

**The depiction of the widow in nineteenth- and early twentieth-century  
German literature**

**Short Abstract**

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This thesis examines the depiction of the widow by men and women in novels and short stories written between 1842 and 1913. The representation of the widow is analysed in the context of dominant views about widowhood at the time, such as those expressed in the writings of politician and statesman, Theodor Gottlieb von Hippel (1741-1796). These ideas are set out in chapter I. The first chapter also examines the social reality of widowhood in nineteenth-century Germany.

In the first chapter of the thesis Hippel argues that real widows are superfluous beings and men's second-hand goods, but they were also perceived by theologians and moralists of the time as a threat due to their ungoverned lust.<sup>1</sup> Many nineteenth-century widows internalised the idea espoused by Hippel and felt alienated and invisible. In German fiction, however, male writers in the works discussed repeat the latter theory that once deprived of their husbands widows are sexually voracious. In the works written by men, the figure of the widow is generally presented as a dangerous sexual predator. Female authors, however, highlight the invisibility of the widow and portray her as a figure alienated from society and her family.

Henriette Hanke is the first author to be examined in chapter II. Her novel, *Die Wittwen* (1842), portrays five widows, who range from the self-sacrificing Lucie von Gardemer, to the liberated and financially independent Frau von Kleist. Hanke depicts widowhood as a process

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<sup>1</sup> See Olwen H. Hufton, *The Prospect before Her: A History of Women in Western Europe* (New York: Random House, 1996), p. 222.

of education for her two key widows, Lucie von Gardemer and Franzisca Weihland. They must learn to love the right man, and at the end of the story they revert from widowhood to marriage. Fourteen years later, the first version of Gottfried Keller's *Der grüne Heinrich* (1854/55) was published. Chapter III explores the way in which Keller portrays the threatening sexuality of his widow Judith and emphasises her power to destabilise the narrator. Chapters IV and V also focus on the widow as a predatory and dangerous figure, as exemplified in works by Paul Heyse, Eduard Grisebach, C. F. Meyer and Arthur Schnitzler. In chapter VI Hedwig Dohm presents a contrast to the dominant representations of widowhood in her story *Werde, die du bist!* (1896). Dohm challenges prevalent stereotypes of the widow, though with limited success. Gabriele Reuter, the final author to be discussed, reverts to male stereotypes of the widow in her stories. This chapter thus shows that women writers are not always more positive, or original, in their representation of the widow.

The thesis as a whole demonstrates the overwhelmingly negative portrayal of the widow in nineteenth-century German fiction. She is a figure to be at best re-educated and at worst to be feared and guarded against. She is a cynical man-trap in Heyse's and Grisebach's stories, a murderess in Meyer's story, and an incestuous mother in Schnitzler's texts. Hanke and Dohm, themselves both widows, show from the inside what it is like to be a widow in such a society.

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**Long Abstract**

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This thesis analyses the fiction of eight nineteenth- and early-twentieth- century authors and shows the ways in which they portray the German widow. A broad range of writers is examined, both male and female, both well-known, as well as those who have received very little attention from scholars and critics. In its examination of works by a diverse mixture of authors, this thesis offers a balanced and novel approach to the representation of this, largely neglected, literary figure.

In 1980 the first comprehensive study of the depiction of the widow in German literature was published. Irmgard Taylor's *Das Bild der Witwe in der deutschen Literatur* offers an overview of widows in literature from the twelfth century to her own day in just over one hundred pages. Her study does not critically analyse the representation of the widow, however, nor does it differentiate between male and female portrayals. In 2006 Susanne Mürbeth's master's thesis analyses the depiction of the asexual widow in Arthur Schnitzler's *Frau Berta Garlan* and *Frau Beate und ihr Sohn*.<sup>1</sup> These recent studies are few in number, so there is still much work to be done. This thesis seeks to fill this gap and go beyond these two studies. First, two chapters – chapter II and chapter VI - examine works by widows themselves. The representation of widowhood by writers who are themselves widows is an aspect which has not been investigated in previous studies. Henriette Hanke and Hedwig Dohm were both widowed when their works were published, and, to some extent, their works

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<sup>1</sup> Susanne Mürbeth, 'Die "asexuelle Witwe" im Identitätskonflikt am Beispiel von Arthur Schnitzlers "Frau Berta Garlan" und "Frau Beate und ihr Sohn"' (unpublished master's thesis, University of Waterloo, Waterloo, 2006).

## II

present a contrast to the other novels and stories discussed. Second, this thesis shows how the depiction of the widow is influenced by the dominant ideas and theories pertaining to women and marriage at the time. Third, the thesis investigates whether, and if so how, the representation of the widow shifts throughout the course of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Again, this is not attempted in the above mentioned studies on widows in German fiction.

Although there are studies of widowhood as a social reality, these tend to focus on the early modern period. The nineteenth century is thus under-researched, both with regard to works on real widows and to literary widows. Ursula Machtemes's recent study of bourgeois widows in nineteenth-century Germany, published in 2001, is the only comprehensive study of the widow's legal and social position in that century.<sup>2</sup> This thesis also examines some authors and works which have yet to receive sustained critical, or indeed any, analysis. Henriette Hanke (1785-1862) was a popular prose author of her time, yet she is completely unknown to twenty-first-century readers. Her novel *Die Wittwen* (1842) is an important addition to this thesis. Hanke records the thoughts and feelings of her widows sympathetically and in minute detail and offers the reader a great deal of insight into their mindsets. Her novel introduces important themes, such as the power relations between the sexes, which run throughout the works the thesis considers. Hanke, although a conventional writer, highlights the dominant perceptions of marriage and widowhood which damage her heroines and portrays how they gradually come to free themselves from the destructive ideas which they have so thoroughly internalised. As such, Hanke shows a sensitive awareness of societal relations of the day and is deserving of scholarly attention.

Paul Heyse (1830-1914) won the Nobel Prize for literature in 1910, but has since been largely forgotten. To date, his novella *Die Witwe von Pisa* (1865) has received only scant

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<sup>2</sup> Ursula Machtemes, *Leben zwischen Trauer und Pathos: Bildungsbürgerliche Witwen im 19. Jahrhundert* (Osnabrück: Rasch, 2001).

### III

attention. His comic story, however, adds a new perspective to the analysis of the representation of the widow, for in his work it is not the widow who is unveiled as untrustworthy or deceptive, as is normally the case in nineteenth-century German fiction, but the narrator castigates her. However, she is not redeemed either. Heyse's widow is instead portrayed as a foolish and ridiculous figure. Thus, if the widow is not dangerous and to be feared, then, the only alternative in fiction, it seems, is that she is stupid. Portrayals of widows as both threatening and foolish, which first surface in Heyse's story, continue throughout the works the thesis considers and are particularly pronounced in works of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

In chapter I, the social, economic and legal situation of real-life nineteenth-century bourgeois widows is discussed. The prevailing ideas about widows at the time are that they are incomplete, superfluous beings, especially if they are older and/or childless. Moreover, there is a discrepancy between the way in which widows are viewed and the reality of their widowhood. While nineteenth-century widows were in fact more autonomous as widows than as wives, they were encouraged by society, and it was also a legal requirement, that they mourn, and be seen to be mourning, their late husband. Both the law and social convention stressed a widow's link with her deceased husband. Widowers, on the other hand, were encouraged by the same influential thinkers and by society to remarry as soon as possible.

Although the ideas set out by society at the time may appear repressive to the modern reader, they were, in fact, internalised by the majority of widows and widowers in the nineteenth century. Most widows lived for their husband's memory, and most widowers did remarry within a few months. However, a minority of widows began to assert themselves in widowhood and pursue their own interests. By doing so, they gained independence and, on occasion, started to criticise their marriages and resent the subordinate position which they had adopted as wives.

One of the questions this thesis asks is whether the fictional representation of widowhood mirrors the social reality. Henriette Hanke, the author discussed in the second chapter, depicts marriage as a prison-like institution which stifles female creativity and development. Hedwig Dohm, whose work is analysed in chapter VI, also writes about the woman's sense of alienation and estrangement within marriage. Her heroine is trapped in marriage and lives solely for her paralysed husband. Her widowhood comes too late to set her free. These writers thus examine the theme of widowhood partly to criticise the institution of marriage. In a similar way to real widows, therefore, Hanke and Dohm highlight the doubtful benefits of marriage for women.

A second question which this thesis addresses is whether women writers are influenced by, reproduce, or modify the patriarchal norms set out in chapter I. From approximately 1780 onwards, women were perceived as self-sacrificing, weak and passive. One of Hanke's widows embodies this ideal. Her Lucie von Gardemer is portrayed as an angelic victim. Her second widow, Franzisca Weihland, on the other hand, is depicted as angry and aggressive until she finds love with the right man. Hanke's novel is a conventional romantic story. There are moments in which the patriarchal norm is questioned – marriage, for instance, comes in for much criticism - but it is clear that Hanke does not advocate women remaining single but rather marriage to the right man. Most stories discussed in this thesis do in fact reproduce norms and stereotypes about the widow. As such, the same discourses pertaining to widows are mobilised again and again throughout the period, and these become particularly misogynistic at the turn of the nineteenth century into the twentieth.

In works by male writers written around the middle of the century, the focus is on the widow's inherent ambiguity, and her threatening sexuality is also prominent. In Gottfried Keller's *Der grüne Heinrich* (version one, 1854/55, version 2, 1879/80), both of his widows, Heinrich's controlling mother and the seductive Judith, are ambivalent figures. Paul Heyse's

*Die Witwe von Pisa* (1865), one of the subjects of chapter IV, also portrays the widow as a figure who defies classification. The reader laughs at the male narrator in his desperate attempts to understand Lucrezia, the heroine of the story, but also laughs at her. Eduard Grisebach's story in the same chapter, *Die treulose Witwe* (1873), focuses on the widow's hypocrisy and the danger she represents to men. His rendition of the faithless widow in literature is particularly misogynistic, and as such it paves the way for late nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century fiction.

At the turn of the century with the emergence of psychoanalysis and the radicalisation of the women's movement in Germany, authors depict the widow as particularly transgressive, and so they become more punitive in their treatment of her. In Meyer's *Die Richterin* (1885) the widow is a power-crazed monster with a perverse fascination with death, while in Schnitzler's two short stories the widows are sexually voracious figures. Though Meyer's heroine does not commit incest, as do Schnitzler's widows, the theme of incest is present in the relationship between half-brother and half-sister. In all these works, the widow has a special connection to death.

Although Schnitzler does not present his widows favourably, there is a socially critical dimension to his works in that he highlights the sexual double standard in bourgeois Vienna. This socially critical dimension is also present to a much greater degree in Dohm's *Werde, die du bist!* (1894). Dohm launches a direct attack upon society in her novella, which echoes the social critique in her journalism. The final chapter shows how she goes some way to modify patriarchal norms so readily absorbed by other writers. Dohm's story is told from the inside, her heroine is given a voice and she articulates, with tremendous insight, the fate of an older widow who no longer has a place in society and lacks an individual identity. The heroine of the novella dies at the end. As such, Dohm's ending is in keeping with the

majority of works discussed. The heroine is unable to escape the mortal fate which is so common for widows in German fiction of the nineteenth century.

If widows do not die at the end, their sexuality and/or social standing undergoes a death. The message that widows are useless, highlighted in chapter I, is reinforced at the end of the thesis in two short stories by Gabriele Reuter: a widow has no place in society, she is entirely purposeless. Gabriele Reuter portrays her widows becoming progressively more alienated from society. They undergo a social death and present an antithesis to the figure of the merry widow, a common stereotype of the widow in our own day, but one which scarcely features in nineteenth-century German fiction.

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## The depiction of the widow in nineteenth- and early twentieth-century German literature

### Introduction

The figure of the widow has long been overlooked in investigations of the representation of women in nineteenth-century German fiction. Unlike the representation of mothers, daughters, sisters and wives, the ambivalent figure of the widow has yet to receive sustained attention in German literary criticism.<sup>1</sup> This thesis aims to go beyond the prevalent cultural clichés, which portray the widow either as a site of female empowerment or as a woman who has been denied a specific identity outside the function of memorialising her late husband, and highlight the multiple and often contradictory meanings ascribed to her. The representation of widows on the stage is a much more popular area of examination, but the analysis of dramas and plays does not form a part of this study.<sup>2</sup> This thesis instead examines a range of well-known and less-well-known novels and short stories by male and female authors and asks whether the depiction of the widow changes throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth century and if so, how and why.

The first chapter examines the social reality of widowhood. It also lays bare cultural and intellectual assumptions about widows, as expressed predominantly by Theodor Gottlieb von Hippel. At the turn of the nineteenth into the twentieth century, taboos surrounding the subject of human sexuality in the mid nineteenth century are lifted and it becomes the focus of scientific investigation and literary representation. Therefore Freud's views on female sexuality, repression and unconscious drives are discussed. Around the same time that Freud's theories on sexuality and psychoanalysis were being published, the German women's

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<sup>1</sup> Irmgard Taylor's is the only account of widows in German literature. Irmgard Taylor, *Das Bild der Witwe in der deutschen Literatur* (Darmstadt: Gesellschaft Hessischer Literaturfreunde, 1980).

<sup>2</sup> See Susanne Kord, *Ein Blick hinter die Kulissen: deutschsprachige Dramatikerinnen im 18. und 19. Jahrhundert* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1992).

movement was becoming more radical, as Richard Evans shows.<sup>3</sup> Coinciding with the radicalisation of the women's movement and increasing freedom for women in society, stories written by men at the turn of the century and in the twentieth century become more punitive in their treatment of widows. As women become demanding and vociferous, men attempt to place them once again in a subordinate position. This thesis, which offers a chronological representation of widowhood, demonstrates how, when women become unwilling to conform and start to question their role in society, there emerges, in Bram Dijkstra's words, a 'war on women'.<sup>4</sup>

The pervasive nature of turn-of-the-century misogyny and male writers' consequent portrayal of the widow as an all-destroying, ravaging animal, contrasts with the sympathetic depiction of the widow in Henriette Hanke's romantic novel *Die Wittwen*, published in 1842 and the subject of chapter II. As Anna Richards shows, conventional love stories which were traditional in content were typical of women writers of this period.<sup>5</sup> Indeed, Hanke's novel focuses on the subjective experiences of her widowed protagonists, highlights their unhappy marriages to the wrong men and trusts that they will find true love at the end. It serves to instruct other women and the patriarchal system remains largely unchallenged.

*Die Wittwen* is not without its critical and innovative moments, however, most clearly shown in the narrator's depiction of the power games and power struggles between the widow Franzisca Weihland and her brother-in-law. This is a theme which runs throughout the thesis and which appears to be characteristic of the widow's relations with her family, highlighting the need for the potentially autonomous woman to be controlled. From the

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<sup>3</sup> Richard J. Evans, *The Feminist Movement in Germany 1894-1933* (London and Beverly Hills: Sage, 1976), p. 44.

<sup>4</sup> Bram Dijkstra, *Idols of perversity: fantasies of feminine evil in fin-de-siècle culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), p. vii.

<sup>5</sup> Anna Richards, *The Wasting Heroine in German Fiction by Women 1770-1914* (Oxford: Clarendon, 2004), p. 6.

middle of the century onwards, power struggles take place predominantly between the widowed mother and child, as is the case in chapter III in Gottfried Keller's *Der grüne Heinrich*, chapter V in C.F. Meyer's *Die Richterin*, and chapter VI in Gabriele Reuter's *Clementine Holm*. In their depictions of power games and power struggles, authors show that the widow's carefully constructed façade, her exterior of independence and control, is gradually torn away by her only child, or, at times, by other men in the story, as is shown in Paul Heyse's and Eduard Grisebach's works.

Chapter III examines Keller's *Der grüne Heinrich*, first published in 1854/55 and then reworked and published in a second version in 1879/80. The novel focuses on the threatening power of female sexuality in the presentation of the young, beautiful and independent widow Judith. A counter-figure to the seductive and self-sufficient Judith is Frau Lee, Heinrich's widowed mother, who lives solely for her son. Chapter III focuses on the first version of the story, although some reference is also made to the second. Keller's story is of particular interest as it shows how men create an image of a destructive and powerful woman and then become fearful of her. In this respect it shares similarities with Heyse's story published eleven years later and discussed in the following chapter.

Chapter IV analyses the motif of the faithless widow in German literature. Eduard Grisebach, who vividly portrays how a widow who takes on a new mate is evil through and through, adapts a famous Chinese tale in his story *Die treulose Witwe* published in 1873 and gives it a particularly misogynistic spin. The theme of power relations between the sexes reaches a peak in this work, in which widowhood is portrayed as an assault on the gender hierarchy. Paul Heyse writes about a cold-blooded man-eating widow in his short story *Die Witwe von Pisa*, published in 1865, or so the reader is led to believe from the brief framework passage which opens the story. Yet it is the male architect and narrator of the story who is

unveiled as inherently deceitful. Heyse's story, although humorous, does not redeem the character of the widow.

In chapter V, examples of Meyer's and Schnitzler's 'war on women' are analysed. Meyer's *Die Richterin*, published in 1885, portrays the widow as a death-dealing power-crazed woman. Schnitzler's *Frau Beate und ihr Sohn*, published in 1913, paints a picture of an incestuous widow who also functions as a death bringer. This chapter also examines another short story by Schnitzler, which continues with a portrayal of an incestuous widow, *Frau Berta Garlan*, published in 1901. In his study *The Gender of Death*, Karl S. Guthke points out that there is 'an ascendancy of female death images' in the course of the nineteenth century.<sup>6</sup> Moreover, he argues that at the turn of the century representations that portray death as a woman typically show the angel of death and the seductress.<sup>7</sup> Beate, the first of Schnitzler's widowed protagonists, is depicted as a seductress who lures her son into death. As the century draws to an end, Guthke argues, 'the fascination of the fusion of love and death, and women and death, in art and literature' increases.<sup>8</sup> Both Meyer and Schnitzler highlight the widow's special relationship to death. Meyer's widow is even aligned with the dead. Whereas earlier nineteenth-century works portray the widow as a liminal figure between life and death, towards the end of the century and at the start of the twentieth century, the widow is often depicted as closer to the realm of the dead or as an embodiment of the living dead.

The stories discussed in chapter V continue with a presentation of the faithless widow, but with a new element: these widows are depicted as liars. Woman's 'instability' and 'variability', a facet of the female character highlighted in chapter IV, is reinforced. Widows

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<sup>6</sup> Karl S. Guthke, *The gender of death: a cultural history in art and literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 173.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 186.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 188.

are accordingly presented as disloyal and hypocritical. This is particularly prominent in Schnitzler's two stories, though Meyer also depicts an untrustworthy widow who lies to her own family. The idea that women have a bad memory and are inherent liars, which Schopenhauer argues, is put forward in chapter I of the thesis and is another theme of this chapter which Schnitzler treats. Owing to their inherently deceitful natures and inability to remember correctly, his widows are presented as just as disloyal and unchaste as the widows of chapter IV.

The final chapter of the thesis shifts the focus from the male fear of powerful and independent women and their consequent depiction as monsters of raging sexuality and examines widowhood from a female perspective. In her story *Werde, die du bist!*, published in 1894, Hedwig Dohm writes a moving account of an older widow's attempt to find her identity in widowhood. Dohm's story is unique as it examines the theme of female ageing and depicts a widow going through the menopause. She shows how women internalise contradictory and self-destructive values which stunt them as human beings. Her story questions the prevalent sexual double standard, women's role in society, and these notions of female sexuality which Meyer and Schnitzler accept.

The thesis asks whether female writers understand the figure of the widow differently from male authors and whether her situation and feelings are described in more detail by women. This thesis will also ask whether women challenge contemporary notions, or if they accept, and, at times, internalise them. Gabriele Reuter's short story *Clementine Holm*, published in 1902, unveils the active and autonomous widow as an egotistical figure of perverse sexuality. Her six-page story *Five O'clock*, also published in 1902, presents an antithesis to the figure of the merry widow in a heroine who finds her new-found freedom a burden. The conclusion the thesis presents is, therefore, that women writers often do not, or are unable to, escape the

dominant stereotypes pertaining to women and widows frequently employed by influential male thinkers and male authors.

## **Chapter I**

### **‘Eine halb verwischte Schilderei, ein umgewandtes Kleid, ein aufgewärmtes Essen.’<sup>1</sup> Popular perceptions of widowhood and the social reality in nineteenth-century Germany**

#### **Introduction**

For women in the period under consideration, widowhood was a life-phase of conflicting possibilities, replete with the contradictions that came with the loss of a patriarch. While it could offer potential freedom and increased social power for women, widowhood could also signal social uncertainty, and often isolation. Throughout this period, associations, assumptions and theories surrounding the term ‘widow’ often portray the widow as a figure of contrasting extremes.<sup>2</sup> This thesis, which focuses on the *representation* of the widow, seeks in part to highlight and account for these extremes. Why, for example, is the widow often portrayed as either an extremely vulnerable or a particularly empowered being, either as a dangerous seductress or a grieving, helpless woman, but rarely as anything in between?

#### **Research on the German widow: fiction and society**

##### **a. Widows in fiction**

Although there are quite a few studies dedicated to the portrayal of wives, mothers and daughters,<sup>3</sup> the depiction of the widow has received very little scholarly attention. Ursula Machtemes examines the widowhood of twelve bourgeois women in a study

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<sup>1</sup> Theodor Gottlieb von Hippel, *Über die Ehe. Vierte viel vermehrte Auflage* [1793] (Berlin: Berl, 1793), p. 457-458.

<sup>2</sup> Marjo Buitelaar, ‘Widows’ Worlds: Representations, Realities’, in *Between poverty and the pyre: moments in the history of widowhood*, ed. by Jan Bremmer and Lourens van den Bosch (London: Routledge, 1995), pp 1-18 (p. 6).

<sup>3</sup> See *Mütter-Töchter Frauen. Weiblichkeit in der Literatur*, ed. by Helga Kraft and Elke Liebs (Stuttgart: J.B. Metzler), 1993. Renate Möhrmann, *Verklärt, verkitscht, vergessen. Die Mutter als ästhetischer Figur* (Stuttgart: J.B. Metzler, 1996).

published in 2001.<sup>4</sup> She provides a thorough analysis of the dominant views regarding widowhood during this period and as such her study is a valuable starting point. The only wide-ranging study of the widow in German literature is a slim volume by Irmgard Taylor which investigates the portrayal of German widows from the Middle Ages to the present.<sup>5</sup> Although the title appears promising, Taylor does not provide an in-depth examination of the works she discusses, but rather a catalogue which documents all the stories and novels in which widows simply feature without in-depth analysis. There is also a recent Masters thesis by Susanne Mürbeth which examines the depiction of what the author calls the ‘asexual widow’ in two of Arthur Schnitzler’s short stories.<sup>6</sup> Mürbeth relies to a certain extent on the gender and power theories of Michel Foucault and Judith Butler in her discussion of the widow. Finally, Michaela Perlmann’s study, also on Schnitzler, devotes a few pages to the image of the widow in *Frau Berta Garlan* but does not mention *Frau Beate und ihr Sohn*. To date, these are the only studies which focus specifically on the figure of the widow in nineteenth-century Germany. Although it does not focus on widowhood in German literature, culture and society, the essay collection edited by Jan Bremmer and Lourens P van den Bosch, *Between poverty and the pyre: moments in the history of widowhood*, provides a thorough representation of widowhood throughout various cultures and ages, thus providing a context for the German material.

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<sup>4</sup> Ursula Machtemes, *Leben zwischen Trauer und Pathos: Bildungsbürgerliche Witwen im 19. Jahrhundert* (Osnabrück: Rasch, 2001).

<sup>5</sup> Irmgard Taylor, *Das Bild der Witwe in der deutschen Literatur* (Darmstadt: Gesellschaft Hessischer Literaturfreunde, 1980).

<sup>6</sup> Susanne Mürbeth, ‘Die “asexuelle Witwe” im Identitätskonflikt am Beispiel von Arthur Schnitzlers “Frau Berta Garlan” und “Frau Beate und ihr Sohn” (unpublished master’s thesis, University of Waterloo, Waterloo, 2006).

## **b. Real widows**

The widow in the early modern period, by contrast, is a much more popular subject for investigation. Many of these works focus on the social history of real widows. Numerous studies have been devoted to the widow in her historical and social reality.<sup>7</sup> These works cover British and French history, literature and society as well as Germany.

Other important studies about real widows in Germany include works which highlight the widow's financial situation. Eve Rosenhaft's work, for instance, explores widows' funds in eighteenth-century Germany.<sup>8</sup> Hannah Würth has written a recent doctorate on 'The provision for widows of pastors in the Duchy of Mecklenburg-Schwerin from the age of the Reformation until the 20<sup>th</sup> century'.<sup>9</sup> This dearth of scholarship on the representation of widows stands in direct contrast to the frequency with which they are depicted.

### **Real-life widows in nineteenth-century Germany**

In order to analyse the representation of widows and widowhood by male and female authors, it is important first to examine the social and historical situation of nineteenth-century German widows. As all of the fictional widows in my thesis belong to the middle class, it is appropriate to refer to Machtemes's study as it

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<sup>7</sup> See for example *Widowhood in medieval and early modern Europe*, ed. by Sandra Cavallo and Lyndal Warner (Harlow: Longman, 1999). *Widowhood and visual culture in early modern Europe*, ed. by Allison Levy (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003). Britta-Julia Kruse, *Kulturgeschichte eines Standes in Spätmittelalter und früher Neuzeit* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2007). Doreen Fischer, *Witwe als weiblicher Lebensentwurf in deutschen Texten des 13. bis 16. Jahrhunderts* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2002).

<sup>8</sup> Eve Rosenhaft, 'Did Women Invent Life Insurance? Widows and the Demand for Financial Services in Eighteenth-Century Germany' in *Family Welfare: gender, property and inheritance since the Seventeenth Century*, ed. by David R. Green and Alastair Owens (Westport: Praeger, 2004), pp. 163-195.

<sup>9</sup> Hannah Würth, 'Pfarrwitwenversorgung im Herzogtum Mecklenburg-Schwerin von der Reformation bis zum 20. Jahrhundert' (unpublished doctoral thesis, Georg-August-University, Göttingen, 2004).

explores the reality of bourgeois widows, based on diary extracts and letters. These widows were wives of learned men, theologians, doctors, lawyers and writers, who were widowed in the second half of the nineteenth century and who lived on after the death of their husbands for approximately a further twenty-five to thirty years. She examines both widows with children and childless widows to see whether there were differences in the ways in which society perceived them.

Machtemes emphasises the ‘Unsterblichkeit der geistigen Verbindung’ with the dead husband as a defining trait of nineteenth-century bourgeois widows.<sup>10</sup> In order to overcome the loss of a husband, widows were encouraged to devote the rest of their lives to commemorating him. The deceased husband was supposed to become an object of romantic longing and this cultivation of the husband’s memory is one of the reasons why many widows ruled out the option of a second marriage. For these widows, ‘blieb nur der Rückzug in die Vergangenheit, um den Witwenalltag zu überstehen’.<sup>11</sup> Such widows lived in the past, structuring the present and their futures around the memory of their late husbands. The letters of condolence they received stressed that this was their duty. These, Machtemes argues, served not only to help widows and advise them on their future, but also to control and discipline them. She highlights how consolers emphasised the loss of the widow’s identity within society. It was often understood that following the death of her husband a widow would lose her purpose entirely. As one consoler wrote to a recent widow: ‘Nicht nur ist Ihnen der Gegenstand der Liebe, der Bewunderung des Lebens entnommen, sondern auch das tägliche Brot des Geistes, die beständige Stärkung des Gemüts, die Teilnahme

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<sup>10</sup> Machtemes, *Leben zwischen Trauer und Pathos*, p. 92.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 97.

aller Empfindungen'.<sup>12</sup> In contrast to this, the death of a wife was not experienced by her widower as an existential crisis in the same way. Yet this should not lead one to believe that widows, even if devoted to their husband's memory, were entirely passive beings. It is somewhat paradoxical that it was precisely this absorption with the achievements and work of the late husband together with an adoption of his behaviour and manners which gave the widows a definite sense of purpose and self-importance.

There is no doubt that following the death of a husband and his consequent loss widows were left in the difficult situation of how to fill, structure and re-organise their daily lives, which previously had focused on him. Victorie Gervinus, who was widowed at the age of fifty-four and remained so for twenty-two years, was advised by female consolors to use her late husband's 'Nachlaßarbeit', his 'geistiger Schatz zum Lebensinhalt'.<sup>13</sup> Like with many other widows, 'die stillen heimlichen Freuden der Arbeit' were recommended to her as a means to overcome the difficulty of the present.<sup>14</sup> This tendency to kill time by immersing oneself in details of a late husband's life was not restricted to Victorie Gervinus alone. Machtemes points out that bourgeois widows, even those who worked during marriage and/or followed their own interests, such as Berta Gutzkow and Ida Freiligrath, still chose to devote their lives to keeping the memories of their late husbands alive. The pianist Clara Schumann is a further example of a widow who pursued her independent talent throughout marriage but became the servant of her late husband's memory. This phase of devotion to the husband's memory belongs to the first stages of widowhood and is perceived as a consoling activity lasting approximately a year.

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid., p. 91.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., p. 121.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., p. 121.

This cultivation of the dead served a dual function; it made widows feel important, at times even superior to others, and it brought them closer to their loved ones. Yet widows did not only begin to *feel* important, they acted on this new-found sense of purpose when they started the task of editing and publishing their late husbands' works. Moreover, they did not shy away from conflict and demonstrated a degree of assertiveness and confidence in their dealings: 'sie verteidigten ihr Monopol, die einzige authentische Interpretin seiner Persönlichkeit und seiner hinterbliebenen Werke zu sein und reagierten auf Fremdveröffentlichungen zurückhaltend bis gereizt'.<sup>15</sup> Filling a husband's occupational position did much to enhance the public stature of widows. In assuming the position of their late husbands, many nineteenth-century widows succeeded in making a definite impact on society. The very act of being a widow, therefore, and the insistence on taking responsibility for a husband's works brought about a shift of power, where, for the first time, the widow was in a position to interpret her late husband's intentions and ideas, indeed to interpret the man himself to the outside world.

The roles are reversed and widows have a clear sense of authority and control, something that was the privilege of their husbands within marriage. In a nutshell, the widow, a woman who is no longer under the control of her husband, is potentially in control of him. Indeed, some nineteenth-century German widows did become more emancipated as a result of their widowhood as they were released from their role as a subordinate wife. In her study, Machtemes draws attention to the large age gap between men and women within marriage as a defining feature of nineteenth-century marriage and she argues that this serves to account for the teacher/pupil relationship

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<sup>15</sup> Machtemes, *Leben zwischen Trauer und Pathos*, p. 159.

commonly found in marriage. Men of the time had a preference for child brides. Paul de Lagarde, for example, only allowed his wife Anna to read selected pieces of literature chosen by him.<sup>16</sup> This was typical of many marriages, in which the wife took a subordinate position to her husband and had her education dictated to her by him. Moreover, the historian Gervinus, whom Machtemes cites in her study, did not perceive wives as ‘ernstzunehmende Gesprächspartnerinnen’, instead preferring the company of a ‘charmante Plauderin’, and it was into this role that he wanted to mould his wife.<sup>17</sup> Wives were supposed to give emotional support to their husbands. Indeed, as Ute Frevert points out, the wife’s first priority was to make her husband happy.<sup>18</sup> In retrospect many widows found their role as ‘pupils’ within marriage unsatisfactory and one-dimensional, and they took steps to rectify this in widowhood.

Of interest is that widows first began to express their ambivalent feelings towards their marriage after it had ended. Berta Gutzkow, who was a widow from 1878 to 1909, emphasised her husband’s difficult personality in a letter to Katharina Plantenius:

Gottlob tröstete mich das Bewußtsein, nach besten Kräften und gewissenhafter Pflichterfüllung das meinige, jeder Art versucht zu haben, dem armen Märtyrer sein Loos zu erleichtern. Er gehörte zu den Menschen, die zu hohe Begriffe von Glück haben und es darum nie erreichen können. Umso beseeligender ist mir deshalb die Erinnerung an einzelne glückliche Momente.<sup>19</sup>

Berta portrays herself as extremely supportive of her husband and happy to obtain mere snapshots of happiness, ‘einzelne glückliche Momente’. Some widows, however, criticised their deceased husband’s works and/or personalities. Anna de

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid., p. 211.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., p. 214.

<sup>18</sup> Ute Frevert, *Women in German History. From Bourgeois Emancipation to Sexual Liberation* (New York: Berg, 1989), p. 17.

<sup>19</sup> Machtemes, *Leben zwischen Trauer und Pathos*, p. 215.

Lagarde, a widow from 1891 to 1918, made her feelings clear about her late husband's 500 verses when she said: '[D]iese zu lesen hat Niemand Geduld'.<sup>20</sup> As she grew older, Anna found that she no longer necessarily shared her husband's beliefs and convictions, and her later letters became more critical of him.

Another way in which some widows emancipated themselves was by following their own interests. Marie Luise Gothein published a two-volume study entitled *Geschichte der Gartenkunst* in 1926.<sup>21</sup> Other widows gained autonomy by either modifying or acting against their deceased husband's wishes, as did Victorie Gervinus:

Es war der Wunsch meines verstorbenen Mannes, daß die nun Deutsche Ausgabe der Werke, Georg Friedrich Händels, nach unserem Tode, der hiesigen Universitätsbibliothek hinterlassen werde; ich glaube jedoch in seinem Sinne zu handeln, wenn ich dieselbe schon jetzt dem Orte ihrer Bestimmung übergebe.<sup>22</sup>

Although widows *could* exert control in their lives, this was more often the exception than the rule. At the conclusion of her study Machtemes reiterates her view that her widows were first and foremost defined by their late husband's achievements and that as such the husband's death constituted a death of the 'weibliches Selbst'.<sup>23</sup> These widows followed the expectations and guidance set out by society as to how a widow should behave and they emphasised their emotional and spiritual connection with their late husbands. It is thus pertinent at this stage to examine attitudes towards widowhood in nineteenth-century Germany.

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<sup>20</sup> Machtemes, *Leben zwischen Trauer und Pathos*, p. 223.

<sup>21</sup> Marie Luise Gothein, *Geschichte der Gartenkunst* (Jena: E. Diederichs, 1926).

<sup>22</sup> Machtemes, *Leben zwischen Trauer und Pathos*, p. 220.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 249.

### **Widowhood and remarriage**

There is no shortage of information on the numerical predominance of widows over widowers in various cultures and societies. Since the Middle Ages this has been the case.<sup>24</sup> Even in seventeenth-century Germany, Olwen H. Hufton points out that eighty percent of all widowed men found new wives within a year of widowhood, but only forty percent of widows found new husbands.<sup>25</sup> In comparison to the situation in Italy, however, these figures for female remarriage appear high, as in eighteenth-century Tuscany remarriage was almost an entirely male affair.<sup>26</sup> A study of widows in nineteenth-century Nova Scotia unveils similar results. In 1871 Nova Scotia had 10,636 widows compared with 4,102 widowers.<sup>27</sup> Furthermore, there were more widows in each age group than there were widowers, except in the 91-101 age group.<sup>28</sup>

There are two major factors which affected the number of widows versus widowers. First, in nineteenth-century Germany mortality rates for men were higher than those for women. Second, remarriage among men was more frequent than it was among women. Between 1871 and 1910, the population in Germany increased from forty-one to approximately sixty-five million. Although the rates of single and married persons remained more or less constant, the rate of female widowhood increased from half a percent to 3:1 percent. Only when both sexes reached their sixties did the differences even out with similar numbers of widows to widowers. Thus widowhood for women was not age-related.

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<sup>24</sup> Machtemes, *Leben zwischen Trauer und Pathos*, p. 25-31.

<sup>25</sup> Olwen H. Hufton, *The Prospect before Her: A History of Women in Western Europe* (New York: Random House, 1996), p. 219.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 220.

<sup>27</sup> Katie Pickles, 'Locating widows in mid-nineteenth-century Pictou County, Nova Scotia', *Journal of Historic Geography*, 30:1 (2004), 70-86 (p. 73).

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 74.

Many more widowers than widows remarried. In 1910 the discrepancy between remarrying widows and remarrying widowers was at its highest in the age bracket between thirty and forty, with thirty-four percent of widowers remarrying compared to only seven percent of widows. The most common age for widows to remarry was up until the age of thirty, with twelve percent marrying in this age group. Remarriage was thus not as common an occurrence for German widows as it was for Nova Scotian widows.

The reason for this is that German widows were not encouraged to remarry. In fact, as has been previously shown, German widows needed to demonstrate to society that they venerated their husband's memory by remaining single, while social pressures impelled a man towards speedy remarriage, because he needed a wife to help raise his children. Another factor preventing widows from remarriage was the restrictive marriage system, which will be discussed later in this chapter. The more a woman adhered to the typical and passive role of housewife and mother within marriage, the less likely she was to remarry. As one of Henriette Hanke's fictional widows argues:

Meine Freiheit war theuer genug erkaufft, als das ich sie nicht zu schätzen wissen sollte. So kann ich überhaupt nicht begreifen, wie Frauen zu einer zweiten Heirath entschließen mögen, es wäre denn, um der lieben Versorgung willen. Nein! ich will meines Lebens froh werden, im Fluge ein Stückchen von dieser schönen Erde sehen, und nicht wie ein brütendes Weibchen daheim das Nest hüten.<sup>29</sup>

Machtemes points out that, in the nineteenth century, widowhood was a more liberating state legally than marriage.<sup>30</sup> It was, moreover, also potentially empowering as it offered women the opportunity to pursue their own goals and interests, which some widows took advantage of. The widow Johanna Schopenhauer remarked: 'Ich

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<sup>29</sup> Henriette Hanke, *Die Wittwen* [1842], I, 15, in *Bibliothek der Deutschen Literatur: Mikrofiche Gesamtausgabe*, ed. by Axel Frey (Munich: K.G. Saur, 1995), FNr: 502-536, III, p. 37.

<sup>30</sup> Machtemes, *Leben zwischen Trauer und Pathos*, p. 9.

lebe so froh und glücklich, wie ich es nur wünschen kann'.<sup>31</sup> The author Henriette Hanke, whose novel *Die Wittwen* is the subject of the second chapter of this thesis, wrote and published prolifically as a widow. The same is true of Hedwig Dohm, who came into her own as a widow. Yet many widows began lamenting the extreme difficulty of their loss and regarded themselves as incomplete. If widows did indeed have more freedom than their married counterparts, then why was a feeling of a loss of identity so prevalent? Why did so few widows exploit this new-found sense of power, this rebirth that for some was at the core of widowhood?

### **Popular perceptions of widows**

In the nineteenth century widows were not only expected to grieve and be seen grieving, but mourning was enshrined in law. It was a legal requirement. The *Preussisches Allgemeines Landrecht* laid down rules which determined how long a widow should mourn her late husband. In 1794 paragraph 436 of the *Preussisches Allgemeines Landrecht* stated that: 'Die Wittwe mag ein ganzes, der Wittwer aber ein halbes Jahr, um den verstorbenen Ehegatten trauern',<sup>32</sup> and in 1875 it was decided that widows could not remarry within the first ten months of their widowhood. The questions and implications of widowhood and remarriage were particularly dominant throughout the nineteenth century. In this century and up until the start of the twentieth century female remarriage was viewed negatively. Indeed, a widow was perceived as more virtuous if she remained a widow until her death. In the eighteenth century the writer, politician and statesman Theodor Hippel (1741-1796) published an essay entitled *Über die Ehe*. This first appeared in 1774 and appeared in a series of

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid., p. 10.

<sup>32</sup> *Preussisches Allgemeines Landrecht* <[http://www.smixx.de/ra/Links\\_F-R/PrALR/1\\_11\\_pdf](http://www.smixx.de/ra/Links_F-R/PrALR/1_11_pdf)>

expanded versions up to 1793. In all versions he argues that widows who remarry are committing an 'Ehebruch am Toten'.<sup>33</sup> According to him, a widow should remain in spiritual connection with her late husband and for this she will be rewarded by society. Hippel states that 'die ganze Welt hatte Abscheu vor Weibern, die sich zum zweitemal verheirateten'.<sup>34</sup> Of interest is the fact that such assertions only pertained to widows. As far as widowers were concerned, Hippel encouraged them not only to remarry but, if possible, they should remarry a relative of their deceased wife or someone who looks like her:

Das leichteste und probateste Mittel, dich mit dem Schatten deiner Verstorbenen und der Welt auszusöhnen, ist die Wahl einer Frau, die deiner Verstorbenen ähnlich sieht oder gar ist? Etwa ihre Schwester oder ihre nahe Verwandte.<sup>35</sup>

This piece of advice was actually endorsed by many widowers of the time. In a similar way, widows throughout the nineteenth century came to accept and internalise the dominant perception of them as useless and superfluous in society. This idea of a widow's purposelessness is summed up by Hippel in a passage that occurs in all versions of *Über die Ehe*:

Was ist eine Witwe mehr als eine halb verwischte Schilderei, ein umgewandtes Kleid, ein aufgewärmtes Essen, eine Perrücke statt eigenes Haar, eine Tulpe, die den Schlüssel verloren hat und sich nicht mehr zuschließen läßt?<sup>36</sup>

This statement suggests incompleteness, inauthenticity, and substitution. But Hippel goes further than that. According to him, a widow is nothing more than second-hand goods, unwanted leftovers from a previous marriage, thus another man's used goods. In a patriarchal society a woman's identity was seen as bound up in her husband. If he were to die, she too would lose her identity. In particular, old and childless widows

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<sup>33</sup> Theodor Gottlieb von Hippel, *Über die Ehe* [1774] (Berlin: der Morgen, 1987), p. 89.

<sup>34</sup> Hippel, *Über die Ehe* [1793] Berlin, p. 454.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 449.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 457-458.

were regarded as ‘nutz- und zwecklos auf dieser Welt’ by the writer and poet Eduard Grisebach (1845-1906).<sup>37</sup> According to him, childless widows do not fulfil the typical functions women should occupy, namely motherhood. Indeed, a childless widow’s grief was seen to be particularly immense. As Emma Droysen writes to the childless Victorie Gervinus:

Wie einsam und öde mag Ihnen das Leben erscheinen, ganz besonders bei der Art wie Sie alle Interessen mit Ihrem Mann teilten, mehr noch wie wir anderen Frauen die durch Kinder abgehalten werden können.<sup>38</sup>

Throughout the long nineteenth century, therefore, nothing really changes as regards the heavily reductive view of widows. Whereas widows were perceived as superfluous and were encouraged by society, and law, to grieve for a certain period of time, in letters of condolence widowers were frequently recommended to integrate themselves back in to society as soon as possible and the wish was expressed that the period of mourning would pass quickly. This idea is encapsulated in a letter from the composer Felix Mendelsohn-Bartholdy to the recent widower Johann Gustav Droysen in 1847:

Wäre nur erst die Zeit da, wo Du wieder recht arbeiten könntest, oder hättest Du einen Beruf wie ein Handwerker oder ein Arzt oder ein Prediger; die habe ich immer beneidet, daß sie wirklich menschlich notwendig sind, daß sie den anderen helfen müssen [...] Aber in solchen Tagen ein Buch schreiben oder eine Symphonie (...) das kommt einem lange, lange gar nicht so nötig vor!<sup>39</sup>

Although the ideas set out by Hippel appear outrageous to the twenty-first-century reader, they were actually experienced and internalised by many nineteenth-century widowers and widows. Henriette von Willich, for example, underwent severe doubts

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<sup>37</sup> Eduard Grisebach, *Die Wanderung der Novelle von der treulosen Witwe durch die Weltliteratur* (Berlin: F & P. Lehmann, 1889), p. 134.

<sup>38</sup> Machtemes, *Leben zwischen Trauer und Pathos*, p. 91.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 99-100.

as to whether she should remarry, believing that she would lose society's respect if she chose to do so.<sup>40</sup> A question this thesis explores is whether the depiction of widows in literature mirrors this social reality. Do fictional widows internalise the reductive and antifeminist ideas set out by Hippel and Grisebach and hence regard themselves as a burden, out of place in society, and so live for their husband's memory?

While widows were perceived as superfluous beings by many nineteenth-century writers on the one hand, they were, on the other hand, and as Hufton points out, also seen as a threat.<sup>41</sup> A widow is a woman who has experienced sex and hence had her libido aroused, so she is thought to embody ungoverned lust. The widow is different from the unfaithful wife as her expression of her sexuality is not opposed or frustrated by a husband and she has the means to satisfy her needs; she can express her desires more overtly. This image of the widow as a predatory and lustful force has also been absorbed by novelists. The dichotomy of the subdued and virtuous versus the predatory widow has dominated since antiquity. Peter Walcot effectively illustrates this common perception of the widow as a sexual predator:

The widow lacks not just the protection of a man – she has also lost the control exercised by a husband and can indulge her passion and lust. She is likely to take on the predatory male attitude towards sexual promiscuity.<sup>42</sup>

The problem – for society - is that widows are potentially powerful, independent and fulfilled beings living life on their own terms. This inspires fear; surely a widow should accept her sexual and social death. In fiction at least, widows need to be shown their proper place. In German fiction of the nineteenth century, widows are often

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid., p. 59.

<sup>41</sup> Hufton, *The Prospect before Her*, p. 222.

<sup>42</sup> Peter Walcot, *Women in Antiquity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), p. 11.

portrayed as women who transgress sexually and therefore end up dead at the end of the story. If widows do not die sexually and socially, then the only alternative – in fiction at least - is actual death. Male writers, in particular, depict widows as women who need to be chaste if they want to stay alive.

This prevalent fear which the widow creates in the male imagination is also pointed out in an essay by Marjo Buitelaar in *Between poverty and the pyre: moments in the history of widowhood*. She argues that the widow is a source of cultural anxiety due to her perceived unfettered sexual longing.<sup>43</sup> Once deprived of their husbands, widows are thought to be sexually voracious. This emphasis on the widow's ungoverned sexuality is picked up by medieval and modern authors in France as well as in Germany and turned into two equally terrifying images of widowhood; first, the image of the morally reprehensible widow, in other words, the 'faithless' widow, and second, the widow who replicates the conduct of single and married males. In an article entitled 'Grief, Widowhood, and Women's Sexuality in Medieval French Literature', Heather M. Arden highlights the prevalence of the Widow of Ephesus motif in French literature of the Middle-Ages.<sup>44</sup> Reworkings of this motif taken from Petronius, which is the subject of my fourth chapter, were particularly common in medieval French literature, where the widow was depicted as a recently bereaved yet easily consoled woman. Furthermore, and true to the motif, the widow in French medieval literature was often presented as a morally repulsive woman, thereby highlighting woman's instability and variability. This image of the widow is picked up in the fifth chapter of the thesis. The idea of the faithless widow has captured the

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<sup>43</sup> Buitelaar, 'Widows' Worlds', p. 7.

<sup>44</sup> Heather M. Arden, 'Grief, Widowhood and Women's Sexuality in Medieval French Literature', in *Upon my husband's death: widows in the literature and histories of medieval Europe*, ed. by Louise Mirrer (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1992), pp. 305-318.

German male imagination as well as the French, and many adaptations of this motif can be seen in German literature from the Middle Ages up until the twentieth century.

It is clear that widows are perceived as threatening the gender hierarchy, as Walcot says of widows in antiquity:

The widow, it will have been noted, adopts a male attitude; in other words, roles are being exchanged and becoming confused, women are denying their true 'nature', and, as a consequence, the fabric of society is being threatened.<sup>45</sup>

A widow's independence enhances her anomalous position; she is neither masculine nor feminine but a woman 'in between'.<sup>46</sup> Such notions of the widow adopting a more masculine exterior and set of behaviours serve to increase the sense of fear and threat which she exudes. Because she is more like a male, she is automatically perceived as more powerful and in control.

The dual characteristics of emptiness and power which define the widow go a long way to explain the sense of fascination and fear she creates. She is, seemingly at all times and throughout many cultures, a woman known for her contrasting extremes of character; most notably, her vulnerability as well as her empowerment. The widow is subject to so many definitions and stereotypes because she *lacks* any kind of readily accessible identity. Since a widow contains elements of both a married and an unmarried woman she has no concrete identity and retains a liminal status, she has 'nowhere to go in widowhood'.<sup>47</sup> She is sexually experienced yet without a man, she is potentially liberated and emancipated from the bonds of marriage, yet required by society to perpetually mourn her husband, and she is, having stared death in the face, a figure between life and death.

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<sup>45</sup> Walcot, *Women in Antiquity*, p. 11.

<sup>46</sup> Buitelaar, 'Widows' Worlds', p. 11.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 11.

A widow is also a liminal figure in that she occupies the realms between the living and the dead. She is regarded as a bearer of death and is hence a permanent reminder of the reality of death and of the sudden and unexpected tragedies which can befall humankind. To summarise, a widow is a woman strongly linked to sex and death, and in both of these categories she is a liminal figure. She belongs neither with the married woman nor with the unmarried; she is neither fully integrated in the world of the living nor in the world of the dead. Nowhere and to no-one does the widow belong. Women's role as a wife, however, although lacking the ambiguity inherent to widowhood, was extremely restrictive. This is illustrated below.

### **Marriage and family law**

Until 1900 the *Preussisches Allgemeines Landrecht*, a highly authoritarian and patriarchal code, was in place. Evans highlights its restrictive nature:

The Allgemeines Landrecht firmly declared that the husband was the head of the family, and made him the legal guardian of his wife. Without his permission she could not take a job, sign a contract or engage in litigation; she was not a 'legal person' in Civil Law.<sup>48</sup>

The code also gave the father full control over his children. He represented his daughters-in-law until they married and held their property as his. The Civil Code or *Bürgerliches Gesetzbuch*, which replaced the *Preussisches Allgemeines Landrecht* in 1900, did little to improve the situation of women, however, and, as Evans argues, 'in some respects even worsened it'.<sup>49</sup> Yet it did advance one important step in that it granted full legal status to a woman. Women were now 'legal persons' and a husband was no longer a legal guardian of his wife. Moreover, as Frevert points out, the money

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<sup>48</sup> Evans, *The Feminist Movement*, p. 12.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 13.

that a married woman earned was now rightfully hers.<sup>50</sup> Despite these concessions the *Bürgerliches Gesetzbuch* still did not advocate the principle of gender equality. For example, in section 1354 Part 1 it is stated that the husband has the ‘Entscheidungsrecht in allen Angelegenheiten, die das gemeinschaftliche eheliche Leben betreffen’.<sup>51</sup> Furthermore, property which she gained within marriage was also to be made over to him.

A wife’s control over her children did not improve either. All legal power remained in the hands of the husband. Moreover, ‘if a widow with children remarried, her new husband gained all legal powers over her children including the disposal of their property’.<sup>52</sup> These findings also help explain why there were such large numbers of widows in nineteenth-century Germany. Compared with the corresponding laws in many other countries, the *Bürgerliches Gesetzbuch*, which remained in force until after the Second World War, gave fewer rights to women. Thus it was a step backwards for women.

A widow was not restricted in all respects, however. The middle-class widow’s financial status improved in the nineteenth century. Whereas in the eighteenth century the needs of middle-class widows were not being met, as Eve Rosenhaft highlights in her study,<sup>53</sup> a quarter of widows towards the end of the nineteenth century did not experience financial difficulties. Machtemes writes that:

1895 gab es in Deutschland über zwei Millionen verwitwete Frauen [...]. Als ‘gutsituiert’ galten 918.167 Witwen. ‘Hinreichend versorgt’ waren 891.167 Witwen,

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<sup>50</sup> Frevert, *Women in Germany History*, p. 136.

<sup>51</sup> J. von Staundinger, Martin Löhnig, Hans-Wolfgang Sträß, Reinhard Voppel, Michael Coester, *BGB IV1626 Einleitung zum Familienrecht. 1297-1362 (Verlöbnis, Eheschließung, Allgemeine Ehwirkungen, Faktische Lebensgemeinschaft)* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2007).

<sup>52</sup> Evans, *The Feminist Movement*, p. 14.

