the tree of knowledge, knew that they were naked), Eden was lost. The imposition of control in the centuries that followed, in the form of laws, commandments, and governmental and religious structures, may be seen as an attempt to subjugate or direct the sexual impulses that resulted in this loss, and thereby to regain the security of the first garden. Because of the perceptions of woman's direct culpability in "the Fall" (for Eve offered Adam the apple), it is she who has been most constrained by these structures. From "the beginning," then, the garden and gender have been closely connected.

### 1.3 The German "Gartenrevolution"

The garden image had also figured in German literature from its beginnings (i.e., in Gottfried von Strassburg's Tristan [1210] and Rebhun's Susanna [1536]) but in the final decades of the eighteenth century, the garden came to play an increasingly significant role. In the 1770's, German landscapers appropriated the English "sentimental" gardening style, which Capability Brown would bring to perfection, and the ensuing dispute between the new style and the traditional French formal

garden – the “Gartenrevolution,” as it was called – became a focal point for theorists, writers, and philosophers. The improvements in agriculture and land cultivation over the previous two centuries had been accompanied by a reassessment of nature as a whole. The idea of nature as formless and chaotic had been challenged, as scientists and philosophers discovered order, harmony, and design in the world. “Viewed as a reflection of the beauty of God’s mind, nature became endowed with improving, uplifting, enlightening powers” (Finney 53). The open, “natural” spaces of the English landscape garden were seen as far more likely to evoke these “enlightening powers” than the formal, geometric, and artificially-controlled French gardens.

The connection between art and nature also reached its peak during the period of “Enlightenment.” The cultivation of landscape was seen as a means of revealing nature’s intrinsic aesthetic values, values which, in turn, were believed to be ethically motivating. Aesthetic effect is a central element in the definitive work on the English landscaping style in Germany, Christian Hirschfeld’s Theorie der Gartenkunst. This five-volume tome, published in 1775, became a bible for followers of the sentimental style of gardening. In Theorie der Gartenkunst Hirschfeld detailed ways in which the gardener could organize and form nature to achieve the greatest sentimental effect. The garden should be divided into “scenes,” and each of these, by means of the skillful combination of natural elements (vegetation, waterfalls, etc.) with manmade structures (such as grottos, temples, or even gravestones), should elicit a particular

emotion. In Hirschfeld's own words, the character of such a scene could be "einsam, ernsthaft, melancholisch, feyerlich, lebhaft, lachend, romantisch, wild, traurig, fruchtbar, öde, frey, versperrt u.s.w." (10).

Hirschfeld attempted through his writings to elevate "Gartenkunst" to an accepted art form. He stressed the link between landscape architecture and landscape painting, and other thinkers followed suit by drawing connections not only between gardens and painting, but also between gardens and "Poesie." Johann Gottfried Herder, for example, declared "Gartenkunst" to be a fine art: 'In der Natur Harmonie und Disharmonie unterscheiden, den Charakter jeder Gegend kennen und gebrauchen lernen, mit dem regen Triebe, das Schöne der Natur allenthalben zu erhöhen, zu versammeln; wäre dies keine schöne Kunst, so gäbe es keine'" (132). The inspired gardener could combine and order natural elements as a writer does words and syntax, and thereby create a poetic landscape.

Hirschfeld's focus, however, was not just on artistic effect for its own sake. His work must be understood as a product of late Enlightenment philosophy, with its emphasis on aesthetics as a means of motivating moral thought and behavior. According to Hirschfeld, the garden's aesthetic value was directly linked to the richness and variety of the sentiments it evoked, for the beauty of the well-ordered landscape expressed God-given aesthetic qualities: "Diese äußern sich als ästhetische 'Kraft' und werden in der Seele als 'Bewegungen,' also als Emotionen wahrgenommen" (Kehn 202). Landscape architecture was thus imbued with a

religious and didactic purpose: the emotions induced by viewing sentimental parks and gardens, Hirschfeld maintained, had the effect of improving the human soul.

#### 1.4 Goethe's Die Wahlverwandtschaften and the "German" Garden

Among literary texts in which the garden plays a central role, Goethe's Die Wahlverwandtschaften demands attention, as aspects of the work influenced treatment of the literary garden throughout the nineteenth century. In Die Wahlverwandtschaften, the park surrounding the residence of the main characters, Charlotte and Eduard, bears traces of both the French style of gardening and an earlier, more classical phase of the English garden. (Again, the extensive property in question is actually a park). In the opening chapters, Charlotte is busy at work transforming the land along the lines of the English style. She has arranged for new paths to be constructed to afford better views of the ponds and wooded hills and has had a small pavilion built, a "Mooshütte" whose doors and windows serve as "frames" for views of the surrounding landscape. In her effort to create "sentimental" effects, Charlotte has even gone so far as to rearrange the gravestones at the church on their property. As she and Eduard enter the churchyard, it is clear that her efforts have been successful: "Eduard fühlte sich sonderbar überrascht, wie er durch die kleine Pforte hereintrat; er drückte Charlotten die Hand und im Auge stand ihm eine Träne" (Goethe 15). When Eduard's friend the Captain arrives, he criticizes Charlotte's attempts, labeling them the work of a dilettante: "Es ist ihr, wie allen

denen, die sich mit solchen Dingen beschäftigen . . . man probiert, es gerät, es mißrät, man verändert, verändert vielleicht, was man lassen sollte, läßt, was man verändern sollte, und so bleibt es zuletzt immer ein Stückwerk, das gefällt und anregt, aber nicht befriedigt" (23). The Major and Eduard begin to involve themselves in replanning and remodeling the landscape garden. Even the retiring and domestic Otilie, when she joins the other three, is eventually drawn into these efforts. During a discussion concerning the construction of a new lodge, it is she who discovers the ideal location with the perfect "sentimental" view: "Die Aussicht auf die Teiche, nach der Mühle, auf die Höhen, in die Gebirge, nach dem Lande zu, ist außerordentlich schön" (58).

Ironically, although the landscape does assume the shape of an English sentimental garden under the concerted efforts of the four, it fails abysmally to achieve a morally educating effect. In fact, as Gail Finney points out in her study of the garden, The Counterfeit Idyll, "the English method of gardening . . . is closely bound up with the novel's catastrophe" (66). More often than not, the planning of the garden results in Charlotte and Eduard spending lengthy amounts of time away from each other. In addition, the open, "free" spaces of the garden invite the characters to lower their inhibitions. The emotions evoked by the "sentimental" views and scenes lead not to ethical enlightenment, but to desire, and, in Eduard's case, to extramarital passion. Even the Captain and Charlotte, usually paragons of control and virtue, succumb for an instant to the forces of nature. One evening on the lake, their boat runs adrift, and after the Captain has carried Charlotte to shore, the two briefly embrace and kiss. Later, the same lake "accommodates the passionate reunion of

Eduard and Otilie and is hence the indirect agent of the baby's drowning, and ultimately the mythical, natural realm claims as its victims Otilie and Eduard as well" (Finney 68). The emotional liberation offered by the garden thus leads to the dissolution of friendship and marital ties, to betrayal, and even to death, suggesting an inherent flaw in the freedom of the English style: without limits, whether they be those imposed by the laws of classical humanism or by the socially sanctioned institutions of marriage and the family, the powerful forces of nature and human nature can have deadly effects.

The conclusion of Die Wahlverwandtschaften prompts the question: is there a specific type of German landscape garden? This is a question that occupied Hirschfeld in the later volumes of his Theorie der Gartenkunst. In trying to introduce a German garden, Hirschfeld suggested privileged neither the English or the French model: "Wir wollen zwischen beyden Arten des herrschenden Geschmacks einen *Mittelweg* versuchen und sehen, wie weit wir auf demselben fortrücken können" (qtd. in Schepers 89). He was ultimately unable to resolve the issue of the German garden. Instead, he made general appeals to national consciousness, proposing that the German gardener include German inscriptions on the garden structures and erect statues of Germanic heroes (Schepers 91-92). Finney suggests that Die Wahlverwandtschaften proffers a model of gardening that would become dominant in nineteenth-century German literature. This "German" garden is implied during a conversation between Charlotte and the assistant, a young man who had been Otilie's instructor at school. The assistant predicts the return to an earlier, neoclassical style

of garden, one that synthesizes beauty and utility, art and nature. When Charlotte asks him whether he thinks that followers of the new, “free” English landscape style will ever be able to endure the restriction of the older, classical garden, he replies:

Warum nicht? . . . jeder Zustand hat seine Beschwerlichkeit, der beschränkte sowohl als der losgebundene. Der letztere setzt Überfluß voraus und führt zur Verschwendung . . . Sobald der Mangel eintritt, sogleich ist die Selbstbeschränkung wiedergegeben. Menschen, die ihren Grund und Boden zu nutzen genötigt sind, führen schon wieder Mauern um ihre Gärten auf, damit sie ihrer Erzeugnisse sicher seien. Daraus entsteht nach und nach eine neue Ansicht der Dinge. Das Nützliche erhält wieder die Oberhand, und selbst der Vielbesitzende meint zuletzt auch das alles nutzen zu müssen. (Goethe 186)

Goethe’s Die Wahlverwandtschaften thus gestures toward a garden different from the French or English, one embodying classical virtues of moderation, self-control, and utility.

#### 1.5 The Romantic Garden: Banishing and Controlling (Female) Nature

Die Wahlverwandtschaften does not simply reflect the aesthetic discourse surrounding landscaping in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. For in Goethe’s work, gender and the garden are inextricably linked. This connection is exemplified by the predominance of water in the landscape and the fatal role it plays in the novel. The gardeners’ attempts to control water, an element associated for centuries with the female, with unharnessed, potentially destructive sexuality, fails abysmally. The Captain warns against combining the three natural lakes into one large one, and his fears are confirmed on the night of Ottilie’s birthday celebration:



when one of the dams begins to crumble under the weight of the revelers, a young boy falls into the water and almost drowns. Following a daring rescue by the Captain, the boy is revived, but later the lake claims another victim. One late afternoon, Ottilie, who has been reading a romance while walking with Charlotte's baby beside the lake, is caught unawares by the sudden appearance of Eduard. After their parting, Ottilie, overwrought with emotion, hurries to return the child to the pavilion. The sun has gone down, and a mist rises above the waters in the twilight. The atmosphere mirrors Ottilie's own mental state: she is "verwirrt und bewegt," and does not realize that her heart is pounding and her legs shaking from the emotional reunion.<sup>3</sup> Forgetting Charlotte's warnings not to row across the lake with baby Otto, she leaps into the boat, stumbles, and drops both the child and her book into the water; despite her efforts to save it, the baby drowns.

Ottilie, who up to this point has taken a keen interest in the creation of the sentimental landscape, seems to realize that the feelings and passions it has induced have led to her "sin." She reveals her new awareness to Charlotte: "[I]ch bin aus meiner Bahn geschritten, ich habe meine Gesetze gebrochen . . . Auf eine schreckliche Weise hat Gott mir die Augen geöffnet, in welchem Verbrechen ich befangen bin. Ich will es büßen; und niemand gedenke mich von meinem Vorsatz abzubringen!" (232) The laws she has broken are clearly those of Christian moral behavior, and Ottilie atones for her transgression by renouncing her love for Eduard,

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<sup>3</sup> Goethe's use of the present tense in the scene serves to accelerate the action, further emphasizing Ottilie's haste and the suddenness of the tragedy.

retreating into silence, and slowly starving herself to death; Eduard dies soon afterward. That nature-induced feelings and emotions have led to these deaths underscores nature's more chaotic and perilous aspects.

The writers associated with the Romantic movement shared Goethe's respect for the dangerous forces of nature. Tieck, Brentano, Eichendorff and others were uncomfortable with the English landscape gardening style, finding that it expressed the chaos of nature more than its "freedom." Consequently, in their works, the garden tended to represent an area of "fröhliche[r] Faßbarkeit," in which nature appeared in predictable and controlled forms, as orderly flowerbeds or playful fountains (Thalmann 31). The Romantics envisioned their gardens as providing a place of escape from nature's capriciousness and unpredictability. In the framing stories to Tieck's Phantasmus, for example, the setting for the young people's discussions (of "Gartenkultur," among other topics) is a room opening out to a pleasant garden. Here the house and garden constitute "die beiden ichgeschaffenen und faßlichen Räume, in denen der Mensch zu Hause ist" (Thalmann 30).

The opening pages of Eichendorff's novella Das Marmorbild provide an example of the garden as an extension of the safe, cultivated, domestic realm. The main character, Florio, spends his first evening in the town in a public garden, in "eine[m] weiten, grünen Platz" planted with "blühenden Gebüsch" and "hohen Bäumen" (Eichendorff 190-91). Here he is surrounded by a lively company of knights and their gracious ladies, "lachend und plaudernd und mit den bunten Federn nickend im lauen Abendgolde wie ein Blumenbeet, das sich im Winde wiegt" (191).

The garden provides an area of safety from any natural (or supernatural) perils, but later in the novella Florio encounters a garden imbued with an altogether different atmosphere. After the festival in the public garden is over, the moonlight draws Florio away from the town into the surrounding landscape, where he discovers a marble statue of Venus. The next day, as he tries to find the statue again, he loses his way and happens upon the iron gate to a “Lustgarten.” When Florio passes through the gate, it is as if he has entered into a dream. Instead of the cheerful voices of knights and ladies he is met with an “Einsamkeit” whose “tiefe Stille” is broken only by the soft murmuring of countless fountains and the occasional nightingale, singing “wie im Schlummer fast schluchzend” (208). A beautiful lady – the Venus statue come to life – wanders through the garden, singing and playing her lyre, and the young man falls under her spell: “Florio stand in blühende Träume versunken, es war ihm, als hätte er die schöne Lautenspielerin schon lange gekannt und nur in der Zerstreuung des Lebens wieder vergessen und verloren, als ginge sie nun vor Wehmut zwischen dem Quellenrauschen unter und riefte ihn unaufhörlich, ihr zu folgen” (210).

The two manifestations of the garden image in Das Marmorbild – as a place of safety and Christian community, or as a realm of enchantment and pagan seduction, reflect Eichendorff’s philosophy of man’s relationship to nature as a whole. Like early Romantics such as Novalis, Eichendorff believed that his era in history was one marked by disunity and conflict, by the alienation of human beings from God and from nature. According to Eichendorff, nature, too, longs for redemption, for an

eventual return to harmony with humanity. Nature at this stage in history, however, cannot articulate this longing clearly. In the words of Alex Goodbody, “sie [die Natur] schläft, träumt vom Himmel und drückt ihre Ahnungen von einer Erlösung in der Endzeit und ihre Erinnerungen an ihren paradiesischen Ursprung in abgebrochenen, halbverständlichen Lauten aus” (126). It is all too easy to misinterpret these halting utterances. Only by recognizing that nature’s messages are veiled, or “verhüllt,” and by holding fast to Christian faith and ethics, can humans – and more specifically, men – avoid succumbing to nature’s purely sensual forces. The identification of female sexuality with the seductive and undermining forces of nature is a prominent theme in Eichendorff’s works and throughout the Romantic era (for example, in Brentano’s and later Heine’s poems about the “Lore Lay,” who lures men to their deaths with her beauty and enchanting voice).

#### 1.6 Trapped in House and Garden

The elements of safety and control are inherent to the Romantic garden, and they remain dominant themes in German literary depictions of the garden throughout the nineteenth century. This penchant for portraying the garden as a safe haven may be traced to the particularism that continued to characterize Germany during this period. Even after the Congress of Vienna in 1815, which attempted to consolidate the hundreds of territorial states, the new “German Confederation” still consisted of thirty-eight states (Fulbrook 101). The revolutions of 1848 failed to unify the

country, and although rapid economic growth did take place in the 1850s, Germany remained woefully behind its European neighbors in terms of industrial development until after its unification under Bismarck in 1871 (Fulbrook 122). As Gail Finney explains, “[w]ithout a national consciousness and the sense of participation in government which the individual enjoys in a democracy, the average German citizen tended to retreat into the private, provincial island of his home and family” (59).

Finney’s use of the masculine possessive pronoun “his” in the previous sentence is interesting, for it was the woman who was most strongly affected by the increasing focus on “home and family” in nineteenth-century Germany. The gender expectations of the time period in question stipulated that the ideal bourgeois woman be passive, selfless and unconditionally loving, completely dependent upon her husband and devoted to her family and the maintenance of the domestic sphere. Her husband, by comparison, was to be active, independent and reliable, bravely striving in an often hostile world to ensure material security for his family.

The late eighteenth century had marked a paradigm shift in the understanding of gender, marriage and the family, particularly for the middle class in Germany. In her article “Die Polarisierung der ‘Geschlechtercharaktere,’” Karin Hausen suggests that this shift resulted from Enlightenment striving to detect the reason and purpose behind all natural phenomena and relationships: “Der Geschlechtscharakter wird als eine Kombination von Biologie und Bestimmung aus der Natur abgeleitet und zugleich als Wesensmerkmal in das Innere der Menschen verlegt” (369-70). In other words, the characteristics and behaviors associated with the female and male could

now be justified “scientifically” as biologically determined. Following Rousseau’s misogynist lead, thinkers from Fichte to Darwin agreed that women were the “zweite Geschlecht,” a rung lower on the ladder of God’s creation. In the early 1800’s, the newly established field of “Gynäkologie” saw women’s very bodies as a text from which doctors and scientists could “read” female inferiority. In the words of Claudia Honegger, author of Die Ordnung der Geschlechter,

Schon der schwächere Körper *bedeutet* das schwächere Geistesvermögen, die weicheren Fibern weisen auf den weicheren Charakter hin. Die kleineren Lungen künden von der grösseren Furcht, die schlafferen Muskeln vom schlafferen Willen, der stete Wechsel der Geschlechtsverrichtungen kündigt von der Launenhaftigkeit, das Unvollkommene des Geschlechtsapparates vom Schamgefühl usw.” (206).

According to such “science,” God and nature had created woman as the weaker sex, imbuing her with characteristics that, in turn, dictated her place in society and in the family.<sup>4</sup>

These gender roles were codified in the literature of the nineteenth-century, most particularly in the popular genre of *Anstandsbücher*, or conduct books. Such

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<sup>4</sup> Just as eighteenth-century scientists sought to detect “natural” causes to validate gender roles, they also ascribed human gender characteristics to nature. A fascinating example of gendering nature is Carl Linnaeus’ system for determining the sexuality of plants. In addition to classifying male and female aspects of plants (stamens and pistils), Linnaeus anthropomorphized botanical sexual reproduction, and penned colorful descriptions of “vegetable coitus”: “The flowers’ leaves . . . serve as bridal beds which the Creator has so gloriously arranged, adorned with such noble bed curtains, and perfumed with so many soft scents that the bridegroom with his bride might there celebrate their nuptials with so much the greater solemnity. When now the bed is so prepared, it is time for the bridegroom to embrace his beloved bride and offer her his gifts” (Linnaeus, Praeludia sponsaliorum plantarum, section 16). See Londa Schiebinger, Nature’s Body 11-39 for further discussion of eighteenth-century investigations of plant sexuality.

books helped to further widen the gap between the outside world, the man's sphere of influence, and the home, the woman's domain. Their authors frequently employed botanical images to illustrate their points, comparing their female readers, for example, to delicate flowers. Elise Polko begins a section of "Unsere Pilgerfahrt von der Kinderstube bis zum eignen Herd" by quoting Heine's poem "Du bist wie eine Blume," followed by the words, "Dieser tiefpoetische Gedanke Heine's müßte in jeder Seele aufsteigen beim Anblick eines echten jungen Mädchens, jener halberschlossenen Rosenknospe im Garten der Menschheit" (169). Amely Bölte counsels her young readership to be content as "bescheiden[e] Veilchen," for a potential husband will surely choose a modest and unassuming bride rather than the "duftende, prangende königliche Rose," whose beauty hides the flaws of "Eitelkeit" and "Selbstliebe" ("Mädchenerziehung" 112-113). Christian Wilhelm Spieker, a theologian writing "Über weibliche Würde und Bestimmung," connects women with plants and nature, as well as the garden: "Die Frauen wachsen und blühen wie die Pflanzen, still und unbemerkt, nach immer gleichem Gesetze, schmücken Gärten, Wiesen und Wälder, erfüllen die Luft mit lieblichem Duft, und fesseln Auge und Herz durch ihre Schönheit und Anmuth." (58) Like Bölte, Spieker advises his female readers to emulate the modesty and reticence of the flowers, to be passive and decorative, and to remain appropriately confined within their "gardens"; in other words, to behave according to the "natural laws" of gender.

## 1.7 The Gendered Gardens of Stifter and Fontane

As illustrated by the examples of both “high” and “low” literature in the previous two sections, the garden is a landscape that has everything to do with gender. The association of not only women but also men with specific gender roles and expectations is especially evident in the gardens examined in this study – the gardens of Stifter’s Brigitta and Der Nachsommer, and of Fontane’s Irrungen, Wirungen and Effi Briest. Stifter’s tendency to set his stories in rural areas and his penchant for well-ordered, cultivated landscapes makes the garden image a logical focus of study. The choice of Fontane seems less obvious. The settings of Fontane’s works are almost universally urban. The North German writer is renowned for his Berlin novels, in which practically the only mention of nature is the “Landpartie,” where city-dwellers flock to the country for amusement and escape.<sup>5</sup> As a writer, Fontane tended to concern himself with people, with modern society, not landscape descriptions.

Yet in the two Fontane works focused upon in this study, the garden is as central a motif as it is in Stifter’s Brigitta und Der Nachsommer. And a closer examination of the two authors reveals that the differences between them are not as extreme as they might seem at first glance. Stifter was born in rural Bohemia, and his

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<sup>5</sup> Per critic Werner Hollmann: “In the works of Fontane nature does not play an important role and remains rather inconspicuous. One is not likely to recall emphatic nature descriptions, evocations of mood, or changes in the landscape in his major novels” (237).



works reflect the deep religiosity and awe of nature that marked his childhood. He was a landscape painter, and the landscape descriptions that dominate his writings have the effect of “Bilder,” static images captured by the artist’s (or observer’s) eye. Fontane, though not a painter, did spend many years as an art critic for various journals, and the nature scenes depicted in his works are remarkably similar to Stifter’s landscapes in their pictorial effect.<sup>6</sup> In the works of Stifter as well as Fontane, landscapes – whether gardens or lakes or mountains – reflect the thoughts and feelings, conscious or unconscious, of the characters. The two authors are also similar in terms of their willingness to focus on everyday, “mundane” life: the four works in this study are characterized not by dramatic events, but by life’s more common “little” joys and sorrows. Stifter and Fontane seemed to share a similar view of “Großes” and “Kleines.” Stifter’s words in the famous “Vorrede” to *Bunte Steine* (1852) – “Großes oder Kleines zu bilden hatte ich bei meinen Schriften überhaupt nie im Sinne, ich wurde von ganz anderen Gesezen<sup>7</sup> geleitet” (9) – are echoed over thirty

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<sup>6</sup> Hubert Ohl examines the images in Fontane’s works in his article “Bilder, die die Kunst stellt. Die Landschaftsdarstellung in den Romanen Theodor Fontanes.” As Ohl explains, “[h]inter der scheinbaren Naturtreue seiner [Fontanes] Landschaften verbirgt sich eine ästhetische Zurichtung der Natur: nicht die Kunst will hier Natur werden, sondern die Natur wird Kunst. Sie wird zu einem Bild, das menschliches Erleben spiegelt” (454).

<sup>7</sup> In this study, as in the critical editions consulted, Stifter’s original spelling, “Gesez,” has been retained. In many other words, the consonants “tz” have been replaced by “z” (i.e., “Kazensilber”).

years later in a letter of Fontane to his wife Emily: “Ich behandle das Kleine mit derselben Liebe wie das Große, weil ich den Unterschied zwischen klein und groß nicht recht gelten laße” (FB 3: 278).

Both writers reacted to the problems that dominated the latter half of the nineteenth century: rapid industrialization, the rise of cities, and increasingly dramatic social changes. Fontane did so more explicitly (focusing, for example, on the various types of repression under the rigid militaristic Prussian regime). Stifter's criticism of modernity was accomplished in a more indirect manner, by deliberate omission. In his writings, Stifter ignores modern life, positing idealized, preindustrial rural utopias.<sup>8</sup> For Stifter and Fontane, the garden topos serves not only as a realm removed from the problems of modernity, but also as a locus to examine issues of individuation. The garden is, or seems to be, a private place, set off and protected from the public (i.e., social) sphere of influence. In all four works examined in this study, however, the walls surrounding the garden prove to be either illusory or flawed, for at least one social “issue” invades this isolated space: gender.

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<sup>8</sup> As Hoffmann points out, even the urban settings of Fontane's works tend to be somewhat anachronistic. “Fontane's Berlin, as he created it in his novels, did not reflect the rapid economic, social and technical changes it had undergone in the last three decades of the nineteenth century” (237).

The garden<sup>9</sup> in Stifter's writings has been the subject of a fair amount of commentary and interpretation, and some analyses have focused on gender issues.<sup>10</sup> Both themes have also received attention in critical explorations of Fontane's Irrungen Wirrungen and Effi Briest. With very few exceptions, though, critics have not combined the garden and gender, as I do in this study. Applying a methodology in which I supplement close reading with a historical-cultural approach, I employ feminist and gender theory to ground my analysis. I support my interpretations with references to letters and essays by Stifter and Fontane (and, of course, to the wealth of existing secondary literature and historical and biographical information).

In each of the subsequent chapters, I focus on the gendered garden in a different work, examining the novels in the order of their publication: Brigitta (1847), Der Nachsommer (1857), Irrungen, Wirrungen (1888), and Effi Briest (1895). My analysis of the "gendered" garden occurs on two levels. I do focus on images and aspects of the specific literary gardens as gendered. The rose and cactus in Risach's

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<sup>9</sup> In the works of Stifter examined in this study, the gardens at issue must, technically, be defined as parks. Brigitta's immense "garden" exhibits aspects of the English style; for example, it contains within its confines a deer park. That the entire property is surrounded by walls, however, imbues it with the qualities of safety and protection inherent to the garden topos. Similarly, the extensive gardens in Der Nachsommer provide a safe haven. The function of the land surrounding Risach's also argues for its consideration as a garden – though extensive, the area is dedicated to the cultivation of flowers, vegetables and fruit.

<sup>10</sup> See, among others: Lorenz, "Stifters Frauengestalten" 93-106; Schmidt, "Adalbert Stifters Nachsommer: Subjektive Idealität. Heinrich Drendorfs Subjektkonstitution im Spiegel seiner Selbstdefinition" 81-104; Selge, "Stifters Kaktus" 38-52; and Sjögren, "The Allure of Beauty in Adalbert Stifter's Brigitta" 47-54.

garden in Der Nachsommer, for example, clearly convey sexual significance, as do the lake, the fig leaves and the gooseberries in Effi Briest's garden. For the most part, however, I examine the garden as a gendered space, a place where societal or personal projections of gender roles and expectations are at play. In Stifter's and Fontane's works, the garden – whether as Horatian "beatus ille," garden of love, Eden, or paradise lost – becomes a frame for nature and gender.

Chapter One focuses on Brigitta, a work which on the surface appears to exemplify the Stifterian well-ordered agrarian utopia. I argue, however, that this early novella calls into question the interpretation of the garden as a Biedermeier "beatus ille," dedicated to the control of nature and the maintenance of the traditional family structure. For the garden in Brigitta is created and maintained by an abandoned woman, a fact that turns accepted gender roles of the Biedermeier on their head.

In Chapter Two, the exquisitely landscaped and controlled garden of the Nachsommer epitomizes the garden as patriarchal ethical construct. At first glance, the main female characters in the work, Mathilde and Natalie, seem to be merely extensions of the perfect garden. Yet through closer examination of the text, I link Stifter's portrayal of his ideal female (and male) characters as sexless or androgynous to the author's fear of passion and overt sexuality as manifestations of nature's more destructive, uncontrollable forces.

Turning to Fontane in the final two chapters, I examine the garden as an oasis of safety and freedom outside of authoritarian societal restrictions. In Irrungen, Wirungen, the little garden on the outskirts of Berlin is a garden of love, where Lene and Botho may escape the demands of class and society. In Effi Briest, the grounds at Effi's childhood home of Hohen-Cremmen hearken back to an almost Edenic innocence, mirroring Effi's own naiveté and naturalness. The gardens in Fontane's works are fragile and ultimately ineffectual refuges. Lene's and Botho's garden of love ultimately cannot withstand the strictures of class and gender, and they are driven from their haven. Fontane's "Naturkind," Effi, is thrust into a marriage for which she is unprepared and ill-suited, and her surrender to natural passions eventually leads to her expulsion from the Edenic garden of her childhood home. Paradise cannot be regained: in the final scene of Effi Briest the two elderly parents sit quietly in the garden, near the grave of their only child.

## CHAPTER 2

### *DER GARTEN IN DER WÜSTE: BRIGITTA*

#### 2.1 The Garden of Childhood

In the earliest account of Stifter's life, recorded in a posthumously discovered autobiographical fragment, the author recalls breaking a window as a child and cutting his hand. Of this event he remembers only "Klingen, Verwirrung, Schmerz" (NB 1292). But he reports after the accident a memory of startling clarity, a memory of a garden.

[D]ann war ein Bild, das so klar vor mir jetzt dasteht, als wäre es in reinlichen Farben auf Porzellan gemalt. Ich stand in dem Garten, der von damals zuerst in meiner Einbildungskraft ist, die Mutter war da, dann die andere Großmutter, deren Gestalt in jenem Augenblicke auch zum ersten Male in mein Gedächtnis kam, in mir war die Erleichterung, die alle Male auf das Weichen des Entsetzlichen und Zugrunderichtenden folgte, und ich sagte, "Mutter, da wächst ein Kornhalm." (1292)

The scene is characterized by extremes. After the pain and fear of the accident, when the child is overwhelmed by devastating fear ("Entsetzlichen, Zugrunderichtenden") he finds comfort when his mother bandages his hands. In the garden, however, when the young Adalbert notices the "Kornhalm," his grandmother declares coldly, "Mit einem Knaben, der die Fenster zerschlagen hat, redet man nicht" (1292), and neither

she nor the mother responds to the boy. As a child, he is unable to make the connection between action and punishment, but he does experience the pain of being ignored: “[E]in ganz Ungeheures [lag] auf meiner Seele . . . , das mag der Grund sein, daß jener Vorgang noch jetzt in meinem Innern lebt” (1292-93).

The event in the garden is the author’s first clear memory, for up to this point in the fragment the writer’s recollections have been nebulous, comprised of “Glanz und Farben” (NB 1291).<sup>1</sup> As a very young child he could not distinguish between the specific figures in his life, only the difference between unhappiness and appeasement. That which provided comfort he identified as “Mam,” an amalgam of familiar and soothing eyes, arms, and voice. The scene in the garden is thus significant because it is the first time Stifter remembers differentiating the figures of mother and grandmother. The garden memory also illustrates the author’s sensitivity to strong, debilitating emotions. The feelings of shame and isolation as a result of having broken with a moral code – here, one of which he was completely unaware – are overwhelming. He is no longer an ego-driven child who must simply cry to receive comfort. From this point forward, he realizes his actions (whether he is “good” or “bad”) will determine how others respond to him.

The garden scene is part of a progression in terms of Stifter’s perception of the external world. From nebulous impressions of light and sound (“Glanz” and “Klänge”), and the inability to distinguish between himself and his surroundings (the

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<sup>1</sup> Early in the fragment, for example, Stifter recalls a trek through the nearby forest. At this point he could not even distinguish between himself and the surrounding woods, and experienced the trees as “dunkle Flecke in mir” (1292).

scene in the forest), the writer's vision becomes clearer as he moves closer to the domestic realm. The garden represents the type of nature Stifter elevated above all – cultivated nature. In the next memory recounted in "Mein Leben," the child is no longer in nature, but in the house, the kitchen, where he admires the festively decorated Easter table. The young Adalbert observes the outside world through the window, thus distancing himself from a direct experience with nature.<sup>2</sup>

The garden in Stifter's childhood and in his literary works may be seen as representing a middle ground between uncultivated nature – the amorphous forest trees of the author's earliest memories, those dark forms of nature whose wildness, or "dunkle Flecke," can be found in the human soul – and the cozy interior of the Biedermeier household, where decorum and order rule, and where nature can be observed through the safety and distance of the window. Throughout his life and particularly in his writings, Stifter struggled with the two extremes, the wild (nature's – and human nature's – unpredictable and uncontrollable forces) and the domesticated. The garden memory in "Mein Leben" illustrates the young Stifter's sudden awareness of the devastating consequences of succumbing to "wildness." In the garden scene both the unreflecting, "natural" act of breaking the window and the subsequent punishment by Adalbert's mother and grandmother have the same negative impact – physical and mental pain.<sup>3</sup> As we will see in the two works in this

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<sup>2</sup> This distancing presages the writer's later works, in which he frequently described natural phenomena through the lens of art or science.

<sup>3</sup> In this scene, the two women serve as representatives of societal and moral expectations and rules.



study, Brigitta and Nachsommer, for Stifter the garden becomes an area of quiet conflict. Here he and his characters attempt to harness the passionate, potentially dangerous forces of nature through societal codes of morality and expected behavior.

## **2.2 Keeping up Appearances**

Adalbert Stifter was born on October 23, 1805, in the small Bohemian town of Oberplan. Son of a weaver and sometime farmer, Adalbert was the oldest of six children. Oberplan was located in a heavily forested, mountainous area, and its remote location insured its inhabitants' safety from Napoleon's devastating military campaigns in Austria. As Peter A. Schoenborn writes in his biography of Stifter, the town had little contact with the outside world: "Der Wechsel der Jahreszeiten, jahrhundertealte Bräuche und die katholische Kirche regelten das Leben der dort ansässigen deutschsprachigen Bauern und Gewerbetreibenden, für die Treue zum habsburgischen Kaiserhaus und konservativ-patriarchalischen Gesinnung selbstverständlich waren" (2). Readers and scholars familiar with the Austrian author will recognize in Schoenborn's description the setting for the majority of Stifter's works.

Oberplan may have remained untouched by the disruptive events of the outside world, but the child Stifter did encounter tragedy in his early years. A younger sister died in infancy, and his father was killed in an accident when Stifter was twelve years old. The young boy left school to help support his family by

working with his paternal grandfather in the fields. He might have remained there, had not his intelligence already been recognized in his early years at school. At the advice of his schoolteacher and the assistance of his maternal grandfather, Adalbert was sent to the Benedictine monastery of Kremsmünster to continue his education. Stifter excelled in his studies, and after completion of secondary school in 1826, he entered the university in Vienna. There he studied law, and helped to support himself by working as a tutor for a number of well-respected families.

In the summer of 1828, Stifter met and fell in love with Franziska (Fanny) Greipl, the daughter of a successful merchant. From the beginning, class differences troubled the courtship, and Stifter's earliest love letters reveal his doubts and insecurities about the relationship. Stifter's missives to Fanny are confusing and often contradictory, already marked by the author's difficulty in harmonizing sexual attraction and desire with his idealized concept of passionless love, *agape*. Stifter declares his undying affection for Fanny, but he makes frequent asides in which he either questions their love ("Ich weiß es ja, es ist nur ein liebliches Phantom, es ist nur ein Kartenhaus, an dem ich mich so sehr ergötze" [SB 5]) or dilutes it by elevating his loving sentiments for their mutual group of friends:

Für jeden Menschen von Bildung und feinem Gefühle ist es ein inniges Lebensbedürfnis, sein Herz an andere Menschen anzuhängen, die er lieben, mit denen er in herzlichem Verkehre leben kann. Darum ist es mir bei Euch so wohl, weil ich weiß, daß Ihr mir alle gut seid, und weil ich das selige Gefühl genießen kann, Euch recht von Herzen lieben zu dürfen. (SB 5)

The relationship with Fanny thus sheds light on Stifter's often perplexing portrayal of love in his literary works.

Stifter's correspondence with Fanny continued for almost nine years, during which time the young man lost focus and drive and eventually dropped the study of law. When he entered into a relationship with Amalie Mohaupt, a seamstress, he found himself, in the words of Schoenborn, in the classic situation "des zwischen zwei Frauen stehenden Mannes . . . , eines Mannes, der zwischen der himmlischen und der irdischen Liebe hin und herschwankt" (28). Stifter eventually opted for earthly love, although he continued to pine for Fanny, writing her even after becoming engaged to Amalie.

The failure or success of Stifter's marriage is not at issue here. Martin and Erika Swales offer a concise and intriguing analysis of the author's relationship with Amalie, exploring the conflicts that necessarily arose due to the couple's differences in education and interests. Amalie was the daughter of a lower army officer, and though she was beautiful, the general consensus among critics is that she did not understand her husband's work or aspirations as a writer. Yet, as the Swales point out, "it has been suggested that Amalia [sic.], precisely because she was a woman of few intellectual and imaginative gifts, was able to channel and fulfill Stifter's powerful sexuality, in the sense that he could only find physical release with a partner whom he could not respect intellectually" (6). In any case, Stifter's earliest published work – Der Condor – appeared within three years of the couple's 1837 marriage.

After the tumultuous years of brooding and frustration that marked his relationship with Fanny, Stifter's life as a writer is comparatively staid, even boring. He continued to work as a private tutor while devoting himself to his writing (the

Studien, among them Brigitta, first appeared in 1844). In 1850 Stifter was appointed to a position as Inspector of Primary Schools in Upper Austria, a position he occupied for much of the rest of his life. He rarely traveled beyond the borders of the Austro-Hungarian empire, but devoted himself to his beloved art, painting landscapes and involving himself in efforts to restore damaged altars and wood carvings in Austrian churches. His was certainly a life of disappointments, of personal tragedy, but not a life marked by adventure or change. It was, instead, a life characterized by the author's desire to "keep up appearances." Stifter's success in this endeavor is illustrated by his reception by subsequent generations as the ultimate Biedermeier poet.

Yet extreme conflict lay beneath the veneer of Biedermeier respectability. Stifter's life, despite its external predictability, continued to reflect his difficulty in integrating situations or events that he perceived as clashing with his own rigid ideals of morality and appropriate behavior. This is illustrated by the writer's reaction to the failed revolution of 1848. At first, Stifter was elated, filled with hope for change, but he quickly became disillusioned by the violence and turmoil of the revolution, and ultimately denounced the entire effort. One observes the same see-sawing in Stifter's changing attitude toward his position as school inspector. Though initially excited by the reforms and improvements he envisioned effecting, Stifter became increasingly dissatisfied. Frustrated by the bureaucracy and the recognition that no change would occur under the "reformed" government, he complained in letters that the job was too draining and that it took too much time away from his writing. Once again, ideals

and expectations did not match actuality. Perhaps Stifter's greatest failure, demonstrating his ultimate inability to harmonize reality and theory, occurred with the adoption of Amalie's niece, Julie. The adoption proved disastrous. Amalie apparently beat the girl, and after disappearing for nearly five weeks in 1859, Julie was found drowned in the Danube. Stifter was faced with the realization that he had failed abysmally as both father and "Erzieher."<sup>4</sup>

The writer's messy suicide is well-known (due to the pain of advanced cirrhosis, he slit his own throat with a razor on January 26, 1868), but Stifter struggled with depression, anxiety, and mood swings throughout his life. Wolfgang Matz writes that the death of Stifter's father was devastating for the young boy, not just because of the loss of parent and breadwinner, but because of the cruel arbitrariness of the event. "Die Erfahrung des Todes, der Brutalität, mit welcher ein junger, kräftiger Mensch aus dem Dasein gerissen wird und ins Nichts verschwindet, diese Erfahrung beendete die Kindheit" (Stifter 34). We see this internal conflict regarding the randomness of events in Stifter's attitude toward nature. In the "Vorrede" to Stifter's 1853 Bunte Steine, the author professed his belief that nature is ruled by a benevolent, divine law, a "sanftes Gesez." Stifter argued that the power behind nature's gentler manifestations (the rustling of the wind, the growing of the grain, the shining of the stars) is far greater than that behind events such as thunderstorms, volcanoes and earthquakes: "[I]ch halte [diese Erscheinungen] für

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<sup>4</sup> The latter, as we will witness in Der Nachsommer, was a role Stifter elevated above all others.

kleiner, weil sie nur Wirkungen viel höherer Gesetze sind. Sie kommen auf einzelnen Stellen vor, und sind die Ergebnisse einseitiger Ursachen" (BSV 10). Yet the author was aware (particularly as the son of a sometime farmer, growing up in rural Bohemia) that such events, however "small," could destroy lives and livelihoods. The much-quoted "Vorrede" represents an attempt to explain the wilder, more dangerous forces of nature (and human nature) within a philosophical system. As we shall see, the same impulse is in evidence in the author's early novella, Brigitta.

### 2.3 "Das widersinnige Weib"

*Denn was könnte es Widersinnigeres geben, als wenn ein Weib dem zarten Sinn der Weiblichkeit, der ihr Geschlecht adelt, entsagt . . . und männliche Gewohnheiten annimmt?*

From a nineteenth-century *Anstandsbuch*<sup>5</sup>

In her 1984 study of literary gardens, The Counterfeit Idyll, Gail Finney analyzes the garden image as it appeared in the nineteenth-century fiction of France, England, and Germany. Finney links the garden image prevalent in nineteenth-century German fiction, the garden as "ethical construct," to the *beatus ille*, or "happy man" topos. Here, the garden hearkens back to the idealized farm life described in Horace's second Epode:

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<sup>5</sup> Caroline S.J. Milde, "Beruf und Frauenemanzipation," Bildung und Kultur bürgerlicher Frauen 1850-1918, ed. Günter Häntzchel (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1986) 263.

Happy the man who, far away from business cares,  
like the pristine race of mortals, works his  
ancestral acres with his steers.<sup>6</sup>

In the German literary works analyzed in Finney's study – Goethe's Die Wahlverwandtschaften, Immermann's Die Epigonen, Stifter's Nachsommer, and Ludwig's Zwischen Himmel und Erde – the garden is a tranquil agrarian refuge, devoted to the classical principles of moderation and virtue and to the maintenance of the patriarchal family structure. A closer examination of the gardens in Stifter's writings, however, specifically in his early novella Brigitta, yields a far more complex interpretation. Applying the lens of gender to the work calls into serious question the identification of the garden in Brigitta as a Biedermeier *beatus ille*.

In Brigitta, we do find reference to the Horatian model. When the young narrator first tours the estate of his friend the "major," he is struck by the older man's efforts to tame the wild landscape: "Die Einsamkeit und Kraft dieser Beschäftigungen erinnerte mich häufig an die alten schönen Römer, die den Landbau auch so sehr geliebt hatten" (437). But if in Brigitta, as in Stifter's later masterpiece Der Nachsommer, we find a mode of agriculture dedicated to the control of nature and the maintenance of the patriarchal family structure, what are we to make of the work's central character? For the creator of the first garden in the work, the figure who transforms the wasteland of the Hungarian steppes into a blossoming, fertile farm, is a woman. And to make matters even more interesting, Brigitta is an

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<sup>6</sup> The original Latin reads: "Beatus ille qui procul negotiis,/ ut prisca gens mortalium,/ paterna rura bobus exercet suis . . ." (qtd. in Finney 50).

abandoned woman, afflicted by a variety of challenges. She is physically unprepossessing (“häßlich,” in the words of the narrator), she has grown up in an environment of callous indifference, and she has been betrayed by her husband, the one person who – at least at first – seemed to be able to see beyond her appearance. Yet despite all of these deficiencies, Brigitta perseveres and even flourishes, demonstrating a strength that flies in the face of the nineteenth-century ideal of the acquiescent and primarily ornamental female.

In this sense, Brigitta would seem to lend itself perfectly to the goals of early feminist interpretation: the work presents a central female character who, in her subversion of gender roles and expectations, is protofeminist. From her birth, Brigitta fails to fulfill her society’s concept of the “feminine.” As we learn in the novella’s third chapter, “Steppenvergangenheit,” Brigitta was not a pretty baby. She is compared to a demon changeling – she lies “in dem schönen goldenen Prunkbettchen in den schneeweißen Linnen,” the cradle of a princess in a fairy tale, yet she stares out at the world “mit einem nicht angenehmen verdüsterten Gesichtchen, gleichsam als hätte es ein Dämon angehaucht” (446). From the very beginning, Brigitta is dark and unattractive, and her own mother turns away from her, preferring the two older sisters, “zwei kleine schöne Engel” (446). Psychologically, the early rejection by her mother is arguably the most significant and devastating event of the young girl’s life. Stifter uses botanical imagery to emphasize Brigitta’s increasing isolation and to explain her refusal to accept her mother’s belated attempts at affection: “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 Herzens schlagen mußten, und da trotzen” (447).

