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Novellenschatz.
Searching for Treasure
in the Novellas of Gottfried Keller and George Eliot

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ABSTRACT

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This dissertation is composed of readings of four novellas: two by the Swiss writer Gottfried Keller and two by the English novelist George Eliot. It focuses on the motif and concept of treasure (*Schatz*). Beginning with the figurative and rhetorical employment of "treasure" in the stories, each reading proceeds to identify traces of authorial anxiety concerning the status of literature itself as a fetishized object of desire. In their novellas, the study shows, Keller and Eliot stage a dramatic struggle between two broad concepts of desire, one that would underwrite the subjective authenticity of treasure and one that undercuts it by pointing up desire's implication in an irreducibly intersubjective dynamic of mimesis. In contradistinction to their common mentor, the philosopher Ludwig Feuerbach, Keller and Eliot can here be seen to anticipate certain strains of psychoanalytic thought, particularly the Freudian theory of narcissism. This is established not only by way of the themes and representational strategies of the stories, but through consideration of issues surrounding textual identity and integrity. It is moreover in this theoretical context that Keller and Eliot's insistent return to femininity is placed. Alongside the representation of a fundamental female conservatism, even fetishism -- a tendency to cling to things or forms that have outlived their usefulness and are valued only for

their own sake – the novellas of Keller and Eliot simultaneously conceive of femininity as a fount of generosity. This gendered notion of gift is deeply implicated in the genre of the novella itself, which is postulated as a treasure beyond price by the same token that its most characteristic temporal gesture is (fruitless) repetition. While thus self-consciously failing to represent something fundamentally new, the novellas of Keller and Eliot are deeply invested in delineating the conditions for the emergence or appearance of novelty. With a particular eye to textual excesses, surpluses, and above all remainders, the "search" for treasure in the novellas of Keller and Eliot yields insight into their realist representations of fetishism as well as a certain fetishization of literature that their texts both exemplify and diagnose.

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Introduction

Theoretical Investments

Erudition and philosophy are to me only the means by which I bring to light the treasure hid in man.
-Ludwig Feuerbach, *The Essence of Christianity* (George Eliot translation)[1]

This dissertation is comprised of readings of four novellas, two by the Swiss writer Gottfried Keller and two by the English novelist George Eliot, *née* Mary Ann Evans. Eliot and Keller were exact contemporaries: both share their year of birth, 1819, with the English queen who gave her name to the age. Both began writing realist fiction relatively late in life, and both are considered major figures in their respective language traditions.[2] Of the many good reasons that could be given for juxtaposing the work of these two authors, this dissertation focuses on the motif and the concept of "treasure" (*Schatz*). The set of concerns provoked by treasure provides, I will argue, a uniquely productive means of grasping Eliot and Keller's practice of short fiction. The "search" for treasure consequently underlies both the decision to concentrate on the novella genre and the choice of individual texts to be read. At the same time, treasure is a name for that which is to be found, or established, in and through these readings. This introduction will develop each of these points in turn.[3]

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[1] Ludwig Feuerbach, *The Essence of Christianity.* George Eliot, trans. Buffalo, New York: Prometheus Books, 1989, p.xxii. All further references to this edition will be given in the text.

[2] For a general comparison of Eliot and Keller, see H.R. Klieneberger, "Gottfried Keller and George Eliot." (*New German Studies,* 5, 1977, pp.9-23); and *The Novel in England and Germany. A Comparative Study.* (London: Oswald Wolff, 1981). For an analysis of the influence of Keller's novellas on Eliot, see James Diedrick, "Eliot's Debt to Keller: *Silas Marner* and *Die drei gerechten Kammacher*" (*Comparative Literature Studies,* 20, Winter 1985, pp.376-387); and "George Eliot's Experiments in Fiction: 'Brother Jacob' and the German Novelle" (*Studies in Short Fiction* XXII, 1985, pp.461-468).