<sup>53</sup> See Rosenhaft, ‘Did Women Invent Life Insurance?’

und in Armut oder unsicheren Verhältnissen lebend, wurden 399.333 verwitwete Frauen gezählt.<sup>54</sup>

### **Sexual ideology**

Around the turn of the century, theories and ideas on femininity and sexuality became increasingly misogynistic, and these are reflected in stories about German widows in the late nineteenth century. Misogynistic ideas and theories can be seen in the works of, among many others, Paul Julius Möbius (1853-1907), Arthur Schopenhauer (1788-1860) and Sigmund Freud (1856-1939). Möbius states in his controversial tract *Über den physiologischen Schwachsinn des Weibes*, published in 1900, that: ‘Das Weib ist berufen, Mutter zu sein, und alles, was sie daran hindert, ist verkehrt und schlecht’.<sup>55</sup> As Anna Richards points out, Möbius states that the ‘height of evolutionary advance for a woman was to be as female as possible. But this ‘femaleness’ lay precisely in a *lack* of evolution, a failure to develop intellectually or individually’.<sup>56</sup> He writes:

Wollen wir ein Weib, das ganz seinen Mutterberuf erfüllt, so kann es nicht ein männliches Gehirn haben. Liesse es sich machen, dass die weiblichen Fähigkeiten den männlichen gleich entwickelt würden, so würden die Mutterorgane verkümmern und wir würden einen hässlichen und nutzlosen Zwitter vor uns haben. Jemand hat gesagt, man solle vom Weibe nichts verlangen, als dass es ‘gesund und dumm’ sei. Das ist grob ausgedrückt, aber es liegt in dem Paradoxon eine Wahrheit.<sup>57</sup>

His statement serves to highlight the contradictory nature of evolution for women at this time. Möbius also writes that women are situated halfway between children and men in terms of their mental and physical development. Schopenhauer holds a similar

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<sup>54</sup> Machtemes, *Leben zwischen Trauer und Pathos*, p. 39.

<sup>55</sup> Paul Julius Möbius, *Über den physiologischen Schwachsinn des Weibes* [1900] (Halle a. S: Marhold, 1902), p. 37.

<sup>56</sup> Anna Richards, *The Wasting Heroine in German Fiction by Women 1770-1914* (Oxford: Clarendon, 2004), p. 33.

<sup>57</sup> Möbius, *Über den physiologischen Schwachsinn des Weibes*, p. 37.

view. In his essay 'Über die Weiber' published in 1851, he writes: 'Daher bleiben die Weiber ihr leben lang Kinder, sehn immer nur das Nächste, kleben an der Gegenwart'.<sup>58</sup> Although this was published half a century before Möbius's tract, Konstanze Fliedl points out that Schopenhauer's 'Über die Weiber' was both popular and influential for at least fifty years after its publication.<sup>59</sup>

Schopenhauer, like Möbius, argues that women are ruled by instinct. One of the most prominent ideas in his essay, moreover, is his insistence on the prevalence of woman's unreliability and inherent bad memory. Schopenhauer argues that: 'das Weib geht mehr in die Gegenwart auf', and that 'alles Abwesende, Vergangene, Künftige, viel schwächer auf die Weiber wirkt'.<sup>60</sup> This is a facet of the female character which Schnitzler highlights in the works discussed in chapter V. Woman's inability to remember accurately, according to Schopenhauer and Schnitzler, can be attributed to her cunning and deceitful nature. Möbius draws a similar conclusion, supporting the idea of female deceit. He writes: 'Verstellung, d.h. Lügen, ist die natürlichste und unentbehrlichste Waffe des Weibes, auf die sie gar nicht verzichten kann'.<sup>61</sup> According to Schopenhauer, the most common defects of the female character are: 'Falschheit, Treulosigkeit, Verrath' and 'Undank'.<sup>62</sup> Woman also has an 'unvertilgbaren Hang zum Lügen',<sup>63</sup> another trait which Schnitzler illustrates in the works analysed in chapter V.

Sigmund Freud's writing is clearly influenced by the traditional notions of femininity, as discussed above. Freud's views on passivity, repression in women and

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<sup>58</sup> Arthur Schopenhauer, 'Über die Weiber' [1851], *Arthur Schopenhauers sämtliche Werke. Fünfter Band*, ed. by Paul Deussen (Munich: R. Piper, 1913), p. 678.

<sup>59</sup> Konstanze Fliedl, *Arthur Schnitzler: Poetik der Erinnerung* (Vienna: Bohlau, 1997), p.142.

<sup>60</sup> Deussen, 'Über die Weiber' [1851], p. 679.

<sup>61</sup> Möbius, *Über den physiologischen Schwachsinn des Weibes*, p. 40.

<sup>62</sup> Deussen, 'Über die Weiber' [1851], p. 680.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 680.

unconscious drives will briefly be discussed in connection with Schnitzler, who applies Freud's theories to literature. Freud's *Traumdeutung*, which also influenced Schnitzler, is also relevant here. Freud was among the first to acknowledge that women did indeed have a sex drive, but he wrote that women have a weaker sexual instinct than men.<sup>64</sup> In his work *Drei Abhandlungen zur Sexualtheorie* published in 1905, Freud writes that passivity is feminine and activity is masculine. Moreover, in his essay 'Die "kulturelle" Sexualmoral und die moderne Nervosität' he argues that sexual desire and activity are socially less acceptable in women than in men. Among siblings, he points out, brothers are likely to put their desires into practice and remain healthy but perverted, whereas sisters turn their desires inward and become neurotic as a result. In the same work Freud further argues that the cause of women's intellectual weakness is the repression of their curiosity about sex.

Wolfgang Nehring argues that for Freud love equates to sex and that 'all the subtle feelings that lovers might have for one another are only reflections and sublimations of the original drive which was obstructed in its goal'.<sup>65</sup> Women, in particular, could not show that they had sexual desires, however. Together with Breuer, Freud noticed that wishful impulses that were in conflict with other wishes and ethical standards were also subject to repression. Although such impulses were repressed, they still exerted an influence. This served to convince Breuer and Freud, as Henk de Berg points out, that 'there are two different mental processes in the mind, conscious (*bewußt*) processes and unconscious (*unbewußt*) ones'.<sup>66</sup> This dualistic model of the

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<sup>64</sup> Sigmund Freud, 'Die "kulturelle" Sexualmoral und die moderne Nervosität' [1908], in *Gesammelte Werke*, 18 vols (London: Imago, 1941), VII, pp. 143-167 (p. 145).

<sup>65</sup> Wolfgang Nehring, 'Schnitzler, Freud's Alter Ego?', in *Modern Austrian Literature. Vol 10, No. 5. 3/4, Special Arthur Schnitzler Issue* (University of California: n. pub) (1977), 179-195 (p. 187).

<sup>66</sup> Henk de Berg, *Freud's Theory and Its Use in Literary and Cultural Studies. An Introduction* (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2003), p. 4.

mind was one of the major steps in the development of psychoanalysis. De Berg writes that at any given moment the human mind is an interplay of consciousness and unconsciousness.<sup>67</sup> Freud discovered, moreover, that what is repressed is always related to sexuality. Yet not everyone finds a balance between inner urges and social demands. In Freud's and Schnitzler's Vienna, uncompromising expectations of moral propriety were placed on middle-class women. Widows, who in particular were supposed to remain chaste and asexual, exemplify this tension between societal expectations and inner needs to an even greater degree.

### **Dominant models of widowhood**

Two examples of well-known widows who function as role models are the Biblical Judith of the Old Testament, who decapitated Holofernes and thus freed the Israelites, and Artemisia, who mixed her husband's ashes with wine and drank them, thus becoming a walking memorial to her husband.<sup>68</sup> Judith's core values are wisdom; in speech and insight, and chastity; more than three years after the burial of her husband Judith continued to live in a tent on the roof of her house wearing the garments of widowhood and she does not remarry. Artemisia also functions as an embodiment of the chaste and devoted widow. It is interesting to note that in stories and novels about widowhood in nineteenth-century Germany writers do not use Artemisia as a model while there is a large body of works about Judith. The figure of Judith is ambiguous as she is also a dangerous seductress. The beautifully dressed Judith goes with her loyal maid to the camp of the enemy general, Holofernes, promising him information

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<sup>67</sup> Ibid., p. 5.

<sup>68</sup> See Helga Meise, 'Die Witwe und das Weltwunder. Zum Fortleben der Artemisia im siebzehnten und achtzehnten Jahrhundert', in *Trauer tragen, Trauer zeigen: Inszenierungen der Geschlechter*, ed. by Gisela Ecker (Munich: Fink, 1999).

on the Israelites. After having gained his trust and dazzled him with her beauty he invites her to dinner one night but drinks too much. He lies in a drunken stupor and she decapitates him with his own sword, then takes his head back to her countrymen. Judith illustrates the threatening power of female sexuality, and in his portrayal of Judith in *Der grüne Heinrich* Keller draws on this aspect of her personality. Even when writers refer to chaste models of widowhood in their portrait of a widow, therefore, it is not the widow's chastity they emphasise.

A model of widowhood which is much more influential is Petronius's widow of Ephesus in the *Satyricon*, which recounts the tale of a faithless widow. The story of an unchaste, hypocritical widow quick to find a new lover is adapted and depicted in a story published in 1873. The story goes much further than just finding a second husband quickly, however. The widow who rapidly abandons the memory of her late husband and pursues a new lover is portrayed as dead to moral scruples and evil through and through. Models of devoted and faithful widows do not appear to capture the imagination of nineteenth-century authors in the same way as do models of untrustworthy and immoral widows.

## **Conclusion**

Throughout the nineteenth century many of the heavily reductive views regarding widows remained constant. Moreover, many widows, and widowers, internalised the behaviours and attitudes dictated to them by influential thinkers and by society. A widow's legal and economic situation improved in the nineteenth century, but there is a mismatch between her objective reality and her subjective inner life. Widows were legally and economically more independent and powerful, yet they often felt, and indeed were made to feel, incomplete and alienated; their new-found agency does not

define them. The question then is: Is this mismatch experienced and depicted by writers? Hanke's novel *Die Wittwen*, the subject of the next chapter, goes some way to answer this. Her novel highlights the fate of the alienated widow, who needs to find her way back into society and is imprisoned in the dominant view of womanhood. Hanke's widows have rich and varied inner lives, which contrast with the poverty of their public existences.

## Chapter II

### ‘So kommt mir nun dies Verhältnis als eine Buße vor, der ich mich, willig oder nicht, unterziehen muss’.<sup>1</sup> Pain, power and virtue in Henriette Hanke’s *Die Wittwen*

#### Introduction

Henriette Hanke’s novel *Die Wittwen*, published in 1842, offers a detailed account of the lives, thoughts and feelings of her two young widowed protagonists, Franzisca Weihland and Lucie von Gardemer. Though her novel depicts a broad mix of characters ranging from the independent young orphan to the unhappy widower, this chapter will focus on Hanke’s depiction of Franzisca and Lucie. *Die Wittwen* is divided into four volumes and portrays the marriages and widowed lives of both Franzisca and Lucie, together with a probing analysis of society’s views about marriage, widowhood and the ideology of womanhood. In her novel Hanke carefully shows how her protagonists come eventually to free themselves from the dominant opinions which damaged them throughout marriage and in the early stages of widowhood. Hence *Die Wittwen* can be read as a critique of nineteenth-century German society, which simultaneously praises and attacks prevailing preconceived notions about marriage, widowhood and gender roles.

Very little is known about Henriette Hanke (1785-1862). Although she was a popular prose writer of her time, her works have been neglected by critics in the twentieth century. Hanke is not mentioned in any biography of women’s writing, and when she is referred to at all, it is usually only in passing.<sup>2</sup> Ursula Machtmes’ study *Leben zwischen Trauer und Pathos*

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<sup>1</sup> Henriette Hanke, *Die Wittwen* [1842], I, 15, in *Bibliothek der Deutschen Literatur: Mikrofiche Gesamtausgabe*, ed. by Axel Frey (Munich: K.G. Saur, 1995), FNr: 502-536, I, p. 76. Page references for quotations from the novel are henceforth given in the text as volume (I, II, III or IV) followed by page number.

<sup>2</sup> Henriette Hanke’s works are extremely under-researched. Thus far, there appears to be no secondary literature which engages with *Die Wittwen*. Moreover, Hanke is not included in studies which deal with female writers in the nineteenth century and she is also not mentioned in a study which examines the widow in German literature. Hanke does not appear in Gudrun Löster-Schneider’s and Gaby Pailer’s very recent *Lexikon deutschsprachiger Epik und Dramatik von Autorinnen 1730-1900* (Tübingen: Francke, 2006). Neither does she appear in Irmgard Taylor’s recent study on widowhood. Irmgard Taylor, *Das Bild der Witwe in der deutschen Literatur* (Darmstadt: Hessischer Gesellschaft, 1980).

provides some details about Hanke's widowed life, which will be discussed below. Geoffrey Orth has written an illuminating article about Hanke and her influence on American domestic fiction.<sup>3</sup> He shows how Hanke emphasises the moral values of the woman's sphere, woman's submissiveness, and her stoic endurance of pain, which 'acts as a retardant to character development'.<sup>4</sup> Finally, Hanke gets a passing reference in Arno Lubos's *Schlesisches Schrifttum der Romantik und Popularromantik*.<sup>5</sup> There is to date no other secondary material available on *Die Wittwen* or on Hanke as a writer.

Hanke was born Henriette Arndt in 1785 and lived in Jauer, Silesia. She married at the age of twenty a vicar many years her senior, who already had five children from his previous marriage. Understandably, Hanke did not have any children of her own. After her husband's death in 1819 she returned to her parents' home in Jauer. She was married for fourteen years and widowed for forty-three. Her years of widowhood were clearly the most productive and fulfilling of her life, which is reflected in the numerous short stories and novels she produced during this time.

Hanke's marriage can be understood as a 'Vernunft Ehe'. Her goal in life was to become a writer, but as a poor and 'einfache Kaufmannstochter' she soon realised that she had to marry if she wanted to fulfil her dream.<sup>6</sup> As she explains in her diary:

Meine Verheiratung mit dem Pastor Hanke (...) war eine sogenannte vernünftige. Ich gab ihm meine Hand wie tausend mittellose Mädchen einem achtbaren Mann, der ihnen mit einer anständigen Versorgung die Gelegenheit darbietet, ihre innerliche Bestimmung erfüllen zu können.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Geoffrey Orth, 'Mary E. Lee, Martha Fenton Hunter, and the German Connection to Domestic Fiction in the Southern Literary Messenger', *Southern Quarterly*, XXXIV, no. 4 (1996), 5-13 (p. 7).

<sup>4</sup> Orth, 'The German Connection to Domestic Fiction', p.11-12.

<sup>5</sup> Arno Lubos, *Schlesisches Schrifttum in der Romantik und Popularromantik* (Munich: W. Fink, 1978).

<sup>6</sup> Ursula Machtemes, *Leben zwischen Trauer und Pathos. Bildungsbürgerliche Witwen im 19. Jahrhundert* (Osnabrück: Rasch, 2001), p. 61.

<sup>7</sup> Machtemes, *Leben zwischen Trauer und Pathos*, p. 33.

For Hanke and many women of her time marriage provided financial support and security. Although her course of action regarding marriage was similar to that of many women during this period, she differed somewhat in her thoughts regarding remarriage. In one of Hanke's diary entries, the reader learns that she did not believe in eternal love for a first husband. Rather she criticised this belief as leading to the Indian tradition of the Sati, a practice which male writers of the nineteenth century, such as Eduard Grisebach, thought praiseworthy.<sup>8</sup> Indeed, in the preface of *Die Wittwen* Hanke quotes the writer Friederike Lohmann who also believes in the possibility of finding love for a second time: 'Die Liebe hat weder Anfang noch Ende! Wisse, auch was verwelkt war, kann wieder erblühen!' (I, p. 1). A positive statement may preface the novel, but this should not lead one to believe that this sets the tone for the story as a whole.

### **Die Wittwen: plot summary**

There are five widows and two widowers in Hanke's text. Two of these widows are the key figures in the novel. The first volume of the novel begins with an analysis of the thoughts and feelings of the recently widowed Franzisca Weihland. The name 'Weihland', meaning 'previously', suggests, among other things, that Franzisca is different from how she used to be. She is aggressive and angry at the start of the novel and she needs to recapture her self as she was before marriage and widowhood. She is portrayed in many different lights and it becomes her companion's and brother-in-law's task to return her to her former, happier self. Having just returned from a ball, which is also her first time out in public since the death of her husband, Franzisca is depicted as pining for the love of another man, Felice, who seems completely unaware of her love. That the word 'Felice' means 'happy' is ironic in this

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<sup>8</sup> Eduard Grisebach, *Die treulose Witwe: eine chinesische Novelle und ihre Wanderung durch die Literatur* (Vienna: L. Rosner, 1873).

instance, as Felice is the man who causes her such sorrow. Despite her sufferings and the way in which she feels she is marginalised by society, which is shown in a comment made by the widowed Frau von Buchs at the start of the text, who implies that a widow takes a back seat in society, Franzisca is portrayed predominantly as a strong-willed, but angry and unhappy woman. She is a widow who is capable of speaking her mind. Later in the same volume, Franzisca loses some of her former strength of mind when she agrees to let Felice, the man who is causing her so much pain, and his family to move into a part of her house. In the second part of this volume Franzisca and her companion, Pauline Platon, spend some time at a country retreat. The name 'Platon' suggests that Pauline is a wise and sensible woman. She influences Franzisca's behaviour positively throughout the novel and owing to her occasional perceptive insights she is used as a mouthpiece for the author. This country retreat is symbolically named 'Klostergarten'. In Klostergarten Franzisca undergoes an almost fatal accident and on her sick-bed she speaks out against her sufferings at the hands of men, which the reader will have witnessed first in her neglect by Felice and ensuing unhappiness and second in her prison-like marriage to her husband. After her presentation as a liminal figure between life and death, something that characterises the widow, Franzisca experiences a rebirth. She becomes more pious, she no longer pines for Felice, and she lives calmly and in seclusion, which contrasts with the depiction of her as aggressive at the start of the text. In the final volume of the novel the reader learns that Franzisca has met the right man at last, Admont von Blandsovth, and is to marry him.

Hanke's second key figure, Lucie von Gardemer, née Clarburg, is introduced to the reader in the midst of her grief. Once again, her name 'Clarburg' is a speaking name which suggests 'light' and 'clarity' as does her first name. 'Burg' however is a fortress, and Lucie is portrayed as a fortress of virtue. In contrast to Franzisca, Lucie is presented as an extremely pious widow living with the memory of her late husband. Hanke paints a picture of her as a

self-sacrificing angelic woman, who is prepared to defend her husband despite the misery which he caused her. Towards the end of the first volume Lucie paints a picture of her husband and the reader gains an insight into an emotionally abusive, loveless marriage based on deceit. It turns out that her husband has a daughter from a previous marriage, whom Lucie knew nothing about, and in volume IV Lucie finds out who she is.

In the first volume, Lucie meets Troja, a man she loved before she met her husband. The name 'Troja' is reminiscent of 'Treue' and is symbolic of his loyal nature. Troja is contrasted with Lucie's secretive late husband, Major von Gardemer. He attempts to undo the emotional damage inflicted upon her by Major von Gardemer and hence redeem her honour.

Before Hanke portrays Lucie's married life in depth, she takes the reader back to the time when Lucie and Troja were in love and simultaneously presents the obstacles to this love. Troja was the doctor who treated Lucie's mother when she was very ill, but failed to save her. Lucie's father blamed Troja for her death. Shortly after, Lucie's father remarried a domineering woman who is jealous of Lucie. Lucie worries about her father, who is subject to this fierce-tempered and controlling woman. In all these episodes Lucie is portrayed as the suffering victim of circumstances.

In volume IV, Lucie manages to discover the truth about her husband's secretive past and in so doing she gains a daughter, Perle. During Lucie's marriage a Jewish family lived with her and her husband in a separate part of the house. When, in the same volume the mother of the family, Blume, dies, Lucie discovers that Blume's daughter, Perle, was in fact her husband's child. Lucie offers to take care of Perle and when she is granted permission she, like Franzisca, is transformed. Lucie now decides to forget about her past and at the end of the novel she too is to remarry. She remarries Troja, her childhood sweetheart.

Hanke presents another variation on the theme of widowhood through the character Claudine von Unstern, an orphan, who also plays an important role in the novel. Claudine

marries with the sole intention of becoming a widow. Claudine is depicted as a free-spirited, outspoken and independent young woman. Yet her surname, 'Unstern', 'misfortune', suggests that she is not going to find the happiness she so desires. Before she meets her misfortune, the reader is told that she is in love with her cousin Eugen, but her stepmother does not want them to marry. Their love is described in passionate terms, which contrasts with the less demonstrative love of the older man, Admont von Blandsovth, whom Claudine marries instead. He is twenty years her senior and she marries him in the hope that he will die soon, as her only wish is to become a widow, a state she sees as bringing financial and emotional independence. On their wedding day, however, Claudine confesses to Admont that she only married him so she could eventually become a widow. Thus she confesses before their marriage is consummated. Naturally their marriage ends on the spot and Claudine insists on being called 'Unstern' as before. Admont, as we have seen, later marries Franzisca.

The above précis of the story suggests that Hanke at times overturns the reader's expectations. This is particularly apparent with Claudine. Portraying a woman who cynically desires to be a widow, who thus strives for autonomy, can be perceived as pushing the boundaries of what was acceptable in the 1840s. Yet it would appear that Hanke more often than not advocates that men and women adhere to the fixed gender roles of nineteenth-century society. Although Hanke's widows do on occasion think independently, proudly assert their feelings, and challenge the prevailing norms on marriage and widowhood, they are unable to act solely in their own interest. The widows, in fact, internalise social conventions of femininity and widowhood to such a degree that it leads to forms of masochism and self-abnegation. Borrowing from Marianna Noble's study, *The Masochistic Pleasures of Sentimental Literature*, masochism will be understood in this chapter as the

characters' attraction to emotionally abusive men, despite a clear dislike of abuse.<sup>9</sup> Furthermore, Hanke highlights the prevailing ideologies of womanhood, which broadly defined women as subordinate to men, as self-sacrificing beings able to 'restore to man his original innocence', and as figures excluded from the public sphere.<sup>10</sup> The process(es) by which the widows internalise these ideologies of true womanhood and display masochistic behaviours are depicted again and again by Hanke.

Yet though Hanke may highlight the dominant and destructive ideologies which her widows internalise, this does not mean that she advocates them. Her key widows undergo an educational process in the novel which teaches them to abandon their former unhappy selves and damaging ways of thinking. Hanke's females need to be and are educated in the process of love. Through their unhappy marriages and relationships, Hanke highlights that her widows and the orphan Claudine are linked to the wrong men, and, in the novel, it is their task to find the correct partner. In keeping with typical romantic novels of the nineteenth century, *Die Wittwen* can be understood as a series of instructions and stories of education that end with the closure of a series of happy marriages. As Laura Fairchild Brodie writes in her article on Jane Austen's treatment of widowhood:

With author and audience contributing to a collective imagination – an imagination alive to the artifice of fiction but committed to romantic convention – Austen guaranteed that in *Northanger Abbey*, and in subsequent novels, “we are all hastening together to perfect felicity” (5:250). Even in *Mansfield Park*, where Edmund's love for Fanny is particularly slow to kindle, Austen trusts that romance will blossom at each reader's leisure [...] Her happy endings seem inevitable.<sup>11</sup>

Hanke also trusts that her unhappy females will find love with the 'right' man at the end of the story. Indeed, this is what the typical female reader, at whom this novel was no doubt

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<sup>9</sup> Marianne Noble, *The Masochistic Pleasures of Sentimental Literature* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), p. 12.

<sup>10</sup> Chris Weedon, *Gender, Feminism and Fiction in Germany, 1840-1914* (New York: Peter Lang, 2006), p. 2-3.

<sup>11</sup> Laura Fairchild Brodie, 'Society and the Superfluous Female: Jane Austen's Treatment of Widowhood' in *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, vol. 34, (1994), pp. 697-718 (p. 697-698).

directed, would have expected. Through the technique of flashbacks, which Hanke uses throughout her novel, she creates an atmosphere full of suspense which leaves the reader continually questioning whether the women will indeed find the happiness of which they are so deserving, with the right loving man.

### **The domestic sphere and sentimental literature: power and suffering**

Hanke's novel has much in common with both fiction of the domestic sphere and the sentimental literature of the nineteenth century. Todd Kontje points out in his study *Women, the Novel and the German Nation 1771-1871* that domestic fiction 'concentrates on traditionally feminine concerns of romance, marriage and family'.<sup>12</sup> In a nutshell, this describes Hanke's novel, with the added emphasis on widowhood. Domestic fiction also at times affords women the opportunity to voice their feelings and sufferings. Literature of the domestic sphere, with its emphasis on gender and power relations, bears a striking resemblance to Hanke's text, whereas sentimental literature, with its focus on pain, suffering, and longing, also has much in common with *Die Wittwen*. Hence power and suffering are closely linked in Hanke's novel.

In her discussion of representations of fiction in the domestic sphere, Weedon highlights that 'critiques of gender norms and sexual double standards from the 1840s were remarkably radical but were followed by decades of less progressive thinking'.<sup>13</sup> In some sense Hanke appears to be starting to critique these norms in *Die Wittwen* without being in any way radical. Ruth-Ellen Boetcher Joeres argues that many writings of domestic fiction in the early to mid nineteenth century offer mixed messages and ambiguous representations.<sup>14</sup> The same

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<sup>12</sup> Todd Kontje, *Women, the Novel, and the German Nation 1771-1871. Domestic Fiction in the Fatherland* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 1.

<sup>13</sup> Weedon, *Gender, Feminism, and Fiction in Germany*, p. 110.

<sup>14</sup> Ruth-Ellen Boetcher Joeres, *Respectability and Deviance. Nineteenth-Century German Women Writers and the Ambiguity of Representation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), p. 137.

can be said of Hanke's *Die Wittwen*. Hanke's ambiguity is particularly evident in her depiction of marriage. The first widow to be discussed in *Die Wittwen*, Franzisca Weihland, highlights this ambiguity.

### **Franzisca Weihland**

Before the narrator introduces the reader to Franzisca, Pauline Platon, Franzisca's faithful companion, and Ludwig Weihland, Franzisca's brother-in-law, discuss Franzisca's behaviour at a ball the previous evening in some depth. Through Ludwig's portrayal of Franzisca, the reader conjures up an image of a transgressive and dangerous woman who is associated with death. Ludwig says: 'Ich stand neben ihr und sah im Geiste lauter Todtenbräute an das Kirchhofgitter fliegen' (I, p. 7). This eerie image not only paints a picture of a fatal and demonic woman, it also creates an image which blends death, pain, and love. Alongside this portrayal of a dangerous female bound up with death is a presentation of a woman who acts like a man. Franzisca has no difficulty in asking for what she wants, much to Ludwig's dislike: 'Sie forderte bald dies, bald das, und nichts brachte ich ihr zu Danke' (I, p. 8). Her assertive and hence masculine nature, however, is seen as destructive, even when she requests something as harmless as a glass of lemonade: 'die Bitte klang wie ein im Zorne gegebener Befehl, wie die Sehnsucht nach Gift' (I, p. 8). On the one hand, the word 'Gift' confirms the image of Franzisca as a dangerous woman in Ludwig's eyes. On the other hand, however, it already serves to show Franzisca's potential to inflict pain upon herself. That she is depicted as having a longing for poison suggests that she is to a certain extent attracted to pain and suffering.

Following Ludwig's depiction of Franzisca at the ball, Hanke presents the reader with Pauline's portrayal of her immediately after the event. The way in which Pauline talks about Franzisca is in clear contrast to Ludwig. Pauline sees Franzisca predominantly as a helpless

child. According to her, Franzisca behaved ‘wie ein krankes Kind’ (I, p. 10) after the ball. Moreover, Pauline infantilises Franzisca: ‘Ich hatte das Mädchen zu Bette gehen heißen und wollte sie selbst auskleiden helfen’ (I, p. 9). Franzisca’s real age, however, is not revealed to the reader. The narrator shows how Pauline exerts a nurturing, motherly influence on Franzisca, and this develops throughout the story. The only trait which both Ludwig and Pauline find the same in Franzisca’s behaviour is that she is a woman capable of deep pain: ‘nur ein schmerzlicher Krampf bewegte ihre Lippen, und ich dachte, das heftige Schluchzen würde ihr das Herz brechen’ (I, p. 9). This conventional image of the suffering female is more in keeping with the nineteenth-century model of how a widow should behave. Yet such different portrayals of the widowed Franzisca serve to highlight the ambiguous position of widows in society, and society’s consequent attempt to categorise them.

When Franzisca first appears her physical appearance is described in such a way as to suggest that underneath an exterior of happiness there lies a suffering female: ‘Ihr schönes Gesicht war auffallend bleich, und die strahlenden Augen blickten, wie unter einem Schleier von Trübsinn, verwundert in das heitere Beisammensein jener Beiden’ [Ludwig and Pauline] (I, p. 13). Characteristic of Franzisca at the start of the novel is her sarcastic and quick-witted manner. She is described as ‘spöttisch’ yet as smiling ‘mit gekränkten Zügen’ (I, p. 14). Franzisca reacts in a similar mildly aggressive way when the widowed Frau von Buchs, a companion of Pauline’s, alludes to the invisibility and indeed superfluity of the widow’s status. Commenting on last night’s ball, Frau von Buchs remarks: ‘Die verheiratheten Frauen haben ihre Männer, so haben sie doch etwas, und können sich daher begnügen. Eine junge Wittwe ihrer Art tritt aber in die Vorrechte der Mädchen zurück’ (I, p. 18). This speech unveils society as prone to gossip and unkindness. Frau von Buchs believes that a woman needs a man, and while Franzisca does not outwardly dispute this, she makes it clear that she has been insulted: “Sie haben Recht”, antwortete Franzisca beleidigt und mit stolzem

Verzichten; “diese tritt zurück” (I, p. 18). Referring to herself as ‘diese’, Franzisca portrays herself as less than a person, which mirrors Frau von Buchs’s perception of the widow. Franzisca is aware that widows are lumped together and are seen only as a group.

The narrator depicts Franzisca as a quick-witted widow who speaks her mind, yet also as a dark and bitter woman. On the one hand, Franzisca has no difficulty in asserting her feelings. This is particularly apparent when Pauline refers to the recently widowed Lucie von Gardemer. Franzisca’s straightforward and unsympathetic remark about Lucie’s new life as a widow makes clear her dislike of marriage: ‘Da ist wieder ein Quäler zur Ruhe gebracht und ein freies Herz erlöset’ (I, p. 15). To a certain extent, Franzisca is articulating feminine protest against the institution of marriage. Yet on the other hand, she only goes so far with her criticisms. The narrator paints a picture of Franzisca as a predominantly angry, bitter, self-satisfied and even nasty woman. Indeed, it could be argued that anger is Franzisca’s defining quality up until this point. This becomes particularly apparent when the narrator refers to Franzisca’s facial features in a series of negative adjectives: ‘Ein verschmähendes Lächeln bitterer Genüge schwebte um den aufgeworfenen Mund’ (I, p. 14). Furthermore, while drinking coffee, the narrator notes that Franzisca’s ‘Blick weilte finster und strafend auf dem kleinen spaßhaftem Bilde, sie seufzte dabei so tief, als sehnte sie sich, Lethe zu kosten’ (I, p. 15). In volume II of the novel it is revealed that the picture on the cup is of Stephan, Franzisca’s late husband. Franzisca therefore longs to experience ‘forgetfulness’ and death. Franzisca, it is suggested, is striving to forget her late husband. Thus her behaviour is clearly a deviation from what is expected of the grieving widow. It also reinforces the fact that Stephan was the wrong man for Franzisca. Similar to her longing for poison at the ball, her wish to sample Lethe suggests that Franzisca is hoping to experience obliteration of some kind.

In her first appearance Franzisca is indeed presented as somewhat of an exceptional widow. She asserts her difference to the widowed Frau von Buchs by implying that she does not need to be defined by men, and she clearly and honestly expresses her feelings. Yet Franzisca's role as the unconventional widow is taken to another level when the reader learns that she is grieving for a man who is not her husband. It transpires that the reason why Franzisca acted the way she did at the ball was because a young man, Felice, with whom she is in love, did not pay any attention to her. In an intimate tête-à-tête with Pauline, Franzisca discusses her feelings at the ball, which was her first time in public since the death of her husband. The ball symbolises society at large, and Franzisca's experience at the ball signifies her re-entering society. In the following passage, the narrator depicts the widowed Franzisca's uncertain and ambivalent position in society:

Ich fühlte mich befangen, ängstlich, meine Schritte schwankten, als ob ihnen die sichere Stütze fehlte, als dürften sie dort keinen festen Fuß fassen. So gerieth ich, ohne zu wissen wie es zuing, in einen Kreis alter Damen, die mich mit dreisten Blicken und Fragen bestürmten. An meiner Seite saßen ein paar blöde junge Mädchen, stumm und glühend (I, p. 23).

The narrator employs the motif of dancing to highlight the alienation and 'lack' inherent in widowhood. As a recent widow, Franzisca is missing the support and security, the 'sichere Stütze', of her husband. The implication is that as a woman alone Franzisca cannot function properly in society; she is incomplete. Moreover, the narrator presents Franzisca as a liminal being; she is sexually experienced like the older women but she is without a man like the younger ones. The above quotation also undermines the former assertive picture Franzisca has created of herself.

The narrator reveals much about Franzisca's adjustment to the state of widowhood by allowing her to talk about her emotions at the ball, which is synonymous with society, in some depth. Franzisca repeats how she feels 'allein' (I, p. 24) and even 'bloßgestellt' (I, p. 24). Moreover, a feeling of estrangement accompanies her throughout the evening: 'alles war

mir fremd' (I, p. 24). Franzisca wants to dance with Felice, but on some level she registers that this would not be an appropriate way for a recent widow to behave. The tension between her personal desires and society's expectations is clearly highlighted:

Doch nur zu bald ergriff mich der Gedanke, ich hätte nicht mit ihm [Felice] tanzen sollen. Ich wußte nun, wie er mich rangirte – ich las in seiner Seele, und mein Irrthum lag offen vor mir. Ich wollte nun den Ball sogleich verlassen; aber eine räthelhafte Gewalt zwang mich, daß ich bleiben mußte. So hielt ich ziemlich lange aus. Es war mir, als sollte ich warten, ob sich nicht irgend etwas ereignen werde, was mich anders entließe; doch Felice blieb sich gleich, und an mir ist es nun, alles zu ändern - (I, p. 25).

The narrator reveals two important points about Franzisca in the above paragraph. First, she is only starting to become aware of society's attitudes towards, and expectations about, widows, shown by her realisation 'ich wußte nun'. This is something the novel seeks to rectify; in other words, Franzisca is to learn acceptable ways for widows to behave and she is to adopt them. The narrator suggests that it is not Felice who is at fault; rather the emphasis is on Franzisca and it is *she* who needs to change, 'an mir ist es nun, alles zu ändern'. Second, the word 'Gewalt' reinforces how Franzisca is attracted to pain and danger. Staying at the ball when she clearly feels unhappy is indicative of her ability to allow herself to suffer.

Franzisca again opens herself up to suffering when she agrees to let Felice's family move into her house. Just after Franzisca talks about her discomfort at the ball, she tells Pauline that not seeing Felice would do her good. Indeed, the beneficial results of Franzisca's not seeing Felice are shown in her stay in the country in volume II. Yet despite her acknowledgement that seeing Felice is harmful to her happiness, she agrees to let his family move in, and, in so doing, she sets herself up for pain and disappointment.

The narrator highlights Franzisca's wealth to portray the relationship between money and power. Franzisca is at times referred to as the 'reiche, schöne Wittwe' (I, p. 65) and again on the same page the reader's attention is drawn to her 'schöne(s) Vermögen' (I, p. 65). The connection between her wealth and power is emphasised when Franzisca refers to her role as

head of her household. Ludwig and Pauline have tried to convince Franzisca that she is making a mistake in allowing Felice's family to move in, so in order to regain some control and authority, Franzisca asks: 'bin ich und bleibe ich nicht die Herrin meines Hauses?' (I, p. 67). Yet Franzisca does not manage to convince: 'Die arme Franzisca sagte dies mit schwankendem Tone, mit unterdrückten Thränen – um ihre ganze Herrschaft sah es in diesem Moment übel aus' (I, p. 67). The narrator sympathises with Franzisca in this instance, as evinced by the adjective 'arm'. In contrast to her responses at the start of the volume to Ludwig and Frau von Buchs, Franzisca now seems less sure of herself and less aggressive. Franzisca is using her resources to help others, even though it may prove to be damaging to herself. Hand in hand with Franzisca's benevolence towards Felice and his family is her own self-abnegation. By using her wealth to benefit others, Franzisca is denying her own needs and sacrificing her happiness, and so Felice comes to dominate her, as the following passage shows:

Ich bin noch ziemlich jung, und dennoch zu alt für Felice. Mein Umgang genügt ihn nicht mehr, und in dieselben Zimmer, welche ich für ihn schmückte, nimmt er Menschen auf, die mir fremd, ja feindlich sind. So kommt mir nun dies Verhältnis als eine Buße vor, der ich mich, willig oder nicht, unterziehen muß (I, p. 76).

As Weedon argues in her study, the 'masochistic construction of femininity is the key psychic dimension of women that accounts for their internalisation of repressive norms, and it is used to explain why they put up with their oppression'.<sup>15</sup> Franzisca is slowly but surely starting to internalise prevalent and oppressive views about women and femininity. Before the reader learns about Franzisca's previous married life and her husband, the narrator uses the figure of Ludwig to voice patriarchal norms about femininity and how women ought to behave. Every time Franzisca thwarts the reader's expectations by being assertive, straightforward, or powerful, Ludwig, and at times the narrator, reminds the reader of how

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<sup>15</sup> Weedon, *Gender, Feminism, and Fiction in Germany*, p. 125.

Franziska as a widow should be acting. However, Ludwig's comments are often playful, tongue-in-cheek remarks which highlight his inherent fondness of Franziska, even though she does not see it in this way. Ludwig comments on the recently widowed Franziska's change in behaviour to Pauline:

Sagen Sie, was ist mit der schönen Frau vorgegangen? – Sie sieht sich nicht mehr gleich. Empfindlich über die Maßen, den süßen Mund bitterer Worte voll, zeigt Franziska ein ewiges Mißbehagen, und man weiß wahrhaft nicht, wie dieser steten Bestimmung zart genug zu begegnen sei. Sie nimmt alles sehr genau und den kleinsten Scherz übel auf. Jene holde Anmut des Umgangs, die nicht rechnet noch rechtet, ist ganz aus ihrem Benehmen verschwunden (I, p. 60).

The above passage shows how Ludwig genuinely has Franziska's best interests at heart and the words 'schöne(n) Frau' reinforce the fact that he likes her. Ludwig argues that Franziska has lost her 'Anmut', hence her femininity, in widowhood. In volume II of the novel, while staying at a country retreat, both Pauline and Ludwig try to redress this and make her into a calmer, but essentially happier, woman, in keeping with the ideology of true womanhood. Before this, Ludwig, in particular, did not know how to deal with Franziska when she was not a charming and docile female. There is a constant tension and struggle for power between the two characters underneath the playful remarks, as Franziska has the power to shock Ludwig with her directness and he either feels obliged to put her in a more subordinate position, by reminding her that women do not voice their feelings, or he is left in the powerless position of not knowing how to respond. An example of the latter is when Ludwig says that in the country he feels like he is in Eden, to which Franziska sarcastically responds: 'Gewiß, wir sehen den alten Adam leibhaft in Dir' (II, p. 84). Yet Ludwig does not respond to this, 'und lies es diesmal hingehen' (II, p. 84), presumably because he does not know how to. This demonstrates how Franziska the widow has the ability to outwit Ludwig and catch him off guard. Franziska's satire and sharp wit serve as a weapon to protect her from society's fixed judgements about women and marriage.

The character of Ludwig is largely used to provide humour and relieve tension in an otherwise sombre story. Moreover, his gentle teasing and playfulness is well received by Pauline, which signals to the reader that she is attracted to him. Throughout the story the narrator subtly hints to the reader that a marriage between Ludwig and Pauline may be on the cards, and this is what the nineteenth-century reader would hope for. The reader is given occasional snapshots of their happiness together and mutual respect for one another. Continuing her criticism of Ludwig, Franzisca ironically says: 'Ich gratulire seiner künftigen Frau, wenn er noch heirathen sollte' (II, p. 74). Yet Pauline defends Ludwig and applauds his sense of humour, thereby revealing her fondness of him: 'Sein Scherz ist aber niemals böse gemeint, und ein wenig Humor würzt das Leben der Ehe. Ich möchte lieber die Gattin eines Solchen, als eines Finsterlings sein, den die Geister der Freude fliehen' (II, p. 74). This is by no means a casual remark; it is suggested that she would like to be his wife. This section of the volume highlights the different facets of, and conflicting viewpoints about, Ludwig's character; Franzisca insists that Ludwig is poking fun at her expense, whereas it is implied that Pauline secretly idolises him: 'Und doch hatte er Recht – wie immer' (II, p. 75). The narrator is, throughout the novel, dropping hints that Pauline is in love with Ludwig.

As demonstrated at the start of the novel in Ludwig's depiction of Franzisca as a bossy woman who 'longs for poison', her masculine nature is destructive and needs to be rectified. Above all, Pauline and Ludwig want Franzisca to be fulfilled, not 'böse', 'bitter', and 'gereizt', as she has thus far been depicted. Her sense of enjoyment of life and playfulness have been lost and these qualities need to be regained. There is no better place in which to bring about these changes than in the symbolically named 'Klostergarten', an Edenic country retreat far away from the stress and gossip which characterise city life.

### **‘Klostergarten’: The Return to The Self**

At the end of volume II of the story, Franzisca, Pauline and Ludwig retire to a country retreat called Klostergarten, a kind of Eden. When Franzisca first arrives in the country she feels apathetic. The way in which she expresses herself suggests that she has no place in Klostergarten: ‘Ein Grauen, als wäre ich allein in der weiten Welt – vergieb! Stößt mich aus, ich fürchte mich vor mir selbst’ (II, p. 95). The narrator implies that Franzisca needs to recapture her self as it was before marriage and widowhood in order to find happiness and peace. In this section of the novel, Franzisca’s repressed longing for motherhood is also brought to the fore. Here too, she has a near death experience and when she wakes she is portrayed as reborn. This occurs after an accident that takes place while riding out to the symbolically named estate of Gimle. Franzisca is thrown out of a carriage and wakes up on her sick-bed in Gimle, in the presence of Admont von Blandsovth, the owner of the property, whom she meets for the first time. After this nearly fatal accident the former aggressive Franzisca dies and a new Franzisca emerges – one who understands and adopts acceptable ways for widows to behave and who finds love with the right man.

Before Franzisca’s transformation from an unhappy and angry widow to a calm and fulfilled woman who is to marry Admont, her marriage to her late husband is depicted in a flashback. This marriage was characterised by boredom and a repressed desire for a child. In her marriage Franzisca felt a lack of purpose: ‘Madame Weihland besaß keine Talente, denen sie die Zeit widmen konnte’ (II, p. 33). Her husband felt it was his duty to protect her, so that she was ‘weich und warm wie in Baumwolle gewickelt’ (II, p. 32). The narrator is quick to point out, however, that with this protection ‘war ihr [Franzisca] nichts Gutes geschehen’ (II, p. 32). Franzisca was often alone, without the company of her husband, and she felt ‘ernst’ and ‘wenig froh’ (II, p. 31). Just as prevalent as the boredom within her marriage was her feeling of being trapped and subordinate to her husband:

Wie wenig ihr Gemahl auch die Absicht hatte seine junge Gattin zu beschränken und ihr irgend einen Genuß des Lebens zu versagen, so fühlte sie doch das Band der Hochachtung für ihn als eine Kette, die sie leise hemmte, sich nach Lust und Laune zu regen und zu rühren (II, p. 31).

Franziska was left with a feeling of ‘tödliche Langweiligkeit’ during her marriage (II, p. 34). The narrator suggests, however, that another, and perhaps more important, reason for Franziska’s feelings of boredom and emptiness was her lack of children:

Sie ging still und sinnig unter ihren Blumen umher, betrachtete die Kinder der verjüngten Sonne mit einem abgeblüheten Gefühl von Lebenslust, dem kein Trieb mehr entsprießen zu wollen schien – und neidete manche Rose, die den tiefen Busen dem vollen Strahl öffnen durfte (II, p. 31).

The childless Franziska feels a sense of resignation, and her childlessness is associated with purposelessness. On another occasion, again during her marriage, Franziska is depicted as wistfully thinking about children:

Blickte Franziska auf einem Gange durch das Dorf in das enge Gewühl einer schmutzigen Hütte und sah darin eine Bäuerin in der Mitte ihrer Kinder, etwa das Jüngste an nähernder Brust, voll Ueberfluß des mütterlichen Segens, und die anderen strotzend vor Gesundheit um sie her, so wendete sie das Auge traurig ab. Madame Weihland meinte dann, die Natur hätte allen ihren Geschöpfen ein Glück gewährt, das nur ihr allein versagt wäre. Es half ihr nichts, daß sie daheim den Blick starr auf die stummen Wände richtete (II, p. 33).

The message could not be clearer; without children Franziska is incomplete. She feels she has been singled out and must endure a cruel fate of childlessness. Children are depicted in the above passage as synonymous with health and vitality and motherhood is closely linked with purpose. In contrast, the childless Franziska is portrayed as both an unnatural and limited being. The figure of the mother thus comes to be the primary signifier of wholeness and assumes great importance during Franziska’s stay in Klostergarten. Love unions, such as that which Franziska later in this volume comes to find, are compared to the union of a mother and child. Franziska comes to identify herself with Frau Loth, a figure who functions as a

mother replacement, she is filled with maternal longing, and she falls in love with Admont, a man who is gentle and has maternal characteristics but is also powerful.

Franziska's transformation is depicted as a slow process and a shedding of her former self. When she first arrives in Kloostergarten she feels empty and sad, as she did in her marriage. Franziska is still the quick-tempered and irritable widow whose answers are again characterised by 'Spott' and 'Schmerz' (II, p. 83). It is not until she is confronted with the sight of her neighbour, Frau Loth, netting, that Franziska is filled with longing for her 'selige Mutter' (II, p. 88). Franziska enthusiastically describes to Pauline what she sees in front of her: 'Du glaubst nicht Pauline, wie rührend mir dieser Anblick ist! Er versetzte mich in meine Kindheit' (II, 88). Franziska sees this as an opportunity to try and recapture her childhood. She too, under Frau Loth's guidance, tries netting, and when she succeeds she is depicted as 'kindisch erfreut' (II, p. 90) and becomes both more child-like and feminine, thus more in keeping with the ideology of womanhood: 'Daß Franzisca die Uebung [netting] in dieser weiblicher Fertigkeit bewundert, während sie sich selbst ungelenk dazu bekannte, lieh dem vornehmen Aufstande der Madame Weihland eine schülerhafte Anmuth' (II, p. 89). Through the act of netting and identifying with a mother figure, therefore, Franziska has regained her 'Anmuth'. In the above passage and in the previous one, in which children are depicted as synonymous with vitality, 'Franziska' indicates the individual, whereas 'Madame Weihland' refers to her private self before her widowhood. This is her name as a wife, while Franziska is her own name. In the above passage, for example, the phrase 'schülerhafte Anmuth' is attributed to Madame Weihland, which reinforces the idea that she needs to undergo a change so that her former, more charming and dignified self returns.

During her stay in Kloostergarten Franziska fantasises about a gentle and maternal man who represents benevolence. Admont von Blandsovth, the man with whom Franziska becomes obsessed, represents a combination of maternal nurture and paternal mastery, though the

latter aspect of his character is not immediately revealed. Through Frau Loth, Franzisca learns that a man named Admont is the owner of an estate in a place called 'Gimle'. In Norse mythology, Gimlé is described as the most beautiful place on Earth. Franzisca begins to question Frau Loth about Admont and is keen to find out as much as she can about him. Frau Loth paints a picture of him as a romantic outsider, gentle and loving: 'So hat der gute Herr denn lange gelebt und ist der Welt abgestorben. Die Menschen flieht er und er mag niemand sehen, außer uns; die Blumen liebt er und hat eine gesegnete Hand dafür' (II, p. 91).

This suggests that Admont has been hurt by others just like Franzisca has been hurt by men. Already from a term such as 'gesegnet' the reader senses Admont's angelic nature. Indeed, Admont's estate is portrayed as a perfect Garden of Eden and he is further described as angelic:

Sie sollten den Garten von Gimle sehen, Madame! Das ist eine wahre Luft! göttlich blühen sie da. Man hat solche aparte Sorten noch nie gesehen. Eine Wildniß von Burgunder Röschen, als hätte es dem lieben Gott gefallen, der alten Rose einen kleineren Schnitt zu geben, um die ewige Mode einmal zu verändern (II, p. 91).

Admont also represents benevolence. Frau Loth states: 'Unser Herr ist die Güte selbst' (II, p. 92). Thus he is portrayed as a saint. From this moment onwards, thoughts of Admont begin to dominate Franzisca, just as Felice dominated her in volume I. She creates a romanticised and idealised image of Admont:

Der Misanthrop in Gimle beschäftigte ihr Denken und Sinnen. Sie sah ihn in jener Wildniß der Burgunder Röschen einsam umherirren – sein Herz von tausend Dornen zerrissen. Sie dachte sich einen finsternen, frühzeitig gealterten Mann in ihm, und ihre Phantasie schuf sich ein düsteres Bild von seinem Aussehen, von seinem Schmerze (II, p. 92).

This passage makes clear that Franzisca yearns for, and is in need of, the love of a good man. It also suggests that she wants to rescue him from his unhappiness and hatred of humanity. Admont and Franzisca do not meet, however, until after she has an accident. After being told by Frau Loth what a wonderful place Gimle is, Franzisca requests to be taken there

by horse and carriage with Pauline. At the moment they reach Gimle they have a near-fatal accident and Franzisca is unconscious for a short while. The emotionally sick and apathetic widow actually becomes life-threateningly ill. When she wakes up she finds herself in Admont's house being looked after by him. He closely examines her on her sick-bed, and on several occasions, reference is made to his 'fixirter Blick' (II, p. 107). On her sick-bed Franzisca adopts the role of the sinner and Admont the role of a confessor, who listens to the ramblings of a semi-conscious woman, in which she exposes herself and her suffering caused by men:

Franzisca phantasirte. Sie klagte ihm, den sie nicht kannte, den Verrath der Liebe, sprach bittere Kränkung aus und den Wunsch, eines Daseins quitt zu werden, das sie, lebensmüde, wie eine Last trüge. Sie flüsterte mit rührend leiser vertraulicher Stimme dem fremden Zuhörer die Schuld der Falschheit zu, welche ihr das Herz gebrochen; doch seltsam! wie in spottender Vorsicht – ohne je den Namen des Mannes zu nennen, der so übel an ihr getan (II, p. 119-120).

Franzisca sheds her former angry and unhappy self in this passage. It is implied that Franzisca's self-exposure, her portrayal of her cruel treatment meted out to her by patriarchy, is acceptable only if it is *not* a conscious revelation. Franzisca is adapting to a society in which woman's resistance and the right to speak publicly and consciously about one's injustices at the hands of men are impossible. Only when she is not fully conscious does she provide the reader with more than mere sarcastic snapshots of her anger. Franzisca opens herself up to Admont as if he were a priest, and he listens to her 'ernst, wie ein Beichtiger, der über die Sünde der Menschen trauert' (II, p. 120). Thus Admont, a man who has also been hurt by love and on the receiving end of Claudine's dishonesty, is portrayed as her saviour; the man who restores her to life. This is a counterpart to the romantic image which Franzisca created of Admont, a man whose heart had been torn by a thousand thorns. As such, the narrator shows how they are an ideal couple; both are in need of rescuing from a

miserable and loveless existence. This marks the moment where Franzisca is reborn. When she returns to full consciousness, the narrator highlights her ‘innere Genesung’ (II, p. 108).