Brigitta’s “klein[e] Würzlein” find no fertile soil in her loveless surroundings, and as she grows, the girl remains an outsider. With the years, as her sisters grow ever more beautiful and feminine, Brigitta stands out like a “fremde Pflanze” (B 448), a weed in the garden. Where her sisters show the appropriate interest in pretty dresses, an indifferent Brigitta soils and rips her clothes. As a teenager, she manifests a proclivity toward “male” pursuits. Instead of learning to dance or play a musical instrument, she rides her horse “gut und kühn, wie ein Mann,” and takes up “knechtliche Arbeit,” working until she actually sweats with the effort (B 448). Her body, too, exhibits male form and strength: “Die Schwestern waren weich und schön geworden, sie blos schlank und stark” (448). Brigitta’s embrace of “male” activities may be seen as an attempt to find some gender definition or stability. She sees that she is not beautiful, and senses from her mother’s rejection that she cannot fit within the “female” domain. But if Brigitta’s forays into traditionally male pursuits are an attempt to enter the realm of her father, they are doomed to failure. As a young child, Brigitta is completely ignored by her father, despite her attempts to penetrate his

world by stealing into his study to read his books. Later, when the “Jungfrau” Brigitta refuses to enter the “Gesellschaftszimmer” and join her sisters and prospective beaus, her father beats her.<sup>7</sup>

Throughout her childhood and teenage years Brigitta exhibits mannerisms associated with the male sex. And, in fact, throughout the majority of her adult life Brigitta continues to be a “widersinniges Weib.” She does, for a short time, take on society’s prescribed female role, marrying and bearing a child, obeying her husband and caring for their household. After learning of her husband’s brief flirtation with a young neighbor, however, she divorces him and returns to her earlier ways. Donning men’s clothing and riding among her workers, she takes control of her own estate. Abandoning the woman’s limited sphere of the house, she approaches her fellow landowners and establishes with them a “Bund,” a federation. When the narrator’s older friend, the major, settles in the area, he, too, becomes a member of this federation. At meetings of the “Bund,” the members discuss not only agricultural techniques, but also economic and political issues (at the time, such topics were considered to be a male preserve). In her newfound homeland, Brigitta’s “manly” behavior is not chastised, but admired. Her workers respect and obey her, and the neighboring landowners follow her example and ask her advice. Shortly before the major and the narrator make a visit to Brigitta’s estate, the older man declares, “Sie

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<sup>7</sup> This is actually one of the very few instances in which Brigitta receives any attention – albeit negative – from a parent. Gerda Wesenauer writes that, in addition to Brigitta’s mother’s ambivalence, “[a]uch der Vater schien kein wirkliches Interesse für die jüngste Tochter zu haben . . . . Brigitta bekam also keine Zuwendung, nicht einmal Tadel. Gleichgültigkeit der Umwelt aber ist am schwersten zu ertragen” (61).

werden in meiner Nachbarin Marosheli das herrlichste Weib auf dieser Erde kennen lernen" (B 442). In the major's eyes, Brigitta's adoption of masculine ways in no way diminishes her – or makes her less of a woman.

## 2.4 Transcending Gender?

The choices Brigitta makes after she divorces her husband represent not only a break with her time period's gender expectations, but suggest a transcension of gender itself. Though she may dress and act like a man, Brigitta also becomes the consummate mother, both of her son and of the stony Hungarian steppes. Alone with her son, she becomes a creative figure of almost cosmic proportions. The language describing Brigitta's transformation of the wasteland into a garden is reminiscent of a mythical recounting of the original creation of the world: "Diese Seele griff immer weiter um sich, der Himmel des Erdschaffens senkte sich in sie; grüne Hügel schwellten sich, Quellen rannen, Reben flüsterten, und in das öde Steinfeld war ein kraftvoll weiterschreitend Heldenlied gedichtet" (461). In this passage, gender distinction is blurred – as Brigitta's soul expands, it creates a theater for the simultaneous "penetration" of the earth, of the "Seele" of the mother by the "Himmel des Erdschaffens." The result is a combination of nature (a realm traditionally

associated with female forces) and poetry (a talent usually attributed to the male realm).<sup>8</sup> Through this act of transformation, Brigitta creates beauty and fertility in the wasteland and finally comes to appreciate and value herself. Abandoned by husband, rejected by family and society, and, yes, “ugly,” Brigitta nonetheless manages to create and become a new Eden.

Despite Brigitta’s ability to overcome many of the gender roles and expectations of the time, closer examination of the work reveals that Stifter’s main character is, in many respects, still defined by these prescribed roles. Stifter clearly denigrates Brigitta’s shallow sisters and, in the words of critic Dagmar Lorenz, “[d]ie gesellschaftlichen Machenschaften, die junge Leute zwecks der Partnerschaft zusammenführen sollen, die größeren Gesellschaften, die junge Frauen zu Schaustücken machen” (98). Yet Brigitta’s life follows the expected narrative of the nineteenth-century woman – she marries and produces progeny for her husband. And, at least according to the narrator, the high point of the novella is not the transformation of the wasteland into a garden, but Brigitta’s reunion with her husband. Only in forgiveness, in reconciliation, and most specifically, in the reestablishment of the family unit does the novella’s heroine overcome her true handicap, her ugliness: “Nun hob sie, noch in Thränen schimmernd, die Augen – und

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<sup>8</sup> In her article “The Allure of Beauty in Stifter’s Brigitta,” Christine Oertel Sjögren examines Brigitta’s transcendence of traditional gender roles. Of the narrator’s first encounter with Brigitta, Sjögren writes: “Standing before the setting sun, “[e]mblazoned with light, . . . this male-garbed female on horseback brings to mind a dual-sexed nature deity, whose entry upon the narrator’s field of vision brings forth luxuriant fecundity in a landscape heretofore bleak and arid” (51).

so herrlich ist das Schönste, was der arme, fehlende Mensch hienieden vermag, das Verzeihen – daß mir ihre Züge wie in unnachahmlicher Schönheit strahlten” (472).

Another aspect of Brigitta’s character that conforms to expectations for women of the nineteenth century is her “purity.” For though physical ugliness is acceptable for a heroine, promiscuity, or even sexual interest, would be unthinkable. In “Steppenvergangenheit” Stifter emphasizes Brigitta’s chastity. After the ball when Murai shows interest in her Brigitta does not abandon herself to romantic fantasies, but weeps over a children’s picture “auf dem dargestellt war, wie sich ein Bruder für den andern opfere” (452). Brigitta’s image of ideal love is thus selfless and sexless *agape*. Stifter describes the young woman in a way that emphasizes her innocence: “[Sie] saß . . . noch auf der Erde vor dem Spiegeltische, gleichsam wie ein ausgeweintes Kind und sann. Es lagen die Hände in dem Schooße, die Schleifen und Krausen des Nachtgewandes waren feucht, und hingen ohne Schönheit um den keuschen Busen” (453). Stifter renders the potentially erotic image of the wet nightgown clinging to the young woman’s body sexless: even Brigitta’s breasts are “keusch.”

This emphasis marks a departure from Stifter’s original portrayal of his heroine. At a few points in this version of the novella,<sup>9</sup> Stifter’s narrative undermines this image of Brigitta as the properly asexual heroine. As Murai shows Brigitta more and more attention, Stifter describes the young woman’s reaction in prose that hints – though not explicitly – at the sexual nature of her growing feelings: “Auch an ihr

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<sup>9</sup> I refer to the 1847 “Buchfassung” of Brigitta.

begann nun die dunkle Macht und die Größe des Gefühles in der verarmten Seele zu zittern" (454). In the earlier "Journalfassung" of the novella, which appeared in 1843, Brigitta clearly has sexual feelings. Her early encounters with Murai are emotionally charged, particularly the scene where the two lovers meet on the balcony. Here, in contrast to the later version, Murai's actual words are not reported. This omission reflects the fact that Brigitta is, in this instance, completely overwhelmed by her passionate feelings for Stephan; she cannot take in his words, only the sound of his voice. Brigitta's first kiss is also reported differently: in this earlier version of the novella the young woman throws her arms around Stephan and "empfang den Kuß des heißgeliebten Mannes" (241). By the "Buchfassung," Brigitta has become a far more passive recipient of Murai's kiss: "[D]a er ihre Hand faßte, sie sanft gegen sich ziehend, widerstand sie nicht, und da er sein Angesicht immer mehr gegen sie neigte, und sie seine Lippen plötzlich auf den ihrigen empfand, drückte sie süß entgegen" (454).

Finally, in our questioning of Brigitta's "transcension" of gender, we must look at the circumstances surrounding the transformation both of herself and the bleak Hungarian steppes. This metamorphosis, as Stifter makes clear, only takes place after Brigitta has embraced the "ultimate" feminine role, that of mother. True, her son's birth takes place earlier, while her marriage is still intact, but it is not until Brigitta is abandoned that she devotes herself totally to motherhood. Her own mother shunned and ignored her, but Brigitta "nahm . . . jetzt . . . ihr größtes Gut, das sie hatte, nach Marosheli mit, ihren Sohn, pflegte und hüthete ihn, und ihr Auge hing einzig und

allein über dem Bettchen desselben" (461). Her son Gustav, who, in typical Stifterian fashion, is androgynously beautiful, is his mother's crowning achievement in life. Brigitta's "thätige, schaffende, heischende Seele" is the direct result of the connection with her son – only when "sein kleines Auge und sein Herz sich erweiterte, that es auch das ihre mit" (461).

## 2.5 Taming the Wasteland

None of the above points are intended to minimize Brigitta's achievements. After all, even after the reconciliation scene Murai continues to live with Brigitta at her estate, "von wo der Major im Sinne hatte, Brigitta nie fort zu ziehen, weil sie da in Mitte ihrer Schöpfung sei" (475). This "Schöpfung" is indeed impressive when the reader considers the external hurdles Brigitta has had to face in addition to an hostile natural environment: a loveless childhood, betrayal by her husband, and single motherhood. But her transformation gains even greater significance upon closer examination of the "Wüste," for the wasteland is a symbol with which Brigitta is inextricably linked.

The image of the "Wüste" is introduced before the reader ever encounters Brigitta, for as the narrator makes his way across the barren Hungarian steppes to visit the major, he ponders the setting of his first encounter with his friend, the wasteland landscape of Vesuvius. But the rich significance of the wasteland comes into focus in the "Steppenvergangenheit" chapter. In the first paragraph of the

narrator's recounting of Brigitta's story, in a discourse about the theme of beauty, he reports: "Oft wird die Schönheit nicht gesehen, weil sie in der Wüste ist, oder weil das rechte Auge nicht gekommen ist" (445-46). Considering that the entire focus of the "Steppenvergangenheit" chapter is Brigitta, the reader may assume that, in addition to beauty, the wasteland will be an integral concept in her narrative. This assumption is supported by the early pages of "Steppenvergangenheit," when Stifter, after detailing Brigitta's rejection of – and by – her own mother, writes the following phrase: "So ward die Wüste immer größer" (447). This passage marks the first of many times in his novella that Stifter directly compares his heroine, or her circumstances, to the wasteland.

The metaphor of the wasteland resounds on a number of levels. It is certainly fitting in light of Brigitta's childhood, for her indifferent family and a critical society provide an inhospitable environment for growth. Stifter denigrates Brigitta's family as superficial, remote, and at times even cruel. Her mother, as we have seen, turns away from the child Brigitta because her daughter fails to match expected standards of feminine beauty. Whether she is weeping or quiet, Brigitta is largely ignored. The sisters, though beautiful, are vain and silly, entranced by their pretty clothes and the glittering parties their father throws for them. With obvious disdain, Stifter reports that "ein Putzkleid oder die Anordnung eines Festes . . . sie Tage lang auf das Ergreifendste und Innigste beschäftigen [konnte]" (449). Brigitta's father is concerned only with money and with establishing lucrative matches for his



daughters.<sup>10</sup> (When Murai comes to the city, Brigitta's father ascertains his level of wealth before pursuing the young man as a groom for one of his daughters). In the wasteland of her youth, Brigitta's roots, or "Würzlein," can gain no purchase. Brigitta learns to depend only upon herself, but because no one around her values her, neither does she. In the "Fels des eigenen Herzens" (B 447) Brigitta does grow, but she is ravaged and twisted like a tree on a rocky cliff.

In a later description, Stifter draws yet another parallel between Brigitta and the hostile landscape. Earlier, when beaten by her father, the young Brigitta silently and stubbornly glared at her oppressor "mit den heißen trockenen Augen" (448). And later, when demanding a divorce from Murai, she does not respond to her husband's vehement protestations, but simply stares at him "mit den trockenen, entzündeten Augen" (459). Stifter repeats these adjectives – "heiß" and "trocken" – in the narrator's initial impressions of the landscape around Brigitta's estate Marosheli. As Rosemarie Hunter-Lougheed writes, "Anfangs gleichen ihre [Brigittas] 'heißen trockenen Augen' denen des Steinfelds um Maroshely, das bei der ersten Begegnung des Erzählers mit der Titelgestalt, 'in der Abendluft draußen lag und in den rötlich spinnenden Strahlen *heiß und trocken* hereinsah zu [der] kühlen grünen Frische,' des von ihr kultivierten Gebiets" (366). The opening word of Hunter-Lougheed's quote – "[a]nfangs" – hints at another important connection between Brigitta and the

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<sup>10</sup> At this point the father no longer even considers Brigitta as marriageable material. Stubbornly refusing to take part in the balls he organizes; Brigitta encounters Murai long after the rest of her family and their society, "weil sie gerade in jener Zeit schon seit länger her nicht in das Gesellschaftszimmer gekommen war" (B 450).

landscape, for it points to the development in Brigitta's own character, the fact that in cultivating the wasteland, transforming its stony barrenness to a green and fertile farm, the heroine has transformed herself. By the time the narrator encounters Brigitta, her eyes are no longer "heiß und trocken." Always her best feature, they now radiate the confidence she has developed, as well as contentment in her friendship with the major. Visiting Brigitta, the narrator reports that "[i]hre Augen . . . noch schwärzer und glänzender [waren], als die der Rehe, und mochten heute besonders hell strahlen, weil der Mann an ihrer Seite ging, der ihr Wirken und Schaffen zu würdigen verstand" (464).

Brigitta's cultivation of the landscape and herself is not unproblematic. As discussed in the introduction to this study, landscape has traditionally been associated with the female. In working the Hungarian steppes, in compelling them to be fruitful and useful, Brigitta embraces the Enlightenment doctrine of cultivating the irrational – arguably feminine – forces of nature. Stifter's writings certainly demonstrate his dedication to this Enlightenment perception of nature. The world Stifter seeks to create is "a rational and ordered totality in which everything is thought to have its proper place. . . . Nature manifests not only a divine design but a purpose" (Finney 86). Unfortunately, in a world in which rationality is privileged, anything that does not appear to be ruled by reason is denigrated as "Other," as "irrational" and therefore inferior.<sup>11</sup> Thus, Brigitta's "taming" of the wilderness may be seen as incorporating

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<sup>11</sup> This "rational" philosophy may be applied to subjugate not only nature but women and people of different races or classes. See Josephine Donovan, Feminist Theory: The Intellectual Traditions 19.

and carrying out reason's repression and dominance of the "Other" (i.e., women and nature). But is she actually guilty of betraying nature, herself and her sex? A helpful, if somewhat indirect method, of assessing Brigitta's actions is to compare them to those of the novella's other main character, Stephan Murai.

## 2.6 "Die Sage von dem Paradiese": The Major's Hungary

In Stifter's novella, the cultivation of nature, the transformation of the wasteland to a fertile landscape/garden, has other, more political, implications. Richard Block, in his article "Stone Deaf: The Gentleness of Law in Stifter's Brigitta" maintains that Stifter, in the later "Studienfassung" of the novella, attempts to "show a stronger connection between the fate of the characters in the story and Hungary and Europe" (17). According to Block, Stifter's narrative reflects the author's fear of the radical forces determined to wrest Hungary's independence from the Hapsburgs in the 1840's, and his privileging of the more moderate efforts at reform led by Stephan Szecheny, a Hungarian nobleman.<sup>12</sup> Szecheny's reforms, in addition to cultivation of the landscape, entailed establishing "casinos," forums

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<sup>12</sup> Szecheny was only one of the players in the campaign to free Hungary from almost two centuries of autocratic rule under Austria. (Other leaders included Louis Kossuth, Baron Eötvös, Sándor Petöfi and Francis Deak). The independent republic of Hungary, which existed briefly in 1849, fell the same year when Russian troops invaded at the behest of Austrian Emperor Francis Joseph. These initial attempts to establish Hungary as a republic were unsuccessful. However, in the wake of its defeat in the Austro-Prussian war, Austria joined forces with the Hungarian nationals in the "Ausgleich" or Compromise of 1867, forming the Austro-Hungarian monarchy ("Hungary").

where the wealthiest landowners could meet to discuss agriculture, resources and reform. The “Bund” in Brigitta may be seen as performing the function of Szecheny’s casinos.

But do these reforms really improve the lot of the workers on these landholders’ estates, or that of the smaller farmers who are not members of the federation, or “casino”? In Szecheny’s case, the answer was no. These lesser groups were still beholden to the larger landholders, whose members represented the upper class, and the workers’ efforts contributed to the power and capital of these landholders. The system resulting from Szecheny’s reforms would ultimately prove to be as rigid and repressive as the feudal system it attempted to replace (Block 28). As nationalist sentiment grew in Hungary, Hungarian nationals opted for the more radical methods of Lajos (Ludwig) Kossuth. Kossuth, a vital player in the Hungarian revolution of March 1848, was in 1849 briefly president of Hungary after the parliament declared the country to be an independent republic. Szecheny, who had assumed he would be able to control the masses when the time came, was pushed aside as nationals chose revolution over reform. The turn of Hungarian sentiment against Szecheny may also be explained by the fact that Szecheny, the founder of modern Hungary, had maintained ties with Metternich, going so far as to conspire with the Austrian statesman against Kossuth (Block 27).

In Brigitta, as in all Stifter’s works, any revolutionary impulse is absent. Stifter instead portrays an idealized Hungary in which the reforms of Stephan Szecheny – or his literary counterpart, the major – are successful, and the figure of Kossuth is nowhere to be found. Szecheny’s methods are reflected in the major’s

cultivation of the landscape and the agrarian improvements he introduces to his Hungarian workers. They are also manifested, as previously mentioned, in the federation, or “Bund,” Brigitta establishes among herself and her fellow landowners. In addition, throughout the novella Stifter evokes the concept of Hungarian nationalism. On the first night at the major’s estate, Uwar, the narrator is struck by the room’s decorations: “An den Wänden hingen Waffen aus verschiedenen Zeiten der Geschichte. Sie mochten einst der ungarischen angehören. . . . Außer den Waffen hingen auch Kleider da, ungarische, die man aus früheren Zeiten aufgehoben hatte” (425). The museum-like quality of the room presages the interior of the “Rosenhaus” in Nachsommer, but in the major’s case, the exhibition of Hungarian objects reflects his dedication to his new-found homeland. When the narrator first encounters the major in Uwar, his friend is clothed in Hungarian garb (the narrator soon abandons his German styles to follow his friend’s example). And, as the narrator learns upon hearing the older man converse with his workers, the major has mastered their language, demonstrating his devotion to Hungary, for Hungarian would not be instituted as the national language until 1830.<sup>13</sup>

In the first days of the narrator’s visit to Uwar, the two friends ride through the surrounding landscape. The major waxes rhapsodic about the country, praising its

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<sup>13</sup> The legitimization of the Hungarian language was also one of Szecheny’s primary goals. In “Stifters Erzählung ‘Brigitta’ und Ungarn,” critic Moriz Enzinger writes: “Hebung der Wirtschaft, besonders der Landwirtschaft . . . lag ihm [Szecheny] ebenso am Herzen wie die Pflege der madjarischen Sprache, die bisher ein verachtetes Dasein geführt hatte und gegenüber dem amtlichen Latein und der kulturell führenden deutschen Sprache hatte in den Hintergrund treten müssen” (141).

fine soil, its beautiful mountains, and the “edle Ströme” that flow through the land. Nevertheless, as he explains, the landscape of Hungary must be cultivated to reach its true aesthetic – and economic – potential. Hungary is, in the major’s words, “ein größeres Kleinod, als man denken mag, aber es muß noch immer mehr gefaßt werden” (436). The mountain slopes must be planted with vineyards, the ground mined for minerals, the fields plowed and sowed with grain. This desire to cultivate and “perfect” nature may be seen as a continuation of the drives behind the “Gartenrevolution” of the late Enlightenment, a movement which continued well into the mid-nineteenth century. Aspects of Uwar’s gardens and parks are reminiscent of the English garden style. Though the narrator’s initial impression is of untamed, uncultivated nature, he soon discovers that the landscape is well-tended and beautiful in its own fashion. Like the “Mooshütte” in Die Wahlverwandtschaften, the major’s house at Uwar is constructed on a hill to provide a superior view of the surrounding park.

But the major’s focus, as we have seen, extends beyond the desire for the aesthetic and simultaneous “moral” effects of the well-planned English landscape garden. Nature cannot simply be beautiful, but must be made useful. This assessment of nature only in terms of its instrumental value dominated nineteenth-century Europe. As the major explains to the narrator, “Die ganze Welt kömmt in ein Ringen sich nutzbar zu machen, und wir müssen mit” (436). Thus the major’s garden, though reminiscent of the English landscaping style, is still very much a garden of control. The major, like Risach in Der Nachsommer, shows his young

guest around the estate, demonstrating how every acre has been cultivated for a specific, useful purpose, whether as vineyards, fields, or gardens. Even the most unlikely land, a swampy mire, is being prepared for future use: beggars and other indigents have been employed to drain the land and lay a road.

The major, of course, sees his agricultural reforms as a gift to Hungary and its people. He appears to be genuinely concerned for his workers' welfare, desiring only to educate and help them so that they may live more purposeful, meaningful lives. Yet closer examination of the major's comments to and about the Hungarian "natives" begs the question: does he truly consider these workers to be inherently valuable human beings, or does he see them – like the landscape – only in terms of their instrumental value? Aristotle expressed the opinion that slaves were "living tools" (Dent 410), and though the major's farm workers are not slaves, they are essentially serfs, beholden to their feudal master. The major's attitude toward them is distinctly, and to the modern reader, insultingly patriarchal. Denying the possibility that the native inhabitants of Hungary might have ideas or initiative of their own, the major compares them to "ein[em] Kind, dem man Vormachen muß, was es beginnen soll" (437). He admits that, because of their childlike natures, the Hungarians might easily be led in any direction, but, like Szecheny, he is convinced of his control over the natives. As he explains to the narrator, "Diese würde ich sogar zum Blutvergießen führen können, sobald ich mich nur an ihre Spitze stellte. Sie sind mir unbedingt zugethan" (438).

On the second day of his visit to Uwar, the narrator accompanies his friend to visit the major's shepherds. As usual, the younger man is unquestioningly admiring of the major's relationship with his employees, accepting the shepherds' fawning subservience and his friend's patronizing condescension as a matter of course. The narrator describes the major's behavior among the natives: "Er war so leutselig mit ihnen, als wäre er einer aus ihrer Mitte, und dies, wie ich glaubte, erweckte eine Art Begeisterung unter den Menschen" (433). Yet to the modern reader, the major in no way gives the impression of being one of his people. Riding on his fine horse, and dressed in, as the narrator describes it, "reizende[r] Tracht," the landowner stands in sharp contrast to the unkempt "[b]raune[n] Gestalten" (B 433). The shepherds who gather about in their dirty trousers and ragged shirts live in the most primitive of conditions, opting to sleep on animal hides outdoors instead of inside their rickety hut. The major's hearty "Lebt wohl, Kinder" as he rides away may be grating to the ear of the modern reader, but neither he nor the narrator give any indication that they perceive the situation as less than normal.<sup>14</sup>

The gallows, an omni-present and potent symbol in the novella, marks the point of separation between the major's and Brigitta's property. It stands in the midst of a no man's land, a place of concentrated wildness. Lit by a blood red sickle moon,

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<sup>14</sup> Riding from this scene, the major makes the following remark about the Hungarians' dogs: "Wenn . . . ihr etwa einmal allein heraus kommen wolltet, um mit diesen Leuten gleichsam zu leben, müßt ihr auf die Hunde achten, die sie haben. Sie sind nicht immer so zahm und geduldig, wie ihr sie heute gesehen habt, sondern sie würden euch strenge mit fahren" (434). The major's warning may be read as a not so subtle comparison of the dogs with their owners; like their dogs, the "zahm[en] und geduldig[en]" natives may turn dangerous.



this area is littered with white stones (reminiscent of skulls), and a stream circles the “Todeseiche” near the gallows like a “todte Schlange” (422). The only “order” in this wild landscape is represented by the gallows. The narrator’s guide through this wasteland, Brigitta’s servant Milosch, explains that the oak was once the locus for hanging criminals: “Jetzt darf das nicht mehr sein, weil ein Galgen ist” (421). Denigrating the Hungarians’ traditions, Murai and the other landowners wished to establish a more “civilized” means of execution for the “natives.” Of course, the gallows is also a symbol for the landowners’ authority, and a reminder of the consequences should their “children” disobey.

The major sees his workers as he does his land, in terms of how they contribute to his wealth and influence (for as we witness in his speech to fellow landowners, the major has political aspirations as well). He makes no real attempt to improve their shabby clothes, miserable living conditions, or lack of education. Unlike Brigitta, he has not erected walls around his garden, but the barriers between the major and the native Hungarians are insurmountable. Despite the major’s “reforms” his workers essentially remain vassals.

What of Brigitta and her relationship with her land and workers? After all, Brigitta was the originator of the “Bund,” and could be seen as complicit in the major’s methods and ideology. But just as Brigitta was different as a child, so, as an adult, is she unique in her dealings with Hungary and its people. When the narrator first encounters Brigitta, though he misidentifies her gender, he correctly assumes that she is in charge of the surrounding workers. Brigitta, however, does not address her

employees with the major's patronizing tone. When she asks her worker Milosch to show the narrator the way to Uwar, she speaks to him with courtesy and respect. In her relationship to the land, specifically her estate, Brigitta also exhibits respect, even love. Her primary impulse is not to use nature, but to protect and cherish it. This is illustrated by the narrator's description of his first visit to Marosheli and Brigitta's immense garden: "Sie führte uns in den Park, der vor zehn Jahren ein wüster Eichenwald gewesen war; jetzt gingen Wege durch, flossen eingehegte Quellen, und wandelten Rehe. Sie hatte durch unsägliche Ausdauer um den ungeheuren Umfang desselben eine hohe Mauer gegen die Wölfe aufführen lassen" (463). The deer in Brigitta's garden display a remarkable level of trust, and seem to communicate gratitude to their protectress: "Die Rehe, schien es, wußten das alles, und dankten ihr [Brigitta] dafür; denn, wenn wir manches bei unserem Gange sahen, war es nicht scheu und blickte mit den dunkeln, glänzenden Augen gegen uns herüber" (464). Brigitta's eyes, also dark and shining, suggest an almost fairy-tale affinity with these creatures of nature. Guiding her guests through her garden, Brigitta exhibits none of the major's didacticism, his pride in his power over the landscape and its people. Instead, she radiates contentment, and love for her garden. As the narrator reports, "Brigitta führte ihre Gäste und Freunde recht gern durch den Park, weil sie ihn liebte" (464).

## 2.7 Stephan: “Der Vulkan”

To view the major only as a reactionary in reformer’s clothing is to ignore the complexity of his character. For the major (who, the reader later learns, is actually Brigitta’s former husband, Stephan Murai) is a man of contrasts: charismatic, charming, tender, sometimes heartless, and – in terms of gender – frequently ambiguous. The narrator describes his first encounter with Murai, or the “major,” as he knows him, in the most glowing of terms. He is not only physically attractive, but is the most handsome man the narrator – or anyone, for that matter – could ever imagine. Even as an older gentleman, the major possesses charm and beauty that attracts not only women, but “mehr als einmal auch Männer bethörte” (413). Dagmar Lorenz maintains that this blurring of strict gender distinctions is typical of the author. “Stifters Widerstand gegen die uniforme Stilisierung der Geschlechter manifestiert sich da, wo sich die bekannten Klischees verkehren: Brigitta ist kräftig, artikuliert, aber unschön, während der junge Stephan schön, zart, weichlich und passiv ist” (98).

Murai’s personality is also fascinating. As the narrator comes to know the major better, he reports “daß diese Seele das Glühendste und Dichterischste sei, was mir bis dahin vorgekommen ist” (415), though as the major/Murai later admits, his own attempts at “Dichten” ultimately come to naught. What makes the character of Murai most intriguing to both the narrator, and, earlier, to Brigitta’s family and society, is his unknown, and therefore romantic, past. In the words of the narrator,

“[e]r soll in Staatsbegebenheiten verwickelt gewesen sein, er soll sich unglücklich vermählt, er soll seinen Bruder erschossen haben . . .” (414). Murai has “etwas Wildes und Scheues an sich” [B 450]) and this, his mysterious past, and his incredible beauty make him irresistible.

Murai’s complex and compelling personality is epitomized by the natural symbol with which Stifter links his character, the volcano. The narrator, as he recalls during his journey to Uwar, first encountered the Major on a visit to Vesuvius: “In Unteritalien, beinahe in einer eben so feierlichen Oede, wie die war, durch die ich heute wandelte, hatte ich ihn zum ersten Male gesehen” (413). Although most of the time Murai’s behavior is docile, like the gentle blue skies above the dormant volcano, there are times when he erupts, when his passionate, violent nature breaks through.<sup>15</sup> One instance of such an eruption is the scene toward the novella’s conclusion, when Murai attacks the vicious wolves (themselves representative of nature’s wild and destructive elements): In this case, passion has positive results: Murai saves his and Brigitta’s son Gustav from the marauding wolves. But an earlier occasion where Murai “erupts” into passion spells doom for his and Brigitta’s happiness. On a ride through the woods, he encounters Gabriele, a beautiful young woman, and, like Murai, a somewhat “wildes Geschöpf” (B 458). Stephan enters into a short-lived relationship with Gabriele, and when Brigitta discovers the betrayal, she divorces her husband.

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<sup>15</sup> See Hahn 151 for an in depth examination of the symbol of the volcano in Brigitta.

Other less momentous examples of the major's destructive behavior occur in the novella, cases where acting according to his passionate nature negatively affects those around him. At the ball where Brigitta refuses to dance with the young Murai, he jokes and dances with the other young women in the room to make her jealous. These insincere conquests not only wound Brigitta, but demonstrate a lack of respect for her and other women. Females are simply a means to an end, and Murai's ultimate treatment of Brigitta reveals that in his eyes she is no different. Murai's initial attraction to Brigitta, his ability to see beyond to her internal beauty, might seem to redeem him on some level. In the hall full of beautiful women, his eyes repeatedly catch Brigitta's, and he pursues her even after she has assured him that he will regret it. But Murai's dedication to winning Brigitta may be read in a different light. For despite the narrator's complimentary assessment of the major's soul as possessing "das Kindliche, Unbewußte, Einfache, Einsame, ja oft Einfältige" (415), these characteristics were manifest in the younger Murai's incredibly immature and self-centered nature. As a young man, he flits from pleasure to pleasure, and even after wedding Brigitta he is unable to retain the focus and discipline necessary to sustain the marriage. Murai's initial attraction to Brigitta is more along the lines of conquest than love: he sees the young woman as a "special challenge, promising an extraordinary experience, rather than as a source of ethical values to cherish" (Sjoegren, "Allure" 48). Because Brigitta is different from any woman Murai has encountered, she piques his curiosity; the prospect of a lucrative marriage provides an additional incentive. Soon after succeeding in his conquest, of course, Murai begins

to lose interest in her. The liaison with Gabriele marks Murai's return to earlier behavior patterns, patterns he continues to indulge in over the next decades. As a "mature" man he continues to use and throw aside women, and cannot settle in one place. He is the consummate wanderer, looking for meaning outside of himself, unable to dedicate himself to any goal.

In a sense, then, Murai might be seen as the typical hero of the romantic "Bildungsroman," the wanderer moving from place to place, with circumstances – and women – serving only as tools for his growth and learning. Yet by the time the narrator visits the major in Uwar, the older man has undergone a significant change in personality. In the letter in which he invites his friend to come to Hungary, the major writes that his wandering days are over, "denn er sei jetzt endlich gesonnen, auf einem einzigen winzigen Punkte dieser Erdkugel kleben zu bleiben, und kein anderes Stäubchen mehr auf seinen Fuß gelangen zu lassen, als das der Heimat, in welcher er nunmehr ein Ziel gefunden habe, das er sonst vergeblich auf der ganzen Welt gesucht hatte" (412). In finding a homeland and committing himself to it, the major has learned to control his passionate nature, or at least to channel its forces to attain beneficial effects. Like the "Oede" of the landscape of Vesuvius, the major's new homeland appears to be barren and inhospitable. In cultivating the Hungarian steppes, however, the major simultaneously tames his destructive volcanic tendencies and embraces the volcano's other side, which is "friedlich, sanft, alles in sich

aufnehmend, alles umschließend" (Hahn 151). In keeping with the gender ambiguity of Murai's character, these latter attributes – passivity, gentleness, receptivity – are ideal "feminine" qualities.

## 2.8 Gabriele: "Ein himmlisches tolles, glühendes Rätsel" (B 458)

But what of Gabriele, the "other woman" of Stifter's novella? The daughter of an eccentric count, Gabriele is truly a child of nature, having grown up with no restrictions to her freedom. She is described as "ein Abgrund von Unbefangenheit"(458), the latter word pointing to her charming spontaneity, the former to the danger she presents to Murai. Though Stifter does not write of the two consummating their relationship, he describes their breathless races on horseback (a sexually-laden activity considering that the horse is a traditional symbol of passion). The reader learns very little of Gabriele, for her appearance is essentially limited to one paragraph in the "Steppenvergangenheit" chapter. This "wildes Geschöpf" is, in some ways, similar to Brigitta. She appears to have been largely ignored growing up, and her wild and competitive riding style is far from ladylike. She behaves as she wants to, teasing, laughing and joking with Murai, ignoring societal conventions dictating a woman should be quiet and demure. Critic Walter Hahn maintains, however, that Gabriele represents Brigitta's opposite, an example of external and empty beauty. Gabriele's eyes, he writes, are not dark and deep as are Brigitta's, but

**“spiegelnd”: “Bei ihr stellen die Augen keine Öffnungen dar, durch die sich das innere Wesen offenbaren kann. Ihr Innerst ist bar jedes echten Gefühls; es ist ein Vakuum” (155).**

Critics have generally treated the figure of Gabriele as a necessary instrument in Murai’s (and Brigitta’s) development. Featured in one paragraph in the novella, she merits only the briefest of mention in three later sentences. Gabriele’s comparative lack of importance is further emphasized by the fact that Murai completely ignores her when he rides by her castle after Brigitta sends him away. And Stifter’s treatment of Gabriele suggests a purely instrumental function, for she dies shortly after Murai leaves. Even after death, Gabriele seems significant only in terms of the role she played in the development of the two main characters. As the narrator passes Gabriele’s grave, he notes, “Auf dem Marmor standen zwei große weiße Lilien” (475). These lilies may be seen as symbolizing the pure and perfect love attained by the major and Brigitta in their late life.

There are, of course, other possible interpretations of the lilies on the grave. From antiquity, the lily has symbolized innocence, an unequivocally positive virtue. The association of the lily with Gabriele thus undermines any attempt to see Gabriele as Brigitta’s moral inferior. In addition, the image of the lily is often present in depictions of the angel Gabriel, the bringer of God’s messages and commands: In Stifter’s Brigitta, Gabriele serves primarily as a harbinger for fate and a catalyst for



development.<sup>16</sup> Yet her importance in the novella must not be underestimated. For the main difference between Brigitta and Gabriele is not, as Hahn would suggest, their eyes, nor the moral superiority of one character above the other, but the fact that one woman is beautiful, while the other is not. The power of Gabriele's physical appearance, "das Bild der sanften Wange, des süßen Athems, und der spiegelnden Augen" (B 459), points to the central theme of Stifter's novella – the perception of beauty.

## 2.9 The Skewed Eye: Perceiving Beauty and Gender

The importance of beauty, or, more specifically, the perception of beauty, is in evidence in the opening paragraph of Stifter's 1847 version of Brigitta.<sup>17</sup> Long before introducing his "ugly" main character, Stifter details the mysterious powers that affect our souls, that lead us to be attracted to others, despite their outward appearance. "In dem Angesichte eines Häßlichen ist für uns oft eine innere Schönheit, . . . während uns oft die Züge eines andern kalt und leer sind, von denen alle sagen, daß sie die größte Schönheit besitzen" (411). From the beginning of the novella, then, Stifter makes clear what is at stake is not external, but inner beauty.

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<sup>16</sup> For further discussion of the significance of the lily, see Dittmann, Erläuterungen 34.

<sup>17</sup> In the Journalfassung of the novella, beauty is not the only mysterious force under discussion. The author mentions mesmerism, ghosts and electrical impulses in his original introduction (possibly reflecting the younger Stifter's affinity for romantic themes).

It is interesting, therefore, that the sense focused upon in Brigitta is that of sight, the sense that takes in outward appearances. Particularly in the opening chapter of the later version of the novella, the reader is rarely confronted with the narrator's feelings or interpretations, but rather with his visual impressions. When wandering across the plains of Hungary to visit his friend the major, the narrator describes only the landscape. When he encounters others, when he stays with the "Hirten und ihren zottigen Hunden" (B 416), he mentions nothing of their personalities or his dealings with them. And though the narrator reflects on the long ago meeting with the major in Italy, he focuses the older man's external appearance: "[N]ie hat man einen Mann gesehen, dessen Bau und Antlitz schöner genannt werden konnte, noch einen, der dieses Aeußere edler zu tragen verstand" (413). As the narrator makes his way across the steppes, his one concern is how his friend will look in his new environment ("[O]ft dachte ich mir, wie denn mein Freund in diesem Lande aussehen werde" [416]).

Judgment based on external appearances is, however, problematic. Visual impressions can lead to incorrect conclusions. Stifter draws attention to the faultiness of perception – particularly initial perception – throughout his narrative. An early example of mistaken perception in the novella is illustrated by the narrator's first impressions of the Hungarian landscape. The narrator, for example, is overwhelmed by the visual effect of the steppes, viewing the landscape as an "Oede," his eye "übersättigt" by the perpetual barren sameness. He is reminded of the landscape where he first encountered his friend the major, the "furchtbar zerworfene dunkle

Oede" of the dormant Vesuvius (**B** 414). Only after spending a considerable period of time wandering through the steppes does he come to appreciate their wild beauty, and potential for the future: "[E]s war mir, als hörte ich den Hammer schallen, womit die Zukunft dieses Volkes geschmiedet wird. Jedes in dem Lande zeigt auf kommende Zeiten, alles Vergehende ist müde, alles Werdende feurig" (417).

Through lengthy exposure to the steppes, and as a result of his relationship with the major, the narrator soon develops "das rechte Auge" to see and appreciate the landscape, and to agree with his friend's assessment of the country as a "Kleinod." Endowed with the "right eye," he learns to see the landscape's inner beauty, and its potential, through cultivation, to blossom into a garden.

Another mistaken perception occurs as the narrator, after long wanderings through the Hungarian puszta finally makes his way to the farm he erroneously believes to be Uwar, the home of the major. As he nears the homestead he sees a figure riding toward the workers in the field. The rider's demeanor and clothing, as well as the actions of the workers, lead the narrator to conclude that the figure is a man. "Auch sammelten sich alle Arbeiter um die Gestalt, da sie bei ihnen angekommen war, wie um einen Herrn" (418). Of course, the narrator's eye has deceived him. The rider is Brigitta, and because she acts in a way that he identifies as "male," the narrator assumes her to be a man. This faulty perception on the basis of gender expectation does not end here, however. That a woman could command the respect and obedience of male field workers is barely imaginable, but that Brigitta

could actually be the “Herrin” of the estate is unthinkable. The narrator therefore concludes that the woman must be “eine Art Schaffnerin” and attempts to tip her for her assistance (420).

In the above instances, then, both landscape and gender are misjudged. But how are these examples connected? How does the narrator’s failure to see the beauty of the landscape – the potential for a garden in the wilderness – relate to his inability to see that Brigitta is a woman, despite her manly actions, and a landowner, despite her gender? In both cases, the narrator assigns value to the object of his vision, his “eye,” based upon personal and/or societal assumptions. An uncultivated, wild landscape is an “Oede,” a wasteland, unsightly and potentially dangerous. And a person who owns property, who supervises laborers, who manages a large and productive estate, must be a man. Though these preconceptions skew the narrator’s perception, they do not damage him personally, since the people and objects he perceives remain outside and separate of himself. For Brigitta, however, the accepted societal criteria for beauty, and, as we shall see, gender, are devastating.

## 2.10 Through a Glass Darkly: Gendering Ugliness

When the narrator attempts to tip the “Schaffnerin” Brigitta, her reaction – laughter – shows her amusement, and perhaps delight, at the narrator’s gender misconception. Her laughter also demonstrates how far she has come during the years in Hungary. For if we look back to “Steppenvergangenheit,” we see that

Brigitta's earlier perception (her "eye") was completely formed and informed from without, from the messages and assumptions she received from her parents and society. In the area of gender, even as a child Brigitta broke from the restrictions and expectations of those around her, but only at the cost of ostracism. For nineteenth-century women of Brigitta's class, physical beauty was almost without exception their only form of power. The young Brigitta, with her "ugly" face, is presumed to be without value. And despite the self-sufficiency she develops, the independent attempts to learn on her own, the "phantastische" if "verstümmelte Welt" she creates in her heart, Brigitta fully internalizes her society's ideals of beauty, and accepts unquestioningly that she does not measure up. This explains her disbelief that Stephan Murai could actually show interest in her.

In two instances in "Steppenvergangenheit," as if to confirm her ugliness, Brigitta looks in the mirror. The first time occurs after the second ball, when Murai asks her to dance, then flirts and entertains the other young women when Brigitta answers "daß sie nie tanzen gelernt habe" (451). Throwing a brief glance in the mirror upon returning to her room, Brigitta takes in only her external appearance, her dark face and black hair. She checks her appearance to confirm that any expectations she might entertain with regards to Murai would be in vain. The mirror functions as the eyes of the majority of those in Brigitta's life. It reflects back the "truth" of her external ugliness, the fact that her facial features and body do not match the ideal of beauty society propounds.

As Murai's attentions become more pronounced, Brigitta again looks in the mirror. Stifter does not report what she sees in the mirror, only that she looks for a long time. In fact, Brigitta does not see her outward appearance, but looks "hinein," and the mirror reveals her inner self, her "ganze(s) versäumte(s) Leben" (452). She cries for the first time in her life, and as she falls asleep, she murmurs repeatedly the phrase "Es ist ja nicht möglich!" (453) Whether she is referring to the impossibility of Murai's actually finding her attractive, or her disbelief, as Rosemarie Hunter-Lougheed suggests, that there might be a way out of the "Wüste" is unclear.<sup>18</sup> Stifter's use of the mirror image is typically ambiguous.

But what do society, her family, and Murai see when they look at Brigitta? Her mother, unable to find any beauty in her youngest, averts her eye from her child and focuses instead on her traditionally pretty daughters. Brigitta's sisters poke fun at her odd manner and clothing, calling the dark headdress she has constructed for a ball "häßlich" (450), and Brigitta clearly believes herself to be ugly, as evidenced by both the mirror scenes and her conversation with Murai ("ich weiß, daß ich häßlich bin" [454]). Yet other than descriptions of her family's and society's ostracism of Brigitta, there is no direct evidence in the text of "Steppen-vergangenheit" of physical

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<sup>18</sup> "Auch wenn sie [Brigitta] zuletzt ausruft: 'Es ist ja nicht möglich, es ist ja nicht möglich!', so hat das an die Lippen gedrückt Kinderbild, auf dem sich 'ein Bruder für den andern' opfert, gezeigt, daß sie zum erstenmal an nähere zwischenmenschliche Beziehungen glaubt, an die Erlösung aus der Wüste" (371).

ugliness.<sup>19</sup> Aside from the darkness of her complexion, the specifics of Brigitta's physical "ugliness" are never spelled out. Patricia Howe, in her article "Faces and Fortunes," maintains that Stifter's reluctance to detail Brigitta's ugliness hearkens back to traditional narrative's equation of beauty with goodness, and the difficulty of portraying an ugly heroine without repelling the reader. Thus, Stifter's perpetual focus upon beauty in Brigitta, his at times confusing asides linking beauty to "moral impulses and mysterious instincts," further obfuscates the issue of Brigitta's ugliness.