[3] With its focus on treasure, this study joins a tradition of "economic" research into Keller and Eliot. Keller has been a favorite of Marxist and/or materialist critics at least since Georg Lukács' homage to him in *Deutsche Realisten des 19.Jahrhunderts* (Bern: Francke Verlag, 1959); the peak of this trend was reached in the early 1970s with works like

The identification of literature with (a) treasure has a long tradition. Already the act of opening a book suggests the imminent dis-covery of something valuable. It is in part this conventional association that Hermann Kurz and Paul Heyse call upon with the choice of title for their late nineteenth-century anthology, *Deutscher Novellenschatz* ("German Novella Treasury").[4] The twenty-four volumes began appearing in 1871, followed, in quick succession, by a "foreign" and a "new" edition.[5] In the final pages of the third volume, George Eliot, who notes reading the *Novellenschatz* in her journals, would certainly have recognized Keller's most famous novella, "Romeo und Julia auf dem Dorfe." [6] Whether she (re)read the tale at this

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Gert Sautermeister's "Gottfried Keller – Kritik und Apologie des Privateigentums" (in: Gert Mattenklott und Klaus R. Scherpe, eds. *Positionen der literarischen Intelligenz zwischen bürgerlicher Reaktion und Imperialismus.* Kronberg/Ts.: Scriptor Verlag, 1973, pp.39-102), which analyses the same two novellas to be read here. Adolf Muschg's well-known Keller biography (*Gottfried Keller.* München: Kindler Verlag, 1977) is also of interest in this context; its organizing motif and principle is the concept of guilt/debt (*Schuld*). On the economics of Seldwyla, see Richard Hacken, "Gottfried Keller's Realism: The Socio-economic Ground between Switzerland and Seldwyla" (in: John F. Fetzer et. al., eds. *In Search of the Poetic Real. Essays in Honor of Clifford Albrecht Bernd on the Occasion of his Sixtieth Birthday.* Stuttgart: Akademischer Verlag, 1989, pp.151-168) and Willi Goetschel, "Love, Sex, and Other Utilities: Keller's Unsettling Account" (in: Raymond A. Prier and Gerald Gillespie, eds. *Narrative Ironies.* Amsterdam and Atlanta, GA: Rodopi, 1997, pp.223-235). On *Der grüne Heinrich*, see, above all, Jochen Hörisch, "Geld, Gott und verunglücktes Dasein im ‚Grünen Heinrich'" (in: Hörisch, *Gott, Geld, und Glück. Zur Logik der Liebe in den Bildungsromanen Goethes, Kellers und Thomas Manns,* Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1983, pp.116-179). Eliot's reputation among English Marxist critics (e.g. Raymond Williams and Terry Eagleton) has never been a match for the attention lavished on Keller by German leftists, but her engagement with economic themes has begun to receive more serious attention in the last several years. In addition to chapters devoted to Eliot in Jeff Nunokawa, *The Afterlife of Property: Domestic Security and the Victorian Novel* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994) and Catherine Gallagher, *The Body Economic. Life, Death, and Sensation in Political Economy and the Victorian Novel* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2006), see the important articles by Deanna Kreisl, "Superfluity and Suction: The Problem with Saving in *The Mill on the Floss*" (*Novel,* Fall 2001, pp.69-103); Susan Stewart, "Genres of Work: The Folktale and *Silas Marner*" (*New Literary History,* 34: 2003, pp.513-533); and Daniel Siegel, "Losing for Profit" (in: Karen Chase, ed. *Middlemarch in the Twenty-First Century.* London: Oxford University Press, 2006, pp.157-176). Tim Dolin's recent overview of Eliot's life and work also includes a helpful section on her relationship to money; see Dolin, *George Eliot* (London and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), pp. 130ff.

[4] Paul Heyse and Hermann Kurz, ed. *Deutscher Novellenschatz.* 24 vols. (München: Oldenbourg, 1871-1876). This was hardly the first "Novella Treasury," but it was the most popular. The favored Romantic term for a novella collection was a "wreath" (*Novellenkranz*).

[5] *Novellenschatz des Auslandes* (14 vols. München: Oldenbourg, 1872-1875).; and *Neuer Deutscher Novellenschatz* (Paul Heyse and Ludwig Laistner, eds. 24 vols. München: Oldenbourg, 1884-87).

[6] See also Nietzsche in *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches II,* 109 (in: Nietzsche, *Kritische Studienausgabe.* Giorgio Colli und Mazzino Montinari, eds. München, Berlin, New York: dtv/de Gruyter, 1988, p.599) where he casts

juncture, when she was at work on *Middlemarch*, has not been recorded; but the novella had been singled out for special praise by her companion, G.H. Lewes, when he reviewed it -- along with some less impressive novellas by Heyse -- thirteen years before.[7] Like Lewes, Heyse was a great admirer of Keller's tale: in his letter soliciting its inclusion in the anthology, he refers to it as a "gem" (*Kleinod*). The casting of novellas as objects of rare value is a convention, even a cliché, that – along with a certain defensiveness regarding the apparent inability of the German-speaking world to produce a "great" novel to rival those written in French or English – will remain common throughout the nineteenth century and well into the twentieth.