That Franzisca has found real true love is shown when she refers to Felice as ‘ein Irrthum meiner Seele, eine Krankheit des Gemüts – ich genehe nun’ (II, p. 111). Pauline sees Franzisca as a ‘Wiedergeborene’ (II, p. 112) and she supports Franzisca’s new opinion of Felice, arguing that ‘jede Leidenschaft ist eine geistige Verstörung’ (II, p. 112). A distinction is made between passion and love in which passion is seen as the destructive emotion. Franzisca is portrayed in conventional terms as a powerless woman wanting the protection and comfort of a man. Love is thus depicted as a woman’s true destiny and route to happiness. Moreover, Admont represents gentleness and maternal characteristics, qualities for which Franzisca formerly yearned: ‘Sie sah sich selbst in tiefer Ohnmacht an der Brust des Herrn Admont liegen, gehalten von seinen Armen, unempfindlich für alles, was um sie geschah’ (II, p. 115). Two words in particular highlight her change: ‘Ohnmacht’ and ‘unempfindlich’. Franzisca is relinquishing her former power and she sees herself as desensitised, contrasting with her former depiction as irritable and outspoken.

Franzisca also behaves more like a conventional woman when she enters the garden in Gimle for the first time following her illness: ‘Aber Franzisca schritt nicht stolz, nicht triumphierend’ (II, p. 121). She has lost the feeling of pride which accompanied her earlier in the novel. In the Garden her rebirth and conversion are made apparent; she has woken ‘unter den Palmen Edens’ (II, p. 121) and Franzisca is now a pious widow: ‘Sie konnte die Allmacht Gottes nicht denken; sie fühlte ihn nur unausprechlich in unsterblicher Liebe’ (II, p. 122). God and the human male, Admont, become linked at the end of this volume. In the garden, it is Admont who is associated with the Edenic tree of knowledge: ‘Herr Admont lehnte in der Nähe des Springbrunnens am Stamme eines breitästigen Apfelbaums’ [...] ‘es war, als ob der Baum der Erkenntnis über ihm [Admont] rauschte’ (II, p. 122). Conventional order is being

restored; man and woman are being returned to their rightful places. Franzisca's path to wholeness, which is comparable to the mother-child union, is almost complete. As previously mentioned, her union with Admont is predicated upon masculine domination and mastery, which, as Noble argues in her study of sentimental literature, frequently come to be interpreted by the woman as signs of romantic desirability.<sup>16</sup> At the end of Franzisca's stay in Klostersgarten the reader is suddenly made aware of Admont's strongly dominant streak, in contrast to earlier depictions of him as gentle and timid:

Herr Admont war genau mit Worten, sparsam mit Befehlen, karg mit Verweisen; dennoch lag ein Etwas in dieser Zurückhaltung, was seinem Willen eine vollstreckende Gewalt über Andere gab, und man fühlte, er dürfte selten Widerspruch oder Beleidigung erfahren haben. Sein Blick regierte (II, p. 116-117).

Noble writes that 'authority, and a willingness to use violence to enforce it,' is an 'essential aspect of a male hero's desirability'.<sup>17</sup> The above quotation reveals Admont's ability to be authoritative if need be, and this functions as part of his charm. Furthermore, this again shows how Admont is a good match for Franzisca. He is portrayed as consistent and calm contrasting with Franzisca's tendency to be changeable.

Volume II of the novel ends with a depiction of Franzisca as the virtuous and feminine widow who has come to accept the reality of her widowhood. Ludwig, who was only at Klostersgarten for the start of her stay, comments on Franzisca's appearance when he next sees her; she is 'verschönt' (II, p. 137). The repetition of the word 'zufrieden' in the last few pages of the volume to describe Franzisca's situation suggests that she has reached acceptance of her status as a widow and understands the proper way for widows to act. She now leads a more isolated existence: 'Madame Weihland lebte jetzt sehr still' (II, p. 140), and Pauline notes this contrast to her former 'frühere(r) Geselligkeit' (II, p. 140). Franzisca is

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<sup>16</sup> Noble, *The Masochistic Pleasures of Sentimental Literature*, p 68.

<sup>17</sup> Noble, *The Masochistic Pleasures of Sentimental Literature*, p. 69.

adopting the virtuous lifestyle that fits with her new personality. To do this she renounces desire: ‘ihr Herz blieb im ruhigem Gange’ (II, p. 141).

In keeping with the ideology of true womanhood, Franzisca comes to embody piety, weakness and compliance. Her physical appearance, formerly described as ‘finster’, that is, characterised by anger, marks in part some of these changes:

Franziscas schönes Gesicht, vormals nicht selten durch Mißmuth und Prätension entstellt, rührte jetzt in dem Ausdrücke der liebenswürdigen Zufriedenheit. In ihren Zügen lag zuweilen eine heimliche Freude, ein frohes Nachsinnen, als hoffte sie, der heilige Christ würde ihr den liebsten Wunsch bescheeren’ (II, p. 140).

Franzisca’s greatest wish, her desire for a child, is alluded to in the final sentence. Ludwig is particularly bemused by Franzisca’s change of character following her stay in the country. He asks: ‘Wo sind Franziscas Launen hingeflogen – wo ist die allerliebste kleine Bosheit geblieben, die schnell gereizt, keinen Widerspruch vertragen konnte? Franzisca ist ein Lämmchen, das vor dem Scheerer verstummt’ (II, p. 140-141). The word ‘allerliebste’ again reveals that Ludwig did have a fondness for the earlier, angry Franzisca. Franzisca is tamed. Her passivity and silent nature is emphasised. She no longer questions and makes assertions and she no longer takes offence at people’s remarks. Indeed, Franzisca hardly speaks in these last few pages; instead, Ludwig and Pauline do her talking and thinking for her. Throughout the rest of the novel, in fact, the reader hardly hears Franzisca’s voice – she is completely absent in volume III and speaks only a few sentences in volume IV. Franzisca was an independent but unhappy widow who becomes a wife again. This is to be understood, of course, as a positive change. Franzisca may have been independent and outspoken at the start of the story, but not in a good way. The silenced, compliant and pious Franzisca after her rebirth has similarities to Lucie von Gardemer, Hanke’s second key widow.

### **Lucie von Gardemer**

Lucie is presented as a contrast to the aggressive Franzisca of volume I. Lucie embodies female weakness and in her first appearance of the novel she is the epitome of the virtuous and grieving widow, 'Tieftrauernd' and 'in Gedanken versunken' (I, p. 29). To further contrast her with the 'angry' Franzisca, the narrator describes Lucie as 'zart' (I, p. 30). Moreover, the reader is not told Lucie's age; all that is revealed is that she too is a 'junge(n) Wittwe' (I, p. 30). Lucie's sister comes to comfort the recently widowed Lucie at the start of the novel, and like Ludwig and Pauline, her views represent those of society at large. Lucie is characterised by her suffering and extreme pain, 'ein unsägliches Weh' (I, p. 32), and she cannot escape the memory of her late husband.

The reader learns that Lucie nursed her husband towards the end of his life. As a recent widow she is exhausted and unable to fully escape his presence: 'Es webt und wispert um mein Lager, ich höre jedes Stöhnen, das so oft tief in mein Erbarmen drang, und ein verscheidendes Bild schwebt mir vor, wohin ich mich auch wende' (I, p. 32). It turns out that Lucie was equally tormented as a wife, however. Lucie's sister paints a harsh picture of her brother-in-law, whose cruelty contrasts with Lucie's soft-hearted nature:

Sein Dasein war ihm eine Plage und Andern auch. Temperament, Vorurtheile der Erziehung, Hirngespinnste seines Standes hatten seinem Charakter jene unselige Richtung gegeben, die ihn unzugänglich für ein mildes, menschliches Glück machte. Doch Du, Lucie – Du warst geopfert. Wie ein sühnendes Engel standst Du zwischen ihm und dem Leben, womit er gefallen war, und bist Deiner Pflicht treu geblieben bis ans Ende (I, p. 33).

In this portrayal, Lucie embodies the ideal of the self-sacrificing and angelic woman. During this exchange with her sister, the reader learns that Lucie's late husband, Major von Gardemer, had a daughter by another woman. Lucie does not know anything about this girl, or even who the mother is, until after his death. Lucie comes to view this as a sin for which it is her duty to atone, and this is an aspect of her behaviour which the narrator commends. Thus the force of Lucie's redeeming nature as demonstrated in her marriage is one of the first

aspects of her character to be highlighted. Lucie chooses to defend her difficult and cruel husband: ‘Und dennoch härt mich der Gedanke, ich hätte manchmal noch mehr thun können, meinen Mann zu beruhigen, der doch auch sein viel Gutes hatte’ (I, p. 34). She is indeed the epitome of ‘Sanftmuth’ (I, p. 34); a saintly patient woman who lives for her husband. Lucie has lost all sense of self and identity in her marriage. She lived entirely for her husband and as a consequence has thoroughly internalised his destructive views about female reputation and honour.

Volume I focuses on the damaging and prevailing ideals of womanhood which ought to be upheld by women according to Major von Gardemer. His lofty ideas about women are described as an unattainable ideal: ‘Ja, es ist wahr, mein Mann hatte die seltsamsten Ansichten, und seine Begriffe von weiblicher Ehre reichten über das Äußerste hinaus; eine Heilige selbst würde ihm nicht genügt haben’ (I, p. 35). Major von Gardemer wants a saint but no woman can live up to this; woman’s purity is seen by him as a defining feature. Trying to uphold such an impossible ideal, it is no wonder that Lucie feels intimidated and inadequate. In addition, her husband polices her honour:

Mein Mann wollte mich zwar ausgezeichnet und bewundert wissen, er rügte jeden Mangel an Aufmerksamkeit; aber sie sollte mir nur in ehrerbietiger Ferne widerfahren. Niemand wagte es, sich mir zu nähern, denn wenige Schritte von meinem Sitze entfernt, wo ich mich auch befand, stand Gardemer wie eine Ehrenwache, und hütete den Raum meiner Umgebung (I, p. 37).

Finally, Lucie feels she has no choice but to completely withdraw from society into herself.

Yet this only serves to awaken the Major’s suspicion:

Jetzt quälte Gardemer mich mit vorwurfsvollen Fragen, welches ein geliebtes Gedankenbild mich beschäftigen müsse, weil ich keine Zerstreung mehr bedürfte? Er sah mich bestürzt an, sein Auge blitzte Argwohn, daß ich verschwiegener Weise unglücklich sein könnte, durch eine frühere Liebe oder durch seine eheliche Tyrannei, die ich ohne Klage ertrug. Daß mir alle Männer gleichgültig schienen, daß ich so ganz eingezogen lebte, nur ringend danach mit manchem Krampf der Seele, daß es still und immer stiller in mir würde – dies schärfte mehr

seinen Verdacht, ich hege treulos das Andenken an einen unvergessenen Gegenstand (I, p. 38).

In marriage Lucie was the silenced female, controlled by Major von Gardemer, mocked for her soft-hearted humanity, and made to feel inferior to her husband. He criticises her ‘weichherzige Humanität, als einer niederen Neigung’ (I, p. 36). Another important point, which the narrator expatiates on later, is the question of a woman’s age. Lucie remembers how her husband instilled in her a belief that a wife cannot be young enough, regardless of her actual age, but that a man needs to be far older than her to maintain the correct power relation:

Das Gefühl der Jugend ward zeitig in mir erdrückt. Was bei den Römerinnen jede verheiratete Dame, auch die jüngste, hieß, dies war ich, eine Matrone; resignirt auf jede Lust des Lebens und der Liebe. Gardemer suchte mich zu überzeugen, daß nur ein Unterschied von zwanzig Jahren, die der Mann voraus hätte – dies war gerade unsere Differenz – eine Frau in das richtige Verhältnis zu ihm stellte (I, p. 36).

The word ‘erdrückt’ highlights the feeling of suffocation and crushing which accompanies Lucie in her marriage. She is stifled; her personality and individuality has no space to grow and develop. It is in marriage, and not in widowhood, that Lucie feels that her life is over. Lucie’s sister is indeed correct when she refers to the Major as Lucie’s ‘Peiniger’ (I, p. 34). Everything she does is subject to fierce questioning and suspicion. Her husband is portrayed as an extremely jealous man who tests her patience to the limit. However, the narrator shows how, in spite of this, Lucie tries to serve as his moral redeemer and atone for her husband’s sin:

Mit dem edelsten Stolze ihres Geschlechts wollte sie eine Sünde ihres Gemahls sühnen, und alles Böse, das er ihr zugefügt, in Güte vergelten. Dieser verzeihende Stolz ist der Triumph der Engel über sterbliche Schwächen; aber, o Lucie! auch die reinste Tugend darf nur menschlich sein (I, p. 40).

The narrator shows through the choice of such words as ‘edelsten’, ‘verzeihender Stolz’, ‘Engel’, and ‘reinsten Tugend’, that this is, in theory, a praiseworthy way for women to

behave. However, the final exclamation unmasks this behaviour as excessive and impossible. Lucie is defined by her purity and her feeling of 'Stolz'. Unlike Franzisca's 'Stolz' at the start of the first volume, Lucie is commended for her feeling of pride as it is directed towards improving a fellow human being, thus it is being used for altruistic means, but it is neither practical nor desirable.

With the death of her husband, Lucie has undergone a metaphorical death herself. Her behaviour has been dictated by her husband, and, following his death, all that remains for Lucie is to remain true to these ideals and continue to endorse them. When her sister leaves, the reader is given a brief insight into Lucie's feelings towards the Jewish family who live in a separate part of her house, and she reflects on the way in which her husband interacted with them. Lucie perceives some sign of humanity in her husband's treatment of the family, 'da er sonst gegen den Stamm der Juden mit öffener Verachtung sprach' (I, p. 46). The overwhelming picture which is painted is one of mystery; it is suggested, through Major Gardemer's treatment of this family, that Lucie never really knew her husband. Lucie feels a sense of exclusion; she does not understand her husband's contradictory behaviour. Although Lucie feels a great deal of respect for her husband when she learns that he allowed the family to live rent free, she remains suspicious about the odd nature of her husband's relationship with Ephraim Moschel, the father of the family:

Obgleich Frau von Gardemer, ihren Gemahl zu beobachten, viel zu arglos war, so fiel es ihr doch im Verfolg der Zeit als seltsam auf, daß zwischen ihm und dem Juden irgend ein geheimer Verkehr statt fand. Jedenfalls war und blieb Lucien dies Verhältnis rätselhaft. Spielten die Kinder der Juden harmlos im Hofraum, und schmiegten sie, wenn der Major sich blicken ließ, so konnte er ihnen mit einer Härte begegnen, die Lucien das sanfte Herz empörte; wiederum handelte er gegen die unglückliche Mutter so mild und rücksichtsvoll, wie es seinem Charakter sonst nicht eigen war (I, p. 47-48).

The innocent Lucie does not find out the reason for this strange behaviour until the end of the novel, when it transpires that her husband had a child with the mother of this family. Until then, Lucie had never openly questioned her husband, though there were moments in

her life ‘worin sie die Gattin Ephraims beneiden konnte’ (I, p. 48); yet this envy was repressed. Until Lucie discovers the truth, she is portrayed as a woman who is deeply suspicious of men, who fears abandonment, and comes to internalise in part her husband’s jealous and mistrustful mindset. On his deathbed, her husband expresses one last wish to his wife, that ‘sie möchte den Epraim und die Seinen nicht verlassen’ (I, p. 51). These are the final words spoken by the Major. Lucie fulfils his request and visits the Jewish family on a daily basis.

In Lucie’s second appearance in the novel in the second half of volume I her suffering at the hands of men is again a prevalent theme. Lucie sees Troja for the first time since their romance. Troja, like Ludwig, appears to take on the role of the patriarchal observer, and he attempts to define Lucie by her widowhood. Just before he sees Lucie, he imagines her as ghost-like; a figure of the living dead: ‘und es war ihm, als würde Lucie im schwarzen Schleier – seine Phantasie vermengte die Begriffe ihres Verlustes – aus einer der weißen Thüren, deren er mehrere hier sah, entgegentreten’ (I, p. 79). That reference is made to both the colours black and white, however, serves to suggest that at the outset Troja is not sure how to categorise Lucie; hence she is relegated to a position between death and life, between black and white. When he does see Lucie she thwarts his expectations of an indefinable being and he is surprised at the energy and life which she exudes. Yet the following observation he makes again reinforces how he is creating an image of Lucie: ‘Jener göttliche Hauch, der Pygmalions Werk belebte, gab Luciens holdem Gesicht Seele, eine Seele der Liebe. Sie schien zu athmen, zu lächeln’ (I, p. 81). The reference to Pygmalion, a sculptor who falls in love with a statue of his own creation, shows how Lucie is not seen as an individual, rather she is defined by men. The narrator takes the reader back to Lucie’s youth with Troja in a flashback.

Lucie thinks back to the time when her mother was ill. Troja, a doctor, was unable to save her mother and Lucie's father blamed him for her death. Although he was able to forgive Troja, this moment marked a rupture in their relationship, and Troja decided to leave, while Lucie felt it was her duty to stay close to her father, who was in need of her support. She considered moving to the town to be close to her sister, but in the end she decided that her father needed her more: 'Er war muthlos, ohne Trost und mit sich selbst zerfallen; so konnte sie ihn nicht verlassen' (I, p. 93-94). She put everyone else's needs above her own as was expected of single women. Shortly after, Lucie's father married a dominant woman and she is astonished at the speed at which this takes place, and cannot understand why the father wants to marry this woman: 'Sie fühlte, sie könne kein Herz zu ihrer künftigen Stiefmutter haben' (I, p. 96). Her stepmother is contrasted with Lucie's deceased mother, who 'als Gattin stets untergeordnet war' (I, p. 97). Yet through the portrayal of this controlling stepmother, the narrator suggests that women's self-destructive behaviour and its internalisation can also be learned from other women. The reader learns that the stepmother is jealous of Lucie and she wants rid of her:

Dennoch gähnte ein finsterer Haß gegen das Mädchen in der Brust der Stiefmutter auf. Luciens aufblühender Reiz, ihr unbestreitbares Recht war ihr ein Dorn im Auge, und sie wünschte, sich dieses Ärgernisses entledigen zu können (I, p. 97-98).

Lucie's angelic nature highlights her stepmother's faults. That the narrator disapproves of this jealous and domineering woman is shown by the word 'finster', previously used to demonstrate Franzisca's angry, nasty side. Against this background of pain, jealousy and abuse of power, Lucie meets the man she subsequently marries. He immediately falls in love with her and asks for her hand in marriage. Lucie is not depicted as in love, however, but is merely 'betroffen über dieses Geständnis' (I, p. 99). It is Lucie's priority to remain close to her father, so Gardemer offers to purchase her some land next to her father's if she agrees to marry him. This offer is accepted and she agrees to be his wife. Yet the following passage

implies that Lucie marries solely to be close to her father and to keep her romantic dream alive. The land which Gardemer proposes to buy is where she and Troja met and were happy:

Eine Welt voll Gedanken lag in dem gerührten Blicke, den sie auf Gardemer und auf die Möglichkeit warf, ihm als Gattin anzugehören. Die nächste Veranlassung zu einem Verhältnisse, das ihr Abscheu einflößte, ward dadurch aufgehoben, Lucie blieb ihrem Vater nahe, sie ward endlich Besitzerin eines Eigenthums, das einst ihr ganzes Glück enthalten, und noch mit allem Zauber der Erinnerung ihrer Wünsche anzog. Troja – sie wagte nicht, sein Bild auszudenken. Auf ihn durfte sie nicht hoffen. – (I, p. 100).

Clearly Lucie is not marrying out of love, rather she is marrying in order to be close to her memory of love. Her father's response to her engagement supports Lucie's role as the sacrificial female victim: 'So geh denn', sagte er, 'und erlöse mich, Du reines Lamm, das fremde Sünde trägt' (I, p. 100). The reader perceives that Lucie's father feels guilty about his marriage. Moreover, Lucie is sacrificing her own dream of happiness with Troja to stay close to her father. She is in effect being bought by Gardemer.

Now that the narrator has told the reader the story of Lucie's unhappy engagement, she takes us forward to the moment where Lucie and Troja meet again for the first time after the death of her husband. From this moment onwards, Lucie defines herself by the suffering and injustices to which she has been subjected.

**'Es stände übel um uns Frauen, wenn wir nicht resigniren könnten.'<sup>18</sup>**

The former love between Troja and Lucie becomes the central focus of their meetings throughout the rest of the novel, in which Troja attempts to recapture their romance. In contrast to Major von Gardemer, Troja defends the female sex and shows an awareness of the injustices within society pertaining to age, gender and female reputation. Lucie, on the other hand, becomes a walking monument to her husband.

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<sup>18</sup> Hanke, *Die Wittwen*, III, p. 128.

In volume II it becomes clear that Lucie has strong feelings of love for Troja. When he shakes her hand, for example, she ‘erglühete’ (II, p. 46). She has so thoroughly internalised society’s views about the respectable way for women to behave, however, that she cannot act on her feelings: ‘Ein zartes Gefühl der Schicklichkeit sprach in ihr an, jener feine Tact, der die Frauen das richtige Zeitmaß lehrt’ (II, p. 46). In accordance with the strict regulations on mourning, Lucie must remain chaste. That Lucie feels guilt at her feelings towards Troja is shown through her inability to forget her husband while in Troja’s presence. She imagines her husband’s reaction to her situation thus:

Sie dachte der schroffen Vorurtheile ihres Gemahls; sein Bild schwebte ihr vor, sein strenger Blick, sein finsterner Sinn. Sie richtete eine leise, leise Frage an ihn, was er wohl dazu sagen würde? Und sein Schatten zürnte und verschwand (II, p. 46).

Lucie is not free. Even as a widow she is directed from beyond the grave by her dead husband. Lucie fears for her reputation, a trait which she has inherited from her husband: ‘Die öffentliche Meinung war meinem Gemahl ein Phantom, das er mehr scheute, als ein Mann dies jemals sollte’ (II, p. 47). The implication is that a man need not worry about his reputation. Moreover, she feels it is not enough to merely act in accordance with society’s rules, rather she feels it her duty to prove to Troja that she is a respectable widow: ‘Lassen Sie mich zeigen, daß Gardemers Ehre seiner Gattin theuer ist, ob ihr Schützer auch im Grabe ruht, daß ich mit jener Pietät, wie sie dem Weibe ziemt, auch seiner Schwächen schone’ (II, p. 47). There is a sense that Lucie cannot be a worthy wife if she is not a good widow. She must therefore insist on her right to defend her husband.

To a certain extent, Troja acts as a bridge between Lucie’s personal desire to see him and the concept of ‘Anstand’ (II, p. 48) which she must uphold. Troja mentions that a certain young woman, Claudine von Unstern, would like to become acquainted with Lucie. According to Troja, this would not harm Lucie’s reputation. Claudine is an orphan, abandoned and lonely. Troja recognises that in Lucie she can receive the ‘liebevolle[...]

Begegnung' (II, p. 49) she so needs. However, this innocent suggestion is misinterpreted by a suspicious Lucie. Lucie has convinced herself that Claudine is Troja's fiancée, and she sees in his suggestion the attempt to push her into the background: 'Lucie fühlte sich in einer Nebenrolle' (II, p. 48). Although Lucie is hurt by this suggestion and feels that Troja is treating her badly, she agrees to his offer, just as she agreed to be purchased by her late husband.

This section of volume II ends with Lucie totally subservient to the norms of female behaviour dictated to her by the late Major von Gardemer. As Lucie reflects on her previous meeting with Troja, in particular his proposition with regard to Claudine, she draws the following self-destructive conclusions:

Sie kam sich um drei Decennien älter vor, die schroffen Maxime ihres Gemahls schienen ihr plötzlich der Gipfelpunkt der Wahrheit und richtigen Ansichten des Lebens. Gestürzt aus ihrem Himmel, wo keine Jugend verblüht, keine Liebe altert, sank sie in Trübsinn; ein Gemisch von Reue, Scham und Schmerz wallte in ihrer Brust auf. Sie gedachte ihrer Leiden, wie der Schüler einer höheren Classe jener leichten Aufgaben, in denen er die ersten Proben seiner Fähigkeiten abgelegt. 'Und ist es denn so schwer', fuhr Lucie fort, 'Selbstverleugnung zu lernen, und Wünschen abzusterben?' (II, p. 51).

A new, and destructive, mentality takes hold of Lucie. She believes that she has to renounce values such as belief in the eternal nature of love, and enter a new reality, which is characterised by self-denial and resignation. Lucie is portrayed as a victim of her past. Similar vocabulary is employed to portray Lucie's 'realisation' as was used to depict Franzisca's rebirth; both widows are presented as a 'Schüler', for example. Franzisca's rebirth was positive, however, whereas Lucie's insights serve to show the extent to which she inhabits a destructive mindset. In further contrast to Franzisca, the narrator shows how Lucie needs to *unlearn* this destructive mentality as opposed to adapting herself to it. Lucie is depicted as a regressive being, a 'Schüler', undergoing a necessary learning process. Part of Troja's role, like Pauline's, is to guide the widow and show her correct and healthy ways in which to behave and live.

To a certain extent, Lucie's attitude towards Troja is similar to the nature of her relationship with her husband. As such, their relationship serves to highlight the extent she has been damaged by her husband as she forges links between the Major's behaviour and Troja's. Lucie was suspicious of her husband's odd behaviour, and she is again suspicious that Troja is hiding something from her, namely, his supposed fiancée, Claudine. Moreover, Troja's suggestion that Lucie should become acquainted with Claudine reminds the reader of the Major's final request for Lucie to stay close to the Jewish family. When Lucie meets Troja at the end of the second volume after a long period of separation has passed, her distance to him is emphasised. Whereas previously she was overjoyed to see him, she is on this occasion indifferent and holds a 'gleichgültiges Gespräch' (II, p. 125) with him. The former loving and angelic Lucie is depicted as 'fremd' (II, p. 126) and her 'strafende Kälte' is mentioned (II, p. 126). This shows that her destructive mentality is starting to take her over and sabotage her happiness. Troja tries to win Lucie and he asks for her hand in marriage, yet as happy as this makes Lucie feel on the inside, she finds that she needs to talk herself out of accepting his offer.

Lucie does not surrender to her desire out of fear that this is not a respectable way for a widow to behave: 'Die Erfahrung reift', entgegnete Frau von Gardemer schmerzlich, 'es stände übel um uns Frauen, wenn wir nicht resigniren könnten' (II, p. 128). For the first time, Lucie articulates her concern that Claudine is his fiancée, yet he immediately dismisses this. Claudine is not, and never was, his fiancée. Even when Troja asks for her hand in marriage, and Lucie realises that this moment marks 'der süßeste Moment ihres Lebens' (II, p. 129), she does not voice her feelings, she merely says: 'ich habe keine Worte, Ihnen meine Gefühle auszudrücken' (II, p. 129). In order to be a respectable widow, Lucie must be silent and withdrawn, and not show the kind of desire that Franzisca did for Felice.

Until now, gender roles have been rigid. Yet a large and important role which Troja plays in the novel consists in defending the female sex. Troja utters a comprehensive condemnation of society's mores and he battles with Lucie to get her to rise above her own internalisation of destructive social ideas. Thus he is, in this instance, a mouthpiece for the author. Lucie defines herself by her age and convinces herself that Troja should be, and wants to be, with a younger woman. Her exaggerated statements border on the ridiculous, serving to show the extent of her internalisation: 'Ich habe nun gelebt. Meine Zeit ist vorüber. Ich bin sogar ein Jahr älter als Sie' (II, p. 129), and, finally 'Ich muß es besser einsehen, ich, die Ältere' (II, p. 129). Troja shows both a sensitive awareness of the rules and regulations which serve to damage women and a desire to abolish them. He asks the following: 'Ist es möglich, daß auch Lucie sich nicht über ihr Geschlecht erheben kann, um die Liebe höher zu würdigen, als nach gewöhnlichen Begriffen?' (II, p. 130). The narrator further depicts Troja as a refreshing example of a man who does not view age as a barrier to love: 'Ich hasse die Berechnungen des Alters, diese Zahlen der Zeit, welche schlimmer tödten, als der Buchstabe des Gesetzes' (II, p. 131). Troja also highlights how women damn themselves by criticising and judging, which is how Lucie behaves throughout. Troja says: 'Da sitzen die Damen in der Runde, ein Höllenkreis, den Dante vergessen hat – und diese Verdammten, vom Himmel Ausgeschlossenen, richten und rechten über die Jahre ihres Geschlechts, außerhalb dieses Zirkels' (II, p. 131). Troja makes the point that women can choose to be different and not judge themselves or adopt damaging mentalities, and this is what he wants from Lucie.

In spite of Troja's attempts to rescue Lucie from her self-destructive ways of thinking, she still believes that he is deluding himself, that he does not really want to marry her, and that he is in love with the Lucie of his youth and not the Lucie who stands before him. Lucie refers to herself as 'verblichen' (II, p. 133). She is depicted as insecure through her complete inability to believe in Troja's love for her. She feels that her beauty has either disappeared, or that it

will soon fade. Where Troja sees ‘Glanz’ (II, p. 133), Lucie merely sees a ‘matte Gestalt’ (II, p. 133). Lucie does at least come to acknowledge that her husband was responsible for her perception of herself: ‘Er hat mir gesagt, wie bitter sein Geschlecht welcher Kränze spottet. Ich bin dadurch sehr schüchtern geworden, und denke mich völlig abgefunden mit der Welt’ (II, p. 134). Yet she still does not act on her love for Troja. In a final attempt to win Lucie, Troja reminds her of a happier time when they were young and in love, but this simply places another obstacle to Lucie’s happiness in her mind, ‘der Schatten ihres Vaters’ (II, p. 135). No matter where Lucie turns she cannot seem to escape the damaging influence of men in her life and embrace her happiness. She does not feel worthy of love, and only begins to view herself as worthy when she takes on the role of mother.

**‘O! hätte ich eine Mutter gehabt, die meine zarte Jugend behütete!’<sup>19</sup> Motherhood in *Die Wittwen***

The text portrays motherhood as the highest stage of female development and as proof of women’s social worth, giving women the strength to fulfil their social role by fulfilling their natural role. Furthermore, novelists put forward the idea that the healthy nature of a woman will become ever more sickly and ailing while her urge for motherhood is not realised.<sup>20</sup> The reader has already seen how Franzisca was portrayed in volume II as a sickly woman longing for a child. The narrator implies that motherhood serves to integrate women back into society, and as such it can function as a source of power.

Claudine von Unstern grows up without a mother. Up until the moment that she meets her lost mother, a widow, towards the end of volume IV, she is depicted as a cunning and independent woman on the one hand, and as an extremely sad woman bound up with death

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<sup>19</sup> Hanke, *Die Wittwen*, IV, p. 38.

<sup>20</sup> Weedon, *Gender, Feminism and Fiction in Germany*, p. 93.

on the other hand. The reader is introduced to Claudine in volume II, and in her first appearance the narrator highlights two important characteristics; first, she is portrayed as against the institution of marriage, and second, she is depicted as on an emotional and spiritual journey to find her mother. The narrator comments that ‘Claudine hätte wohl eher zum heiligen Grabe wollen, als der Hochzeit ihrer Schwester beiwohnen mögen’ (II, p. 145). Religious quests and domestic quests thus become blurred in the course of her search.

Claudine’s desire for independence at any cost, a feature condemned by the narrator and which proves destructive to other characters in the novel, is also attributed to her lack of a mother figure. Claudine is the epitome of the autonomous and self-sufficient woman. She outwardly rejects marriage and ‘wollte lieber sterben als die Sklavin eines Mannes sein’ (III, p. 27). However, Claudine has not observed in her own family the typical husband-wife relations of the nineteenth century, as her father remarries a controlling and domineering woman. Claudine thus witnesses a reversal of power relationships in marriage in which the husband is subordinate to the wife; indeed she sarcastically observes how her father wears ‘seine Ketten mit Anstand’ (III, p. 31). It is suggested that this in part accounts for her wayward, transgressive behaviour and her contempt for men as the weaker sex. Claudine feels superior to men, the sex she has only ever known ‘von schwachen Seiten’ (III, p. 31). Her independent and free spirit merge with her deceitful nature when she decides to marry Admont, a weak man twenty years her senior, so that she can become a liberated widow.

Before Claudine marries Admont she is depicted as in love with her cousin, Eugen. His love for her is characterised by its passion, shown by the repetition of the word ‘Leidenschaft’ (III, p. 41) to highlight the intensity of his feelings. However, it is implied that, precisely owing to his passion, Eugen is not yet the right man for Claudine, a woman so cold that she is portrayed as ‘jungfräuliche[r] Schnee’ (III, p. 43). Thus his love needs to mature: ‘Eugen liebte seine Jugendfreundin wohl zu leidenschaftlich’ [...] ‘er preßte sie so

fest, so angsthaft an sich, als wolle er sich von ihrer Wahrhaftigkeit überzeugen' (III, p. 73). Through the example of Eugen, the narrator shows that male characters are also in need of change. Claudine too must undergo an educational process as do the widows. In the course of the novel the narrator shows that Claudine needs to learn two things; to love and learn that she is not superior to men.

Claudine marries Admont, a marriage that only lasts a day, for Claudine confesses to him on the night of the wedding that she only married him so that she could become his widow. After having met and admired the 'merry' widow, Frau von Kleist, who will be discussed below, Claudine aspires towards the same future of freedom for herself: 'Sie [Claudine] trauerte bereits um den Gemahl, der es noch werden und dann sterben sollte' (III, p. 77). Claudine is extremely cunning. Her fiancé Admont is ill and believes he only has a few years left to live, although the reader is not told his exact age. The narrator shows her utter contempt of Claudine's behaviour by comparing her to a cold statue:

Eine Coquette der feinsten Art – und zu dieser wollen wir das Fräulein zählen – gleicht der Statue Pygmalions, die jedem Manne Kraft seiner schöpferischen Einbildung beseelt erscheint; doch unausbleiblich kommt der Augenblick, wo er seines Irrthums inne wird. Diese Adern täuschen nur, kein Puls der Empfindung klopft in ihnen, diese Brust, gebaut zu einem Thron der Liebe, ist kalt – kein Herz schlägt drinnen, das Leben schweigt in diesem Marmor. Ein göttliches Kunstwerk ist diese Galatee, die so reizend lächelt – Alle zu entzücken! aber Lebensfülle wird nimmer aus ihr emporblühen. Du erstarrest zuletzt, Du schauerst zurück, Du Armer! der Du Dich zum Gott träumtest, welcher ihr den lebendigen Odem einhauchte; ein todttes Bild ist Deine Liebe (III, p. 73-74).

Claudine is depicted as a woman incapable of love. She is contrasted with Lucie, who is also compared to the statue of Pygmalion. Lucie exuded a 'göttlicher Hauch' and gave life to the statue, whereas Claudine is depicted as dead to any emotion. However, the narrator is not just criticising Claudine. The reference to Pygmalion shows that men are responsible for their own fate. Indeed, Admont is criticised for getting carried away with emotion and drawing his own speedy conclusion that Claudine is to be his wife. Thus Admont is not entirely

blameless, rather he has a part to play in his own disappointment and deception. While discussing his marriage proposal, he says: 'Sie hatte kaum Ja gesagt. Er hielt ihr leidsames Gewähren für die blöde Zurückhaltung der Braut und freute sich darüber' (III, p. 82).

As Claudine's wedding draws closer, death comes to define her. Just one hour before her ceremony, she 'saß wie eine aufgerichtete geschmückte Leiche in einem Armsessel' (III, p. 101). The theme of death continues when Eugen, after a letter from Claudine informing him of her marriage, threatens her in his reply with suicide. At this point of the story the narrator criticises Claudine for her deception. Her role-playing is highlighted in a passage that links the start of Claudine's new life with the death of Eugen: 'In den Gardinen ihres Brautbetts sollte ihm [Eugen] der Vorhang des Lebens fallen' (III, p. 104). In effect, Claudine is an actress. In love with one man but marrying another, she is responsible not only for her own misfortune but also for the unhappiness of the men in her life.

As soon as Claudine and Admont are married, Admont adopts the role of the controlling and powerful husband, who refers to Claudine as his 'Eigenthum' (III, p. 107). After less than a day of being a married woman, Claudine confesses to him that her sole reason for marrying was to become a widow. She divorces Admont before the marriage is consummated and re-establishes herself as the independent and assured woman she once was: 'Sie nahm nichts an, selbst seinen Namen gab sie zurück, und ließ sich nach wie vor Fräulein von Unstern nennen' (III, p. 120). It would thus seem that 'Unstern', 'misfortune', is to be Claudine's destiny.

In volume IV Claudine tells Lucie that she believes her lack of mother is at the root of her bad luck:

Ein unseliges Geschick waltete schon um meine Wiege, eine Mutter hatte ich nie – und in der Hölle lernt man nicht lieben. Den heiligsten Namen in der Natur durfte ich nicht nennen im Hause meines Vaters. O! hätte ich eine Mutter gehabt, die meine zarte Jugend behütete! – Wohl denen, die dieses Segens genießen, wäre es auch vom tiefsten Grabe aus! Das Grab einer Mutter, Frau von Gardemer, ist, ob auch ein kleiner Hügel nur, doch ein heiliger Berg für die Wallfahrt eines Kindes, es steht dort dem Himmel näher und erreicht knieend eine sittliche Stufe nach der andern (IV, p. 38).

Claudine's search, and intense longing for her mother, is depicted as a pilgrimage. The religious vocabulary is striking in the above passage. Claudine's existence is compared to hell on earth without a mother and she feels jealous of those who are 'blessed' enough to have the loving influence and protection of a mother. Moreover, Claudine comes to view her desire for autonomy and freedom as the results of growing up without a mother's love: 'So reifte mein jungfräulicher Stolz an einer Empörung gegen die natürlichsten Gefühle. Ich verachtete die Liebe, schuf mir ein Traumbild von Glück außerhalb ihrem magischen Kreise, und fühlte mich jeder Versuchung und jedem Mann überlegen – Jedem!' (IV, p. 39). Claudine is realising that, in her desire to be autonomous and live without love, a quality perceived as woman's natural and proper destiny, she has transgressed against the laws of true womanhood. Her idea of fulfilment does not coincide with society's; Claudine strove to find her happiness independent of men and love, the 'magische[r] Kreis'. Once again, reference is made to Claudine's feelings of superiority, but, on this occasion as the quotation suggests, she starts to become aware that this is an aspect of her character in need of change. It is Lucie's function as an angelic and pious woman to rectify this 'error' of existence.

Lucie shows Claudine the error of her ways by forging a link between female independence and unhappiness:

Das Streben nach Selbständigkeit, liebe Unstern, ist für unser Geschlecht wohl immer mit Gefahr verknüpft. Wir sollten nun einmal abhängig sein; in unserer Schwäche liegt auch unser Schutz, und die Liebe ist des Weibes Leben (IV, p. 39).

Thus begins Claudine's process of education, expressed in the phrase 'die Liebe ist des Weibes Leben'. Lucie advocates female weakness and acts as a motherly example to Claudine as Pauline did for Franzisca. Through Lucie's influence, Claudine comes to realise that her previous autonomous behaviour was destructive. She acknowledges that her desire to be free 'war mein Verderben' (IV, p. 39). Lucie attempts to ease Claudine's pain by advocating Christianity and a submission to God: 'Erheben Sie sich zu Ihm, gute Claudine!

dann neigt er sich wieder. – Wir alle ruhen ja am Herzen Gottes' (IV, p. 40). As part of her religious beliefs, Lucie tells Claudine to forgive and forget all that has been inflicted upon her. The narrator rewards both Claudine and Lucie at the end of the novel for their shift in beliefs and attitudes; Claudine meets her real mother, and Lucie takes on a motherly role towards Perle.

Lucie's portrayal as an angelic widow with a permanent relationship to death is again highlighted when Blume Moschel, Perle's mother and Lucie's late husband's mistress, dies. Lucie is present with the family when she dies and is perceived by them as 'ein Engel' (IV, p. 43). Lucie shows strength of character at this difficult time, and uses the death of Blume to her personal advantage, probing the now widowed Ephraim about her late husband. It transpires that Perle, whose age is not given and whom Lucie believed to be the child of Ephraim and his wife, is in fact the daughter of her husband and Ephraim's wife. Just as her husband bullied Lucie during marriage so he bullied Blume, Ephraim's wife. Major von Gardemer called her 'eine Närrin' (IV, p. 59) and ridiculed her 'Thorheit' (IV, p. 59). Lucie is depicted as feeling shame and even guilt at her realisation of her husband's behaviour, yet she does not show any signs of anger or pain at his deception. Rather she focuses on her gain and claims possession of Perle: 'Perle ist mein' (IV, p. 62), making plans to take care of Perle's future. By assuming this maternal role Lucie's sense of purpose greatly increases. For the first time she becomes assertive and dominant, telling Ephraim what is best for Perle and insisting that he follow her advice. Motherhood has given her a voice and a clear sense of purpose. Furthermore, it is implied that her natural role as mother enables her to fulfil her social role as wife: 'Sie durfte ihren Troja lieben' (IV, p. 49).

The virtuous and maternal Lucie offers Ephraim her house and does so altruistically in contrast to the selfish and damaging behaviour of her late husband. Yet, when she suggests that Perle should live with the devout Pauline after Lucie's own marriage to Troja, Lucie's

decisions and actions in this instance are described as a combination of generosity and of jealous mistrust:

So waren es jetzt zarte Gefühle weiblicher Großmuth und weiblicher Schwäche, welche in diesem Falle ihre Handlungsweise bestimmten. Daß sie sich mütterlich mit dieser Perle befaßte, war eine Sühne für die Manen der Mutter – und das Frau von Gardemer das Kind dieses Vaters fremder Leitung anvertrauen wollte, geschah meist aus Vorsicht. Sie fürchtete, ihr künftiger Gemahl könnte wie der vorige, auch ein Judenmädchen schön finden. – Lucie konnte trotz Trojas Versicherung sich noch nicht von dem bangen Zweifel befreien, ihm auf die Dauer zu genügen. – So wollte sie ihr bleiches Bild nicht sogleich gegen den aufblühenden Reiz des Mädchens in Schatten stellen. Wir preisen Lucie deshalb weise (IV, p. 67).

The narrator praises Lucie's wisdom in a dry, almost cynical comment. Her fear that Troja may find Perle attractive is indicative of Lucie's deep suspicion of men, just as Lucie's stepmother was afraid of Lucie's 'aufblühender Reiz' earlier in the novel. That exactly the same expression is employed to illustrate Lucie's fear of Perle shows how women's behaviour is destructive to other women, and how this same behaviour is learnt and internalised. The narrator's comment, however, indicates that women must always allow for men's weakness.

Thanks to Lucie's influence, Perle converts to Christianity following the death of her mother. Christianity is depicted predominantly as a religion bound up with suffering and pain. Lucie instills a belief in Perle that 'ein Herz, das Gott vertraut, über jeder schmerzlichen Erfahrung stehe' (IV, p. 75). Lucie has been able to bear the burden of her pain through her Christian religion, and she teaches this to Perle. This drastic change in Perle makes Lucie feel 'lebenslang mütterlich' (IV, p. 76), despite the fact that Perle is to be looked after by Pauline. Claudine also undergoes an important change thanks to Lucie, for she, like Franzisca and Lucie, has a lesson to learn. When the reader was first introduced to Claudine, she was depicted as a woman without a heart and feelings, something which was exposed in her 'marriage' to Admont. When she meets Troja in volume IV, he has not met her but knows of her due to her relationship with Admont and she is again portrayed as a cunning flirt.

Claudine 'kannte die Macht des Gefühls nicht' (IV, p. 96). Yet her behaviour destabilises Troja and puts her in the position of power:

Claudine wünschte sich ihm von einer besseren Seite zu zeigen, und ließ einige bleiche Farben vom Prisma der Coquetterie auf ihn spielen. Der Capitain bemerkte scharf, aber doch nur wie ein Mann, das heißt: wie Einer, der sich nie dem Einflusse weiblicher Versuche entziehen kann, ihm gefallen zu wollen. – Er hatte ein ungünstiges Vorurtheil gegen die Grausame gehabt; und er fand ein schönes, interessantes, mildes Wesen in Claudine, unfähig einen Wurm zu kränken, mit leidender Miene, die ihn entwaffnete (IV, p. 96).

The narrator shows how women can wield power through weakness and gentleness and how men all too easily fall prey to this and surrender to feminine charms, even intelligent men like Troja. Yet the balance of power is immediately restored on the following page and the male, Troja, is placed in the position of power. Troja may not be sure what to think of Claudine, but she is certain about her perceptions of him. He is depicted as an authoritative and powerful man, and this is what awakens sentiments of respect for the male sex within her:

Sie blieb ihm scheu entgegen, wenn auch wachsam, ihn anzuziehen - ; doch der Augenblick, wo Troja gewankt hätte, kam nimmer. Sein männlicher Charakter führte Claudine auf das Gefühl der Weiblichkeit zurück. Sie meinte, es wäre ein unnennbares Glück, von solch einem entschiedenen Manne geliebt und beschützt zu werden. Sie lernte jetzt erst die Anfangsgründe der wahren Liebe kennen; ihre frühere war ein falsches Buchstabiren von Empfindungen gewesen, was die fertige Schülerin nie dahin kommen ließ, das ewige Gesetz der Natur und Genesis zu lesen: "Er soll Dein Herr sein! und der Wille des Weibes soll dem Manne unterthan sein!" Jetzt glänzten ihr die goldenen Lettern dieser Urschrift Gottes (IV, p. 97-98).

The above passage illustrates how Claudine has come a long way since her first appearance in the novel. Thanks to the strong and masculine Troja, Claudine comes to realise that she too needs to find love with a mature and powerful man. In this respect, Claudine is rescued by Troja. Moreover, she sees her mistake in perceiving herself as superior to men; this the novel needs to redress. Claudine too is a 'Schülerin', a repressed being as Franzisca and Lucie were, who longs for male protection and who is only coming to discover the importance of

love, the superiority of man, and God's laws. Once again, the natural laws of womanhood – femininity, admiration of the male sex and love – become interchangeable with God's will. In fact, the laws of Nature and the Bible are portrayed as one and the same. Now that Claudine has gained an insight into the true ideology of natural womanhood, she is rewarded by meeting the mother she never knew.

Claudine's mother suddenly appears at her house one evening shortly after Claudine realises that she needs to find love with the right man. She is a widow characterised by her 'fromme Demuth' and 'Kummer' (IV, p. 105). When Frau von Gorse, as the mother is called, reveals who she is, Claudine is overcome by a sense of belonging and purpose: 'Jetzt ist alles, alles gut! Ich weiß, wohin ich gehöre. Ich habe eine Pflicht, die mich an das Leben bindet' (IV, p. 107). Claudine, who was formerly associated with death and portrayed as a cold marble statue and a painted corpse, is now a figure of life embodying purpose. Once again, motherhood and purpose are intertwined. Claudine finds love and protection from her mother: 'Sie ruheten Beide Hand in Hand, Claudine zum ersten Mal unter dem Schutz der mütterlichen Nähe' (IV, p. 118).

Claudine is not the only woman in *Die Wittwen* who comes to find love and purpose in a mother-child relationship rather than in one with a man. The narrator portrays a liberated widow, Frau von Kleist, who contrasts with the depictions of Franzisca and Lucie in that she is not bound up with death. Moreover, Frau von Kleist serves to undermine the negative perception of widows in society as figures bound up with death. She is presented to the reader from Claudine's perspective:

Ein Wagen fuhr vor. Man meldete eine Dame, welche, wie Frau von Unstern gegen einen schon anwesenden Gast bemerkte, kürzlich Wittwe geworden war. Claudine machte sich auf ein ältliches betrübtetes Gesicht gefaßt, auf traurige Reminiscenzen. Sie hörte im Geiste Klagelieder und das Bimmeln und Bammeln einer Stimme, die das Sterbeglöckchen nachläutete. Aber herein trat eine Dame in voller jugendlicher Frische, mit rosenrothen Wangen, und vergnügt wie eine Königin – würden wir sagen, wenn das Sprichwort paßte. An ihrer Hand hing ein idealisch schönes Kind, ein Mädchen von drei Jahren. In blühende Farben war die Dame selbst, und was sie

sprach, gekleidet (III, p. 35).

Frau von Kleist, unlike Franzisca and Lucie, has an ‘idealisch schönes Kind’, and this is what constitutes her happiness. She is the very image of vitality, colour and life, and this, it is suggested, is the result of having a child and finding one’s role in life as a mother. Another example of this is Lucie’s ‘reizender Farbenwechsel’ (IV, p. 63) when she takes possession of Perle. Moreover, Frau von Kleist is the epitome of the merry widow and is adamant that she will never remarry:

Nimmermehr! Meine Freiheit war theuer genug erkaufte, als daß ich sie nicht zu schätzen wissen sollte. Ich will meines Lebens froh werden, im Fluge ein Stückchen von dieser schönen Erde sehen, und nicht wie ein brütendes Weibchen daheim das Nest hüten (III, p. 37).

Frau von Kleist is a widow who is able to enjoy her freedom, for she has fulfilled her natural role and through her and her comments, the kind of self-abnegation practised by Lucie is criticised. At the end of the story the theme of motherhood returns in the discussion of Franzisca’s remarriage to Admont.

### **Happily ever after. The end**

In the last nine pages of *Die Wittwen* the narrator draws the story to a close and talks directly to the reader, taking each of the characters in turn in an attempt to close the work neatly. The end of the novel reinforces and resolves its romantic message – that the widows and Claudine need to find love and happiness with the right man. In *Die Wittwen* the narrator shows that it is not only men who save women, as is the case with Troja and Lucie, for example, but that women can rescue men too, as Franzisca does with Admont. As the narrator talks through the ending with the reader, she highlights how each character is right for their mate. Starting with Franzisca, the narrator implies that this widow, who was depicted with a

repressed longing for motherhood in volume II, will find her natural calling in her marriage to Admont:

Trage das gute heftige Herz, geheilt vom Dornenstich der alten Liebe, in die Rosen von Gimle, und dieser Ort sei Dir immerdar ein Wohnsitz der Ruhe und Seligkeit. Wir hoffen, da Deine Wange wieder aufblüht wie in frühester Jugend – die Natur, um Dich wesentlich genesen zu lassen, werde Dir auch etwas zu pflegen und zu ziehen geben; denn die Mutterliebe ist für Frauen von kränklichen Gefühlen ein göttliches Arcanum (IV, p. 122-123).

Lucie finds her purpose in being maternal to Perle, and now, the narrator suggests, it is Franzisca's turn to fulfil her natural and highest duty as a woman. In her discussion of Franzisca the reader is further reminded that Felice is not the right man for her, as it was not love she felt for him, but passion: 'denn die Zukunft berichtigt immer die thörichte Vergeblichkeit unserer Schmerzen und dem Irrthum leidenschaftlicher Gefühle' (IV, p. 123). Clearly 'passion' is the mistake and this is not to be confused with love. In a similar way, it is suggested that the younger passionate Eugen was not the right man for Claudine. At the end of the novel Claudine and Eugen are reunited, and the narrator presents the reader with a changed picture of him: 'Er war männlicher geworden und sehr viel älter [...] Seine Gestalt hatte an Festigkeit gewonnen, Ruhe und Resignation hatten ihren stillen Ernst auf seine Züge' (IV, p. 120). Eugen has lost his previous intensity of feeling, and, similar to Troja, whom Claudine admired, Eugen is presented as masculine and able to feel a more mature love. The narrator shows that Eugen is now right for Claudine and they are to marry.