The ambiguity and frequency of the term ["Schönheit"] obscure and overwhelm the rival notion of ugliness and the experience of it presented in the heroine, so that the conflict becomes located in the juxtaposition not of beauty with ugliness, but of external beauty with an inner, spiritual beauty that depends on perception. (Howe 428)

Stifter suggests that Brigitta's ugliness is primarily the result of her society's and family's inability to see her true inner beauty. But Brigitta is "ugly" in another way, for besides transgressing the aesthetic norms of her time, she behaves in a manner that goes against the gender expectations of her society. In addition to her obviously boyish behavior (riding like a boy, engaging in manual labor) Brigitta displays a fierce independence: as a child she goes so far as to create her own

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<sup>19</sup> Gerda von Petrikovits suggests that Stifter may have had a "mongolischen Typ" in mind as a model for Brigitta. She quotes a description of such a "type" from Hungarian novelist Kálmán Mikszáth: "[E]ine Frau mit stark mongolischen Zügen; schräge, winzige, schwarze Augen brannten in ihrem krummgeschnittenen kleinen Gesicht wie zwei glühende Kohlen . . . im übrigen war sie eher häßlich zu nennen, keineswegs hübsch; sie hatte eine breite Tatarennase, eine Brust so breit wie ein Brett, dazu eine enorm schmale Stirn, beinah nur ein Streifchen, das die Stirn andeutete" (101). Von Petrikovits' proposal must be regarded as pure speculation, as there is nothing in Stifter's novella to suggest that such a "type" was his model for Brigitta.

language, muttering “Laute, die sie von niemanden gehört hatte” (447). She strikes her sisters when they attempt to participate in her “boyish” games, and rips and soils her dresses. Brigitta is stubborn, moody, and unwilling to conform to the ideal of young women as sweet, malleable and ornamental.

The only account of Brigitta’s facial features occurs in the novella’s second chapter, when the narrator describes the face of a young girl in a picture he sees on Murai’s study desk. He describes the girl’s face as ugly, but his words do not specify any disfigurement, only difference from the norm: “[D]ie dunkle Farbe des Angesichtes und der Bau der Stirne waren seltsam” (440). The other characteristics the narrator attributes to the face are, likewise, not “ugly.” “[E]s lag etwas, wie Stärke und Kraft darinnen, und der Blick war wild, wie bei einem entschlossenen Wesen” (440). Strength and power are admired qualities in a man; the narrator’s comment suggests that they are only “ugly” when expressed by the female countenance. Wildness, too, is not necessarily negative, but can be a sign of determination and strength. (For example, the adjective “wild” is applied to the major’s behavior in the scene in which he courageously saves his son from marauding wolves). Brigitta’s actual features do not make her unattractive to the narrator, but she looks masculine to him. This interpretation is supported by the earlier “Journalfassung,” in which the narrator reports that the young Brigitta was portrayed “mit einem wilden starken Auge, wie ein Mann” (231).

The above instance would suggest that one of the main reasons Brigitta’s family and society designate her as ugly is her masculine appearance and behavior.



Yet neither beauty nor gender are universal categories, but societal constructs. Both may be altered by history, by changes in society. In the 1920's, the "Flapper" era, Brigitta's strong and slim form would not have been denigrated as overly-masculine, but privileged over the soft figures of her sisters. In Brigitta, Stifter expresses his awareness of the superficial nature of societal notions of beauty and gender, detailing the changes his characters – and particularly Brigitta – undergo in their understanding of both of these constructs.

## 2.11 Playing House in Silence

*Der Mann strebt und wirkt nach Außen und wagt es, für die Ewigkeit zu handeln. Das Weib aber waltet im Innern des Hauses still und friedlich, vor den Augen der Welt verborgen, und soll ihre Wünsche nur auf ein einziges, nahegelegenes Gut beschränken und es festzuhalten streben.*

From a nineteenth-century *Anstandsbuch*<sup>20</sup>

In "Steppenvergangenheit," Stifter describes the changes Brigitta undergoes upon meeting and marrying Stephan Murai. Experiencing love and acceptance for the first time in her life, Brigitta is thrown into a state of confusion. She is terrified of her feelings, and paralyzed at the thought of losing Murai. These fears, as well as Brigitta's conviction that she is ugly, lead to her warning Murai that she will demand from him "die allerhöchste . . . Liebe" (454). When Murai insists upon marrying her

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<sup>20</sup> Christian Wilhelm Spieker, "Ueber weibliche Würde und Bestimmung," Bildung und Kultur bürgerlicher Frauen 1850-1918, ed. Günter Hantzschel (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1986) 58.

despite her warning, Brigitta finally succumbs. Their first kiss – the first of her life – marks the end for Brigitta of any attempt to struggle against societal and gender expectations. She becomes the good and obedient wife, remains at home, and within a year presents her husband with a son. Initially Murai remains at home with her, but as time passes, he and Brigitta each retreat to the gender roles prescribed by society: he turns to managing his estates, while she takes care of their child. When Stephan becomes convinced that he can manage the estates better from the country, Brigitta obediently follows him. She knows from her husband's overtly cherishing behavior toward her in front of others that he is losing interest in her. "Sie dachte: 'Jetzt weiß er, was mir fehlt,' und hielt das erstickende Herz an sich" (457). Convinced of her ugliness, Brigitta has completely changed herself in an attempt to keep Stephan. But at this point, she is still a child, a child who has for the first time in her life received love and approval and will do anything to hold on to this. Fearful of loss and certain of her ugliness and inner worthlessness, Brigitta attempts to be the good wife and mother, her actions reminiscent of a child "playing house."

Despite Brigitta's transformation from stubborn "tomboy" to model wife, one behavior appears constant: her silence. In "Steppenvergangenheit," except for her few short conversations with Murai, Brigitta does not speak at all. As a child, she is stubbornly silent, using only her eyes to communicate. With her eyes she expresses reproach at her mother's abandonment, disinterest during lessons with her tutor, and stubborn pride when her father beats her for refusing to enter the "Gesellschaftszimmer." When she encounters Murai for the first time, no words are

exchanged. In the crowded hall, Brigitta looks up to see “zwei dunkle, sanfte Jünglingsaugen auf sie geheftet” (451). Murai, in turn, is mesmerized by Brigitta’s eyes, by “dem einzigen Schönen, das sie hatte, . . . den in der That schönen düstern Augen” (447). During this first encounter, Brigitta’s and Murai’s mutual glances are the only communication that takes place between them. When Murai confronts Brigitta about her feelings for him, her verbal response is both pained and unwilling; the moment others enter the room, she breaks off, and “ihre Lippe bebte vor Schmerz” (454). Murai finally succeeds in winning Brigitta by temporarily joining her in her realm of silence, honoring her only with adoring glances and wordless attentions, keeping his own eye upon Brigitta rather than the beautiful women surrounding him.

It is telling that after the brief conversation with Murai, Brigitta is not reported to say another word until the end of their marriage. Silence in her youth was an act of rebellion and anger; it is now a characteristic of the good wife. Brigitta’s silence as a married woman may also be seen as a desperate attempt to conform to Murai’s expectations, and to keep him from seeing what is “wrong” with her. After the couple are engaged, even Brigitta’s actions and responses are kept largely silent. After one line in which the narrator reports the increasing happiness of Brigitta’s heart – “Aus dem tiefen Herzen des bisher unbekannten Mädchens ging ein warmes Dasein hervor” (B 455) – Murai’s reactions are the only ones mentioned in the story. Murai is delighted by his fiancée’s strength and her chastity, and excited to enter

Brigitta's "neues, merkwürdiges, nur ihr angehörendes Reich" (B 455).<sup>21</sup> The reader learns of Murai's, not Brigitta's, anticipation of the wedding, and when the day comes, the groom leads his silent bride to the altar.

Until the marriage ends, Brigitta's reactions to her life are reported through her eyes. Initially, alone with her husband, she looks at their new home with "glänzenden Augen" (456). As Murai begins to resort to his old ways, returning to society with his new bride, Brigitta sees that he handles her "vor Leuten noch zarter und noch aufmerksamer . . . als selber zu Hause" (457), she realizes that his attentions to her are a sham. And finally, she sees in the dark flush of Murai's and Gabriele's cheeks her betrayal. To her husband's reaction to her request for a divorce – "Weib, ich hasse dich unaussprechlich, ich hasse dich unaussprechlich!" (459) – she responds with the same "trockenen entzündeten Augen" as she did when corporally punished by her father. She utters only the words "Ich habe es dir gesagt, daß es dich reuen wird" (459), the "I told you so" of a child who has expected betrayal and abandonment from the beginning.

## 2.12 Developing "das rechte Auge": Re-envisioning Beauty and Gender

Given her situation, Brigitta's transformation of herself and the landscape is even more extraordinary. When Murai leaves, Brigitta is on her own in the

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<sup>21</sup> Considering Brigitta's complete lack of physical contact before meeting him, she is a great prize – more virginal than the purest virgin.

“wasteland” of the Hungarian puszta. Soon the other members of her family die. Brigitta is completely alone in the world, and this, Stifter seems to suggest, produces the necessary environment for her metamorphosis. Unburdened by society’s, her family’s and her husband’s expectations – the “eyes” that have, throughout her life, condemned her for her “ugliness” and difference – Brigitta is at last able to be herself. Her creativity has an outlet: instead of being trapped in the private, “verstümmelte Welt” of her youth or the isolation of her marriage, Brigitta channels her energies and ideas, to plant and tend her own garden.<sup>22</sup> She turns her eyes on herself and her surroundings, most specifically her son, and as his own eye and heart expand, so do her own: “[S]ie begann die Haide um sich zu sehen, und ihr Geist fing an, die Oeder rings um sich zu bearbeiten” (B 461). Brigitta, in her cultivation of the landscape and herself, develops “das rechte Auge” that she had initially been lacking. She not only sees the Hungarian steppes’ beauty and potential, but also her own. And when she and Stephan are finally reconciled at the end of the novella, it appears that he, too, now possesses “das rechte Auge.” Brigitta attempts to pardon his infidelity as a natural response to the “sanfte[n] Gesetz der Schönheit,” but Stephan corrects her, saying “ja, es zieht uns das Gesetz der Schönheit, aber ich mußte die ganze Welt durchziehen, bis ich lernte, daß sie im Herzen liegt, und das ich sie daheim gelassen” (473). Murai has finally learned to truly appreciate Brigitta’s inner beauty.

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<sup>22</sup> For Stifter, as evidenced by the “Rückblick” chapter in Nachsommer, isolation is anathema to ethical and aesthetic flourishing. Not only the world Brigitta creates in her own head is stunted, but also the world that she and Stephan inhabit alone.

Brigitta's transformation of the landscape also entails a change in her perception of gender. Brigitta's growth, her flourishing, is not just a result of (or parallel to) her cultivation of the "Oede." When Murai leaves she reclaims the male behavior of her childhood and youth. Brigitta changes her name, directs her own affairs, and dresses as a man as she rides through and maintains her estates. To what extent, however, does Brigitta's "gender-bending" have to do with her growth, her flourishing in the wasteland? Critical response to the question of gender has been varied. Rosemarie Hunter-Lougheed, in her detailed analysis of the novel, writes that "Brigitta beschäftigt sich mit der Frage der weiblichen Emanzipation" (359), maintaining that Brigitta is an example of Stifter's literary attempts to create an ideal woman, one equal to men in intellect and ethical development and not restricted by gender expectations of the time. Critic Gerda Wesenauer interprets Brigitta's embrace of male activities not as a move toward "weibliche Emanzipation," but as a continuation of the process she began as a child, the turning away from the mother toward the father. As an adult, she is able to embrace the (superior) values embodied by the male: reason and control. Wesenauer quotes Freud's assertion: "In der Entwicklung des Menschen bedeutet die Wendung von der Mutter zum Vater den Sieg der Geistigkeit über die Sinnlichkeit" (74).

Walter Haußmann sees Brigitta's temporary male behavior as something that ultimately makes her a more ideal woman. Initially, he maintains, both she and Murai were "abnormal," imperfect representatives of their sexes, with Murai possessing feminine traits, and Brigitta displaying masculine characteristics.

Interestingly, according to Haußmann Brigitta ultimately develops into the perfect wife and mother because she retains some male virtues: “Mit hoher Kunst führt der Dichter die Gatten in dem Augenblick wieder zusammen, da Murai das Weibliche von sich abgetan hat und in rechtem schöpferischem Tun ein voller Mann geworden ist und da Brigitta ganz Mutter und Frau geworden ist – ohne doch etwas von ihrer männlichen Tüchtigkeit zu verlieren” (43). Haußmann strictly assigns the act of creation to the male realm. Despite the fact that the major elects to stay with Brigitta at her estate at the end of the novella, Haußmann seems to suggest that Brigitta, at this point, has abandoned her “male” creativity, and returned to the home, the proper place for a mother and wife. The only male characteristic she retains is “Tüchtigkeit,” the efficiency and competence necessary for her to maintain the home for her husband. According to this interpretation, regardless of the degree to which Brigitta embraces masculine virtues, the end result is the same. In the “happy ending” of “Steppengegenwart” Brigitta again becomes Stephan’s wife, and the Biedermeier (patriarchal) family unit is reestablished.

A number of instances suggest, however, that Brigitta – if not her critics – has come to an altogether different understanding of her role in terms of gender. One, as mentioned before, is Brigitta’s reaction to the narrator’s attempts to tip her as “Schaffnerin.” Her amusement at the narrator’s mistaken perception suggests that she is, in a sense, delighting in her playing with gender expectations.<sup>23</sup> Another example

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<sup>23</sup> Over 150 years before Judith Butler coined the term, Brigitta is engaging in “performativity.”

is Brigitta's choice of clothing when Murai and the narrator come to visit Marosheli: "Da sie den Major erwartet hatte, war sie in Frauenkleidern und hatte ihre Geschäfte bei Seite gesetzt, weil sie den Tag für uns widmete" (B 464). It is clear from this statement, and from Brigitta's actions during the visit, that the novel's heroine is able to effortlessly switch from "male" to "female" behavior. In her conversation with the major, for example, Brigitta is an equal partner, at times instructing her friend about business and estate management, or, when she is uncertain, admitting this and learning from the major's knowledge. Her fluctuation between male (instructive, active) and female (passive, receptive) roles is even more pronounced in the 1843 "Journalfassung," where the narrator reports: "[S]ie ging, wie ein Mann in die Sache ein, und wo sie kein Urtheil hatte, war sie wieder ein Weib, und bat mit naiver Unwissenheit den Major um Berichtigung"(247). Brigitta, as she has become more self-certain and self-sufficient, is able to alternate so easily between gender roles because she has realized that her appearance and actions do not truly define who she is. She is the overseer of her workers, mother to her son, manager of her estates, or friend to the major as the situation demands.

Whether or not the character of Brigitta or her creator Stifter makes the connection, gender is as much a construct, a matter of perception, as beauty. By the end of the novella, the narrator no longer describes Brigitta as ugly, but as strong and powerful, with flashing white teeth and beautiful eyes, her face filled with joy and contentment at her life and her friendship with the major: "[D]iese Freude, wie eine späte Blume, blühte auf ihrem Antlitze, und legte einen Hauch von Schönheit



darüber, wie man es kaum glauben sollte, aber auch die feste Rose der Heiterkeit und Gesundheit" (467).<sup>24</sup> And in terms of gender, neither the workers, nor the major (nor, by the end of the story, the narrator) is taken aback by Brigitta's sometimes "masculine" behavior. After Stephan's reunion with Brigitta, he makes no attempt to restrict her to her womanly duties, or to command her movements and actions as he did in their earlier marriage. Instead, he chooses to live with her at her estate, "in der Mitte ihrer Schöpfung." (475).

### 2.13 Breaking Down the Garden Walls

In the opening lines of his novella, Stifter discusses the inner beauty that the human soul senses in unexpected places, "[i]n dem Angesichte eines Häßlichen," for example (411). But the majority of the opening paragraph is devoted to the mysteries of physical attraction, the inexplicable force that draws us to others. As Stifter explains, just as we may see inner beauty in someone who is physically unprepossessing, "[e]ben so fühlen wir uns manchmal zu einem hingezogen, den wir eigentlich gar nicht kennen . . . [wir] haben eine gewisse Sehnsucht, ja eine Liebe zu ihm" (411). Stifter labels this force a "gewissen schönen und sanften Reiz" (411). The words the author chooses, however, to describe this attraction – "hingezogen," "Sehnsucht" – do not suggest beauty or gentle affection, but passion. Whatever

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<sup>24</sup> Twice in this passage Brigitta is referred to in terms of botanical imagery. No longer a "fremde Pflanze," Brigitta is now at harmony with her surroundings and has become a flower.

attracts us to one person, or causes us to be repelled by another, is a physical, indeed a chemical reaction, one that defies the explanations of reason or science.

In his analysis of Stifter's novella, Christian Begemann compares Brigitta's estate in Hungary to the fantasies she created as a child, fantasies whose purpose was to protect her:

Das 'merkwürdige, nur ihr angehörende Reich' der Imagination, in dem sich Brigitta anfänglich einkapselt und von der unempathischen, lieblosen, ja feindseligen Außenwelt isoliert, hat dieselbe formale Gestalt wie ihr späteres Gut Maroshely, das wie eine Oase, wie eine 'Fabel' in der Wüste liegt. (279)

Begemann's statement suggests a different significance for Brigitta's garden in the wilderness. The garden, and Brigitta's estate as a whole, is not simply a locus of cultivation, where wild nature is harnessed to make it beautiful, safe and productive. The garden is also a place of refuge, for despite Brigitta's successful cultivation of her small corner of Hungary, the steppes still harbor dangerous forces. In the novella, these forces are represented by the marauding wolves, which Brigitta has banished from her garden through the erection of a high wall. These dangers are also manifest within herself, in the physical drives and passions that she represses and denies.

Such repression is evident in "jene[m] seltsamen Vertrag" (B 474), the unusual contract between Brigitta and the major in which both agreed, despite their love for one another, to remain friends rather than to remarry. Their trepidation is understandable, for strong emotions drew the two together originally, and led to the destruction of their union. Their first encounters were characterized by yearning glances, passionately stilted conversations, and wild tears (for example, Brigitta's

breakdown in her bedroom). After the couple marry, Murai exclaims that he knew from the beginning that theirs would not be a relationship based upon calm emotions: “Da ich dich das erste Mal sah, wußte ich schon, daß mir dieses Weib nicht gleichgültig bleiben werde; aber ich erkannte noch nicht, werde ich dich unendlich lieben oder unendlich hassen müssen. Wie glücklich ist es gekommen, daß es die Liebe ward!” (456) Passion, in turn, ends the couple’s marriage: the major’s uncontrollable passion for another woman, one who happens to be beautiful. It is no wonder that Brigitta and Murai choose to renew their relationship in the form of companionable friendship, rather than allow the potential of passionate love to destroy their newfound, safe happiness.

Both Brigitta and Murai struggle to control their darker, more emotional sides by entering into their “seltsamen Vertrag.” There is a character in the novella, however, for whom no struggle is necessary, a figure who embodies the very spirit of *agape*, of idealized, passionless love. This is, of course, Gustav, Brigitta’s and Murai’s son. The narrator and the reader first encounter Gustav when he visits the major’s estate to deliver correspondence, and the narrator is struck both by his “außerordentliche[n] Schönheit” (B 429) and the tenderness with which the major behaves toward the boy. Gustav, with his dark soft eyes, possesses an almost feminine beauty, but he also exhibits manly behavior; when attacked by wolves, he defends himself – though unsuccessfully – with the major’s pistols. In riding, Gustav is the perfect synthesis of “male” strength and “female” humility. As the narrator reports, “wenn er zu Pferde saß, so kraftvoll und so demüthig, neigte sich mein

ganzes Wesen zu ihm" (442). Gustav personifies everything his parents – most particularly, Brigitta – idealize. He is beautiful, beloved by all who know him, and most importantly, androgynous, and thus safe from the ravages of passionate (i.e., sexual) love. In a sense, Gustav is the human embodiment of Brigitta's garden: he is aesthetically pleasing and perfectly cultivated, free from any wild drives or impulses.

The wolf attack in the novella's final chapter brings to light the fragility of Brigitta's garden refuge, for it illustrates the folly of attempting to shut out the "wolves." Brigitta may have built high walls around herself and her garden, but she cannot keep emotions and desires at bay any more than she can keep her son safe from all dangers. In fact, what ultimately saves Gustav is passion, the unbridled, adrenaline-driven actions of the major. The narrator recounts approaching the scene of the wolf attack: "Als ich ankam, war er [der Major] schon wie ein verderblich Wunder, wie ein Meteor, mitten unter ihnen [den Wölfen] – der Mann war fast entsetzlich anzuschauen, ohne Rücksicht auf sich, fast selber wie ein Raubthier warf er sich ihnen entgegen" (468). Helena Ragg-Kirkby maintains that this scene implies "that the forces of chaos are necessary for the maintenance of order: only by showing the unbridled energy of the rushing meteor, the savage predator, does the major have the power to rescue Gustav from the wolves" ("Wüste" 211). But the forces at work here are not chaotic. The major's actions are completely natural in light of the extremely stressful and dangerous situation, and the result is not, in fact, the maintenance of order, but a revolutionary change for the novella's main characters.

In the final scene, Brigitta and the major forgive one another, and agree to break their strange contract and renew their marriage. Their reconciliation, however, does not simply represent a return to the status quo, to the state of events before their divorce. When Gustav finally awakens after the attack, Brigitta is by his side, but the major's back is turned on the scene; he is looking out the window into his garden. The narrator notices "daß an seinen Wimpern zwei harte Tropfen hingen," and when he asks the major why he is crying, the older man replies, "Ich habe kein Kind" (472). The major's feelings in this scene are understandable; reduced to a "friend of the family" he is excluded from the parent-child configuration. A reexamination of the garden motif further clarifies his reaction. Like Brigitta, the major has spent his later years in a "garden," perfectly cultivated, perfectly controlled, and perfectly safe. The metaphorical garden walls which he, too, erected for safety's sake have isolated him. Shut off from love, from sex, from true, "wild," nature, he has been left alone, without wife or child. After acting upon his instincts, becoming the fiery "volcano" to save his son, the major seems to realize the emptiness of restricting his life to the garden. Brigitta's response to the major's words suggest that she has undergone a similar change. Her reunion with her former husband is anything but docile: "[D]ann aber vorwärts tretend lag er eines Sturzes in ihren Armen, die sich mit maßloser Heftigkeit um ihn schlossen" (472). With the "boundless ferocity" of her embrace, Brigitta, too, seems to acknowledge the necessity of tearing down the garden walls.

Stifter attempts, through his narrator, to give the novella's conclusion a moral spin. After witnessing the couple's reunion, the narrator ponders: "O wie heilig, o

wie heilig, muß die Gattenlieb sein, und wie arm bist du, der du von ihr bisher nichts erkanntest, und das Herz nur höchstens von der trüben Lohe der Leidenschaft ergreifen ließest" (474). Brigitta, however, does not denigrate the force of passion. She knows that her husband's brief infidelity was "blos natürlich," the result of "ein sanftes Gesetz der Schönheit, das uns zieht" (473). Brigitta's "sanftes Gesetz" "does not carry the moral signification that we know from the preface to Bunte Steine. "When Brigitta uses the term, she is referring to the irresistible pull of physical beauty; she fully acknowledges the needs of passionate, amoral man" (Swales 105). This does not imply that Brigitta and the major will succumb to wildness. The couple's reunion represents a newly-gained sense of harmony and synthesis, an embrace of what had before seemed to be irreconcilable opposites: male and female, cultivation and wildness, dispassionate *agape* and passionate love. Brigitta and the major, in breaking down the garden walls, abandon the illusion of perfect safety and cultivation, and achieve unexpected freedom. In the words of the narrator, watching the reunited couple: "Sie waren wie zwei Menschen, von denen eine große Last genommen ist. Die Welt stand wieder offen" (473).

In Stifter's Brigitta we encounter a very different model of the garden than that described in Finney's Counterfeit Idyll: the garden as ethical construct, as a microcosm of Biedermeier patriarchal control (47). We witness the metamorphosis of Brigitta – labeled by society as ugly because of her "masculine" behavior and appearance – from an isolated, self-loathing girl to an empowered, creative woman.

In working the Hungarian “Öde” Brigitta simultaneously transforms her own inner wasteland. In the process, she learns to accept and value herself, embracing both “male” and “female” aspects of her personality. Murai, and eventually the narrator, are also affected by this process, and develop “das rechte Auge,” the ability to see beyond appearances to beauty and potential. In Brigitta, the protective walls of the garden provide the refuge necessary for these transformations. Only in destroying these walls, however, are Brigitta and Murai able to overcome their fear and individual isolation. In the novella’s conclusion, “wild,” passionate natural forces do not result in the “Entsetzlichen, Zugrunderichtenden” of Stifter’s childhood garden (NB 1292). Instead, they are incorporated into a new, open garden, where gender itself ceases to be a confining or repressive force.

## CHAPTER 3

### *DIE ROSE UND DER CACTUS: DER NACHSOMMER*

Less than a year after the appearance of Brigitta,<sup>1</sup> revolution broke out in the streets of Vienna, and indeed, throughout the Austrian empire. Stifter was filled with enthusiasm: his publisher Heckenast, visiting shortly after the initial uprisings, reportedly found the author “overcome with excitement and with tears of joy in his eyes” (Blackall 245). Months of bloody fighting and overwhelming disorder changed Stifter’s fervor to disappointment. In a letter to Heckenast in early March, 1849, Stifter expressed his disillusionment after the events of “ein[em] fürchterliche[n] Jahr” (SB 119), and his conviction that change could not be achieved through revolution: “Das Ideal der Freiheit ist auf lange Zeit vernichtet, wer sittlich frei ist, kann es staatlich sein, ja ist es immer; den andern können alle Mächte der Erde nicht dazu machen. Es gibt nur eine Macht, die es kann: Bildung” (SB 120).

In Stifter’s Der Nachsommer, published in 1857, the garden is an ideal realm dedicated to the pursuit of “Bildung.” As in Brigitta, it is a protected space, where the novel’s main character, the young Heinrich Drendorf, may grow and learn (albeit at a glacial pace). Unlike the garden in Stifter’s 1847 novella, however, the garden in

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<sup>1</sup> I refer to the “Buchfassung,” published in 1847.



Nachsommer excludes “wild” or unpredictable nature. Any elements that cannot be controlled or “cultivated” are ruthlessly eradicated as if they were weeds or garden pests. As will become clear in the course of this chapter, life in this “paradise” of “Bildung” and “Ordnung” is far from perfect – particularly for the garden’s female inhabitants.

### 3.1 Garden and Rosenhaus: A Symbiosis of Nature and Art

In analyzing Stifter’s works and biography, critics frequently refer to the “Vorrede” of the author’s collection of short stories, Bunte Steine.<sup>2</sup> Friedrich Hebbel had criticized Stifter for devoting himself to the description of minutiae (“Käfer” and “Butterblumen”) while neglecting “das Große” in nature.<sup>3</sup> Stifter responded by presenting his own unique philosophy, one applicable to both nature, and, as he explains later in the “Vorrede,” to humanity:

Das Wehen der Luft das Rieseln des Wassers das Wachsen der  
Getreide das Wogen des Meeres das Grünen der Erde das Glänzen des  
Himmels das Schimmern der Gestirne halte ich für groß: das prächtig  
einherziehende Gewitter, den Bliz, welcher Häuser spaltet, den Sturm,  
der die Brandung treibt, den feuerspeienden Berg, das Erdbeben,

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<sup>2</sup> See, among others, the interpretations of Baumer (117-19), Blackall (258-60), Finney (86), Matz (AS 301-03), and Swales (129-32).

<sup>3</sup> Hebbel’s criticism of Stifter was not limited to the author’s earlier works. In reaction to Nachsommer, for example, he wrote: “Drei starke Bände! Wir glauben nichts zu riskieren, wenn wir demjenigen, der beweisen kann, daß er sie ausgelesen hat, ohne als Kunstrichter dazu verpflichtet zu sein, die Krone von Polen versprechen.” (qtd. in Ragg-Kirkby, Mania 4).

welches Länder verschüttet, halte ich nicht für größer als obige Erscheinungen, ja ich halte sie für kleiner, weil sie nur Wirkungen von viel höherer Geseze sind. (10)

It is striking to read the “Vorrede” in conjunction with Stifter’s earlier works (the Studien, for example) and the stories within Bunte Steine. Destructive natural phenomena abound, from the lightning that strikes Abdias’ daughter dead, to the hailstorm and devastating fire of “Kazensilber.” The children in “Bergkristall” may survive the ice storm, but the unearthly, fantastic glacial landscape through which they wander is hardly a gentle or common natural phenomenon. Yet Stifter, particularly in the Studien, elevates cultivated nature, whether in the form of a farm or garden, as an example of nature perfected, nature that reflects the “sanftes Gesez.”<sup>4</sup> In Abdias, the main character retreats to a rural, idyllic paradise with his daughter; in the sturdy house, surrounded by well-tended gardens and fields, he is – at least temporarily – safe from the dangers that plagued him in the desert. And, as we have seen, in Brigitta the garden stands out as a new Eden, a place where nature and the human spirit attain full fruition. Still, in both of these earlier works, the garden is a fragile idyll, constantly threatened by the destructive forces of man and nature. In his

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<sup>4</sup> See Zoldester 41: “Stifter schätzt und beschreibt den Ackerbau als eine der ursprünglichsten Beschäftigungen des Menschen, die in ihrer Unschuld, in ihrer Leidenschaftslosigkeit noch am ehesten an den paradiesischen Zustand grenzt . . . Eine solche Bebauung, sei sie nun Acker-, Forst- oder Gartenwirtschaft, bedeutet wahrhafte Kultur für Stifter, da dieselbe sich den Gesetzen und Lebensbedingungen der Naturdinge anpasst, ja die letzteren fürsorglich und sachgerecht verbessert und ihnen auf diese Weise hilft, ihr Eigensein voll zu entwickeln.”

late masterpiece, Der Nachsommer, Stifter seems to have found a setting in which “große,” that is, benevolent, natural occurrences prevail: the Asperhof, a garden paradise whose central structure is covered with roses.

When Heinrich Drendorf, Nachsommer’s narrator, makes his way up the hill to the Asperhof, nature itself seems to spotlight the Rosenhaus, as if to emphasize its idyllic perfection:

Es [das Haus] war, da schon ein großer Theil des Landes . . . im Schatten lag, noch hell beleuchtet und sah mit einladendem schimmerndem Weiß in das Grau und Blau der Landschaft hinaus. . . . Das Haus war über und über mit Rosen bedeckt . . .: die Rosen schienen sich das Wort gegeben zu haben, alle zur selber Zeit aufzubrechen, um das Haus in einen Überwurf der reizendsten Farbe und in eine Wolke der süßesten Gerüche zu hüllen. . . . Die Sonne, die noch immer gleichsam einzig auf dieses Haus schien, gab den Rosen und den grünen Blättern derselben gleichsam goldene und feurige Farben (I: 46-48).<sup>5</sup>

The house appears before the wanderer like an enchanted cottage in a Grimm’s fairy tale. Its owner, too, seems initially to be a story-book figure: He is dressed unconventionally, in a long, knee-length house coat, and an uncovered halo of white hair surrounds his curiously ageless face. The older man’s enigmatic nature is intensified by his failure to provide his name (not until a later visit to the city does the narrator learn his host’s identity, Freiherr von Risach). When the narrator expresses his desire to wait out the approaching storm, the mysterious master of the house insists that, despite the darkening skies and rising winds, no storm will come. The weather soon clears, leaving the narrator to question his host as to the method behind his prediction. The older man’s response is perfectly reasonable: the garden’s animal

occupants, namely the bees and the ants, were undisturbed by the black clouds, and their uninterrupted activity led to the conclusion that the skies would, in fact, clear.

“[I]ch [kann] sagen, daß nach meinen bisherigen Erfahrungen gestern keines der Thierchen in meinem Garten ein Zeichen von Regen gegeben hat, wir mögen von den Bienen anfangen, welche in diesen Zweigen summen, und bis zu den Ameisen gelangen, die ihre Puppen an der Planke meines Gartens in die Sonne legen, oder zu dem Springkäfer, der sich seine Speise trocknet” (1: 123).

True to the “gentle law,” the owner of the Rosenhaus has learned to recognize the importance and significance of nature’s smallest manifestations.

The safety provided by the Rosenhaus and its environs is therefore not due to mysterious or magical powers, but is the result of its owner’s ability to “read” natural signs; through his application of the laws of reason Risach is able to predict and control nature. Unlike Brigitta, Risach does not need to protect his garden with tall walls. Instead, he ensures its safety by the imposition of perfect order, thereby insuring that the “nature” in his garden is not only beautiful, but useful and absolutely predictable. In addition to beds of ornamental flowers (all perfectly maintained), the garden contains vegetable plots and orchards of fruit trees. Each type of vegetable and tree is meticulously labeled to identify its type, and Risach’s employees frequently scrub the tree trunks to keep them immaculately clean. The garden also encompasses greenhouses, containing more delicate or exotic plants, such as Risach’s collection of cacti. Heinrich is struck not only by the intense order of the garden, but also by the fact that there are no pests; none of the plants bears any trace of

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<sup>5</sup> All references to Der Nachsommer include the volume number (1, 2, or 3).

destruction by insects. When Heinrich asks for an explanation, Risach replies that seeds are hung in the trees of the garden to attract birds from the forest: “Die Vögel sind in diesem Garten unser Mittel gegen Raupen und schädliches Ungeziefer. Diese sind es, welche die Bäume Gesträuche die kleinen Pflanzen und natürlich auch die Rosen weit besser reinigen, als es Menschenhände oder was immer für Mittel zu bewerkstelligen im Stande wären” (1: 152). These birds simultaneously rid the garden of pests and fill the air with their beautiful song.

Risach regards nature as his teacher, for its manifestations reveal to him the secrets of the “gentle law.” But the perfectly landscaped gardens illustrate that Risach is not simply a passive pupil: as nature’s law instructs and forms his internal “Sittengesetz,” Risach, in turn, forms nature. To return once again to the “Vorrede” of Bunte Steine, the mild and pleasant phenomena of nature best reflect the “sanftes Gesez.” By taming and cultivating nature, Risach hopes to intensify the edifying effects of this law. Interestingly, the reasons underlying Risach’s careful control of nature are similar to those behind the strict sense of order and discipline Heinrich’s father maintained in the Drendorf family home.<sup>6</sup>

Risach’s extensive cultivation of the garden also demonstrates his (and his creator Stifter’s) faith in the importance and power of beauty. Stifter, a disciple of the classical aesthetic, believed that beauty exercises a central ethical function. Its

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<sup>6</sup> In his article “The Transformation of the Garden,” Carl Schorske explores the phenomenon of ordering and aestheticizing nature in Nachsommer. For both Risach and the older Drendorf, Schorske writes, “[t]he well-ordered environment was the key to the well-ordered soul, and together they composed the well-ordered world” (285).

presence brings about the blossoming of the human spirit, and its contemplation should result in moral improvement. The preference for mediated reality – art – is illustrated by the organization of the novel: Stifter devotes many more pages to the discussion of aesthetics than to the descriptions of nature. Risach's treatment of nature also supports this elevation of aesthetics, for he uses nature to provide both form and material for art. While leading a tour of the estate, Risach shows the young man how he has been able to discover material for art even in the most malformed trees, stunted, twisted alders growing in a swampy plot. By sawing into the bases of these trees, he explains, one reveals "die schönste Gestaltung von Farbe und Zeichnung in Ringen Flammen und allerlei Schlangen-zügen . . . , so daß diese Gattung Erlenholz sehr gesucht für Schreinerarbeiten und sehr kostbar ist" (1: 139).

The Rosenhaus is a microcosm of Risach's estate and, more specifically, of his gardens. Within its confines, absolute order prevails. The house is constructed of the most beautiful and precious materials, and Risach protects these treasures scrupulously; going so far as to insist that visitors wear felt shoes when treading on the delicate marble tiles of the main entrance. Each room is dedicated to a specific purpose, whether to reading, eating, sleeping or, most importantly, to the contemplation and discussion of art. During a tour through the Rosenhaus, Heinrich is struck by the wealth of costly books, valuable paintings by old masters, finely-worked marble and wood samples, and exquisitely-restored antique furniture. In the central hall stands a perfectly restored statue of ancient Greece, the "Marmorstandbild" that testifies to both Risach's love of classical values and his

elevation of art. For Stifter – and for his creation Risach – “Die Kunst ist . . . ein so Hohes und Erhabenes, sie ist . . . nach der Religion das Höchste auf Erden” (BSV 9). Where Risach’s garden embodies the perfection of nature, his Rosenhaus is a shrine dedicated to art, a temple where the human spirit may grow and flourish.

To emphasize the parallel between the cultivation of both plants and humans, the house is imbued with reminders of nature and the garden outside. Every room on the main floor has windows opening out to the garden’s well-tended beds and trees. In the reading room where the narrator Heinrich spends several hours of his first day at the Rosenhaus, Risach has “achieved an almost Japanese interpenetration of indoors and outdoors” (Schorske 190). The windows are open, covered with a delicate screen of gray silk that allows a breeze and birdsong to enter the room. Gentle sunlight filters through the pale gray screen, and the narrator has the impression that he is sitting “nicht in einem Zimmer, sondern im Freien, und zwar in einem stillen Walde” (1: 55). In the house’s main hall, where Risach displays his statues, light from the surrounding windows plays on the marble figures, and the air is filled with the scent of roses from the garden. Botanical motifs also appear throughout the Rosenhaus, from the furniture carved with delicate leaves and flowers to the iron roses wrought in the window shutters.

The Rosenhaus is the center, the focal point, of Risach’s garden idyll. From the ground to the roof it is covered by a blanket of roses, each labeled according to its type. Training the roses to climb and cover the house has been an act of intense cultivation: the flowers’ beauty is the result of an intricate irrigation system and a

lattice that allows air to circulate among the leaves and blossoms. Above all else in the garden, these roses epitomize both Stifter's and Risach's dedication to perfecting nature, to eliciting the "sanftes Gesez." The garden, like the house, is very much a work of art. On the first day of Heinrich's visit to the Asperhof, Risach ends their extensive tour of the garden grounds at a cherry tree, planted at the summit of a tall hill. The tree marks the end of the garden. Seated on the benches surrounding its base, the observer is able to view the entire landscape, perfectly laid out before him like a painting. Risach explains to his young protégé that this was his intent, that he chose the summit, transplanted the fully-grown cherry tree from a nearby field, and organized the estate and garden to obtain the most ideal view possible.<sup>7</sup>

### 3.2 "Der König in seinem kleinen Reiche"

*Haus und Hof, Acker, Wiese, Wald, Garten, wenn auch nur von mittelmäßiger Ausdehnung, ist das Königreich des bescheidenen fleißigen Besitzers. Er ist der König in seinem kleinen Reiche, die Gattin die Königin, Kinder und Dienstboten ihr Volk, welchem sie durch gute Sitten, Redlichkeit und Fleiß vorzugehen haben.*<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> In addition to the cherry, Risach supervised the transplanting of numerous other adult trees. He explains to Heinrich, "Wir haben sie im Winter mit einem großen Erdballen ausgegraben, sie mit Anwendung von Seilen ungelegt, hieher geführt, und mit Hilfe von Hebeln und Balken in die vorgerichteten gut zubereiteten Gruben gesenkt." As if rejoicing in their new position in the artful landscape, the trees flourished: "Waren die Zweige und Äste gehörig gekürzt, so schlugen sie im Frühlinge desto kräftiger an, gleichsam als wären die Bäume zu neuem Leben erwacht" (NS 1: 128-29).

<sup>8</sup> From an 1861 edition of Landwirtschaftliche Zeitung von und für Oberösterreich (qtd. in Wagner 155).



Risach's devotion to method, science and rationality dispel any illusion Heinrich (or the reader) might have of the older man being some sort of fairy tale enchanter in his idyllic garden. Instead, Risach is "der König in seinem kleinen Reiche," a strict, if generally benevolent ruler of his underlings. In his home and in his gardens countless rules must be obeyed: felt slippers must be worn to protect the marble floors, books must be returned immediately to their proper place on the shelves, and, as Risach sternly reminds the narrator, "nur erinnert euch, daß ich gestern gesagt habe, daß in diesem Hause um zwölf Uhr zu Mittag gegessen wird" (1: 130). (Not just the elevation of art, but punctuality and order are of inestimable importance in Risach's "kingdom"). The garden must be kept free of dying or decaying plants, its tree trunks painstakingly cleaned, and under no circumstances may a flower be plucked without the master's permission. Like Murai in Brigitta, Risach sees his role as model and instructor for his servants, friends and neighbors. An early conversation with the narrator reveals Risach's attitude to be that of a patient, if rather condescending teacher: "Sie sind im ganzen ungebildete aber nicht ungelehrige Leute. . . . Sie ahmen nach, wenn sie etwas durch längere Erfahrung billigen. Man muß nur nicht ermüden. Oft haben sie mich zuerst verlacht, und endlich dann doch nachgeahmt. In Vielem verlachen sie mich noch, und ich ertrage es" (1: 72-73). Risach does not, however, tolerate such behavior in his servants and workers. They must unquestioningly carry out his instructions, and those who do not are summarily dismissed ("[D]er, welcher wiederholt den Anordnungen nicht nachkömmt, [wird] des Dienstes entlassen" (1: 125).

During his first visit at the Rosenhaus, the narrator notices that his host repeatedly uses the words “uns” and “unser” when referring to his estate and property, and assumes the young boy he has encountered earlier – Gustav – to be Risach’s son. This assumption is mistaken, but Risach, though he has neither wife nor children, does have a family of sorts. His neighbor and friend Mathilde serves as his queen (his “Königin”) whenever she and her daughter Natalie visit the Rosenhaus. At the beginning of each of these visits, Mathilde greets and inspects every member of the staff, from the housekeeper to the lowest chambermaid, thanking them for their care of Risach and her son Gustav, and giving each servant a small token of her largesse. Mathilde presides at table with Risach, and the narrator notes that his mentor treats her as if she were, indeed, the lady and mother of the house: “Mir fiel es auf, daß er die Frau als ersten Gast zu dem Plaze mit den Tellern geführt hatte, den in meiner Eltern Hause meine Mutter einnahm, und von dem aus sie vorlegte” (1: 247). Like Risach, Mathilde is devoted to “Bildung” and the worship of art and beauty, and like a good wife, she defers to her male sovereign in all matters. Whereas in Brigitta the heroine both offered and solicited advice from her male counterpart, Mathilde seeks Risach’s approval before making or pursuing any decision. She undertakes renovations to her own home, the Sternenhof, only after consulting Risach, and unquestioningly defers to her friend’s superior knowledge and “Bildung.” The two households, Asperhof and Sternenhof, form a family unit, albeit a somewhat untraditional one.

Stifter envisioned Nachsommer as presenting, if not specifically a utopia, an alternative to the times in which he lived.<sup>9</sup> Writing to his friend and publisher Gustav Heckenast on February 11, 1858, the author explained, “Ich habe wahrscheinlich das Werk [Nachsommer] der Schlechtigkeit willen gemacht, die im allgemeinen mit einigen Ausnahmen in den Staatsverhältnissen der Welt, in dem sittlichen Leben derselben und in der Dichtkunst herrscht. Ich habe eine große, einfache, sittliche Kraft der elenden Verkommenheit gegenüberstellen wollen” (SB 204). In the novel itself, the “Schlechtigkeit” of which Stifter is critical barely finds mention; the author condemns the conditions of his time more by their omission from Nachsommer and the lives of its characters. The narrator, Heinrich, spends the majority of his younger years in the suburbs of the city, in the protective isolation of the patriarchal family unit. Risach has abandoned urban life and politics and retired permanently to the simplicity and clarity of the country. When the city is actually depicted, there is no mention of the problems of modern society, only of high culture (for example, a production of “King Lear”) and Heinrich’s increasing social interactions with the aristocracy. It is as if the industrial age had never arrived.