The collectibility of the novella reinforces its frequent identification with valuables. Like a poem, and unlike a novel, the novella characteristically appears (or is hidden?) in the midst of other texts: novellas are often first or even exclusively published in an annual or monthly journal (Eliot's "Brother Jacob" and "The Lifted Veil")[8]; a cycle of stories by the same author (Keller's *Die Leute von Seldwyla* as well as Eliot's *Scenes of Clerical Life*); or even within the pages of a novel (Goethe's *Wahlverwandtschaften* or *Wilhelm Meisters Wanderjahre*),[9] as well as

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Keller's novella collection *Die Leute von Seldwyla* as one of the few components comprising the "treasure of German prose" (*Schatz der deutschen Prosa*).

[7] See G.H. Lewes, "Realism in Art: Recent German Fiction." Review of novels and novellas by Paul Heyse, Theodor Mügge, Gustav Freytag, and Gottfried Keller. *Westminster Review,* July 1858, pp.488-538. It is regularly presumed by Eliot biographers that she read Keller's work at this time, perhaps aloud to Lewes. For studies of the influence of "Romeo und Julia auf dem Dorfe" on Eliot's *The Mill on the Floss,* see Alan Casson, "*The Mill on the Floss* and Keller's *Romeo und Julia auf dem Dorfe*" (*MLN,* 75, 1960, pp.20-22) and E.A. McCobb, "Keller's Influence on *The Mill on the Floss*: A Reassessment" (*German Life and Letters,* 1980, pp.199-207). Heyse's correspondence with Keller has been reprinted in "*Du hast alles, was mir fehlt...*" *Gottfried Keller im Briefwechsel mit Paul Heyse.* Fridolin Stähli, ed. Zürich/Stäfa: Th.Gut &Co., 1990. Further page references will be given in the text.

[8] The stories in *Scenes of Clerical Life* were first published in *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*. Following the success of *Die Leute von Seldwyla,* several of Keller's novellas were published in Berthold Auerbach's *Volkskalender.*

[9] It is of course the case that nineteenth-century novels, like Eliot's own, were often serialized in periodicals before being made available for independent publication. Nevertheless, the ultimate aim of such practices was the emergence of the novel -- if not in a single volume, then certainly as a single epic entity. Moreover, while the

"treasuries" of stories by different authors (*Deutscher Novellenschatz*).[10] As Hugo Aust points out, the novella's collectibility gives it a unique role in the economics of literature: "Hier wird ein literarisches Forum greifbar, ein ästhetischer Marktplatz narrativer ‚beweglicher' Güter und Kleinwaren..." ("Here a literary forum becomes palpable, an aesthetic marketplace of narrative, 'moveable' goods and petty wares…").[11] To be sure, the novella is not the only literary or even prose form that lends itself to being collected, nor is it the smallest unit of narrative "currency"; in the 18th century, the tale, the fable, and the anecdote were favored candidates for anthologies like Johann Peter Hebel's phenomenally popular *Schatzkästlein des rheinischen Hausfreundes* (*Little Treasury of the Rheinish Family Friend*).

The novella differs from such works not only in length, but as regards the question of value in the broadest sense: where Hebel's didactic tales are supposed to provide a kind of profit or payoff in the form of a moral, it is much more difficult to ascertain what, if indeed anything, is to be gained by reading novellas.[12] It is thus hardly coincidental that texts like Eliot's "Brother Jacob" and Keller's "Die drei gerechten Kammacher" open upon witty gems of wisdom that are deeply problematized, if not wholly undermined, by the tales that ostensibly illustrate them. (Chapters I and III will discuss this in more detail). The larger issue here – one that will be

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process of serialization underscores, indeed redoubles, the narrative trajectory of a novel, the brevity of the novella not only allows it to be bought and (re-) sold with comparative ease, but emphasizes its somewhat paradoxical relationship to narrative time, an issue to which I will return briefly below and more comprehensively in the chapters that follow. Needless to say, the introduction of a framing device, like Keller's own famous "Einleitung" to *Die Leute von Seldwyla,* does not contradict the free-floating character of the novella, but is rather one of the many possible responses to it.