In volume IV the reader learns that Pauline and Ludwig, Franzisca's brother-in-law, are to marry. The cheerful Ludwig is portrayed as a perfect counterpart to the wise Pauline: 'denn ein fröhlicher Gefährte verschönt die Lebensreife' (IV, p. 125). By highlighting their most salient characteristics, good humour and wisdom respectively, the narrator is showing how they are to enhance one another in marriage. In a similar manner, the narrator illustrates how Lucie, who marries her childhood sweetheart as her second husband, has found a man

deserving of her love and he is, in turn, rewarded with the 'schönste treueste Seele' (IV, p. 125), the word 'treueste' reinforcing how Lucie is perfect for Troja. At the end of the novel, the narrator shows how Franzisca, Lucie and Claudine have moved beyond their former painful and miserable existences and are on the way to happy and fulfilled lives.

### **Conclusion**

Hanke's novel, in spite of its conventional ending, has aspects which remain unique for its time. Hanke acknowledges the widow's psychological complexities, gives her protagonists a voice, and delves into the subjective experiences of her heroines. As such, she resists the temptation to assign her widows a minor role. It is shown that her widows have rich and complex inner lives, but the tragedy is that as single women without men or children, these lives do not count for anything.

Franzisca and the independent orphan Claudine serve as primary agents for exploring potentially subversive female behaviour and exposing the injustices pertaining to women. Lucie, in contrast, serves as a model of virtuous widowed behaviour. That Hanke's female characters differ so greatly in their motives and feelings at the start of the novel, but then enter into the same future with the same beliefs at the end, highlights women's lack of choices in nineteenth-century German society and the impossibility of resistance.

Hanke's novel without a doubt serves a didactic purpose designed to transform her female readers into submissive women. Although there has been protest in the novel, shown through the figures of Franzisca and Claudine, these women convert to resigned and conventional figures in the end, hence abandoning their former selves. Similarly, Hanke shows how woman should be the companions, and not the rivals, of men. Compliance, rather than independence, is the key to appropriate femininity. Franzisca's power struggle with Ludwig

at the start of the story, for example, became resolved when she adopted the role of the ‘charming’ and ‘beautiful’ female following her stay in Klostergarten.

In marriage Hanke depicts motherhood as the one positive experience in a woman’s life. Hanke is rather cynical about marriage, as the implication is that motherhood brings greater fulfilment to women than marriage. The bleak depiction of marriages in the novel further supports this. Frau von Kleist is the only widow to be portrayed as happy and fulfilled. She is liberated *and* has a child. Surely this is no coincidence. Female desire and romance, with its many obstacles, is not portrayed in the same positive way as is the experience of motherhood. When Lucie takes on a maternal role, for example, she becomes jubilant and radiant. Marriage, unlike motherhood, is seen as a duty and not as a divine gift from heaven, yet it is marriage which remains the paradigmatic experience of women’s lives.

In her study of widows in the English novel, Karen Bloom Gevirtz argues that widowhood is used as a tool to model virtuous, female behaviour in opposition to selfish and self-interested activity.<sup>21</sup> The same can be said of Hanke’s novel. Hanke is teaching her female readers through the examples of Franzisca and Lucie that women should avoid using the power inherent in widowhood and instead use their wealth to help the community at large. Lucie helps Ephraim by offering to purchase him a house, and Franzisca helps Felice’s family by sharing her property. The widows’ potential for social good is thus highlighted, and in their capacity as nurturers for the community they compensate for the destruction of the domestic idyll brought about by the male characters.

Gottfried Keller’s *Der grüne Heinrich*, the subject of the next chapter, also analyses the portrayal of motherhood, virtuous behaviour, and money in connection with widowhood. Yet a crucial difference is that the widowed mother is defined by her poverty.

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<sup>21</sup> Karen Bloom Gevirtz, *Life after Death. Widows and the English Novel, Defoe to Austen* (Cranbury: Associated University Presses, 2005), p. 22.

### Chapter III

#### The ambiguous widow. The portrayal of Frau Lee and Judith in Gottfried Keller's *Der grüne Heinrich*

##### Introduction

Keller's *Der grüne Heinrich* depicts the predominantly destabilising and ambiguous role of the widow.<sup>1</sup> Keller's novel was first published in 1854/55 and then revised, reworked and published in a second version in 1879/1880. It is the first version which will form the focus of this chapter.

*Der grüne Heinrich* does not have a plot in the usual sense of that term, but recounts the life-story of the protagonist Heinrich Lee. Briefly summarised, it is the story of the growth of a child to manhood; the story of an unsuccessful artist, who discovers that his true calling is to be found in service to society. The novel is dominated by the great themes of art and love, in which lengthy descriptions of Heinrich's choice of profession, his development as a painter, and his awakening to love, take precedence. The novel is divided into four volumes. The first is dedicated to Heinrich's childhood and his problems with religion and school. The reader is introduced to Heinrich's widowed mother, Frau Lee, whose strict and pious lifestyle is highlighted. In the second volume, Heinrich decides on his profession as an artist and undertakes his first apprenticeship to an engraver and Christmas card artist. At the end of the volume he goes to Munich to study landscape painting and meets two painters, Erikson and Lys. Throughout this volume, Heinrich is awakened to feelings of love for two contrasting

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<sup>1</sup> Gottfried Keller, *Der grüne Heinrich. Erste Fassung. Sämtliche Werke in fünf Bänden. Band 2*, ed. by Thomas Böning and Gerhard Kaiser (Frankfurt am Main: Deutscher Klassiker, 1985). The majority of criticism on the novel dates from the 1960s and 1970s. For example, Hanspeter Gsell, *Einsamkeit, Idyll und Utopie: Studien zum Problem von Einsamkeit und Bindung in Gottfried Kellers Romanen und Novellen* (Frankfurt am Main: H. Lang, 1976), Hartmut Laufhütte, *Wirklichkeit und Kunst in Gottfried Kellers Roman 'Der grüne Heinrich'* (Bonn: Bouvier, 1969) and Louis Wiesmann, *Gottfried Keller: Das Werk als Spiegel der Persönlichkeit* (Frauenfeld: Huber, 1967).

women, the young and innocent Anna and the beautiful widowed Judith. In both versions of the novel, Heinrich's vivid imagination, intensified by his teachings in art and literature, colours his view of reality throughout his life and has a profound impact on how he views women. His creativity is also heavily inspired by the women he meets, notably the young Anna and the widow Judith. Lucie Karcic points out that Heinrich comes to associate his childhood friend Anna with purity and the colour white, and Judith with darkness and sexuality,<sup>2</sup> while Richard Ruppel argues that in his love for Anna and Judith Heinrich struggles between 'reality and imagination' and between 'nature and ideal'.<sup>3</sup> Anna is representative of the ideal and the imaginative, whereas Judith represents the 'real, worldly, natural, and socially well adapted young woman'.<sup>4</sup> Heinrich's relationship to Judith grows and develops following Anna's death in the third volume of the story. Early in this volume, Heinrich learns that Anna has been unwell. During her illness his relationship to Judith matures and intensifies. Heinrich sees her every day, although it makes him feel disloyal to Anna. In the final volume, the extent of Frau Lee's self-sacrifice and devotion to her son is highlighted through her bleak letters. As a consequence, Heinrich feels a sense of guilt which follows him in his dreams about returning home to his mother. Although both versions of the novel have these points in common, there are still many differences between them.

The first major difference between the two versions is that Heinrich dies at the end of the first version, but lives on in the second version in order to embrace a socially responsible position as a civil servant. Thus the Heinrich of the revised version

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<sup>2</sup> Lucie Karcic, *Light and Darkness in Gottfried Keller's 'Der grüne Heinrich'* (Bonn: Bouvier, 1976), p. 68.

<sup>3</sup> Richard R. Ruppel, *Gottfried Keller and His Critics. A Case Study in Scholarly Criticism* (Columbia: Camden House, 1998), p. 128.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 128.

places community needs before personal desires. The second major difference is that Judith's bathing scene, in which she is compared to a siren and a marble statue, is omitted in the 1879/80 version. This famous scene will be examined in some detail below. Thirdly, Judith, whose age is reduced by eight years in the second version, is banished from the story in the earlier version, whereas in the story of 1879/80 she is brought back in the last chapter, where she returns from a ten-year stay in America working in an orphanage. Fourthly, Heinrich returns to attend his mother's funeral procession at the end of the first version, before dying himself, whereas in the second version he finds her on her deathbed. The fifth and final change is that in the version of 1854/55 the story is narrated in the third person, whereas in the second edition it is narrated in the first person.

### **The widowed mother**

Frau Lee plays a central and important role in both versions of the story, but particularly in the first version. Daniel Rothenbühler labels the version of 1854/55 a 'Mutterroman', and argues that Frau Lee is as important a character as Heinrich.<sup>5</sup> Critics have read the mother-son relationship on many levels, ranging from 'eine verkorkste Beziehung', through to a 'literarisch verarbeiteter Inzestwunsch'.<sup>6</sup> While this chapter does not deny the significance of the mother's role in the novel or the closeness of their relationship, its focus instead will be on the aspect of power and the problems inherent in Heinrich's fixation on his father. The relationship between mother and son, is, to begin with, characterised by closeness, exclusivity and

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<sup>5</sup> Daniel Rothenbühler, *Der grüne Heinrich 1854/55: Gottfried Kellers Romankunst des 'Unbekannt-bekannt'* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2002), p. 295.

<sup>6</sup> Rolf Selbmann, *Gottfried Keller. Romane und Erzählungen* (Berlin: Erich Schmidt, 2001), p. 19.

intimacy, though without sexual undertones. This relationship then evolves into a power struggle once Heinrich leaves the family home and tries to find his place in the world.

Frau Lee is presented as a figure of darkness. The first the reader learns of her is that she is a forty-five year-old woman with coal black hair. Her darkness not only manifests itself physically but also emotionally. She is described as devoid of feeling and she punishes her son with silence. She is further perceived as embedded in the dark world owing to the atmosphere of poverty and frugality which she creates following her husband's death. Towards the end of the novel her life is defined by the concept of 'nichts'; she has learnt the art of living with the bare minimum, 'von nichts zu leben' (p. 699) and she eats a 'schwarze Suppe' (p. 699) every day. She leaves her house only once a week and even on these occasions she behaves in a manner that is 'zurückhaltend', 'knapp' and 'ängstlich' (p. 702) to those around her. Contrasting with this figure of darkness, Heinrich's father represents for him the world of light, as Karcic points out.<sup>7</sup> At the start of the story the narrator paints a picture of Herr Lee as a man of imagination and free spirit, who is perceived by the villagers as a heroic and independent figure. Heinrich becomes even more obsessed with his father owing to the glowing stories his mother recounts about Herr Lee's life and travels.

Rothenbühler points out that this fixation on the father figure, coupled with such a positive portrayal of him, serves both to account for and to highlight the extreme polarisation of the sexes in the novel.<sup>8</sup> This polarisation is most clearly portrayed through images of active men contrasted with pictures of powerless and helpless women. Frau Lee's powerlessness is reflected in the many images of her spinning.

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<sup>7</sup> Karcic, *Light and Darkness*, p. 28.

<sup>8</sup> Rothenbühler, *Der grüne Heinrich 1854/55*, p. 295.

First and foremost, her spinning serves to show how she is trapped in an activity, ‘die um die Mitte des 19. Jahrhunderts ökonomisch und sozial völlig entwertet ist’.<sup>9</sup> Thus her spinning serves no practical purpose. Moreover, spinning does not bring her happiness. The only time Frau Lee finds enjoyment in this activity is in Heinrich’s dreams.<sup>10</sup> In reality, however, her constant spinning serves to reinforce her helplessness. Frau Lee’s sole activities in the novel are spinning, washing, and writing letters to Heinrich. Interestingly, in all said activities, she emerges as both a helpless woman *and* a powerful figure simultaneously, and this paradox constitutes her ambiguity.

Rothenbühler draws attention to Frau Lee’s ‘Machtanspruch als Hausfrau’.<sup>11</sup> Indeed, the vocabulary which Keller employs when examining her role as a housewife paints a picture of a determined and energetic woman. She is reported to take care of the household ‘mit wahren Fanatismus’ (p. 66-67). Expressions of power and vigour abound in the description of her activity: ‘Sie beherrschte mit Kraft und Meisterschaft das Füllen und Leeren einer Anzahl großer Speisekörper’ (p. 67). The word ‘beherrschen’ serves to show how Frau Lee is also a competent housewife. Furthermore, Heinrich remembers how, when he first left home and was dependent on financial support from his mother, she asserted her power over him by sending him money in small instalments, showing ‘auch ihr häuslicher Machteinfluß und die eiserne Gewohnheit der Bescheidenheit und des Respektes mit’ (p. 703). The word ‘eisern’ is indicative of her iron will, whereas ‘Gewohnheit’ suggests her tenacity and determination. These power-games continue even when Heinrich is not involved. Frau

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid., p. 302.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., p. 303.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., p. 300.

Lee's need for power is also manifested in her dealings with the other women at the market. Her sense of superiority comes to the fore when she critically observes others, for example, 'die munteren leichtsinnigen Dienstmägde' (p. 700). She also shows her contempt for these women, 'welche sich von den lustigen Metzgerknechten also betören ließen' (p. 700). That she is also a powerful force is shown in the way in which she is viewed by others. She is, for example, perceived as 'der Schrecken der Marktweiber' and 'die Verzweiflung der Schlächter' (p. 67). The words 'Schrecken' and 'Verzweiflung' suggest that she inspires fear in others. It appears that the more Frau Lee acts out her role as mother and housewife, the more able she is to provide herself with an identity.

The mother can assert her power over her son, and provide herself with an identity, by engrossing herself in her work as a housewife, therefore she carries out this role to the extreme. On countless occasions she displays her work to her son with a show of pride: 'ich habe das Tuch selbst gesponnen' (p. 19) or she tells him that his clothes will never be as good 'als ich es verfertigt habe' (p. 19). Frau Lee continually reminds Heinrich of his dependence on her, and by so doing, she gets a sense of self worth and feels validated as a mother. At the same time, it is her attention to detail, her extreme thrift and her preoccupation with her role as a housewife and mother, which makes her appear to Heinrich as a moral force to be feared, as Rothenbühler points out: '*als strengste Richterin*'.<sup>12</sup> Frau Lee shows her moral superiority on several occasions, the most notable being early on in the novel when Heinrich steals money from her. Through her sense of 'moralische Allmacht' she is further revealed as an egocentric

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid., p. 313. Rothenbühler's italics.

figure.<sup>13</sup> She is responsible for creating Heinrich's sense of guilty conscience. After finding out about his stealing, she looks at him with her 'strengen und bekümmerten Blick' (p. 180). Frau Lee is contrasted with the figure of Judith, who, later in the novel, teaches Heinrich how to live with his actions. Much later in the story, Heinrich gives a poor artist called Römer a loan. It transpires that he is unable to repay it, yet Heinrich is insistent that he should pay it back. This leads to Römer's utter destitution and insanity, which in turn leaves Heinrich feeling guilty. Heinrich looks for forgiveness firstly in his mother, then in Judith. Yet Frau Lee does not appease his conscience, rather she manifests her egotism; she insists that Römer finds the money somehow and demands it back in its entirety. Owing to her inability to forgive, she is set in opposition to Judith, who instills in Heinrich a sense of responsibility.

Frau Lee further creates a feeling of guilt in Heinrich through the tone and vocabulary employed in her letters to him. In her letters she informs Heinrich of her ever-increasing poverty and her withdrawal from the outside world. Heinrich exploits his mother's naïve innocence in financial matters to pursue his goal of becoming a landscape painter. He reflects on his own behaviour: 'Ich log, verleumdete, betrog oder stahl nicht, wie ich es als Kind getan, aber ich war undankbar, ungerecht und hartherzig unter dem Scheine des äußeren Rechtes' (p. 508). His dependence on her financial and moral support indebts him to her, and this increases the sense of individual guilt from which he suffers throughout the novel. Yet it appears that Frau Lee is not entirely the passive victim; she is depicted as basking in her self-induced isolation, 'sie schwelgte ordentlich in ihrer freiwilligen Askese' (p. 701). For a long time Heinrich chooses not to write to his mother, but this merely serves to increase his

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid., p. 313.

feelings of guilt. Eventually, as Rolf Selbmann points out, this guilt catches up with Heinrich and pursues him in his dreams.<sup>14</sup> Heinrich's dreams serve to highlight three important points regarding his feelings towards, and perceptions of, his mother. The first of these is the guilt he feels and which he tries to remedy by rescuing her from her poverty and isolation; the second is Heinrich's creation of a masculine and domineering image of his mother; and the third is his attachment to his mother. As previously mentioned, Herr Lee represents the world of light and Frau Lee represents the world of darkness, but in one of Heinrich's dreams of his mother, it is she who is placed in the light world. Thus it is shown how she oscillates between the realms of the feminine and the masculine in Heinrich's imagination, thereby serving as both a mother and a father figure:

Da sah er, anstatt in ein Gemach hinein, in einen herrlichen Garten hinaus, der im Sonnenlichte lag, und dort glaubte er zu sehen, wie seine Mutter im Glanze der Jugend und Schönheit, angetan mit seidenen Gewändern, durch die Blumenbeete wandelte (p. 780).

This ambiguity, shown by the verb 'glauben', is replaced by certainty when the dream changes and Heinrich sees his mother 'deutlich, alt und grau und bleich, hinter der dunkeln Scheibe sitzen, wie sie in tiefen Sinnen ihren Faden spann' (p. 781). In reality, therefore, she has no place in this light world as embodied by Herr Lee. Instead, she is returned to her rightful realm of darkness, 'hinter der dunklen Scheibe'. Heinrich attempts to rescue his mother from her poverty and seclusion: 'Heinrich streckte die Arme nach dem Fenster empor; als sich die Mutter aber leise rührte' (p.

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<sup>14</sup> Selbmann, *Gottfried Keller*, p. 20.

781). Yet, as Thomas Heckendorn writes, he fails to save his mother from her bleak and poverty-stricken lifestyle.<sup>15</sup>

Heinrich's other dream of his mother presents Frau Lee as in between the masculine light world and the feminine dark world. In the same section of the novel, Heinrich dreams of both a domineering and controlling mother and a mother who spoils him.

He dreams of a small meadow, in the middle of which is his mother:

Sie hütete mit einer grünenden Rute eine kleine Herde großer Silberfasanen, und wenn einer sich aus ihrem Umkreise entfernen wollte, schlug sie leise auf seine Flügel, worauf einige glänzende Federn emporschwebten und in der Sonne spielten. Am Bächlein aber stand ihr Spinnrad, das mit Schaufeln versehen und eigentlich ein kleines Mühlrad war und sich blitzschnell drehte; sie spann nur mit der einen Hand den leuchtenden Faden, der sich nicht auf die Spule wickelte, sondern kreuz und quer an dem Abhange herumzog und sich da sogleich zu großen Flächen blendender Leinwand bildete. Diese stieg höher und höher hinan, und plötzlich fühlte Heinrich ein schweres Gewicht auf seiner Schulter und merkte, daß er den vergessenen Mantelsack trug, der von den feinen Hemden ganz geschwollen war. Indem er sich mühselig damit schleppte, sah er wie die Fasanen plötzlich schöne Bettstücke waren, die seine Mutter sonnte und eifrig ausklopfte (p. 767-768).

This dream has been interpreted by Heckendorn as symbolic of Heinrich's 'Mutterbindung' and as a symbiosis of good and evil.<sup>16</sup> On the one hand, the mother strives to spoil her son, yet it is precisely owing to her 'Fürsorge',<sup>17</sup> her 'grünende Rute' and the image of her preparing the beds that show how she controls Heinrich's relationships with other women. This in turn produces feelings of guilt and betrayal in him when he develops feelings for these women. Moreover, the reference to her 'Spinnrad' serves to show how she remains 'in fortwährender Tuchföhlung' with her son.<sup>18</sup> Thus she prevents Heinrich from developing relationships with women, and all his consequent relationships with women are revealed as linked to his mother. This

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<sup>15</sup> Thomas Heckendorn, *Die Problematik des Selbst in Gottfried Kellers Grünem Heinrich* (Bern: Peter Lang, 1989), p. 141.

<sup>16</sup> Heckendorn, *Die Problematik des Selbst*, p. 152.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 153.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 153.

dream illustrates how everything that Frau Lee offers Heinrich feels like a burden to him, ‘ein schweres Gewicht auf seiner Schulter’. He is unable to escape his mother; he is consumed by her and their lives are continually intertwined.

In his dreams Heinrich creates this more domineering and masculine image of his mother; she enters this world of light, as she needs to be both mother and father to him at the same time. His dreams also illustrate his guilt. In the second version of the novel, Heinrich manages to free himself from this burden of guilt, but in the first version, he is destined to remain indebted to his mother. A brief comparison of the two endings of *Der grüne Heinrich* shows how both mother and son are united in their respective feelings of guilt.

The first version of *Der grüne Heinrich* ends with Heinrich returning home to his mother’s funeral procession, whereas in the second version he returns to find her on her deathbed. The first version illustrates how Heinrich does not manage to break free from his mother. He fails to be a successful man and follow in his father’s footsteps. Instead, as Rothenbühler points out, he follows his mother in death: ‘Zum Schluss wird Heinrich nicht die Vaternachfolge im Leben gewährt, sondern die Mutternachfolge im Sterben’.<sup>19</sup> The novel comes full circle as Heinrich returns to his mother.

Hans Meier argues that seeing his mother on her deathbed in version two is the only time when Heinrich is able to understand his mother’s humanity. Thus he comes, to a certain extent, to make amends for the past and absolve his guilt. Contrasting with Heinrich’s easing conscience at the end of the story is a picture of a mother who is highly irresponsible. The reader learns that Frau Lee was forced to leave her house of

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<sup>19</sup> Rothenbühler, *Der grüne Heinrich 1854/55*, p. 293-294.

twenty-eight years because all her money and savings went to Heinrich, which highlights her lack of responsibility. It is also revealed that she never informed Heinrich of the real extent of her poverty and suffering, therefore leading him to believe that she was not so utterly destitute. At the end of the first version of the story it is she, not Heinrich, who is unveiled as dishonest.

### **Women, death and violence: Anna and Judith**

Just as there is an extreme polarisation of the sexes in the novel, shown in the contrasting portrayals of Frau and Herr Lee, the narrator polarises the figures of the child-like Anna and the seductive Judith. By so doing, he does not have to develop a full and mature relationship with either woman and the narrator is placed in a position of power. Yet what these women have in common is their link to violence and death. Selbmann points out that the narrator constructs his own image of women by connecting all the female characters with death.<sup>20</sup> In her recent study, Jennifer Cizik Marshall points out that Heinrich attempts to maintain control over his female counterparts through artistic creation. The female figure is represented; she is framed and made into an image. Woman as painting and portraiture, as Cizik Marshall argues, is ‘one of the most commonly deployed tropes of nineteenth-century fiction, which presents the woman as a violated, dead image, the product of her transformation by male creativity’.<sup>21</sup> Cizik Marshall argues that death normally signifies the end of male creativity,<sup>22</sup> but in *Der grüne Heinrich* Anna’s function as the narrator’s muse strengthens when she dies and the narrator forges a link between

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<sup>20</sup> Selbmann, *Gottfried Keller*, p. 34.

<sup>21</sup> Jennifer Cizik Marshall, *Betrothal, Violence, and The “Beloved Sacrifice” in Nineteenth-Century German Literature* (New York: Peter Lang, 2001), p. 60.

<sup>22</sup> Cizik Marshall, *Betrothal, Violence, and The “Beloved Sacrifice”*, p. 19.

death and artistic production. Moreover, the ‘banality of violence’ is also exercised on Anna and Judith. As Cizik Marshall writes:

Much of this violence borders on that kind of example that is sublimated into the representation itself, as that which is called “love” is manifested in a most cold and uncaring manner. Through this facilitating context of affection, violence is perpetrated against figures who are introduced into the narrative only to be perpetually marginalized into nothing more than a prop for the developing hero, a fetish behind which to hide the dangerous eroticism of the female body, and material to be sacrificed in the name of his creative urges. In a variation of this last theme, the woman or girl is often so repeatedly framed or observed by a male protagonist that her body seems subjected to vivisection, her presence becoming important only in that she provides a dwelling place for the hero’s solipsistic fantasies.<sup>23</sup>

Both Anna and Judith play critical roles in the development of Heinrich, yet both are exiled from the story and both have their individuality negated. In the first section of the novel, the young Heinrich shows a preference for Anna, who is described as virginal and angelic:

Schlank und zart wie eine Narzisse, in einem weißen Röckchen und mit einem himmelblauen Bande gegürtet, mit goldbraunem Haaren, blauen Äuglein, einer etwas eigensinnigen Stirne und einem kleinen lächelnden Mündchen (p. 248).

The association of Anna with a narcissus is important. Cizik Marshall points out that the narcissus and the fact that Anna’s clothing mirrors Heinrich’s ‘foreshadows the role Heinrich will assign to her as a blank canvas upon which to project his romantic fantasies’.<sup>24</sup> Andrew J. Webber seconds this interpretation and argues that Anna serves as an object for Heinrich’s narcissism.<sup>25</sup> The narrator comes to frame Anna as an aesthetic object. The descriptions of Anna which follow are formulaic and

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid., p. 177.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., p. 178.

<sup>25</sup> Andrew J. Webber, *The Doppelgänger. Double Visions in German Literature* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), p. 263.

disembodying, which ‘foreshadows and emphasises the problems the protagonist will experience with her as an erotic experience’.<sup>26</sup>

Heinrich’s relationship with Anna is characterised by his need to keep at a distance from her. Instead, he enjoys the fantasy and memory of Anna more than he longs for her actual presence. This is highlighted in a passage which demonstrates that Heinrich is in no hurry to see her. Cizik Marshall cites the following:

Indem ich jedoch mich nach dem Wiedersehen sehnte, war mir die Zwischenzeit und meine Unentschlossenheit gar nicht peinlich und unerträglich, vielmehr gefiel ich mir in diesem gedanken- und erwartungsvollen Zustande und sah einem zweiten Begegnen eher mit Unruhe entgegen (p. 265).

The expression of a desire for Anna is quickly negated by a desire to maintain distance and this is repeated throughout the novel, as Cizik Marshall writes.<sup>27</sup> On the one hand, Heinrich longs for Anna’s presence, but, on the other hand, he is worried by the actual implications of her presence. This is because he wants to see the pure and holy muse in Anna, and not the erotic temptress. His insistence on the polarisation of Anna and Judith makes him rule out the possibility that Anna could be anything other than the virginal girl. Already in his childhood this tension lies beneath the surface. When they are children a kitchen maid suggests that, if Heinrich can catch Anna’s finger while shelling beans, Anna must kiss Heinrich. Following this suggestion Anna changes into a dangerous seductress in Heinrich’s mind: ‘Die Mitternacht schien sie zu verwandeln, ihr Gesichtchen war ganz gerötet und ihre Augen glänzten vor Freude’ (p. 278). Yet this leads to a more dangerous encounter between them than just a kiss. Instead, Anna throws her arms around Heinrich’s neck and they recite together, and, ‘als das Liedchen zu Ende war, lagen unsere Lippen dicht aufeinander, aber ohne

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<sup>26</sup> Cizik Marshall, *Betrothal, Violence, and The “Beloved Sacrifice”*, p. 178.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 180.

sich zu regen; wir küßten uns nicht und dachten gar nicht daran, nur unser Hauch vermischte sich auf der neuen, noch ungebrauchten Brücke' (p. 279). Cizik Marshall points out that this metaphor of 'a new, as yet unused bridge is appropriate to this unexpectedly heated scene'.<sup>28</sup> However, Heinrich makes sure that this bridge is never crossed.

Some years after this encounter Anna appears again in the novel as a young woman. Heinrich feels threatened by the unfamiliarity of the new and mature Anna. He refuses to acknowledge that she is different to the child-like girl he once knew. It is Anna's death which teaches Heinrich that it is better that she is kept at a distance from him, for that way she cannot become the 'erotic property of another man', as Cizik Marshall puts it.<sup>29</sup> Yet Heinrich is described as largely unaffected regarding her death, he is 'ohne Schrecken oder heftigen Schmerz' (p. 527). Although Heinrich did not cause Anna's death, Cizik Marshall argues that 'Anna appears as a sacrificial victim, whose death allows Heinrich to experience the 'safe', limited form of continuity he so longed for'.<sup>30</sup> On her death-bed Anna is described as a beautiful work of art, which is typical of representations of dying and dead women in nineteenth-century German literature.<sup>31</sup> Her corpse is 'geschmückt' (p. 127). Through her death Heinrich feels he has achieved a marriage-like union with Anna and he appropriates her death for the purpose of his own spiritual elevation:

Ich sah alles wohl und empfand beinahe eine Art glücklichen Stolzes, in einer so traurigen Lage zu sein und eine so poetisch schöne tote Jugendgeliebte vor mir zu sehen [...] erst jetzt fiel es mir ein, daß wir unsterblich sind und fühlte mich durch ein unauflösliches Band mit Anna verbunden (p. 528).

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid., p. 181.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., p. 182.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., p. 183.

<sup>31</sup> See Elisabeth Bronfen, *Over her dead body. Death, femininity and the aesthetic* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1992), p. 59-75.

Heinrich seeks to heighten the ritualised and poetic experience of his own continuity through Anna's death, and the objectivity of his attitude towards Anna is presented as cruel and chilling. The representation of Anna in her coffin again serves to highlight the narrator's narcissism which is at work in his construction of women. The narrator frames Anna aesthetically in the following passage:

Ich glaube, die Glasscheibe [in Anna's coffin] tat es mir an, daß ich das Gut, was sie verschloß, gleich einem in Glas und Rahmen gefaßten Teil meiner Erfahrung, meines Lebens, in gehobener und feierlicher Stimmung, aber in vollkommener Ruhe begraben sah[...] (p. 450).

Webber argues that the glass over her body allows Heinrich to 'make a portrait of her', hence 'see her through an artistic lens' and place his experience of her 'in Glas und Rahmen' where it can be buried.<sup>32</sup> Webber further argues that Anna is not so much present as re-presented; she is invariably cast as 'Bild' - mental image, portrait, mirror-image'.<sup>33</sup> By framing his object, Heinrich can maintain his position as controlling voyeur. A similar process of 'representation' coupled with Heinrich's position as voyeur takes place with Judith. In terms of sexual expression, Judith stands in direct opposition to Anna. Cizik Marshall points out that, unlike Anna, Judith is not 'subjected to the same taboos created by the painter's eye', and thus 'the transgressive erotic is more pronounced'.<sup>34</sup> Judith is also aligned with a sphere of art, a 'Marmorbild' (p. 521) which will be discussed below. Yet this is not an art that Heinrich controls, but rather it is an art that controls him. Thus the power of Judith's threatening sexuality will be explored.

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<sup>32</sup> Webber, *The Doppelgänger*, p. 264.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 263.

<sup>34</sup> Cizik Marshall, *Betrothal, Violence, and The "Beloved Sacrifice"*, p. 187.

In her first appearance of the novel, Judith is compared to the dangerous seductress Lorelei and the emphasis is placed on her sensuality:

Sie galt für eine Art Lorelei, obschon sie Judith hieß, auch niemand etwas Bestimmtes oder Nachteiliges von ihr wußte. Dies Weib trat nun herein, vom Garten kommend, etwas zurückgebogen, da sie in der Schürze eine Last Frisch gepflückter Ernteäpfel und darüber eine Masse gebrochener Blumen trug. Dies schütterte sie alles auf den Tisch, wie eine reizende Pomona, daß eine Gewirre von Form, Farbe und Duft sich auf der blanken Tafel verbreitete (p. 225).

The reference to Pomona is indicative of her sensuality, but in the reference to apples and a garden, Judith is compared to the figure of Eve. Thus the element of danger is already suggested in her first portrayal. This interplay between Judith as Pomona and Judith as Eve makes her an ambiguous figure. Moreover, just as Anna was presented as a blank canvas upon which Heinrich could project his fantasies in her first appearance, the same is true of Judith, who is depicted as a 'blanke Tafel'. The reader expects, therefore, that Judith will be made into an image in a similar way to Anna.

The relationship between Judith and Heinrich is built on suggestiveness and restraint. It is the danger of Judith's sensuality which fascinates Heinrich throughout the novel. Everything that Judith does is steeped in the sensual and the suggestive, as the following passage, in which Judith is portrayed in her garden coming towards Heinrich with a basket of apples, goes some way to demonstrate:

Sie biß mit ihren weißen Zähnen entzwei, gab mir die abgebissene Hälfte und fing an die andere zu essen. Ich aß die meinige ebenfalls und rasch; sie war von der seltensten Frische und Gewürzigkeit, und ich konnte kaum erwarten, bis sie es mit dem zweiten Apfel ebenso machte. Als wir drei Früchte so gegessen, war mein Mund so süß erfrischt, daß ich mich zwingen mußte, Judith nicht zu küssen und die Süße von ihrem Munde noch dazuzunehmen (p. 487).

This passage presents Judith as a highly flirty widow. As in the story of Genesis, the temptation occurs after biting into the apple; Heinrich is tempted to kiss Judith after

taking bites out of three apples. Judith is further suggestive when she, immediately after offering Heinrich the apples, asks him: ‘bin ich dir lieb?’ (p. 487). Although she wants an honest response, she goes about getting it by almost seducing the sixteen-year-old Heinrich and making him verbalise his affection for her.

That their relationship is built on an interplay of suggestion and restraint is further shown early on in the story, after they have only met a few times. In the chapter entitled *Judith und Anna* Judith’s playful sexuality comes to the fore. The vocabulary which Keller uses to describe one of the first meetings between Judith and Heinrich clearly shows how Judith is able to capture the male imagination: ‘Auf diesen Wegen war ich häufig am Hause der schönen Judith vorübergekommen, und da ich eben deswegen, weil sie ein schönes Weib war, auch einige Befangenheit fühlte und Anstand nahm einzutreten, von ihr gebieterisch hereingerufen und festgehalten worden’ (p. 266). Moreover, as Karcic points out, this also shows how Judith asserts her autonomy and dominance, thus establishing the ground rules of their association.<sup>35</sup> Judith is evidently a sexual being, which is shown in the erotic undertones of her ‘games’ with the adolescent Heinrich. She is a widow associated with desire: ‘[...] Ich fing an zu spielen und Judith pflegte bald, ihre Hände in den Schoß legend, den meinigen ihr schönes Haupt zu überlassen und lächelnd die Liebkosungen zu erdulden, in welche das Spiel allmählig überging’ (p. 267). The word ‘Spiel’ adds a childish, innocent element to their activities, but on the next page the sexual references take on a more dangerous meaning owing to Heinrich’s discovered knowledge of Judith’s power and repressed sexuality. Heinrich remarks on

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<sup>35</sup> Karcic, *Light and Darkness*, p. 95.

Judith's 'innere Wünsche und Regungen' (p. 268), and they are even depicted as lovers:

Doch leistete sie, indem sie immer sitzen blieb, so kräftigen Widerstand, daß wir beide zuletzt heftig atmend und erhitzt den Kampf aufgaben und ich, beide Arme um ihren weißen Hals geschlungen, ausruhend an ihr hängen blieb; ihre Brust wogte auf und nieder, indessen sie, die Hände erschöpft auf ihre Knie gelegt, vor sich hin sah (p. 267).

That the former 'Spiel' has evolved into a 'Kampf' is symbolic of the power which Judith holds over Heinrich and the start of his fear of her, which he needs, but fails, to control.

The narrator's polarisation of Judith and Anna shows how he is doomed not to understand their full range of characteristics. The narrator views Judith solely as the erotic seductress. Yet she also reveals herself to be an intellectual and moral influence in Heinrich's life, as Anne Brenner points out.<sup>36</sup> It is with Judith, and not Anna, that Heinrich reads and hence develops an awareness of beauty. Furthermore, it is Judith who forces Heinrich to hear and admit the truth, shown in the incident with Römer. It is she who teaches him how to take responsibility and live with his actions: 'Die Vorwürfe deines Gewissens sind ein ganz gesundes Brot für dich, und daran sollst du dein lebenslang kauen, ohne daß ich dir die Butter der Verzeihung darauf streiche!' (p. 514-515). Heinrich may have a more exciting and open relationship with Judith than with Anna, but he is unsettled by the fact that she is in control and he comes to view their relationship as destructive. As Cizik Marshall points out, 'he fears the power of the vivacious and unfettered woman in a way he would never fear Anna'.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Anne Brenner, *Leseräume. Untersuchungen zu Lektüerverfahren und – funktionen in Gottfried Kellers Roman 'Der grüne Heinrich'* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2000), p. 114.

<sup>37</sup> Cizik Marshall, *Betrothal, Violence, and The "Beloved Sacrifice"*, p. 189.

That Judith is not just an erotic seductress is further shown through the portrayal of a minor figure, also a widow, called Rosalie, who embodies the stereotype of a lusty and deceitful widow. Rosalie is contrasted with Judith and she is subjected to Keller's irony as the merry and liberated widow who is out to capture men, unlike Judith, who is self-contained within her widowhood and rejects many suitors. Rosalie is depicted as a beautiful and happy widow, similar to Frau von Kleist in Hanke's *Die Wittwen*:

Sie war aber auch des längsten Anschauens wert; kaum vierundzwanzig Sommer alt, stand Rosalie liebreizend da, von der Rosenfarbe der Gesundheit und Lebensfrische überhaucht, von freundlichen Gesichtszügen, mit braunem Seidenhaar und noch brauneren lachenden Augen. (p. 574).

In his portrayal of Rosalie, Keller uses various stereotypes of the widow to mock her. First of all, Rosalie is a man-eater. She is on one occasion compared to Venus: 'und der Stern in ihren Locken glänzte wirklich wie der Stern der Venus' (p. 606). Yet during the Fastnacht celebrations she is seen stealing the painter Lys away from the young and innocent Agnes, who is frequently compared to Anna. Heinrich sees her as a man-hunting gold-digger. Moreover, Rosalie exemplifies the concept of 'Weiberlist'. Her crafty and somewhat deceitful nature comes to the fore when she invites guests to a drinks reception under the pretence of raising money for a poor seventeen-year-old boy, whose mother is homeless. It turns out, however, that the real reason for this reception is not to help the poor boy, but rather to announce her engagement to Erikson. She is thus crafty and not to be trusted, again unlike Judith.

It is largely owing to the narrator's relationship with Anna, her death and his contrasting her with Judith, which accounts for his construction of Judith as a Lorelei and a marble statue in her famous night bathing scene. It is also owing to his reading of Ariosto with Judith, Karcic argues, that the narrator comes to an appreciation of

sensual beauty and ‘die Macht der Worte’,<sup>38</sup> which impacts on how he views Judith bathing. In order to forget the sadness of Anna’s impending death, Heinrich and Judith submerge themselves in ‘eine frische glänzende Welt’ found in Ariostos *Orlando Furioso*.<sup>39</sup>

Wenn die in Schönheit leuchtenden Geschöpfe rastlos an uns vorüberzogen, von Täuschung zu Täuschung, und leidenschaftlich sich jagend und haschend, immer eins dem andern entschwand und ein drittes hervortrat, oder wenn sie in kurzen Augenblicken bestraft und trauernd ruheten von ihrer Leidenschaft, oder vielmehr sich tiefer in dieselbe hineinzuruhen schienen an klaren Gewässern, unter wundvollen Bäumen, so rief Judith “O kluger Mann! Ja, so geht es zu, so sind die Menschen und ihr Leben, so sind wir selbst, wir Narren!” (p. 518).

Heinrich and Judith discover a world of illusion in their reading and they come to identify with the characters. This removal from reality becomes a prerequisite for their nightly adventures at the Heidenstube. Even though they may be able to temporarily remove themselves from the real world, Heinrich’s fear of Judith still dominates.

Owing to the potentially dangerous relationship between Judith and Heinrich, Judith can be compared to the biblical heroine who bears her name. The biblical Judith of the Old Testament is an irresistible seductress who kills – but she does not die after her deed. Judith, therefore, is both seductive and dangerous. Heinrich explains the dangers of his attraction to Judith in the following:

Und doch liebe ich dich von ganzem Herzen und wenn du zum Beweis dafür verlangtest, ich sollte mir von dir ein Messer in die Brust stoßen lassen, so würde ich in diesem Augenblicke ganz still dazu halten und mein Blut ruhig auf deinen Schoß fließen lassen! (p. 449).

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<sup>38</sup> Karcic, *Light and Darkness*, p. 115.

<sup>39</sup> Karcic, *Light and Darkness*, p. 107.

The reference to violence aligns Judith with the Judith of the Old Testament. This element of violence is lacking in Heinrich's relationship to Anna. A further difference between the two women, which Cizik Marshall points out, is that, while Heinrich mythologises Anna, Judith is already her own mythology.<sup>40</sup> Judith is developed in terms of sculpture. In the famous night bathing scene at the Heidenstube, a scene that is omitted in the second version of the story, Judith is again portrayed as a flirty and dangerous seductress. Their relationship of suggestiveness and restraint reaches a climax where, during a moonlit walk, Judith springs naked into a pool. This is her deliberate attempt to entice Heinrich. The night bathing scene highlights how Judith, like Anna, is also represented as a product of the Imaginary, a 'Phantasiegebilde' or 'image of fancy' free from reality, as Webber points out.<sup>41</sup> While Judith is really in the water, she is also an image in the water:

Auf den Steinen lagen Kleider, zuoberst ein weißes Hemd, welches, als ich es aufhob, noch ganz warm war, wie eine soeben entseelte irdische Hülle. Es wurde mir wirklich unheimlich zumute, da die Stille der Nacht von einer dämonischen Absicht ganz getränkt erschien. Ich wollte eben Judith beim Namen rufen, als ich seltsame, halb seufzende, halb singende Töne vernahm, aus denen zuletzt ein deutliches altes Lied wurde. Sein Inhalt war die Tiefe des Wassers, etwas von Liebe und sonst nichts weiter; aber zuletzt war es von einem fast sichtbarem verführerischen Lächeln durchdrungen und von einem silbernen Geräusch begleitet, wie wenn jemand im Wasser plätschert und sich dasselbe in sanften Wellen gegen die Lenden schlägt (p. 520-521).

The scene is uncanny for Heinrich to behold. Judith's nudity is seen as both 'dämonisch' and 'unheimlich'. Upon hearing Judith singing, Heinrich conjures up an image of the Lorelei, shown through the vocabulary 'Tiefe des Wassers' and 'verführerisch'. This song enchants him with its seductiveness. On an unconscious level, Judith is a dangerous siren to Heinrich and thus this is how he creates her in this

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<sup>40</sup> Cizik Marshall, *Betrothal, Violence, and The "Beloved Sacrifice"*, p. 195.

<sup>41</sup> Webber, *The Doppelgänger*, p. 264.

passage. Dominik Müller argues that the phrase ‘entseelte irdische Hülle’ is indicative of how Judith is slowly being stripped of her personality.<sup>42</sup> Heinrich is beginning to transform her into an object; he is even unable to pronounce her name which shows how he is losing sight of her as a person.

Judith’s ambiguity is also revealed in this scene. On the one hand, she is clearly depicted as an erotic temptress who is out to seduce Heinrich, but, on the other hand, the scene also illustrates a more innocent aspect of her personality, for instance, her love of nature. She is portrayed as becoming one with nature: ‘Judith verschwand plötzlich von meiner Seite. Es wurde mir zumute, wie wenn Judith sich aufgelöst hätte und still in die Natur verschwunden wäre’ (p. 520). What is evident at the start of the scene is her enjoyment of nature, and through this, her innocence is revealed. In the following description her harmless enjoyment of nature is conveyed and she does not at this stage appear threatening:

Sie freute sich über diese Freiheit um ihrer selbst willen und nicht als Naturschwärmerei. Sie stellte daher keine gefühlvollen Betrachtungen über den Mondschein an, sondern sie rauschte mutwillig und rasch durch die Gebüsche, oder knickte halb unmutig manchen grünen Zweig, mit dem sie mir ins Gesicht schlug, als ob sie alles damit wegzaubern wollte, was zwischen mir und ihr lag (p. 519).

Her playful attitude comes to the fore in this passage. Judith is also portrayed as grounded in reality, shown by the fact that she neither romanticises nature, nor does she want her relationship with Heinrich to take on a poetic or romantic dimension, shown through the verb ‘wegzaubern’. It is Heinrich who views Judith as part of a poetic environment. Yet this should not be taken to mean that underneath a playful exterior there is not a dangerous woman, who tries to use her charm on Heinrich.

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<sup>42</sup> Dominik Müller, *Wiederlesen und Weiterschreiben. Gottfried Kellers Neugestaltung des ‘Grünen Heinrich’*. Mit einer Synopse der beiden Fassungen (Bern: Peter Lang, 1988), p. 189.

After Heinrich conjures up an image of Judith as a Lorelei, however, he then transforms the image of Judith in the water into an object larger than life:

Sie war bis unter die Brust im Wasser; sie näherte sich im Bogen und ich drehte mich magnetisch nach ihren Bewegungen. Jetzt setzte sie den weißen Fuß auf die trockenen Steine, sah mich an und ich sie; sie war nur noch drei Schritte von mir und stand einen Augenblick still; ich sah jedes Glied in dem hellen Lichte deutlich, aber wie fabelhaft vergrößert und verschönt, gleich einem überlebensgroßen alten Marmorbilde. Jetzt hob sie die Arme und bewegte sich gegen mich; aber ich, von einem heißkalten Schauer und Respekt durchrieselt, ging mit jedem Schritt, den sie vorwärts tat, wie ein Krebs einen Schritt rückwärts, aber sie nicht aus den Augen verlierend (p. 521).

Brenner argues that in this depiction of a marble statue the emphasis is placed on the *‘unwirkliche Ästhetik’*.<sup>43</sup> This is shown through the words *‘überlebensgroß’* and *‘verschönt’*. It is argued that the narrator creates an *‘abstraktes Kunstideal’* as he fears Judith’s sexuality and does not want it to find expression.<sup>44</sup> Thus as soon as Judith appears dangerous and threatening, like the Lorelei, she is turned into a statue. Heinrich secretly hopes that Judith may turn into stone and remain motionless. Through this image, moreover, Webber points out that Heinrich’s narcissistic identification is revealed. The *‘voyeuristic subject is magnetically drawn to re-turn the movements of the exhibited object’*:<sup>45</sup> *‘ich drehte mich magnetisch nach ihren Bewegungen’*.

The animal magnetism of the bathing scene, however, disrupts rather than compels desire. As Judith steps forward, Heinrich retreats. He responds to each of Judith’s steps forward with a step backwards, thus creating an *‘inverting mirror’*.<sup>46</sup> From now on, Heinrich will not remember Judith as she actually is, but rather as a vision: *‘der nächtliche Spuk, die glänzende Gestalt’* (p. 522). Like Anna, Judith is now ingrained

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<sup>43</sup> Brenner, *Leseräume*, p. 115. Brenner’s italics.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 116.

<sup>45</sup> Webber, *The Doppelgänger*, p. 265.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 265.

in his mind as a 'Bild', a 'mental image', and not as her real self. Judith thus undergoes a metaphorical death in this episode. Whereas Anna and Judith were formerly represented as polar opposites, they now serve the same purpose – by making them into eternal images, Karcic argues, Heinrich has freed himself from committing to reality.<sup>47</sup>

The bathing episode further serves to illustrate the paradoxical connection between nakedness and death.<sup>48</sup> Firstly, Judith's shirt which was lying on the stones was described as an 'irdische Hülle', and secondly, only when Judith begins to dress and their hypnotic eye contact comes to an end, is Heinrich able to approach her. By covering her body, Judith gives life back to Heinrich.<sup>49</sup> He is once again able to approach and touch her:

Ich trat unwillkürlich, meine eigene Verwirrung vergessend, hervor, half ihr zitternd den Rock über der Brust zuheften und reichte ihr das große weiße Halstuch. Hierauf umschlang ich ihren Hals und küßte sie auf den Mund, gewissermaßen um keinen müßigen Augenblick aufkommen zu lassen (p. 522).

In the final meeting between Judith and Heinrich before Judith's return in the last chapter of the second version, Heinrich tells her that he can no longer see her; he has come to say goodbye to her forever. Following the bathing scene, Heinrich feels he has to choose between his memory of Anna and the reality of Judith, and he chooses Anna and thus departs from Judith. Heinrich fears he is falling in love with Judith, which scares him for she does not represent stability to him. This is how Heinrich justifies deserting her, which is only part of the truth. Judith has in fact taken on a mythical dimension for Heinrich, which has come about due to his newly developed

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<sup>47</sup> Karcic, *Light and Darkness*, p. 110.

<sup>48</sup> Müller, *Wiederlesen und Weiterschreiben*, p. 191.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 191.

awareness of sensual beauty. This chapter marks the end of Heinrich's childhood. He is eighteen and about to start his military service and leave his childhood, his past, and Judith, behind. Following their conversation, Judith emigrates to America for ten years.

### **The two endings**

In the first version of the novel, Judith has been banished into non-existence at the end. This banishment is the price she has to pay for her sexuality and independence. In the second version of the text, Keller brings Judith back in the final chapter after her stay in America, but this does not mean that she is 'forgiven'. As Michael Minden argues, Judith's return in the second version symbolises the 'reappearance of the maternal woman figure' and hence the playing down of her former threatening sexuality.<sup>50</sup> Moreover, Cizik Marshall points out that Judith's 'sacrifice' is made in the form of expulsion rather than death'.<sup>51</sup>

A widow who dies or who is killed at the end of a story is nothing new. A widow who comes to represent life, however, is virtually unheard of in nineteenth-century German literature. Judith is an example of this rare outcome. Critics are generally united in the belief that Judith's re-emergence in the closing chapter presents a picture of a more positive, and indeed, more likeable, widow.<sup>52</sup> However, the opposite is in fact the case; Judith is stripped of her personality at the end. The ending of the second version has also been regarded as a compensation for the 'demonic' bathing scene.

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<sup>50</sup> Michael Minden, 'Der Grüne Heinrich and the legacy of Wilhelm Meister', in *Gottfried Keller 1819-1890. London Symposium 1990*, ed. by John L. Flood and Martin Swales (Stuttgart: H-D Heinz, 1991), pp. 29-41 (p. 34).

<sup>51</sup> Cizik Marshall, *Betrothal, Violence, and The "Beloved Sacrifice"*, p. 189.

<sup>52</sup> Minden, 'Der Grüne Heinrich', p. 34.

The end is perceived as a ‘genaues Gegenstück’ to the bathing episode.<sup>53</sup> In order to see what exactly is to be understood by the ending of version two as a ‘genaues Gegenstück’ to the bathing scene and as a compensation, it is necessary to describe the events of the final chapter in some detail.

Judith returns from America where she has been working with orphans for ten years. She encounters Heinrich just after his mother has died and he has taken on a job with the civil service. The end of the 1879/80 version of the novel emphasises the ‘unspectacular’ surroundings of Heinrich’s and Judith’s meeting as opposed to the more dramatic backdrop of the bathing scene.<sup>54</sup> Although this could be evidence of the author’s attempt to humanise Judith by placing her in a more ordinary light, it is more likely to be indicative of Heinrich’s resignation to his role as a civil servant and his feelings of guilt over his mother’s death.

In the final chapter, Judith becomes a liminal figure and stands for the ambivalence of life and death as shown by the grey of her clothes: ‘Statt der halbländlichen Tracht, in der ich sie zuletzt gesehen, trug sie jetzt ein Damenkleid von leichtem grauen Stoffe und einen grauen Schleier um Hut und Hals gewickelt’ (p. 852).<sup>55</sup> Cizik Marshall argues that when Judith returns in the second version she is ‘colourless, sedate, desexualized, and a functionary of the world of work rather than the sphere of the erotic’. Thus there is no possibility for ‘erotic continuity in the textual universe of either the older or the younger Heinrich’.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Müller, *Wiederlesen und Weiterschreiben*, p. 196.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 196.

<sup>55</sup> Gottfried Keller, *Der grüne Heinrich. Zweite Fassung. Sämtliche Werke in sieben Bänden. Band 3*, ed. by Thomas Böning, Gerhard Kaiser, Kai Kaufmann, Dominik Müller and Peter Villwock (Frankfurt am Main: Deutscher Klassiker, 1996). All quotations from version two will be taken from this text.

<sup>56</sup> Cizik Marshall, *Betrothal, Violence, and The “Beloved Sacrifice”*, p. 189.