The Rosenhaus, the narrator observes, bears many similarities to the home of his own parents. Though Heinrich’s father is a merchant, he, like the aristocratic Risach, is devoted to the collection and admiration of the old masters and antiquities (if more for their monetary than aesthetic worth). Both men revere the past and its

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<sup>9</sup> For a detailed discussion of the concept of “utopia,” see Müller, “Utopie und Bildungsroman. Strukturuntersuchungen zu Stifters ‘Nachsommer’” (199-228).

values. The “utopia” embodied in the Asperhof, therefore, does not look to the future, but to the past. For Stifter, the “große einfache sittliche Kraft” he wishes to portray can only exist by returning to a pre-industrial era, one whose inhabitants are devoted to the care and cultivation of the land. Yet Risach is not completely disdainful of progress, for he seeks to incorporate some modern developments into his “[r]ückwärtsgewandte Utopie” (Glaser 1). In the Rosenhaus, for example, equipment and tools (“Werkzeuge der Naturlehre aus der neuesten Zeit” [1: 91]) for conducting research in the natural sciences fill one room. The experiments and studies carried out in this laboratory have clearly contributed to the “perfection” of Risach’s gardens and his Rosenhaus. In addition, on the estate he maintains his own tiny “factory,” a workshop dedicated to the renovation of antique furniture. Risach’s factory displays none of the usual problems attributed to its industrial counterparts: it is filled with light, characterized by “Ordnung und Einheit,” its workers educated, respected and comfortably supported in all their needs.

The garden in Nachsommer may in fact be read as “a metaphor for the author’s ideal conception of the progression of history” (Finney 91). In a conversation between Risach and Heinrich towards the end of the second book, the older man’s remarks about the history of civilization reveal a firm confidence in the future of humanity. Risach foresees a time when advances in communication and technology will render the great distances between cities and countries insignificant. Both knowledge and goods will become more immediately accessible, and although Risach sees the danger of certain states becoming powerful and threatening to others

through more rapid development, he is optimistic that the future will ultimately bring both harmony and greatness: “[E]s wird eine Abklärung folgen, die Übermacht des Stoffes wird vor dem Geiste, der endlich doch siegen wird, eine bloße Macht werden, die er gebraucht, und weil er einen neuen menschlichen Gewinn gemacht hat, wird eine Zeit der Größe kommen, die in der Geschichte noch nicht dagewesen ist” (2: 228). As this passage illustrates, Stifter – as well as his creation Risach – supported progress, but progress occurring at a slow, calm, and steady rate.

The model of reform presented in Nachsommer may reflect economic and social progress (i.e., “Bauernemanzipation”), but the traditional and patriarchal customs remain firmly ensconced (Wagner 156). In other words, though perfectly willing to enrich his garden, home and pocketbook through the application of modern scientific and economic methods, Risach still sees himself in the role of feudal lord: “Es ist in der That sehr zu bedauern,” he laments at one point, “daß die alte Sitte abgekommen ist, daß der Herr des Hauses zugleich mit den Seinigen und seinem Gesinde beim Mahle sitzt” (1: 135). Risach longs for a day when his servants and workers will once again see themselves as “belonging” to their master and his family, for as he explains to his protégé Heinrich,

weil alles, was im Staate und in der Menschlichkeit gut ist, von der Familie kömmt, so werden sie nicht blos gute Dienstleute, die den Dienst lieben, sondern leicht auch gute Menschen, die in einfacher Frömmigkeit an dem Hause wie an einer unverrückbaren Kirche hängen und denen der Herr ein zuverlässiger Freund ist. (1: 135)

### 3.3 “Mächtige Bewegungen”: Cracks in the Façade

Stifter envisions Risach and his “family” – Mathilde, Natalie, Gustav, and, peripherally, Heinrich – as models for proper behavior in the morally impoverished modern world. Each of the characters in Nachsommer seems to conform to Stifter’s ideal of humanity as set forth in Bunte Steine’s “Vorrede”:

So wie es in der äußeren Natur ist, so ist es auch in der inneren, in der des menschlichen Geschlechtes. Ein ganzes Leben voll Gerechtigkeit Einfachheit Bezwungung seiner selbst Verstandesgemäßheit Wirksamkeit in seinem Kreise Bewunderung des Schönen verbunden mit einem heiteren gelassenen Sterben halte ich für groß . . . (12)

Risach, at least the older Risach, appears to epitomize this ideal, as does his “queen” Mathilde. Quiet and self-composed, Mathilde is constantly compared to a rose, one that, though past its prime, still possesses a gentle beauty and grace. Her children are also idealized figures: Gustav is handsome, intelligent and unquestioningly obedient, his sister, Natalie, the quintessence of Schiller’s “schöne Seele.” Heinrich, as the central figure of this Bildungsroman, may have much to learn from his mentor, but at no point is he guilty of the excesses against which Stifter warns in the “Vorrede”: “[M]ächtige Bewegungen des Gemüthes furchtbar einherrollenden Zorn die Begier nach Rache den entzündeten Geist, der nach Thätigkeit strebt, umreißt, ändert, zerstört, und in der Erregung oft das eigene Leben hinwirft” (12).

Like the garden, which represents ideal nature, Stifter’s characters are a manifestation of ideal human nature. The “sanftes Gesez” rules both the garden and its inhabitants, and no storms or earthquakes, natural or emotional, can disturb the

peace of this idyll. Nevertheless, there are moments when “mächtige Bewegungen des Gemüthes” break through the characters’ contented and elevated facades. One of the first of such instances occurs upon the first visit of Natalie and Mathilde to the Rosenhaus. The narrator, who up to this point has been Risach’s only guest, is overwhelmed by feelings of jealousy. After viewing the women’s arrival from behind a corner of the house, he slinks upstairs and sits silently in his room. Even after meeting the visitors he remains “stumm,” not only because he feels alienated from the group, but also due to his growing interest in Natalie. Again, this strong emotion is only hinted at obliquely: when the artist Roland visits later in the chapter, the narrator notices “daß er mehrere Male seine dunkeln Augen länger auf Natalien heftete, als mir schicklich erscheinen wollte” (1: 269). Heinrich’s behavior during Natalie’s and Mathilde’s initial visit indicates depths of passion and emotion the reader would not necessarily expect from him – jealousy, desire and resentment. After the arrival of the two women he feels himself, figuratively speaking, banished from the garden. And it is these intense emotions, these immoderate feelings, that lead to his temporary alienation.

Later in the “Begegnung” chapter, another character exhibits extreme behavior. When saying farewell to Risach, the usually composed Mathilde breaks down in tears, gesturing to her son Gustav and referring to him as “[m]eine größte Schuld . . . , welche ich wohl nie werde tilgen können” (1: 277). Not until the third book of Nachsommer does the reader learn the reason for Mathilde’s sorrow and shame: Gustav is the child of a loveless marriage, a marriage that resulted when she

and Risach destroyed their own chances of a fruitful and happy union when they succumbed to “inappropriate” passions. And though the now staid and mature Risach attempts to convince Mathilde that hers is a sin that requires no “Tilgung,” nature itself seems to reflect her sense of loss, her regret for a wasted life. As the two stand and say their goodbyes, “ein leichtes Morgenlüftchen [wehte] einige Blätter der abgeblühten Rosen zu ihren Füßen” (1: 277). These withered petals are a reminder of Mathilde’s and Risach’s expulsion from another garden, an event described later in the “Rückblick” chapter. Interestingly, Mathilde’s outburst of emotion in this scene occurs as she is leaving Risach’s garden. The garden at the Asperhof is not a place for any behavior that deviates from the objective and dispassionate ideals of the “gentle law.”

In fact, as the behavior of another character indicates, the garden’s atmosphere can be, at times, stifling. Natalie most clearly experiences this repression. During a visit to the Rosenhaus, she returns from a walk later than expected, and her mother questions her about her whereabouts. Natalie replies:

Ich bin zu mehreren Rosenstellen in dem Garten gegangen. . . . [I]ch bin zwischen den Gebüschten neben den Zwergobstbäumen und unter den großen Bäumen, dann zu dem Kirschbaume empor und von da in das Freie hinaus gegangen. Dort standen die Saaten und es blühten Blumen zwischen den Halmen und in dem Grase. Ich ging auf dem schmalen Wege zwischen den Getreiden fort, ich kam zur Felderrast, saß dort ein wenig, ging dann auf dem Getreidehügel auf mehreren Rainen ohne Weg zwischen den Feldern herum, pflückte diese Blumen, und ging dann wieder in den Garten zurück. (2: 194-95)

This passage is significant in a number of respects. Natalie begins her walk among the roses, but she soon moves beyond Risach’s perfectly tended blooms. Struggling



with her growing feelings for Heinrich, emotions restricted and repressed in the garden, Natalie turns away and passes out of the garden's boundaries into "das Freie."<sup>10</sup> She meanders "ohne Weg" through the fields of grain (grain being the realm of Ceres, the Greek goddess of the harvest and fertility), picking wild flowers where they grow. At this moment, Natalie, though not as abandoned as her mother had once been, is a "weed," a flower out of place, unsubmitive to the gardener's hand. She enjoys this time away from the garden, and takes pleasure in the sensual warmth of the sun on her hair and body: "Ich empfinde mich in ihr [der Sonne] sehr wohl und sehr frei, ich werde nicht müde, und die Wärme des Körpers stärkt mich eher, als daß sie mich drückt" (2: 195). Later, when Heinrich chances upon Natalie on a walk she simply remarks, "Ich gehe gerne herum, wo ich nicht beengt bin" (2: 202).

Thus, "within this portrayal of a cherishing and cherished life, there are persistent hints of a blighted centre" (Swales 116). In the garden itself, these hints are limited, for Risach has obliterated any dangerous or "blighted" natural elements. To maintain the sanctity and safety of his idyll, Risach is willing to repress nature, to force it to conform to unnatural dimensions. He will even resort to ruthless means to guarantee that the "sanftes Gesez" is manifested in the Asperhof. We learn, for example, that any dogs or cats who cannot learn to leave the songbirds alone are

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<sup>10</sup> The roses in Risach's garden are very different from their counterparts in Nachsommer's "Rückblick" chapter. Unlike those in the garden of young Mathilde's and Risach's trysts, these roses promise neither passion nor even the possibility of erotic encounter.

banished or destroyed. And when birds from outside the garden threaten Risach's insect-control aviary, he uses his musket to drive them away or to kill them. Behind this compulsion to control and order nature (one thinks of the impeccably scrubbed tree-trunks and camellia leaves, the meticulously labeled flowers and plants) lies fear, fear of perceived chaos, of "mächtige[n] Bewegungen des Gemüthes." The genesis of this fear may be found in another garden, the garden of Risach's and Mathilde's youth.

### 3.4 The "Rückblick" to the Garden of Love

"Der Rückblick," the penultimate chapter of Nachsommer, is, essentially, the crux of the entire "Erzählung". Finally, after seven years of guiding and teaching his protégé, Risach feels that Heinrich is ready to hear of the great failure of his youth, the event which led to his bittersweet love of the rose, and to the "Indian summer" of his relationship with Mathilde. As a young man, Risach works diligently to rise above extremely impoverished and rural beginnings. He eventually becomes a successful tutor in the city, only to be emotionally devastated by the death of his mother and only sister. Having entered service as instructor for the son of a wealthy landowner, he is obviously jealous and further depressed by his charge's loving and affluent family situation. When Risach falls in love with his employers' teenage daughter, Mathilde, his declaration of devotion comes on the heels of his statement: "Ich habe keinen Vater keine Mutter und keine Geschwister mehr" (3: 186). His love

for Mathilde is therefore based on extreme emotions – passion fueled by envy and loneliness – and intensified by the necessity of keeping their relationship a secret from her parents. The young Mathilde, who in later life is calm and dispassionate, responds to her admirer with equally intense passion. When he asks if she loves him, she cries out: “Gustav, Gustav, so außerordentlich, wie es gar nicht auszusprechen ist,” and Risach bursts into tears (3: 187).

In this chapter, the garden mirrors the lovers’ feelings. Although it is late summer and past the time of the roses, Risach reports, “es war als blühten und glühten alle Rosen um das Haus” (3: 189). The garden glows with reds, oranges and pinks, the colors of fire and passion, and these colors are reflected in Mathilde: “Sie stand wie eine feurige Flamme da, und mein ganzes Wesen zitterte” (3: 191). The lovers meet in an arbor, heavy with grapes, the fruits of Dionysus, the god of wine and unfettered sexuality. Stifter never elaborates specifically on the sexual “Triebe” of his characters, but his choice of words makes these feelings clear: “Sehnen,” “Erregung,” “Glut,” “Gefühl . . . wie ein Sturmwind” (3: 188-89). And Risach’s and Mathilde’s actions as they wander through the garden suggest a symbolic if not literal consummation of their relationship. While wandering through the gardens, Mathilde picks a leaf from the grape arbor and Gustav hides it close to his heart, while she pins the flower he gives her to her breast. Even more telling, Gustav plucks the stem of a rose (“was eigentlich nicht erlaubt war”) and gives it to his lover. Any doubts about the sexual implication of this action, the symbolic “deflowering” of Mathilde, are removed by her subsequent action: she modestly turns away, “und da sie sich wieder

uns zugewandt, hatte sie den Rosenzweig bei sich verborgen" (3: 190). The significance of this "plucking" is clearly not lost on Mathilde. All that is missing is the drop of blood from the rose's thorn.

The language of the "Rückblick" chapter is riddled with Romantic topoi. Whereas in the Rosenhaus of Risach's maturity, even the most fabulous "natural" occurrences are scientifically modified and perfected (i.e., the house covered with perfect roses, the complete absence of destructive insects, the song of birds one would expect to hear only in the forest) the idyllic garden setting of the "Rückblick" chapter exists without explanation. It is as if the garden flourishes and blossoms in reflection of the lovers' emotions. For once in this book, words fail completely. The lovers communicate through signs and hieroglyphs, passing each other books with appropriate romantic passages, playing music for one another, or arranging flowers "welche von unserer Vergangenheit redeten, die so kurz und doch so lang war" (3: 193). When the lovers do speak, they stammer almost incoherently, overwhelmed by their emotions: "'Mathilde, dein auf immer und auf ewig, nur dein allen, und nur dein nur dein allein!' 'O ewig dein, ewig, ewig, Gustav, dein, nur dein, und nur dein allein'" (3: 193).<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Christine Oertel Sjögren suggests in her article "Mathilde and the Roses" that Stifter intentionally employs language reminiscent of Romanticism to denigrate the overly-subjective and excessively emotional aspects of that movement: "Abounding in violence, extravagance, overstatement, and even cliché, the stylistic tone of this episode is in as questionable taste as the behavior of Risach and Mathilde is indiscreet" (404). It could be countered that after hundreds of pages of characters who are simply chaste mouthpieces for ideology, the portrayal of figures who react, suffer, and embrace life's extremes is a relief.

The family returns to their country estate after wintering in the city, and Mathilde and Risach once again meet in the garden. The language describing their encounters reflects a further deepening of feeling for one another: the arbor and the little garden Rosenhaus have been transformed to temples to the gods of love and sexuality, Aphrodite and Dionysus. The “Weinlaubengang . . . war ein Heligtum geworden” and the “Gartenhaus . . . umgab uns wie ein stiller Tempel” (3: 196-197). Stifter repeatedly emphasizes the exclusivity of the lovers’ relationship. While all three characters (Risach, Mathilde and her brother Albert) enter the Rosenhaus, only “zwei Gemüther wallten.” Mathilde and Risach are completely intertwined, and the “Verbindungsfäden wuchsen Tausendfach” (NS 3: 197). The two are finally guilty of the greatest sin in Stifter’s eyes: completely self-focussed, they shut out all other relationships, particularly that of family.<sup>12</sup> In addition, the lovers’ excessive emotions directly violate the “gentle law” and the strict sense of “Sittlichkeit” Stifter holds in such high regard. Eventually, aware that the holiness he and Mathilde have experienced in the arbor and Rosenhaus is tarnished, Risach decides that the secrecy of their relationship must end. As must be expected, Mathilde’s mother and father

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<sup>12</sup> Per Klaus-Detlef Müller, “die Liebe [zwischen Risach und Mathilde] ist hier als Entfernung aus dem Familienverband schuldhaft und heillos und scheitert darum notwendig. Diese Konsequenz ist mit der Wertdimension, die der Familie im Roman eignet, unvermeidlich” (224). See also Lorenz 102 and Sjögren “Configuration” 190-96 for discussions regarding Stifter’s concept of ideal love between two people – such love may not exclude other important relationships, be they with family, friends or God.

object to their union, on the grounds that the lovers are young and have not attained the maturity, education, and, in Risach's case, career success necessary to successfully sustain a marriage.

The symbol of the rose binds the "Rückblick" chapter to the rest of Stifter's Nachsommer. The Rosenhaus Risach eventually models his own home upon is the Gartenhaus at Heinbach (the estate of Mathilde's parents). The rose takes on particular significance when examined in conjunction with the love affair between the youthful Risach and Mathilde. As the flower associated with both Venus and the Virgin Mary, the rose has come to symbolize both erotic and sacred love; in the "Rückblick" chapter of Nachsommer, the rose is clearly that of Venus.<sup>13</sup> When Risach explains to Mathilde that he will submit to her parents' wishes and leave her, she kneels among the roses and prays to them as if to the goddess of love herself: "Hört es, ihr tausend Blumen, die herabschauten, als er diese Lippen küßte, höre es du, Weinlaub, das den flüsternden Schwur der ewigen Treue vernommen hat, ich habe ihn geliebt, wie es mit keiner Zunge in keiner Sprache ausgesprochen werden kann" (3: 206). Mathilde refuses to hear Risach's rational explanation that the separation will only be for a few years, insisting that her lover's decision is a permanent betrayal of their love. He has made it impossible for her ever to belong with him, "weil er den Zauber zerstört hat, der alles band, den Zauber, der ein

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<sup>13</sup> See Stillmark 84-92 and Sjögren, "Mathilde" 401- 402 for further analysis of the rose's significance in Nachsommer.

unzerreißbares Aneinanderhalten in die Jahre der Zukunft und in die Ewigkeit malte” (3: 207). Mathilde epitomizes Stifter’s greatest fears: complete lack of moderation and abandonment to the excesses of passion.

Risach’s reaction to Mathilde’s despair marks a turning point in the story, and a shift in the roses’ significance. Gripping the thorns of the roses, he lets the blood flow down his hand. The Christ-like imagery is unmistakable: the roses become symbols of transcendent rather than earthly love. When Risach, years later, creates his own Rosenhaus, it is no longer a haven for lovers’ trysts, but a shrine to art and beauty. And when an older and sadder Mathilde comes to him to beg forgiveness, the roses’ meaning has changed for her as well. Risach offers to remove the roses from his home out of concern that they will elicit painful memories in Mathilde, but she refuses, explaining that to her they have become “das Theuerste” (3: 221). Sorrow has been transformed to calm acceptance. When the older Risach and his little “family” gather to admire the blossoming of the roses, Mathilde, now the lady of the roses, sits at the group’s center, a Mary figure of redemption and agape.

### 3.5 The Iron Rose

Only after the “Rückblick” chapter does the narrator – and the reader – understand the significance of the roses for Risach and Mathilde, and the reason behind their near religious devotion to these flowers. Risach’s drive for order and control in his garden also becomes more understandable as a logical attempt to atone

for the excesses of the past. And because erotic love has brought nothing but suffering to Risach's life, all sexual passion is excluded from the Asperhof. Here the garden is clearly an example of framed, controlled nature – nature become art. Nothing untoward will take place within the environs of the Rosenhaus; no grape arbor will conceal a secret tryst. Every vista is public, the entire area visible from the cherry tree at the summit of Risach's estate. This is not to say that love does not exist in this garden. Instead of indulging in possessive, exclusionary desire, however, the characters in Risach's garden admire and respect each other as manifestations of an ideal – the ideal of perfectly cultivated humanity. This is illustrated by Natalie's declaration of love for Heinrich in "Der Bund" chapter:

"[I]ch sah, wie ihr die Dinge dieser Erde liebtet, wie ihr ihnen nachginget und wie ihr sie in eurer Wissenschaft hegtet – ich sah, wie ihr meine Mutter verehrtet, unsern Freund hochachtetet, den Knaben Gustav beinahe liebtet, von eurem Vater eurer Mutter und eurer Schwester nur mit Ehrerbietung sprachet, und da . . . liebte ich euch, weil ihr so einfach so gut und doch so ernst seid." (2: 261)<sup>14</sup>

In her article "The Configuration of Ideal Love in Stifter's *Der Nachsommer*," Sjögren maintains that for Stifter all forms of love are equally elevated; heterosexual love may predominate in his stories, but love between parents and children, between friends and between siblings is just as valid. "[L]ove, by Stifter's definition, means inclination toward the Godhead. . . . Since, therefore, no difference exists between love of God and love of man, there is essential similarity between all types of human

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<sup>14</sup> Natalie's respect and admiration of Heinrich is also reflected by the fact that she continues to address him formally. Not until after engaging in a chaste kiss do the two begin to use the informal "du" with one another.



love relationships, so long as they are not flawed by the egotistical and subjective impulse” (190-91). The equation of all these constellations of love would further explain the exclusion of sexuality and desire from Risach’s ideal garden, and the transformation of the roses from a symbol of erotic to one of sacred love. The fact that the immoderate passions of the “Rückblick” chapter occupy only a few pages in a book devoted to the description of Risach’s ideal, passionless existence, leaves no doubt as to where Stifter’s sympathies lie. To abandon oneself completely to another is to turn one’s back on the world. Such passion is anathema to personal fulfillment and growth, and to Stifter’s understanding of ideal love.

At what cost does this renunciation of passion come? Although Mathilde may seem to have completely accepted Risach’s ideology, there are moments when she expresses doubt and regret. During a visit to the Rosenhaus, Heinrich overhears a conversation between Mathilde and Risach, when the two are observing the roses. Mathilde’s regretful words – “Wie diese Rosen abgeblüht sind, so ist unser Glück abgeblüht” – are countered by Risach’s calm assurance that their happiness and love is “nicht abgeblüht, es hat nur eine andere Gestalt” (2: 121). Heinrich, while listening to this exchange, is sketching a wrought iron rose on the shutter of his window. This rose may be seen as an artistic representation of the friendship between the older and wiser Risach and Mathilde, a sign of the stability and integrity of the couple’s relationship (Sjoegren, “Mathilde” 407). Yet the iron rose, for all its beauty and permanence, is artificial, with no fragrance or softness – it is only the remembrance of

a rose, not the actual flower. Though Risach's words may resonate with Heinrich, Mathilde grieves that she never experienced a "Sommer" of love, but must be content with the "Nachsommer."

### 3.6 Separate and [Un]equal: Gender and Androgyny in the Garden

The previous sections have examined the exclusion of sexuality and erotic passion from Risach's garden idyll. But what, after all is said and done, do these revelations tell us about gender in Stifter's Nachsommer? For gender is not limited to sexuality: it is a societal and cultural construction, in which behavior, or the social role one is expected to play, is determined based upon biological sex. Risach may have chosen to create a passionless "paradise," and Mathilde may feel disappointment that the "rose" of their later friendship bears no traces of their earlier passionate love, but the question remains as to what role gender actually plays in Nachsommer and its gardens.

Unlike Brigitta, Stifter's later "Erzählung" does not present a heroine who transcends gender expectations to create her own life, her own garden. In Nachsommer, though, we do witness a blurring of gender distinctions, for here, too, certain characters exhibit androgynous qualities. Natalie's brother, who, like Brigitta's son, is named Gustav, is a young boy of extraordinary beauty and almost feminine sensitivity. Throughout the novel, the narrator compares Gustav to his sister, praising the siblings' shared physical characteristics, their classical features,

their poise and grace. The two are so similar in build and feature that at times they are indistinguishable. As the company leaves Risach's house for a walk through the garden, Heinrich casts his glance in the hall mirror, and is struck by Natalie's and Gustav's matching eyes, "die vier ganz gleichen schwarzen Augen . . . in dem Spiegel" (1: 251). Brother and sister walk ahead, and Heinrich notes that they have brown hair of an identical shade: "[W]enn die Geschwister, die sich sehr zu lieben schienen, sehr nahe an einander gingen, so war es von ferne, als sähe man eine einzige braune glänzende Haarfülle, und als theilen sich nur unten die Gestalten" (1: 253). The siblings are reminiscent of the Gemini, godlike and passionless: "The difference between man and woman is negligible and unimportant relative to their representation of the classical ideal of the human, which here appears as androgynous" (Sjögren, "Configuration" 193).

Even when essentially equating the brother and sister, the narrator mentions physical, gender-related distinctions. Gustav is, for example, taller than his sister, while Natalie is more delicate and graceful.<sup>15</sup> And, though the siblings may share physical characteristics, they receive different treatment based upon their sex. Whether Mathilde values Gustav more highly than his sister is uncertain, but she does show preference for her son in bestowing upon him her most prized possession, a complete set of Goethe's works. She insists that Nathalie will receive "schon etwas anderes" (1: 250), but the implicit message is that, as a male, Gustav more richly

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<sup>15</sup> "Ich sah ihn neben der Schwester gehen und sah, daß er größer sei als sie. . . War er aber auch größer, so war ihre Gestalt feiner und ihre Haltung anmuthiger" (NS 1: 252-53).

deserves these valuable books, books that epitomize the greatness of German art and culture. Finally, when Heinrich witnesses Natalie and Gustav conversing in the garden, he notes with satisfaction that the sister exhibits the proper respect for her brother's clearly greater knowledge. "[E]r (Gustav) zeigte ihr Verschiedenes, das ihm etwa an dem Herzen lag, oder worüber er sich freute, und sie nahm gewiß den Antheil, den die Schwester an den Bestrebungen des Bruders hat, den sie liebt, auch wenn sie die Bestrebungen nicht ganz verstehen sollte" (1: 251). Androgyny, therefore, does not point to the questioning of gender roles in Nachsommer.<sup>16</sup> In fact, as we shall see, the maintenance of gender hierarchies is vital to sustaining the Rosenhaus and its garden paradise.

### 3.7 Educating Women

*Reinheit der Liebe, Treue in der Gesinnung, Ausdauer bei der Arbeit, Kraft in der Geduld, Beharrlichkeit in der Hoffnung, Stärke des Glaubens und der Andacht hohe Erhebung – das sind die Tugenden unseres Geschlechts, die reichlich entschädigen für des Mannes tieferes und umfangreicheres Wissen, für sein Wirken und Schaffen auf dem öffentlichen Märkte des Lebens, für die Ehre seines Namens, für den Sieg im Kampfe, für die Freude des Gelingens.*

From a nineteenth-century *Anstandsbuch*<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Critic Sabine Schmidt suggests that the comparisons of the siblings to one another is yet another attempt by the narrator to subordinate Natalie, to essentially deprive her of her identity. "Die äußere Ähnlichkeit mit diesem 'vollkommenen Jüngling' beraubt Natalie implizit auch ihrer geschlechtlichen Identität als Frau, wie die innere Verwandtschaft mit den Gemmen und Nausikaa sie ihrer Individualität beraubt" (98).

<sup>17</sup> Spieker, "Würde" 60.

It must be noted that on a number of levels, Stifter's portrayal of his female characters in his "Erzählung" breaks with nineteenth-century gender expectations. As previously discussed, Mathilde owns and controls her own estate and is responsible for the education of her daughter. Natalie's schooling in languages, art and science should render her the intellectual equal of her future husband and should make her a better mother for their children. The narrator's sister Klotilde also receives a quality of education unusual for the time. As a woman, she is restricted from the schools and opportunities open to her brother, but by means of tutors, she receives comparable instruction, including both intellectual and physical education. In a number of his theoretical writings, Stifter argued for women's equal right to develop their minds and spirits. In 1850 in "Wiener Boten," Stifter wrote, "Der Mensch hat das Recht über seinen Geist, er hat das Recht, ihn beliebig zu entwickeln, auszubilden und der Vollkommenheit entgegenzuführen" (qtd. in Lorenz 95). In Nachsommer, this liberal viewpoint is manifest in the exceptional educations of Natalie and Klotilde.<sup>18</sup>

Yet despite these examples of more enlightened opinions about women, Stifter's views of the "fairer sex" were largely representative of his time. In a youthful letter, written in 1834, Stifter expressed his thoughts on the ideal female partner:

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<sup>18</sup> Lorenz sees these examples as indicative that for Stifter, women were not simply defined by their gender: "Bei Stifter ist die Frau vor allem Mensch, Person und Persönlichkeit" (96).

Freilich der schönste Bund ist es, wenn ein Mädchen oder eine Gattin groß genug sein kann, nicht vor dem weiten Tempel des Mannes, oder vor seiner großen Alpe zu erschrecken, sondern bewundernd und jubelnd – hineinzutreten oder hinaufzuklettern, und alles freudereich, als ihr verwandt, ans große Herz zu drücken und nicht zu sinken. . . . Du, wo ist die? . . . die Deine Geliebte und Dein Freund zugleich ist? die durch unsere Donnerwetter schiffet, an unsern Gletschern sich nicht spießt, an den wackern Stachelgewächsen Kaktus und Aloen sich nicht zerreißt (die doch so süß blühen werden), alles in allem nimmt und versteht und mildert wiedergibt. – Ich könnte niederknien vor der großen Seele, sie wäre größer als ein großer Mann! (SB 37)

To the contemporary reader, Stifter's choice of imagery is so obviously phallic as to be comical. The jutting, sharp glaciers, the prickly cacti and aloes – even the “großen Alpe” are allusions to the mountainous peaks the ideal wife “joyfully” will have to mount. Looking beyond this phallogocentric landscape, however, we find the young Stifter's expectations for the ideal life mate to be both perplexing and contradictory. A wife must be great, but not greater than her husband, not be hurt by his “barbs” and “thorns,” but rejoice in his near divinity (his “weiten Tempel”). She must never make demands on her husband, but devote herself entirely to his wants and needs.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Stifter would have liked the world to believe that his relationship with his own wife was an example of the ideal marriage. His letters to Amalie are full of praise for her simplicity and domestic virtue, as evidenced by this excerpt from a June 1863 epistle: “Dein einfacher Wandel voll Rechtlichkeit, Deine Dir fast unbewußte Ausübung der häuslichen und weiblichen Tugend, Deine Zurückgezogenheit, Dein Fernsein von jedem Prunken und Anmaßen verbunden mit der Güte Deines Wesens hat mich immer mehr und mehr mit Achtung erfüllt und hat mein Herz an Dich gefesselt mit den stärksten Ketten, die es für einen guten und redlich wollenden Menschen gibt” (SB 287). The truth, however, was that the couple's marriage was far from Stifter's ideal. Stifter was a man of physical appetites, and despite his adoration of the unattainable, virginal Fanny, he married the beautiful and sensual Amalie, a woman who was not particularly gifted in the domestic arts.

It is true that this letter to Adolf Freiherr von Brenner was written twenty years before the publication of Nachsommer. Nevertheless, upon closer examination it becomes clear that many features of this earlier “map” are to be found in the “landscape” of the author’s later novel. In the opening chapter the relationship between the narrator’s parents obviously embodies nineteenth-century gender expectations. The mother has dedicated her life to fulfilling her husband’s desires and demands, never questioning his strict rules concerning herself and the children. As Heinrich reports, “[d]ie Mutter war eine freundliche Frau, die uns Kinder ungemein liebte, und die weit eher ein Abweichen von dem angegebenen Zeitenlaufe zu Gunsten einer Lust gestattet hätte, wenn sie nicht von der Furcht vor dem Vater davon abgehalten worden wäre” (1: 12). That there should be inequality between the sexes is, perhaps, to be expected in the household of the narrator’s childhood, for Stifter, though clearly admiring of this bourgeois household’s dedication to tradition, does not present it as the ideal. But even in Risach’s paradise of horticulture and art, the cracks in the veneer of gender equality are readily apparent. Although Natalie and Klotilde may have received exceptional educations, their ultimate goal – marriage – is never in question. Mathilde, despite owning her own estate, bows to her male friend’s decisions in all matters. Risach has even dictated the nature of their relationship in the “Nachsommer” of their years. Any remark by Mathilde that hints at disappointment or unhappiness with that relationship is “corrected” by Risach (their love has not, as she suggests, “withered,” but has assumed another form, one that is, in his view, superior).

Risach's "education" of his female friend, his redefinition as to the "truth" of their situation, points to the role of all males in Stifter's Nachsommer: teacher. The narrator reports that when he was a child his father often took it upon himself to educate his son and daughter in matters of aesthetics, economics and even history: "Er erzählte uns, daß manche [Bücher] da seien, in welchen das enthalten wäre, was sich mit dem menschlichen Geschlechte seit seinem Beginne bis auf unsere Zeite zugetragen habe" (1: 16). As a young adult, Heinrich observes the same didactic manner in his older friend, Risach. Heinrich spends his first visit to the Rosenhaus listening to Risach hold forth regarding gardening, insect control, interior design and furniture renovation. During later visits, these topics are expanded to include beauty, truth, and aesthetics, but the roles remain consistent – Risach is the teacher, Heinrich the student.

As time progresses, Heinrich himself adopts the role of instructor, particularly in his relationships with Natalie and his sister, Klotilde. That he sees such pedagogy as a male prerogative is illustrated by his reflections on the conversation he witnesses in which Gustav "instructs" his sister Natalie. Heinrich reflects with satisfaction at Natalie's respectful demeanor, "So thut es ja auch Klotilde mit mir in meiner Eltern Hause" (1: 251). The less than subtle message in this passage is that both Natalie and Klotilde should show the proper respect for their male siblings' superior knowledge, displaying interest even if they do not necessarily possess intellects equal to understanding the content of the conversation. Klotilde adores and reveres her brother and accepts his instruction as a matter of course. During one of the narrator's



visits home, he takes it upon himself to teach his sister to play the zither, and to tutor her in the Spanish language. Heinrich also introduces his sister to the subjects he has mastered in his wanderings and studies, using a trip to the mountains to educate her in matters of geology and natural history.

Heinrich's didacticism is also in evidence in his exchanges with Natalie. When the couple meet in the Sternenhof grotto, Heinrich counters each of Natalie's observations with lengthy, instructive discourses. Natalie's simple comment about the beauty of the water from the fountain becomes an opportunity for Heinrich to expound upon the entire history of man's use of water, from the aqueducts of the ancient Romans to the healing properties of natural springs for the inhabitants of modern "gesundheitverderbenden Städten" (2: 258). Heinrich's instruction of Natalie is not an attempt to broaden her knowledge of the world, for his beloved has received an education comparable to his own. Instead, his behavior suggests a sense of fierce competition with the well-read Natalie, a desire to best her in every situation. Heinrich's conversations with Natalie demonstrate his need to prove his superiority and to establish the proper roles for their relationship – he as teacher, she as pupil. Here, however, gender alters these roles, for while Risach's "student" Heinrich will eventually become his equal and the heir to his estate, Natalie will always remain – in Heinrich's eyes – his inferior.<sup>20</sup> Tellingly, Heinrich himself only begins to study

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<sup>20</sup> In her analysis of Nachsommer, Schmidt points out: "Natalie wird von Heinrich nicht als selbständiger, selbständig denkender Mensch wahrgenommen und auch nicht so behandelt. So zeigt etwa eine Analyse der wenigen Gespräche von Heinrich und Natalie ein ständiges Bemühen seinerseits, sich als überlegen darzustellen" (98)

Spanish and to play the zither when he learns that Natalie has undertaken these pursuits. His subsequent instruction of his sister in Spanish and the zither may be read as an attempt to restore the appropriate power structure between the sexes. If, in this instance, he cannot better Natalie, he can at least remain superior to his sister.

### 3.8 Closing the garden gate

*In Leid' und Freud', in allen Lebenslagen,  
O, lern' entsagen!  
D'rum möcht' ich grüßen Euch mit diesem Gruß:  
"O betet um Entsagung, wollt Ihr beten!:  
D'rum möcht' ich hin zu jeder Wiege treten  
Und leise sprechen mit dem ersten Kuß:  
"Willst Du Dein Leben an das Leben wagen?  
Kind, lern' entsagen!"*

From a nineteenth-century *Anstandsbuch*<sup>21</sup>

We find the power configuration explored in the previous section mirrored in the gardens of Nachsommer. In Risach's Asperhof, the gardener applies the (male) principles of order and control to "wild" nature, a realm frequently associated with the female. Man cultivates nature, guiding and modeling it, making it a beautiful, useful and safe garden. And in Risach's garden, female characters are expected to follow suit, to permit the suppression of any wildness or unpredictability in their nature, to bow to the gardener's commands and match his expectations. Upon initial reflection, the character of Natalie appears to represent the perfect Stifterian female.

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<sup>21</sup> Anny Wothe, "Zur Mädchenerziehung im allgemeinen," Bildung und Kultur bürgerlicher Frauen 1850-1918, ed. Günter Häntzchel (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1986) 112.

She displays none of her mother's youthful passion or wildness. At his first meeting with her at the Rosenhaus, Heinrich is struck by the fact that Natalie rarely speaks, an admirable quality in a well-bred young lady.<sup>22</sup> She is unquestioningly obedient, insisting even after she and Heinrich declare their love for one another that they will only marry if all members of their families bless their union. Natalie is described throughout Nachsommer as a pale beauty, dressed in elegantly simple and tasteful clothing. At a celebration at the Sternenhof, when the company is in the garden, Natalie's appearance and personality are so subdued that she seems to fade in and out of view. As Heinrich reports, "Ich sah sie mit ihrem lichtbraunen Seidenkleide zwischen andern hervorschiimmern, dann sah ich sie wieder nicht, dann sah ich sie abermals wieder. Gebüsche deckten sie dann ganz" (2: 212).

Yet Natalie's forays into the open fields, her longing to find an unbounded space where she is no longer confined, call attention to a desire to break with her family's requirements and expectations. When Natalie returns from her walks she is, if not argumentative, determined and confident, unwilling to acquiesce to her mother's – or Heinrich's – wishes. These wanderings beyond the garden's borders represent a threat to the established order, a behavior that must be curbed. At first, Mathilde attempts to reign in her daughter, to prevent her from losing herself in nature: "[D]u weißt auch nicht, wie lange du in der Hize verweilest, wenn du dich in das Herumsehen vertiefest oder wenn du Blumen pflückest, und in dieser

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<sup>22</sup> In Heinrich's words, Natalie "hatte kein Wort gesprochen" (NS 1: 244), "sprach äußerst wenig" (NS 1: 247), and "redete niemals ein Wort" (NS 2: 124).

Beschäftigung die Zeit nicht beachtest" (2: 195). Mathilde's words reflect not just a fear of the sensual heat of the sun, but concern that Natalie will forget time, the strict schedule that regulates every activity in Risach's Rosenhaus. Later, when Heinrich comes upon Natalie in the fields, he, too, tries to lead the young woman back to the "safe" confinement of the garden. Every attempt by Natalie to share the sights and events of her walk is countered by Heinrich, who repeatedly insists that she must be exhausted from her over-exertion. Wishing to avoid any appearance of impropriety, he offers to run to the Rosenhaus and send Natalie's brother to help his sister back to the estate; he assumes that any female would be weakened after such a long walk. Natalie refuses to accept any assistance, to play the expected part of the delicate lady.

Even more disturbing to Heinrich than Natalie's lengthy absence from the garden is her apparent lack of goal or purpose on her walk. She has not plucked flowers for a bouquet. She knows that many of the wild varieties, like the poppies and cornflowers, quickly wilt and die when they are picked, and chooses instead to enjoy the living flowers "wenn sie noch so reichlich vor mir stehen" (2: 204). She wanders aimlessly, rejoicing in the opportunity to be completely alone.<sup>23</sup> Where Heinrich's wanderings afford an opportunity to explain and categorize the world and its phenomena, Natalie seeks out nature so that she might know herself. In the open fields she can pursue her own thoughts interrupted, an impossibility in Risach's garden: "Auf diesem Plaze ist es schön, das Auge kann sich ergehen, ich bin bei

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<sup>23</sup> "Als Bestes bringt der Gang, daß man allein ist, ganz allein, sich selber hingegen" (NS 2: 205).

meinen Gedanken, ich brauche diese Gedanken nicht zu unterbrechen, was ich doch thun muß, wenn ich zu den Meinigen zurück kehre" (2: 202).

Eventually Heinrich successfully returns Natalie to the safety of the Asperhof garden. Her reluctance to be reconfined seems evident in the circuitous route the couple take to the garden gate. But once the gate has shut behind her, Natalie never again leaves the garden, never again demonstrates rebellion against expectations, or independence from societal, familial and gender expectations. As the novel progresses, passion and color seem to fade from her body, leading her to resemble, more and more, the marble statue to which she is so frequently compared.

### 3.9 Galatea Reversed: Turning Natalie to Stone

In Risach's statue, the nude female – arguably the most potent of sexual symbols – is completely aestheticized. In the lengthy discussions surrounding the marble figure, its physical attributes are rarely mentioned, only the sense of "Anmut und Würde" it elicits in observers. During the course of Nachsommer Natalie becomes, like the statue, a "Gegenstand" to be admired and owned, completely passive and unthreatening.<sup>24</sup> Where Pygmalion created a marble figure and prayed

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<sup>24</sup> This tendency is displayed in many of Stifter's writings. As Renate Obermaier explains, "Stifter nimmt seinen Personen ihre entscheidende Lebendigkeit. . . . Diese Entlebendigung trifft vor allem die Frauengestalten. Wenn sie nicht fleißige und gebildete Landarbeiterinnen sind (vgl. "Brigitta," "Die zwei Schwestern"), werden sie als Pflanzen oder Statuen entworfen (vgl. "Feldblumen," "Narrenburg," "Abdias," "Hochwald," "Der Nachsommer"). Sie sind entweder ein Stück ruhige, sanfte Natur oder natürliche Kunst" (40).

that it might be transformed into a living woman, Heinrich takes a living woman, and, through control and “education,” changes her into a statue. By the time Heinrich and his beloved are married, Natalie has been essentially reduced to a marble bust upon which the males of the family may display jewelry.

This reverse metamorphosis becomes particularly clear when we compare Natalie to the young Mathilde. With her lover Risach in the garden of their youth, Mathilde glows with sexuality, an adolescent literally blossoming into young womanhood. Her physicality and sexuality find constant, if indirect, mention in the “Rückblick” chapter (her lips, her body’s trembling, her soft sighs when she and Risach embrace, and her “Zittern” when they touch hands). After Mathilde and Risach first avow their love, she does not wait to be kissed, but, as Risach reports: “Da flog sie auf mich zu, drückte die sanften Lippen auf meinen Mund, und schlang die jungen Arme um meinen Nacken” (3: 187). Mathilde reflects and embodies the sensuous aspects of nature, the brilliant colors of the garden, the fragrance and softness of the roses. When she feels that Risach has betrayed her, she embraces and seeks solace in nature, burying her face in the roses, and “ihre glühende Wange war auch jetzt noch schöner als die Rosen” (3: 208).

Only once in Nachsommer is Natalie described as having glowing cheeks. Returning from an earlier walk in the fields, carrying a bouquet of wildflowers, she blushes when she unexpectedly encounters Heinrich. Here, though, the color red does not symbolize passion, but Natalie’s embarrassment and “Erschrecken,” perhaps

at being “caught” in an unlady-like activity.<sup>25</sup> Heinrich’s reaction to this encounter demonstrates his discomfort in the face of a colorful and vibrant Natalie, and leads to yet another attempt to transform her into an art object. Observing Natalie speaking with her mother, Heinrich “recognizes” the similarity of her features to the classical faces on his father’s carved cameos.<sup>26</sup> This aestheticization is in evidence from the first time Heinrich consciously notices Natalie: he is struck by the artistic potential of her face: “Ich dachte mir . . . ob denn nicht eigentlich das menschliche Angesicht der schönste Gegenstand zum Zeichnen wäre” (1: 178). He sees not a beautiful woman to be loved and desired, but an object to be sketched. Heinrich begins to draw female faces, not live models. When someone points out that he is only sketching the faces of young women, Heinrich becomes embarrassed, and begins to sketch “Männer Greise Frauen ja auch andere Theile des Körpers . . . so weit ich sie in Vorlagen oder Gipsabgüssen bekommen konnte” (1: 201).<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> For a discussion of the symbolism of colors in Stifter’s Nachsommer, see Requadt 174-208.

<sup>26</sup> Heinrich also continually associates Natalie with Nausicaa, the beautiful daughter of the Phaeacean king Alcinous in Homer’s Odyssey. On the surface, this comparison is not as off-putting as Heinrich’s likening of Natalie to a statue or carved stone cameos. Nausicaa is both clever and brave, and in many ways a free spirit. But she is also absolutely virtuous and aware of propriety. Her conversation with the handsome Odysseus is formal and stylized, and she does not attempt to seduce him or gain him as a husband despite her attraction to him. Instead, she offers him hospitality, good food and drink, and the protection of her family’s hearth. Heinrich, in linking his beloved to Nausicaa, thus further defines and confines her according to his own wishes. Natalie is not only a classical, and hence passionless figure, but she, like Nausicaa, should occupy her proper place as a woman in the domestic sphere.

<sup>27</sup> Heinrich’s unwillingness to use live models underscores his uneasiness with the human body.

Heinrich insists that because of his different (i.e., superior) upbringing, he is concerned with things other than the “Wünsche” and “Begierden” of his male contemporaries. He is terribly disconcerted by his friends’ open admiration of women’s appearance or physical attractiveness: “[W]enn sie eine muthwillige Bemerkung über die Gestalt oder das Benehmen eines Mädchens ausdrückten, so erröthete ich, und es war mir, als wäre meine Schwester beleidigt worden” (1: 189). Because sexuality makes Heinrich so uncomfortable he repeatedly retreats to the aesthetic realm when evaluating (or avoiding) his feelings for Natalie.<sup>28</sup> It is telling that Heinrich’s first actual encounter with Natalie occurs not in nature (or even a garden, as had been the case with Risach and Mathilde) but in the city, at a theater, where art imitates life. The passions of King Lear – madness, jealousy, betrayal, abandonment in the “wasteland” – are bearable only because they are aestheticized, held within the boundaries of the stage. Nevertheless, it is interesting that Heinrich is not smitten with Natalie’s face at rest, but at a moment when she is overcome by what she has seen on stage: she is “schneebleich,” her “Angesicht . . . von Thränen übergossen” (NS 1: 198). Though Heinrich may later channel his feelings into art,

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<sup>28</sup> This discomfort in the face of direct experience – the privileging of art over life – finds perfect expression in Heinrich’s comments regarding architectural sketches:

Ich habe einmal irgendwo gelesen, daß der Mensch leichter und klarer zur Kenntniß und zur Liebe der Gegenstände gelangt, wenn er Zeichnungen und Gemälde von ihnen sieht, als wenn er sie selber betrachtet, weil ihm die Beschränktheit der Zeichnung alles kleiner und vereinzelter zusammen faßt, was er in der Wirklichkeit groß und mit Genossen vereint erblickt. Bei mir schien sich dieser Ausspruch zu bestätigen. (NS 1: 208)



through painting and sketching, the moment of attraction to his beloved was, as with Risach, a moment of unmasked, uncontrolled emotion.

Any “mächtige Bewegungen des Gemüthes” Heinrich or Natalie might feel are soon overcome, or at the very least, stifled. Where Mathilde met with her lover amid the red roses, Natalie and Heinrich swear their chaste devotion to one another with a marble statue as their witness. The grotto where they meet could be a place of clandestine romantic encounters, for its ivy-covered walls protect its visitors from any prying eyes. The ivy and running water, though both potential symbols of (female) sexuality, have no power over the spirit of classical restraint that rules in this enclave. As if to illustrate their unquestioning obedience to the laws of Greek classicism and “Bildung,” Heinrich and Natalie confess their love only after more than five pages of painful discussion about the beauty and value of marble, jewels, and the element of water. And unlike the garden of love, where all knowledge and respect for “Sitte” was lost and Mathilde gave Risach a first kiss, here Natalie chastely waits for Heinrich to take the initiative: “[I]ch zog sie näher an mich, und neigte mein Angesicht zu ihrem. Sie wendete ihr Haupt herüber, und gab mit Güte ihre schönen Lippen meinem Munde, um den Kuß zu empfangen, den ich both” (2: 265).

With the immaculate white marble statue as a witness to their chaste union, the lovers have become a *tableau vivant*, representing a new Adam and Eve in paradise regained. Having come to love through art, Natalie and Heinrich have avoided the pains and passions of Mathilde and Risach; the young pair, we are led to believe, will spend the rest of their lives in Eden. But the perfectly balanced harmony

of this living work of art rings hollow. All conflicts and difficulties, passions and sorrows – in short, all those things that give life depth and meaning – have been eradicated: “Die Versöhnung im Kunstwerk ist nur durch dessen völligen Realitätsverlust erreicht. Der Nachsommer ist ein Versuchsaufbau für das richtige Leben und gleichsam unter Laborbedingungen” (Matz, “Gewalt” 726). In this “laboratory” of a garden, love becomes coldly clinical. Heinrich and his “Galatea,” Natalie, will certainly consummate their union, but they will conduct the untidy act of sex in a perfectly dispassionate manner, its sole purpose the production of progeny to further expand and enrich “das reine Familienleben” (NS 3: 282).

### 3.10 Cultivating the Cactus: Heinrich and the *cereus peruvianus*

As examined earlier in this chapter, to avoid any intrusion of the dangerous and, as he saw it, destructive force of sexuality into the paradise of the Rosenhaus, Stifter portrays characters and relationships with no obvious trace of erotic desire. Still, even in a laboratory environment, with the scientist imposing the strictest measures of control, nature seems to find a way. In Risach’s garden the rose may be transformed to a wrought iron work of art, but what of the other central botanical symbol in Nachsommer, the *cereus peruvianus* cactus?

As any reader of Stifter’s letters is aware, the author himself was greatly enamored of cacti, and possessed an impressive collection of the prickly plants. Interestingly, Stifter’s fascination with cacti actually began after writing Nachsommer

(Selge 42). Frustrated, unhappy, and increasingly isolated, he turned to the collection and care of these plants in an effort to recreate something akin to the Indian summer enjoyed by his creation Risach. In a letter to Heckenast on May 24, 1857, Stifter wrote that “die Pflege dieser merkwürdigen Gewächse . . . für mich in meiner Einsamkeit etwas Reizendes und Seelenerfüllendes [hat], da mir das Gedeihen und wundervolle Blühen dieser Gewächse den Umgang mit Menschen ersetzt”(SB 196). Stifter’s attempt to assuage his emptiness and loneliness by collecting exotic cacti may also be seen as hinting at the desperation behind Risach’s collecting of art objects. In both cases, inanimate objects are an inadequate substitute for human intimacy.<sup>29</sup>

That the *cereus peruvianus* is one of Risach’s prized possessions is illustrated by the effort he must undergo to obtain it. Initially, as the gardener Simon explains to Heinrich on one of his early visits to the greenhouse, the cactus was located at another estate, the Inghof. There it was neglected, confined to a space not adequate to its great height. On Heinrich’s next visit, Simon excitedly informs him that Risach has had the huge cactus transported to the Rosenhaus. Here it receives the attention Simon and Risach feel it warrants – the greenhouse is actually altered to accommodate its growth:

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<sup>29</sup> Ragg-Kirkby interprets Stifter’s fascination with cacti in a sexual light, describing the author’s collecting as a “Drang,” yet another method of sublimating passions that did not fit with his ideals. She sees Stifter’s “manic” interest in collecting cacti as indicative of his obsession with – and repression of – sexuality (Mania 26).

Die Pflanze war in freien Grund gestellt, man hatte für sie einen eigenen Aufbau gleichsam ein Thürmchen von doppeltem Glas auf dem Cactushause errichtet, und hatte durch Stützen oder durch Lenkung der Sonnenstrahlen auf gewisse Stellen des Gewächses Anstalten getroffen, daß der *Cereus*, der sich an der Decke des Gewächshauses im Inghofe hatte krümmen müssen, wieder gerade wachsen könne (NS 2: 19-20).

Alexander Stillmark sees the cactus, and specifically its blossoming in the final chapter of Nachsommer, as the ultimate symbol for Heinrich's own flourishing under the principles of "Bildung": "The final flowering of this plant is . . . symbolic of a fulfillment which concerns man in a moral sense as it concerns nature in a material way: its exquisite beauty matches the exalted nature of this fulfillment" (84). Like the rose, though, the cactus begs multiple interpretations: its symbolism is not purely ethical or aesthetic. Even without illustrations or specifics about the *cereus peruvianus*' shape, the fact that Risach must build a special glass tower to accommodate the cactus' growth is indicative of its form and size. It is, clearly, enormously phallic. In Förster's Handbuch der Kakteenkunde (which Stifter is known to have possessed), the author classifies the *cereus peruvianus* as belonging to the "Giganten aller Kakteenformen [. . .] deren Säulengestalten auf heimathlichem Boden bei 18-24 Z[oll] Durchmesser und 40-50 F[uß] emporstreben." In other words, the *cereus* is as thick as the trunk of a medium-sized tree and as tall as a two story building (Selge 40).

Another factor pointing to the cactus' sexual significance is its prickly spines. These potentially painful spikes again call attention to Stifter's highly ambiguous, if not pathological, view of sexuality; they may also be interpreted as mini-phalli. The

cactus is not a purely male sexual symbol, for each of its spines grows from a brown, oval shaped “Areole,” a word that obviously shares the same Latin root as “areola,” the brown area of skin surrounding the nipples of the breast. Also, the blossom of the *cereus peruvianus* is similar in coloring and shape to female genitalia. As Förster writes, “[die] Blütenblätter [stehen] zweireihig, etwas zugespitzt, die äußern besonders nach der Spitze hin bräunlich-hellroth, die innern schneeweiß, auf dem Rücken blaß-rosenröthlich” (qtd. in Selge 40). The *cereus peruvianus* blooms but once in a century, and its flowering in Der Nachsommer coincides with Heinrich’s and Natalie’s wedding, the very day when the couple will consummate their union. Ragg-Kirkby suggests that Stifter “dwells obsessively” on the cactus and its blossoming because of its “hidden connection with Heinrich’s inner development – and, specifically, with his *sexual* maturity.” With the flowering of the *cereus* on Heinrich’s wedding night, “Stifter is obliquely alluding . . . to the very thing he apparently considered too odious to mention: human sexuality” (Mania 26). This allusion seems far from oblique however, when one considers the scene in Risach’s greenhouse: the entire company crowded around to observe the vaginal flower atop the enormously phallic cactus.

Obviously the act of consummation symbolized by the cactus’ blossoming requires two participants, Heinrich and Natalie. Nevertheless, the cactus is more specifically related to Heinrich’s sexuality – Natalie does not enter the cactus house or encounter the *cereus peruvianus* until her wedding day. Also, though Risach may serve as his guide and mentor in practically all other subjects, Heinrich is on his own

in this matter. On their initial exhaustive tour of the estate gardens, Risach passes over the greenhouse where the cacti are kept. When Heinrich discovers it on an excursion of his own, he confides to the gardener Simon that he already has some experience with these plants: “Ich sagte ihm, daß ich in früheren Zeiten Pflanzenkunde getrieben habe . . . und daß die Cactus nicht das Letzte gewesen wären, dem ich eine Aufmerksamkeit geschenkt habe” (1: 134). Considering the cactus’ phallic symbolism, the young man’s divulgence that he cultivated cacti “zwar nicht in Bezug auf Gartenpflege sondern zu meiner Belehrung und Erheiterung” could be interpreted as an admission that sexuality has, up to this point, been but a dilettantish interest. (He has not yet applied his knowledge of the “cactus” to “Gartenpflege,” the serious work of establishing a family). Heinrich’s curiosity on this subject is further underscored by the fact that it is he who is indirectly responsible for bringing the *cereus peruvianus* to the Asperhof. During Heinrich’s first visit to the Rosenhaus, Simon expresses the wish that Risach, the great collector, might buy the ancient cactus from the Inghof, where it is not properly appreciated. Heinrich “casually” broaches the subject with Risach, and by the following summer the enormous cactus has been acquired. Finally, the circumstances behind Heinrich’s visits to the greenhouse where the cacti are kept also point to a sexual association. His forays to the cactus house almost always follow an erotic encounter (or at least an encounters that recalls or promises passion), whether a meeting with Natalie, an overheard conversation between Risach and Natalie, or his own engagement (Selge 47).

Does the proud flourishing of the cactus, and the appearance of its rare and exquisite flower, signify that Heinrich may finally experience the “summer” that his mentor Risach never knew (in other words, a relationship incorporating sexual passion)? Unfortunately, there is little in Stifter’s Nachsommer to support such a conclusion. Earlier in the book, the reader witnessed the yearly ritual of the roses at the Asperhof, where family, friends and neighbors gathered to see Risach’s garden and Rosenhaus in full bloom. Imbuing this event with ceremonial, almost sacred import, Risach and Mathilde were able to repress their memories of passion in the garden of love by amending the roses’ import, changing them into symbols of selfless, disinterested agape. Similarly, the presence of not just Heinrich and his bride, but Risach, Simon, Mathilde and the entire Drendorf family in the final scene transforms the flowering of the *cereus peruvianus* from a potentially erotic event into a ritual. The greenhouse has thus become a temple, the gardener Simon the priest of a holy sacrament.<sup>30</sup>

In the penultimate “Rückblick” chapter of Nachsommer, Risach shares a cautionary tale with his protégé, his sad tale of impetuous passion and love lost. Heinrich is thus finally initiated into the mystery behind the Rosenhaus; only after learning of the roses’ significance is he allowed to marry Natalie and to enter into a

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<sup>30</sup> Selge humorously suggests that Simon and his wife, this strange old couple clothed in white, may be seen as “Tempelwächter,” guarding the secrets of their phallic god. “Nach Stifters Farbensymbolik ist Weiß die Gegenfarbe zum Leidenschafts-Rot. Die Tempelwächter wären demnach in eine eunuchartige Schutzfarbe der reinen Nichtsexualität gekleidet, um die Gewalt der Leidenschaft, die da bei ihnen gebändigt, ja gebannt heranwächst, beherrschen zu können” (Selge 47).

sexual relationship. Gertrud Fussenegger, in her article “Utopie und Eros am Beispiel ‘Der Nachsommer,’” seems to suggest that this final rite signals Heinrich’s entry into the “happily every after” of a fairy tale. She writes: “[S]icher fiel ihm [Stifter] zum Nachsommer-Rosenhaus auch Dornröschens Heckenschloß ein. Also wird uns das Risachsche Haus von Anfang an nicht nur als Stätte patriarchalisch verordneter Gesittung, sondern auch als Stätte erotischer Verzauberung angeboten” (131). As illustrated by the examples of the rose and the cactus, however, any “erotisch[e] Verzauberung” in Nachsommer is soon repressed. By the time Risach shares his past with Heinrich, the older man’s warning is no longer necessary. After years of study, conversation and reflection, Heinrich has fully internalized Risach’s life view – he will never succumb to lawless passion. Instead, he will apply the knowledge he has gained of the rose and the cactus to engage in true “Gartenpflege,” the establishment of a family.<sup>31</sup>

### 3.11 “Der entzauberte Garten”: Perfecting Nature to Death

The final lines of Nachsommer may be read as a reconfiguration of the conclusion to Voltaire’s Candide. Heinrich, having become the heir to Risach’s estate and fortune, promises to continue in his older friend’s footsteps, to tend his garden, while devoting himself to the family: “[E]ines ist gewiß, das reine

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<sup>31</sup> Heinrich has come to agree with his friend Risach, that family possesses the ultimate value, above even “Umgang mit Lieben Freunden . . . die Kunst die Dichtung die Wissenschaft” (3: 282).



Familienleben, wie es Risach verlangt, ist gegründet, es wird, wie unsre Neigung und unsre Herzen verbürgen, in ungeminderter Fülle dauern, ich werde meine Habe verwalten, werde sonst noch nützen, und jedes . . . Bestreben hat nun Einfachheit Halt und Bedeutung" (3: 282). Where poor Candide came to the conclusion "il faut cultiver notre jardin" out of resignation, after all his ideals had been destroyed by a cruel world, Heinrich faces his future in the garden with certainty that this is, indeed, the best of all possible worlds.

Such sanguinity is impossible after closer examination of the garden in Nachsommer. Risach, Heinrich and the older Drensdorfs may be delighted with the way events have transpired, but what of the main female characters of Stifter's "Erzählung"? Mathilde, though outwardly a contented inhabitant of the Rosenhaus garden, still mourns the loss of her own "summer." She has acquiesced to Risach's wishes and stifled the "dangerous" passions and impulses of the garden of her youth. Where she once embodied the vibrant beauty and sensuality of the rose, she is now a pale and withered flower. Mathilde's daughter fares far worse in Nachsommer. Where her mother's motif is at least organic, Natalie is consistently linked to the "Marmorstandbild" in the Asperhof. By the end of the novel Natalie has become, for all intents and purposes, a statue. She has learned well from her male teachers: her behavior has become as flawless as her face and body, and all spontaneity and natural warmth has been leached away. This essential petrification of a living woman suggests a desire on Stifter's part to "freeze fluid passion into something safe, something controllable" (Ragg-Kirkby, Mania 37). Natalie will never again leave the

garden, never seek to be alone with her own thoughts as she did during her wanderings through the fields, but will restrict her focus to her husband and family. For Natalie, as for her mother, the strict order of Risach's garden demands unquestioning obedience and adherence to prescribed gender roles.

The Rosenzimmer, Mathilde's room at the Asperhof, underscores the fate of women and female sexuality in this garden idyll. Risach introduces Heinrich to this chamber on the initial tour of the Rosenhaus, leading him silently through a hidden "Tapetentür." Heinrich gazes "mit Staunen" (NS 1: 173) at the soft rose-colored walls, the pink and gray silk-cushioned furniture, the satin curtains, the gilded fireplace. The walls are striped in green, the floor of the room is covered by a fine green carpet, and Heinrich reflects that the effect is of a rose garden: "Die grünen Streifen erinnerten an das grüne Laubblatt der Rosen" (1: 172); "Es war gleichsam der Rasenteppich, über dem die Farben der Rosen schwebten" (1: 173). Considering that Mathilde's symbol is the rose, this comparison is certainly valid. And this hidden chamber, with its soft pinks, grays, and reds calls to mind another "flower": the female sexual organ, the ultimate "inner sanctum." Risach's silence in this room and his reluctance to clarify even the "Zweck dieser Wohnung" suggest a certain respect, even reverence, for this female realm, but the quiet that rules the Rosenzimmer hints at darker connotations. The room is not only unoccupied, but as Heinrich remarks, there is absolutely no sign that someone lives there: "Kein Merkmal in dem Gemache zeigte an, daß es bewohnt sei. Kein Geräthe war verrückt, an dem Teppiche zeigte sich keine Falte, und an den Fenstervorhängen keine Verknitterung" (1: 173).

Despite its rich beauty, the silent and empty Rosenzimmer holds no promise of love, warmth, or even life. The Rosenzimmer, the sanctuary of female sexuality and “earthly love,” has become a mausoleum.<sup>32</sup>

The garden, too, is in danger of petrification. For in his desire to order and control, to banish any dangerous or unpredictable elements from his sanctuary, to turn nature into art, Risach has created an essentially static landscape. Viewed from the cherry tree at the summit of his estate, the garden and surrounding lands lie before Risach like an enormous still life, but as Glaser warns, “[j]ener Augenblick, in dem die Welt stillsteht, zur Dauer des Epos perpetuiert, läßt die Ruhe der Landschaft an die Starre mahnen, an die Ruhe des Todes” (6). The result of Risach’s drive to “perfect” nature, his ruthless enforcement of the “gentle law” upon his garden and its inhabitants, is a sterile dystopia, bereft of spontaneity, of wonder, of life. How could Heinrich, who has spent much of his life exploring “wild” nature, hiking through forests and mountains and climbing glaciers, be content to remain in such a garden? Upon closer examination it becomes obvious that Heinrich’s fascination with the greater world, the numerous experiments he conducts during his time away from the Rosenhaus, and his development of a unique system of classification for his natural specimens, are simply other manifestations of his mentor Risach’s drive to control, order and explain. Whether transforming nature into art or forcing it to comply to a rigid system of scientific categorization, both Risach and Heinrich share the same

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<sup>32</sup> See Fussenegger 132: “[I]n dieser Farbsymphonie von sanftestem Rosa und Weiß, Rauchgrau, Nachtblau und Rasengrün, in dieser . . . silbernen Vollkommenheit wird in der innersten Stelle nicht mehr die irdische Liebe angesprochen, sondern der Tod.”

goal. In their “perfect” garden, the patriarchal family structure remains intact, the problems of the industrial age never intrude, and even nature stands still, “frozen” into a completely safe and predictable form.

Not long after his engagement with Natalie Heinrich takes a walk through the garden on a cold, snowy day. Heading towards the cherry tree he is initially impressed by the fact that the garden, even in winter, is well cared for. The paths are shoveled, the more tender plants are protected by straw, and the tree limbs have been brushed free of snow. As he continues, however, Heinrich is struck by the silence, for though Risach’s ingenious feed boxes still hang from the trees, there are no birds. The only movement and sound comes from the wind in the branches of the cherry tree, and looking out over the garden, Heinrich finds that the customary view has disappeared as well:

Das dunkle Baumgitter lag unter mir, wie schwarze regellose Gewebe auf den Schnee gezeichnet, weiter war das Haus mit seinem weißen Dache, und weiter war nichts; denn die fernere Gegend war kaum zu erblicken. Bleiche Stellen oder dunklere Ballen schimmerten durch, je nachdem das Auge sich auf Schneeflächen oder Wälder richtete, aber nichts war deutlich zu erkennen, und in langen Streifen gleichsam in nebligen Fäden, aus denen ein Gewebe zu verfertigen ist, hing der fallenden Schnee von dem Himmel herunter (3: 117).

The impression is of eternal sameness, cold, and isolation. In this moment, Heinrich seems to sense the essential bleakness of this “entzauberten Landschaft” (Glaser 13). The frozen landscape before him hints that the garden he will inherit is one he will not be able to escape. As Heinrich turns to leave he notes that the surrounding fields

are no longer open to him. “Von dem Kirschbaume konnte ich nicht in das Freie hinausgehen; denn das Pfortchen war geschlossen. Ich wendete mich daher um und ging auf einem anderen Wege wieder in das Haus zurück” (3: 117).

In Der Nachsommer, the “Bildung”-inspired freedom Stifter envisioned in his 1849 letter to Heckenast remains unrealized. By “trapping” Heinrich within the frozen garden, the author, however unwittingly, questions his own “perfect” system. But Nachsommer’s utopia has been undermined long before Heinrich discovers that the gate is “geschlossen.” In this garden, cultivation of nature – and human nature – has resulted in rigidity, repression, and imprisonment. Safety and “Ordnung” have been achieved only by the enforcement of a strict gender hierarchy. In Risach’s garden, Mathilde and Natalie are deprived of agency, their personal needs and desires stifled. Where the cactus is given room to grow, the rose is turned to iron, and the woman to stone.

## CHAPTER 4

### *DAS GEBUNDENE STRÄUßCHEN: IRRUNGEN, WIRRUNGEN*

With Irrungen, Wirrungen, we move far away from Stifter's preindustrial rural "utopia" to the urban landscape of Prussian Berlin. The garden in Fontane's 1888 novel, a tiny oasis of nature in the wasteland of metropolitan life, is located on the outskirts of the great city. Aside from location, Fontane's story exhibits another significant difference from Stifter's novels: in Fontane's "Gärtnerei" we encounter not the "Bildungsbürgertum" of the Rosenhaus, but members of the "vierten Stand." The garden in Irrungen, Wirrungen is nothing like the mature Risach's masterpiece of cultivation and control. Instead, it is a garden of love. Here, as in the "Rückblick" chapter of Nachsommer, passion and "natural" physical attractions are free to blossom. The two lovers in this garden, Botho and Lene, are both single, both consenting adults, but they face an obstacle far more daunting than the parental disapproval encountered by the young Mathilde and Risach: class.<sup>1</sup> Because Botho is an officer and member of the lower aristocracy, it is inappropriate for him to be seen with the working class Lene in public. The garden is the only place where they

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<sup>1</sup> As we will see, Fontane's inclusion of the issue of class in Irrungen, Wirrungen adds an entirely new dimension to the gendered garden.

can safely meet, for here class distinctions seems to disappear. The walls of this garden are fragile, however, and ultimately they cannot protect the lovers from society's inflexible rules, demands, and prejudices.

#### 4.1 Fontane's Natural Landscapes

Theodor Fontane's life, like Stifter's, spanned much of the nineteenth century. Unlike the Austrian author, however, Fontane explicitly incorporated the events of the century into his journalistic and literary work: the Napoleonic era, the "Vormärz," the failed 1848 revolution in Germany, and the increasing industrialization and militarization during the "Bismarckreich" all found expression, direct or oblique, in his writings. Fontane was born in 1819 in the Prussian town of Neuruppin. He initially followed in his father's footsteps, working as an apothecary in Berlin, Burg, Dresden and Leipzig. After years of part-time involvement in literary pursuits (he was, for example, a member of "Der Tunnel über die Spree," a literary club whose roster included Paul Heyse and Theodor Storm, among others) Fontane gave up pharmaceutical work in 1849 to devote himself to writing. For nearly thirty years the author supported himself primarily through journalistic work and travel reports. Where Stifter was bound to his native land, Fontane traveled extensively. He spent almost five years as a correspondent in London, writing political commentary as well as theater and art reviews for German newspapers. In 1870, he traveled as a war correspondent to France, where he was arrested in Domrémy as a

spy. Fontane spent almost three months in French prisons before diplomatic and governmental pressures from home affected his release. He wrote of his experiences in his book Kriegsgefangenen (1871), and made light of his transformation in the eyes of the public “zu einer Sehenswürdigkeit . . . , zu einem nine days wonder” as a result of his incarceration (Nürnberger, “Leben” 73).

Fontane did not begin to write his novels, the source of his lasting fame, until the late 1870's. He was sixty-nine when Irrungen, Wirrungen appeared in book form, and seventy-six when Effi Briest was published. Fontane had lived his life in city environments, and his later works in particular tend to reflect the problems and challenges faced by those living in urban settings, specifically Berlin in the era of Bismarck. The countless pages dedicated to nature description that marked Stifter's writing are notably absent from the German author's works. In his essay on Willibald Alexis from 1872, Theodor Fontane writes, “Eine Sonne auf- oder untergehen, ein Mühlwasser über das Wehr fallen, einen Baum rauschen zu lassen, ist die billigste literarische Beschäftigung, die gedacht werden kann. In jedes kleinen Mädchens Schulaufsatz kann man dergleichen finden” (WA 456). These lines from Fontane's Alexis essay could almost be read as referring specifically to Stifter, for Fontane continues by stating, “Es ist dies noch langweiliger wie eine Zimmerbeschreibung” – such description, as we have seen, was another of the Austrian's favorite literary tactics.

Yet despite these apparently disparaging remarks, Fontane's works are not devoid of nature images. Majestic mountains, fantastic glaciers and vast, barren



wastelands may be absent from Fontane's fiction, but the author depicts less momentous landscapes: rolling meadows, secluded bucolic retreats and, of course, gardens. The difference, as Fontane explains, is that "Die Landschaftsschilderung hat nur noch Wert, wenn sie als künstlerische Folie für einen Stein auftritt, der dadurch doppelt leuchtend wird, wenn sie den Zweck verfolgt, Stimmungen vorzubereiten oder zu steigern" (WA 456).

In Irrungen, Wirrungen, as in his other works of fiction, Fontane employs nature descriptions to illuminate the feelings and actions of his characters, and to encourage emotional response and identification. In Chapter 5, for example, his atmospheric depiction of a fragrant, still garden at twilight prepares the reader for a romantic encounter between two lovers:

Drinne im Garten war alles Duft und Frische, denn, den ganzen Hauptweg hinauf, zwischen den Johannis- und Stachelbeersträuchern, standen Levkojen und Reseda, deren feiner Duft sich mit dem kräftigeren der Thymianbeete mischte. Nichts regte sich in den Bäumen, und nur Leuchtkäfer schwirrten durch die Luft. (32)

In addition to establishing a particular mood through his description of the garden, Fontane chooses his botanical images for a specific purpose. The thyme, gooseberry and currant bushes establish this as a practical kitchen garden – these are herbs and berries to be used in cooking and baking. By contrast, "Levkojen" and "Reseda" (stock and mignonette) are ornamental flowers, planted for their fragrance and, in the case of stock, for their showy blossoms. In this scene, therefore, common and elegant vegetation are united to create a harmonious whole. By selecting these particular plants, Fontane subtly draws attention to the contrasting backgrounds of the two

lovers. In the garden, class and educational differences between the aristocrat and the seamstress are rendered inconsequential: the delicate fragrance of mignonette combines deliciously with the stronger scent of thyme.

The idyllic seclusion of the garden in this scene points to another important function of natural settings in Fontane's works. These settings stand in contrast to, and offer an escape from, the "civilized" urban, urbane existence predominant in the author's "Berlin" novels. Fontane is scathing in his portrayal of Berlin society. He frequently portrays the life of the upper classes as stiflingly restrictive, mind-numbingly tedious, and essentially empty. The two lovers in Irrungen, Wirungen are from different classes, and natural landscapes – in particular, the garden – offer the only possible venue to meet. Within the protective walls of the garden, Botho and Lene can experience and express their love for one another, safe from society's restrictions and prejudices.

The garden of Irrungen, Wirungen is referred to as "eine große, feldeinwärts sich erstreckende Gärtnerei" (5). As the narrator explains, this garden no longer exists, but at the time the story takes place – the mid 1870's – it could be found at the point where Kurfürstendamm and Kurfürstenstraße crossed, across from the Berlin Zoological Gardens. The focus on the garden's specific location is significant: this "Gärtnerei" is an island – or at least a peninsula – in an urban sea, a place of nature on the edge of the great city. The narrator's description of the garden as opening out to the fields ("feldeinwärts") is also significant, for this specification foreshadows the

actions of the novel's main characters: Botho and Lene attempt to escape from the realities and restrictions of city life by seeking refuge in either the "Gärtnerei" or the fields beyond.

#### 4.2 Nature and "Natürlichkeit" in Fontane's Works

The association of the character Lene Nimptsch with the quality of "Natürlichkeit" draws attention to Fontane's frequent use of the term: it appears throughout the author's letters, essays and other works of fiction. Fontane often employed the term to describe aesthetic value. In assessing the products of Naturalism, for example, he evoked the concept of "Natürlichkeit" to point to a missing quality: "Aller modernen Kunst ist der Sinn für das Natürliche verloren gegangen, und gerade diese Kunst nennt sich naturalistisch" (qtd. in Hollmann 238). Fontane also valued "Natürlichkeit" in the works of fellow writers; comparing the great Henrik Ibsen to Gerhart Hauptmann, Fontane reported a preference for the latter, "weil er menschlicher, natürlicher, wahrer ist" (qtd. in Hollmann 248). What specifically did this quality entail for Fontane? As is clear from the writer's denigration of Naturalism, his conception of "Natürlichkeit" did not refer to a direct, unmediated, or gritty imitation of reality. Instead, Fontane understood art as a medium for – if not filtering – at least tempering reality, giving the reader or viewer the impression of life. In a letter to Emil Schiff (a Berlin doctor and writer) on February 15, 1888, Fontane admitted that copious details of his recent novel,

Irrungen, Wirrungen, were probably inaccurate: “Es ist mir selber fraglich, ob man von einem Balkon der Landgrafen-straße aus den Wilmersdorfer Turm oder die Charlottenburger Kuppel sehen kann oder nicht,” he wrote. Elements of the garden were also called into question: “Gärtner würden sich vielleicht wundern, was ich alles im Dörrschen Garten a tempo blühen und reifen lasse.” Yet Fontane stalwartly defended his work, maintaining that he had succeeded in his artistic goal. “[I]ch bin überzeugt, daß auf jeder Seite etwas Irrtümliches zu finden ist. Und doch bin ich ehrlich bestrebt gewesen, das wirkliche Leben zu schildern. Es geht halt nit. Man muß schon zufrieden sein, wenn wenigstens der Totaleindruck der ist: ‘Ja, das ist Leben.’” (FB 3: 586).<sup>2</sup>

The confusion comes in keeping this concept of “Natürlichkeit” – a quality communicated in artwork – separate from the “Natürlichkeit” Botho ascribes to Lene – a human virtue. Critic Werner Hollmann falls prey to this predicament, making little or no distinction between “Natürlichkeit” in art and “Natürlichkeit” in people. He further muddies matters by opening his article, “Natürlichkeit in the Novels of Fontane,” with an examination of nature in the German author’s works. Certainly Fontane did seek to attain “Natürlichkeit” in his portrayal of nature, to give the appearance of reality without purely imitating or “photographically” reproducing what he saw. Still, one cannot equate the two concepts of nature and aesthetic

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<sup>2</sup> Silvain Guarda describes Fontane’s writing in terms of a “dialektischen Wechselwirkung zweier komplementär angelegter Darstellungsprinzipien, namentlich der Schaffensprinzipien von Mimesis und Fiktion, durch die der Dichter seinen Kunstwerken außer konkretem Bestand Unmittelbarkeit und Natürlichkeit verleiht” (123).

**“Natürlichkeit.” Consideration of “Natürlichkeit” as a human quality becomes more complicated. If we look at Lene, the character in Irrungen, Wirungen most frequently identified with “Natürlichkeit,” we cannot fail to notice that she often appears in natural settings. The garden is Lene’s domain, and the two excursions she takes with Botho are to the fields outside of Berlin and to a secluded inn in the country, Hankels Ablage. The lovers also meet in a somewhat natural environment, rowing on the river in Stralau. That water is a central element in two of these instances establishes a further link between the story’s heroine and nature. (Water, as mentioned in the introduction, is a natural element traditionally linked to the female sex). Viewed in this light, Lene might be seen as representing or even embodying nature, and thereby providing a natural haven for her lover Botho, whose life is so restricted by the rigidity of city society.**

**Lene, however, is not a child of nature. Unlike Effi Briest, the central figure of the next chapter, Lene does not frolic in her garden with naïve and childlike abandon. The Dörrs’ garden is a nocturnal haven in which to meet her lover, to enjoy solitude, the moonlight, and the fragrance of the flowers and herbs. During the day, though, the garden offers no natural sanctuary from the demands of life. For Frau and Herr Dörr, the garden is a workplace, where they grow the meager crop of asparagus they will sell at the market. For Lene, too, the garden provides no respite from labor. Sitting beside her mother day after day, she embroiders designs on linen and silk garments for wealthy customers, and in this tedious fashion ekes out a living. In fact, as Lene herself admits, life in the garden can be terribly boring. She rejoices when**

Botho comes to see her, not only because she loves him, but also because his visits afford a respite from the monotony of her days. As she complains to Frau Dörr, “Gott, man freut sich doch, wenn man mal was erlebt. Es ist oft so einsam hier draußen” (20). This explains Lene’s pleasure in going into the city. As she makes her way through the Berlin streets one day after meeting with her employers, Lene is delighted by a busy marketplace: “Die Sonne that ihr wohl und das Treiben auf dem Magdeburger Platze, wo gerade Wochenmarkt war und alles eben wieder zum Aufbruch rüstete, vergnügte sie so, daß sie stehen blieb und sich das bunte Durcheinander mit ansah” (119). Lene’s happiness in this urban environment illustrates that her “Natürlichkeit” is not a result of some special connection with nature. Lene is simply glad to engage in life, to take part in pleasurable or exciting activities, to be with her lover instead of alone with her mother and the Dörrs. The reason her meetings with Botho take place in the garden or secluded natural areas is not because she represents nature, but because of class boundaries: it would be unthinkable for the Baron and the seamstress to openly walk hand in hand through the city streets.

Why, then, is Lene identified with the concept of “Natürlichkeit”? For although it is Botho who delivers this assessment, Fontane is clearly of the same opinion when it comes to his creation Lene. Unlike the ladies Botho encounters in his niveau of society, Lene is without artifice or pretense, open about her feelings and honest with her opinions. When recounting to Frau Dörr her initial encounter with Botho, she admits that it might not have been “right” for her to accept his invitation to

walk her home, but she defends her actions by declaring, “der Eine [Botho] gefiel mir und sich zieren und zimperlich thun, das hab’ ich nie gekonnt” (19). Lene’s life is difficult, and, as we have seen, often tedious. Yet instead of complaining, she takes pleasure in small things, transient as they may be – the scent of flowers and herbs in the garden, the sight of boats on the water at Hankels Ablage, the relationship with Botho. She resolutely refuses to bow to external pressures: after the affair with Botho ends she will not deny its existence, despite the possibility that the admission of this earlier love may cause her potential bridegroom to abandon her. Lene’s ability to live in the present moment, to see poetry in the banal prose of everyday existence, to remain true to herself even if breaking with societal codes and expectations – this is the “Natürlichkeit” to which both Fontane and his creation Botho respond.<sup>3</sup> As Fontane wrote in an October 10, 1895 letter to his friend Colmar Grünhagen, “Der natürliche Mensch will leben, will weder fromm noch keusch noch sittlich sein, lauter Kunstprodukte von einem gewissen, aber immer zweifelhaft bleibenden Wert, weil es an Echtheit und Natürlichkeit fehlt. Das Natürliche hat es mir seit lange angetan, ich lege nur *darauf* Wert, fühle mich nur *dadurch* angezogen” (FB 4: 487).

Ultimately there is a connection between “Natürlichkeit” as manifested in the character of Lene Nimptsch and a specific notion of nature. In the Berlin Fontane

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<sup>3</sup> The contrast between prose and poetry is central to Alan Bance’s interpretation of Irrungen, Wirrungen. Bance elevates Lene above all other characters, dubbing her a “representative of the poetic, in the ‘conflict between the poetry of the heart and the opposing prose of circumstances.’ Along with her honesty, naturalness and purity, the poetic quality allows her to come to terms . . . with the ineluctable facts of life as conditional, confused and transient” (81).

both loved and hated, whose politics, militarism and social rules restricted every aspect of life, human “Natürlichkeit” was an increasingly rare and endangered quality. Similarly, nature, even a little square of nature such as the Dörrs’ garden, is the only place where natural behavior (as Fontane defined it) is truly possible. Like “Natürlichkeit,” nature is a threatened commodity. In Irrungen, Wirungen the little garden is the most temporary and fragile of refuges. Its sanctity can be neither expanded nor reproduced, as the lovers discover on the Wilmersdorfer Heide and at Hankels Ablage. The garden itself eventually disappears, swallowed up by the growing city. By the time Fontane “recorded” the “Irrungen” and “Wirungen” of Lene’s and Botho’s story, the garden and the “Natürlichkeit” the lovers experienced there had been relegated to the realm of “once upon a time.”

#### 4.3 “Es war einmal . . .”

The initial description of the garden and its central structures is reminiscent of the narrator’s first view of the Rosenhaus in Nachsommer – here, too, the impression is of something out of a fairy tale. Where the Rosenhaus was spotlighted by streaming sunshine, however, the little “Wohnhaus” of Irrungen, Wirungen is depicted in the soft half-light of evening, its details blurred and indistinct. The mystery of the cottage and its gardens is intensified by the fact that both are almost completely hidden from view. From the road all that can be seen is a tower painted red and green, calling to mind a castle “Turm.” A clock face is visible at the top of



the tower, but its hands are missing, emphasizing the timelessness of this place. That the garden is a refuge for lovers is suggested by the flock of doves, traditional symbols of love and tenderness, circling the tower in the twilight (IW "Anmerkungen" 239).

The garden's inhabitants, too, seem to be straight from a *Märchen*. "Die Alte," Frau Nimptsch, tends the eternal flame in her cottage (the fire is kept lit at all times), and she is so sunken in her "Betrachtungen und Träumereien" (IW 6) that she often seems unaware of the outside world. Her beautiful daughter, Lene, is not her biological offspring, but instead a foundling, whose parentage remains unknown. (Their neighbor, Frau Dörr, hints that she could be "eine Prinzessin oder so was" [8]). In addition to her mysterious lineage, Lene's gentle, quietly noble demeanor seems to remove her from the common sphere. The story opens with Lene's "Pflegemutter" chatting with Frau Dörr about Lene's recently-formed relationship with a nobleman (the longed-for prince charming of any fairy tale heroine). As the two older women talk, Lene and her lover, Baron Botho von Rienäcker, are walking on the outskirts of the garden, enjoying the beautiful evening and the privacy the "Gärtnerei" affords them.

The fairy tale atmosphere is not unintentional; allusions to *Märchen* appear throughout Fontane's novel. In a later visit to the garden, Botho brings a gift for Lene, and then voices mock concern that Frau Dörr might think it is "ein goldener Pantoffel oder sonst was aus dem Märchen" (25). References to Lene's ash blonde hair also hint at a connection between her story and that of "Aschenputtel," the poor

maid who was transformed into a princess and left behind a golden slipper so that her prince might find her (Speirs 73). Where the Rosenhaus in Nachsommer only possibly parallels the thorn-, and later rose-covered castle in “Dornröschen,” that fairy tale is more directly referenced in Irrungen, Wirrungen. When the lovers make their excursion to Hankels Ablage, Botho returns late to their room and expresses disappointment to find Lene still awake: “Lene, noch auf! Ich dachte, daß ich Dich mit einem Kusse wecken müßte” (85). Botho obviously enjoys imagining Lene in the role of fairy tale princess, his “Dornröschen,” leading a timeless existence in her castle and gardens, waiting patiently for him, her prince.

The issue of class difference, the most insurmountable obstacle Botho and Lene face, is often rendered inconsequential in *Märchen*. The pitiable goose girl tormented by the harsh princess in “Die Gänsemagd” is revealed to be the true princess and is married to the king’s son. In “Aschenputtel,” the poor scullery maid becomes queen with the help of her dead mother, a magic tree and chance. (Of course, Cinderella’s goodness and forbearance makes her true nobility clear from the beginning of the story). Fairy tale endings were not unheard of in the works of Fontane’s contemporaries. In Charles Dickens’ Our Mutual Friend, written twenty years before Irrungen, Wirrungen, the working-class Lizzie Hexam overcomes all obstacles through her integrity, loyalty and purity. She marries the aristocratic Eugene Wrayburn (who, like Botho, is in questionable financial straits), and

ultimately wins the affection of his family<sup>4</sup>. Faced with such examples, the reader may indeed wonder whether Lene's and Botho's story might, after all, turn into a *Märchen*, with the "prince" awakening his "princess," and leading her out of the enchanted garden to be his bride.

Gardens are not a particularly common setting for fairy tales. More often, the heroes or heroines of such tales venture into wilder manifestations of nature, such as the dark and perilous woods of "Hansel und Gretel" and "Rotkäppchen." When gardens do figure, they are places of enchantment and often danger, concealing mysterious objects of desire. In the Russian tale "The Firebird," the king's pleasure garden contains a beautiful tree that bears golden apples, which are stolen every night by a magical bird with golden feathers. The garden of the beast in "La Belle et le Bête" is filled with red roses, although it is the dead of winter. The merchant who ventures inside to take one of these must pay dearly; the furious beast spares his life only when the merchant agrees to give up his beloved daughter. And in "Rapunzel," the pregnant wife's insistence that her husband fetch her lettuce from the neighboring enchantress' garden also costs them their child. In each of these gardens, the object stolen possesses symbolic importance beyond its material value. The golden apples represent the king's sovereignty and wealth, and the roses in the beast's garden

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<sup>4</sup> Fontane's admiration for the British author is well-documented. During his 1852 stay in London, Fontane learned that Dickens was a close neighbor. Unable to muster the courage to call on the famous "Boz," Fontane took to visiting the park in front of his house, "und niemals," as he wrote in his *Reiseberichte*, "ohne den frommen Wunsch zu hegen, daß die frische Luft, die da weht, mir von dem Geist leihen möge, der eben an dieser Stätte heimisch und tätig ist" (Aust, "Traditionen" 366).

denote both unrequited longing and selfless love. Even the lettuce in “Rapunzel” possesses a deeper significance. As Max Lüthi explains in his study of fairy tales, “[t]he pregnant mother’s desire at the very outset [of “Rapunzel”] is a sign of longing for a mysterious higher value; the desired plant grows only in the sorceress’ garden, and it is dangerous to pick it” (112).

The object of desire in the garden of Irrungen, Wirungen is not a plant, but a young woman. For Botho, Lene represents romantic love, as well as the qualities he values most highly, “Einfachheit, Wahrheit, Natürlichkeit” (IW 106). In the garden, their love is similarly “simple and natural,” and they may express it openly and without fear (for Lene’s stepmother Frau Nimpsch is neither a sorceress nor an evil fairy). The danger Botho faces is not from within the garden itself but from the “real” world beyond its walls. As in the fairy tales above, to remove the precious “item” from the garden would have negative, if not disastrous consequences. Lene, and the love Botho shares with her, can only be experienced in the safe and secluded natural realm of the “Gärtnerei.”