Judith's ultimate loss of power and removal from the realm of sexuality is brought out in a passage which mirrors the events from Heinrich's adolescence. When Judith and Heinrich walk past a garden with an apple tree, Judith is shamefully reminded of her former playful and erotic side: 'Der schöne Baumgarten, wo sie einst Äpfel pflückte, stand unverändert. Sie warf nur einen halben Blick auf mich, schlug ihn dann nieder und errötete sanft, indem sie eilig weiter schritt' (p. 854). Judith's shame makes her appear to Heinrich as 'zarter' and 'besser' (p. 854). Clearly she is better in the sense that, judging by her lowered gaze, she is embarrassed by her former overt sexuality. The lack of eye contact and her fast-paced walking in this passage undermine Judith as a confident and independent woman. This is to be contrasted with Judith's autonomy earlier in the novel, where Heinrich commented that she moved about 'so sicher und frei' (p. 445).

That Judith is recognised as an image and idea rather than as an individual in the final chapter is illustrated when she informs Heinrich of her stay in America. Consequently he perceives her as 'veredelt' and 'höher gehoben' (p. 855). Judith is placed on a pedestal and removed from the realm of the human. In fact, she comes to be seen as Heinrich's liberator and saviour. Heinrich pushes Judith into the realm of advisor and judge. He makes it clear that he feels guilty about his mother's death and he sees it as Judith's role to appease his conscience and absolve him of his guilt. On two occasions he says to Judith 'Du hast mich erlöst' (p. 858). Heinrich never understands the real Judith. He does not realise, for example, that she rejects the idea of having a relationship with him because she realises that he is not mature enough. The ending of the second version shows that Heinrich has not learnt from his mistakes. In the version of 1879/80 Heinrich does not die but it is hinted that he is

condemned to a life of repetition. The novel closes with the following words, ‘um noch einmal die alten grünen Pfade der Erinnerung zu wandeln’ (p. 862).

Neither Anna nor Judith is allowed to develop into independent individuals in the novel. Cizik Marshall argues that this shows how these women are marginalised and neglected by Heinrich and how his attitude towards them is exploitative.<sup>57</sup> These women have thus only functioned as material for his creative work and fantasies.

### **Conclusion**

The ending of the second version has generally been perceived as more positive, for Heinrich lives on and Judith is brought back into his life. However, the closing words of the 1879/80 version suggest that Heinrich has not reached a full and mature development for he continues to live in the past. Judith’s return does not represent an optimistic turn of events either.

In her final depiction in the last chapter, Judith comes to share traits with the biblical Judith after her return to Bethulia. After her ‘transgression’, which is her display of sexuality in the night bathing scene, she too lives on, as the biblical Judith does, despite the narrator’s stripping her of her personality. Morally, Keller’s Judith comes to represent chastity, as does the biblical widow, for in her last twenty years of life, as her namesake, she does not marry but lives as a chaste widow. The biblical Judith is a liberator of her people just as Keller’s Judith has been regarded as liberating and ‘rescuing’ the protagonist, as Hartmut Steinecke points out.<sup>58</sup> However, in contrast to the biblical Judith, Keller’s Judith does not emerge as heroic and

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<sup>57</sup> Cizik Marshall, *Betrothal, Violence, and The “Beloved Sacrifice”*, p. 190-191.

<sup>58</sup> Hartmut Steinecke, *Interpretationen zu Gottfried Keller* (Stuttgart: Ernst Klett, 1984), p. 31.

triumphant in her final depiction. This is confirmed at the end of the second version, where Judith renounces 'das Glück' (p. 860).

Both Keller's Judith and the biblical heroine are defined by their ambivalence. Frau Lee is also portrayed as an ambiguous figure. She emerges as a powerful woman and as a helpless victim. As such, she represents both a cliché and a paradox of widowhood. Moreover, as Brenner argues, she functions as an 'imaginäres Spiegelbild' for Heinrich and needs to be both mother and father to him.<sup>59</sup> In the end, however, she is stripped of her vigour and tenacity and is defined by her victimhood, which also holds true for Anna and Judith. At the end of the novel Judith undergoes a death of her sexual self. The first chapter of this thesis argued that in fiction of the nineteenth century, widows who do not die at the end undergo a death of sexuality and/or social standing. This is illustrated through the portrayal of Judith, who is desexualised at the end.

As with Hanke's *Die Wittwen*, the violent repression of the female characters has revealed itself to be an incorporated part of the social and patriarchal system. Whereas Hanke portrayed the damaging effects of emotional violence, the narrator of *Der grüne Heinrich* highlights that 'the constant appearance of female figures duplicated as images or being duplicated by their lovers all point to this violent end, that the male creative urge is in part a reflection of the need to designate a social sacrifice'.<sup>60</sup> The innocent female is portrayed as a mirror in which male identity and dominance are formed.

The next chapter continues with a presentation of male dominance and authority, in which the widowed heroines are again stripped of their power and independence.

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<sup>59</sup> Brenner, *Leseräume*, p. 92.

<sup>60</sup> Cizik Marshall, *Betrothal, Violence, and The "Beloved Sacrifice"*, p. 242.

## **Chapter IV**

### **Men's Voices: The faithless widow in Eduard Grisebach's *Die treulose Witwe* and Paul Heyse's *Die Witwe von Pisa***

#### **Introduction: *Über die Ehe***

‘Die zweite Ehe ist allemal eine Art von Ehebruch’.<sup>1</sup>

This chapter examines the figure of the widow who remarries, or looks for a second mate, and how she is perceived in nineteenth-century German fiction. The above quotation is taken from the final version of *Über die Ehe* by the politician and enlightenment thinker Theodor Hippel (1741-1796). *Über die Ehe* was published in four different versions; in 1774, 1776, 1792 and finally in 1793. When comparing the final volume with the first, the reader is struck by the radical change in Hippel's views towards women in general. Hippel is generally much more liberal towards women in the version of 1793 than he was in 1774. However, his opinions on the remarriage of widows do not change. In the introduction to this thesis it was pointed out that Hippel viewed widows as men's second-hand goods:

Was ist eine Witwe mehr als eine halb verwischte Schilderei, ein umgewandtes Kleid, ein aufgewärmtes Essen, eine Perrücke statt eigenes Haar, eine Tulpe, die den Schlüssel verloren hat und sich nicht mehr zuschließen läßt?<sup>2</sup>

The exact same passage also appears in the final version of his work. Hippel was widely read and cited in his time and serves as a mouthpiece for prevalent ideas, so

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<sup>1</sup>Theodor Gottlieb von Hippel, *Über die Ehe. Vierte viel vermehrte Auflage* [1793] (Berlin: Berl, 1987), p. 446.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 457-458.

his vision of the remarrying widow as a seductress and, at worst, as a killer, is significant.

In all versions of *Über die Ehe* Hippel displays a double standard when addressing the question of faithfulness. Both the versions of 1774 and 1793 contain the following assertion: ‘Wenn ein Mann ungetreu ist, so ist es unrecht; wenn es aber eine Frau ist, ist es unnatürlich und gottlos’.<sup>3</sup> A woman is perceived as transgressing against nature if she strays. Yet she does more than merely transgress against nature if she remarries; in the latter case, as the epigraph to this chapter highlights, she commits a crime against her late husband.

If anything, Hippel becomes stricter in his views on widows in the final version of *Über die Ehe*. In 1793, for example, he introduces the widow Artemisia, who drank her husband’s ashes and built a tomb to his memory, as an example of an exemplary widow.<sup>4</sup> A high priority appears to be that a husband is *remembered* and that his death does not make him disappear into oblivion. Bernhard Jussen writes that the more a husband is remembered and acknowledged, the less dead he apparently is. On one level, the ‘fateful connection between remarriage and oblivion’ is played out in the figure of the widow who has her sights set on a new lover or husband.<sup>5</sup> Yet it is not only a widow’s interest in the future instead of the past which destabilises gender relations, but also the fact that as a widow she is a sexually experienced woman, and hence in a position to make comparisons between her dead husband and her new

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<sup>3</sup> Hippel, *Über die Ehe* [1793], p. 196.

<sup>4</sup> Hippel, *Über die Ehe* [1793], p. 460.

<sup>5</sup> Bernhard Jussen, ‘Challenging the Culture of Memoria. Dead Men, Oblivion, and the Faithless Widow in the Middle Ages’, in *Medieval Concepts of the Past. Ritual, Memory, Histiography*, ed. by A Gerd Althoff, Johannes Pried and Patrick J Geary (Washington D.C: German Historical Institute and Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 215-232 (p. 222).

lover. Hippel clearly spells out the fear of comparison and the fear of one's masculinity being tested, which a widow creates in the mind of her potential second husband. According to him, the future husband will always, no matter what, take second place to her first love:

Man könnte sagen: der zweite Ehemann sei, ohne die Gabe der Weissagung zu haben, im Stande das Schicksal genau zu bestimmen, das nach seinem Tode auf ihn warte; er müsse auf die Erinnerung der ersten engelreichen Schönheit eines Weibes Verzicht thun und sich vorrücken, daß *vor ihm einer war*, der die Erstgeburt und den Segen genommen hat.<sup>6</sup>

It is the fate of the second husband to be continually reminded that there was someone before him, someone to whom he will be compared. Hippel teases out this idea further in a rather lengthy description highlighting how the second husband tends to be an unnecessary figure, who, in most cases, can only ever aspire to obtain the mere leftovers of a widow's former happy existence:

*Annia* antwortete auf die Frage, warum sie nicht zum zweitenmal heirathen wollte: 'bekomme ich einen guten Mann, so will ich nicht gern in Furcht stehen, ihn zu verlieren; bekomme ich einen bösen – wie unsinnig würde ich handeln, da ich einen guten gehabt habe!' Man kann dieses erweitern; denn wenn sie auch einen bösen gehabt hätte, so würde ihr die zweite Ehe nichts geholfen haben; wäre der Mann gut gewesen, so hätte sie bedauern müssen, dass sie ihre besten Jahre, den besten Bissen beim Gastmahl, einem Bösen zugewendet, und für einen so guten lieben Mann nur noch den Grummen, der Jahreszeit gemäß, übrig habe; wie hätte sie nicht zittern müssen, diesen guten Mann zu verlieren!<sup>7</sup>

That a widow has a special relationship to her past, and is indeed to a certain extent guided by it, is illuminated in the first sentence, in which *Annia* expresses her fear that she will lose a husband for a second time. Hippel expands on *Annia's* words and draws his own conclusion from them; namely, that the second husband is either

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<sup>6</sup> Hippel, *Über die Ehe* [1793], p. 458. My italics.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 459.

entirely superfluous, or that his role within the marriage is simply to remind the widow of her previous husband. This continuous looking back to the past and comparing it to events in the present is, according to Hippel, one of the most painful experiences for men: 'die Zurückerinnerung gehabter Freuden ist bei uns in gleichem Grade wirksam wie der Schmerz, den wir bei dem gegenwärtigen Unfall anderer Leute empfinden'.<sup>8</sup> It is hardly surprising that Hippel advised widows to remain widows until their deaths, since they are perceived by him as calling the autonomy and masculinity of men into question, while simultaneously running the risk of casting their dead husbands into complete oblivion.

A century later, Eduard Grisebach (1845-1906) repeats the ideas espoused by Hippel. Grisebach praises sati, the Indian tradition of the widow's suicide in which the recently widowed woman immolates herself on her husband's funeral pyre. Like Hippel, Grisebach depicts the widow as a superfluous being: 'Die Witwe, zumal wenn sie keine Kinder zu erziehen hat, ist nutz- und zwecklos auf der Welt'.<sup>9</sup> Grisebach believes that a widow's task is solely to mourn: 'Denn die Frau geht ganz auf in der Liebe und Ehe, es ist ihre einzige Bestimmung; der Mann soll auch den größten Schmerz des Lebens überwinden, um sein Dasein in Krieg, Wissenschaft und Kunst würdig zu Ende zu leben'.<sup>10</sup> A widower, in other words, as the quotation illustrates, has something better to do with himself than simply to mourn. Further, Grisebach believes that all widows are dangerous temptresses out to cause harm to men. Grisebach is fascinated by the subject of the faithless widow, and has extensively

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<sup>8</sup> Hippel, *Über die Ehe* [1793], p. 462.

<sup>9</sup> Eduard Grisebach, *Die treulose Witwe: eine chinesische Novelle und ihre Wanderung durch die Weltliteratur* (Vienna: L. Rosner, 1873), p. 49.

<sup>10</sup> Grisebach, *Die treulose Witwe*, p. 51.

researched this motif in world literature. His own addition to literary treatments of the motif is his short story *Die treulose Witwe* of 1873. It shows both similarities and differences with the well-established tradition of the faithless widow in German literature.

### **The faithless widow in German literature**

In his study *Die Wanderung der Novelle von der treulosen Wittwe durch die Weltliteratur*,<sup>11</sup> Grisebach traces this motif throughout history and in various cultures, demonstrating thereby that all widows are faithless and not to be trusted. This study differs from the 1873 version which will be cited throughout the chapter. In the study of 1889, Grisebach has expanded his work with a final section entitled *Nationale Anschauungen von Ehe und Wittwenstand im Spiegel der Literatur*. Moreover, this work does not contain the story *Die treulose Witwe*. Grisebach's story is an adaptation of a Chinese tale of a faithless widow, which is earlier than Petronius's tale in his *Satyricon* (first century CE) about the widow of Ephesus to be discussed below. The stories are obviously similar, however, a point which Grisebach makes in the preface to his 1873 story. Both cultures employ the same taboos and strictures about a widow taking on a new mate. The Widow of Ephesus has also been reworked in various languages and cultures, while the Chinese tale, as Ingrid Schuster points out, was translated into European languages through the agency of Jesuit scholars.<sup>12</sup> The plot of this fourth-century Chinese tale, *Die treulose Witwe*, is as follows: a young woman

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<sup>11</sup> Grisebach, Eduard, *Die Wanderung der Novelle von der treulosen Wittwe durch die Weltliteratur* (Berlin: F. & P. Lehmann, 1889).

<sup>12</sup> Ingrid Schuster, *Vorbilder und Zerrbilder. China und Japan im Spiegel der deutschen Literatur 1773-1890* (Bern: Peter Lang, 1988), p. 101.

fans the grave of her husband with a white fan, for she has promised not to remarry until the earth over his grave is dry. The Taoist philosopher Chuang-tzu listens to the widow's story and dries the earth over the grave by dint of his magical powers. After this meeting with the widow at the graveyard Chuang-tzu tells the story to his wife, who is so angry about the widow's faithlessness that Chuang-tzu decides to test her own faithfulness. With his supernatural powers he fakes illness and death. Then he changes into the figure of a young male student, who is also a handsome prince, and his wife soon falls in love with him. The prince becomes ill and only the brain of a recently deceased person can save him. Chuang-tzu's widow does not hesitate: she takes an axe to her husband's coffin. As she is about to strike the coffin, Chuang-tzu resumes his former self and accuses his wife. After she confesses her faithlessness, she hangs herself. Thus the widow does not go unpunished for her crime. Chuang-tzu decides to devote the rest of his life to his studies in Taoism and in the end becomes immortal. This story was first reworked in German by Johann Karl Augustus Musäus (1735-1787) in a text ironically titled *Liebestreue* (1782-1787).<sup>13</sup>

#### **a. The faithless widow in Musäus's *Liebestreue***

Musäus's story tells of a widow who is perceived as an exemplary chaste and devoted widow. She builds a monument to her husband's memory, like Artemisia, but she soon falls in love again and violently destroys her husband's memory. In Musäus's story there is no widow fanning the grave, but, as in the Chinese original, there is a discussion about faithfulness within marriage. Jutta von Oldenburg, the

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<sup>13</sup> Johann Karl August Musäus, *Liebestreue*, in *Märchen und Sagen* [1782-1787] (Berlin: Aufbau, 1957), pp. 349-380.

female protagonist, the 'Muster der Tugend' (p. 349), also paints a picture of herself as sincere and genuine:

Aus einem Übermaß weiblicher Zärtlichkeit beteuerte die Gräfin oftmals ihrem Gemahl, daß sie ohne ihn die Freuden des Himmels selbst unvollkommen schmecken und die Gesellschaft ihres Schutzengels für die Abgeschiedenheit von ihm ihr keinen Ersatz würde leisten können (p. 350).

Jutta goes even further than the widow in the Chinese tale in her proof of sincerity; 'Sie schlang aus zweifarbiger Seide, Grün und Schwarz, als der Farbe der Hoffnung und der Trauer, einen unauflöselichen Liebesknoten' (p. 352). This is to be taken as a sign of her eternal love. Unlike Chuang-tzu, Graf Heinrich, Jutta's husband, does not possess magical powers and he dies in combat. His widow builds a monument to his memory: 'ein prächtiges Monument von Alabaster und welschem Marmor, auf dessen Gipfel die Bildsäule des Grafen in voller Rüstung, wie er zu Felde gezogen war, hoch emporragte' (p. 362). Jutta visits his monument every day for a year and becomes known in her community as an extremely chaste and devoted widow. However, Jutta soon overturns this image of herself as the grieving widow. Her page, Irwin, starts accompanying her to the monument and she falls in love with him. She begins to distance herself from her late husband's memory: 'Sie dachte mit Ernst darauf, den ehemals so fest verschlungenen Liebesknoten aufzulösen' (p. 370). That she really forgets him is shown by her destruction of the symbol of their eternal love:

Sie nahm die wirksame Schere zu Hülfe, die ihr eben den Dienst tat, den das Schwert des Großen Alexanders bei Auflösung des Gordischen Knotens geleistet hatte, und nun war gegen die Möglichkeit, einen fest verschlungenen Liebesknoten aufzulösen, nichts mehr einzuwenden (p. 370).

At the end of the story, Jutta marries Irwin but she is haunted by the face of her late husband. She cries out: 'Ach, mein Gemahl, der Graf, kommt, sich zu rächen! Als sie

das gesagt hatte, sank sie auf dem Stuhl zurück, schloß die schönen Augen zu und gab kein Zeichen des Lebens mehr von sich' (p. 378). Like the heroine of the Chinese tale, Jutta dies at the end of the story and thereby receives her due punishment.

In a chapter entitled: 'Ehegeschichten aus China: Zur Rezeption chinesischer Literatur im achtzehnten und neunzehnten Jahrhundert', Schuster highlights the differences in tone of the two stories. Whereas the Chinese philosopher is characterised by his cynicism and scepticism regarding women and honesty, the narrator of Musäus's story relies on subtle irony and has a more realistic approach towards women.<sup>14</sup> The irony is most clearly shown in the title, *Liebestreue*, of course. His irony, however, does not serve to place the female protagonist in a more favourable and forgiving light. Musäus portrays Jutta as 'wankelmütig' (p. 374); she is a stereotypical woman characterised by her inconsistency and fickleness, who simply cannot be trusted.

### **b. Hofmannsthal's *Der weiße Fächer* (1897)**

This drama by Hugo von Hofmannsthal (1874-1929) offers a more unusual take on this tale as he includes a widower, Fortunio, as well as a widow, Miranda. In his philosophical musings upon his first entrance, Fortunio appears similar to Chuang-tzu:

Ich weiß sehr wenig. Aber einen Blick  
Hab ich getan ins Tiefre. Irgendwie erkannt:  
Dies Leben ist nichts als ein Schattenspiel:  
Gleit mit den Augen leicht darüber hin,  
Dann ists erträglich, aber klammre dich  
Daran, und es zergeht dir in den Fingern (p. 46)<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid., p. 110.

<sup>15</sup> Hugo von Hofmannsthal, *Der weiße Fächer*, in *Kleine Dramen* (Wiesbaden: Insel, 1949), pp.45-67.

Fortunio is depicted as in the depths of grief, and neither his friend Livio, nor his grandmother, can help him. Hofmannsthal depicts Miranda, however, as a typical hypocritical widow who can quickly discard the memory of her late husband. Miranda dreamt that she fanned her husband's grave with a white fan. This dream made her feel upset and ashamed; she describes herself as 'entsetzlich berührt' (p. 54) following this dream. Yet on her next visit to the graveyard she meets Fortunio and both widower and widow quickly forget their deceased partners.

Whereas in the original Chinese story and in Musäus's story the women portray themselves as chaste and full of love for their husbands, Miranda responds to the unspoken request made by her husband on his deathbed, whether she will remain chaste, with a 'Ich murmelte irgend etwas, ich weiß nicht was' (p. 57). Then her husband expresses his dying wish: 'Laß, laß...aber solange die Erde über meinem Grab nicht trocken ist, wirst du an keinen andern denken, nicht wahr...' (p. 57). According to Schuster, this lack of emotion displayed by Miranda, together with her dream of fanning her husband's grave, 'offenbart ihre eigentlichen Wünsche'.<sup>16</sup> Miranda does not portray herself as the chaste widow and she soon falls into the arms of another man.

Once again, irony is a central feature of this drama. In the epilogue, Hofmannsthal combines irony with seriousness:

'Doch was Euch Glück erscheint, indes Ihr lebt,  
Ist solch ein buntes Nichts, vom Traum gewebt' (p. 66).

As well as being more light-hearted in tone, this drama features no attempted damage to the husband's corpse and the widow Miranda is not punished at the end.

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<sup>16</sup> Schuster, *Vorbilder und Zerrbilder*, p. 134.

Petronius's Widow of Ephesus taken from chapters 111 and 112 of his *Satyricon*, combines some irony with the widow's desecration of the husband's corpse.<sup>17</sup> Briefly told, the story is of a widow so grief-stricken at the death of her husband that she refuses to leave the tomb. The governor of the province gives orders that some robbers should be crucified. A young soldier is deputed to guard the corpses. The soldier and the widow become lovers and they consummate their love in the tomb, next to the coffin of the dead husband. While the soldier is thus occupied, one of the corpses he was guarding is stolen. The discovery of this corpse would expose both his dereliction of duty and his relationship with the widow. It is the widow who finds the solution, saying that they can take the corpse of her dead husband and hang that on the cross in place of the missing corpse. Petronius comments ironically that the widow is as clever as she is chaste. She is not found out and so can live happily with her new partner.

This tale is one of the best-loved motifs of world literature. Indeed, its march down through European literature is indicative of its popularity. German authors have various takes on this motif and highlight different aspects of the story, ranging from actual dismemberment of the husband's corpse, to the destruction of the memorial to the husband, to the widow's desecration of the corpse and tomb.

### **c. Dismemberment of the corpse**

Hans von Büchel, who was born in 1360 and died between 1429 and 1444, is the first known German author to work on this motif. He published a collection of verses in 1412 under the title *Dyocletianus Leben*, in which a wife dismembers her husband's

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<sup>17</sup> Edward Courtney, *A Companion to Petronius* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).

corpse and throws the parts to the dog to be eaten. Verses 6495 to 6944 tell this story.<sup>18</sup> At the start of the story, the widow is presented as inconsolable:

Die frowe gehûb sich so jemerliche  
 Das sy zû der Stûnde  
 Nieman getrosten kûnde  
 Sy schrey vnd weinte alltag teglich  
 Sy sprach herre got in himelrich (v 6540-6545)

The widow makes herself a small hut by the grave of her husband and spends her days and nights there. One day a knight, complaining of the cold weather, asks if he can rest in the hut with the widow. They soon become lovers. The knight then discovers that one of the corpses he has been guarding has been stolen. This corpse was missing certain body parts, and the widow suggests that they replace it with her husband's corpse, who has only been dead for a day. Von Bûhel's widow is depicted as particularly evil as she is the one who attacks and dismembers her husband's corpse to make it resemble the corpse which was stolen:

Sy sprach lieber ritter min  
 Gib her mir das swert din  
 Durch dinen willen ich es selb tû  
 Do bringet mich din liebe zû  
 Sy nam das swert an der stunt  
 Und slûge ym ein grosze wund (v. 6839-6944).

In a final act of cruelty, she throws these body parts to a dog to be eaten. At the end, however, she is punished for her deed. The knight calls her 'die boste ob allen wiben' (6913), refuses to marry her and instead chops her head off. Unlike Petronius's widow, she most certainly does not get away with her transgression.

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<sup>18</sup> Hans von Bûhel, *Dyocletianus Leben*, ed. by Adalbert Keller (Leipzig: Quendlinburg, 1841).

In his discussion of the numerous takes on the motif of the faithless widow in various countries before the year 1563, Grisebach comes to the conclusion that German authors have been the most punitive in their treatment of the faithless widow, which is highlighted by von Büchel's version.<sup>19</sup> The gruesome story just quoted is commended by Grisebach, who believes that von Büchel illustrates the 'enormen Mangel jener anderen Darstellungen'.<sup>20</sup> Von Büchel's tale is thus set in contrast to a more forgiving version by Kirchhof.

#### **d. Destruction of the memorial to the husband**

In 1563 Hans Wilhelm Kirchhof (1525-1603) published his first edition of *Wendunmuth* containing 2063 fables, one of which is an adaptation of the *Widow of Ephesus* entitled *Von einem höltzern Johannes*.<sup>21</sup> The fable tells of a widow who creates a wooden statue of her dead husband, Johannes. Every night she sleeps beside this monument to Johannes. Once she is introduced to her maid's brother, however, she soon forgets her wooden Johannes. The maid introduces the widow to her handsome brother and at the same time hides the wooden figure. When the maid later comments that she does not have enough wood for the oven, the widow comes up with a suggestion:

Ach, sagt die Frauw, so nim den höltzern Johannes, derr ist dürr gnüg, den zerhauw und koch darbey, so lang er wehret. Dergestalt bracht die magd iren brüder in grosse reichthumb, denn dieweil er die frauwen so wol wermet, behielt sie in zü irem ehelichen mann (p. 389).

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<sup>19</sup> Grisebach, *Die Wanderung der Novelle*, p. 109.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 109.

<sup>21</sup> Hans Wilhelm Kirchhof, *Wendunmuth*, ed. by Hermann Österley (Tübingen: Literarischer Verein in Stuttgart, 1869).

Thus the widow destroys the memorial to her husband and marries the maid's brother, which gives the fable a happy-ever-after feel. There is no hint that Kirchhof's widow is evil, such as there is in the stories of faithless widows described above. Since the story does not mention the husband's corpse and the reader is not told how long her husband has been dead for, it is indeed a much milder version of the story.

### **e. Desecration of the corpse and tomb**

*Ein Lied von der Weibertreue* by Adelbert von Chamisso (1781-1838), published in 1834, has a similar plot to that of Petronius's tale.<sup>22</sup> A young widow is grieving for her husband and is starving herself. A soldier comes to visit and console her. He too brings her food and drink, but she does not embark on an affair with him. Yet, like Jutta in Musäus's story, this widow is portrayed as inconsistent:

'Sie sagt nicht nein, sie sagt nicht ja,  
Sie sieht betroffen, errötend da' (p. 134).

While the soldier comforts the widow, one of the corpses he is guarding is stolen. The widow again finds the solution to this by suggesting that they take her husband's body:

'Wir haben auch einen, wenn Ihr es erlaubt,  
Gebt ihm den unsern' (p. 135).

Thus far, the tale is similar to Petronius. Yet this widow goes even further than to desecrate her husband's corpse, she attacks it:

'Dem Räuber fehlt ein Vorderzahn

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<sup>22</sup> Adelbert von Chamisso, *Ein Lied von der Weibertreue*, in *Sämtliche Werke. Erster Band*, ed. by Volker Hoffmann and Jost Perfahl (Munich: Winkler: 1975), pp. 280-284.

Da nimmt sie selber einen Stein  
Und schlägt den Zahn dem Toten ein' (p. 135).

Although she does not brutally dismember her husband's corpse, as does the widow in von Büchel's tale, her violence towards the corpse highlights how quick she is to discard her husband's memory. Like the widow in Petronius's tale, she too goes unpunished. The final stanza of this ballad comments savagely on how the widow has got away with it:

'So schleiften hinaus ihn alle drei  
Und hängen ihn an den Galgen frei  
Und streift nun der Wind die Heide entlang,  
So geben die Knochen gar guten Klang  
Zum Lied von der Weibertreue' (p. 135).

Another widow who goes unpunished for the desecration of her husband's corpse is Antiphila. The one-act drama *Die Matrone von Ephesus* by Christian Felix Weisse (1726-1804) was published in 1744.<sup>23</sup> Weisse strives to put a humorous spin on this tale, which he accordingly terms 'ein Lustspiel'. The story comprises three characters; the widow Antiphila, her maid Dorias, and the soldier, Carion. Antiphila is depicted as the typical grieving widow and both Dorias and Carion attempt to convince her to put an end to her grief and join the living. Promptly, Antiphila falls in love with the young soldier and he spends the night in the tomb with her. While thus occupied, a body is stolen. Carion threatens to take his own life as a punishment, to which Antiphila answers that it is not necessary, for they already have a dead body:

'Kaum stirbt mir armen Frau ein lieber junger Mann,  
So greift das Unglück schnell auch meinen Tröster an  
Zween Männer auf einmal? Daran kann ich nicht denken!

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<sup>23</sup> Christian Felix Weisse, *Die Matrone von Ephesus*, in *Lustspiele* (Carlsruhe: Bey Christian Gottlieb Schmieder, 1778), pp. 211-260.

Laßt uns den todten Mann dafür an Galgen henken!’ (p. 260).

The simple and concise way in which the drama ends serves to show the advantages of the living over the dead: ‘Ein Mann, der lebt, gilt mehr/ als ein gestorbener Mann’ (p. 260). It highlights the speed and ease with which the dead are forgotten with chilling clarity. The widow may remain unpunished, but, as in the previous adaptations of Petronius’s tale, she does not emerge in a positive light. All the widows, whether in the original Chinese tale and its reworkings, or in Petronius’s story and its adaptations, are depicted as dead to moral scruples.

The original Chinese tale is the most cynical and bitter in tone, and the most misogynist, for the husband tests his wife assuming that she will be unfaithful, and he does not really die himself. This test is what separates it from Petronius’s story.

### **Grisebach: *Die treulose Witwe***

#### **a. The ideal widow**

Grisebach’s story begins with the following words spoken by the philosopher Tschwang-sāng: ‘Selbst das fleisch und blut vor deinen augen ist falsch, und liebe und dankbarkeit kehren sich in hass und feindschaft’ (p. 3).<sup>24</sup>

The text begins in an extremely cynical vein as the above quotation illustrates. Such negative statements permeate the first five pages of the work, in which Grisebach reflects on the futility of relations between the sexes and thus sets the tone for the story, in which husband and wife are unable to live in harmony. Before introducing the reader to the main characters, Grisebach quickly draws the conclusion that it is

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<sup>24</sup> Grisebach does not use capitals for nouns.

only the 'reiz des fleisches' (p. 4) which unites man and woman. Moreover, the relation of husband and wife is hierarchical: Tien-sche calls her husband Tschwang-sāng 'meister' (p. 13), for he is a renowned academic who is associated with 'vernunft' (p. 9). Husband and wife are to embody different and traditional roles within marriage, with the man being rational and dominant and the woman being passive. Grisebach makes clear that Tschwang-sāng is his mouthpiece: he shares Grisebach's cynicism and utter distrust of women.

Just after the reader is introduced to Tschwang-sāng we read his musings in a cemetery on life and death. He thinks about the inevitability of death, how death does not discriminate, and hence how the same fate awaits us all: 'Alt und jung, weise und toren, ohne unterschied kehren alle hierhin zurück!' (p. 10). What may seem to be a universal feeling, namely, that death is not selective, is depicted here as a personal sentiment, which manifests itself in Tschwang-sāng's fear that a widow is also not selective, that she does not discriminate when it comes to choosing a new partner. This fear is in part confirmed when, in the same cemetery, Tschwang-sāng stumbles upon a widow fanning the earth over her husband's grave. Although secretly appalled, he offers to fan the grave for her, the widow accepts and to show her gratitude she offers him a silver hair-clip, which he rejects, but takes the fan instead, the very symbol of the widow's faithlessness and hence the cause of his negative view of her. Upon leaving the graveyard Tschwang-sāng feels justified in his conviction that women are not to be trusted: 'Wie bald aber erkennt man, dass nach dem tode kein gefühl und keine gerechtigkeit waltet!' (p. 13).

Following this experience, Tschwang-sāng believes that all widows are faithless, that 'nach dem tode sehnen sich alle das grab zu fächern!' (p. 14). Tien-sche, his wife,

also reacts with anger to this story of the widow. She calls her 'ein wesen ohne scham und tugend' (p. 13). When asked whether she would wait three to five years before remarrying if Tschwang-sǎng were to die, Tien-sche says that 'ein keusches weib heiratet niemals zum zweiten male. Ich werde mein ganzes lebenslang witwe bleiben und selbst in meinen träumen nur an dich denken' (p. 15). The picture which she paints of herself as a grieving widow living solely for the memory of her husband is taken to extreme levels when she reiterates the widespread notion that a wife should follow her husband in death, and she would thus die next to him, 'um meines herzens aufrichtigkeit zu zeigen' (p. 16). Just as she is playing the part of the virtuous and sincere woman, so he plays the part of the dying man. Tschwang-sǎng wants to believe that what his wife says is true: 'ich wünsche nur, du wärest so gut wie du betuerst' (p. 16). Then suddenly he falls ill just a few days later, and, upon hearing Tien-sche pronounce her words of undying love, Tschwang-sǎng answers, 'es ist genug, ich sterbe' (p. 16).

Reminiscent of Petronius's Ephesian widow, Tien-sche is so overtaken by grief that she 'vernachlässigte schlafen, essen und trinken, als wenn sie krank oder vergiftet wäre' (p. 17). She cries for days on end and is depicted as in 'tiefer trauer gekleidet' (p. 17). Tien-sche appears to be the epitome of the virtuous widow. Yet, when a former student and prince comes to visit Tschwang-sǎng's tomb, Tien-sche's grief comes to an abrupt end.

**b. 'Ein todter körper ist nicht die quelle des lebens'.<sup>25</sup> The conflict between the living and the dead**

Only two pages later, Tien-sche is described as being attracted to the student visitor, Wang-sien. He asks to remain as a guest and Tien-sche's love for him quickly grows. Her visiting the tomb is said to be pretence; her sole interest lies in seeing Wang-sien. Tien-sche actively chooses the company of another male and begins to pursue him in an aggressive and masculine way. Thus she transgresses the normal order, and, to a certain extent, displays her power over her husband by dint of having outlived him.

As her feelings for Wang-sien rapidly grow, she sets out to seduce him. To do so, she flatters his servant, pouring him wine and asking him about the marital status of the student. As soon as the servant suggests that a marriage may be difficult, she proceeds to pour the servant more wine. Thus, she cunningly endeavours to get him drunk, and this is the first point in the text where she is referred to as a 'witwe' (p. 21) - the link in Grisebach's mind between hypocrisy, deceit and widowhood is obvious.

Tien-sche convinces Wang-sien that he should marry her. Wang-sien provides three reasons for not being able to marry her, yet she responds with counter-arguments and he finally succumbs to her logic. His first reason is that he does not want to be continually confronted with her dead husband's corpse. To this Tien-sche responds that the corpse can be removed, 'hinter dem hause ist ein kleiner stall, ich kann ihn durch einige leute dorthin tragen lassen – und so wäre ein hindernis gehoben' (p. 25). Thus the dead man is clearly perceived as an obstacle to her future happiness. Furthermore, the widow is depicted as representing the privileges of the living over

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<sup>25</sup> Grisebach, *Die treulose Witwe*, p. 25.

the dead, for she is quick to discard her dead husband's corpse to serve the present situation. Tien-sche's justification for obliterating her dead husband, 'ein todtter körper ist nicht die quelle des lebens' (p. 25), is reminiscent of Weisse's 'Ein Mann, der lebt, gilt mehr / als ein gestorbener Mann'. Both emphasise the rights of the living over the dead.

The conflict between the living and the dead is further played out in the student's fears, namely, that in becoming Tien-sche's second husband he will be held up in eternal comparison to Tschwang-säng. This is reminiscent of Hippel's words quoted in the introduction to this chapter. Wang-sien openly confirms his insecurities about becoming the second husband: 'Sie haben in glücklicher ehe gelebt, und da er [Tschwang-säng] zudem ein berühmter weise der Tao-sekte war, meine gelehrsamkeit aber sicherlich der seinigen nicht gleich kommt, so bin ich bange, der verachtung ausgesetzt zu sein' (p. 24). Yet his fear does not dissuade Tien-sche; rather she answers this by attacking all facets of her husband's character and thus again showing her power over him.

### **c. Widowhood as an assault on gender hierarchy**

Jussen points out in his discussion of the medieval treatments of the Widow of Ephesus motif that, owing to the damage done to the corpse, widowhood has come to be regarded as the embodiment of an attack on gender hierarchy.<sup>26</sup> This also holds true for Grisebach's *Die treulose Witwe*, but with Grisebach, the assault extends to an attack on the male's character when Tien-sche endeavours to play down her husband's academic success as well as his capacity for emotion.

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<sup>26</sup> Jussen, 'Challenging the Culture of Memoria', p. 216.

In response to Wang-sien's fear, Tien-sche remarks that her husband was 'sich seiner schwachen kräfte und geringen talente bewusst' (p. 25). Thus she attacks his intellect, and by so doing, she is somehow outwitting him. Moreover, Tien-sche mentions how Tschwang-sāng verbally attacked her and women generally on his deathbed. She calls his capacity for emotion and feeling into question when she asks: 'wo war seine zuneigung?' (p. 25). It is evident that Tien-sche, in her crafty and cunning manner, is attacking her husband's personality and is exacting revenge for the way he spoke about women. In this section of the story the typical male and female roles are hence reversed, for it is usually a widow who is associated with a lack whereas Tien-sche highlights the lack of intellect and emotion in Tschwang-sāng's character. Yet Grisebach is nonetheless quick to remind the reader not to sympathise with Tien-sche and not to read too much into the image she creates of herself as a victim. He paints a more balanced picture of the sexes by portraying the hypocrisy which previously characterised her.

Tien-sche rejects the dead and places emphasis on the present moment. This is most clearly brought out when she finally persuades Wang-sien to marry her and she consequently 'warf ihre trauerkleider ab und nahm ihre vergnügte miene wieder an' (p. 26). Perhaps as a punishment for Tien-sche's refusal to cultivate her dead husband's memory, the prince Wang-sien collapses at the altar just as he is about to marry her. The only way for her to save him is to get hold of the brain of a man who has not been dead for more than forty-nine days. Upon hearing this, Tien-sche happily exclaims that her husband has been dead for only twenty days and she therefore proposes using his brain to save Wang-sien. In his article Jussen argues that in depictions of widows in the Middle Ages the dead man is often treated as an object to

be used in the service of the living.<sup>27</sup> The same can be said of Grisebach's story. Tien-sche's suggestion that the brain of her husband be used to help the prince marks both the start of her attempt physically to attack her husband's corpse *and* the culmination of the conflict between the living and the dead, for Tien-sche also treats the dead man as an object to be used in the service of the living. That Grisebach conceptualises the widow who returns to life after her husband's death as a menacing, we might say castrating woman who transgresses against the gender order is highlighted towards the end of the story when she takes an axe to her husband's coffin. As she approaches Tschwang-sāng's coffin she is depicted as a violent widow who is fully in control of her actions. With a lamp in her left hand and an axe in her right hand she makes her way to the coffin, and when she reaches it she acts without a moment's consideration: 'Mit beiden händen erhob sie die waffe und den festen blick auf das kopfende des sarges gerichtet, die zähne zusammenbeissend, und ihre kräfte sammelnd, liess sie das eisen mit voller gewalt niederfallen' (p. 30). But, just as the axe is making its way down to the coffin, Tschwang-sāng resumes his former self as Tien-sche's husband and reappears at the scene. Tien-sche has been deceived. In accordance with the traditional gender order, she becomes the passive woman, overcome with 'weibische furcht' (p. 30) and destined to follow her husband's orders and obey him.

The power and assertiveness which characterised Tien-sche in the previous scene is taken away from her at the sight of her husband: 'Obwohl sie entschlossenen charakters war, kam doch weibische furcht über sie; ihre kniee schlotterten, ihr herz glich einer umsinkenden lampe und verwirrt ergriff sie die flucht' (p. 30). The lamp, which in the former scene symbolised her taking the initiative, represents in this

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<sup>27</sup> Jussen, 'Challenging the Culture of Memoria', p. 229.

instance her losing control, shown by the words 'einer umsinkenden lampe'. The power not only slips away from her but it shifts to her husband. The fearful Tien-sche resigns herself to obeying her husband's orders: 'er trug das licht, während sie folgte und mit ihm in die kammer trat' (p. 30-31). When Tien-sche realises once and for all that she has been caught out, she is so overcome with guilt that she hangs herself. In response to her suicide the narrator Grisebach rather ironically remarks: 'Dies war ein wirklicher tod' (p. 34).

Although Tien-sche hangs herself at the end, she does not have the final say over her body – perhaps this is her lesson for attempting to attack her husband's body. Tschwang-sāng dismembers her and throws her into the coffin he had inhabited during his masquerade. He then burns the house and the coffin and emigrates to the West to immerse himself in his studies, thus turning his back on the world. Like the philosopher of the original Chinese tale, Tschwang-sāng becomes immortal. Grisebach closes the story by telling the reader – obviously the male reader - 'er sei euer vorbild!' (p. 36). It is interesting that the only point in the text at which Tien-sche did have control and the freedom to express it was during her 'widowhood'. As a married woman, both at the start and end of the story, she was answerable to her husband and safely under his authority.

It is clear that Grisebach's adaptation is extremely close to the original Chinese tale. Tschwang-sāng is so cynical about women that he tests his wife and both husbands are philosophers with magical powers. The endings of the original and Grisebach's also resemble each other, since both widows hang themselves. However, Grisebach takes the widow's punishment further, as he has her husband dismember her body; thus his version is the harshest of all. The story has no humorous or light-hearted

moments; rather the narrator shows his utter contempt of womankind throughout. Grisebach's *Die treulose Witwe* is thus a particularly misogynist take on the motif.

### **Paul Heyse: *Die Witwe von Pisa* (1865)**

In a collection of essays on Heyse, Roland Berbig and Walter Hettche point out that he is also well-known for his cynical view of women and his presentation of them as stereotypes, though without the misogyny so characteristic of Grisebach.<sup>28</sup> In his *Witwe von Pisa* Heyse (1830-1914) paints a stereotypical picture of a widow, but at the same time unmasks the stereotype as such.<sup>29</sup> The plot can be summarised in a few sentences: a young German architect – the narrator - comes to Pisa to carry out some research. Here he encounters the young and beautiful widow, Lucrezia, with whom he lodges. Unbeknownst to her, however, her husband is not really dead. He is a musician, who has simply moved away from her to be able to compose in peace as he cannot bear her out of tune singing. Throughout the story Lucrezia tries to capture the architect and make him her husband. He manages to get away from her and by chance encounters her husband. At the end Lucrezia is reunited with her husband, Carlo, and the male protagonist is free. As can be seen from this outline of the story, it relies heavily on comic elements.

The novella is set within a framework, in which the narrator, that is, the architect, begins a discussion with a writer, whom the reader assumes to be Heyse. The architect points out the overtly favourable image the writer presents of Italian women in his

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<sup>28</sup> *Paul Heyse: ein Schriftsteller zwischen Deutschland und Italien*, ed. by Roland Berbig and Walter Hettche (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2001), p. 73.

<sup>29</sup> Paul Heyse, *Die Witwe von Pisa* [1865] <<http://www.gutenberg.org/dirs/etext05/7wtps10.txt>>. All quotations will be taken from this source.

fiction. The narrator mentions in particular *L'Arrabbiata* and *Annina*, both stories by Heyse. These stories tell of independent and strong-willed young women who are determined to make their own decisions in life. These women are portrayed as both 'wildwüchsig' (p. 232) and as 'edle Mädchengestalten'. The architect, on the other hand, states that there are only very few such women in Italy. The writer admits that he is generally in love with all women and is consequently an idealist and apostle of the beautiful in life, who states that there are plenty of other writers, 'die es vorziehn, das Häßliche zu malen' (p. 231). The writer's optimism is set against the architect's cynicism. The most striking trait of Italian women, according to the architect, is their fierce man-hunting; 'die Sucht, einen Mann zu bekommen' (p. 232). In order to convince the writer that his opinions about Italian women are accurate, the architect recounts his recent experience with the widow of Pisa, who he says tried to trap him into marrying her. The reader is led to believe from this conversation that the story is going to be about a dangerous seductress. The architect tells the writer that when he first heard the widow, Lucrezia, singing, for example, he noted that her voice was to be his 'Verderben' (p. 233). At this stage, the reader's sympathies therefore lie with the narrator, who portrays himself as being on the receiving end of a lusty widow's potentially dangerous passion.

The way in which Heyse's novella is narrated has a central significance for how the reader judges it. Seeing the action through the eyes of the internal narrator, the architect, enables the reader to witness his hypocrisy and deceit – character deficits he associates with the widow Lucrezia - and this serves to heighten the comic effect. Heyse's novella thus invites the reader to pay as much attention to the internal narrator as to the widow herself. Comedy is a central element of the story, as is the

theme of deceit, and the opening framework introduces these two features which run throughout the text.

In this opening section the reader learns that the narrator has come to Pisa to undertake some work on the leaning tower, and he proudly mentions that he has his own version of a 'schiefer Turm' (p. 234) in the grounds of a castle near to where he lives, which was made to lean due to 'ein später angelegter Karpfenteich in der Nähe dieses ehemaligen Wachttürmchens' (p. 234). After this comic statement the architect reveals that he is engaged to a German woman and plans on spending a year researching in Italy before marriage, yet nowhere in the story does he tell this to Lucrezia, who follows him around in her attempts to make him her husband. Instead, he gives the impression that he may be interested in becoming Lucrezia's lover, whereas in reality his reasons for renting a room in her apartment are purely work-related.

When the architect arrives at Lucrezia's apartment, he feels compelled to stay, not because of the beautiful twenty-three year-old Lucrezia, but because of 'ein mächtiger viereckiger Tisch mitten im Zimmer, gerade so einer, wie er meine Sehnsucht war' (p. 236). Immediately after spotting this table he is introduced to Lucrezia, who is depicted in an ambiguous light. She is dressed: 'in einem Nachtgewande von verdächtiger Weiße aber unzweifelhafter Sittsamkeit' (p. 236). Immediately the architect tries to categorise Lucrezia, but in her first appearance she defies classification. It as though the architect assumes that there should be something reprehensible about the widow, shown through the word 'verdächtig', yet she challenges this through her self-styling as modest. Thus, at first sight, the architect is perplexed by Lucrezia, but he flatters her and tells her exactly what she wants to hear

nonetheless, because he is so desperate to be able to do his architectural drawing at that table.

The beginning of the story focuses precisely on the narrator's dishonesty and his pretence of being a chivalrous gentleman in order to appeal to Lucrezia. He flatters Lucrezia, whom he has only just met, and reveals his hypocrisy. This appears to the reader in a comic light:

Ganz im Gegenteil, meine beste Dame, rief ich lebhaft aus – immer die Augen auf meinen schönen Tisch geheftet – vielmehr würde ich überglücklich sein, Ihnen beweisen zu können, wie sehr ich Ihre Zurückhaltung schätze, wie sehr ich Sie wegen der Reize, Talente und Tugenden, die ihre Person schmücken, bewundere und verehere (p. 238).

The architect tells Lucrezia what he thinks she wants to hear on several occasions. Since he knows that she is on the lookout for a second husband, for example, he does not mention his fiancée but chooses instead to give the impression that he is available to her: 'ich sei entschlossen, kein halbes Jahr mehr ein Junggeselle zu bleiben' (p. 240). He also plays the role of the romantic wanderer which he believes will appeal to Lucrezia and hence enable him to stay in the apartment:

Schöne Lucrezia, fuhr ich fort, vielleicht ist es ein Werk der Vorsehung, daß ich jetzt auf diesem Sofa sitze. Ich bin viel herumgeschweift (ich meinte: in Pisa, nach Wohnungen; sie verstand: in der Welt) und habe nirgends gefunden, was ich suchte. Erst in diesem Hause – und dabei schielte ich wieder durch die Türe nach dem schönen Zeichentisch – ja, Madonna Lucrezia, erst hier fühle ich den Drang, zu bleiben und Hütten zu bauen' (p. 240).

Again, Heyse injects humour into his story by showing how the architect cannot resist a sneaky look at the table while he says this. His arrogance is also conveyed in his automatic assumption that he is perceived as a cultured and well-educated man. The architect's empty, exaggerated and false words soon come back to punish him,

however. In a final desperate and dishonest endeavour to remain in the apartment boasting the large table, the architect, after being told that Lucrezia has four children, says: ‘Schön, ich hoffe ich lerne die kleinen Engel bald kennen’ (p. 240). Yet in his typical exaggerated manner, the architect does not stop his attempted pleasing there. He goes on to add: ‘ich habe eine wahre Passion für alle Haustiere, Kinder, Hunde und Kanarienvögel’ (p. 240). On the next page, after having met Lucrezia’s children and experienced the continuous din in her apartment, the reader is given a rather different version of the architect’s feelings about noise and children. The architect is hence depicted as responsible for his own suffering and it appears that Lucrezia is putting his words to the test and playing him at his own game:

Kam ich von meinen Vermessungsgeschäften am Campanile nach Hause, so pflanzte ich mich sofort hinter den bewußten Tisch, um die Resultate in meine Zeichnung einzutragen. Währenddessen konnte sie [Lucrezia] nebenan ihr “Ah sin’ all’ ore estreme” oder eine andere schmelzende Kantiline schmettern, so viel sie wollte: ich pries, zum ersten Male im Leben, mein stumpfes Ohr, das mir half, diese Lockung mannhaft zu überstehen. Ein paarmal schickte sie mir die Kinder herein, die einen greulichen Unfug mit meinen Mappen und anderen Habseligkeiten anstellten, bis ich mit einigen Orangen den Frieden von ihnen erkaufte (p. 241).

Heyse further teases out the architect’s dishonesty by highlighting his exaggerated and inappropriate displays of rehearsed gentlemanly behaviour. As such, he is portrayed as embodying a set of constructed masculine behaviours making him appear mechanical and lifeless. Before answering one of Lucrezia’s questions, for example, he firstly responds ‘mit einem ehrerbietigen Handkuß’ (p. 240). His ‘devot[es] Hutabziehen’ (p. 242) is another attempt on his part to appear chivalrous and respectful towards Lucrezia. Yet it is apparent that he has no respect for her, which is highlighted in his stereotypical categorisation of Lucrezia, the Italian female, as

stupid. The architect assumes that the reason behind Lucrezia's early nights is as follows:

Da sie, wie die meisten Italienerinnen, völlig ungebildet war und höchstens einen französischen Roman in der Übersetzung las, so langweilte sie sich entsetzlich, sobald es dunkel wurde und sie nicht mehr aus dem Fenster sehen und sich bewundern lassen konnte (p. 242).

In contrast to the architect, who uses exaggerated and long-winded speech, Lucrezia is depicted as being very to the point and casual; she speaks 'ganz gelassen' (p. 239), which causes the narrator to paint a picture of her as a cold and unemotional woman. When asked how long she has been widowed, for example, she replies: 'Zehn Monate, ohne daß die Erinnerung sie besonders anzugreifen schien' (p. 238). Moreover, while looking at a portrait of her husband, the architect is unable to detect 'eine Spur einer Gemütsbewegung auf ihrem Gesicht' (p. 239). It is also in this cool and casual manner that she, at first, tries to capture the architect: 'sie sprach ganz gelassen von einem neuen Lebensglück, wobei sie mich einlud, auf dem Sofa neben ihr Platz zu nehmen' (p. 239). Clearly she is not sad about the loss of her husband and has her sights set on the architect; she wants him to be her 'Lebensglück'. The architect is happy to play along at first, flattering her in order to stay in the apartment, but once Lucrezia starts to become more dominant and threatening, he begins to plan his escape, realising that he has a real fight on his hands.