#### 4.4 “Bedrügerei” in the “Gärtnerei”

To view Lene as simply a “desired object,” of course, denies her importance in Irrungen, Wirungen; she would be reduced to an element in the hero Botho’s development. Women characters serve this instrumental function in many fictional narratives, particularly in the “Bildungsroman.” Such tales tend to focus exclusively

upon the male protagonist and his quest for truth, knowledge, or individuation; female figures become incidental “Durchlaufstationen” on the hero’s journey (Rüttiger 106).<sup>5</sup> Fontane’s insistent allusion to fairy tales, however, contradicts the notion that Lene is simply a minor character. For as any reader of *Märchen* knows, the central figures of many of these stories – and certainly in the most well-known – are not male, but female. It is true that the heroines of fairy tales often triumph because of their embodiment of idealized feminine characteristics, such as purity, kindness, patience, and domestic virtue (one thinks of the good daughter in “Frau Holle,” who returns home with praise and riches after uncomplainingly cleaning the old woman’s house). Often, though, these young women display intelligence and bravery. The sister in “Brüderchen und Schwesterchen” wisely refrains from drinking from the bewitched stream, and in “Die sechs Schwäne,” the young queen willingly suffers six years of silence (during which time she is tormented by an evil mother-in-law and threatened with death by fire) to restore her enchanted brothers to human form. Lene embodies many of the positive qualities of these fairy tale heroines, and is ultimately as vital to Irrungen, Wirrungen as is her lover Botho.

Max Lüthi maintains that the prevalence of heroines in fairy tales is a manifestation of the “strong and clear need for a complementary antipole” in a male-dominated modern era. In narratives, particularly in the fairy tale, “the feminine component, that part of man closer to nature, had to come to the forefront to

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<sup>5</sup> Jean-Louis Bandet, in his analysis of Irrungen, Wirrungen, states categorically that Lene’s purpose is purely instrumental: “Lene n’est qu’un personnage de référence, qui permet de mesurer l’évolution de Botho” (49).

compensate for the technological and economic system created by the masculine spirit, which dominated the external world of reality” (136). In his analysis, then, Lüthi once again points to the connection of the female with nature, and links both to the fairy tale. These correlations are certainly in evidence in the “Gärtnerei” of Irrungen, Wirrungen. In Botho’s mind, the little patch of nature is a female realm, offering an alternative to the “male” world, the banality of army life, the restrictive artificialities of society. Lene is essential to the idyllic, fairy tale existence Botho associates with the garden. He is only half mocking when he details to Frau Nimptsch the components of her enviable life: “Erst haben Sie das Haus und diesen Herd und dann den Garten und dann Frau Dörr. Und dann haben Sie die Lene” (24).

Fontane, like Stifter, quickly dispels any idea that the garden is truly “märchenhaft,” but not by having a character scientifically or logically explain away its “magic,” as did Risach in Nachsommer. Instead the narrator himself subtly undermines the mystery he has suggested. The reigning silence, for example, is only “halbmärchenhaft,” and the air of timelessness is rendered similarly illusory because the hands of the tower clock are not broken, but “halbweggebrochen” (Kribben 237). The notion of the garden as being a place removed from time is further eroded by the narrator’s placing it within a specific time period, “Mitte der 70er Jahre” (5). In addition, the apparent secrecy of the garden proves deceptive, for it can be seen from the street, which represents the city, society, and time: the garden’s “Wohnhaus, trotz aller Kleinheit und zurückgezogenheit, [konnte] von der vorübergehende Straße her sehr wohl erkannt werden” (5).

The conversation between Frau Dörr and Frau Nimptsch also deconstructs this fairy tale. For one, their thick Berlin dialect places them firmly in an historical context. The two women also discount any notion that Botho might be “Prince Charming.” He is certainly a gentleman, for though the young people have been out of sight for some time, Frau Nimptsch knows that he will behave himself with Lene: “Sie wissen ja, der is nicht so.” (7). Still, both women are well aware that this is not a relationship that will lead to marriage and “happily ever after.” Such an outcome is impossible for lovers of different class backgrounds. Frau Nimptsch is concerned that Lene, despite her assertions to the contrary, has allowed herself to indulge in hopes for a future with Botho, and Frau Dörr agrees that this would be a catastrophe. “O Du meine Güte, denn is es schlimm,” she warns. “Immer wenn das Einbilden anfängt, fängt auch das Schlimme an. Das is wie Amen in der Kirche” (7).

Fontane’s description of the garden on the following day shatters any remaining illusions the reader might have that this is a magical place. In the harsh light of the morning, the “Schloß” is revealed to be “nichts als ein jämmerlicher Holzkasten,” its mysterious tower a pigeon house (IW 9). The “Gärtnerei” is a purely practical garden, poorly maintained and overrun with chickens. The mysterious nature of the garden the previous evening was just a trick of the light, and in the actions of the gardener, Herr Dörr, there is also an element of deception. The dilapidated greenhouse contains pots with carnations in them that Herr Dörr plans to take to market to sell, but they are not carnations he has grown himself, simply stems he has stuck into the containers. He gleefully anticipates bargaining with and

ultimately swindling the “Madams” at the market. The only other agricultural commodity mentioned is a pathetic crop of asparagus, and here, too, Dörr encourages his wife to bind up the broken pieces with the full stems: “Na, binde man alles gut zusammen. Und den kleinen Murks auch” (14-15). Frau Dörr, though frustrated with her husbands’ “Bedrügerei,” is resigned, for, as she complains to Lene, “so sind die Gärtner alle . . .” (16). In this garden, illusion – if not deception – reigns.

For Lene’s lover Botho, however, it is essential that the air of fantasy the garden provides be maintained. As mentioned before, the “Gärtnerei,” with its “Schloß,” quaint cottage, and picturesque inhabitants, offers Botho freedom from the stifling atmosphere of his own social class. In addition, within the garden’s safe confines, the class differences that challenge his relationship with Lene fade into the background. Botho’s is clearly an outsider’s perspective. The lives of those in the garden are tedious and difficult: the Dörrs scrape a meager living from the depleted soil, while Lene makes ends meet through piecemeal stitchery. And the tiny cottage is, as Frau Dörr points out later in the book, little more than a “Puppenkasten, wo jeder Kater ins Fenster kuckt un kein Gas nich un keine Wasserleitung” (127). Yet Botho, sitting by Frau Nimptsch’s fire, insists that the old woman lives “Wie Gott in Frankreich” (24).

A closer examination of Botho’s life sheds further light on his contentment in the Dörrs’ “Gärtnerei.” Botho’s days are marked by a surplus of leisure time: he is an officer in the army, but the reader never encounters him engaging in any drills or maneuvers. He spends much of his time playing cards with fellow officers in the



club, where conversation is limited to the subjects of women, betting, horses and finances. Botho's balcony apartment is characterized "durch eine geschmackvolle, seine Mittel ziemlich erheblich übersteigende Einrichtung" (38), its walls hung with expensive paintings (one of which he has won playing the lottery). Botho's propensity for consistently living beyond his means suggests an attempt to offset ennui by purchasing beautiful things.

Whether Botho's profligate lifestyle signals lack of fulfillment or spoiled indulgence on his part, his behavior cannot continue. The family coffers are nearly dry, and the only way to renew the Rienacker fortunes is through a lucrative marriage between Botho and a wealthy cousin. He is essentially trapped in this narrow life, yet his situation is no different than that of the majority of his comrades. In a later scene, Botho rides along the canal with a fellow officer who is also caught between family and class obligations and his love for a woman of the "vierten Stand." The unrelentingly straight lines of the canal symbolize nineteenth-century Prussia's straight and narrow codes of conduct. As much as they may desire to escape these restrictions, ultimately neither Botho nor his comrade is able to break away from society's "langweilige Geradlinigkeit" (Jolles 80).

In the garden Botho can escape from the demands of reality, from his debts, and from the nagging of his family to marry well. Among Lene's people Botho is a nobleman, set on a pedestal, and he can recreate society with himself at its center. During the evening spent at the Nimptsch cottage in Chapter 4 he stages a "soirée" in which he is both the main actor and the director. Botho has brought souvenirs from a

high society dinner party the night before, “Knallbonbons,” or crackers, which, when “popped,” reveal trite rhymes and sayings. Such frivolities, Botho explains, are par for the course at such gatherings, whose participants wax rhapsodic on any theme, from summer travel destinations to art to morel mushrooms. Botho attempts to instruct Lene in the conversational finesses of the aristocracy, but while the other characters are caught up in the “Schauspiel,” Lene is bemused and a bit shocked by the meaningless prattle: “Und so sprecht Ihr! . . . [W]enn es alles so redensartlich ist, da wundert es mich, daß ihr solche Gesellschaften mitmacht” (27-28). In any case, these are “Gesellschaften” to which Lene will never gain entrance. As if to emphasize her exclusion, at this moment music begins to drift through the windows from a concert at the Zoological Garden. The elegant garden, located directly across the road, is a constant reminder of the “real” society from which Lene is barred. With the intrusion of the concert music Fontane again underscores the fragility of the “Gärtnerei” and its environs as a sanctuary for the lovers.

This scene also reveals Botho’s conflicting feelings regarding the class differences between himself and Lene. Despite his charming attentions to Frau Nimptsch, flattery of Frau Dörr and joviality with her husband, Botho feels a distinct sense of superiority to these simple people. His staged “fete” in the Nimptsch cottage is a pathetic imitation of the fine party he has attended the evening before, and his condescension is illustrated by the crackers he brings as a gift. Lene, his “fairy tale princess,” receives no “goldene[n] Pantoffel” (*IW* 25), but only leftovers from the

tables of the rich.<sup>6</sup> Botho's allusion to "Märchen" hints at his dilemma. He is in love with Lene, yet their relationship can only survive in the safety of the "Gärtnerei," by perpetuating an atmosphere of fantasy and fairy tale. Even within the garden, though, that fantasy is undermined by the intrusion of Lene's family and friends, reminders of her inferior station. This quandary foreshadows the end of the lovers' relationship long before their ill-fated excursion to Hankels Ablage: in the words of critic Jean-Louis Bandet, "[Botho] aperçoit son amour pour Lene sous les deux images contrastées et inconciliables du conte de fées et de la vulgarité, sinon de l'obscénité, de la liaison entre un noble et une ouvrière" (46).

#### 4.5 The "Gärtnerei" as Garden of Love

The presence of Lene's mother and neighbors reminds Botho of his lover's "vulgar" origins, spoiling his fantasies. The fairy tale atmosphere can only be restored by separating Lene from her people, so after the party in the little cottage has dispersed, Botho leads her alone into the evening garden. As the two promenade together through the "Gärtnerei," they can at least pretend that this is a "garden of love," like the French model described in Gail Finney's Counterfeit Idyll, where the lovers are surrounded by beautiful and sweet-smelling flowers and serenaded by a

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<sup>6</sup> Kurt Sollmann points out that the crackers' "Kurzlebigkeit . . . im krassen Gegensatz zum Märchen [steht]" (44). They also serve as a metaphor for the "Kurzlebigkeit" of Lene's and Botho's relationship.

nightingale. In the Dörrs' garden, not roses, but berry bushes and thyme border the path and scent the air, and the buzzing of fireflies must substitute for the nightingale's song (IW 32). Though the "Gärtnerei" can only approximate the features of a true "garden of love," it nonetheless functions as an idyll for Botho and Lene.

As the lovers stroll through the garden at evening, Lene asks Botho to tell her a story, "[a]ber etwas recht Hübsches" (32). Her appeal may be seen as an attempt to perpetuate the fairy tale, reflecting a desire that Botho might speak of their love, of their present – and perhaps future – happiness. Botho fails to fulfill Lene's request. Instead, he asks about the relationship between the Dörrs (who are the antithesis of a romantic pair). He is particularly fascinated by Frau Dörr's earlier relationship with a man who was of a higher class. It is as if Botho must have a point of comparison, either to remind himself and Lene of the ultimate end inherent in all such relationships or to draw a parallel between Lene and Frau Dörr. Lene, in her response, leaves no doubt that she considers the two relationships to be completely different. Frau Dörr conducted her affair for financial reasons, but Lene truly loves Botho. She seeks to distance and differentiate herself from the other woman by making fun of Frau Dörr's lack of "Figur." Ultimately, though, she speaks kindly of the older woman, explaining that despite being chastised and ridiculed by society, "sie selber hat sich in ihrer Einfalt nie Gedanken darüber gemacht und noch weniger Vorwürfe" (34).

Of course Lene wishes on some level that the fairy tale between her and Botho could continue. Though Lene may – in the words of her lover – embody the qualities

of “Einfachheit, Wahrheit, [und] Natürlichkeit,” she is not “einfältig.” Lene is painfully aware of Botho’s concern that they will be seen together. When her lover reacts with alarm to her casual comment that she would be afraid to meet his mother, she laughs and assures him, “Du mußt nicht gleich denken, daß ich vorhabe, mich bei der Gnädigen melden zu lassen” (35). Lene realizes that though Botho is kind and loves her as well as he is able to, he is weak, controlled by the “Stärkre”: “Und der Stärkre . . . ja, wer ist dieser Stärkre? Nun, entweder ist’s Deine Mutter, oder das Gerede der Menschen, oder die Verhältnisse. Oder vielleicht alles drei” (36). Lene, like Frau Dörr, makes no “Vorwürfe” – she knows that she and Botho will one day part. The pleasures enjoyed in the garden cannot last, for this is a fragile refuge in comparison with the infinitely stronger forces of societal, family, and monetary expectations.

The impermanence of this garden sanctuary is accentuated in this scene by a nature description. After satisfying Botho’s curiosity about Frau Dörr’s liaison with the nobleman, Lene suggests that they sit and look at the “Mondsichel.” The moon – and particularly the waning sickle moon – is a symbol of the passage of time, and a reminder that Botho’s and Lene’s happiness cannot last (Sollmann 46). Also significant is the position of the moon, for it sheds its silver light on the “Elefantenhaus” of the Zoological Garden. This garden serves as the counter realm to the garden of the Dörr “Gärtnerei,” for where the Dörrs’ garden is an area where the lovers can secretly rendezvous, the Zoological Garden is an open, public place,

populated by members of Botho's societal class. Lene can never enter this garden with Botho by her side, and its presence fills her with longing and sadness.<sup>7</sup>

From the bench where she and Botho sit, Lene points over the trees to the Zoological Garden, where fireworks are shooting up into the night sky in a brilliant display of color and light. It is as if "sie sich jagen und überholen wollte" (IW 36), perhaps foreshadowing the game of tag Lene and Botho play together in the Wilmersdorf meadows in the ninth chapter. The bright fireworks also symbolize the lovers' passion. But the rockets' failure to "catch" one another also points to the futility of Lene and Botho's hopes for remaining together: Suddenly everything is over – in the glow of evening and the fading lights, the only sound to be heard is that of a pair of birds chirping in their cages at the zoo. Lene knows that she and Botho are, like these birds, restricted in the "Käfigen" that society has determined. Still, though they both live in "cages," Botho's is ultimately far more restrictive and more limited than hers: "Ihr kennt ja nur Euch und euren Klub und euer Leben. Ach, das arme bischen Leben" (IW 37). For Botho, it soon becomes apparent that to leave that life is unthinkable, regardless of his love for Lene. The music that begins again "nach einer langen Pause" is, as Lene points out, the "Schlußstück" (37); despite the happiness the lovers have experienced, their "final song" will soon play itself out.

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<sup>7</sup> The "Zoologischer," in the words of Karl-Gert Kribben, represents "eine Art 'gesellschaftlich vermittelter Paradiesgarten,' – jenen Punkt der Großstadt, wo inmitten der 'Prosa' durch die Konzentration exotischer Tiere und tropischen Pflanzen in Gehegen und Triebhäusern der 'Poesie' des Feinen und Abenteuerlich-Fremden auf eng-begrenztem Raum ein Platz zugewiesen wird" (233). Nevertheless, an openly acknowledged relationship between lovers of different classes would be too strange for even this exotic environment.

#### 4.6 Going Beyond the Garden: the Wilmersdorfer Heide

Lene is determined to enjoy the song while it lasts. On Botho's next visit she suggests that they walk outside the garden, to the Wilmersdorfer Heide. This landscape is more open, and thus less protected than the garden, but it is fairly secluded, and seems to be a safe arena for the lovers' attempt to expand the garden's boundaries. Just as the horticulture of the Dörrs' little garden was a mean approximation of the garden of love, the landscape through which the lovers stroll in Chapter 9 is almost a parody of the sentimental garden elevated in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. For a few moments, the quiet scene calls to mind a work of art. "[R]eckartige, wie für Turner bestimmte Gerüste" stand between quaint sheds, and Botho is curious as to their purpose. These, however, are not the picturesque little edifices one might expect to see in a landscape garden, but structures for beating carpets – "[G]leich danach begann ein Kopfen und Schlagen mit großen Rohrstöcken, so daß der Weg drüben alsbald in einer Staubwolke lag" (IW 58). Substituting for the statues of noble and mythological figures is a heap of rubbish from a sculptor's studio. The hill they climb to survey the surrounding fields (for every sentimental garden must have a viewing point) offers as a seat not a marble bench, but a pile of weeds and nettles. Finally, instead of the cheery song of birds or the soothing rush of a stream, the prominent sounds in this scene come from the falling pins at a nearby

bowling alley. All of these rather pathetic approximations of the English sentimental garden accentuate the deceptive nature of this landscape as a refuge for Botho and Lene.

Lene, ever aware of Botho's concern that they will be seen together, promises that nobody will be on the path, and invites Frau Dörr along. Whether she intends Frau Dörr to be a chaperone is unclear, but it is as if Lene realizes that the older woman's presence is necessary. Frau Dörr's past, her affair with a count, reminds the two lovers of the reality of their situation and the transience of their relationship. Still, the added company soon becomes grating, if not offensive. As the three walk from the garden into the fields, Frau Dörr dominates the conversation, responding to Botho's flirtations as if she, and not Lene, were his lover. In fact, she seems better able to respond to Botho's teasing remarks. As the strange "ménage à trois" pass the pile of refuse from the sculptor's studio, Frau Dörr corrects Botho when he points out an angel: "Ich denke, wenn er so klein ist und Flügel hat, heißt er Amor," to which Botho quips, "Amor oder Engel, . . . das ist immer dasselbe. Fragen Sie nur Lene, die wird es bestätigen" (59). Lene is discomfited, whether by this confluence of divine and sexual love, or by Botho's inappropriate sharing of their intimacies with an outsider. And from this point forward it seems to be Frau Dörr's intent to embarrass the younger woman through repeated innuendoes. Passing a stand of poplars, Frau Dörr criticizes the properties of their fluffy catkins as a mattress stuffing, particularly "wenn es denn so wuppt." When Lene tries to change the subject, Frau Dörr's attention is drawn to a stork looking toward them: "Na, nach mir sieht er nicht" (59).



Whether intentional or not, the older woman's words have the effect of reducing Botho and Lene's love for each other to a baser, or at least more sexual, level, and of reminding the two that theirs is an old story. An apparently off-handed comment about the marsh frogs ("Poggen") has sexual connotations as well. "Ja, die Poggen. . . . Nachts ist es mitunter ein Gequake, daß man nicht schlafen kann. Und woher kommt es? Weil hier alles Sumpf is und blos so thut, als ob es Wiese wäre" (59). Frau Dörr's remark about the croaking of the frogs is a less than subtle reference to the "disruptive" sounds made during nocturnal lovemaking. The older woman's remark that the meadow is in reality a swamp may also be seen as an allusion to Lene's and Botho's relationship. Beneath the flowery surface of their superior love and respect for one another is a "Sumpf," a mire of base sexuality. For centuries, western society has viewed physical love in this light, as a swamp whose muddy waters threaten to immerse and drown the unwary (male) lover (Bowman 446). (It is clear that the swamp is a gendered landscape, associated particularly with female sexuality). Such a dangerous "Sumpf" corrupts men, seducing them from the only bond between the sexes that is sanctioned by society: marriage. Reaction to Fontane's Irrungen, Wirungen certainly suggests that many members of the public shared this view of sexuality. Scandalized readers abruptly stopped their subscriptions to the "Vossische Zeitung," which was carrying installments of the "immoral" work. A copartner of the newspaper wrote Stephany, angrily demanding from the editor, "Wird denn die gräßliche Hurengeschichte nicht bald aufhören?" (Sollmann 88).

Botho does not consider his Lene to be a “Hure”; he is grateful for the fact that she is different, not a jaded mistress like those of his companions. Her candor and simplicity are, of course, in short supply in his sphere of society, where conversation at a dinner party is so superficial, “eigentlich ist es ganz gleich, wovon man spricht” (IW 28). At the club (although Botho insists that this is a place where “die Redensarten auf[hören] und die Wirklichkeiten [an]fangen ” [28]), he and his closest friends hide behind nicknames, and engage in shallow and trivial banter. Similarly, in affairs between men of his social milieu and women of the “vierten Stand,” it is customary to adhere to certain “rules of the game.” (These rules are on impressive display between the officers and their “ladies” at Hankels Ablage). Botho is firmly ensconced in the behaviors and expectations of his class, and though admiring of Lene’s “Natürlichkeit,” he is somewhat at a loss that she does not abide by these accepted conventions. This explains his obvious enjoyment of Frau Dörr’s presence on the Wilmersdorf walk. Because of her past, Frau Dörr is aware of the “rules,” and she behaves in the flippant, flirtatious and slightly risqué manner Botho would expect from a woman of her class. After the three return to the garden, he goes so far as to insist: “Frau Dörr muß immer dabei sein. Ohne Frau Dörr geht es nicht” (69).

Botho’s flirtations with Frau Dörr demonstrate once again his fascination with the “underbelly” of Lene’s world. This fascination is apparent from the lover’s first walk in the garden, when Botho insists upon discussing Frau Dörr, her strange marriage and her earlier liaison with an aristocrat. In a sense Botho’s persistent

prodding for information, for the truth about the older woman, may be seen as gesturing, once again, to the realm of “Märchen.” In fairy tales, appearances are deceiving, and the truth is revealed only after enduring trials or adventures: the poor goose-girl is actually a princess, the slimy frog an enchanted prince. In looking beyond Lene’s external appearance, however, Botho does not expect to uncover a hidden noble heritage. Instead, he seems determined to identify his beloved with Frau Dörr, a woman whose company he may enjoy, but who represents for him the most common and tawdry elements of the lower classes. Botho’s behavior during the walk on the Wilmersdorfer Heide represents an attempt to psychologically distance himself from Lene, in order to lessen the pain of their inevitable separation. By flirting with Frau Dörr, Botho subtly reduces Lene to the older woman’s level, suggesting that she, too, is a common mistress.

For a few moments on the Wilmersdorfer Heide, even Lene seems content to slip into expected behaviors. On the way back to the garden, she coyly suggests a game of tag. During the chase in the fields Lene literally uses Frau Dörr as a shield, as if hiding behind the “mask” of the mistress, the mask society assigns to her role in Botho’s life. Ironically, it is Botho who ends the game, breaking Lene away from the older woman’s protection and kissing her. When Frau Dörr is unable to refrain from drawing a comparison to her earlier paramour, Lene momentarily agrees, “Zuletzt ist einer wie der andere” (63). Botho’s questioning response – “Meinst Du?” – reveals his unwillingness to be lumped together with Frau Dörr’s despicable count. Despite Botho’s attempts to convince himself that the affair with Lene is nothing out of the

ordinary, he desperately wishes to be seen as different, superior to others of his class who are simply “slumming it.” Lene, sensing his distress, replies in the negative, but the exchange has shaken both of them. On the walk home, the atmosphere of play and fantasy cannot be reclaimed. As the three return to the garden, they sing a love song, and while Frau Dörr has enjoyed the excursion, Lene and Botho appear quiet and anxious. This, their, first attempt to venture beyond the garden and to maintain the atmosphere of fairy tale beyond its boundaries, has failed.

#### 4.7 Hankels Ablage

Botho is plainly torn between, in the words of Bandet, “[le] conte de fées et . . . la vulgarité” (46). The excursion to Hankels Ablage is an example of his desire to escape into the fairy tale with Lene alone, away from his comrades, the club, monetary worries, and the disruptive presence of Lene’s people, particularly Frau Dörr. The lovers had attempted this on their walk through the fields at Wilmersdorf, but Frau Dörr’s presence had been a constant reminder of the “vulgarité” Jean-Louis Bandet speaks of. At the (supposedly) isolated Hankels Ablage, Botho hopes to recreate and perfect the idyll of the garden, to escape into a pure fairy tale, with no disruptions from members of his or Lene’s class. When Lene and he discuss the fact that Frau Dörr has not been invited on the excursion, Botho’s rationalizes the decision to leave her behind: “Frau Dörr, wenn sie neben Deiner Mutter sitzt oder den alten Dörr erzieht, ist unbezahlbar, aber nicht unter Menschen. Unter Menschen ist sie blos

komische Figur und eine Verlegenheit" (71). In other words, the older woman would disturb and embarrass him, and simultaneously disrupt the idyll.

The importance of Hankels Ablage is demonstrated by its location in the book. Of the novel's twenty-six chapters, the events at Hankels Ablage occupy the eleventh through the thirteenth chapter, and represent a watershed in Irrungen, Wirrungen. The lovers have anticipated and planned their escape to the country for weeks, and when they first arrive, it seems that they have finally succeeded in expanding the boundaries of their garden of love. The little inn on the river is quaint and welcoming, and Botho and Lene are its only visitors. Lene's happiness at the beauty of the place leads to a change in her, one that Botho notes with pleasure: "Etwas Entschlossenes und beinah Herbes, das sonst in ihrem Charakter lag, war wie von ihr genommen und einer ihr sonst fremden Gefühlsweichheit gewichen und dieser Wechsel schien ihr selber unendlich wohl zu thun" (72). Very soon, though, Fontane begins to undermine the lovers' idyll. On a walk along the water, Botho spies two boats, the "Forelle" and the "Hoffnung," and playfully asks Lene which they should choose to carry them across the river. Lene replies, "Natürlich die Forelle. Was sollen wir mit der Hoffnung?" (73) When Lene retires early, the landlord and his wife assume she is pregnant (a "vulgar" assumption hearkening back to Frau Dörr's comments about the stork on the walk at Wilmersdorf). And Botho, while talking to the landlord, learns that their idyll is far from isolated; during the summer, hundreds of Berliners flock to Hankels Ablage. This conversation foreshadows the destruction of the lovers' newfound garden.

Nature itself suggests that the end is near. The location of Hankels Ablage is significant, for water was the setting for Botho's and Lene's first encounter. It is only fitting that this unstable and unpredictable element – the same Spree river where their affair began – should serve as a backdrop for its end. The birds the lovers observe on their first afternoon are also harbingers. Both the finch creating a nest for her family and the mother duck leading her ducklings to the water hint at a happiness Botho and Lene will never experience: they will never be able to marry and have a home and children together.

Even the gathering of flowers has significance. As the lovers wander through a meadow beside the river, Botho expresses disappointment that he cannot pick a bouquet for Lene: "Aber sieh nur, die reine Wiese, nichts als Gras und keine Blume. Nicht eine" (74). Lene insists, "[e]s stehen hier mehr als in Dörr's Garten; man muß nur ein Auge dafür haben," and proceeds to gather an armful of flowers. When Botho, playing the botanist, denigrates them as weeds and "Salat," Lene laughingly corrects him: "Hier ist Vergißmeinnicht, aber kein Mäuseohr-Vergißmeinnicht, will sagen kein falsches, sondern ein ächtes. Zugestanden? . . . Und das hier ist Ehrenpreis, eine feine kleine Blume. Die wirst Du doch auch wohl gelten lassen? Da frag' ich gar nicht erst. Und diese große rothbraune das ist Teufels-Abbiß, und eigens für Dich gewachsen. Ja, lache nur. Und das hier . . . das sind Immortellen." (75) The forget-me-nots presage the end of the affair, as well as the fact that neither lover will be able to forget this relationship, while the "Ehrenpreis" may be seen as referring to the rewards of love, whatever the pain of loss. "Immortellen" are also symbolic of

memory, but everlasting memory, beyond death, for these flowers retain their color after they are picked and dried. Botho asks for one of Lene's hairs to bind the bouquet, and though she hesitates ( for "Haar bindet") she complies in the end. Botho's insistence reveals the continued effort on his part to deny the importance, the uniqueness, of the relationship with Lene. This also explains the inclusion of "Teufels Abbiß" in the bouquet: in this affair Botho has bitten off more than he can chew. For the rest of the novel, Botho struggles unsuccessfully to forget the liaison. When, in Chapter 22, he burns the bouquet of now dried and faded flowers, he realizes that Lene was right: "Ob ich nun frei bin? . . . Will ich's denn? Ich will es *nicht*. Alles Asche. Und *doch* gebunden" (IW 167).

That evening, alone in their room while Botho chats below with the inn's landlord, Lene opens the window. After a day of reminders of the insurmountable obstacles before herself and her lover, she seeks solace in the view of nature.

Eine tiefe Stille herrschte, nur in der alten Ulme ging ein Wehen und Rauschen und alles, was eben noch von Verstimmung in ihrer Seele geruht haben mochte, das schwand jetzt hin, als sie den Blick immer eindringlicher und immer entzückter auf das vor ihr ausgebreitete Bild richtete. Das Wasser fluthete leise, der Wald und die Wiese lagen im abendlichen Dämmer und der Mond, der eben wieder seinen ersten Sichelstreifen zeigte, warf einen Lichtschein über den Strom und ließ das Zittern seiner kleinen Wellen erkennen.

"Wie schön," sagte Lene hochaufathmend. "Und ich bin doch glücklich," setzte sie hinzu. (85)

As in the garden, the twilight results in an atmosphere of unreality, of "Märchen," but the sickle moon signifies the passage of time toward an inevitable conclusion. The flowing water, too, suggests impermanence. Lene is calmed by the scene, but the word "doch" in her second statement reveals that, despite her constant assertions to

the contrary, she deeply regrets that the relationship with Botho must end. When he returns to the room, she pulls him to the window to appreciate the beautiful “Bild.” “Sieh nur. Ein armes Menschenherz, soll ihm keine Sehnsucht kommen bei solchem Anblick?” (86) Her words are reminiscent of the earlier scene in the garden, when Lene lamented Botho’s “armes bischen Leben” (86). With her query before the open window, Lene seems to ask whether Botho, that “armes Menschenherz” trapped in a rigid societally-dictated life, is ever filled with longing for something more, for an existence marked by love and “Natürlichkeit.”

Such a life, as both Lene and Botho know, is impossible. With the events of the following day, the last vestiges of the garden fairy tale are destroyed. As the couple sit over breakfast, the visitors the landlord had warned of begin to arrive, among them Botho’s three closest comrades and their “Damen.” Earlier that morning Botho had joked with the landlord, “Hoffentlich wird sich kein Spreedampfer mit 240 Gästen für heute Nachmittag angemeldet haben. Das wäre dann freilich die Vertreibung aus dem Paradiese” (87). The appearance of “Pitt,” “Balafre” and “Serge” and their companions (who have also been assigned pseudonyms) has the effect Botho had feared. Paradise is lost. When Botho’s comrades “inadvertently” intrude on the lover’s isolation, Botho immediately realigns himself and the situation to match societal expectations. Suddenly Lene is no longer Botho’s beloved—she is demoted to his mistress and banished to the company of the other “Schnepfen” while



the men retire to play cards.<sup>8</sup> Botho's designation of Lene as "Agnes Sorel" may be interpreted as an attempt to grant her a more dignified position among the "Damen," "Königin Isabeau, Fräulein Johanna, [und] Fräulein Margot" (IW 90). In Schiller's Die Jungfrau von Orleans (the literary source for the women's names), Agnes Sorel was of noble birth, while Margot and Johanna were of humbler origins (IW "Anmerkungen" 261). Still, this small favor on Botho's part is as insubstantial as the crackers he had earlier brought to Lene as a gift. By betraying his lover, Botho proves himself weak, as Lene had known him to be all along.

The expulsion from paradise as illustrated by the events the final day at Hankels Ablage affords an opportunity to examine the issue of gender in a unique light. In the two works examined in the previous two chapters of this study (Stifter's Brigitta and Der Nachsommer) and in the concluding work under scrutiny, Fontane's Effi Briest, the manifestations and struggles of gender are relatively straightforward. The heroine of Brigitta, both in her appearance and actions, challenges gender expectations, creating an oasis of female creative power. In Nachsommer, Risach's garden expresses his Biedermeier patriarchal mindset, while its female inhabitants are restricted (or, as we have seen, petrified) within the narrow definition of the "schöne[n] Seele." And in Effi Briest, as we will see in the next chapter, breaking with societal gender codes has tragic results for the main character, her lover and her husband. In none of these works, however, is class an issue. All of the figures in the

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<sup>8</sup> The soldiers' "Damen" are essentially professional escorts, or prostitutes. Such women were referred to colloquially as "Schnepfen" (IW Anmerkungen 261).

two Stifter “Erzählungen” are members of the upper classes, as are Effi and Innstetten in Fontane’s late masterpiece. In Irrungen, Wirungen, class is the primary obstacle to the lovers and their happiness. Its presence necessitates a different approach to the examination of gender in the work.

#### 4.8 Gender and Class in the Garden

Before returning to Hankels Ablage it is helpful to look at the relationship of class to gender. Expanding beyond the narrower conceptions originally espoused by cultural feminists, gender has come to mean much more than the dichotomy of male and female. Teresa De Lauretis, in Technologies of Gender, explores the metamorphosis of gender, from its most basic definition as a grammatical term, or as a “classification of sex” (4), to the complex interweavings of power relations and structures, race, and socio-economic factors. De Lauretis refers to Joan Kelly’s 1984 Women, History and Theory in her examination of gender’s expansion as a field of inquiry:

Once we accept the fundamental feminist notion that the personal is political, Kelly argues, it is no longer possible to maintain that there are two spheres of social reality: the private, domestic sphere of the family, sexuality and affectivity, and the public sphere of work and productivity. . . . Instead we can envision several interconnected sets of social relations – relations of work, of class, of race, and of sex/gender: “What we see are not two spheres of social reality, but two (or three) sets of social relations. For now, I would call them relations of work and sex (or class and race, and sex/gender).” Not only are men and women positioned differently in these relations, but – this is an important point – women are affected differently in different sets. (8)

In Irrungen, Wirrungen, the sets mentioned by Kelly are clearly in evidence. Botho is not only male, but is also shaped by his particular sets of “social relations,” among them Prussian society of the upper classes, political conservatism, and the military life. All of his behaviors are prescribed by, and conform to, these sets. As he proudly demonstrates at the soirée in the Nimptsch cottage, Botho is a master of social niceties, able wittily to discuss any topic, to flatter and flirt and to dance. His time is spent riding his fine horse, taking part in society entertainments, and, of course, playing cards with his comrades at the club. Even Botho’s relationship with Lene, a woman of the lower classes, is accepted, if not openly sanctioned, by society. At this time (as illustrated by the appearance of Botho’s comrades and their female escorts) it was common practice for men of the upper classes to engage in such affairs.<sup>9</sup>

Frau Dörr and her “Doppelgänger” at Hankels Ablage, Königin Isabeau, are also defined by specific sets of social relations. They are women of the “vierten Stand” who offer their services to officers and aristocrats in return for financial favors. For both of these women, the arrangement, if practical, is hardly pleasurable. Frau Dörr, who has married later in life and thus become a “respectable” woman, speaks of the earlier experience with her count “wie von einem unbequemen Dienst, den sie getreulich und ehrlich erfüllt hat, blos aus Pflichtgefühl” (IW 34). Similarly,

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<sup>9</sup> See Bramsted 251: “It was fashionable and permissible for young aristocratic officers and Junkers to indulge in temporary relationships, in erotic liaisons unhallowed by the marriage tie. Dancers and actresses, especially, were favored for such liaisons. The man from the higher stratum compensated the devotion of his lady love from the lower stratum with money, expensive presents, etc.”

Königin Isabeau admits that any thrill she might once have felt is long gone. She has “played the game” since she was fifteen years old, and has grown weary.

“Wahrhaftig,” she confides to Lene, “je baldier man wieder ’raus ist, desto besser”

(96). Like Frau Dörr, Isabeau plans to use the proceeds of her labors to finance a respectable future, for as she says without a trace of irony, “ich bin für Ordnung und Anständigkeit und die Kinder ordentlich erziehn und ob es seine sind oder meine, ist ganz egal” (96).<sup>10</sup>

When considering the character of Lene Nimptsch, the reader encounters problems, for she does not conform to her expected “set.” Like Frau Dörr, Königin Isabeau and the other “Damen,” Lene is a member of the “vierten Stand.” She is conducting an affair, a sexual liaison, with an officer from the upper classes. But she does not conform to societal gender expectations for a woman of her class. Lene does not continue her relationship with Botho for monetary gain, but for love, a fact that shocks and dismays Frau Dörr in Chapter 1 (“denn is es schlimm” [7]) and Isabeau in Chapter 13 (“Ja, Kind, *denn* is es schlimm, denn giebt es ’nen Kladderadatsch” [97]). From the horrified, almost scandalized reactions of Frau Dörr and Königin Isabeau, it is clear that actually falling in love breaks the rules of the game. And this is not the only area where the young woman deviates from her set. Although she has not had the benefits of formal education, Lene expresses herself articulately, both in speaking and in writing. When Botho receives a letter from his lover in Chapter 6, he praises

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<sup>10</sup> As Anne-Marie Brumm points out, Isabeau’s “Auffassung von ‘ordentlich’ ist eine Travestie von wahrer Ordnung: Die Menschen sind auszunutzen, die Natur auszubeuten, die Zeit totzuschlagen” (452)

her script, and delights in the few spelling mistakes: “Wie gut sie schreibt! Kalligraphisch gewiß und orthographisch beinah” (41). Lene also fails to exhibit the coarse sexuality displayed by other representatives of her class. Her honesty and forthrightness notwithstanding, she is deeply embarrassed by crass references to the sexual act (such as those of Frau Dörr on the Wilmersdorfer Heide), and Isabeau’s unabashed admission of prostitution turns Lene white with dismay.

In her profession, Lene also breaks from the norm. For women of the lower stratus of society in nineteenth century Berlin, employment opportunities were limited. Factory jobs were an option for some, while many others chose domestic service (Lene’s mother, for example, was a washerwoman). Prostitution was a frequent if miserable choice: at the time Fontane wrote Irrungen, Wirrungen, there were approximately 40,000 “Halbweltdamen” in Berlin (IW “Anmerkungen” 261). Lene embroiders and stitches designs on fine clothing, a job usually reserved for unmarried women of the bourgeoisie.

The scene on the second day at Hankels Ablage illustrates how different Lene is from the other officers’ companions. She is quiet and visibly uncomfortable with the three “Damen,” and is unable to take part in their conversations, unwilling to don the mask Botho has forced upon her. Isabeau kindly takes “das Kleine” under her wing, but the older woman’s insistence that all men in these situations are the same (“einer ist wie der andere” [96]) leaves Lene silent and miserable. The two younger women have no idea what to make of the new addition. Johanna criticizes Lene’s ill-fitting gloves and frumpy hat, and interprets the newcomer’s taciturnity as stupidity.

To her, Lene is competition, her “Anständigkeit” simply a new trick for attracting men. “Das fehlt auch noch, daß solche mitspielen und in Mode kommen,” she complains (97). Margot, in turn, suggests that Lene has made a clever tactical decision in walking with Isabeau, the most powerful and influential member of the group.

It is obvious that Lene does not belong among these women, but Botho’s decision to realign himself with his companions forces his lover into the role of “Schnepfе.” In the minds of the other officers, Lene is firmly ensconced in her appropriate “set.” With the arrival of Botho’s comrades at Hankels Ablage, “[t]he group is . . . immediately divided along both class and sex lines, the women being left to their own devices while the men resume the normal officers’-club activity of card-playing” (Bance 100). The assignment of names from Schiller’s Jungfrau von Orleans is yet another means of establishing this segregation. Without formal education, the women are unaware of the significance of their pseudonyms. The officers enjoy this “Bildungslücke”: when Balafré makes reference to a Schiller play other than the Jungfrau, the ladies cannot understand the punchline: “Ja, Königin, das Leben ist doch schön. Zwar aus Don Carlos. Aber muß denn alles aus der Jungfrau sein?” (92) Isabeau and her court thus become the butt of Balafré’s joke.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> In the words of Claudia Liebrand, “Der Spaß geht über ihre Köpfe und auch auf ihre Kosten. Das Spiel . . . deklassiert die ‘Offiziersdamen,’ die schon sozial benachteiligt und für ‘ihre’ Männer Sexualobjekte sind, auch noch zu Statisterie-Spielmaterial” (106).

With this betrayal of Lene, Botho himself brings about the “Vertreibung aus dem Paradiese.” After parting from the officers and their ladies, the lovers are unable to reestablish the happiness of their initial arrival at Hankels Ablage. They return to Berlin, and as they part in front of the garden gate, Lene says aloud what they both sense: “[E]s geht zu End’. Und rasch . . .” (100). The next morning Botho receives a letter from his mother encouraging him to act in the financial interests of the family, and within hours he has made the decision to marry Käthe. But the expulsion from paradise began long before the lovers’ weekend at Hankels Ablage, or the arrival of the letter from Botho’s mother. Already in the Dörrs’ garden, there were clear signs that Botho, while loving Lene, needed to keep her in her “place.” His constant conversational references to Frau Dörr equate Lene with the older “Halbweltdame.” Botho’s panicked response to Lene’s comment that she would be afraid of his mother reveals his inability to see beyond their class differences, even within the safety of the garden. Lene reacts to Botho’s fears with laughter, but it is forced. Behind her lighthearted assurance that she has no intention of visiting his mother lies the unhappy suspicion that Botho is, indeed, just like all the “others.” Even on this early, idyllic evening in the garden, there are hints that the relationship will soon be over. The evening has grown cold, the music is playing itself out in the Zoological Garden nearby, and the Dörrs’ dog, Sultan, watches balefully as the lovers leave the garden and enter the dark “Schloß.”

Months after their affair is over, Lene encounters Botho on a Berlin Street. The unexpected sight of her former lover chatting gaily with his new wife is

devastating: the earth itself seems to shake (“Lene fühlte das Zittern der dünnen Eisenplatte, darauf sie stand” [IW 120]). Struggling to regain her composure, she makes her way to a little “Vorgarten, dessen Gitterthür offen stand,” and collapses on the veranda stairs. When she recovers, a small girl stands before. In one hand the child holds a spade with which she had been digging little flower beds. The significance of the scene is clear. At the moment of her greatest distress at losing Botho, Lene returns to the garden – the gate stands open and waiting. There she is faced with a younger version of herself, naive and hopeful, ignorant of class, gender, or societal expectations. When Lene leaves the “Vorgarten,” she effectively closes the gate behind her forever. That very day she declares her decision to her mother to move away from the Dörrs’ “Gärtnerei.” For Lene, the idyll is truly over.

#### 4.9 Lene: A Plant Out of Place

In the chapters following the pivotal sequence of events at Hankels Ablage, Lene’s appearances in Irrungen, Wirrungen are limited. Fontane briefly describes the apartment on the “Luisen-Ufer” where Lene and her mother now live, and introduces the family’s new neighbor, the kind (if rather odd) Gideon Franke. The last half of the novel is devoted primarily to events and developments in Botho’s life, but Käthe does not usurp Lene’s position as the heroine of Fontane’s novel. Despite all of Botho’s efforts to forget the affair, Lene remains a continual presence in his life. The flat where he and Käthe take up residence is “keine Tausend Schritt von dem Hause



der Frau Nimptsch” (IW 118); from the balcony Botho can see the Zoological Garden and the “Gärtlein” beside it. Botho never learns that Lene has moved, and the view from his window reminds him daily of the happiness he has lost. His new bride is considered to be the perfect “Partie” – she is beautiful and blonde, vivacious and charming, and, most importantly, wealthy. But, as Pitt points out to Serge after a dinner with the couple, Käthe “is rather a little silly. Oder wenn Du’s deutsch hören willst, sie dalbert ein bischen. Jedenfalls *ihm* zuviel” (139). Though he is fond of Käthe, Botho finds her constant frivolity wearing, and Lene’s “Einfachheit, Wahrheit und Natürlichkeit” are never far from his mind. A postcard he receives from Käthe results in an oblique comparison with Lene’s letter from long ago: “[E]s fehlt etwas. Es ist alles so angeflogen, so bloßes Gesellschaftsecho” (147).

Fontane’s choice of Lene as the heroine of Irrungen, Wirrungen illustrates the author’s elevation of the lower classes. In his writings Fontane frequently portrayed members of the “vierten Stand” (particularly women) as strong and self-reliant. This tendency is particularly evident in the works examined in this study. Not only Lene, but Frau Dörr, Mutter Nimptsch and Königin Isabeau are practical in their outlook, straightforward, and able to weather any situation. In Effi Briest, Effi’s servant Roswitha remains faithful, loving and supportive after society has turned its back on her mistress. Female characters from the bourgeoisie or upper classes may be kind or sympathetic, but they are generally portrayed as weak, helpless or silly. In a February 22, 1896 letter Fontane wrote

Alles Interesse ruht beim vierten Stand. Der Bourgeois is furchtbar, und Adel und Klerus sind altbacken, immer wieder dasselbe. . . .  
[D]as, was die Arbeiter denken, sprechen, schreiben, hat das Denken, Sprechen und Schreiben der altregierenden Klassen tatsächlich überholt. Alles ist viel echter, wahrer, lebensvoller. Sie, die Arbeiter, packen alles neu an, haben nicht bloß neue Ziele, sondern auch neue Wege. (FB 4: 539).

Critics have tended to agree that Fontane created Lene to be a paragon of her class' virtues. In "Der alte Fontane," Lukács wrote that "[Lene] . . .die bedeutendste Gestalt [ist], die Fontane geschaffen hat . . . – ein Triumph des Plebejisch-Volkshaften über die Bürgerlichkeit" (73). Mittelman, too, sees Lene as belonging to a Fontane tradition of working class heroines: "Bis auf Stine erweisen sich die Frauen der Arbeiterklasse als lebenskräftiger und lebensstüchtiger als die Frauen der Adelsklasse und als unverdorbenere als die Frauen des Bürgertums, denen durch ihren krassen Materialismus das gesunde Empfinden für die eigentlichen Werte des Lebens verloren gegangen ist" (109).

Botho certainly exhibits this glorification of the "vierten Stand." Like his creator Fontane, he elevates "Natürlichkeit" and associates this quality with the lower classes. On the morning Botho receives the letter from his mother advising him to marry Käthe, he takes a ride to soothe his nerves, and passes a group of workers.

Es war Mittag und ein Theil der Arbeiter saß draußen im Schatten, um die Mahlzeit einzunehmen. Die Frauen, die das Essen gebracht hatten, standen plaudernd daneben, einige mit einem Säugling auf dem Arm, und lachten sich untereinander an, wenn ein schelmisches oder anzügliches Wort gesprochen wurde. Rienäcker, der sich den Sinn für das Natürliche nur mit nur zu gutem Rechte zugeschrieben, war entzückt von dem Bilde, das sich ihm bot, und mit einem Anfluge von Neid sah er auf die Gruppe glücklicher Menschen. (108)

The scene takes place outside of a factory, but the mood is that of a rural idyll: the workers nap and rest in a modern day version of Brueghel's "Harvesters." Botho's glorification of these workers is the result of his need to rationalize ending the affair with Lene. The "Ordnung" he admiringly ascribes to the workers is yet another example of the classification of groups within specific gender and/or class sets. The workers "order" entails working hard, marrying and having children; it also mandates that the members of this class stay in their proper place. Botho's praise of the lower classes is a matter of convenience – he sees what he wants to see. With his internal dialogue about order, Botho attempts to convince himself that Lene will be happier when she has returned to the "Ordnung" of her own class, "after he has released her from the 'Irrungen, Wirrungen' of their affair" (Bance 95).

Botho's reaction to the factory "idyll" is simply another example of his efforts to classify Lene. Regardless of his indirect comparisons of Lene to Frau Dörr, and his abandonment of her to Königin Isabeau and the other "Schnepfen" at Hankels Ablage, Botho knows that his lover does not belong among "Halbweltdamen." But neither can she be subsumed under the "order" of the workers, these respectable representatives of the "vierten Stand." While Lene does take the route of "Ordnung" and "Anständigkeit," and ultimately marries a man she respects but does not love, she does so on her own terms. Lene's sharing of her romantic and sexual history with her prospective bridegroom is more of a profession than a confession – if Gideon rejects

her, she will not be diminished in her own eyes.<sup>12</sup> Her strength and sense of self-worth enable Lene to survive outside the restrictive, protective walls of a specific “set.”

Thus, like Brigitta, Lene transcends gender and class restrictions imposed by her society. This does not give her the power to alter that society, or to change the course of events. Botho’s decision to resign himself to the marriage with Käthe, to realign himself with his society and the gender expectations of his class, comes as no surprise. Lene identified her lover as “weak” in the garden, and Fontane’s portrayal of Botho throughout the rest of the novel does nothing to call this assessment into question. Lene’s acceptance of Botho’s actions is not a result of low self-esteem.<sup>13</sup> She in no way continues that tradition of German literary female victims – from Lessing’s Emilia Galotti to Goethe’s Otilie – who passively resign themselves to “fate” or circumstances, smiling sweetly while the male figures in their lives abandon or destroy them. As Lene tells Botho on the night they part, “Ich bin nicht wie das

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<sup>12</sup> In fact, Lene’s sense of self and desire to tell the truth at any cost are seen by her mother and Frau Dörr as excessive. When Gideon Franke begins to pay court to her daughter, Frau Nimptsch is dismayed that Lene insists upon telling her potential bridegroom of her past affairs. Frau Dörr suggests, “Wir müssen es ihr ausreden. Er braucht ja nich alles zu wissen; wozu denn?” Frau Nimptsch responds, “Woll, woll. Aber die Lene . . .” (IW 132). Lene loves her mother and wishes to care for her, but even this devotion cannot make her lie.

<sup>13</sup> Suzanne Conrad maintains that the end of the relationship is yet another example of Botho’s callous and patronizing attitude toward Lene, and of Lene’s own resigned personality: “Die Tragik von Lenes Entsagungsverhalten beruht darin, daß sie kein Selbstwertgefühl entwickeln konnte, das ihr gestatten würde, Ansprüche zu stellen und in der Liebe Konsequenz zu fordern” (30). In addition to misreading Lene’s character, Conrad fails in her assessment to take into account the social realities of the time period in question.

Mädchen, das an den Ziehbrunnen lief und sich hineinstürzte, weil ihr Liebhaber mit einer andern tanzte" (110). Lene accepts her sadness as she embraced her happiness. Having given her lover a final kiss, she closes the garden gate behind him.

In Irrungen, Wirrungen, the refuge provided by the garden is revealed to be illusory. The *Märchen* of an enchanted space, free from the demands and restrictions of society, is undermined by Fontane and the inhabitants of the Dörrs' "Gärtnerei." Even the modicum of quiet happiness Lene and Botho enjoy in the garden cannot be expanded beyond its boundaries. On the Wilmersdorfer Heide, the "vulgar" presence of Frau Dörr reminds the lovers of how their relationship would be seen by the outside world – as just another officer with his "Schnepe." And in Hankels Ablage, the intrusion of Botho's comrades and their mistresses relegates both Botho and Lene to their "appropriate" gender and class sets. The love affair ends soon after this final "Vertreibung aus dem Paradiese."

In leaving the garden, Lene and Botho seem to resign themselves to society's demands and class-determined gender expectations. According to critic Gerhard Friedrich, the characters in Fontane's novels lack the freedom to exist outside the "walls," the rules and constraints, erected by society: "Der natürliche Mensch besitzt nicht die Freiheit, sich für oder wider die gesellschaftliche Ordnung zu entscheiden, sondern er ist in einen unaufhebbaren Gegensatz zu Gesellschaft gebracht, den er austragen muß" (85). Friedrich's assessment certainly applies to Botho, who, despite his love of the "Natürliche" allows the system ("der Stärke"), to determine his life.

To live within the system, however, to make decisions that may be at odds with that system, and to accept the consequences, is a different kind of freedom. In Bismarck's Berlin, Lene, who speaks her mind and follows her heart, is definitely a weed, a plant out of place. Yet even within the restrictive "walls" of society, her "Natürlichkeit" continues to grow and flourish.

## CHAPTER 5

### ***DER GARTEN UND DER GRABSTEIN: EFFI BRIEST***

The garden in Fontane's Effi Briest is different from any encountered in the three works examined thus far. Unlike the model elevated in Stifter's Nachsommer, the garden at Hohen-Cremmen contains nothing useful, no fruit trees or vegetable plots. Nor is it a microcosm of patriarchal Biedermeier society, for the inhabitants of this garden are primarily female, and Effi's mother's is the voice of authority. The Briest garden does not present a *locus amoenus* for star-crossed lovers to meet, as did the "Gärtnerei" in Irrungen, Wirrungen: here sexuality is only hinted at, and romantic love is, for Effi and her girlfriends, the stuff of fairy tales and novels. Despite the presence of walls, a characteristic shared with Brigitta's garden at Marosheli, the protection afforded by the garden at Hohen-Cremmen does not result in the main character's blossoming into a strong, independent woman. Instead, the garden of the Briests' estate is a realm of innocence, of eternal childhood. Here Effi spends her days, playing with her girlfriends and basking in the love of her parents.

Effi epitomizes the "Natürlichkeit" Fontane elevated in Irrungen, Wirrungen. Unlike the strong and self-assured Lene, however, Effi is a pampered child of the upper classes. Uneducated by her parents in the ways of the real world, she is

hopelessly unprepared for life beyond the garden walls. Ultimately, Effi's "Natürlichkeit" cannot be reconciled with the stringent rules and rigid gender expectations of Prussian society.

### 5.1 The Garden at Hohen-Cremmen

Fontane begins Effi Briest with a description of the garden at Hohen-Cremmen. In the center of this "Ziergarten" stands a sundial surrounded by a roundel of flowers, bordered by heliotrope, *canna indica* (lilies) and rhubarb.<sup>1</sup> Abutting the house is a churchyard wall, covered "ganz in kleinblättrigem Epheu" (5), and this wall, the house and a side wing create the effect of a horseshoe. Closing the horseshoe is a small pond, with a rickety swing beside it, half obscured from view by a few "mächtige[n] alte[n] Platanen," or plane trees (5).

The reader first encounters Effi with her mother, sitting in the garden in the shade of the house's main wing and embroidering altar cloths. Already in this first description Effi displays her defining characteristics: "Übermut und Grazie . . . , natürliche Klugheit und viel Lebenslust und Herzensgüte" (6-7). At seventeen, she wears not an elegant dress, but a blue and white striped sailor tunic, the uniform of a younger child. Her behavior is also childlike. She takes frequent breaks from the

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<sup>1</sup> Heliotrope, which requires rich soil and plenty of moisture, is considered a greenhouse plant. Like *canna indica*, it is extremely susceptible to frost damage. The choice of these delicate flowers underscores the level of protection afforded by this garden.



needlework to do gymnastic exercises. Her mother, secretly delighted by her daughter, comments, “Effi, eigentlich hättest Du doch wohl Kunstreiterin werden müssen. Immer am Trapez, immer Tochter der Luft” (7). Effi initially chides her mother, saying that if she made such a life for herself, it would be her mother’s fault: Pointing to her shapeless tunic, she asks, “Warum kriege ich keine Staatskleider? Warum machst Du keine Dame aus mir?” (7) But Effi quickly admits that she does not want to be a lady. Abandoning her needlework, she impetuously throws her arms around her mother. Growing up would entail leaving the garden and her mother, the person she loves most dearly.

In his analysis of Irrungen, Wirrungen, G.H. Hertling interprets the first page as a “Schlüssel” to the entire novel. I would not attempt such a feat with Effi Briest. Nevertheless, the opening pages do provide, in addition to a clear picture of Effi’s character and her life at Hohen-Cremmen, foreshadowing of her future experiences. Each element of the garden has significance. Two prominent botanical symbols in the garden are “wilder Wein,” or Virginia creeper, and the ivy. We first see Effi and her mother in front of “ein paar offene[n], von wildem Wein umrankte[n] Fenstern” (6). These vines are visible not only from the garden but from within the house. When Effi meets her bridegroom-to-be, Innstetten, her friends break the solemnity of the moment by peeking through this window and calling to her: “[I]m selben Augenblicke fast, wo sich Innstetten unter freundlicher Verneigung ihr näherte, wurden an dem mittleren der weit offen stehenden und von wildem Wein halb überwachsenen Fenster die rotblonden Köpfe der Zwillinge sichtbar, und Hertha, die

Ausgelassenste, rief in den Saal hinein, 'Effi, komm'" (18). The "wilder Wein," with its tendency to grow ("creep") beyond its prescribed borders, may be seen as symbolic of independence and freedom from conventions (Demetz 204). In this sense, it is a central symbol in the garden at Hohen-Cremmen, for, as becomes increasingly clear as the novel progresses, this garden is the only place where Effi can be who she truly is, a free "Naturkind," as her father refers to her (EB 41).

Edith Krause labels the "ominous solidity of the stately *Herrenhaus* and its adjoining buildings" and more specifically the "phallic symbol" of the "'Hohen-Cremmener Schindelturm' with its gilded weathercock" as "a signifier of the dominant social law, the Law of the Father" (118-119). The omnipresent ivy, however, undermines this interpretation: like the Virginia creeper, this vine links the house to the garden (which, as we will see, is definitely a female realm). Also, there is nothing "ominous" about the Briest family home. Unlike its counterpart in Kessin, the house at Hohen-Cremmen is light and open. Organic life surrounds and permeates the estate, integrating the house into the garden space.<sup>2</sup> Set apart from the outside world, Hohen-Cremmen radiates an air of timelessness. The Briests, as is

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<sup>2</sup> Stanley Radcliffe elaborates upon this integration in his interpretation of Effi Briest. "Everywhere aspects of greenery and natural growth embellish and soften harsh lines and bring the world of organic growth right into the human sphere – aloes grow in tubs on the veranda, wild vines climb about the windows, the churchyard wall is cloaked with small-leaved ivy" (50). Radcliffe's analysis supports the idea of the estate itself not being a part of the rigid societal order that eventually leads to Effi's downfall.

stated in the novel's opening sentence, have occupied this house "schon seit Kurfürst Georg Wilhelm" (5), and they remain very much removed from the challenges and the problems of the time.

The sundial at the center of the garden's roundel is also significant, for it can only register time on sunny days; it is an appropriate timepiece considering Effi's "sunny" character (Grawe, Effi 55). Yet the sundial suggests other, less positive meanings. Even in the opening paragraph the reader senses that Effi's idyllic days at Hohen-Cremmen are numbered, for a shadow falls across the garden. This might, on the one hand, be read as an indication of the irrelevance of time at Hohen-Cremmen (for a sundial in shade cannot register time), but it also foretells the end of Effi's life. At the end of the novel, the sundial has been replaced by Effi's little gravestone.

This same shadow falls across "einen weiß und grün quadrierter Fliesengang" (5). The beginning and ending points of this path are not indicated, but it could be read as a symbol of the narrow way the young heroine's life must follow. Like other middle and upper-class women of her time, she is expected to proceed along a strictly-defined continuum, from child, to bride, to mother. The alternating green and white quadrants of the flagstones remind the reader of a game board, or perhaps a hopscotch grid, underscoring Effi's childishness. At this point, for Effi and her young girlfriends, life is a game, and the future a subject for imagination and make-believe.

The circular shape of the roundel at the center of the "Ziergarten" suggests that Effi's life will not follow the conventional progression represented by the flagstone path. The roundel is symbolic of the cyclical route the protagonist's short

life will follow: in the end, Effi will return to the garden of her childhood to die (Jolles 83). The heliotrope that dominates the roundel planting does not find mention in the opening scene, but it is, arguably, the most important botanical symbol in the garden at Hohen-Cremmen. The brilliant purple-red flowers of the plant are perpetually turned towards the sun (hence its name), and this quality mirrors Effi's desire for warmth and light. The association of Effi with the heliotrope is obvious, "besonders dann, wenn man in der Protagonistin das von der Gesellschaft sich abwendende, sich zum Licht hinwendende Naturkind sieht" (Post 49). The flower's significance, however, extends beyond the conflict of society and the "Natürlichkeit" embodied by Effi. For centuries, the heliotrope has symbolized the striving of humanity for the divine: its presence at Hohen-Cremmen thus further strengthens the connection between this and the "first garden."<sup>3</sup>

Peter-Klaus Schuster exhaustively examines this connection in his analysis of Fontane's novel, Effi Briest – Ein Leben nach christlichen Bildern. Some of his observations are perhaps obvious (for example, the wide leaves of the rhubarb that Effi compares to "Feigenblätter," thus gesturing towards the Fall, when Adam and Eve covered their shame with fig leaves). But Schuster's interpretations are, on the whole, convincing, and shed particular light on the garden image. It has been

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<sup>3</sup> It must be noted that Effi, until the end of her life is near, rarely indicates anything other than a passing interest in God or heavenly matters. In fact, at one point she wonders aloud: "Und am Ende, wer weiß, ob sie im Himmel so wundervollen Heliotrop haben" (31). Effi's gravestone may replace the sundial, but the heliotrope will remain a symbol that for the "Naturkind" Effi, heaven is bound to life on earth, particularly to her life in the garden at Hohen-Cremmen.

suggested that Effi's name means "ivy" (Wansink 23), certainly appropriate for a young woman dubbed a "Naturkind" by her father. Effi, however, may also be a reference to "Eve": Innstetten, in his letters to Effi, calls her his "kleine Eva" (EB 36). The "fig leaves" support this association, as does the Edenic protection offered by the garden at Hohen-Cremmen. Yet the *hortus conclusus* exemplified by the Garden of Eden is an image that is also frequently linked with the Virgin Mary. In many German Renaissance paintings of the Annunciation, Mary is depicted in the "verschlossenen Garten," or at the very least in a room that opens to a walled flower garden. This enclosed garden symbolizes both virginity and immaculate conception. In support of this connection between the Virgin and Effi, Schuster notes that the tunic worn by the protagonist in the novel's opening scene is blue and white – colors Mary frequently wears in paintings of the Annunciation (4). The "angel" who arrives at the garden at Hohen-Cremmen, speaking the words that will forever alter Effi's life, is Geert von Innstetten. In a curious twist of both the Eve and Mary stories, this annunciation does not result in a divine occurrence, but in the expulsion of its recipient from paradise.

## 5.2 "Schaukel" and "Teich"

Effi's "Vertreibung" is foreshadowed by two final symbols in the Hohen-Cremmen garden: the swing and the pond. For Effi, the "Tochter der Luft," swinging is a favorite pastime. After her engagement, Effi speaks with her mother

about Innstetten's intention to give her jewelry, and admits that such a gift is unimportant to her: "Ich klettere lieber, und ich schauke mich lieber, und am liebsten immer in der Furcht, daß es irgendwo reißen oder brechen und ich niederstürzen könnte. Den Kopf wird es ja nicht gleich kosten" (37). This remark reflects Effi's love of adventure, her desire to be amused and avoid boredom. It also portends her downfall, for in Kessin, where she and Innstetten first reside, her initial attraction to Crampas is accompanied by the same feelings of exhilaration and fear that accompanied her swinging. In fact, when Effi first touches the hand of her future lover in greeting, she is sitting on the veranda at Kessin in a rocking chair, a "Schaukelstuhl." Still safe in the garden, the young Effi has no notion that her one future "fall" will cost, if not her head, then life as she knows it.

Effi is fascinated by the element of water. At both the beginning and conclusion of the novel, she is clothed in a sailor's tunic, and the make-believe games she plays with her friends in the opening chapter center on ships and sailing. Her friend Hulda remarks that she looks like "ein Schiffsjunge," to which Effi replies "Midshipman, wenn ich bitten darf." She joyfully tells of her father's promise to build her a mast next to the swing, and details how she herself will hoist the sail; she finishes her tale with a swaggering "Alle Wetter, das sollte schmecken" (15). Krause maintains that such play-acting indicates that Effi's conception of gender is ambivalent, basing her assessment on Effi's clothing, her desire to climb the "penile 'Mastbaum,'" and a later occasion when Effi "explores the delicate parameters of gender and sexuality" and "playfully slips into the role of the other sex: 'Wenn ich

ein junger Leutnant wäre, so würde ich mich in die Mama verlieben'" (119). Yet it seems just as likely that Effi's pretending to be a sailor is motivated by her desire for adventure and excitement, the same desire that causes her to swing with abandon on the rickety "Schaukel." Even as a sheltered and somewhat spoiled young girl, she is aware that the freedom she longs for is, in her society, only possible for men. In addition, Effi's clothing, though it suits her, is not entirely of her own choosing. As we will see in a later section of this chapter, Effi's parents, particularly her mother, have kept their daughter a child, and Effi's boyish sailor's tunic reflects their need to perpetuate this image.

For Effi, then, water symbolizes freedom and adventure, and the small pond bordering the estate at Hohen-Cremmen is the sea for her naval fantasies. But, as is the case with all the elements of the garden, the pond has a darker significance. When her friend Hertha eats the contents of a bowl of gooseberries (symbolic, perhaps of the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge in Eden), Effi takes it upon herself to dispose of the remaining hulls in the proper manner.<sup>4</sup> She and the other girls go out in a boat, and sink the prickly leavings in the pond, thus erasing Hertha's "sin." As they sing a sad dirge, "Flut, Flut/ Mach alles wieder gut . . ." (13), Effi remembers, "so vom Boot aus sollen früher unglückliche Frauen versenkt worden sein, natürlich wegen Untreue" (14). As with her offhand comment about swinging, Effi's words

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<sup>4</sup> The fruit of the gooseberry plant, though sweet, is covered with sharp bristles. Like the thorny rose and spiny cactus in Stifter's Nachsommer, the gooseberry may be seen as symbolizing the painful or dangerous side to any pleasure.

foreshadow her own future. Unlike the gooseberries, however, Effi will not “sink” in the clean waters of the pond at Hohen-Cremmen, but in the swampy “Schloon” on the outskirts of Kessin.

Critics have often seen Effi as an example of a Melusine figure. The Melusine is a variation of Andersen’s The Little Mermaid and Fouqué’s Undine, an embodiment of the age-old association of the female with the uncontrollable, “amoral” element of water.<sup>5</sup> Effi’s lover Crampas links her to Melusine in the choice of poetry he quotes to her. During a picnic with Effi (Innstetten has been, predictably, called away on business), Crampas tells Effi of a favorite poem by Heine, “Seegespenst.” In “Seegespenst” the poet writes of lying on the deck of a ship, and seeing beneath the waves a great city, “Altertümlich niederländisch, / Und menschenbelebt” (Heine 71). A busy, but extremely pious populace all appear to be headed to worship at the great cathedral. The fourth stanza is particularly telling, for in it the poet reports

In der tiefen Meerstadt  
Auf ein altes, hochgegiebeltes Haus,  
Das melancholisch menschenleer ist,  
Nur daß am untern Fenster  
Ein Mädchen sitzt,  
Den Kopf auf den Arm gestützt,  
Wie ein armes, vergessenes Kind –  
Und ich kenne dich, armes, vergessenes Kind! (Heine 73)

The “hochgegiebeltes Haus” is reminiscent of the dark, unwelcoming house at Kessin, and the reader cannot help but identify the “armes, vergessenes Kind” with



Effi, whom Innstetten often leaves alone with her fears and loneliness. The fact that the poet is tempted to jump into the sea to join his beloved would seem to point to the Melusine connection – that those who succumb to the lure of the “Seegespenst” (the unpredictable female element) will perish in the waves. Yet in Heine’s poem it is vital to note that the city beneath the sea is not inhabited by mermaids and mermen. Instead, the inhabitants of “Vineta,” as Crampas calls it, make up a society which mirrors Effi’s own. Unlike the snobbish, frosty citizens of Kessin, the inhabitants of the underwater city seem truly pious, anxious to reach the “großen Dome/ Getrieben von Glockengeläute/ Und rauschendem Orgelton” (Heine 72). Still, the effect is the same for both Effi and the girl in the window – both sit alone, “fremd unter fremden Leuten” (Heine 73). That such isolation could occur both above and below the sea undermines the idea of Effi as a Melusine figure. Instead Fontane questions the traditional nineteenth century concept of the Melusine. In the figure and fate of Effi he reveals that his heroine’s downfall is not the result of the natural, unpredictable, sensual forces associated with the element of water, but rather of society’s rigid intolerance of these forces.

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<sup>5</sup> Fontane originally planned to name the heroine of his novel “Betty von Ottersund,” underscoring her connection to water. See Grawe, *Effi* 99-100 and Downes 637 for further discussion of the “Melusine-Thematik.”

### 5.3 The Garden as Feminine Sphere

In The Song of Solomon, the garden is a metaphor for the female body, a safe haven of physical comfort and sensual pleasure. With the exception of double entendres (the rhubarb/ fig leaves) and symbolism (the gooseberries/ fruit of the Tree of Knowledge), sexuality has little place in the garden at Hohen-Cremmen. In its separation from the patriarchal rules and restrictions of Prussian society, it is a realm of the feminine, a womb of sorts. Here the child Effi is surrounded by all the elements she needs to grow and flourish: love, sunlight, fresh air. And a major presence within this garden is Effi's mother, Luise Briest. As is clear from the opening pages of the novel, Luise dotes on her daughter, taking pleasure in her beauty and natural grace. When Effi pauses in her embroidery to stretch, "so sah auch wohl die Mama von ihrer Handarbeit auf, aber immer nur flüchtig und verstohlen, weil sie nicht zeigen wollte, wie entzückend sie ihr eignes Kind finde" (6). Instead of forcing her daughter to conform to societal expectations, Luise seems content to allow Effi to remain an untroubled and adored child of nature.

But what of Herr von Briest, Effi's father? Though by the laws of Prussia, he should be lord and master of the estate, Briest is not the controlling force in his household. In every conversation between him and his wife, Luise is the dominant presence. Effi's father is noticeably absent from the opening scenes in the feminine realm of the garden, and from the preparations for his daughter's wedding. Despite his absence, though, it is clear that he dotes on his young daughter and spoils her.

After the trip to Berlin to buy the trousseau, Luise suggests that if there is anything Effi still wants, she should ask her father within the hour: “Papa hat den Raps vorteilhaft verkauft und ist ungewöhnlich guter Laune.” Her daughter’s reply – “Ungewöhnlich? Er ist immer in guter Laune” (30) – indicates that her father tends to give in to her desires, as well as her mother’s. Contrary to Krause’s labeling of the house and weathercock as symbolic of the “Law of the Father,” Hohen-Cremmen is very much a matriarchy. Herr von Briest is comfortable leaving decisions to his wife, and his famous expression, “Das ist ein zu weites Feld” reflects his tendency to avoid difficult subjects altogether. More than Luise, he realizes that his daughter is not suited to life with Innstetten, and from time to time he voices his doubts. When Luise reads him the letters from Effi on her honeymoon, he comments that Effi “Sehnsucht [hat]. Diese verwünschte Reiserei . . .” (47). But his reaction to Luise’s reproof that he might have stopped the marriage (though one doubts if she would have allowed this) is to retreat, simultaneously giving in to his wife and refusing to argue with her: “Aber wozu das jetzt. Das ist wirklich ein zu weites Feld” (47).

#### **5.4 Perpetual Childhood**

Under the protection of her loving mother and father, Effi leads an idyllic life in the garden. Yet her parents’ doting attentions “can also be read as a deadly mechanism of infantilization, constraint and denial” (Krause 119). By keeping their daughter in childish clothes, ignorant of the ways of the world, Effi’s parents fail to

prepare their daughter for the future in any way. Effi enters her marriage with Innstetten with fairy-tale expectations, picturing her future husband as a dashing prince, and insisting upon the trousseau of a princess. That the young girl sees herself in this role is evidenced by a remark made shortly before her wedding day. Learning that her friends will be staging the “Hollunderbaumszene” from Kleist’s Käthchen von Heilbronn in honor of her nuptials, Effi is dismissive, insisting that such a production must necessarily pale in comparison with the play she has recently seen in Berlin, Aschenbrödel. “Und wie reizend im letzten Akt ‘Aschenbrödel’s Erwachen als Prinzessin’ oder doch wenigstens als Gräfin,” she exclaims. “[W]irklich, es war ganz wie ein Märchen” (29). Effi assumes that her life as Innstetten’s bride will be “märchenhaft.” Even if there is not sufficient romance, she insists in a conversation with her mother, glamour and excitement will be ample compensation: “Und wenn es Zärtlichkeit und Liebe nicht sein können, . . . dann bin ich für Reichtum und ein vornehmes Haus. . . . [U]nd wenn wir dann in Berlin sind, dann bin ich für Hofball und Galaoper, immer dicht neben der großen Mittelloge” (35). Luise does nothing to disillusion her daughter in her fairy tale expectations. She is amused and slightly taken aback by Effi’s “inappropriate” requests for a fur coat, a black and gold Japanese bedroom screen, and a red lamp to cast a magic glow on the bridal chamber. However, she makes no attempt to educate her daughter in sexual matters, aside from the cryptic remark that “[d]ie Wirklichkeit . . . anders [ist], und oft ist es gut, daß es statt Licht und Schimmer ein Dunkel giebt” (33).

The introduction of Effi's fiancé also forces the reader to reexamine this "ideal" relationship between mother and daughter, for Innstetten was once Luise's own love interest, whom she refused in favor of marriage with the considerably older and more socially "appropriate" Briest.<sup>6</sup> Perhaps Luise sees the ambitious and successful Innstetten as a "gift" to her daughter, a way of ensuring that Effi will be "mit zwanzig Jahren da, wo andere mit vierzig stehen" (EB 18). Yet, as we see in Luise's own relationship with Briest, a societally-sanctioned match does not necessarily result in marital bliss. By continuing the pattern and placing Effi in the care of someone old enough to be her father, Luise "can be seen as subconsciously motivated by a sense of rivalry and the desire to belittle and desexualize her daughter who is granted the love and the life that she was denied" (Krause 119). During the months surrounding Effi's wedding, there are hints that Luise still harbors feelings for her former suitor. On the evening of the couple's engagement, Herr von Briest's toast causes his wife to remember the time eighteen years ago when Innstetten had courted her. Her reaction to Briest's "Lebe wohl," a "herzbewegliche[r] Eindruck," (EB 19), suggests that she still feels regret for this lost love. Effi's mother takes complete charge of all the wedding preparations – it is as if the wedding were her own. Though Innstetten writes his young fiancée daily, he corresponds with Luise about important

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<sup>6</sup> Such an age disparity was common. In the nineteenth century, only 3-4 percent of men in Germany married before the age of twenty-five years, compared with approximately sixty percent of women. Because men could not afford to start and support a family until they were professionally and financially well-established, the majority of them (around 58%) waited until middle age to marry (Hausen, Ehepaare 95).

matters such as honeymoon plans and particulars about the house in Kessin (23). Herr von Briest, taking note of Innstetten's controlling and rigid nature, remarks at one point to his wife, "Überhaupt hättest Du besser zu Innstetten gepaßt als Effi" (41).

Luise's arrangement of the marriage between her former lover and her daughter may be seen as an attempt on her part to live through Effi, to enjoy through her daughter the happiness and success she was denied. Yet her actions belie such a motivation. Like her husband, Luise senses that Effi and Innstetten are ill-suited, that he will not be able to provide the young woman with the excitement and diversion she needs to prevent boredom, "diese Todfeindin einer geistreichen kleinen Person" (44). That she offers her daughter to Innstetten despite this knowledge suggests that what lies behind her action is a subconscious desire for revenge. Luise's decision to present her daughter as a child bride, a nineteenth-century "Lolita," is certainly perverse. When Effi runs in from the garden to meet Innstetten, she is flushed and disheveled from playing with her friends. Her mother initially scolds her for her appearance, but she hesitates when Effi volunteers to change out of her sailor's tunic into a more elegant, grown-up dress. Having looked over her daughter appraisingly, she decides, "Es ist am Ende das Beste, Du bleibst wie Du bist. Ja, bleibe so. . . . Du siehst so unvorbereitet aus, so gar nicht zurecht gemacht, und darauf kommt es in diesem Augenblicke an" (17). Luise's use of the word "unvorbereitet" is fitting. Effi is completely unprepared, and her mother wishes her suitor to see her as such, for, as she knows, such "budding" innocence has a tremendous erotic appeal. If this

essential prostitution of her daughter were not enough, Luise's presentation of Effi as a child to the man who could have been her father raises the specter of incest. This, combined with Luise's infantilization of her daughter, renders any sexual feelings Effi might have for Innstetten perverse.<sup>7</sup>

Luise may be far from the ideal mother, but this does not prevent her daughter from adoring her. As illustrated by the discussion with her girlfriends, Effi finds her mother beautiful ("Sie ist eigentlich eine schöne Frau, findet ihr nicht auch?" [11]) And especially in the initial chapters, Effi literally clings to Luise. In the opening garden scene, she throws her arms about her mother, hugging and kissing her so passionately that Luise is taken aback: "Nicht so wild, Effi, nicht so leidenschaftlich. Ich beunruhige mich immer, wenn ich Dich so sehe"(7). Shortly before the wedding with Innstetten, the two women are discussing Effi's desire for entertainment and distraction. When her mother laughingly asks how she put up with life at Hohen-Cremmen, Effi admits that "Langeweile" was sometimes a problem, "'Aber sonst bin ich hier immer glücklich gewesen, so glücklich . . .' Und während sie das sagte, warf sie sich heftig weinend vor der Mama auf die Knie und küßte ihre beiden Hände!" (35). In addition, though Effi only managed to write the occasional postcard in response to her fiancé's frequent letters, she writes her mother daily during her honeymoon.

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<sup>7</sup> Effi's body, according to Ute Treder, becomes a "Wunschmaschine für den Mann. . . . In ihrem blau-weiß gestreiften Matrosen Kittel steht sie [Effi] für immer jenseits aller sexuellen Befriedigung, jenseits der persönlichen Erfüllung des Lustprinzips, während sie für den Mann ununterbrochen sexuelle Begierde produziert" (58).

Krause interprets Effi's love for Luise as hinting "at an almost homoerotic and incestuous attachment to the mother" (119). Yet this seems an overanalysis, for how could Effi not adore Luise? In Prussian society, Effi's mother is the ideal woman. She is beautiful, elegant, married to a wealthy man of the landed aristocracy, and the mistress of a gracious estate. Luise has conducted her life according to the principles elevated by her society, and we find her daughter Effi parroting these same principles. After the engagement Effi's friend Hertha asks if she is certain that Innstetten is the "right one," and Effi replies: "Gewiß ist es der Richtige. . . . Jeder ist der Richtige. Natürlich muß er von Adel sein und eine Stellung haben und gut aussehen" (21). When her mother asks if she might have preferred to instead marry her dashing cousin Dagobert, Effi answers emphatically, "Heiraten? Um Gottes willen nicht. Er ist ja noch ein halber Junge. Geert ist ein Mann, ein schöner Mann, ein Mann, mit dem ich Staat machen kann und aus dem was wird in der Welt. Wo denkst du hin, Mama" (37). In both of these instances, the effect is of a child repeating what she has heard, what she knows her parents – and her society – holds to be valid. This points to the true tragedy of Fontane's novel, that Effi, although her nature prevents her from conforming to society, cannot be happy outside of its confines. Her mother accepts society's rules and expectations as law, and Effi, adoring Luise and wanting her love and approval, follows suit.

That Effi has fully internalized the codes and rules of nineteenth-century Prussian society is evidenced by her distress following the affair with Crampas. Not only has she broken with society; she also fails to sufficiently regret her misdeed:



Aber Scham über meine Schuld, die hab' ich *nicht* oder doch nicht so recht oder doch nicht genug, und das bringt mich um, daß ich sie nicht habe. Wenn alle Weiber so sind, dann ist es schrecklich, und wenn sie nicht so sind, dann steht es schlecht um mich, dann ist etwas nicht in Ordnung in meiner Seele, dann fehlt mir das richtige Gefühl. (258)

Again, Effi's musings are reminiscent of those of a child, unable to come to a state of mind that harmonizes desires with the expectations and pressures of the outside world. And indeed, many of Effi's actions during her marriage to Innstetten indicate that she is still a child. In the dark and unfamiliar house at Kessin, she is frightened by stories of the Chinese ghost who haunts the attic, and begs her husband to remain with her instead of going on his frequent business trips. (Far from comforting his wife, Innstetten neither confirms nor denies the existence of the ghost; he uses Effi's "childish" fears as a way of controlling her, thus perpetuating the process of "infantilization" her parents began). In addition, during and after the short-lived affair with Crampas, Effi hides her transgression as would a child who fears being "caught." And Effi's own childish nature is reflected in her attitude towards her daughter, Annie. Effi is completely unprepared to care for a child. In a letter home after a lonely Christmas in Kessin, she writes her mother that Innstetten's reference to the coming child as a "liebes Spielzeug" for his wife makes her realize "wie jung ich bin, und daß ich noch halb in die Kinderstube gehöre" (115). Separated from Hohen-Cremmen and her own mother, Effi longs for mothering. In hiring Roswitha to nursemaid Annie, she is actually hiring a surrogate mother for herself, thus ensuring that she may – for a while at least – remain a child.

## 5.5 Kessin: Isolation and Ennui

*Ein solches Blümchen Wunderhold sieht sich dann eines Tages in  
einen fremden Garten verpflanzt, wo es neue Blätter treiben, neue  
Blüthen ansetzen soll. Wird der scharfe Uebergang dan.: nicht reich  
an Enttäuschungen sein?*

From a nineteenth-century *Anstandsbuch*<sup>8</sup>

In addition to its Edenic association, Hohen-Cremmen's most distinguishing qualities are its openness and its connection to nature. The internal rooms of the Briest house are never described in detail, and even the sitting room opens out into the garden. This space is filled with light and air, and ivy half covers the window and spills into the room itself, linking it with the garden outside. In her own room at Hohen-Cremmen, Effi is invariably pictured at the window, looking out into the garden. The house at Kessin is a completely different matter. When Effi arrives after her honeymoon, she is struck by the light that fills the entrance hall. Unlike the sunlit Hohen-Cremmen, the light here is artificial, coming from the lamps that line the walls. This is also the only time in the story where light is mentioned in association with the dark house. There is no greenery; the only features even reminiscent of organic life are the stuffed shark and crocodile that hang from the ceiling. (These, and the model ship in the main room, seem to mock Effi's earlier fantasies of the excitement of life on the sea). Effi's bedroom looks out into the courtyard and garden, but the garden is unkempt and uninviting. To escape into nature, Effi must either go on walks in the forest or on the bleak sandy dunes.

Inactivity and isolation mark Effi's life in Kessin. In the garden at Hohen-Cremmen, she was in constant motion, running and playing tag or hide-and-seek with her friends. Although the circle of her acquaintances was small, Effi was never at a loss for company. In Kessin all this changes. For upper-class women of the time, visiting with others of their class was acceptable within certain parameters. A lady – almost always in the company of her husband – could call on other gentlepeople, or at least come into contact with them during dinners and other socially-sanctioned visits. The rest of the time, women were expected to stay at home, caring for house, husband, and children. These, as reflected by the literature and "Anstandsbücher" of the nineteenth century, were a woman's most important tasks, and were ordained by the divine. "Eine Gehilfin des Mannes zu sein, das ist noch Gottes Ordnung die erste Aufgabe der Frau," writes Heinrich Büttner in "Die Ehe- und Hausfrau" (219). Wilhelmine von Oeynhausen, a famous writer of conduct books, reminds her female readers of their proper "profession": "Dein weiblicher Beruf geht dahin, die Seele des Hauswesens zu sein, und für jeden Theil desselben zu sorgen" (133). Yet in a household such as Innstetten's, with servants to monitor domestic details, Effi has no real role.

Effi's situation is not unique. For women of the bourgeoisie, domestic duties still demanded a great deal of time and energy. With or without assistance from servants, the wife ultimately carried the full weight of responsibility for the home; in

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<sup>8</sup> Amely Bölte, "Die Gefährtin des Mannes," Bildung und Kultur bürgerlicher Frauen 1850-1918, ed. Günter Häntzchel (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1986) 232.

addition to cleaning, washing, darning, cooking, and bearing and caring for children, she was to practice stringent frugality in managing the household expenses, as well as plan for social functions, or “Gesellschaften.” Even with domestic help, a good wife was expected to fully supervise the servants’ work, and correct their mistakes. As Henriette Davidis warns in her conduct book Die Hausfrau, without adequate knowledge of household management, the wife might be put in the intolerable position of depending on the “Dienerschaft,” “was stets auf Kosten der Autorität geschieht” (13). Women in wealthier family situations, whether in the upper middle classes or the aristocracy, were relieved of many of these time-consuming duties. For these wives, however, a new problem arose: boredom.

[D]ie Frauen der oberen bürgerlichen Schichte [sind] im allgemeinen nicht in der Lage, ihre abnehmenden Funktionen durch neue zu ersetzen. An den privaten Bereich gebunden, von beruflicher Tätigkeit in der Regel ausgeschlossen, gewährt ihnen das verhältnismäßig große Potential freier Zeit kaum Anregungen und Möglichkeiten zur Selbstverwirklichung. Ihre geistigen Anlagen müssen oft verkümmern, Interessen für neue Tätigkeitsgebiete werden infolge der Monotonie der alltäglichen Lebensweise nur erschwert geweckt. (Häntzchel 9)

Less prepared than most young women, Effi is at a particular disadvantage. During the days when Innstetten is at the office and the many evenings he spends attending Bismarck at his estate in Varzin, Effi is left to her own woefully inadequate devices.

To gain a clearer picture of life for upper-class women in nineteenth-century Prussia, one need look no further than Hohen-Cremmen, to Effi’s mother Luise. Frau von Briest is always either in the company of her husband or her daughter; she is never depicted with any female friends. Luise is in an unsatisfactory marriage, with

no real tasks other than arranging for her daughter's future, and, as has been discussed, her choice of Innstetten as Effi's husband reflects a large measure of frustration and passive-aggression. In Kessin, the effects of isolation are also plain to see. The women Effi encounters on her social visits with Innstetten are narrow-minded and excessively pious. They immediately judge Innstetten's pretty young wife as frivolous and pretentious. Effi's "Toilette" and conversational skills are found lacking, and at the home of the Grasenabb family, the judgmental Sidonie, a "dreiundvierzigjährige alte Jungfer," declares Effi to be an atheist (75).<sup>9</sup>

## 5.6 The Ghost and the Cemetery

Effi will find neither allies nor comfort among the women of Kessin. In fact, in Kessin, with the exception of the pharmacist Gieshübler, Effi has no friends. It almost seems as if Innstetten prefers his wife to remain isolated. On their first day in their new home, he warns Effi against ties with the town's inhabitants:

Gut aussehen thun die meisten hier. Ein hübscher Schlag Menschen. Aber das ist auch das Beste, was man von ihnen sagen kann. Eure märkischen Leute sehen unscheinbarer aus und verdrießlicher, und in ihrer Haltung sind sie weniger respektvoll, eigentlich gar nicht, aber ihr Ja ist Ja und Nein ist Nein, und man kann sich auf sie verlassen. Hier ist alles unsicher. (50)

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<sup>9</sup> Fontane's depiction of the ladies and gentlemen of the Kessin aristocracy also serves as a criticism of Prussian society. "Die Adelswelt von Kessin, die Effi in der Kombination von blindem Patriotismus bei den Männern und rigoroser Frömmigkeit bei den Frauen als die Inkarnation der preußischen Einheit von 'Thron und Altar' und der Formel 'mit Gott für König und Vaterland' entgegentritt, repräsentiert die enge preußische Gesellschaft, in der menschliche Regungen verkümmern" (Grawe, "Vögelchen" 233).

Effi, longing for excitement and difference, is fascinated by the thought of the exotic people ("Eine ganz neue Welt, sag' ich, vielleicht einen Neger oder einen Türken, oder vielleicht sogar einen Chinesen" [51]), but Innstetten quells his wife's spirits by using her chance remark to bring up the subject of the Chinaman whose spirit is reputed to haunt their house.<sup>10</sup>

On the first night her husband is away in Varzin, Effi is unnerved by the appearance – real or imagined – of the ghost at the foot of her bed. When Effi begs her husband the following morning to let them move to another house, Innstetten is annoyed and incredulous. "Ich kann hier in der Stadt die Leute nicht sagen lassen, Landrat Innstetten verkauft sein Haus, weil seine Frau den aufgeklebten kleinen Chinesen als Spuk an ihrem Bette gesehen hat. Dann bin ich verloren, Effi. Von

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<sup>10</sup> The symbol of the ghost – its connection with denied love and sexuality, with death and repression – has been explored extensively in the secondary literature. Valerie Greenberg sees the Chinese man and his tragic tale of denied love for his employer's daughter as a symbol of "eroticism that has been driven underground, where it remains a disturbing force for Effi" (772). In the same vein, Christian Grawe maintains that the ghost is the catalyst for Effi's uncertainty, fearfulness and sense of alienation in her marriage ("Vögelchen" 231). In addition to emphasizing the associations of the Orient (symbolized by the Chinaman) with eroticism, Helen Chambers suggests another connection: "the Orient, in the form of its rulers, connotes absolutism and cruelty. . . . Effi, significantly enough, compares Instetten (sic.) to an Eastern potentate in a picture book she had as a child. In her description of the picture Effi unconsciously associates cruelty and violence with the ideas of rank and power" (*Supernatural* 191-92). British scholar J.P. Stern is impatient with the entire motif, considering the ghost to be the "only blemish in the novel . . . , a piece of bric-à-brac left over by 'poetic realism'" (319). Perhaps, in the end, the most straightforward reading is the most accurate. Effi, like the Chinese man, is an outsider in Kessin, and her desires and needs, for love, tenderness, and friendship, are similarly ignored.

solcher Lächerlichkeit kann man sich nie wieder erholen" (92). At the same time, Effi's husband refuses to deny outright the existence of the ghost, thus ensuring that his wife's fear remains in full force.