A turning point in the story arises when the architect no longer describes Lucrezia as 'meine Schöne' (p. 239) but as 'der schöne Feind' (p. 241). Following her comment about finding a new partner she is consequently perceived as a dangerous 'Wolf' as opposed to a peaceful 'Lamm' (p. 242). The architect starts to emphasise Lucrezia's cold-blooded nature:

Der überrumpelte schöne Feind begnügte sich offenbar damit, mich zu beobachten; denn bei der Kaltblütigkeit, mit der das 'neue Lebensglück' betrieben wurde, konnte sie sich Zeit lassen, zu untersuchen, ob sie auch kein schlechtes Geschäft machte mit diesem wildfremden Zukünftigen (p. 241).

Christopher Minns points out that 'Kaltblütigkeit' is repeatedly attributed to Heyse's sirens.<sup>30</sup> Lucrezia does more than coldly observe the architect, however, she starts to chase him. The architect escapes to the top of the leaning tower to get some peace, but Lucrezia follows him there. The narrator depicts Lucrezia as a man-hungry widow out to seduce him, but thereby reveals his own prejudices against women and his deceiving personality. Thus he is portrayed in the more negative light:

Was sie eigentlich beabsichtigte, ist mir heute noch nicht recht klar; denn von der obersten Zinne sich, entweder allein, oder Arm in Arm mit mir, hinabzustürzen, wenn ich ihr nicht endlich ein festes Heiratsversprechen gäbe, dazu war sie ein viel zu praktischer Charakter, viel zu sehr – Italienerin hätt' ich beinahe gesagt. Am Ende war es bloß die Langeweile, die sie zu mir trieb. Sie hatte auch gerade ihren guten Tag. Ich sagte ihr sehr viel schöne Dinge, die das arme Lamm, nach der langen schlechten Behandlung von meiner Seite, mit sichtlichem Behagen einschlürfte. Natürlich wurde ich durch einige zärtliche Anspielungen und sehr ermutigende Blicke belohnt. Aber ich hatte nicht nötig, durch Umdrehung meines Verlobungsringes einen guten Geist zu beschwören, daß er mich in dieser Versuchung beschütze, denn ich wußte es ganz deutlich, daß ich ihr bei all ihren kleinen schmachtenden Manövrès im Grunde der Seele so gleichgültig war, wie die Marmorstufe, auf der sie stand (p. 243).

The first line illustrates how the narrator does not understand Lucrezia; thus she seems to be one step ahead of him. Even though she is not portrayed in a positive manner, she chases the architect and is portrayed as easily swayed by male charms and as responding to his flattery - , she is at least presented as being true to what she wants. Her honesty and straightforwardness is contrasted with the architect's deceitful behaviour and game-playing, which is shown through his hiding his engagement ring

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<sup>30</sup> Christopher J. Minns, 'The novels of Paul Heyse: a critical study' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Oxford, Oxford, 1984), p. 249.

from her. Unlike the architect, who is presented as a man in conflict owing to the fact that he desires to remain in the apartment but is unable to do so, Lucrezia is depicted as a courageous woman, who ruthlessly pursues her goal. Hong Zin Kim comments that Heyse's female protagonists are often portrayed as acting on their instinct with great determination. He writes:

Denn Heyse bekennt selbst, daß er "stets ein besonderes Vergnügen an den Menschen" habe, die "nach ihrer Überzeugung handeln". Seiner Meinung nach hat die Frau aufgrund ihrer Instinktsicherheit mehr Mut als der Mann, so zu handeln, wie sie es für richtig hält.<sup>31</sup>

Indeed, Lucrezia acts perfectly in accordance with her wishes and deceives nobody while doing so, but she lacks a degree of self-awareness, and this further injects humour into Heyse's story.

Lucrezia's comic self-delusion is highlighted when she goes to the theatre with the architect and sees that a singer called Tobias Seresi is performing, a man with whom Lucrezia in her days as an opera singer once sung a love duet. At the theatre, where she eats loudly throughout the performance much to the architect's annoyance, Lucrezia recounts how, once when she was singing a love duet in an opera with this famous singer, he went mad and threatened to poison her and himself with potato salad! (p. 245). At the end of this story, however, it becomes clear that it is Lucrezia's out of tune singing which drove the opera singer crazy, not her beauty, as she believes. Lucrezia thinks she is irresistible to all men and that all men are consequently in love with her. She does not realise that Tobias Seresi lost his senses and went mad owing to her appalling singing. At the end of the performance, the audience applaud loudly and show their appreciation 'gegen den armen Irren' (p.

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<sup>31</sup> Hong Zin Kim, *Die Erzähltechnik in Paul Heyses frühen Novellen* (Cologne: n.pub, 1981), p. 61.

245), but Lucrezia reverts to her cold-blooded self: ‘Nur meine Witwe lorgnierte ihn ganz kaltblütig, fächerte sich beständig Kühlung zu, und fing gleich wieder an, verzuckerte Orangenscheibchen zu essen’ (p. 245). In this episode Lucrezia is portrayed as completely lacking in self-awareness and as being oblivious to those around her. Moreover, her cold-bloodedness once again comes to the fore, a trait which starts to cause the architect great concern.

As far as the architect is concerned, the way in which Lucrezia treats her children is the most indicative of her inherently cold-blooded nature. When the architect learns that her two youngest children are looked after by her aunt and the eldest two look after themselves in Florence, he refers to Lucrezia as a ‘Rabenmutter’ (p. 246). In her depiction as a cold-blooded and savage mother, combined with the many references to the following line: ‘Ah sin’ all ore all’ ore estreme’ (p. 248) from the opera *Norma* by Vincenzo Bellini, first produced in 1831, Lucrezia is aligned with the figure of Norma. In the opera *Norma*, the heroine is a mother who reflects upon killing her children, but her mother’s feelings triumph. The phrase that is sung by Norma and Adalgisa in the opera is, however, different from the version which is often quoted, indeed misquoted, by the architect. It is: ‘fino all’ ore estreme’ and not ‘sin’ all ore’ estreme’, and it means that each will be faithful ‘to my last hour’. It is the narrator, and not Lucrezia, who cites this line from the opera on every occasion. The narrator’s misquotation of ‘fino’ for ‘sin’ negates the declaration of fidelity which is in the original. This is indicative of his deep-seated distrust of Lucrezia as a widow who cannot be trusted. Moreover, it further serves to undermine the narrator. Earlier in the story, the narrator commented that Lucrezia was an uneducated woman, someone who is unable to read other languages in the original. In the episodes where he misquotes

the Italian, however, it is the architect who is unveiled as incompetent in foreign languages. It later becomes apparent, as shown in the narrator's depiction of Lucrezia as mechanical discussed below, that he is blaming her for his own shortcomings.

There is a further point of comparison with the opera *Norma*. The word 'ore' taken from the opera can be understood as a pun on 'Ohr' and a sound-play with the German, for Lucrezia's dead husband is apparently without his ears. It also highlights Lucrezia's dreadful singing and the constant noise which surrounds her. The significance of the ears, however, does not end here.

In the most absurd episode of the story, Lucrezia presents to the architect a jar containing her husband's ears as evidence that he is really dead. She proudly claims: 'dies ist wohl besser als mancher Totenschein' (p. 247). In an ironic reversal, it is the male and not the figure of the widow who is presented as incomplete. Whereas the opera singer was incomplete owing to the loss of his mind, Lucrezia's husband is presented as physically incomplete. The ears also recall the motif of dismemberment. Moreover, like the singer's madness, the ears are related to Lucrezia's appalling singing. The cool and reserved manner, typical of Lucrezia, in which she presents the jar containing her husband's pickled ears, causes the architect to see her as less than human. While she studies the ears in the jar the architect remarks upon her 'wissenschaftliche[r] Ernst, wie etwa ein Naturforscher' (p. 247). Owing to her complete lack of emotion in this instance, the architect compares her to an automaton, a stock figure in the tradition of German literature: 'Immer sah ich die beiden Fläschchen und die kaltblütigen schwarzen Augen darauf gerichtet und hörte den Klang der Spieluhr aus der hohlen Automatenbrust' (p. 248). The architect, whom the

reader has witnessed to be a rather mechanical and wooden figure himself, now depicts Lucrezia as the epitome of the mechanical and heartless woman.

Moving from the absurd to the purely ridiculous, in a final and desperate attempt to seduce the architect, Lucrezia claims that she has seen a ghost. In the middle of the night she appears in the architect's room. She tells him that she has seen her husband at the foot of her bed, 'wie er leibte und lebte' (p. 249). This is her attempt to compromise him so that he will have to marry her. The architect is struck by the obvious farce and humour of the situation. As he is about to go to her room, however, Lucrezia 'schüttelte abwehrend ihre schwarzen Haare, winkte mir mit den schönen weißen Armen eine gute Nacht und verschwand' (p. 249). The architect bursts into laughter as soon as she leaves the room, and he decides that it is time to make his escape from the crazy widow.

Following this farcical episode, the architect escapes. As soon as he is away from Lucrezia he reflects upon his overwhelming feeling of liberation. This sense of freedom is short-lived, for whom should he stumble upon but 'Sor Carlo, der Mann meiner Witwe!' (p. 253). The game of deception which characterised the architect's relations with Lucrezia also comes to mark his dealings with Carlo, who is a composer. Carlo ran away in order to have enough peace and quiet to compose and get away from Lucrezia's jealousy and her bad cooking. The architect presents Lucrezia as the typical grieving widow: 'Ihre trauernde Witwe hat Tag und Nacht keine Ruhe' (p. 254). He paints this picture of Lucrezia as he needs Carlo to take her back for his own safety. Deception becomes the prevailing theme of their meeting when the architect tells Carlo about the jars containing the ears, which provokes a pertinent and emphatic response from him: 'O, ich bin schändlich betrogen werden!'

(p. 254). Carlo, clearly in full possession of his ears, relates how he has been deceived by the go-between who was supposed to inform Lucrezia that he was alive and well. In his story, therefore, Heyse shows deception on many levels and presents to his reader a text about people deceiving other people. At this stage of the story, the reader is left questioning the extent to which Lucrezia, the 'faithless' widow, actually plays a part in this game of deception.

Just as the reader has been invited to laugh at the architect on several occasions, so does the reader come to laugh at Carlo, who 'sich eingebildet habe, sie [Lucrezia] niese sogar falsch und ihre Schuhe knarrten um einen Viertelton zu hoch' (p. 255). Lucrezia has driven her husband mad just like she did the opera singer. Lucrezia is thus presented as a contrast to the men of the story – her coolness and calmness in her dealings with people usually define her. She may act in a bizarre fashion at times, such as claiming to see a ghost, but she never lets her guard down entirely. This is further confirmed in the comic ending of the story.

At the end of the text, Lucrezia is compared to the figure of Penelope, the wife of Odysseus (p. 257). This indeed seems fitting. Like Penelope, Lucrezia has ultimately been faithful to her husband's memory but she has also been active and cunning. It transpires that at the end of the story she has again followed the architect, another indication of her activity, but she is not prepared for the news which awaits her. In a similar vein to the start of the story, Heyse presents the interaction between Lucrezia and the architect as a comic performance. The architect informs Lucrezia that her husband is alive in everyday language that contrasts with the extremely surreal event being recounted:

Halt! sagte ich. Ihr wißt noch nicht alles. Die Toten stehn wieder auf. Euer Seliger sitzt droben im Wirtshaus und läßt Euch grüßen. Er ist frisch und gesund und im Besitz seiner sämtlichen Ohren, die Ihr von jetzt an hoffentlich etwas schonender behandeln werdet (p. 259).

As the architect recounts his meeting with Carlo to Lucrezia he derives great satisfaction from witnessing ‘den Wechsel der Gemütsbewegungen auf ihrem Gesicht’ (p. 260). Lucrezia is unable to hide the emotion which was previously missing when discussing her husband. In contrast to the colloquial language the architect uses to tell Lucrezia about meeting Carlo, Lucrezia employs a sophisticated outer façade of coolness and control to stop her from showing too much feeling. The architect notes her ‘Ausdruck von zeremonieller Kälte’ (p. 260), which, in its contrast to her changing facial features in the previous sentence, highlights her determination to stay composed and collected no matter what she may be feeling underneath. The ‘widow’ attempts to maintain her dignity until the end when she is sent back to her husband, yet her coldness is once more emphasised: ‘Damit nickte sie mir huldvoll wie einem völlig Fremden meine Entlassung zu, zog den Schleier wieder über das Gesicht und ging majestätisch’ (p. 260). Following Lucrezia’s gracious exit the reader is left with yet another of the architect’s stereotypical observations: ‘O die Weiber! Sie sind niemals größer, furchtbarer, erfinderischer und bezaubernder, als wenn sie ein schlechtes Gewissen haben!’ (p. 260).

On several occasions throughout Heyse’s story Lucrezia is aligned with stock figures of womanhood. The most obvious example is the figure Norma. Towards the end of the text Lucrezia is also compared to Penelope. Owing to the name ‘Lucrezia’, moreover, the reader may ask whether Lucrezia is presented as a reminder of the Roman Lucretia, the quintessential virtuous wife who stabbed herself after she was

violated. It is interesting that all three figures have in common their faithfulness; Norma leapt onto the funeral pyre and Penelope tricked her suitors by secretly unravelling at night the shroud she wove during the day. Aligning Lucrezia with these women firstly serves to highlight the fact that she *has* ultimately been faithful and chaste. Unlike the architect and the go-between, Lucrezia has not deceived anyone. The twist in Heyse's story, therefore, is that in a story about deceit and faithlessness, the widow is the one who is deceived and does not do any deceiving herself. Thus these faithful models of womanhood highlight Lucrezia's faithfulness while simultaneously bringing to light the dishonesty of the architect.

Not only has Lucrezia been compared to Norma and Penelope, but, at the start of the text, the architect likens her to Omphale, the woman who forced Hercules to do women's work. However, the architect compares Lucrezia to Omphale before he has met her. At the start of the story he says to himself: 'Hier bleibst du! und wenn es um den Preis wäre, daß du dein Geschlecht verleugnen und am Rocken dieser Omphale Garn spinnen müßtest' (p. 236). This is further indicative of the architect's stereotyping and classification of women which runs throughout the text. That he says this before having met Lucrezia exemplifies his inability, and lack of desire, to see beyond his preformed categories. Lucrezia's ambiguous classification at the start of the story when she was dressed in her 'suspicious' nightdress together with her alignment with mythological and operatic women, shows how, as a widow, Lucrezia has no status readily accessible to her. Hence the architect reaches out to famous models of womanhood to help him create his image of her.

## **Conclusion**

Both Grisebach and Heyse portray widows who do not conventionally mourn their husbands. Tien-sche and Lucrezia are widows who transgress, be it through rapidly seducing a new lover and violently discarding a husband, or through being active and self-assured. Despite their clear transgressions, both authors have written stories in which the male characters form the centre of attention. Tschwang-säng remained the focus of *Die treulose Witwe* from start to finish by testing his wife's constancy, coming back to life, and then getting the upper hand at the end. Similarly, the reader learns more about the architect and his views of women in Heyse's text than about the 'widow' herself, since it is his view we hear throughout.

Whereas Grisebach's *Die treulose Witwe* is a particularly misogynist presentation of the motif of the faithless widow, Heyse's *Die Witwe von Pisa* playfully mocks the notion of a widow seductress-cum-killer. This is achieved by presenting the architect/narrator as the ultimate deceiver in the story. Although Heyse does not present a positive image of the widow, for she does angle for a man and is clearly cold-blooded, he does overturn the idea, espoused by Hippel and then Grisebach, that no widow is to be trusted. In his depiction of Lucrezia, moreover, the narrator's narcissism is at play, as it is with Heinrich in *Der grüne Heinrich*. To an extent, the narrator creates an image of Lucrezia that is modelled on himself – he paints her as mechanical and wooden, but he is revealed as lifeless in his rehearsed gestures and speech. He also paints her as deceiving, yet he is the real deceiver in the story.

Lucrezia's defining trait is her ambiguity. She is, on the one hand, a victim in that she is subjected to the conflicting labels and images which the architect places on her, but she is also, on the other hand, powerful in that she always stays one step ahead of

the architect by continually confounding his expectations so that he is unable to draw a coherent picture of her. Her power is ultimately removed at the end of the story, however, when she is depicted in a ridiculous and comical light. The absurd scene, in which she presented her husband's ears, shows that the motif of dismemberment is at play, yet, unlike the biblical Judith's dismemberment, Lucrezia is not imbued with power owing to this. Rather the motif of dismemberment in *Die Witwe von Pisa* serves to diminish the widow's power by portraying her in an absurd light.

An examination of both stories thus confirms that Heyse has contributed more to this age-old motif than has Grisebach. Grisebach repeats misogynist notions which dictate that *all* independent women are dangerous and need male control. Thus his text can be seen as a further example of standard notions, albeit in a more extreme form. Heyse, on the other hand, shifts the focus and examines the faulty logic which claims that all autonomous women are the same; hence his story can be understood as a reworking of the topic. The architect's desperate attempts to understand Lucrezia by reaching out to famous historical and mythological models of womanhood, who may or may not resemble her, ultimately fail. Heyse is therefore subtly mocking a male tradition which aligns strong, determined women who do not fit the conventional mould with dangerous and powerful women of the past. The next chapter continues with a different take on the motif of the faithless widow, though she is still painted as a seductress-cum-killer. Schnitzler's widows, instead of discarding their husband's memories, are portrayed as without reliable memories, and this tendency to disconnect from their past renders them unchaste.

## Chapter V

### The widow as death-bringer. Murder and incest in C.F. Meyer's *Die Richterin* (1885), Arthur Schnitzler's *Frau Beate und ihr Sohn* (1913) and *Frau Berta Garlan* (1902).

#### Introduction

In this chapter, the widow's connection to power and death is particularly prominent. The heroine of Meyer's *Die Richterin* is a strong, masculine and autonomous woman. In Schnitzler's short stories, however, it is the powerlessness of his widows that is emphasised. In *Frau Berta Garlan* the heroine's powerlessness is revealed in, among many other things, her monologues. As Nancy C. Michael points out, the monologues which belong to Berta, characterised by their many gaps and pauses, reveal her as a timid and inexperienced woman.<sup>1</sup> In *Frau Beate und ihr Sohn* Beate's powerlessness is conveyed in Schnitzler's presentation of her as a figure completely lacking in self-awareness. Whether powerful or powerless, the fates of Meyer's and Schnitzler's widows take a similar turn at the end of the stories.

Meyer and Schnitzler also portray their widows as bearers of death. Stemma, the protagonist of *Die Richterin*, is a murderer, Beate lures her son into death, and Berta's fate is throughout the story linked to a woman called Anna Rupius, who kills herself after discovering that she is pregnant resulting from her affair in Vienna. Previous chapters of this thesis have shown that the widow is often presented as between life and death. At the turn of the century, the widow's connection to death intensifies and she is consequently portrayed as a death-dealing woman. These widows are thus particularly transgressive. They have transgressed against their natural, womanly roles as givers of life. Consequently they are depicted as unnatural and incompetent mothers.

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<sup>1</sup> Nancy C. Michael, *Elektra and Her Sisters. Three Female Characters in Schnitzler, Freud, and Hofmannsthal* (New York: Peter Lang, 2001), p. 20.

**‘Was ist tue, tue ich groß’.<sup>2</sup> The widow transgressor in Meyer’s *Die Richterin***

*Die Richterin* is set in the year 800 in the fictional fortress of ‘Malmort’, a speaking name meaning ‘bad death’. Stemma, the widowed mother and the eponymous heroine, is the judge of Rhaetia, the territory in which this fortress is situated, and she is depicted as strong and resolute, a woman who is both feared and admired. She has gained herself a reputation as a woman very competent in her capacity as a judge, but she is hiding a guilty secret: she poisoned her husband and had a child by another man, a young priest. Stemma is therefore a self-made widow. The story begins at the point when Stemma calls her step-son Wulfrin back to Rhaetia from the Palace school in Rome. He is her husband’s son by his first marriage and so, to all appearances, the half brother of Palma novella, Stemma’s daughter. Palma is the product of Stemma’s affair with the priest and is therefore not the real sister of Wulfrin, the son of her husband she poisoned. Stemma leads Palma and Wulfrin to believe that they are brother and sister, but they fall passionately in love with each other. In the end, Stemma is forced, either by her daughter or by her guilty conscience or both, to confess her secrets, before poisoning herself. Stemma is not the only murderous mother and widow poisoner to feature in Meyer’s story. Faustine, Stemma’s companion since childhood, also poisoned her husband and had a child by another man. Like Stemma, Faustine was forcibly given in marriage to a man she did not love, but unlike Stemma, she proclaims her guilt and demands punishment from Stemma the judge, whereas Stemma conceals her guilt. Faustine, Stemma’s ‘eigenes Spiegelbild’, as Per Øhrgaard calls her, dies in the course of the tale and thus prefigures Stemma’s death at the end of the text.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Conrad Ferdinand Meyer, *Die Richterin*, in *Erzählungen und Novellen 11. Rezensionen und Aufsätze. Briefe*, ed. by Heinz Schöffler (Berlin: Tempel, 1967), pp. 225-316.

<sup>3</sup> Per Øhrgaard, *C.F. Meyer. Zur Entwicklung seiner Thematik* (Copenhagen: Munksgaard, 1969), p. 100.

Meyer begins his story with the prevailing and intertwining themes of love, death and human conscience. Before the reader is introduced to Stemma the reader learns that she has requested her step-son, Wulfrin, to return from the court of Charlemagne to absolve her of any complicity in the death of her husband, his father. In giving Wulfrin this command, the horn is sounded by the emperor Charlemagne. The horn is an important symbol for many reasons in Meyer's text. Rosemary Park explains that it is credited with the power to force a confession from the wife of any sins committed in her lord's absence.<sup>4</sup> It thus symbolises the power of human conscience. As soon as Wulfrin arrives in Rhaetia and is reunited with Stemma and Palma, it is made apparent to the reader that love among the family members is depicted as a battlefield on many levels. Stemma fights with Palma for possession of Wulfrin and she also fights for possession of Palma. There is also a cup called the 'Wulfenbecher' proffered to a guest on his arrival. It too has symbolic value, as Stemma used this very vessel to poison her husband. The cup therefore symbolises death and power. That it stands for power and the desire for power on the part of both mother and daughter is shown by the way in which Palma and Stemma come to regard it. It is important to Palma that she is in possession of the cup while greeting Wulfrin: 'Ich ergreife den Becher, fliege der Mutter voran – oder noch lieber, sie ist verritten und ich bin Herrin im Hause' (p. 268). Palma secretly wishes to be superior to her mother, but fear stops her from acting on her wishes. Stemma destroys this illusion of Palma's by taking the cup away from her the moment Wulfrin arrives. Stemma feels a sense of disgust when she sees Palma holding the vessel which only she knows has functioned as a poison cup, and so she snatches it out of her hands. Palma remains passive at this point. She acts 'ohne Kampf und Widerstand' (p. 282).

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<sup>4</sup> Rosemary Park, 'Concrete Objects in Conrad Ferdinand Meyer's Novellen', *The Germanic Review*, 18 (1943), 251-65 (pp. 257-8). Cf. p. 189, n. 6.

The relationship between Stemma and her daughter, Palma, assumes great importance in the story, and is depicted primarily as a power-struggle. Heidi Margrit Müller argues that Stemma's gesture, her taking the cup from Palma the moment Wulfrin arrives, is clearly symbolic of her desire for power over, and possession of, her daughter.<sup>5</sup> Müller succinctly refers to this as Stemma's 'Besitzanspruch auf die Tochter'.<sup>6</sup> However, she does not mention Palma's own attempts to take charge and be in control. It is my contention that Palma on occasion tries to show her autonomy and assert her power when dealing with her mother, although she is commonly interpreted as 'weak' and 'innocent' and the more forceful side of her character is not acknowledged.<sup>7</sup> The vocabulary Meyer employs indeed brings to light Palma's more aggressive nature. At the start of the story, for example, she is described as 'gut aber wild' (p. 263). Moreover, Palma has the ability to bring Stemma's more vulnerable side to the fore and thereby rob her of her strong exterior: 'Dann raubte sie [Palma] ihr den Helm so ungestüm' (p. 272). Without her helmet Stemma appears 'jugendlich' and 'leidend' (p. 272), which contrasts with the powerful image she portrays of herself. As already mentioned, Palma is scared of Stemma, but this fear, although on a much smaller scale, is also prevalent in Stemma's feelings towards Palma, as Palma is able to strip Stemma of her carefully constructed and powerful façade. It would thus appear that the concept of power is a central part of their relationship, where both women try to assert their will and independence but each is able to control and undermine the other. On Stemma's part, this desire for possession and power on the one hand is counterbalanced by a maternal protectiveness for her daughter's welfare on the other.

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<sup>5</sup> Heidi Margritt Müller, *Töchter und Mütter in Deutschsprachiger Erzählprosa von 1885 bis 1935* (Munich: Iudicium, 1991), p. 46.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 46.

<sup>7</sup> Per Øhrgaard, *C.F. Meyer. Zur Entwicklung seiner Thematik*, p. 101.

Again, in the second chapter of the text, Stemma has a vision where she sees the priest, Peregrin, Palma's father. In this dream Stemma refers to Palma as her property. Looking over at Palma she says: 'Du bist mein Eigentum! Ich teile dich nicht mit dem verschollenen Knaben! Ich umschleiche dich wie eine hütende Löwin!' (p. 281). This quotation summarises Stemma's attitude to Palma. Stemma believes selfishly that Palma belongs to her, yet she also displays a maternal affection, a fierce love of Palma and a desire to protect her daughter, as is shown by the comparison of a lioness protecting its cubs.

The turning point of Meyer's novella coincides with Stemma's loss of control. The horn, which Stemma clearly recognises as a symbol of conscience, snatching it from Wulfrin and throwing it into the stream, suddenly reappears and Wulfrin blows into it. Believing that the horn announces the arrival of her dead husband, Stemma, suffering from great shock and temporary insanity, confesses at its sound, with Palma as her only witness. This incident changes the nature of their relationship. Palma now realises that she is not related to Wulfrin and has therefore not committed incest as she had thought, and Stemma tries to convince Palma of her own responsibility for the murder by saying that she, Stemma, killed in order to protect her unborn child. Palma decides to remain loyal to her mother by keeping her secret, but the burden of the secret becomes too much and she falls victim to anorexia nervosa. The sight of her ill and dying daughter brings Stemma to her knees, for it is almost too much for her to bear. Yet as the following quotation shows, Palma's welfare does not appear to be Stemma's main concern:

Sie setzten sich auf eine Bank und Frau Stemma betrachtete ihr Kind. Da ergrimmte sie und weinte zugleich in ihrem Herzen über die Verwüstung des Einzigen was sie liebte. Aber sie blieb aufrecht und gürtete sich mit ihrer letzten Kraft. 'Wie', sagte sie sich, 'mir gelänge es nicht, dieses Gehirnchen zu betören, dieses Herzchen zu überwältigen?' (p. 310).

The verb 'ergrimmen' conveys a sense of contempt and anger on Stemma's part. Müller suggests that this is another example of Stemma's lack of respect for her daughter's will.<sup>8</sup> Once again, Palma is responsible for highlighting Stemma's more vulnerable, powerless side. Stemma accordingly tries to gain control over Palma's reason and her emotion. Her use of the diminutive suggests that Stemma is perhaps belittling Palma's capacity for reason and emotion. Starting with her reason, Stemma attempts to convince Palma of her role in Wulf's death. As a final resort, Stemma offers Palma, the 'Entkräftete' (p. 312), bread and wine, but when she refuses, Stemma appears to have finally lost her will and is accordingly portrayed as defeated.

Now the mother-daughter relationship becomes a matter of life and death: 'Stemma sah eine Sterbende. Da starb auch sie' (p. 313). At this point, Stemma realises that she needs to confess so that her daughter can live. Müller puts forward the argument that Palma's battle with death is a visible sign that Stemma has failed in her role as a mother.<sup>9</sup> However, what Stemma truly fears, more than her failure in motherhood, is not so much the loss of her daughter, but rather the loss of what Palma represents and her own loss of power. Although I do not agree that Stemma projects her erotic wishes onto Palma, it is clear that all her emotional energy is focused on her. If Stemma were to lose her daughter, she would lose everything. With this realisation Stemma concludes that she must die and thereby she allows her daughter to live. In the end Stemma confesses her murder and her lie about Palma's birth to Charlemagne, she drinks the poison and dies.

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<sup>8</sup> Müller, *Töchter und Mütter*, p. 49.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 49.

### **The widow and death**

Widows are often portrayed as figures between the world of the living and the world of the dead but it would seem that this is taken further in the figure of Stemma, who is often portrayed as aligned with the dead. Before the reader meets her, Stemma is already depicted as dead. In the central courtyard of the castle of Malmort are two grave-slabs, one over the grave of Stemma's dead husband, the other Stemma's own. Stemma has condemned herself to death, for her effigy is on the grave slab next to that of her poisoned husband's, and this, her 'eigenes liegendes Bild' (p. 282), is constantly mentioned. Lying beside her dead husband assures that Stemma is always associated with death and that her identity is forever bound up with her husband:

In der Mitte des Hofes und im Schatten der Ahorne stand ein breiter Steinsarg, auf dessen Platte ein gewappneter Mann neben einem Weibe lag, das die Hände über der Brust faltete. 'Ei, da hält ja unsere liebe Frau neben ihrem alten stille Andacht' (p. 268).

Stemma is further depicted as 'already dead' in the various depictions of her as stone-like. Stemma is portrayed as 'die steinerne Stemma' (p. 308), who 'kniete starr und steinern' (p. 312). In addition to this, Stemma is described as the voice of death itself:

Da legte sich ihm [Wulfrin] eine Hand auf die Schulter. Ohne das Haupt zu wenden, sagte er: "Ich komme", und wollte sich erheben, denn er wußte, es war der Tod, der zu ihm trat, um ihn an den jähsten Abgrund zu führen (p. 303).

Although Stemma as the personification of death is dangerous to others, she herself enjoys this affinity and treats it in a playful manner. Death is portrayed as a game to Stemma. On several occasions before sleeping she is depicted playing with the vials of poison she keeps in her chamber: 'dann konnte sie lange, lange mit zwei Fläschen spielen' (p. 276). This becomes a 'Bedürfnis' (p. 277), which underlines her inherent fascination with death. In her attraction to death, Meyer highlights her similarities with Wulfrin.

Stemma's possessive nature not only relates to Palma but to a certain extent to Wulfrin, too. Stemma's taking the horn from Wulfrin and throwing it into the stream is interpreted by Müller as a symbol of castration and as a means of preventing sexual relations between Palma and Wulfrin.<sup>10</sup> However, the similarity between Wulfrin and Stemma is most strongly shown by their mutual attraction to death and to lawless worlds. When Wulfrin confesses his love for Palma in chapter four, Stemma uses words such as 'fire', 'flame' and 'sin' to describe the nature of his feelings. These terms match exactly the experiences and feelings which Wulfrin had to fight against in the previous chapter once he became aware of his love. Fire imagery further connects Stemma to Wulfrin, as it highlights their warrior-like natures. When the reader is first introduced to Stemma, she is described as a strong, amazon-like woman: 'eine behelmte(n) Frau mit strengen Zügen, die den Speer, den sie in der Hand getragen, einem bewaffneten Knechte reichte' (p. 270). Furthermore, as Tiiu V. Laane points out, when Wulfrin accepts the condemnation of his apparent incestuous passion, a sense of peace overcomes him. The sunset which he observes is perceived as a warrior like himself.<sup>11</sup>

Wulfrin and Stemma are once again unveiled as similar through their fascination with death when the realisation of Wulfrin's 'incestuous' love for Palma makes the surrounding landscape become one of hell and torment for him:

Er betrat eine Hölle. Über der rasenden Flut drehten und krümmten sich ungeheure Gestalten, die der flammende Himmel auseinanderriß und die sich in der Finsternis wieder umarmten [...] Das war eine Welt der Willkür, des Trotzes, der Auflehnung. Gestreckte Arme schleuderten Felsstücke gegen den Himmel [...] Wulfrin aber schritt ohne Furcht, denn er fühlte sich wohl unter diesen Gesetzlosen (p. 300).

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<sup>10</sup> Müller, *Töchter und Mütter*, p. 47.

<sup>11</sup>Tiiu V. Laane, *Imagery in Conrad Ferdinand Meyer's Prose Works. Form, Motifs and Functions* (Bern: Peter Lang, 1983), p. 78.

Wulfrin is content in this abyss, however, shown by the phrase 'er fühlte sich wohl' (p. 300). Christian Sand points out that this landscape described above is an 'Antiwelt zur bürgerlichen Wirklichkeit'.<sup>12</sup> As such, Wulfrin is connected to Stemma, a widow who has poisoned her husband yet who works as a judge; she too has abandoned the world with laws. Wulfrin treats death in a playful manner and feels he belongs in this realm, as does Stemma who plays with her poison. Indeed, Wulfrin is depicted as simultaneously playing with death and being called by death: '*Auch* ihn ergriff die Lust der Empörung, er glitt auf eine wilde Platte, ließ die Füße überhangen in die Tiefe, die nach ihm rief' (my italics) (p. 300). The word 'auch' reinforces that it is not just Wulfrin who is attracted to danger.

The associations with death continue in the story through the depiction of sexual relationships. In Meyer's portrayal of male/female relationships, violence and death are closely linked. Through the character of Faustine, Stemma's 'Doppelgänger', Meyer treats the theme of violence and its link to patriarchy in the story and makes it clear that these murderous daughters had no other recourse but to kill. Sand also makes this point: 'Von der Gegenwart aus erscheint die Vergangenheit für Stemma erst jetzt akzeptabel'.<sup>13</sup> Faustine says of her dead husband: 'Lupulus, jähzornig wie er war, hätte mich umgebracht' (p. 273). Yet Meyer depicts her guilt at her action in killing him. She wants to be punished, but Stemma refuses to judge her. Stemma, on the other hand, is portrayed as acting out of vengeance. She seduced her lover Peregrin to spite her father: 'aus Auflehnung mehr noch als aus Liebe' (p. 281). Stemma's father is portrayed as particularly cruel and violent, as he killed Peregrin and then forced his daughter into a loveless marriage. Her only way to escape, too, is to murder

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<sup>12</sup> Christian Sand, *Anomie und Identität. Zur Wirklichkeitsproblematik in der Prosa von C.F. Meyer* (Stuttgart: Hans-Dieter Heinz, 1980), p. 176.

<sup>13</sup> Sand, *Anomie und Identität*, p. 182.

the husband who has been forced on her. Unsurprisingly therefore, Stemma's relations with men appear to be controlled by hate and the desire to dominate.<sup>14</sup>

The way in which Stemma views her late husband and her lover Peregrin is similar. Sand argues that the way in which Stemma treats men, in particular her deceased husband and lover, is indicative of her sadomasochistic behaviour.<sup>15</sup> Stemma's vision of Peregrin brings her masculine nature and hunger for power once again to the fore: 'Da fühlte sie eine unbändige Lust, das kraftlose Wesen zu ihren Füßen zu überwältigen' (p. 278). Furthermore, Peregrin is depicted as a coward in her vision:

"Peregrin, ich habe geweint! Aber besinne dich: dein ist die Schuld! Bin ich nicht dreimal vor dich getreten, mein Bündel in der Hand? Habe ich dich nicht drohend beschworen, mit mir zu fliehen? Wer wollte Fuß neben Fuß in Armut und Elend wandern? Du aber erblaßtest und erbleichtest, denn du hast ein feiges Herz. Ich liebte dich und, bei meinem Leben! – warest du ein Mann – Vater, Heimat, alles hätte ich niedergetreten und wäre dein eigen geworden" (p. 279).

According to Stemma, Peregrin revealed himself to be a weak man by not demonstrating his love for her, thus he did not correspond to her image of manly strength, and for this she feels great contempt. She treats her dead husband in a similarly derogatory manner, shown by the heartless and carefree way in which she thinks about him: 'Ein Lächeln des Hohnes glitt über ihr verdunkeltes Gesicht, denn Stemma kannte die Hilflosigkeit der Abgeschiedenen' (p. 281). Sand makes the following interesting point about Stemma's ambiguous presentation: 'Die Freiheit, die sich Stemma gegenüber den Toten nimmt, stellt sie punktuell außerhalb der tradierten Sinnwelt, andererseits bleibt sie ihr dialektisch verbunden durch die Art, wie sie das ihren Normen Widersprechende verdrängt'.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Müller, *Töchter und Mütter*, p. 46.

<sup>15</sup> Sand, *Anomie und Identität*, p. 181.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 181.

This reinforces Stemma's status as between worlds, as a liminal figure. Her playful attitude towards death places her outside the category of the typical grieving widow, but her attempts to repress her deed shows that she is not fully aligned with the lawless world, with which Wulfrin is also connected.

The violence which is inherent in patriarchy is again illustrated in Meyer's treatment of the incest motif. Meyer makes use of certain dominant metaphors, motifs and imagery to help highlight the nature of the 'incestuous' relationship between Palma and Wulfrin. Palma, who is associated with innocence and naivety, is depicted as impatient and hopelessly in love while she waits to greet Wulfrin in chapter two: "jetzt kommt er!" Ihr Herz pochte. Sie begann zu zittern und zu zagen' (p. 268). Indeed, her love for her supposed brother is depicted as pure and child-like. In the third chapter, the theme of incest is closely connected to nature, which is a contradiction in itself. When setting out with Wulfrin towards Pratum, Palma connects her inner feelings of elation with the landscape surrounding her. The beautifully written passage of landscape description which follows is on one level a personification of Palma's feelings for Wulfrin:

Sie deutete auf ein majestätisches Schneegebirge. Seine verklärten Linien hoben sich auf dem lautern Himmel, zierlich, doch ohne Schärfe, als wollten sie ihn nicht verwunden, und waren beides, Kraft und Lieblichkeit, als hätten sie sich gebildet, ehe die Schöpfung in Mann und Weib, in Jugend und Alter auseinanderging (p. 291).

The landscape reveals the physical and spiritual dimension of their love for each other. However, as Christof Laumont argues, a clear sense of ambiguity and fragility pervades this passage, which hints at an undeveloped or unconscious love.<sup>17</sup> The lines on the mountain symbolise the union between man and woman, but this union is immediately threatened with destruction. In contrast to Palma, Wulfrin's love lacks this innocence and is characterised by

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<sup>17</sup> Christof Laumont, *Jeder Gedanke als sichtbare Gestalt. Formen und Funktionen der Allegorie in der Erzähldichtung Conrad Ferdinand Meyers* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 1997), p. 266.

its strong, physical element. When Wulfrin comes to realise that his love for Palma is verging on the sexual, his relationship with her becomes defined by 'Sünde', 'Feuer' and 'Flamme' - what is paradise for Palma is hell for Wulfrin.

Once the sexual attraction is apparent between Palma and Wulfrin becomes overt, the former beautiful and peaceful landscape is portrayed as angry and vengeful. Contrasting scenes of paradise and hell, which match the inner lives of Palma and Wulfrin respectively, are presented. As we have just seen, nature comes alive for Palma and, as Laane points out, it becomes her companion.<sup>18</sup> Palma represents life. Wulfrin's growing love for Palma, on the other hand, is conveyed by means of fire imagery and the approach of a storm and manifests itself in an act of violence in which he throws Palma against a cliff. Love and violence are inextricably linked and are clearly characteristic of family relations in the story.

It is not only Stemma who displays sadomasochist tendencies in her relationships. As Sand argues, Wulfrin too displays a desire to punish Palma before he can possess her.<sup>19</sup> Complementing Wulfrin's sadomasochistic behaviour, Palma acts in a typically passive female manner, allowing herself to be subjected to Wulfrin's physical abuse. She says to Wulfrin: 'Siehe, ich muß dir folgen, es ist stärker als ich! [...] Töte mich lieber! Ich kann nicht leben, wenn du mich hassest! Tue, wie du gedroht hast!' (p. 300-301). In her relationship to men Palma is depicted as weak and suffering, which contrasts both with her behaviour towards her mother, and her mother's behaviour. As the story draws to a close, however, Stemma is depicted as an anomaly. Her lonely status as a widow is reinforced as all the characters in the text who previously shared traits in common with her come to emphasise their differences from her.

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<sup>18</sup> Laane, *Imagery in Conrad Ferdinand Meyer's Prose Works*, p. 87.

<sup>19</sup> Sand, *Anomie und Identität*, p. 180.

Meyer displays many affinities with other German male writers of the time by punishing his widow at the end of the story. Meyer goes further than other writers, however. Throughout the novella Meyer uses several mirroring and doubling devices to highlight Stemma's personality and predicament. Yet, at the end of the story, she is left with no mirror image, she is invisible, and this constitutes her real punishment. Faustine, for example, wanted to proclaim her guilt, in contrast to Stemma, who attempted to hide it. Similarly, Wulfrin reveals his possession of Palma at the end of the text and so undermines Stemma's attempts for possession throughout the story. Thus both characters display their differences to Stemma and highlight her element of 'lack', both morally and physically. After Stemma has poisoned herself, Wulfrin proudly claims '*mein ist Palma novella!*' (p. 316). In the end, Stemma has nobody; the invisible widow is left without a mirror image in society.

Unlike many other depictions of widows in nineteenth-century German literature, Stemma has created herself a widow; she has exerted the power and control to become a widow and has not let fate, or nature, take its course. As a consequence, Stemma the widow must be punished. A recurring trope in the depiction of Stemma is that of punishment for her autonomy, stripping her of her power, so that the punishment fits the crime. Because Stemma has played with the dead, the dead must come back to haunt her, which happens when Wulfrin blows into the horn, thus causing her to confess and taking her to her death.

Meyer's text comes full circle at the end. The desire for possession which was so striking at the start of the story returns at the end with Wulfrin claiming possession of Palma. Moreover, the theme of death which opened Meyer's story also concludes the text with Stemma's suicide by poison. The characters progress and reach a greater level of self awareness and autonomy either by killing others or by killing themselves. Both Faustine and Stemma had to kill their husbands to survive, and Stemma had to die to enable Palma to live. Thus death is the means by which characters come to live and are promised new life in Meyer's story. In

Schnitzler's *Frau Beate und ihr Sohn* on the other hand, death serves as a punishment for the heroine's, and her son's, transgression against society.

### **Arthur Schnitzler: *Frau Beate und ihr Sohn***

As indicated by the title of Schnitzler's story published in 1913, the mother-son-relationship assumes great importance in this work.<sup>20</sup> The story tells of the transition from a devoted mother and chaste widow to a widow submerged in sexual turmoil. Schnitzler's story recounts a few days in the life of the widowed Beate Heinhold. Since the death of her husband, Ferdinand, five years ago, Beate has not been tempted by love and has lived 'keusch wie ein junges Mädchen, ja ohne Wunsch' (p. 78). Her reawakening sexuality coincides with the onset of her seventeen-year-old son's sexuality. Beate fears that her son is having a relationship with a woman her own age, a baroness and former actress of questionable sociable reputation called Fortunata. Beate comes to despise this woman, whom she perceives as sexually provocative and dangerous. Beate begins an affair with her son Hugo's seventeen-year-old friend, Fritz, who represents a son-substitute. At the end of the story, aware that they have transgressed against society's rules, the mother and son come to their deaths through their double suicide in water.

At the start of the story Beate is presented as a typical concerned mother. Critics are agreed that to begin with there is no evidence to suggest that Beate's feelings for her son amount to more than natural anxiety.<sup>21</sup> Beate's attention is increasingly drawn to the 'schmerzhaft gespannte[n] Zug um die Lippen des Siebzehnjährigen, der im Lauf der letzten Tage immer wieder aufgefallen war' (p. 9). Indeed, Beate is painted as a worried and dutiful mother

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<sup>20</sup> Arthur Schnitzler, *Frau Beate und ihr Sohn* (Berlin: S. Fischer, 1922).

<sup>21</sup> Bruce Thompson, *Schnitzler's Vienna. Image of a Society* (London: Routledge, 1990), p. 46. Susanne Mürbeth, 'Die "asexuelle Witwe" im Identitätskonflikt am Beispiel von Arthur Schnitzlers "Frau Berta Garlan" und "Frau Beate und ihr Sohn"' (unpublished master's thesis, University of Waterloo, Waterloo, 2006), p. 80.

concerned about her son's welfare, and, when she fears that she is losing her son, her feelings are portrayed as those of a typical mother:

Eine Trauer umging sie, als hätte sie eben von etwas Abschied genommen, das niemals wiederkommen konnte. Vorbei war die Zeit, da ihr Hugo ein Kind, ihr Kind, gewesen war. Nun war er ein junger Mann, einer, der sein eigenes Leben lebte, von dem er die Mutter nichts mehr erzählen durfte. Nie mehr wird sie ihm die Wangen, die Haare streichen, nie mehr die süßen Kinderlippen küssen können wie einst. Nun erst, da sie sich auch ihn verloren hatte, war sie allein (p. 61).

Beate is mourning an emotionally distant son as opposed to a lover. Her motherly concern again comes to the fore when she worries that her son is having an affair with the much older Fortunata. Beate worries that this woman, this 'Dirne', will destroy her son:

Nur dies eine ersehnte sie sich für ihn: daß er nicht mit Ekel aus seinem ersten Rausch erwachte, mit seiner duftenden Jugend nicht der Lust einer Frau zum Opfer fiele, die ihren halbvergangenen Bühnenruhm nur einer schillernden Dirnenhaftigkeit verdankte und deren Wandel und Ruf auch in ihrer späten Ehe keine Änderung erfahren hatten (p. 14).

At this stage of the story, Beate's concerns do not appear out of line with those of a loving mother, though she does seem to have a vivid imagination. This is an aspect of her character which will be discussed further below. Beate's role as a dutiful mother finds further confirmation in the contrast she perceives between herself and Fortunata. It has already been made clear to the reader, through the word 'Dirne', that Beate sees Fortunata as a sexually provocative woman. Because she is so appalled by this, Beate uses Fortunata to construct her own identity of herself as a chaste and respectable widow. The names Beate and Fortunata represent two opposing extremes: "Beate" bedeutet die christliche/traditionelle und damit bürgerlich-übliche, "Fortunata" hingegen die heidnische und abweichende, nicht-bürgerliche

Variante'.<sup>22</sup> This is set in contrast to the 'asexuelle Mutter/Witwen-Identität' which Beate believes she represents and attempts to uphold throughout the text.<sup>23</sup>

When Beate visits Fortunata with the aim of asking her to end her affair with her son Hugo before he loses his innocence, the reader is shown how Beate divides femininity into two categories and has fixed ideas of women. Schnitzler causes his reader to lose sympathy with Beate by revealing her conviction that there are only decent and indecent women. According to Beate, Fortunata is a 'Luder' (p. 23). At first, attention is drawn to Fortunata's heavily made-up appearance, but it is her overt display of her sexuality, illustrated by means of her dress, which strengthens Beate's belief that she belongs to a different world to Fortunata. Beate remarks on Fortunata's obvious lack of clothing: 'Zugleich bemerkte sie, daß Fortunatens Füße nackt in den Sandalen staken, und daß sie unter dem weißen Leinenkleid nichts weiter anhatte' (p. 26-27). Following their conversation, Beate draws an even greater distinction between herself and Fortunata, or, as she herself puts it, 'Frauen ihrer Art, innerlich zerstört, verrückt und kaum verantwortlich für das Unheil, das sie anrichtete' (p. 34).

Beate's sexual prudery is also revealed in her conversation with Fortunata. When Fortunata begins to speak openly of her sexual reputation, and, in view of later events, ironically comments that, had she a son, she would recommend him to Beate, Beate refuses to pursue their discussion on this level. This is indicative of Beate's inability to abandon her façade of middle-class respectability. It further signifies her unwillingness to admit her true desires to herself. Interestingly, Schnitzler goes on to show in the course of the story that what Beate initially repudiates and fears, epitomised in the figure of Fortunata, she finds herself getting

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<sup>22</sup> Mürbeth, 'Die "asexuelle Witwe"', p. 96.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., p. 96.

drawn into.<sup>24</sup> As such, Beate gradually moves from being a blameless widow to a widow submerged in sexual turmoil.

While watching a tennis match just after her conversation with Fortunata, Beate reflects on what would happen if rules were suddenly abolished in the world:

Wie wohl dieser Abend endete, wenn mit einem Male durch irgendein Wunder alle Gebote der Sitte aus der Welt geschafft wären, und diese jungen Leute ohne jedes Hindernis ihren geheimen, jetzt vielleicht von ihnen selbst nicht geahnten Trieben folgen dürften? (p. 35).

This passage highlights the conflict between female lust and society's desire to control it. Beate creates this image of a world without laws herself, just as she herself chose to label Fortunata a 'Luder'. Once again therefore, Schnitzler is showing the reader Beate's tendency to see and hence construct the world as a set of binary opposites. Moreover, it is further suggestive of Beate's vivid imagination. The narrator emphasises the fact that Beate has a rather weird imagination, especially when she muses on female sexuality. Following her conversation with Fortunata, for example, Beate 'mußte sich Fortunata plötzlich vorstellen im weißen Leinenkleid über dem nackten Leib an einem Meeresstrand dahinlaufend, wie von bösen Geistern gehetzt' (p. 33-34). She has an over-active imagination, which makes it difficult for the reader completely to trust her version of events. The image of a lawless world which Beate creates, moreover, becomes ever more real and tangible when she realises that she herself has been part of this world without rules whilst with Fortunata: 'Und plötzlich fiel ihr ein, daß es ja solche gesetzlosen Welten gab; daß sie selbst eben aus einer solchen emporgestiegen kam und den Duft von ihr noch in den Haaren trug' (p. 35). The word 'plötzlich' may be suggestive of Beate's increasing yet sudden awareness that this lawless world and this moral world are not so far removed from each other as she at first thought, and

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<sup>24</sup> Shaun Whiteside, *Introduction to Beatrice and her son*, by Arthur Schnitzler, trans. by Shaun Whiteside (London: Penguin, 1999), p. ix.

that it is easier to oscillate between these worlds than she imagined. Following this acknowledgment, the conflict between her expectations of remaining chaste and her own unadmitted desires becomes even greater. This conflict together with her own unconscious wish to have a place in this lawless world manifests itself in Beate's incestuous feelings for her son and her subsequent affair with the seventeen-year-old Fritz.

Beate soon crosses the line when she expresses the wish to be her son's confidante: 'In früheren Jahren, als er noch ein Kind war, hatte sie gern den Gedanken gehegt, ihm später einmal nicht nur Mutter, sondern auch Freundin und Vertraute zu bedeuten' (p. 12). The word 'Freundin' moves Beate closer to the category of lover as opposed to mother and thus makes clear that her feelings are out of kilter with those of a typical mother. As Antonia Maria Caputo puts it: 'im Inzest-Motiv ereignet sich nicht so sehr die ödipale Eroberung der Mutter, vielmehr gewinnt die Mutter den Sohn, den Mann, den jungen Mann, der Ferdinand nie gewesen ist'.<sup>25</sup> Indeed, Hugo comes to represent Beate's gateway towards understanding the husband that she never really knew. This is revealed through the various phrases which emphasise the physical similarities between Hugo and his father, many of which Beate did not seem fully aware of while married. Beate often compares the two men: 'Denn sie ahnte ja: wie Hugo die Züge seines Vaters trug, so rann auch dessen Blut in ihm' (p. 14). Even when Hugo is sitting beside his friend Fritz, Beate likens him to Ferdinand: 'Und es ist auch noch immer sein Kindermund, der volle, rote, süße Kindermund! Freilich, den hatte sein Vater auch' (p. 40). The words 'voll' and 'rot' paint a sensual and sexual picture, which shows that her image of her son is indeed sexualised, but this is immediately overturned by the image of a 'süße[r] Kindermund' which follows. The tension between passion and/or excitement and sobriety in this quotation is shown through the exclamation mark following

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<sup>25</sup> Antonia Maria Caputo, *Arthur Schnitzlers Späte Werke. Studien zu seiner Erzählkunst* (Munich: UNI Druck, 1983), p. 254-255.

the 'süße[r] Kindermund' and the word 'freilich' which follows. In contrast to the first sentence, with its many pauses building up to a climax, the second statement is flat and down-to-earth, which suggests that Beate may be trying to restrain her feelings and play down the sexual aspect.

Beate muses on the physical resemblances between father and son and this causes her to reflect on what Ferdinand may have been like as a young man. The secretive and emotionally unavailable Hugo at the start of the text reminds Beate of Ferdinand, whom she never felt she really knew. Towards the end of the story, Beate attempts to see Ferdinand for the first time through Hugo:

'Früher hast du mir alles erzählt'. Und während sie das sagte, war ihr mit einem Male wieder, als richtete sie diese Worte eigentlich an Ferdinand und als wollte sie von ihrem toten Gatten alle die Geheimnisse erkunden, die er ihr schnöde verschwiegen, als er noch auf Erden wandelte (p. 99).

Beate's probing of Hugo, illustrated both at the beginning of the story, where she hopes to be his 'Vertraute ernsterer Empfindungen und Erlebnisse' (p. 13), and at the end as portrayed in her desire to understand his troubles and find out all his secrets, is linked to her relationship to Ferdinand. In fact, the above passage reveals how the images of father and son become blurred for Beate, as she feels she is talking to her husband when she is in fact talking to Hugo. Moreover, the word 'früher', which Beate uses in the above passage and in the previous passage with Hugo, implies that she, as is typical of widows, is bound up with the past and is still enmeshed in her husband's identity. The image of father and son as one is again effectively depicted at the end of the story just before their double suicide, in which Beate and Hugo are depicted as lovers:

Wie ähnlich er seinem Vater sieht, dachte Beate mit wehem Staunen. Nur hab' ich den nicht so jung gekannt. Und wie schön er ist. Es sind edlere Züge als die Ferdinands. Doch die hab' ich ja nie gekannt, und seine Stimme nie, es waren ja immer die Stimmen und Gesichter von andern. Seh' ich ihn heut zum erstenmal? ... Sie zog ihn näher zu sich heran, drängte sich an ihn; eine schmerzliche Sehnsucht stieg aus der Tiefe ihrer Seele auf und flutete dunkel in die

Seine über ... und Beate war es, als küßte sie in dieser Stunde einen, den sie nie gekannt hat und der ihr Gatte gewesen war, zum erstenmal ... Beate zog den Geliebten, den Sohn, den Todgeweihten, an ihre Brust (p. 104-106).

At the moment of their deaths the husband-son images combine and ‘boy-lover, husband and son form a complex, intermingling pattern in Beate’s mind until they fuse in the final incestuous embrace’.<sup>26</sup> As Caputo argues, ‘Beate besitzt Hugo als Reproduktion einer Liebesgeschichte’.<sup>27</sup> Hugo is the means by which she tries – and fails – to discover her husband; the emphasis is again placed on the fact that Beate did not know Ferdinand. Through her incestuous affair with Fritz, her son-substitute, Beate again comes to make important discoveries about the nature and the meaning of her marriage, while confirming to the reader that she desires not only her son, but also other male characters in the story.

There are signs that Beate is attracted to Fritz, a school friend of Hugo’s only one year his senior, which can be evinced through her body language and non-verbal communication. Immediately following their first conversation, for example, Beate ‘seufzte leise und strich sich mit der Hand über die Stirne’ (p. 22). What Beate fails to realise is that she at times behaves in a sexually enticing manner, although she is not aware of this. In her behaviour with Fritz and the two male figures who display a sexual interest in her, the young Doctor Bertram and the older bank manager Welponer, Schnitzler pays attention to gesture to clarify the true feelings of a character. Behind Beate’s façade of social politeness there emerges a woman with clear sexual desires. Yet at the start of the text, Beate never acts in a way which could be deemed inappropriate for a grieving and chaste widow. This is shown in her initial behaviour towards Doctor Teichmann, the only man whom Beate perceives as a suitable candidate for marriage. She immediately regrets ‘das allzu freundliche Lächeln’ (p. 10) with

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<sup>26</sup> Thompson, *Schnitzler’s Vienna*, p. 46.

<sup>27</sup> Caputo, *Arthur Schnitzler’s Späte Werke*, p. 256.

which she bids him farewell, for example. Moreover, in accordance with her self-styling as a chaste widow, she ‘wies die noch nicht ausgesprochene, aber zweifellos zu erwartende Werbung des Advokaten gleich andern Zukunftsgedanken ähnlicher Art innerlich weit von sich’ (p. 10). As is typical of many widows, Beate chooses to identify with the past and rules out the possibility of remarriage. In chapter two, however, as her sexuality awakens, her gestures and outward behaviour clash with her self-construction as a virtuous and therefore asexual widow.

In chapter two Beate goes on a picnic and during this episode, Mürbeth argues, her involuntarily gestures speak a great deal about her inner wishes; her façade of respectability is destroyed by her unconscious display of latent sexual urges.<sup>28</sup> The reader has seen how the figures of Ferdinand and Hugo become blurred in Beate’s imagination. In a similar manner, the figures of Hugo and Fritz at times become merged, as when looking into Fritz’s eyes ‘zärtlich lockend’, she fondles her son’s hair (p. 70). The power of sexual attraction is most prominently highlighted in this chapter through the use of the ‘Blick’ – ‘der zentrale Bedeutungsträger von sexueller Energie’.<sup>29</sup> Beate comments on how Fritz looks at her: ‘Welch ein Blick! dachte Beate. Noch verzückter und durstiger als die, mit denen er mich in den letzten Tagen daheim anzustrahlen pflegt’ (p. 45). Yet it is important to note that this sexually charged male behaviour is not one-sided; although Beate is outwardly discouraging to the male characters, she begins to catch herself acting in a sexually provocative manner. Beate’s ambivalence, her conflict between her moral expectations and her unconscious sexual wishes, are most clearly shown in her relationship to Doctor Bertram. When he invites her for tea at his house, she firmly refuses, stating that ‘Sie sind wohl verrückt geworden’ (p. 49). Yet through her ‘gaze’ she conveys a different message: ‘sie merkte dabei, daß sie zu Doktor

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid., p. 123.

<sup>29</sup> Mürbeth, ‘Die “asexuelle Witwe”’, p. 88.

Bertram ganz gegen ihren Willen wie ermutigend niederschaute' (p. 49). Immediately afterwards she realises that she has broken out of her role of chaste widow and devoted mother, and this she needs to correct: 'eilig blickte sie fort' (p. 49).

Beate again tries to restrain her sexually inviting behaviour when she notices how, not altogether differently from Fortunata's, her clothing is quite revealing: 'Denn plötzlich merkte sie, daß sie die Linien ihres Körpers wie lockend spielen ließ' (p. 49). Thus, in order to discourage Bertram and balance this image, she places herself in the role of the virtuous widow: 'Sie aber blieb kühl und fremd, wurde fremder von Schritt zu Schritt' (p. 53). Beate makes it her duty not to encourage Bertram overtly by acting distantly. Yet she is aware that she is an attractive woman with many suitors, and, as the following passage demonstrates, there is more than a hint that Beate enjoys teasing her admirers:

Und wieder sah sie den Direktor [Welponer], der nun schweigend an ihrer Seite einherging, flüchtig an, aber erschreckt beinahe spürte sie um ihre Lippen ein Lächeln, das aus dem Grunde ihrer Seele gekommen war, ohne daß sie es gerufen, und das untrüglich, beinahe schamlos, deutlicher als aller Worte, sprach: Ich weiß, daß du mich begehrt, und ich freue mich daran (p. 53).

Beate is starting to derive pleasure from the knowledge that she is an attractive woman, yet she still feels a sense of shame from this, shown by the words 'schamlos' and 'erschreckt'. Her repressed sexual longing, which was highlighted in her musings on a lawless world while observing a tennis match, marked the start of her sexual transformation, and this continues and develops in the picnic episode in chapter two. Just after she envisages a lawless world Beate becomes aware of the fact that she is at times perceived as a sex object by men. Thus, coinciding with her rediscovery of her sexuality, is an awareness that she is regarded in a sexual light by others:

Aber es war ihr, als sahen die beiden jungen Männer sie an, wie sie noch niemals sie angesehen. Insbesondere der junge Doktor Bertram hatte eine Art von überlegenem Spott um die Lippen, ließ seine Blicke an ihr auf und ab gleiten, wie er es noch nie getan oder wie sie es noch nie bemerkt hatte (p. 35).

Mürbeth argues that Beate ‘konzeptionalisiert sich selbst als Sexualobjekt’.<sup>30</sup> This can be seen through the way in which she acts with Herr Welponer, which was cited earlier. Beate also views the men in a sexual light. Schnitzler shows how Beate is interested in a sexual liaison and not marriage. Just after her sexuality finds an outlet with Fritz, she begins thinking about her next conquest: ‘nun weiß sie auch, daß der Jüngling, dem sie sich gegeben, nicht ihr letzter Geliebter sein wird. Aber schon regt sich in ihr mit heißer Neugier: wer wird der nächste sein? Doktor Bertram?’ (p. 76). This contrasts with the image of Beate at the start of the story who chose not to think about the future. Beate is now a widow submerged in sexual turmoil thinking of her next sexual adventure.

Fritz is the only character who actually has an intimate relationship with Beate in the story. Mutual feelings of sexual attraction are evident from their first meeting up until they embark upon their affair. Their first conversation is marked by the gentle reciprocal flirting which comes to be a central feature of all their consequent meetings. Fritz initiates the affair on the evening of the picnic, and at first Beate hesitates and tries to push him away. Her initial reaction illustrates her fear of leaving behind her carefully maintained role as a grieving widow. She asks herself: ‘Wer kann es mir übelnehmen? Wem bin ich Rechenschaft schuldig?’ (p. 65). She then responds to Fritz and succumbs to her desires: ‘Und mit verlangendem Armen zog sie den glühenden Buben an sich’ (p. 65). She pulls Fritz towards her as she does with Hugo at the end just before their suicides.

At the start of the third and final chapter of the story, Beate is already regretting her affair with Fritz. The way in which she talks about herself reveals that she cannot perceive herself as a sexual being as well as a mother. Beate attempts to dismiss any facet of her personality which does not coincide with her presentation of herself as a devoted widow: ‘Flüchtige

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<sup>30</sup> Mürbeth, ‘Die “asexuelle Witwe”’, p. 87.

Abenteuer waren ihre Sache nicht' (p. 77). That this is not an accurate representation of herself, however, is revealed to the reader when Beate refers to her affair with Fritz as a harmless game over which she has the control: 'er [Fritz] bedeutete nicht mehr für sie als einen hübschen frischen Knaben, den man nach Hause schicken konnte, wenn das Spiel zu Ende war' (p. 66). Beate instead constructs her identity as a chaste widow by once again contrasting herself with Fortunata. She regards her sexual feelings as a symptom of an illness; something for which she is not personally accountable:

Sie versteht es ja gar nicht recht, daß all das geschehen konnte. Es ist auch nichts anders zu erklären, als daß es in diesen unerträglich schwülen Sommertagen wie eine Krankheit über sie gefallen, sie wehrlos und wirr gemacht hat. Sie fühlt es ja in all ihren Pulsen, ihren Sinnen, in ihrem ganzen Leib, daß sie nicht dieselbe ist, die sie war. Es kann nur eine Krankheit sein. Es gibt Frauen, bei denen solch ein Zustand lange dauert und gar nicht weichen will; so eine mag Fortunata sein. Andere gibt es wieder, die überfällt es oder schleicht sich ein, und weicht bald von dannen. Und das ist ihr Fall (p. 77-8).

The passage is again clearly indicative of Beate's tendency to view the world, and women, in binary oppositions of good and bad. The word 'Krankheit' becomes a metaphor for the sexuality which she is unable to acknowledge, and it also ironically highlights the similarities, not the differences, between Beate and Fortunata. At the start of the story Beate referred to Fortunata as a sick woman, a woman who is 'innerlich zerstört und kaum verantwortlich für das Unheil, das sie anrichtete'. The above passage paints Beate in a similar light; a woman who cannot be held entirely responsible for her actions and who manifests symptoms of a serious illness.

Beate has thus far been unveiled as a woman lacking self-awareness. However, in her affair with Fritz she comes to certain insights and realisations about the true nature of her marriage. The heightened awareness that she gains leads to her demise. Towards the end of the second chapter, Fritz tells Beate that her husband Ferdinand had an affair with the wife of Herr Welponer. This revelation makes her recall Ferdinand's numerous infidelities, and she erupts

with anger at her exploitation as a mother and housewife. Yet this also forces her to acknowledge the fact that she did not love her husband, but loved instead the many roles he played as an actor: ‘Der, den sie liebte, war nicht Ferdinand Heinhold gewesen; Hamlet war es, und Cyrano und der königliche Richard und der und jener, Helden und Verbrecher, Sieger und Todgeweihter’ (p. 82). What is described as Beate’s descent into sexuality, which takes her into the arms of Fritz, opens her eyes to the reality of her marriage and the knowledge that her love for Ferdinand was based on a lie, as Rolf Allerdissen argues.<sup>31</sup> By loving the roles he played and not him, ‘so hatte sie ihn immer betrogen, wie er sie’ (82), Beate comes to the drastic conclusion that she is no better than Fortunata. Following this realization Beate believes that she has left the moral world behind: ‘Immer tiefer zu gleiten war sie bestimmt’ (p. 83).

Beate views herself as having slipped away from the world of laws, which, as Mürbeth points out, is shown through the word ‘gleiten’.<sup>32</sup> The worlds ‘gleiten’ and ‘sinken’ are interchangeable in the story and they convey Beate’s vertical view of the world with virtue at the top and sexuality at the bottom, and they are also employed to depict her despair over abandoning her devoted and chaste self. Two pages earlier, for example, while reflecting on her affair with Fritz, Beate says to herself: ‘Wie tief noch läßt du mich sinken?’ (p. 81). The terms ‘sinken’ and ‘gleiten’ thus represent Beate’s descent into the immoral world as inhabited by Fortunata.

At the end of the story, Beate’s confusion over her roles and where she belongs reaches a climax. Owing to Hugo’s emotionally distant behaviour, reminiscent of the start of the text, Beate feels that she has failed in her role as a mother. It turns out that Hugo has been having

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<sup>31</sup> Rolf Allerdissen, *Arthur Schnitzler: impressionistisches Rollenspiel und skeptischer Moralismus in seinen Erzählungen* (Bonn: Bouvier, 1985), p. 254.

<sup>32</sup> Mürbeth, ‘Die “asexuelle Witwe”’, p. 101.

an affair with Fortunata and is left feeling distraught. Yet when Beate tries to reach out and help him, her efforts are revealed as fruitless. He says: 'Es kann nichts wieder gut werden. Da hilft auch kein Erzählen' (p. 101). Hugo returns to being the silenced son of the start of the story. Hugo's and Beate's fates run parallel – just as Beate is humiliated by her affair with Fritz, so is Hugo ashamed of his affair with Fortunata. Thus the conflict between sexuality and morality, which Beate is unable to resolve, also transpires to be an issue for her son. Beate's death highlights the incompatibility of her roles as mother and lover. She says to Hugo: 'Ich bin deine Mutter, und ich bin eine Frau. Bedenke das, auch eine Frau bin ich' (p. 104). With her affair and the return of her sexuality she has left behind her role as a devoted mother and chaste widow, and Beate sees the only option facing her after this to be death.

Beate realises that it is now impossible to return to her former status as a mother, yet deprived of her function as a mother, she is rendered superfluous: 'Was bin ich in der Welt, fragte sie sich angstvoll, wenn ich nicht seine Mutter bin?' (p. 100). As their boat takes them to their destination on the journey of death, the incestuous nature of their relationship takes centre stage, again blurring the distinctions between Beate's expectations of herself as a devoted mother and her sexuality. Beate's reactions to her son are portrayed as physical: 'Beate erbebte. Doch sie empfand keine Scham mehr, nur ein erlösendes Bewußtsein von Ihm-näher-sein und Zu-ihm-gehören' (p. 105). In the very last scene of the story Beate is presented as Hugo's lover: 'und im verführerischen Vorgefühl der ewigen Nacht gaben sie die vergehenden Lippen einander hin'. Yet Beate knows that these worlds of mother and lover cannot co-exist within her, and so she dies from a conflict of identity and an inability to unite her different roles:

Nie wieder, nie kann sie, die Geschändete, irgendeinem Menschen vor Augen treten [...] Und ich bin eine, die es niemals mehr vergessen kann, nicht bei Tag und nicht bei Nacht, nicht in der Einsamkeit und nicht in neuer Lust, in der Heimat nicht und nicht in der Fremde (p. 91-92).

Schnitzler presents Beate as a seductive death-bringer at the end of the story. Owing to Beate, mother and son come to their deaths by drowning. The water symbolises woman as a siren, a Lorelei, bringing man to his death. The water also carries mother and son to the 'Welt ohne Gebot' (p. 106) which Beate envisaged while watching a tennis match. Water therefore represents the lawless world to which she was attracted and which now allows Hugo to be her lover. Yet as is the case with many fictional representations of widows in nineteenth- and early twentieth-century German literature, the punishment must fit the crime. Thus Beate must come to her death in water, as she committed her crime of incest in water. Death is the only option for Beate as she has transgressed against society's rules and cannot find her way back.

Throughout the story, Schnitzler presents his widow as unreliable and untrustworthy. This is most clearly shown through Beate's unconscious display of feelings through her involuntary gestures contrasting with how she outwardly behaves, but it is also displayed in her inability to accurately interpret her surroundings and account for time. Beate is depicted as unable to measure time correctly: 'Ein Abend kommt ihr ins Gedächtnis – war es vor drei, vor acht Tagen? – Sie weiß es nicht' (p. 76). The exaggeratedly large gap between three and eight days shows the extent to which the reader cannot rely on Beate's version of events. In a similar manner, Beate is often presented as misinterpreting what happens around her. In chapter two during the picnic she believes she can feel Doctor Bertram's gaze on her body, until she finally realises 'daß es ein Grashalm war, der sie kitzelte' (p. 45). Schnitzler does this intentionally; through Beate's inability to record events truthfully the reader is obliged to call her honesty into question. By so doing, Schnitzler distances the reader from her.

**Frau Berta Garlan (1901)**

Frau Beate is not the only untrustworthy and unreliable widow in Schnitzler's oeuvre. In his story *Frau Berta Garlan*, published in 1901, Schnitzler presents another widow as a sexually frustrated and incestuous woman. Berta was twenty-six when she met her husband, Victor Garlan. At this stage of her life she harboured grand dreams of marrying an artist or becoming a 'Klavervirtuosin' (p. 392).<sup>33</sup> Berta's father put a stop to her relationship with a musician, and thus to her artistic dreams, just as he was starting to get famous. Instead Berta married the forty-year-old Victor out of a feeling of gratitude, because he supported her through the death of her parents. Berta is in her early thirties with a young child when Victor, whom she did not love, dies. Berta's sexuality re-asserts itself and she gets in touch with the man she nearly married, Emil Lindbach, who is now a famous violinist. She goes to Vienna to see him, goes to bed with him, but is then told that, if she wants to have infrequent but regular sex with him, all she has to do is turn up in Vienna every four to six weeks. Schnitzler provides Berta with a 'Doppelgänger' in his story, a woman named Anna Rupius, who is married to a paralysed man in a wheelchair.<sup>34</sup> Throughout the story she too has been going to Vienna to live out her libido with a lover. She becomes pregnant, however, and kills herself.

At the start of the story, Berta, like Beate, defines herself through her role as a mother. In a further similarity to Beate, Berta tries to create an image of herself as a grieving and chaste widow, yet her feelings undermine her actions. The reader is told that Berta visits her husband's grave two to three times a week, thereby giving the impression that she is a devoted widow, but her regular trips to the cemetery are revealed as a mechanical and thoughtless process: 'Schon lange hatte dieser Weg für sie nichts anderes zu bedeuten' (p.

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<sup>33</sup> Arthur Schnitzler, *Frau Berta Garlan*, in *Gesammelte Werke: Die erzählenden Schriften. Erster Band* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1961).

<sup>34</sup> *A Companion to the Works of Arthur Schnitzler*, ed. by Dagmar C. G. Lorenz (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2003), p. 245-246.

391). Later in the story it is again clear that Berta feels a duty to play the part of the grieving widow: 'Irgend etwas in ihr sagte ihr, daß sie heute wieder einmal auf den Friedhof gehen müßte' (p. 442). The word 'müßte' highlights Berta's feeling of obligation to serve her late husband's memory. Berta does not know how to live and define herself after the death of her husband, and all she can do is fall back on the expected role of a respectable and chaste widow as held by society.

Not only does Berta attempt to convince herself that she is a devoted widow, she also feels she must prove it to the men in the story. When she later meets Emil, she paints a picture of herself as an asexual widow with her son as the only man in her life. She tells him: 'Ich lebe nur für meinen Buben [...] Ich lasse mir nicht den Hof machen. Ich bin sehr anständig' (p. 459). However, Schnitzler pulls apart Berta's carefully constructed façade as a chaste widow by revealing to the reader the discrepancy between her words and her thoughts. Like Beate, Berta sees the world in binary opposites of good and bad, virtue and sexuality, and she tries to convince herself that she has no place in the 'immoral' world of sexuality. Berta also tries to make herself believe that she is merely curious to see Emil after all these years, but, immediately after telling herself this, it is implied that she would engage in sexual relations if that is what Emil wanted: 'sie wird nachgeben, sobald er es verlangt' (p. 446). This statement is important for two reasons: it highlights the fact that the reader is unable to trust Berta, and it depicts Berta as a powerless woman lacking in self-awareness and control who changes her mind in the presence of a man.

Berta is depicted as lacking more than just personal control. Michael argues that, for Berta 'the sex act and sexual relationships demand the annihilation of the woman's responsible will'.<sup>35</sup> As Berta says to herself: 'Aber sie weiß auch, daß ihr alles Nachsinnen nichts hilft

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<sup>35</sup> Michael, *Elektra and Her Sisters*, p. 17.

und daß sie tun wird, was er will' (p. 462). Her sexual wishes are further combined with death in the various *Liebestod* fantasies she has throughout the story, as Michael points out.<sup>36</sup>

In one of Berta's inner monologues Schnitzler introduces the sex-death nexus with which he will also close the story. Berta connects her meeting with Emil, and the possibility that she will become his lover in Vienna, with death: 'Sie fährt nur nach Wien, um seine Geliebte zu werden und nachher, wenn's sein muss, zu sterben' (p. 446). Later in the story, when Berta prepares to hear Emil play a solo, she again considers death in terms of sexual desire:

Sie fühlt sich ganz als Emils Geschöpf, alles, was vor ihm da war, scheint ausgelöscht. Wenn er von ihr verlangen möchte: lebe ein Jahr, lebe diesen Sommer mit mir, dann aber musst du sterben, - sie würde es tun (p. 447).

Berta would do anything for the man she loves. Yet her shadowy memories of Emil suggest that she does not really love him at all. At the cemetery at the start of the story, Berta comes across the name of Emil Lindbach in a newspaper. Throughout the story, Berta becomes obsessed with rekindling her romantic love for Emil, yet her memories, or lack thereof, uncover her erotic needs as opposed to her romantic dreams. As Konstanze Fliedl points out, in the first reference to Emil he is anonymous<sup>37</sup> and is mentioned in connection with Berta's shattered dreams: 'wegen jener längstvergangenen aussichtslosen Geschichte mit dem Violinspieler' (p. 393). No importance is attached to his individuality. Furthermore, her history with Emil is presented as a story which even she is starting to forget. When Berta travels to Vienna for the first time, her memories of Emil are presented as shadowy and lacking in reality. For example, she is unable to remember Emil's address and she forgets both the tone of his voice and the content of a conversation Emil exchanged with her when he was 'in love' with her. However, Schnitzler does mention the strength of Berta's feelings for

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid., p. 16.

<sup>37</sup> Konstanze Fliedl, *Arthur Schnitzler: Poetik der Erinnerung* (Vienna: Böhlau, 1997), p. 177.

him on this occasion: 'Wie lieb hatte sie ihn doch gehabt' (p. 419). Precisely because her memory is so unreliable, Fliedl argues, she is able to add emotional value to the relationship.<sup>38</sup> Emil is further depicted as a figure of fantasy and a figment of an over-active imagination when Berta reflects on how he may have spent his life until the present moment:

Und während sie weiter ging, sah sie den Geliebten ihrer Jugend in allerlei Abenteuern vor sich, in die wirre Erinnerungen aus gelesenen Romanen und unklare Vorstellungen von seinen Kunstreisen im Ausland seltsam hineinspielten. Sie dachte sich ihn in Venedig, in einer Gondel mit einer russischen Fürstin, dann wieder sah sie ihn am Hofe des bayerischen Königs (p. 421).

In a further similarity to Beate, Berta is depicted as a widow with a vivid imagination. Coupled with this is her inability to remember correctly. The discovery of Emil's letters which Berta finds in the attic again shows her tendency to forget: 'Sie versuchte, sich der Person zu erinnern, aber vergeblich' (p. 426). It therefore seems unlikely that Berta's claim on the next page that Emil is the only man she has ever loved is true. Berta is in fact masking her sexual desires as love.

Berta's daydream uncovers the repressed erotic wishes of her meeting with Emil, and thus once more breaks her romantic illusions to the reader. Schnitzler was greatly indebted to Freudian psychoanalysis in his depiction of dreams. Dagmar C.G. Lorenz points out that, whereas Freud places emphasis on the unconscious, Schnitzler attaches great importance to the mid-level of consciousness or the 'Mittelbewußtsein'.<sup>39</sup> This is defined as 'the area of consciousness where the individual stores the institutional mechanisms that dictate behaviour, but which also contains repressed memories'.<sup>40</sup> On the way back from her first trip to Vienna on the train, Berta thinks back to the man she saw in Vienna who she thought was Emil: 'aber wenn er es wirklich gewesen wäre, wenn er sie erkannt, wenn er sich gefreut hätte, sie

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid., p. 176.

<sup>39</sup> Lorenz, *A Companion to the works of Arthur Schnitzler*, p. 15.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., p. 15.

wiederzusehen?’ (p. 423). The daydream goes on to describe Berta and Emil in a restaurant with her nephew, Richard, as a waiter. Then the dream environment changes and everyone is in a bar, a step down from the sophisticated restaurant and, as Michaela L. Perlmann argues, this is symbolic of Schnitzler’s digging deeper into Berta’s psyche.<sup>41</sup> This is, unfortunately, the milieu in which Berta belongs and where Emil and the waiter are replaced by Herr Klingemann, the town Lothario, and other men, yet Berta does not want to acknowledge that this is where she belongs: ‘sie wird lieber entfliehen’ (p. 424). In her dream, Berta sees a couple from her home town, and her reaction to them portrays her envy of their love: ‘Plötzlich traten in den Saal Herr und Frau Doktor Martin, sie hielten einander so innig umschlungen, als wenn sie ganz allein wären’ (p. 423). Berta too wants a lover and would like to act provocatively. Thus the Martins are representative of Berta’s wish-fulfilment in a disguised form. Further, the motif of music in the daydream symbolises sexuality.<sup>42</sup> Combined with music and sexuality is the fear of failure, as Berta fears she has forgotten how to play the piano. Perlmann interprets this fear of forgetting her musical skills as indicative of her no longer knowing how to be intimate after three years of widowhood. Thus even in her dream Schnitzler portrays Berta as unable fully to express and satisfy her physical desires. Hence, Berta can envy Frau Rupius who does not succumb to moral and social pressure, shown through her spitting her cherry pips out of the train window at the station guard, ‘der sich darüber sehr freut’ (p. 424). This gesture is symbolic of her behaviour towards society, yet in Berta’s daydream, the station guard is not angry with Frau Rupius and does not punish her. Therefore Berta wishes she too could behave as she desires without having to face the

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<sup>41</sup> Michaela L. Perlmann, *Der Traum in der literarischen Moderne. Zum Werk Arthur Schnitzlers* (Munich: Wilhelm Fink, 1987), p. 103.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 103.

consequences of society. Indeed, Berta often evades all responsibility for her actions and remains a passive widow throughout.

Mürbeth points out that there are striking parallels between Herr Klingemann whose sexual advances Berta refuses, and Emil Lindbach, yet Berta is unable to acknowledge these similarities.<sup>43</sup> This again serves to unveil Berta as an unreliable widow who lacks not only self-awareness but also an awareness of other characters in the story. Herr Klingemann views Berta in a purely sexual manner and tells her, for example, that her music ‘muß alles ersetzen’ (p. 397). Berta is disgusted by Herr Klingemann, and when she sees a picture in his house of a naked woman she draws the conclusion that he is a ‘widerwärtiger Mensch’ (p. 401). However, there is a similar picture in the room where Emil takes Berta and where they have their first intimate encounter. In this instance, however, Berta does not project her negative feelings arising from this image onto Emil, rather she projects them onto herself. Mürbeth further points out how Herr Klingemann and Emil have similar mannerisms and gestures. Berta notes that, on one occasion while talking to her, Emil holds his hat in his hand. Berta interprets this gesture as a sign of respect and politeness. Yet this is not how she reads the same behaviour from Herr Klingemann: ‘Bald sah sie Klingemann kommen, aber es machte nicht den geringsten Eindruck auf sie; er sprach sie mit erzwungener Höflichkeit an, hielt immer den Strohhut in der Hand und affektierte einen großen, beinahe düsteren Ernst’ (p. 499). That Berta interprets the same behaviour in different ways is further indicative of the fact that she is unable to record events accurately and interpret her environment.

Herr Klingemann is further similar to Emil in that his behaviour, as interpreted by Alfred Doppler, is ‘ein bloss vergrößertes Abbild des weltgewandeten Benehmens von Emil

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<sup>43</sup> Mürbeth, ‘Die “asexuelle Witwe”’, p. 49.

Lindbach'.<sup>44</sup> First, it is made clear that Emil perceives Berta as a sexual object too, as shown in his suggestion that they meet every four to six weeks. Second, what makes Emil particularly coarse is that he talks down to Berta and treats her like a naïve little girl. On several occasions Emil refers to Berta as 'mein Kind' (p. 475) or 'liebes Kind' (p. 468). Furthermore, while discussing the recent letter which Berta sent him, Emil draws attention to her 'Schulmädchenschrift' (p. 456). This puts Emil in a position of power over Berta, who accepts her subordinate status. His view of himself as superior to Berta is shown when he starts a philosophical discussion but then does not finish it, as he believes Berta will not be able to understand him:

'Lieber als alles andere möcht' ich doch ein Maler sein'. 'Du könntest doch mit dem ganz zufrieden sein, was du erreicht hast' [...] 'Es ist mir ja ganz angenehm, daß ich schön Violin spielen kann, aber was bleibt davon übrig? Ich meine, wenn ich einmal tot bin, - höchstwahrscheinlich mein Name auf kurze Zeit. Das' – seine Augen wiesen auf das Bild, vor dem sie standen – 'das ist doch was anderes'. 'Du bist schrecklich ehrgeizig'. Er sah sie an, aber ohne sich um sie zu kümmern. 'Ehrgeizig? Na, so einfach ist das nicht. – Aber lassen wir das' (p. 456).

Emil views and treats Berta as an uneducated provincial woman who will not comprehend the philosophical ramblings of a cultured and artistic man. The monologues which belong to Berta, however, suggest that she is in fact an inexperienced woman. As she sits alone one evening waiting for Emil she wonders:

Wär es ihr nicht lieber, wenn er nicht berühmt und bewundert wäre? – Gewiss, da würde sie sich ihm viel näher, viel verwandter fühlen, da hätte sie nicht diese Unsicherheit ihm gegenüber, und auch er wäre anders zu ihr. – Er ist ja auch jetzt sehr liebenswürdig und doch... jetzt kommt es ihr zu Bewußtsein...irgend etwas ist heute zwischen ihnen gewesen und hat sie getrennt. Ja, und das ist nicht anderes, als dass er ein Mensch ist, den die ganze Welt kennt, und sie nichts als eine kleine, dumme Frau aus der Provinz (p. 463).

As the passage indicates, when Berta speaks, her sentences are questioning and tentative, which are contrasted with Emil's coherent speech. It is further implied that she is a

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<sup>44</sup> Lorenz, *A Companion to the Works of Arthur Schnitzler*, p. 50.

representative woman in need of a man. In spite of Emil's apparently chauvinistic treatment of Berta, however, Schnitzler does little to make the reader feel sympathy for her situation and identify with her character. First, her childlike inarticulateness and her naiveté keep the reader at a distance from her. Berta would like to share her thoughts with Anna, for example, but her inarticulateness prevents her from doing so: 'Berta fühlte, dass Anna ihr nicht alles sagte; sie hätte sie bitten mögen, ihr doch ihr ganzes Herz aufzuschließen, aber eine solche Bitte mit den rechten Worten auszusprechen, dazu wusste sie sich nicht geschickt genug' (p. 413).

Similarly, she fails to understand the true nature of Anna Rupius's trips to Vienna. Even Herr Rupius is aware of Anna's affair, but he too fails to convey this to Berta: "Fortreisen will sie – fortreisen, auf einige Zeit, wie sie sagt...auf einige Zeit...verstehen Sie mich?" "Nun ja, wahrscheinlich zu ihrem Bruder" (P. 447). Second, Berta is presented as a widow full of a perverse and incestuous sexuality who has a clear preference for fantasy over reality. Berta's preference for fantasy is a trait which Schnitzler reveals by having Berta either voluntarily close her eyes or letting someone else cover her eyes for her. Wolfgang Lukas points out that when Berta closes her eyes in Emil's presence, he becomes defined by a lack of concrete reality; he is interchangeable with other men.<sup>45</sup> At the start of the story in the cemetery Berta's nephew Richard puts his hand over her eyes but Berta confuses him with Herr Klingemann. This difference between actively closing her eyes and passively having her eyes closed highlights Berta's tendency to deceive herself and let herself be deceived by others. Schnitzler also makes Berta incapable of dealing with reality. This is shown in the following quotation: 'Aber sie will ihn lieber sich vorstellen [Emil], ohne ihn zu sehen' (p. 471). Quite simply, Berta does not want to see the truth. Moreover, when Berta thinks that

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<sup>45</sup> Wolfgang Lukas, *Das Selbst und das Fremde: epochale Lebenskrisen und ihre Lösung im Werk Arthur Schnitzlers* (Munich: Fink, 1996), p. 161.

she can see Emil in her mind, it is in fact her nephew Richard's face which she is seeing. This confusion between Emil and Richard is particularly significant, as it hints at Berta's incestuous desires towards her nephew, which is further shown on another occasion when Berta again voluntarily closes her eyes: 'aber ein anderer hielt sie umfaßt, ihr Neffe Richard' (p. 481).

The incest theme in *Frau Berta Garlan*, although on a much smaller scale, has parallels with the depiction of incest in *Frau Beate und ihr Sohn*. Berta makes comparisons between her nephew Richard and Emil when he was a young man, just as Beate compared her husband to her son, Hugo. Richard's behaviour towards Berta is characterised by its flirtatious nature as was Fritz's behaviour towards Beate: 'Er streichelte ihr die Wange, indem er in seiner frischen und doch etwas zärtelnden Art sagte: "Komm' mit, mir zulieb, schöne Tante' (p. 404). Richard, whose sexuality is awakening, is a parallel figure to the young Emil. Berta even compares Emil's kisses to those of Richard: 'Emil umschlang Berta und küßte sie. Dieser Kuß erinnerte sie an etwas...Woran denn nur? [...] Und plötzlich fiel ihr ein: gradeso hatte ihr kleiner Neffe sie neulich geküßt' (p. 470). Mürbeth points out that, like Emil, Richard enters a power relationship with Berta in which he acts as her protector.<sup>46</sup> This is shown by Richard defending Berta against her father's jokes.

Berta is further painted as a powerless widow who needs a man in her romantic notions of Emil as her heroic saviour. Berta believes that her future happiness is dependent upon Emil, who epitomises the well-travelled and well-educated young man to Berta. She also idealises his position as an artist: 'Wie viele Frauen und Mädchen mochten ihn wohl geliebt haben, und in ganz anderer Art als sie' (p. 420). Berta acknowledges the prevalent double standard, which allows a man to have extra-marital affairs, and she accepts this. This is set in contrast

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<sup>46</sup> Mürbeth, 'Die "asexuelle Witwe"', p. 47.

to her own behaviour, which she must uphold as respectable and chaste. Berta says to Emil: 'Du bist eben ein Mann'. 'Ja, - aber was meinst du damit?' 'Du hast gewiß viel lieb gehabt'. 'Lieb gehabt...lieb gehabt...O ja, auch'. 'Aber ich, [...] ich habe niemanden geliebt als dich' (p. 467). In contrast to this talented, popular and powerful man, Berta is depicted as a widow who needs rescuing from her miserable existence. Mürbeth argues that Berta is passive - she reacts but does not act.<sup>47</sup> Owing to Berta's inactivity, her passive acceptance of events and her belief that all fulfilment can be found in Emil, the reader loses sympathy with her. However, it is interesting that, on the one occasion where Berta is active, namely when she writes to Emil and thus breaks out of her role as asexual widow and attempts to assert herself, she enters into a different type of passivity, in which she merely becomes the object of a man's sexual desire.<sup>48</sup> Thus her 'emancipated' action, which takes her into the arms of her former lover, leads to her demise.

Her 'emancipated' act also makes her unable to fulfil her role as a mother. Berta is depicted as denying her role as a mother as soon as she embarks upon her affair with Emil. Once Berta becomes a sexual woman again, she is unable to be a mother, thus she cannot combine sexuality and motherhood. During her affair with Emil, Berta 'empfand es zum erstenmal als sonderbar, daß der Bub, den sie jetzt in sein Gewand steckte, ihr eigenes Kind war' (p. 442). In contrast to the start of the text, where Berta's pride as a mother was highlighted, once she receives Emil's response to her letter, she either uses her son as evidence of her asexuality or as an argument to move to Vienna. Her role as a mother therefore comes second to her feelings for Emil. Berta is portrayed as only thinking about her son Fritz when she feels uncertain towards Emil. Only then does she return to the safe world

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid., p. 34.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., p. 35.

of mother and widow. As in *Frau Beate und ihr Sohn*, Schnitzler shows how it is impossible for a woman to be both a mother and a lover in bourgeois Viennese society.

At the end of the story, Schnitzler again highlights the widow's link to death. Berta's 'Doppelgänger', Anna Rupius, has an affair in Vienna which leads directly to her death. Yet before her death at the end of the text, Schnitzler gradually warns his reader that Anna's and Berta's fates are going to take a tragic turn. The theme of double standards is again briefly touched upon when Berta confesses her relationship with Emil to Anna. Schnitzler has Anna voice the male privilege: "Ah, meine liebe Frau Berta, wir sind gewiß keine Engel, wie Sie nun aus eigener Erfahrung wissen, aber die Männer sind infam, solange" - - - es war, als zögerte sie, den Satz zu enden, "solange Sie Männer sind" (p. 498). Shortly after this discussion, Berta hears that a doctor has been called out to the Rupius' home. Berta is told by the maid that Anna is suffering from 'Blutvergiftung' (p. 508), which, as Lorenz points out, is in line with Berta's romantic illusions, for she believes it to be the result of a suicide attempt.<sup>49</sup> Berta is gradually coming to be associated with death. In fact, Berta's daydream on the way back from Vienna with Anna ends with a vision of a 'Leichenzug' (p. 424), which is highly revealing, for Anna pays for her trips to Vienna with her life. Her affair leads to pregnancy and then an abortion. From this vision until Anna's death, Berta has felt that she has had a strange connection with Anna, and that Anna's illness is linked to Berta's fate.

Lorenz illustrates how Schnitzler briefly shifts the focus from Anna and Berta and visits Herr Rupius in his moment of agony:<sup>50</sup> "Warum nur hat sie's getan? hat sie *das* getan?...Es war nicht notwendig...Ich hätt' es aufgezogen, aufgezogen wie mein eigenes Kind" (p. 511-512). Through the word 'Kind', Berta understands that Anna had no choice but to have an abortion, she could not have had the child anonymously. Moreover, Berta realises that she too

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<sup>49</sup> Lorenz, *A Companion to the Works of Arthur Schnitzler*, p. 248.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 248.

may be pregnant from her one-night stand with Emil, a thought which scares her into facing reality. Berta's inner monologue portrays her belated awareness: 'Was ihr bisher kaum als Möglichkeit vorgeschwebt, stand plötzlich wie eine unbestreitbare Gewißheit vor ihr.- Es konnte gar nicht anders sein, der Tod Annas war eine Vorbedeutung, ein Fingerzeig Gottes' (p. 512). Berta believes she has been duly 'punished' for her affair, as shown through the reference to God. The religious vocabulary continues when Berta goes on to grasp a social truth:

Und sie ahnte das ungeheuerere Unrecht in der Welt, daß die Sehnsucht nach Wonne ebenso in die Frau gelegt ward, als in den Mann; und daß es bei den Frauen Sünde wird und Sünde fordert, wenn die Sehnsucht nach Wonne nicht zugleich die Sehnsucht nach dem Kinde ist (p. 513).

As Lorenz points out, in this passage the verb form is biblical: 'ward' and not 'wurde'.<sup>51</sup> Berta refers to her own acts as 'sins', because, though she wanted to have a child with Emil twelve years before, she no longer does so. Berta therefore draws a moral conclusion that the pleasure she experienced in Emil's arms had nothing to do with procreation, rather it was 'die Lust eines Augenblicks' (p. 512); it was culpable precisely because, as Bruce Thompson argues, it was not intended for procreation.<sup>52</sup> At the end of the story, Berta retreats into the conventional portrayal of the female sexual role. Berta realises that sexual 'freedom' can lead to death for the woman, thus she makes a virtue of necessity by choosing sexual abstinence. At the end of the story the newly chastened Berta Garlan takes her place, sitting down in silence by the side of Herr Rupius:

Herr Rupius saß im Nebenzimmer gradeso, wie sie ihn verlassen. Ein tiefes Verlangen überkam sie, ihm Worte des Trostes zu sagen. Es war ihr einen Augenblick, als hätte ihr eigenes Schicksal nur den Sinn gehabt, sie das Elend dieses Mannes ganz verstehen zu machen. Sie hätte gewünscht, ihm das sagen zu können, aber sie fühlte, dass er zu denen

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid., p. 249.

<sup>52</sup> Thompson, *Schnitzler's Vienna*, p.73.

gehörte, die mit ihrem Schmerz allein sein wollen. So setzte sie sich schweigend ihm gegenüber (p. 513).

### Conclusion

In all the works discussed, the widow has a special and pronounced affinity with death, which is not so prominent in earlier works. This reinforces Karl S. Guthke's assertion that towards the end of the century women and death are increasingly fused in literature.

Although Berta is presented as an unreliable woman with perverse fantasies throughout, she emerges at the end as a survivor and not a suicide. Despite her many *Liebestod* fantasies she does not surrender to this mortal fate. She thinks about suicide after she presses Emil for another meeting:

Und zum erstenmal in ihrem Leben ist sie so bis ins Innerste aufgewühlt, dass sie die Menschen begreift, die sich aus Verzweiflung zum Fenster hinunterstürzen...Und sie sieht ein, dass sie es nicht ertragen, dass nur die Gewissheit ihr helfen kann...sie muss hin zu ihm, ihn fragen...aber so fragen, wie man einem ein Messer an die Brust setzt...(p. 486).

Yet she challenges the stereotype of the suicidal victim. She is a widow who lives on. However, when she tries to emancipate herself by writing to Emil, the story reveals that she is unable to escape convention and her emancipated act does not liberate her, but traps her in the conventional role of sexual object. Dohm's heroine, discussed in the next chapter, undergoes a similar process. It will be shown that her Agnes Schmidt is trapped in convention and rejects convention.

## Chapter VI

### Women's Voices: Hedwig Dohm's *Werde, die du bist!* (1894), Gabriele Reuter's *Clementine Holm* (1902) and *Five O'clock* (1902)

#### Introduction

The fact that the writer is a woman does not necessarily mean that her work will depict the widowed protagonist in a more favourable light or in a way which contrasts with portrayals of widows by male authors. Nineteenth-century women writers inherit the figure of the widow from male writers. However, some women writers, including Hedwig Dohm, begin to question gender stereotypes and this is reflected in their works. Hedwig Dohm's story *Werde, die du bist!* can be understood as an attempt to challenge dominant thinking about women, in particular, the ageing woman in society. In her questioning and criticism of the fate of the older widow in society, Dohm is the first writer considered in this thesis to challenge conventional and prevalent ideas of sexuality and femininity. Her story is radical and it presents a contrast to the other works examined.

Although Reuter was not actively involved in the women's movement, she was seen as a feminist in her own day. She was of the opinion that women cannot find their happiness through men, and that the two most important qualities for happiness, sensual pleasure and freedom, were invariably to be found outside marriage. Thus a prominent feature of Reuter's writing is her attack on patriarchy and her sympathy towards the stifled woman within marriage. This would lead the reader to believe that she presents the widow in a positive light and as able to enjoy her new-found freedom, but this is not the case in her two short stories to be discussed. As Carol Diethe argues, Reuter was unconventional only to a limited degree.<sup>1</sup> Reuter strives to portray her heroines as free, even if this comes at a great cost, whereas Dohm shows the way in which social stereotypes regarding female sexuality prevent a

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<sup>1</sup> Carol Diethe, *Nietzsche's Women: Beyond the Whip* (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1996), p. 134.

woman from being free and finding her sense of self. In her essays Dohm gives her own views of women and marriage in a social context. These views influence the depiction of the widowed protagonist in her novella.

### **Hedwig Dohm: 'Der Frauen Natur und Recht.' Women and marriage**

In addition to fiction, Dohm also published political writings in which she questioned traditional gender norms. Her political writings, as demonstrated in her essay 'Der Frauen Natur und Recht', published in 1876, focus on the deconstruction of traditional, conservative thinking about the nature of women. Whereas her fiction concentrates on the fate of women, her political essays emphasise the theories and social assumptions that restrict women's potential.

Dohm argues in her essay that women are first and foremost products of 'soziale und historische Entwicklungen und Zustände'.<sup>2</sup> Femininity is therefore socially constructed and is not a result of nature. Women are not, Dohm argues, 'oberflächlich und trivial von Natur, sondern die Erziehung behaftet sie mit diesem Makel'. Woman is limited by her upbringing and her education, rendering her situation similar to that of a 'geistige Knechtung'. Thus society with its fixed rules for, and traditional depictions of women, makes it an impossible task for a woman to be an independent subject. Dohm also refers to the contradictory and multiple images attached to women, this 'Potpourri der allerentgegengesetztesten Eigenschaften'. These social *and* conflicting assumptions about women as outlined in her essay are internalised by Agnes Schmidt, the protagonist of *Werde, die du bist!*

Agnes Schmidt is also on the receiving end of men's belittling of women. Again in her essay, Dohm argues that women are never taken seriously by men. In fact, they are spoken to 'mit wohlfeilem, längst verjährtem Spott, mit antiquirter physiologischer mittelalterlicher

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<sup>2</sup> Hedwig Dohm, "Der Frauen Natur und Recht". Deutsche Literatur von Frauen von Catharina Regina von Greiffenberg bis Franziska Gräfin zu Reventlow. CD-Rom: Digitale Bibliothek (Berlin: 2004), pp. 15.900-16.162 (p. 15.999-16.087).

Gelehrsamkeit und im schlimmeren Fall mit philosophischen Zoten à la Schopenhauer'. Dohm also clearly shows in her story that society is responsible for her heroine's destruction. In her essay she draws the reader's attention to these rules created by men which stifle women and can lead to their demise: 'Diese Gesetze, die Männer gemacht haben, scheinen nur dazu da, die bürgerliche Untauglichkeit der Frau zu beweisen, sie nehmen an, daß die Frau schlecht, schwach und unvernünftig sei, der Mann hingegen stark und klug.' Furthermore, Dohm is at pains to point out both in her essay and in *Werde, die du bist!* that women have no place in a society which is constructed and imagined by men: 'Sie erkannten vollkommen richtig, daß das moderne Weib in das Reich, der Träume, der Märchen, der Poeten gehöre, in der Wirklichkeit aber keinen Platz finde.' Throughout the story Agnes tries – and fails – to break free from the tropes and images of femininity created in the male imagination.

Marriage is also perceived by Dohm as an institution which stifles the potential for female self-expression and development. She writes: 'Die Ehe ist noch immer eine fast absolute und gesetzlich garantierte Herrschaftsform des Mannes, und das junge heiratsfähige Mädchen ist auch heute noch nicht viel mehr als eine Waare, die besichtigt, behandelt und gekauft wird'. Yet the problem for Agnes in *Werde, die du bist!* is that, when she is no longer a wife or a mother, she has no purpose and is rendered superfluous in society.

### **Werde, die du bist!**

Hedwig Dohm's (1831-1919) short story, *Werde, die du bist*, published in 1894, is a moving account of widowhood, old age, and the often-neglected subject of the female menopause.<sup>3</sup> For a nineteenth-century bourgeois German woman, Dohm lived a seemingly ordinary life for many years. She married at the age of twenty-four, bore four daughters, and

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<sup>3</sup> Hedwig Dohm, *Werde, die du bist!*, in *Zwischen Anpassung und Selbstbestimmung: Texte Deutscher Schriftstellerinnen des 19. Jahrhunderts*, ed. by Gisela Henckmann (Munich: Goldmann, 1993), pp. 268-330.

was a housewife to her husband, an editor and publisher, Ernst Dohm. On 5 February 1883, Ernst died of a heart attack and Hedwig Dohm's thirty-six-year widowhood began. As Ruth-Ellen Boetcher Joeres argues, during her widowhood, Dohm's difference from other bourgeois German women of the period emerged.<sup>4</sup> Not only did she produce a considerable body of fiction, often depicting the unhappy fate of women, she also wrote witty and lively political essays and was an outspoken advocate of the feminist cause in the nineteenth century. Although she did not actively participate in the women's movement, she was very much involved with its aims and ideals. The contrast between Dohm's radical, positive political writings and the often hopeless depiction of women in her fiction has perplexed modern scholars.<sup>5</sup> Sandra L. Singer argues, however, that Dohm's essays and fiction in fact complement each other, and she accounts for this as follows: 'whereas the essays attempt to tear down barriers to necessary change for women, the fiction illustrates the devastating costs in women's lives of the slow and torturous path to change'.<sup>6</sup>

*Werde, die du bist!* is indeed a poignant example of the damaging consequences which await a woman who endeavours to break free from her limited surroundings and emancipate herself. A widow's struggle to find a voice and an identity is the principal theme of the story. The protagonist, Agnes Schmidt, an 'old' woman of nearly sixty, has lived according to dominant social norms but feels an overwhelming sense of alienation. Singer argues that this feeling of alienation 'leads her to re-evaluate gender roles' but the scope of her 'critical vision is limited by internalized barriers of gender which are only transcended on a metaphysical level'.<sup>7</sup> Although both Dohm and Agnes Schmidt are highly critical of the limitations placed on women, the story shows it is impossible entirely to resist them,

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<sup>4</sup> Ruth-Ellen Boetcher Joeres, *Respectability and Deviance. Nineteenth-Century German Women Writers and the Ambiguity of Representation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), p. 127.

<sup>5</sup> See for example Sandra L. Singer, *Free Soul, Free Woman? A Study of Selected Fictional Works by Hedwig Dohm, Isolde Kurz, and Helene Böhlau* (New York: Peter Lang, 1995), p. 23.

<sup>6</sup> Singer, *Free Soul, Free Woman?*, p. 24. Birgit Mirkus, 'Sprechmaschine Du': Sprachkritik in ausgewählten Romanen Hedwig Dohms', in *German Life and Letters. LXII, no. 2* (Oxford: Blackwell) (2009), 115-139.

<sup>7</sup> Singer, *Free Soul, Free Woman?* p. 25.

transcend gender, sex, and age, and create an identity beyond that of nurturer, mother, and wife.