On the night Effi sees the apparition, her immediate reaction is to ask that Johanna open the window to the room, "daß ich Luft und Licht habe" (88). In her exile in Kessin, Effi misses not only the love and companionship of her parents and friends, but also the open atmosphere of Hohen-Cremmen. (The only room in the Kessin house that is "open" is the uninhabited second floor, the abode of the Chinese ghost). For Effi, her new home is a place of restriction, and, at times, of near suffocation. These feelings are intensified during the winter months, when, as she writes her mother, "es ist fast immer rauh und kalt" (115). With the arrival of spring, the situation improves somewhat, for Effi, now pregnant, can walk to the nearby beach hotel, and watch the elegant visitors: "[W]enn sie saß und von ihrem bequemen Platz aus die Wagen und die Damen in Toilette beobachtete, die da hinausfahren, so belebte sie sich wieder. Denn Heiteres sehen, war ihr wie Lebensluft" (EB 127). Effi's fears and sense of isolation are further allayed as a result of a chance meeting in a garden – or, at least, the place in Kessin that most closely resembles a garden: the church cemetery.

In the "Dünenkirchhof," Effi encounters for the first time in Kessin something akin to the light, peace and sense of connection with nature she experienced in the garden at Hohen-Cremmen. "Alles blühte hier, Schmetterlinge flogen über die Gräber hin, und hoch in den Lüften standen ein paar Möven. Es war so still und

schön" (128). Here Effi comes upon Roswitha, sitting on the grave of her former employer. Pitying the "gute, robuste, . . . treue Person" (EB 129), Effi hires her to serve as a nurse for her child (and as a companion and surrogate mother for herself). Roswitha's strength, common sense and kindness are a great support to her new mistress. But even the presence of this kind motherly figure, whose name evokes the botanical image of the rose, cannot turn Kessin into a garden. Within months after the birth of Annie, another meeting sets into motion the events that will lead to the "Fall" foreshadowed in Hohen-Cremmen, to the "Schloon" where Effi will once again find herself without "Luft und Licht."

#### 5.7 The Fall of Effi: "der Schloon"

*Wenn ein Mann ungetreu ist, so ist es unrecht, wenn es aber eine Frau tut, so ist es unnatürlich und gottlos.*

Theodor Gottlieb Hippel<sup>11</sup>

The affair with Major Crampas "begins" the morning after Effi returns, happy and refreshed, from a six-week visit to Hohen-Cremmen with Annie. (Though exiled in Kessin, she is still allowed occasionally to return to her garden paradise). Effi and Innstetten sit on their veranda in the front of the house, and here, as in the "Dünenkirchhof," the atmosphere is of openness and light. The scene is reminiscent of the garden at Hohen-Cremmen in the novel's opening chapter, but here the swing ("Schaukel") has been replaced by a rocking chair ("Schaukelstuhl"), and

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<sup>11</sup> Qtd. in Hausen, Ehepaare 89).



Hohen-Cremmen's safe little pond by the vast, unpredictable ocean (Hehle 150).

Other differences are in evidence, for Effi, in her new role of mother, is no longer the innocent child of a year before. Innstetten is pleased with the change, and admits to his wife, "Du hast 'was Verführerisches" (144). Effi is delighted with his remark, and in the conversation that ensues, the couple seem more content, more suited for one another than they have ever been.<sup>12</sup>

The motif of the "Schaukelstuhl," however, is a reminder that Effi's love of adventure and risk has not disappeared. During her stay at Hohen-Cremmen, she had returned to the swing beside the lake: "Am liebsten . . . hatte sie wie früher auf dem durch die Luft fliegenden Schaukelbrett gestanden, und in dem Gefühle: 'jetzt stürz' ich,' etwas eigentümlich prickelndes, einen Schauer süßer Gefahr empfunden" (138). Delighted by her newfound sensuality, her "seductive" quality, Effi is particularly vulnerable to the charming Crampas. When Crampas visits the couple on the veranda, Effi is clearly intrigued by his wit and knowledge of literature (qualities her

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<sup>12</sup> Effi's happy reaction to Innstetten's remark can be explained by the fact that she has, from the beginning of the marriage, complained of his lack of physical tenderness. In the first months in Kessin, Innstetten generally spends the evening in his office, only gracing his wife with a few "paar wohlgemeinten, aber etwas müden Zärtlichkeiten" (120). In a conversation with her mother after the move to Berlin, Effi admits to a strangeness in the physical relations with her husband. "Innstetten war immer ein vortrefflicher Mann, . . . aber ich konnte nicht recht an ihn heran, er hatte so 'was Fremdes. Und fremd war er auch in seiner Zärtlichkeit" (254). This strangeness is understandable considering the discussion of section 5.4 of this chapter (see pp. 199-201). The union with the child of his lover must, at times, be unsettling for Innstetten. That Effi employs the past tense in the above conversation with her mother suggests that the situation has improved. In giving birth to their daughter she has ceased, in Innstetten's eyes, to be a child (or even, under different circumstances, his child).

husband does not possess). Though Innstetten initially takes part in the exchange, soon only his wife and Crampas are talking. As Effi realizes later, this was the moment the affair took root. If the veranda is reminiscent of the garden at Hohen-Cremmen – thus gesturing to Eden – the serpent has arrived to seduce Eve.<sup>13</sup>

Effi's "Fall" has been foreshadowed since the first page of the novel, and the details of her seduction and the affair with Crampas are unimportant. She is not motivated by love, but feels herself helplessly drawn into the situation. With her husband's blessing, she goes on long rides with Crampas in the woods (just as Gabriele and Murai rode together in Brigitta), and the two picnic on the dunes. Crampas is insistent, and though nothing untoward happens on these occasions, Effi is nonetheless relieved by the approach of winter, for the rides with Crampas will have to end: "Nein, sie konnte sich nicht tadeln, auf seinen Ton eingegangen zu sein, und doch hatte sie ganz leise das Gefühl einer überstandenen Gefahr und beglückwünschte sich, daß das alles nun mutmaßlich hinter ihr läge" (167). Effi's sense of relief is premature. On the day after Christmas, Effi and Innstetten, along with Crampas and the awful Sidonie von Grasenabb, are invited to a dinner at Förster Ring's home. (Their host's profession is fitting, for Effi will ultimately succumb to Crampas in the forest). Effi seems to sense impending danger. When, on a walk

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<sup>13</sup> Schuster interprets the events on the veranda in this light. Having earlier identified Innstetten as representing a domineering God, he writes: "[D]ie Repräsentanten verschiedener Rollen stehen sich gegenüber. Rollen, die sie nicht ausgesucht haben, sondern die ihnen von der Gesellschaft aufgezwungen worden sind – Eva, Gott und Teufel –, und ereignen muß sich nun der Sündenfall einer vom Teufel verführten Eva" (96).

before dinner, Crampas suggests that the party might be snowed in, she responds, “Das wäre nicht das Schlimmste” (177). She recalls a poem learned long ago in school, Brentano’s “Die Gottesmauer,” which recounts the plight of an old widow, who, terrified of an approaching enemy army, prays that God might build a wall to protect her. “Und da ließ Gott das Haus einschneien, und der Feind zog daran vorüber,” Effi concludes (177). Crampas is visibly shaken by her remarks, knowing that the poem’s marauding enemy force is a reference to him, that Effi desires protection from his advances.<sup>14</sup>

In recalling the “Gottesmauer” poem, Effi also expresses her longing for the garden at Hohen-Cremmen, for its protective walls. On the ride back to Kessin, when chance – and the “Schloon” – throws Effi and Crampas together in the same sleigh, she fervently whispers the prayer of the old widow, “daß Gott eine Mauer um sie her bauen möge” (EB 189). After only three recitations of her silent prayer, Effi stops, for the phrase suddenly seems like “tote Worte” (189). She realizes that she is not in the same position as the widow in the poem, and, terrified but excited, allows herself to be overtaken by the “enemy.” On her swing at Hohen-Cremmen, Effi had flirted with the desire to let go, to fly through the air and perhaps even fall into the pond beside the swing. In the carriage with Crampas, she surrenders to the fall, to the “süße[n] Gefahr” (138) she felt when swinging.

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<sup>14</sup> The image of the “Gottesmauer” is a common religious and artistic motif. Danae and Saint Barbara were both enclosed in towers to protect their chastity, and the Virgin Mary is frequently portrayed in art in a tower or walled garden. Effi’s reference to the “Gottesmauer” while in the company of Crampas draws attention to the symbol’s original erotic significance (Schuster 1).

The setting for these events, the “Schloon,” has obvious sexual connotations. As in Irrungen, Wirrungen, this swampy landscape is a metaphor for perilous, unpredictable (female) sexuality. Whereas the strong-willed Lene was able to cross the “Sumpf” of the Wilmersdorfer Heide unscathed, Effi is in danger of being sucked down into the swamp.<sup>15</sup> In the summer months, Sidonie tells Effi, the “Schloon” is a harmless stream winding through the dunes, but when the winter winds force sea water into the stream, it becomes a mire, a “Soog,” treacherous because of its deceptively solid surface. Sidonie’s explanation of the phenomenon of the “Schloon” leaves no doubt as to its significance. In her account, the word “versinken” appears twice, and the concept of “sinking” dominates the discourse. Sidonie’s words constitute a warning – however insincere – of the dangers of “sinking,” of abandoning oneself to sexual desire, of succumbing to the seductive, irresistible forces of nature.<sup>16</sup>

The element that turns the “Schloon” from an innocuous trickle into quicksand is water. Effi’s fascination with water has been in evidence since the

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<sup>15</sup> Alan Bance, as mentioned in the previous chapter, considers Lene Nimptsch to be a “representative of the poetic,” and thus able to harmonize life’s tribulations and ambiguities into a comprehensive whole. “So it is that she [Lene] is able to wander, charmed and unscathed, across what was, for the nineteenth century, a moral quagmire, symbolized by the swamp, the weeds and the fallen angels of the walk to Wilmersdorf in chapter 9” (81-82).

<sup>16</sup> Though critics differ in the details of their interpretations of the “Schloon,” they agree upon its association with Effi’s sexuality. Gilbert, for example, sees it as the landscape of Effi’s soul; her repressed erotic drives, like the water, insidiously seep beneath the surface, turning her soul to quicksand (73). Grawe, in turn, reads the “Soog” as a metaphor for Effi’s marriage to Innstetten, “die lange unterhöhlt ist” (Effi 65).

opening pages of the novel, when the then innocent seventeen-year-old pretended to be a midshipman. Even in the garden, Effi's naval games reflected a certain interest in sexual matters: she imagined her friend Hulda joining her atop the mast, and envisioned the two of them exchanging a kiss (EB 15). The harmless nature of this make-believe is reflected by the pond, for the small "Teich" serves as one of the protective "walls" for the garden at Hohen-Cremmen. It thus cannot be seen as presenting a true threat.<sup>17</sup> Once Effi has left the garden, the element of water gains increasing power. In the veranda scene with Innstetten and Crampas, the ocean visible from the podium does not symbolize protection, but uncertainty and unfathomability. It is the realm of mermaids, as Effi discovers on a walk along the beach with her husband and Cramps in Chapter 16. Effi's dog Rollo startles a seal sunning on a rock, and it slips silently into the ocean. While Innstetten and Crampas argue about the legality of shooting the creature, Effi and Rollo stand at the edge of the water near the stone where the seal lay: "Dann sahen beide, von dem Stein weg, auf das Meer und warteten, ob die 'Seejungfrau' noch einmal sichtbar werden würde" (151). The scene with the seal/mermaid points once again to the Melusine motif, suggesting that it is Effi's fascination and affinity with water, the element that epitomizes the uncontrollable, amoral, antisocial forces of nature, that leads to her fall from grace. That Effi, on some level, connects her situation with water is evidenced by her reaction to the shipwreck rescue effort she observes soon after her experience

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<sup>17</sup> The gruesome drowning of unfaithful wives, recounted by Effi when she and her friends sank of the gooseberry husks in the pond, was unthinkable in the safety of the garden: "'Nein, nicht hier,' lachte Effi, 'hier kommt so 'was nicht vor'" (14).

in the “Schloon.” As the sailors, one by one, are all safely brought to shore, Effi struggles not to weep in relief. “Ein schönes Gefühl” (EB 197) fills her heart, a hope that it is not too late, and that she, too, might be rescued from sinking.

With his repeated references to water, Fontane leaves no doubt that this element plays a role in Effi’s fate. But there is a danger in linking water to Effi and her demise, for this plays into the centuries-old association of women with nature, leading to the denigration and repression of both. This association gained even greater credence in the eighteenth- and nineteenth-centuries. While women were praised for their inherent “Sittlichkeit” and for their dedication to home and family (the “backbone” of society), they were simultaneously denigrated as weak, prone to natural (i.e., sexual) drives. In succumbing to these forces, a woman threatened to undermine the very bastions of civilization.

Despite the fact that Effi Briest is literally saturated with references to water and the protagonist’s connection with that element, Fontane does not fall into the trap of identifying this as the sole factor contributing to Effi’s downfall. In Chapter 15, in the scene on the veranda in Kessin, the presence of the “unfathomable” sea on one side is offset by the public road on the other. Fontane’s remark, “Es war ein reizender Platz, den ganzen Sommer über von allen Badegästen, die hier vorüber mußten, bewundert” (EB 142), reveals a less desirable aspect of the veranda. Sitting on this podium, flanked by curtains that open out to the busy street, Effi is essentially on stage before society. The “Geborgenheit” afforded by the walls in the Hohen-Cremmen garden is gone, and Effi is left exposed and unprotected. In her exile in

Kessin Effi has already experienced the effects of her nonconformity. Her natural curiosity has been squelched by her husband, then transformed into fear and anxiety about the “haunted” house. The Kessiners, as typified by Sidonie von Grasenabb, are threatened by her youth, openness and vitality; at social gatherings Effi is, if not ostracized, definitely out of place. Effi tries to take a proactive stance in the face of these hardships. She engages Roswitha, whose presence helps decrease her fear of both the ghost and her inexperience in childrearing. She enjoys her friendship with the pharmacist Gieshübler. She even participates in the town play (though its title, “Schritt vom Wege,” is admittedly foreboding). Effi is optimistic and continues to try to make her way in her Kessin exile. After all, there is always Hohen-Cremmen to return to for visits. By committing adultery with Crampas, however, Effi takes the fatal bite from the “fruit of the Tree of Knowledge,” the bite that will eventually lead to her permanent expulsion from the garden.

#### 5.8 “Vertreibung aus dem Paradiese”

The affair with Crampas continues in a rather desultory manner through the winter. More and more, Effi surrounds herself with the flimsy walls of half-truths and blatant lies, sinking more and more deeply into behavior patterns that are completely against her nature. Although unhappy, she continues, for “die Kugel war im Rollen, und was an einem Tage geschah, machte das Thun des andern zur Notwendigkeit” (EB 199). “Rescue” finally comes in the form of Innstetten’s

promotion to a higher post in Berlin. Effi leaves Kessin to search for an apartment, planning to come back to help with the move. At the last moment, in what she hopes is a final act of deceit – a feigned bout of rheumatism – Effi avoids returning to the wasteland. The family's new apartment in Berlin captures, to some extent, the atmosphere of Hohen Cremmen: "Auch hier ein ummauerter Bezirk im Freien, der ans Haus anschließt, Bäume, Wasser und strahlender Himmel" (Schuster 99). Standing in the doorway of their new home, Effi folds her hands as if in prayer and says, "Nun, mit Gott, ein neues Leben! Es soll anders werden" (230).

Things are not different, however. With the discovery that the picture of the "Chinesen" has made its way to Berlin, Effi senses that the events of Kessin will continue to haunt her. On vacation with Innstetten in late summer, she is distressed one day to learn that the closest available accommodations are in a town called "Crampas." That afternoon, on a trip to the shores of the Herthasee, she is again reminded of her past. The sight of the "Opfersteine," where a priestess of the goddess Hertha was once purportedly executed for taking a lover,<sup>18</sup> leaves Effi miserable. "[I]ch muß Dir bekennen," she admits to her husband, "ich habe nichts in meinem Leben gesehen, was mich so traurig gestimmt hätte" (249). The fate of the unfaithful

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<sup>18</sup> The legend of these stones, according to Griebens Reise-Bibliothek (1885), is as follows: When the priestess' transgression is discovered, the high priest has her thrown from the cliff into the ocean, "aber die mitfühlende Göttin liess sie sanft herniedergleiten in die Arme ihres Geliebten, der dort mit seinem Schiff ihrer harpte" (EB "Anmerkungen" 491-92). Effi is not so fortunate when she "falls."



wives in Constantinople is no longer a piece of remote history. The only thing that stands between her and a similar fate, Effi realizes, is the fact that she has not yet been “caught.”

When she returns to Hohen-Cremmen for a visit, Effi finds that her relationship with the garden has changed as well. There is no mention of swinging in this episode, and Effi’s friends are either married or gone. But the real difference lies, of course, in Effi herself. She is no longer a “Naturkind,” an integral part of the garden; in fact, at no point during the visit is she depicted in the garden at all. On the last night before her return to Berlin (significantly, the day before her wedding anniversary), Effi sits at her window and looks out onto the quiet landscape.

Wie that ihr das alles so wohl. Neben dem Kirchturm stand der Mond und warf sein Licht auch auf den Rasenplatz mit der Sonnenuhr und den Heliotropbeeten. Alles schimmerte silbern, und neben den Schattenstreifen lagen weiße Lichtstreifen, so weiß, als läge Leinwand auf der Bleiche. Weiterhin aber standen die hohen Rhabarberstauden wieder, die Blätter herbstlich gelb, und sie mußte des Tages gedenken, nun erst wenig über zwei Jahre, wo sie hier mit Hulda und den Jahnke’schen Mädchen gespielt hatte. (257)

Effi is initially calmed by her view of the garden, but every element of the landscape is a reminder of what she has lost. The “stripes” of shadow and light stretching across the lawn, like linen set out to bleach, hearken back to the blue-and-white striped linen sailor tunic she wore on the day of her engagement to Innstetten – the reference to bleach suggests that the innocence symbolized by the “Matrosenkittel” has been sullied. Also a reminder of lost innocence, the rhubarb leaves (or “Feigenblätter,” as Effi once called them) are now yellow, marking the onset of autumn and the passage of time. Hohen-Cremmen is no longer an enchanted,

timeless realm, for Effi's "fall" has brought with it decay and death. Although beautiful, the garden is lifeless: the warm light of day has turned to cold moonlight, and the air has become deathly still. Similarly, the heliotropes – their bright blooms symbolic of Effi's longing for sun and light – have been rendered colorless. In this static dreamscape, everything appears silver, and although the verb "schimmern" might evoke positive qualities such as beauty or value, the reader is reminded of the iron rose in Stifter's Nachsommer. Though aesthetically beautiful, this silvery landscape has no fragrance or sound, no air or warmth.

Worst of all, Effi has assumed a peripheral position to the garden. Her window is open, but considering the distance between Effi and the Edenic playground of the child she once was, it might as well be barred. Long before the discovery of the love letters from Crampas, and the duel that results in her "Vertreibung" from her home, society and Hohen-Cremmen, Effi has been expelled from the garden. Looking at the landscape that is now essentially dead to her, Effi reflects on her guilt. Though raised within the protective walls of the Briest estate, she has nonetheless assimilated the rigid code of Prussia's societal and gender expectations. She is mortified that she does not feel the crushing guilt she "should" under the circumstances.<sup>19</sup> What Effi does experience is shame about her deceptions and lies: "immer war es mein Stolz, daß ich nicht lügen könne und auch nicht zu lügen brauche" (258). Effi's shame is related to feelings of guilt, but not guilt for her

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<sup>19</sup> See Mende 202: "Die gesellschaftliche Konvention – Ehebruchsverbot, Ächtung der ehebrechenden Frau, versteht sich – verlang als Bestrafung wenigstens das Fegefeuer des Über-Ich, die Höllenqualen des schlechten Gewissens."

“crime” against Innstetten. On some level, Effi realizes that with her “Lug und Trug” (258) she has betrayed herself, her “Natürlichkeit,” for want of a better word. For the lying began not with the affair with Crampas, but on her honeymoon, when she felt compelled to feign interest in her didactic husband’s endless art lectures; it continued in her initial attempts to hide her fear from her husband, to convince Johanna that he must not be told of her terror of the ghost (EB 88). From the day she left the garden, Effi has had to deny herself – her truth - and this constant denial and repression has only led to more lies.

Twice during her time in Kessin, Effi is reported to experience a sense of suffocation, the loss of “Luft und Licht.” The first of these occasions is, as previously mentioned, Effi’s encounter with the ghost of the Chinaman. The second occurs during the sleigh ride from the Försterei. Whereas the swampy “Soog” leads to Crampas riding in Effi’s sleigh, it is not until an unexpected detour through the dark woods that Effi “succumbs.” Instead of following the open road, Innstetten, the lead driver in the convoy, suddenly turns onto the narrow forest way, and Effi’s discomfort at Crampas’ presence turns to fear: “Effi schrak zusammen. Bis dahin war Luft und Licht um sie her gewesen, aber jetzt war es damit vorbei, und die dunklen Kronen wölbten sich über ihr” (189). It is in situations like these, when Effi is most powerless, most suffocated, and most afraid, that she feels furthest from the garden at Hohen-Cremmen. It is therefore appropriate that she is afflicted in a similar manner when, during a visit to the spa in Ems, she receives the letter from her mother

banishing her from her childhood home forever.<sup>20</sup> Having read enough to know that her affair has been discovered and Crampas killed, Effi maintains her composure long enough to escape her nosy companion. Once inside the salon, however, her actions become those of a blind person. She is “froh . . ., einen Halt gewinnen und sich an dem Polysanderflügel entlang fühlen zu können. So kam sie bis an ihr nach rechts gelegenes Zimmer, und als sie hier, tappend und suchend, die Thür geöffnet und das Bett an der Wand gegenüber erreicht hatte, brach sie ohnmächtig zusammen” (300). Again, Effi suffers a loss of “Licht” (hence her “blindness”) and “Luft” (resulting in her fainting).

When Effi recovers sufficiently to read the remainder of the letter, she finds that the situation is far worse than she had imagined. Luise von Briest impresses upon her daughter that from this point forward, air and light will be denied her. “Du wirst am besten in Berlin leben (in einer großen Stadt verthut sich dergleichen am besten) und wirst da zu den vielen gehören, die sich um freie Luft und lichte Sonne gebracht haben” (301). Effi may never return to Hohen-Cremmen. Luise insists that this decision is not due to the fear that she and Effi’s father would, like their daughter, be cut off from the world. “[N]ein, *nicht* deshalb, sondern einfach weil wir Farbe bekennen, und vor aller Welt . . . unsere Verurteilung Deines Thuns . . . aussprechen wollen” (301-02). The phrase “Farbe bekennen” may be translated

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<sup>20</sup> It is somehow fitting that Effi receives news of her banishment from Hohen-Cremmen in a garden. In the walled garden at Ems, Effi sits with her companion, Geheimrätin Zwicker. As in the novel’s opening scene, the two women are diligently bent over their needlework (EB 294).

as “to nail one’s colors to the mast,” an idiom derived from the naval practice of ships to fly specific flags, thereby declaring their loyalty to a nation or power. Luise’s use of this phrase evokes for the reader Effi’s naval fantasies of the opening chapter, serving as a poignant reminder of the innocence and sense of safety she has lost. Most importantly, though, by “showing their colors,” the Briests – and particularly Effi’s mother – declare their loyalty to society over their own child.

#### 5.9 Return to the garden?

In the end, Effi is allowed to return home. Back in Hohen-Cremmen, she again dons her sailor tunic, and treats her parents with the same childlike enthusiasm she exhibited as a girl. But though they may still refer to her as “das Kind”(328), Effi’s mother and father can see that their daughter has changed. The tuberculosis hinted at in the novel’s latter chapters has visibly taken hold: Effi’s bright cheeks and “leuchtend[e] Augen” (330) mark the progress of the disease. Wansink reads Effi’s illness, her “slow death by ‘lack of air,’” as “symbolic of her suffocation in an inflexible society in which she is trapped” (53). It is important to more clearly define the nature of this inflexibility. Effi’s tragedy is not simply an illustration of the destruction of a “natural” person by an intolerable and rigid society. Her fate is directly related to her gender, to her “transgression” against the rigid gender

restrictions that were upheld not only by Prussian society, but codified in its law.<sup>21</sup>

According to the “Allgemeinen Landrecht für die Preußischen Staaten,” a husband had absolute authority over his wife, both in the public and private spheres:

Die Frau teilt Wohnsitz, Namen, Stand des Mannes, ist zur Führung des Hauswesens verpflichtet, darf ohne seine Erlaubnis weder ein selbständiges Gewerbe treiben, noch sich zu außerhäuslichen Diensten verpflichten. Der Mann ist berechtigt, ihre Briefschaften zu öffnen. . . . Der Mann vertritt die Frau im Verkehr mit der Rechtspflege, ist ihr gerichtlicher Vormund. Die Frau darf ohne seine Zustimmung keine Prozesse führen, keine Rechtsgeschäfte abschließen. Die Erziehungsgewalt liegt in den Händen des Vaters: Töchter werden von der familiären Autorität des Vaters erst “frei,” wenn sie heiraten, die Unverheirateten erst durch seinen Tod. (Mende 184-5)

Thus Innstetten is within his legal rights not only in opening Effi’s private correspondence, but in divorcing her and taking her child. And although duels were prohibited by law, Innstetten’s decision to demand satisfaction is accepted, even required, by society.

Though a man, and thus privileged in Prussian law and society, Innstetten is also a victim of the gender restrictions of his time. As a “Landrat” he is expected to epitomize the Prussian male virtues of willpower, steadfastness, courage and devotion

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<sup>21</sup> That the concept of and punishment of such “transgression” varied according to gender is illustrated by a comparison of the situation in Effi Briest with Botho’s hidden love letters in Irrungen, Wirrungen. Were anyone to find his letters from Lene, Botho’s “bischen Glück” and “Ehefrieden” would indeed be threatened (IW 166), but the unpleasantness would be limited to the private sphere. The discovery of Effi’s letters, on the other hand, results in public humiliation and disdain, expulsion from society, and, ultimately, death.

to honor.<sup>22</sup> Yet Innstetten has a romantic, even passionate side to his personality. This is illustrated by his enthusiasm for Wagner, and by his youthful love for Luise Shantikow, Effi's mother. In the beginning of the novel, in fact, Effi hints to her friends that Innstetten has returned to the Hohen-Cremmen area primarily to visit his old flame (EB 13). He is, as Effi realizes after their marriage, "kein Liebhaber" (119), but even she senses the hidden romantic in her often cold husband: "Du bist eigentlich . . . ein Zärtlichkeitsmensch und unterm Liebesstern geboren. . . . Du willst es bloß nicht zeigen und denkst, es schickt sich nicht und verdirbt einem die Karriere" (143). Earlier, when Innstetten yielded to "unmanly" emotions, he was crushed, for Luise, of course, chose to further herself socially by marrying the more established Briest. Only by immersing himself in the most masculine of activities, war, was he able to overcome this disappointment. In marrying the much younger Effi, Innstetten seems to validate the authority of the societal and gender restrictions that earlier destroyed his happiness.

But embracing the patriarchal Prussian code does not guarantee happiness, as Innstetten learns upon discovering Effi's love letters. As he explains to his friend Wüllersdorf, despite the fact that he loves his wife and can summon no real anger against her or Crampas, he has no choice but to go ahead with the duel and divorce: "Man ist nicht bloß ein einzelner Mensch, man gehört einem Ganzen an, und auf das

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<sup>22</sup> See Karin Hausen's article "Eine Spiegelung der Dissoziation von Erwerbs- und Familienleben" for a comprehensive list of male versus female characteristics, compiled from lexicographical and medical, pedagogical, psychological and literary writings of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (368).

Ganze haben wir beständig Rücksicht zu nehmen, wir sind durchaus abhängig von ihm" (278). The code of this "Ganze" (or the "Stärkre," as Lene Nimptsch referred to it) demands that Innstetten pursue "justice." Although neither Innstetten nor Wüllersdorf believe in the validity of this code, both men agree that they must submit to the "Götzendienst" of the Prussian cult of honor, "so lange der Götze gilt" (280). In pursuing his course of action, Innstetten destroys both his and Effi's lives. By the time the dying Effi is permitted to return to Hohen-Cremmen, her former husband's resignation in the face of the societal "Götze" has turned to rage and despair. His life, he complains to Wüllersdorf, has become "leer und öde" (338), and his promotion to "Ministerialdirektor" leaves him cold. He admits to having the desire to run away to Africa, to live "unter lauter pechschwarze Kerle, die von Kultur und Ehre nichts wissen" (340). This vision of a simple, "natural" existence among noble savages may be seen as Innstetten's version of Effi's Edenic, pre-Fall garden.

Even Luise, the character who is arguably most devoted to the maintenance of the Prussian code of honor, suffers under its inflexible system of gender inequity. Her marriage to Briest, the societally "appropriate" choice, has left her frustrated and unhappy, and her attempts to gain some agency in her life are, as we have seen, highly problematic. She infantilizes her daughter and bullies her husband, expressing disdain for him in front of others. By the end of Fontane's novel, however, Luise is clearly questioning the code she has obeyed and supported her entire life. In the book's final scene she comes as close as the reader could reasonably expect to admitting culpability for her daughter's tragedy, wondering aloud to her husband,



**“Ob wir nicht doch schuld sind?” (350) Her question does not point to a complete rejection of society or its gender prejudices: as the dying Effi forgives Innstetten, her mother feels obligated to point out, once again, “eigentlich hast Du doch Euer Leid heraufbeschworen” (347). Still, in her new state of isolation from “the world” (for the return of Effi has resulted in her parents’ social ostracization), the rigid Luise unexpectedly exhibits a sense of spontaneity and childlike longing. When Effi has fully recovered, Luise muses during a conversation with her daughter, the family can travel together to Mentone on the Riviera: “Und dann das blaue Meer und weiße Segel und die Felsen ganz mit rotem Kaktus überwachsen, – ich habe es noch nicht gesehen, aber ich denke es mir so. Und ich möchte es wohl kennen lernen” (345). The tone of Luise’s words is reminiscent of that of her adventurous and imaginative daughter in the novel’s first scenes. Although she does not go as far as Innstetten in rejecting society and yearning for an existence untainted by civilization, Luise has come to admit that there are “viele Arten von Glück” (345), that happiness is a possibility beyond the smothering confines of Prussian life and ideology.**

**Ironically, while Innstetten and Luise experience feelings that mirror and validate Effi’s longing for the garden, she herself never returns to that paradise. Though Herr von Briest’s telegram echoes verbatim the words of the Jahnke twins’ long ago invitation to return to the garden – “Effi komm”(328) – Effi’s childhood promise to her friends (“Spielt nur weiter, ich bin gleich wieder da” [17]) – remains unfulfilled. The impulsive child who courted danger is gone. When Effi swings now, she feels “[k]einen Schauer süßer Gefahr” (138), only the sensation of the air in her**

face, the feeling “als flög ich in den Himmel” (333). Effi’s words are reminiscent of Eichendorff’s poem “Mondnacht,” suggesting that she now sees her true “home” as heaven (Kahrman 128). The swing has come to symbolize Effi’s longing for “Himmel”: “Nichts von schaurigem Reiz, von Niederstürzen, sondern das beseligende Gefühl, aller irdischen Schwere enthoben zu sein, drückt Effi hier aus, und das Schaukelsymbol deutet auf Lösung aus weltlicher Verschuldung und Verstrickung” (Gilbert 66).

Similarly, the “Luft” und “Licht” Effi seeks during her long walks are no longer reminders of the garden, but qualities she associates with heaven. Where she once played in the garden and imagined her future, she now looks at the landscape for hours and forgets her past (EB 330). Effi’s endless contemplation of nature thus signals her leave-taking, her renunciation of life on earth. The girl who once wondered “ob sie im Himmel doch so wundervollen Heliotrop haben” (31) has now turned her face away from the real warmth and light of the sun: the object of Effi’s “Sehnsucht,” once reserved only for the garden at Hohen-Cremmen and her parents, is now heaven. On the night of her death, when Effi again sits at the open window, she seems oblivious of the garden below. Her attention is instead directed to the sky, to the stars. Effi’s final thought, “daß es wie ein feines Riesel auf die Platanen niederfiel” (348), again calls to mind Eichendorff’s “Mondnacht”: “Es war, als hätt’ der Himmel die Erde still geküßt . . .” (Eichendorff 276).

In the last scene of Effi Briest, Effi's little gravestone has taken the place of the sundial in the middle of the roundel. With his transformation of the garden into a graveyard Fontane reiterates that the refuge it provided is illusory. The garden's inhabitants must, at some point, leave the safety of its confines and enter the public sphere, the world controlled by the laws and codes of society. If they do not leave voluntarily, sooner or later an Innstetten (or a Balafré, Serge, or Pitt) will arrive to forcibly evict them. But Fontane's conclusion is not just a lament for paradise lost. Throughout the novel, the author has revealed the injustice, even the absurdity, of Prussian gender restrictions, as well as their devastating effect on both female and male characters. With the death of Effi, and, with her, the symbolic death of the garden, Fontane unequivocally condemns the dominant gender discourse of his time and society.

## CHAPTER 6

### CONCLUSION

#### 6.1 “Fremde Pflanzen” in the Gendered Garden

From the beginning, nature has been gendered. Human beings have personified nature as a benevolent mother on the one hand, and as a fickle, destructive vixen on the other. Mountains, trees (and cacti!) have been identified as masculine, while valleys, lakes and delicate flowers have been associated with the female sex. The gendering of nature gained particular prominence in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, when scientists and philosophers sought to identify reason behind all natural phenomena. Human conceptions of gender were projected upon nature, and nature, in turn, was used to legitimize societal gender constructions. These themes, which are integral to the four works analyzed in this dissertation, continue to resonate with the modern reader. In Stifter’s and Fontane’s novels and novellas, the garden – whether as Horatian “*beatus ille*,” garden of love, Eden, or paradise lost – becomes a frame for nature, gender, and gendered nature.

In Stifter’s Brigitta, the garden offers the female protagonist sanctuary from the intolerant judgments of society, the voices that have labeled her “ugly” for her “manly” behavior and appearance. Having contended all her life with the wasteland

of society where she is a “fremde Pflanze,” Brigitta is initially unable to love and value herself. But as Stifter writes, the wild and uncontrollable landscape of the steppes, like Brigitta, is waiting for the proper eye to see its beauty. In this “Wüste” Brigitta’s transformation takes place: from the wasteland of the landscape and of her own soul she creates and becomes a new Eden. Control is only exerted to the extent that it guides and assists this blossoming. In the midst of Brigitta’s “Schöpfung,” gender ceases to be a domineering force: the protagonist is able to be “manly,” “womanly,” or both, as the situation demands. In the end, Brigitta’s former husband Murai embraces this transformation as well. The couple’s reunion marks the creation of a new, open garden, a truly liminal space where man and woman, culture and nature, cultivation and “wildness” exist in perfect balance.

Sadly, none of the other gardens analyzed in this study achieve this harmony. In Nachsommer, Stifter and his creation Risach envision the Asperhof as a utopian alternative to the “Schlechtigkeit” of modern times, but this “perfect” synthesis of art and nature has a darker side. As a result of Risach’s excessive cultivation, the garden becomes a truly “unnatural” sphere, and any elements that threaten its tranquility are mercilessly eradicated. In such an atmosphere the gender flexibility of Brigitta’s garden is unthinkable. Here, nineteenth-century bourgeois gender codes and expectations are firmly ensconced. Like the roses that cover the Rosenhaus, Mathilde’s natural inclinations are repressed: she must bloom at the whim of the gardener. Her daughter Natalie essentially becomes a “Marmorbild,” a petrified version of Schiller’s “schöne Seele.” The strict control exercised over nature and the

rigid gender hierarchies imposed upon the characters in Nachsommer may be an expression of post-1848 conservatism, of the desire to create an arena of safety and stability. As we have seen, however, Stifter himself questions the “perfection” of his “*beatus ille*.” Along with the novel’s female characters, its male protagonist himself is ultimately “trapped” in the garden.

Fontane, too, is aware of the fragility, and ultimate inefficacy, of his garden refuges: his undermining of these idylls is clearly intentional, as is his criticism of the societal and gender restrictions of his time. In Irrungen, Wirungen, the “wasteland” outside of the garden is the city of Berlin, whose inhabitants are constrained by Prussian codes of propriety and duty. A character like Lene Nimptsch, the embodiment of “*Einfachheit, Wahrheit, [und] Natürlichkeit*,” is a weed in such a landscape. Yet in this “*Öde*” Lene not only survives, but flourishes. Unlike Botho, who is unable to harmonize the happiness he experiences in the garden with his more prosaic existence, Lene integrates the supposedly contradictory elements of her life: joy and resignation, past and present, the garden and “reality.” When she gathers a bouquet for her lover at Hankels Ablage, Lene is able to see flowers where Botho – and the rest of his society – see only weeds. Strong and self-assured, she also manages to transcend the societal gender expectations for a woman of the “*vierten Stand*.” Nevertheless, though Lene may endure, the concluding chapters of Irrungen, Wirungen reveal Fontane’s doubts about how long the garden can survive. Chapter 21 contains the novel’s only description of a cultivated landscape following the

lovers' "expulsion from Paradise" at Hankels Ablage. Significantly, this is not a garden, but a cemetery where Botho places flowers on Frau Nimptsch's grave.

By the final scene of Effi Briest, the garden itself has become a graveyard. The "Naturkind" Effi has died after being deprived of "Luft und Licht" by her husband, society, and even her parents. The Edenic safety of the garden at Hohen-Cremmen is revealed as not only illusory, but perverse: by keeping Effi a perpetual child within the garden walls, by not preparing her for life in the real world, her parents have sealed her fate. The provincial and isolated Kessin may parallel the "Wüste" of Brigitta's Hungarian steppes, but for Effi, it is a place of emptiness and loneliness, neither a landscape she can transform, nor one from which she can draw strength to bring about her own transformation. Effi's inevitable surrender to nature (i.e., to the very natural desire for love or, at the very least, some attention) leads to her demise. The cost of breaking with society's codes and rules is death.

## 6.2 Epilogue

The transformation of the garden to graveyard at the conclusion of Effi Briest obviously does not mark the death of the garden as a literary topos. It does, however, signal a growing change in the treatment of the theme. Carl Schorske, in his book Fin de Siècle Vienna, examines the transformation of the garden image in light of art's changing role in the second half of nineteenth-century Austria. Particularly for members of the liberal middle class, he explains, the "Bildungsideal," with art at its

apex, assumed the dimensions of a religion. Like Stifter's *Risach*, Austrian liberals envisioned art as "a vehicle for the perfection of society and the realization of human dignity" (Schorske 299). By 1895 (the year Fontane's *Effi Briest* was published), these utopian hopes for art's redemptive function had been revealed as illusory. Art was incapable of resolving society's ills; the technological advancement Stifter's *Risach* had foreseen in the final chapters of *Der Nachsommer* did not lead to harmony and good will, but to a deepening of the schisms between the diverse classes. In addition, in the last decades of the century increasingly reactionary and anti-liberal forces significantly reduced the political influence and power of the liberal middle class. Under these conditions, the younger members of this class saw only two options for their art: they could either record "gloomy truths," such as the miserable working and living conditions of the social disenfranchised, or provide in their artistic creations "a temple of beauty as a refuge from reality" (Schorske 301). Austrian writers and artists at the turn of the century (such as Stefan George and Hugo von Hofmannsthal) chose the latter alternative; in their works they constructed gardens for a social and artistic elite.

Like George, Hofmannsthal tended in his poetry to employ the garden image as a metaphor for the artist's creative powers. Another example of Hofmannsthal's treatment of the garden is his prologue to Schnitzler's *Anatol*, in which the garden is the setting for the hedonistic pursuit of self-cultivation and beauty for its own sake. Early in his career, however, Hofmannsthal began to realize the problematic nature of



aesthetics without an underlying ethic. The “Garten des Narziss”<sup>1</sup> central to many works of the *fin de siècle* could provide no sustainable utopia, for it, like its namesake, abandoned both companionship and sexuality in its devotion to self-fulfillment. As Hofmannsthal revealed in his Märchen der 672. Nacht, the inhabitant of such a garden was doomed to die, as Narcissus, without ever having lived, loved, or helped another human being.

The recognition of the necessity of leaving the garden and engaging in the outside world, is, of course, not limited to Hofmannsthal’s work: hints of this realization may be found in the works examined in this study. In Irrungen, Wirrungen, for example, Lene decides to move from the Dörres’ “Gärtnerei,” with its memories of lost love and deceptive security, to an apartment in the city where she will be in closer contact with other people and the “real world.” Even Effi, when exiled from the garden, expresses a longing to become involved with others, to join a “Verein” that teaches less fortunate girls the necessary skills to support themselves: “Da giebt es so Vereine, wo junge Mädchen die Wirtschaft lernen oder Nähschulen oder Kindergärtnerinnin. . . . Und in solchen Verein, wo man sich nützlich machen kann, da möchte ich eintreten” (EB 315). Such involvement is impossible for Effi, for as a fallen woman she “kann nicht ’mal armen Kindern eine Nachhülfestunde geben” (315), but her desire is real.

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<sup>1</sup> One of the most famous “garden” works of the *fin de siècle* was Leopold Andrian’s 1895 novel Der Garten der Erkenntnis, whose title page bore the heading “Ego Narcissus.”

The early decades of the twentieth century witnessed an increasing polarization in the literary treatment of the garden. The garden of safety and escape remained the dominant model: this tradition continued in the novels of *Neue Sachlichkeit* (in the resigned retreat to the garden at the conclusion of Kleiner Mann, was nun?, for example) and in Nazi Germany, with the nature and garden poetry of “Inner Emigration.” In the years before the Second World War, however, a new paradigm surfaced: the garden of engagement, whose proponents sought to break down the walls that had for so long separated artist from society, men from women, and the elite from the masses. Examples of such gardens are not limited to the literary sphere: the “garden city movement” represents an historical attempt to create a garden of engagement. The movement had its beginnings in England, where, in an attempt to improve the miserable living conditions of industrial workers, cities were planned with agricultural “green belts” to “provide food and easy access to the countryside for the town dwellers” (Jellicoe 210). In Germany, the most successful garden city, Gartenstadt Hellerau, was erected near Dresden in 1908.

In the thirties, on the eve of the Second World War, writers as diverse as Hermann Broch and Bertolt Brecht offered literary examples of the garden of engagement. The character of Mutter Gisson in Broch’s Verzauberung, for example, describes her “Weltanschauung” as an open garden, embodying a tolerant and intersubjective relationship between human beings and nature. And in a number of

Brecht's poems, such as "Vom Sprengen des Gartens" and "Der Blumengarten," the garden serves as an allegory for an ideal society in which human beings cooperate with nature and each other.

Gender is not irrelevant in the garden of engagement. The previous examination of the gendered gardens of Stifter and Fontane, however, has shed light on an issue that extends far beyond the garden walls, namely the increasing realization in the latter half of the nineteenth century that the separation between "public" and "private" spheres does not exist. That societal ("public") notions of gender permeate the supposedly secure ("private") space of the garden indicates the futility of seeking refuge from the outside world. Questions and conflicts surrounding power, gender, class, and other societal dynamics continue to. Far from offering a safe haven from these problems, the garden instead becomes a metaphor for engagement, as Bertolt Brecht reminds us in his 1943 poem "Vom Sprengen des Gartens":

O Sprengen des Gartens, das Grün zu ermutigen!  
Wässern der durstigen Bäume! Gib mehr als genug und  
Vergiß nicht das Strauchwerk, auch  
Das beerenlose nicht, das ermattete  
Geizige. Und übersieh mir nicht  
Zwischen den Blumen das Unkraut, das auch  
Durst hat. Noch gieße nur  
Den frischen Rasen oder den versengten nur  
Auch den nackten Boden erfrische du. (Brecht 89)

The verb "sprengen" has a dual meaning. Along with its more obvious translation in this context as "to water," "sprengen" can also mean "to blow up," "to blast,"

**“to burst,” or “to break.” The metaphoric garden walls that separate people from nature and each other must be destroyed. Every person must be nurtured, even the “Unkraut,” the “fremde Pflanzen.”**

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