The story is told from two different perspectives. Agnes's life is portrayed in the third person in two brief framing passages from the viewpoint of the doctors in the psychiatric hospital in which she spends her final days. The majority of the work, however, consists of the diary that Agnes begins to write as a widow. Her life and background during her marriage and before the onset of her 'madness' are told in the first person. The doctors in the hospital fail to see her as an individual and do not understand that her madness is linked to society's treatment of her. They do not refer to Agnes by her actual name; rather she is called 'Gattin', 'Irre', 'Greisin' or 'Kranke', as Lilo Weber points out.<sup>8</sup> As well as the doctors at the psychiatric hospital, Agnes's own family fail to see her as an individual. Her name, Agnes Schmidt, also suggests her ordinariness. In her diary, however, it is revealed that she becomes 'insane' after an attempt to break free from conventionality. Following her husband's death, Agnes asserts herself; she has inherited money and uses this to travel extensively. She reads voraciously and visits art galleries. In Capri she falls in love with a young doctor called Johannes. However, Agnes overhears him ridiculing her, calling her 'Großmutter Psyche' (p. 273), and this moment - the moment Agnes realises that she is being referred to as a mythical figure - precipitates her madness. Three years later, back in Germany Johannes visits the psychiatric ward to which Agnes has been admitted. Agnes recognises him from her trip to Capri, remembers the myrtle wreath which he gave her, and declares passionately that he is her betrothed.

Johannes diagnoses Agnes as suffering from 'erotischer Wahnsinn' (p. 271) following this outburst. Agnes, however, believes that her love for him is of a spiritual nature. It is her soul and spirituality as opposed to her sexuality which she attempts to develop in *Werde, die du*

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<sup>8</sup> Lilo Weber, *Fliegen und Zittern. Hysterie in Texten von Theodor Fontane, Hedwig Dohm, Gabriele Reuter und Minna Kautsky* (Bielefeld: Aisthesis, 1996), p. 152.

*bist!* As Singer points out, Agnes realises that it was ‘her sex that kept her from the education and training that would have enabled her to express her thoughts’ and ‘that determined that she would be bred to serve others’.<sup>9</sup> Yet ultimately Agnes fails to escape from stereotypical images and conventional male ideas of femininity and to construct a personal identity which is dependent upon the emancipation of the soul. When Agnes does try to construct a new identity, she finds herself often imitating the images and tropes of femininity created by men which have been dominant from antiquity to her own day. On several occasions Agnes tries to react against these prevalent tropes of femininity, but by so doing, she learns that she is also destroying her own image of herself. Weber argues that she is left with the feeling that she has only two options available to her – suicide or madness.<sup>10</sup>

That Agnes, the widow, is in part defined by death, is nothing new in depictions of widowhood in nineteenth-century German fiction. The question is whether Dohm, herself a widow, subverts or imitates the dominant discourses pertaining to widows and death at this period.

Dohm’s short story is a clear protest against the ‘living-dead’ status of the widow in the nineteenth century. Dohm has a young child express in an unambiguous way the dominant view of widowhood, and the protagonist Agnes acknowledge that he is right: “‘Dir gehorche ich nicht, du bist ja nur eine Witwe!’ Weises Kind. Eine Witwe, das heißt: Dein Mann ist tot. Du bist mit ihm begraben’ (p. 286). ‘Buried’ with her husband, Agnes experiences the repeated sensation that she is trapped in a coffin.<sup>11</sup> Dohm leaves the reader in no doubt as to the double death which society dictates should occur when a husband dies first.

The form of the short story allows Dohm to express directly Agnes’s growing realisation of her ‘life-in-death’ status, and her attempts to break free from it. Excepting the first brief framing passage and the final pages of the story, *Werde, die du bist!* is recounted in the first

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<sup>9</sup> Singer, *Free Soul? Free Woman?* p. 32.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 170.

<sup>11</sup> See p. 300, p. 328.

person in the form of Agnes's diary. In other words, Dohm gives her protagonist a voice and a clear means of self-expression. The story is told from the inside. That Agnes's commentary on her life between the ages of fifty-four and fifty-eight takes up sixty-four pages of the story, whereas the portrayal of her marriage accounts for five pages and her childhood and adolescence only four, is indicative of the importance Dohm ascribes, contrary to literary convention, to her female protagonist's widowhood and old age.

The start of Agnes's diary tells of the ways in which she has been trapped in a conventional identity to an extent that she does not know herself. She can only find validation in her role as a wife, which is now over, and she has no idea how to continue living:

Bin ich wirklich Agnes Schmidt? ganz sicher Agnes Schmidt? Ich war es ganz bestimmt, bis mein Mann starb. Und nun, allmählich ist mir, als schwände Agnes Schmidt immer mehr aus meinem Gesichtskreis, in weite Fernen hinaus, ein Schatten, der vor mir her ist, und der Schatten wird immer fahler, dünner, und an seine Stelle – (p. 276).

As Singer points out, her entire existence 'was one of rigid repression of her subjectivity'.<sup>12</sup> Her life as a daughter paves the way for her future as a wife and widow, in which she has no voice to express herself. The diary relates how Agnes mourns her lack of education, then the fact that she only married because it was expected of her, without really understanding what married life meant. As a wife Agnes adopts the typical and passive role of housewife, but Dohm suggests that she did not enjoy the sexual aspect of her relationship with her husband: 'und mein innerstes Wesen sträubte sich gegen vieles, was zur Ehe gehört' (p. 278). Moreover, she is described as pleased when their sex life ceases after the birth of their two children. They give up sex as they cannot afford any more children and they live like this for thirty-three years. During her marriage the one thing that Agnes regrets is that she has no time for reading. Her daughters marry well and she hopes that she and her husband

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<sup>12</sup> Singer, *Free Soul, Free Woman?* p. 32.

will now be able to travel but he becomes paralysed and she nurses him for eight years until his death.

Her widowhood is marked increasingly by the feeling that she does not belong anywhere. In her family Agnes comes to feel a burden and out of place. At first, Agnes's widowhood is depicted as a continuation of her former repressed existence as a daughter and a wife. Following her husband's death, Agnes begins to question and reflect upon her former life, or lack of life, which unveils an important paradox. It is in widowhood that Agnes can start to question her passive role, but this questioning can only go so far. Widowhood is simultaneously freedom and limitation. Her attempts to find her subjecthood are repeatedly thwarted by society, which dictates that as an old widow she does not belong anywhere. When Agnes visits her daughters, for example, she soon realises that she has grown apart from them. Agnes is also humiliated by her grandson, who mocks her for not making the perfect birthday cake. His teasing reminds her that Agnes, the old widow, has no place in her family: 'Wir brauchen keine Schwiegermama'. 'Und alle lachten, die Erwachsenen auch, und doch – doch - ich heiÙe hier nur immer die Schwiegermutter, und ich bin doch als Mutter da' (p. 286). Agnes cannot see past her role as a mother; without this label she has no purpose.

Agnes is further mocked by her son-in-law for having physical desires, and she is made the endless butt of jokes. As well as being belittled for having an appetite, Agnes is made to feel unwanted. Her son-in-law does not want to introduce her to guests, so Agnes tries to make herself inconspicuous. As Gisela Shaw argues, Agnes comes to view herself as an 'AuÙenseiter und Sündenbock inmitten der riesigen Familie'.<sup>13</sup> As we saw in Dohm's brief discussion of Agnes's childhood, Agnes has learnt to keep quiet and hidden away from society. This is a behavioural trait which society dictates she must continue throughout her menopause and in widowhood.

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<sup>13</sup> Gisela Shaw, 'Alles was ich schreibe, steht im Dienste der Frauen'. Hedwig Dohm (1831-1919). Quoted from: <[http://www.vings.de/kurse/wissensnetz/frauen/pdf/shaw\\_dohm.pdf](http://www.vings.de/kurse/wissensnetz/frauen/pdf/shaw_dohm.pdf)>, p. 4.

The dissolution of the former identity, and her realisation of her 'invisible' status, is also an opportunity for Agnes. As she writes in her diary: 'ich will vorwärts – aufwärts! Die kleine Hausfrauenseele loswerden' (p. 301). Agnes wants to shed her role as housewife and mother. On her travels she realises that what was done to her when she was deprived of a life was 'Seelenmord' (p. 307). In marriage and motherhood, Agnes was a 'body' and not a 'soul': 'Ich war ja gar kein ich! Agnes Schmidt! ein Name! eine Hand, ein Fuß, ein Leib! keine Seele, kein Hirn' (p. 299). In her widowhood Agnes attempts to redress this.

Agnes's self-assertion therefore involves attempting to remove herself from the domestic sphere and develop intellectually, spiritually, and creatively. She inherits ten thousand marks, and, rather than giving it to one of her sons-in-law, decides to keep it in order to travel to Capri and Florence. This spiritual emancipation involves a denial of the body. On various occasions in the story, Dohm shows how Agnes attempts to escape from her body. One way she does this is by identifying with Goethe's Mignon, from his novel *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* (1795/96), a childlike androgynous figure. As Singer points out, Agnes is aware of the incongruity between the image of Mignon and that of an old woman, but she identifies with her on a spiritual level.<sup>14</sup> Both Agnes and Mignon yearn for something which they have never experienced, yet which they feel is an integral part of their being. In Mignon's case, this is Italy, whereas for Agnes – who travels to Italy –, it is freedom from the confines of gender. Later in the story, when Agnes has been admitted to the psychiatric hospital, her denial of the body in favour of the spirit involves a refusal of food. On Sundays, after going to chapel, Agnes fasts for the whole day. As Anna Richards argues, Dohm 'charts the growth of her soul in proportion to the wasting of her body'.<sup>15</sup> Although the medical profession diagnoses Agnes's behaviour as a kind of madness, to her it seems more like sanity than her

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid., p. 33.

<sup>15</sup> Anna Richards, *The Wasting Heroine in German Fiction by Women 1770-1914* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), p. 187.

previous, repressed life. She tells the doctors in the sanatorium: ‘Hier in Ihrer Anstalt war ich weniger irre als während meines ganzen früheren Lebens’ (p. 274).

But Agnes’s emancipation can only ever be partial, her new sense of self only ever ‘shadowy’ and characterised by a lack. She—and, to some extent her author—are constrained by the male conventions and images from which Agnes wants to escape. Her rejection of the body is very much in keeping with the ethereal nineteenth-century feminine ideal, which denied female sexuality. This is illustrated by Agnes’s feelings for Johannes, the young doctor whom she first meets in Capri. There is a clear challenge to convention here: for Dohm’s nineteenth-century readership, an ‘old’ woman falling in love with a younger man was inappropriate and transgressive. One of Agnes’s doctors gives voice to society’s prejudice when Agnes expresses her enthusiasm on seeing Johannes again. Taking her by the arm, he tells her: ‘Besinnen Sie sich, Frau Schmidt, vergessen Sie nicht, daß Sie eine alte Dame sind’ (p. 271)

Dohm has Agnes draw attention to the sexual double standard which is in evidence here, referring to Goethe and his ‘acceptable’ relationship with a much younger woman:

Der siebzigjährige Goethe liebte ein junges Mädchen, um ihrer Jugend und ihres Reizes willen; und Mit- und Nachwelt bewunderte darin Goethesche Gemütskraft. Empfindet aber eine alte Frau tief und stark für einen Mann, um seiner Seelenschönheit willen, so ist sie – erotisch wahnsinnig (p. 326).

Despite this criticism of the sexual double standard, however, Dohm herself shies away from portraying the sexuality of a woman in her fifties. Instead she has Agnes insist—as in the above quotation—that her love for Johannes is of a spiritual nature:

Ich liebe ihn, nicht wie eine Mutter den Sohn, nicht wie eine Schwester der Bruder, nicht wie die Gattin den Gatten liebt. Freier, reiner ist es, was ich empfinde, eine intime, begeisterte Genossenschaft, geboren aus der herztiefen Sehnsucht nach Mehrsein, nach einem Mehrerkennen, Mehrfinden, Weiterschauen. Das zärtliche Ineinanderschmiegen von Stimmungen und Gedanken, ja auch sie sind eine zarte Wollust, und die Küsse, die nicht auf die Lippen geküßt werden, sondern von Seele zu Seele, auch sie sind eine Ekstase, ein inbrüstiges Erschauen der feinsten Nervendräfte, Funken der von der Weltseele abgesprüht (p. 325).

On other occasions, too, Dohm portrays a heroine who is unable to escape from patriarchal stereotypes. By comparing herself to Goethe's Mignon, for example, she is identifying with a literary creation of male origin. *Werde, die du bist!* has an abundance of stereotypical female figures and images created by the male imagination, and Dohm suggests that her heroine can only be defined with the representations that already exist. Even if she succeeds in overturning a conventional image, another is waiting to be employed, either by others or by herself. When she overhears herself being called 'Großmutter Psyche' (p. 273), for example, she feels so horrified that she is stunned into silence. She is turned into a statue, unable to speak for herself. But Johannes finds a descriptive comparison ready to hand. He explains: 'Sie erinnerte mich in jenem Augenblick mit den geöffneten Lippen und den großen, starren und entsetzten Augen an eine Medusa' (p. 273). For him, Agnes is a death-dealing monster. Later in the story, Dohm seems at first to reject a suggested parallel between her protagonist and an Ophelia-like figure. Agnes has a vision of a drowned woman with whom she feels an affinity, a vision which makes clear to Agnes that for a long time she too has been suffering from 'Selbstmordgedanken' (p. 309). Just after Agnes has this vision, she remarks 'Das Meer zieht mich hinab' (p. 309), yet she does not come to her death in water. Unlike Ophelia, she does not—explicitly at least—commit suicide.

Agnes is likened to Eve when she has a vision in a cave in Capri. The vision ends with the female cast in the conventional and typical sexual role: 'Da ringelte sich die Schlange um meinen Leib und preßte mir die Brust zusammen, und die Schlange sprach: 'Ich bin ja die Sünde, die Sünde des Tiberius' (p. 324). In her comparison to Eve, Dohm reinforces the idea that Agnes, as a woman, cannot escape being defined by her body and her sexuality and she is hence trapped in patriarchal stereotypes. Agnes is defined and trapped by her gender and age on many occasions. Consequently, she presents a picture of herself to the outside world as a woman older than she is. Agnes says: 'wenn ich Leute kommen sehe, krümme ich mich

zusammen, damit ich noch älter erscheine, als ich bin. Ich gebe mir ein stumpfes Ansehen, als vegetierte ich nur so hin, wie es meinen Jahren zukommt' (p. 296). Agnes is portrayed as 'vegetating like a plant'. Again, this highlights how Agnes cannot escape being 'represented' by men. Agnes attempts to make her appearance conform more to what she 'should' look like.

Agnes is also suffering from the changes brought about by the menopause. Dohm's depiction of this again highlights how Agnes is incomplete – she is mourning her sexuality and youth. Mourning and the menopause are closely linked in Dohm's novella. Of the menopause Germaine Greer writes that, 'when the ovaries die the woman dies with them,' and that the menopause is perceived as a change from 'life to death, to death-in-life'.<sup>16</sup> Dohm's protagonist undergoes a double death in that, as well as losing her husband, she has lost her youth.

Although the word 'Wechseljahre' never appears in the text, it is clear that Agnes is undergoing the changes brought about by this transitional phase. Dohm refers to Agnes's menopause in a symbolic manner to illustrate how her sense of self can never be complete. According to Greer, the menopause is symbolic of an evolution from the body to the soul, and it is regarded as a time of spiritual change.<sup>17</sup> This evolution is further seen in Agnes when she sees a headless statue. Upon seeing it, she begins to feel for her own head and thinks that it is missing: 'Und schaudernd sah ich, der Kopf – mein Kopf [...] Auch mein Kopf? Ich halte ihn, ich halte ihn mit beiden Händen fest, fest' (p. 309). Thus she feels she is lacking a spiritual and intellectual dimension and it is this which she seeks to rectify, but fails.

The colour red to signify blood is also used to illustrate this phase in Agnes's life. For example, the headless statue in the park is described as follows: 'Die Säule war ganz rot gesprenkelt, als wäre Blut aus dem kopflosen Rumpf daran niedergeträufelt' (p. 293). This

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<sup>16</sup> Germaine Greer, *The Change: Women, Ageing and the Menopause* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1992), p. 47.

<sup>17</sup> Greer, *The Change*, p. 4.

can be perceived as a reference to the blood of menstruation. Furthermore, the cave in Capri, which has been referred to as the ‘metaphorical female sex organ’,<sup>18</sup> is also mentioned in conjunction with the colour red and blood: ‘Düster glühende Reflexe der untergangenen Sonne fielen in das tiefe Dunkel der Höhle und färbten die leise herabsickernden Tropfen rot, rot wie Blut’ (p. 323). In both passages, Dohm pauses and hesitates before referring to the word blood, a literal reminder of what Agnes has lost and of her status as an ‘old woman’. Agnes’s menopause, like her widowhood, is not a rebirth. This can only come about in death.

Dohm’s ending is a conventional one in the context of nineteenth-century literary depictions of the widow. Lying on her death-bed, Agnes expresses the hope that in the next life she will achieve the liberation of her ‘true’ self for which she has strived: ‘Ob im Tode mein ich geboren wird?—ob ich im Jenseits werde, die ich bin?’ (p. 329). These are Agnes’s words; but her death is narrated in the third person from a male perspective, underlining, again, her inability to escape being ‘represented’ by patriarchal society. Agnes’s corpse is presented via a conventional male gaze as a beautiful work of art, ‘ein Marmorbild von reiner Schönheit’ (p. 330).<sup>19</sup> This beauty depends on the disappearance of the physical characteristics of her age and sex: the doctors describe her body as ‘Ohne Alter, ohne Geschlecht’ (p. 329). In her martyr-like death, Agnes is presented as a female Christ, and she claims that she is dying for other women. Critics disagree about the significance of the comparison with Christ. Richards argues that presenting a female protagonist as Christ is unusual at this period and ‘imbues Agnes with dignity and her death with significance,’<sup>20</sup> but Weber highlights the lack of innovation in the image, pointing out that women have long been represented as sacrificing themselves for others.<sup>21</sup> There is certainly something clichéd

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<sup>18</sup> Weber, *Fliegen und Zittern*, p. 162.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 175.

<sup>20</sup> Richards, *The Wasting Heroine*, p. 188.

<sup>21</sup> Weber, *Fliegen und Zittern*, p. 84.

and formulaic about the description of Agnes with a myrtle wreath in her hair and blood running down her forehead:

Ihr Antlitz war schmal wie ein Schatten. Sie trug noch den welken Myrtenkranz. Die spitzen Stengel hatten sich in ihr Haar verwickelt. Man hatte versucht, den Kranz zu entfernen, und sie dabei geritzt. Ein Tropfen Blutes rann ihr über die Stirn (p. 329).

The word 'Schatten' in the above quotation is suggestive of the way in which Agnes remains more or less invisible until the moment of her death, despite her attempts to assert herself. Dohm's ending is thus not positive. The implication is that to be a martyr Agnes must sacrifice her sex and age. As Singer argues, if Agnes must deny her age and sexuality, 'then the victory of her metaphysical transcendence is an ambiguous one for women indeed'.<sup>22</sup>

As women have been defined and spoken about by men, their own voice, their own representation, is lost. Progression, as Boetcher Joeres remarks, stays within psychic bounds.<sup>23</sup> Agnes dreams, criticises and reflects and thus increases the level of activity within herself. The repressive society in which Agnes lives, on the other hand, makes it clear that her only means of fulfilment is by transcending her aged female body.<sup>24</sup> It is the oppressive and destructive nature of society towards older women that Dohm criticises. Dohm's progressiveness as a writer is marked by her language and her heroine's desire to grow and develop, but, at the same time, Dohm places limits on her own radicality. She has to emphasise the spiritual as opposed to sexual nature of Agnes's love for Johannes because, as the discussion about Goethe's love for a much younger woman illustrates, society does not allow an older woman to feel physical desire.

Dohm's short story is never the less a radical critique of the status of the (aged) widow in late nineteenth-century society and a powerful assertion of her right to 'become who she is'. Perhaps motivated by realism, or perhaps by the attempt to conform, however, Dohm is

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<sup>22</sup> Singer, *Free Soul, Free Woman?* p. 34.

<sup>23</sup> Boetcher Joeres, *Respectability and Deviance*, p. 130.

<sup>24</sup> Richards, *The Wasting Heroine*, p. 189.

unable to present a protagonist who achieves spiritual, intellectual or sexual liberation during her lifetime. Only in that most conventional of ways, a sacrificial death involving the transcendence of the aged, female body, can Dohm conclude her story and offer her protagonist emancipation. Dohm's own long widowhood was the most productive and active period in her life, but her fictional heroine is not so lucky.

Reuter's *Clementine Holm* presents a very different widow to Agnes. Although the protagonist also attempts to assert her individuality, she does so in a particularly egotistical and self-destructive manner.

### **Gabriele Reuter's *Clementine Holm* (1901)**

*Clementine Holm*, by Gabriele Reuter (1859-1941) tells the story of a widowed mother who lives an unconventional life in Alexandria.<sup>25</sup> She is viewed with suspicion by those few people who know her and she presents herself as an artist/outsider figure, who chooses to spend her time helping society's outcasts. Clementine has a son, Ottokar, who has been away from home for ten years. When she receives a letter from him towards the start of the story announcing his homecoming, she decides to devote her entire existence to preparing her home for his arrival; she even chooses and prepares a bride for him. The text portrays Clementine's romantic longing for her son, and when he returns, their relationship is portrayed as excessive and stifling. However, this excessive relationship soon changes to one with clear sexual and incestuous overtones when Clementine becomes jealous of Gretchen, the bride she has prepared for her son and whom he gladly accepts. When it becomes apparent that Ottokar no longer needs his mother in his life; that he is an independent young man and that he will not return his mother's stifling love, Clementine physically attacks

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<sup>25</sup> Gabriele Reuter, *Clementine Holm*, in *Frauenseelen* [1902] <<http://sophie.byu.edu/literature/index.php?p=text.php&textid=1020>>. All quotations from *Clementine Holm* will be taken from this source.

Gretchen, and Ottokar abandons Clementine once again. The text ends with a lonely image of Clementine, 'die Mutter der großen Trauer' (p. 15).

Clementine is depicted as an autonomous widow, who, though she lives in a German colony, has a colourful house full of primitive art work. Characteristic of her is her accountability to nobody and the way in which she lives life on her terms and her terms only. Her individual lifestyle sets her apart from the others living in the colony. In the following passage Reuter highlights Clementine's real difference to others and her difference as perceived by others:

Nicht, daß sie [Clementine] aufregende und skandalöse Liebensabenteuer gehabt hätte, was ja bei einer noch ansehnlichen Witwe von üppigen Formen und mit schönen braunen Augen nicht unerhört gewesen wäre. Aber schon der Umstand, daß sie meist – in ihrem Hause immer – barfuß und in langem, weiten, wallenden Gewändern von leuchtenden Farben umherwandelte, erregte bei den deutschen Frauen, die eine solide, ehrbare Sitte unter dem fremden Mischvolk hoch zu halten wünschten, einigen Anstoß (p. 1).

Reuter simultaneously shows what society expects of a widow and then shows how Clementine undermines this. Clementine is not a lusty widow on the lookout for another husband, contrary to popular belief. As a typical widow she is on the receiving end of society's disapproval and suspicion, though not for any improper behaviour on her part. That she walks barefoot at home and wears flimsy clothing does not make her an unchaste woman. Her loose clothing and absence of shoes indicates her casting off of convention; she is unconfined, physically and socially. Reuter is thus criticising society for its rigid views and highlighting the marginalised role of the widow.

From the outset, Clementine's defiant individualism is highlighted. Reuter employs many adjectives to create a picture of an energetic, active, forceful and powerful woman. This again inspires fear in others:

Überall kannte man Frau Clementine Holm und empfand einen bangen Schrecken, wenn die umfangreiche Gestalt in ihren phantastischen Gewändern und großem, wogenden Hute erschien und sich zu energischen Vorschlägen breit und wuchtig in den ihr höflich gebotenen Sessel niederließ (p. 1).

Her exaggerated gestures and mannerisms serve to suggest that Clementine derives some importance merely by being seen and heard; she is clearly a figure larger than life. The passage also has negative undertones; Clementine is portrayed as insensitive. That she needs to be noticed is further confirmed later in the text when it is shown that she absolutely must influence and have a definite impact upon her son's life in order to feel her own self-worth and justify her existence. Clementine feels she needs to compensate for the uselessness and invisibility so common among widows first and foremost in her function as a mother and second in her being a clear visual presence to others. Yet Clementine takes her role as a mother too far.

When she receives a letter announcing Ottokar's homecoming, her feelings are described as out of keeping with those of a typical mother. Upon reading the letter she experiences a 'Freudenrausch' (p. 4). The word 'Rausch' is also of crucial significance as it is suggestive of feelings which go beyond mother-love and suggest an out-of-control physicality. Once Clementine is over the initial 'intoxicating joy' she feels at her son's letter, she decides to choose a bride for her son. She chooses one of her 'protégées' and decides to dress her like herself:

Vor allem mußte Gretchen [the bride] die konventionelle Modetracht aufgeben, den schönen jungen Körper nicht mehr einschnüren und sich mit Gewändern bekleiden, die Frau Holm ihr aus selbstgewählten Stoffen schnitt und nähte, und statt Stöckelschuhen trug sie Sandalen (p. 4).

The more liberal sandals and unconventional dress are particularly reminiscent of Clementine's lack of control and moderation. Moreover, it is no coincidence that Reuter calls the bride-to-be 'Gretchen'. The narrator likens this to the fairytale 'Hansel and Gretel', so that Clementine clearly becomes the wicked old witch: 'Die Waldhexe konnte Hänsel und Gretel nicht mit größerer Sorgfalt füttern und mästen, als Frau Holm ihr zartes Gretchen.

Denn “Männer lieben das Füllige”, sagte sie mit ruhiger Sicherheit’ (p. 4). Furthermore, the name ‘Gretchen’ also implies a naïve and conventional German girl.

Just like the evil witch of the fairytale, Clementine appears loving and kind to Gretchen at first, enticing her with art and music. Furthermore, she ‘fattens her up’ and in a sense Clementine’s house becomes like a cage for Ottokar, in which he is unable to escape the stifling love of his mother. Clementine views Gretchen as her personal project. In a further similarity to the evil witch, Clementine soon becomes the controlling, authoritarian, and worst of all, jealous woman and mother.

The narrator distances the reader from Clementine even more when she becomes completely immersed in a world of fantasy and illusion. As Clementine impatiently awaits Ottokar’s arrival, Reuter paints a picture of a neurotic and crazy woman. She is described as a ‘gewaltige Frau’ who ‘weinend und klagend umherlief’ (p. 5). That the narrator is further critical of Clementine’s over-active imagination and exaggerated romantic tendencies is shown when Clementine creates an image of her son as a lone wanderer, which has no basis in reality:

Selbst von einer leidenschaftlichen Sehnsucht nach Schönheit, welche vielleicht in irgend einem schlummernden Talente ihren Grund hatte, war es allmählig zur fixen Idee bei ihr geworden, daß ihr Junge seinen Pensionseltern in Deutschland entflohen war, weil das trübe Alltagsdasein eines Gymniasten seinem schwärmerischen Geiste unerträglich gewesen sei, daß er nun, ein Pilger auf den Pfaden der Romantik, die Erde durchstriefte. Mit lebendiger Phantasie näherte sie diesen Traum: was die weite Welt ihm nicht geboten, sollte er, wenn er endlich heimkehren würde, bei seiner Mutter finden (p. 2).

Clementine is inventing her own version of reality, and the narrator’s criticism of this is shown in the tone and the language of the above paragraph, particularly apparent in the phrases ‘fixe(n) Idee’ and ‘schlummernde(n) Talente’. It transpires that Clementine has only a vague idea of her son’s life. Yet in her mind she creates a picture of Ottokar as a romantic outsider, an image which Clementine herself takes pride in cultivating. It is no coincidence that Clementine chooses to create a son in her own image as it helps justify her own

existence; the implication being that if Ottokar really is a romantic free spirit he will always have a place with his mother. Clementine does not identify herself with other Germans living in Alexandria, but if she is able to identify herself with Ottokar then she has a definite role and purpose in life; motherhood. However, the dangers of Clementine's delusion are made clear when Ottokar asserts his difference from her.

The typical roles of mother and son are reversed when Ottokar, to Clementine's great dismay, reveals that he is not a romantic artist as Clementine would have wished: 'Ich will auch nichts weiter sein als ein alltäglicher Mensch' (p. 9). Upon hearing these words, Clementine's world starts to fall apart and she feels emptied of her social role as mother:

Frau Holm schwieg und verließ das Zimmer. Dieser Sohn, an dem es so gar nichts zu beschützen, zu pflegen, zu beeinflussen gab, der so wohlgenährt, staatlich und in sich gefestigt vor sich stand, was sollte sie mit ihm anfangen? In ihr erhob sich ein rebellischer Trotz. Seit vielen Jahren war sie es gewöhnt, immer und überall die Gebende zu sein und die mit etwas Geräusch und Thätigkeit Gebende (p. 9).

Once again, Clementine's egotism is evident to the reader, shown particularly through the words 'rebellischer Trotz'. Clementine realises that she is no longer needed and this fact constitutes her sense of despair. Following Ottokar's assertion of his bourgeois nature, Clementine, the widow, is left without a mirror image. Yet Clementine does not immediately act on her feelings of despair and isolation; rather, she blindly chooses to disregard the truth that her son is an autonomous individual, and she submerges herself once again in her world of fantasy. Clementine becomes the plotting and cunning female, who decides to keep her son in Alexandria by organising a job for him there. The extent of her scheming is highlighted both by the lies she tells in order to get the outcome she so desires, and then by her emphasis on the importance of motherhood, which she notes is very important to 'die Araber und Türken' (p. 11) in Alexandria. Clementine recounts her successful meeting with Ottokar's potential future boss as follows:

Da habe ich bei dem Soldaten im Schilderhause angefangen und ihm vorgeredet, ich müsse den Vicekönig sprechen, weil mein Kind, das ich seit fünfzehn Jahren nicht gesehen hätte, seit es ein kleiner Bub' war, endlich zu mir zurückgekommen sei. Und habe ihm Zigarren zugestreckt und Rupien und Zuckerzeug für seine Kinder...Ihr wißt ja – die Araber und Türken – was bei denen die Mutter gilt...Ueberall haben sie mich durchgelassen. Und das Zuckerzeug hat noch mehr gewirkt als das Geld und die Zigarren, weil es für ihre Kinder war (p. 11).

First, the above passage highlights how Clementine treats Arabs and Turks like children too. Second, the reader knows that it has been ten years since Clementine has seen Ottokar, not fifteen. Thus Clementine is portrayed as an untrustworthy and deceitful woman, who is prepared to exaggerate the truth to get her own way. Moreover, this behaviour infantilises her to a certain degree, as Reuter is painting a picture of a mother who rebels, like an angry teenager, when she does not get what she wants. Indeed, Reuter emphasises both Clementine's child-like and clearly desperate behaviour in this section, and her playing on her role as a mother. When Clementine finally gets to see the viceroy, Ismail, she is so happy that she falls at his feet. She believes that 'wenn man ihn amüsiert, soll man ja alles bei ihm erreichen' (p. 12). She is clearly manipulative. Clementine is portrayed as a woman who is used to getting her own way, who knows exactly how to do so, and who does not care how she achieves it.

When Ottokar first returns home, the way in which Clementine responds to his embrace is portrayed as more akin to that of a lover than a mother: 'Der junge Holm küßte seine Mutter auf den Mund und ihr war schwindlig und wirr im Kopfe' (p. 6). Clementine appears to be experiencing mild feelings of intoxication from her son's kiss, which pushes her outside the realm of the typical and concerned mother. Reuter explores the idea that Clementine is a victim of repressed desire which she transfers onto her son. At first, this is presented to the reader suggestively and as a vague warning that all is not as it appears. Yet feelings of possession and jealousy soon take Clementine over, presenting her as a dangerous woman with an out-of-control and perverse sexuality. When Clementine sees that Ottokar likes

Gretchen and that her 'plan' is running smoothly, instead of feeling relieved she feels mildly and strangely disturbed. Furthermore, Reuter depicts how Clementine is unaware as to why she is not overjoyed at their mutual attraction. She instead experiences 'eine unbegreifliche Traurigkeit, und kam sich so einsam und verlassen vor wie noch niemals in ihrem Leben' (p. 7). This portrayal of ultimate grief seems more fitting for a widow mourning her recently deceased husband, than a mother pining for her son. Further indicative of her perception of her son as a lover, or husband replacement, is an outburst of emotion shortly after her feelings of sadness: 'Als sie [Gretchen] das Zimmer verlassen hatte, fiel Frau Holm ihrem Sohne mit stürmischer Leidenschaft um den Hals und rief: "Du hattest ja keinen Blick mehr für mich und ich habe gehungert in Sehnsucht nach Dir"' (p. 7). Her feelings of 'stormy passion' are not in keeping with those of a mother.

That Clementine's feelings for her son go beyond that of a typical mother is further illustrated by her mythologising of Ottokar. She idealises and worships her son, referring to him as 'ihr Traumgott und Held' (p. 12). Yet throughout the story Reuter sets up a tension between the person whom Clementine wants Ottokar to be and become, and the person that Ottokar really is and in whom Clementine is not interested. Thus intertwined with the heavily incestuous overtones in *Clementine Holm* is a careful depiction of power games and struggles between mother and son, in which Clementine repeatedly attempts to influence Ottokar. Clementine may hope that her son is a romantic soul, but it is shown on various occasions that Ottokar is the opposite. His sober realism both sets him apart from, and highlights, the shortcomings in his mother.

Ottokar transforms Gretchen from the fairy-tale princess created by Clementine into a modern and stylish young woman. Gretchen is pleased with this, which implies that Ottokar understands Gretchen better than his mother does. It also shows how he can play his mother at her own game and outdo her. The sub-text of this is that Ottokar does not need his mother

and he is capable of exposing her faults. Ottokar's complete rejection of her input in styling his bride-to-be renders Clementine superfluous.

The careful juxtaposition of Clementine's excessive emotion and Ottokar's sober realism serves further to expose the cracks in Clementine's carefully constructed façade. When Clementine realises that she has little, if any, opportunity to exert her influence over Ottokar's life, she is painted as a neurotic woman: 'sie verzehrte in Sehnsucht, in einer Sehnsucht, die schließlich wurde wie ein verschwiegener, heimlicher Wahnsinn' (p. 9). As Clementine starts to become jealous of Gretchen she punishes her with her 'eisige Schweigsamkeit' (p. 9), and it is Ottokar's responsibility to compensate for his mother's cruelty, 'und er tröstete sie, wie ein verständiger, nüchterner Mann tröstet, und das verband die beiden noch viel inniger' (p. 9). Ottokar, the rational, understanding and sober man, who is able to reach out to Gretchen, contrasts with Clementine, who is depicted as a woman unable to control her emotions.

As a result of Clementine's blind anger and unbridled emotions she loses her son completely at the end of the story. When Clementine overhears Gretchen playing a song from 'Die Fledermaus' (p. 13) on the piano she physically attacks her. When Ottokar hears of Clementine's attack on Gretchen, he refuses to acknowledge her existence: 'Aber er ging an ihr vorüber, er sah sie gar nicht' (p. 14). Clementine is portrayed as an invisible, shadow-like being. Furthermore, it is Ottokar who now does the punishing with silence: 'Aber er ging schweigend in sein Zimmer und schloß die Thür hinter sich ab' (p. 14). The power is in Ottokar's hands. Once again therefore, he outdoes Clementine at her own game. The text ends with Clementine all alone, abandoned by her son once more. She is described as 'die Mutter der großen Trauer' (p. 15). Ironically, at the end of the story, she has assumed the conventional role of a grieving mother.

Reuter has reverted to typical male depictions of women and widows; underneath the picture of an energetic and independent woman with which the reader was at first presented, there lies a neurotic, jealous and needy female. Moreover, Reuter's presentation of Clementine as inconsistent and deceitful shares similarities with the image of the faithless widow, as seen in Eduard Grisebach's *Die treulose Witwe*. Clementine too has been unveiled as an embodiment of female 'Weiberlist'; she is cunning and plotting. Yet despite these negative depictions, Reuter has not presented her widow as dangerous. Clementine is on no occasion a seductive temptress, a popular image of the male imagination, but she is, at the opposite extreme, a foolish and somewhat ridiculous figure who is submerged in her world of fantasy and acts entirely out of self-interest.

Also similar to common portrayals of widows in the nineteenth century is Reuter's depiction of Clementine as a widow with a perverse sexuality. Clementine's clear incestuous feelings towards Ottokar place her within this category. Clementine abused her role as a mother, thus rendering her childless at the end of the text. Moreover, that a widow is invisible and superfluous in society has also been shown in the presentation of Clementine, who is not needed, and finally ignored, by her son. That she is alone constitutes her final punishment, as happened to Meyer's heroine in the previous chapter. Clementine has been forced to acknowledge that Ottokar is not the romantic wanderer; he does not share anything in common with his mother; thus she too has no mirror image in society. Clementine is metaphorically stripped bare at the end of the story. Ottokar, by dint of his sober personality, has managed to expose Clementine's shortcomings and unveil her as an egotistical and out-of-control woman. Similarly, she is without her protégée and her son at the end, leaving her the empty and powerless widow.

The widowed protagonist of the next story is also left alone, a fate which she finds unbearable.

**Five O'clock (1902)**

Reuter's six-page story tells of a recent widow, Nataly von Neckar, who comes to miss the security and support of a husband.<sup>26</sup> At first she cannot believe that she, as a widow, is finally 'free' to do as she pleases, but this feeling of autonomy is very short-lived.

*Five O'clock* focuses on the way in which Nataly adjusts to the supposed new-found freedom inherent in widowhood. The concept of liberation is at the heart of Reuter's story, as seen at the start with its repetition on the word 'Frei!' (p. 1). The plot recounts how every day at five o'clock during her marriage Nataly would either have male guests visit for tea in her salon or she would enjoy a 'tête-à-tête'. Nataly remarks that she never really noticed these men before as she was a married woman. When her husband died, however, Nataly was confronted with the 'tötliche Langeweile der Trauerzeit' (p. 2). At this stage of the story, Reuter presents Nataly as a widow hopeful that she will enjoy the freedoms of widowhood. She depicts her state, at least momentarily, as a new beginning: 'mit Augen, in denen ein neues, glänzendes Leben erwachte, blickte sie umher' (p. 3). Moreover, being a widow makes her realise that she can now act upon this sudden new-found freedom: 'Und nun durfte sie plötzlich!' (p. 4). Now Nataly *can* think about and appreciate other men. Reuter focuses on the heroine's realisation that, as a widow and hence a single woman, Nataly is no longer accountable to anyone. Yet this freedom is double-edged and comes with a price. Nataly may be free to act as she wishes, but she now has the difficult burden of making a choice between her many possible suitors, a task she was spared when she had a husband. Moreover, now that she is free, one of her admirers, Walther Scharling, fails to visit her. Thus she is portrayed as alone and unwanted as a widow, a reversal to her situation in marriage.

While waiting for the admirer who never comes, Nataly remembers how her husband was an understanding man who allowed her freedom within marriage. Ironically, the more

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<sup>26</sup> Gabriele Reuter, *Five O'clock*, in *Frauenseelen* [1902] <<http://sophie.byu.edu/literature/index.php?p=text.php&textid=1023>>. All quotations from *Five O'clock* will be taken from this source.

freedom Nataly has within widowhood, the more she misses the security of her husband in marriage. She begins to long for him and 'seinen verstehenden Blick', 'seine unverlangende Gegenwart' (p. 4). Reuter's story ends with the heroine unable to bear the burden of choice and longing for the days when she was a married woman: 'Ach, lebte er noch und alles konnte so bleiben wie es gewesen, zu der Zeit, als sie noch nicht frei war' (p. 6).

Reuter's *Five O'clock* appears positive at the outset in that the heroine has discovered that her widowhood marks the start of a potential freedom. Yet this optimism is very short-lived, for it is precisely this freedom, presented as a burden, which causes her misery. Thus Nataly becomes the antithesis of the merry widow, since she cannot use her liberated and independent state to her advantage. In this respect, Reuter neither presents a feminist view of her protagonist nor a more positive portrayal of widowhood. In Schnitzler's *Frau Beate und ihr Sohn* and in Meyer's *Die Richterin* the widow's punishment fits the crime. The same can be said of *Five o'clock*. Nataly is paying the price for the freedom she was allowed by her husband within marriage by being burdened with freedom following her husband's death.

### **Conclusion**

Reuter's heroines indeed end up 'free' at the end, yet at a tremendous cost. Clementine's 'freedom' is described as isolation, and Nataly's 'freedom' is a burden. Both of Reuter's stories end with the image of the lonely heroine. The idea of the liberated merry widow is thus reversed. Reuter's heroines are not reborn into society but are rejected by society; Clementine Holm by her son and Nataly by her admirer, Walter Scharling.

The three stories discussed all portray the widow as an alienated and invisible being. Agnes Schmidt has no place in her family or in society as an 'old' widow, Clementine is not wanted by her son, and Nataly has no place to go in widowhood. The three widowed protagonists are superfluous in society. Reuter has not managed to reject prevalent patriarchal and

stereotypical ideas about widowhood. In fact, she has simply repeated these prevalent male views. Dohm, on the other hand, makes society responsible for Agnes's fate in marriage and motherhood and then responsible for her descent into madness. Moreover, her story does allow her heroine to avoid certain gender and patriarchal stereotypes. Because Agnes rejects the body and sexuality, she is freed into the life of the mind. Dohm's approach differs from that of other writers examined in this thesis, for, although she does not present her widow in a positive light, she does illustrate how Agnes sidesteps conventional gender roles and therefore finds liberation to some extent.

## **Conclusion**

A prevalent theme throughout the thesis is the depiction of the widow as a sexually voracious and dangerous being on the one hand, and as a foolish and ridiculous figure on the other hand. Only Hanke's widows escape these representations. Her widows are neither sexual predators nor laughable figures, but they are the only widows in the works discussed in this thesis who cease to be widows and become brides at the end. This, it seems, is the only solution to, or 'way out' of, a widow's misery in German fiction of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Paul Heyse portrays his heroine Lucrezia as a seductress out to capture the architect and trap him into being her husband, Schnitzler's widows are incestuous death-dealing women, Keller's Judith has a predatory sexuality, and Reuter's Clementine Holm is an egotistical and insensitive mother with a repressed longing for her son. Yet underneath their threatening, dominant and powerful exteriors, these widows are often simultaneously portrayed as either stupid or lacking in self awareness, like Lucrezia and Beate, or child-like, like Berta Garlan and Clementine Holm. Authors in this thesis thus have in common their stripping of the widow's independence and power, something that is particularly prominent in Grisebach's, Keller's and Meyer's stories, where the widow ends up either dead or desexualised. Even widows who are not independent are subjected to a transformation. For example, Keller's Frau Lee is depicted as a controlling and manipulative widow, and she ends up lonely, inactive and destitute at the end. Moreover, it appears that widows cannot escape their presentation as children, for knowledge and insight leads to their demise or death. This is illustrated in *Werde, die du bist!* and in particular in *Frau Berta Garlan*, who is portrayed as ill-equipped to deal with reality. Finally, if a widow's independence and/or sexuality is not removed from the text, then it is 'improved'. This is illustrated in Keller's second version of *Der grüne Heinrich*, in which Judith loses her independence and power.

As the century progresses, therefore, depictions barely change and negative notions of the widow are reinforced. Dohm is the only author to provide a corrective to this view in her presentation of a heroine who manages to emancipate herself by transcending the physical realm. She also gives a much more detailed description of the thoughts and feelings of her protagonist and blames society, not her, for her ultimate destruction. This is not the case in all works written towards the end of the century. Though Schnitzler presents his stories from the female viewpoint, their thought processes are often revealed as incomplete and full of gaps and unanswered questions. It is not the pain of widowhood that the reader experiences in Schnitzler's works, rather it is the widow's ability to inflict pain on herself owing to her lack of self-awareness and/or tendency to annihilate her own self will. The extent to which society is responsible for many of the injustices against widows is also at the centre of Schnitzler's work. It is again Dohm who shows how women come to internalise damaging views held by society and are unable to escape them and form their own sense of self. Schnitzler's *Frau Berta Garlan* is insightful in its portrayal of the prevailing sexual double standard and how women are the victim of this, but he still repeats misogynistic ideas which present his widow, with her many moments of belated awareness, as responsible for her own suffering.

This bleak picture of widowhood in nineteenth-century fiction is taken further in that there are no 'merry' widows in the works discussed in this thesis. Only Hanke and Keller offer the reader a brief insight into the life of a merry widow, who is on both occasions a minor figure who plays no part in the plot or development of the story. In this respect, the fictional representation of widowhood does not greatly differ from the situation of real-life widows in nineteenth-century Germany. It was pointed out in chapter I that, though legally more autonomous in widowhood than in marriage, widows were still under strict instructions to venerate their husband's memory and be seen as chaste and virtuous. The same applies in the literature of the period. Widows in fiction do internalise the reductive and antifeminist ideas

set out by Hippel, but generally the female writers criticise this. Hanke highlights female submission but she does not always advocate it. Dohm's story, the most radical, illustrates the immense suffering of the widow who has been defined throughout her whole life by others. The invisibility, loneliness and alienation from family and society applies to all the widows in the end, apart from those in Hanke's novel, who are no longer widows at the end.

With the emergence of sexual psychology and psychoanalysis at the turn of the century, male writers become particularly harsh in their treatment of the widow. The ideas of Schopenhauer, Möbius and Freud are thoroughly endorsed. Widows become defined by their sexuality and are portrayed as liars. Even female writers, such as Reuter, cannot escape from these prevalent stereotypes and hence repeat them in their own stories.

The figure of the widow in nineteenth- and early-twentieth century literature therefore does not develop at all – she is consistently portrayed as highly sexed, child-like, predatory, incestuous and stupid. Does she ever become a more likeable and liberated figure in German fiction, or are misogynistic ideas still prevalent in the mid - and late-twentieth century? Some fifty years after Schnitzler's *Frau Beate und ihr Sohn* was published, Thomas Mann published his final novella entitled *Die Betrogene*.<sup>1</sup> Although it appeared in the middle of the twentieth century, in 1952, Mann's novella has much in common not only with Schnitzler's story of an incestuous, unnatural, and sexually deviant widowed mother, but also with other widows discussed, whose punishment fits their 'crimes'. The story is set in the 1920s and tells of a fifty-year-old widow Rosalie von Tümler, a respected woman, who lives with her teenage son and adult daughter. Rosalie has entered the period just after the menopause and experiences its typical symptoms. Unexpectedly, she falls in love with her son's twenty-four-year-old English teacher, Ken Keaton. Feelings of erotic desire and rejuvenation suddenly surface, and she soon after experiences bleeding again and is convinced that her menstrual

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<sup>1</sup> Thomas Mann, *Die Betrogene*, in *Sämtliche Erzählungen* (Frankfurt am Main: S. Fischer 1963), pp. 695-754.

cycle has resumed. Rosalie celebrates this as a gift from nature which justifies her strong attraction to a much younger man. However, this bleeding, this perceived ‘gift of nature,’ in fact turns out to be a symptom of ovarian cancer. At the end of the novella medical cures prove useless and Rosalie succumbs to her illness and dies.

Mann portrays his widow as an innocent, naïve and child-like figure throughout, with ‘eine ausschweifende Phantasie’ (p. 697), whom he takes pleasure in mocking. Thus Rosalie has similarities with Schnitzler’s widows. At the start of the novella, the reader is told that Rosalie is celebrating her ‘fünfzigstes Wiegenfest’ (p. 696). Thus at the outset she is presented as less than a woman, a regressive being, as other widows in this thesis are depicted, for instance, Franzisca at the start of *Die Wittwen*. Moreover, only when she believes that she has her period again does Rosalie come to view herself as a ‘Vollmensch’ (p. 731). Like Agnes Schmidt in *Werde, die du bist!*, an ‘older’ widow has no place in the natural world. Indeed, as Mann writes of Rosalie, she is ‘ausgeschieden aus der Natur’ (p. 706). If the older woman in general is useless and worthless, then figure of the older widow exemplifies this to an even higher degree.

The emphasis in *Die Betrogene* is not on love but on sexuality. Moreover, deviant sexuality is at issue. Precisely because this sexuality departs from normal and accepted standards, the figure of the widow suffers. Like Beate in *Frau Beate und ihr Sohn*, Rosalie falls from accepted standards of discipline and must pay the price for it. Duty must come before impulse, social responsibility before freedom. A further parallel can be drawn with *Frau Beate und ihr Sohn* in that both widowed protagonists come to their deaths by water. Although not directly responsible for her own death as is the case with Beate, water takes Rosalie on her journey towards death as it brings her to the castle with the black swans where she learns that she is dying. Finally, it is at the castle where Rosalie confesses her feelings to

Ken Keaton, at which point he disappears from the story and a huge tumour is discovered in Rosalie's uterus, signalling the beginning of her demise.

Mann's novella is thus similar in subject matter to that of earlier works and deals with the same concerns as those expressed in stories of forty years earlier and more. It would appear that widows are often depicted as figures defined by sexuality, while simultaneously being victims of their sexuality. They are perceived solely as sexual beings, yet they are required to be asexual, and this tension and its representations are a popular topic for German authors in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Seen in this light, male and female writers use widowhood as a forum to explore female sexuality. In her obligation to remain chaste, the widow provides a fascinating vehicle by which to explore female desire.

It is interesting to note that the widowed mothers of this thesis are generally presented as 'bad' mothers. Stemma, Clementine Holm and Beate all fail as mothers; Berta is depicted as neglecting her child for her lover, Lucrezia is called a 'Rabenmutter' and Frau Lee is portrayed as highly irresponsible towards herself and her son at the end of the second version of the story. At the start of the century, as demonstrated in Hanke's novel, motherhood is portrayed as affording widows social power and purpose, whereas towards the end of the century, widows are depicted as abusing their natural duty of motherhood, thus making them unfit mothers. In some instances this may be another way of 'punishing' the widow – the widow who abuses the figure who is now the only man in her life has to have him taken away from her at the end. Yet the emphasis on incestuous relationships between mother and son also again highlights the turn-of-the-century predatory and aggressive sexuality of the widow. The widow, who is so sexually promiscuous that she embarks on an affair with her son, a husband-substitute, is clearly perverse through and through. This is the most extreme take on the predatory sexuality of the late nineteenth-century widow.

The clear lack of identity which characterises most widows in the stories examined suggests that authors are reinforcing the idea, highlighted in the first chapter of the thesis, that the widow is an incomplete, superfluous figure, who has indeed lost her ‘weibliches Selbst’ with the loss of her husband.<sup>2</sup> This idea was put forward by Hippel in chapter I:

Was ist eine Witwe mehr als eine halb verwischte Schilderei, ein umgewandtes Kleid, ein aufgewärmtes Essen, eine Perrücke statt eigenes Haar, eine Tulpe, die den Schlüssel verloren hat und sich nicht mehr zuschließen läßt?

Reuter has unveiled her widow Nataly von Neckar as second-hand goods – her suitor fails to visit her, suggesting that she is perceived as another man’s used goods. Agnes Schmidt, who tries – and fails – to find her own sense of self, is rejected by her own family. Clementine Holm attempts to assert her individuality but she is revealed as egotistic and alone at the end, abandoned by her son, and Schnitzler’s widows suffer a crisis of identity as they are unable to live up to society’s ideals. Coupled with their lack of readily available identities, these fictional widows are difficult to categorise. Keller’s Frau Lee is powerful and helpless at the same time, the narrator of Heyse’s *Die Witwe von Pisa* draws on stock models of mythological and classical womanhood to try and understand the domineering and at times ridiculous Lucrezia, and Keller’s Judith, a beautiful temptress who remains chaste, is turned into stone once her personality destabilises Heinrich. It is thus the ambiguity of the figure of the widow which is at all times highlighted in nineteenth-century German fiction.

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<sup>2</sup> Ursula Machtemes, *Leben zwischen Trauer und Pathos: Bildungsbürgerliche Witwen im 19. Jahrhundert* (Osnabrück: Rasch, 2001), p. 249.

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