[10] On the frame see Hugo Aust, *Novelle* (Stuttgart: J.B. Metzler, 1995, pp. 15ff); and Benno von Wiese, *Novelle* (Stuttgart: J.B. Metzler, 1963, pp.36f.).

[11] Aust, op.cit., p.17.

[12] This is not to say that the moralistic vein is not represented in nineteenth-century works, such as Heyse's own *Moralische Novellen*, but that – as Heyse's title already suggests – in the context of what is after all a romantic genre, the didactic gesture must be demonstratively, if not defensively, announced.

encountered repeatedly in the course of this study -- involves a certain oscillation of the novella between the superficially trivial and popular (traits, moreover, that are frequently identified with the feminine) and the promise of profound meaning. Given that morals that have apparently become more difficult to digest, it is perhaps no coincidence that the digestive or culinary metaphor consistently appears alongside the obligatory comparisons to jewels and other valuables. Thus for example, an offhand remark by Eliot's publisher likening novellas to "sweets" (with the implication that the novella in question, "The Lifted Veil" – a piece studded with gems -- has left a bad taste in his mouth) is sometimes credited with inspiring her "confectionary" novella, "Brother Jacob." [13] Similarly, Heyse's letter to Keller requesting the right to republish "Romeo und Julia auf dem Dorfe" in the *Deutscher Novellenschatz* not only appears inadvertently to have led to the completion of the second volume of *Die Leute von Seldwyla*[14]*;* it also makes the anthology itself sound more like a box of chocolates than a treasure trove:

> Now on the one hand we do not wish simply to deliver *robba letteraria*, but rather pieces that are still palatable and tasty today; and yet, on the other, some work is included that can only be consumed with caution. Therefore, the whole enterprise would not penetrate into broader circles…if we did not also give a sample in every volume of the newest and tastiest pieces, as it were, as a reward and encouragement *pour la bonne bouche.* [15]

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[13]See Ruby Redinger, *George Eliot: The Emergent Self.* London: The Bodley Head, 1976, p.435.

[14] "Mir hat die Angelegenheit in Sachen 'Romeo und Julie' die Teufelei angerichtet, daß der Verleger bei diesem Anlaß auf Vollendung des zweiten Bandes der ‚Leute von Seldwyla' dringt, von dem er seit Jahren einen Teil in den Händen hat und dasteht wie einer, der einen Krug ohne Boden unter die Brunnenröhre hält. Ich gedenke ihn jetzt doch bis zum Herbst zu erlösen." *Keller im Briefwechsel mit Paul Heyse*, op.cit., p.61. Keller did work industriously at his task that summer, and the second volume of *Die Leute von Seldwyla* was published at the end of 1873.

[15] "Nun aber, da wir zwar keine bloße robba letteraria liefern wollen, sondern noch heute Genießbares und Schmackhaftes, dabei aber doch Manches mit unterläuft, das nur mit Vorbehalt munden kann, würde das

It is only when Heyse comes to discuss Keller's own piece that he abandons the comparison to things that have their value in the eating, and substitutes items of both inestimable and eternal worth: "...so we come to you, dear Keller, with the entreaty…to obtain the permission of your gentleman publisher to include your "Romeo-and-Juliet"-gem in our house's treasury…" (ibid.).[16] The equivalence between the novella and a precious and rare jewel is conventionally founded on in the evocation of *im*materiality: gems are a traditional symbol of transcendence.[17] This convention makes it perhaps less surprising that Heyse's letter next moves to a dismissal of the importance of the novella as a material object --and, by extension, an object of concrete (economic) value: "Up to now, all of the publishers…have willingly given their assent, as the material object with which we are concerned hardly comes into consideration… "[18] At the risk of reading too much into Heyse's formulations -- since the original publishers of the novellas included in the *Novellenschatz* were given full credit in its pages, there is at least some validity to his claim that the "object itself" was not at issue -- it is notable that Heyse downplays the role of the text as an object, or potential object, of economic exchange in the precise moment that he "raises" its value to that of a priceless gem to be displayed, and buried, in the pages of his *Novellenschatz.*

Unternehmen nicht in so weite Kreise dringen (...) wenn wir von dem Neuesten und Schmackhaftesten nicht auch in jedem Bande eine Probe geben, gleichsam zur Belohnung und Aufmunterung *pour la bonne bouche* "(58). It is worth noting that Heyse seems to have succeeded in this; almost every volume of the *Novellenschatz* contains at least one piece that has since, by common consensus, been deemed a "classic" of the genre.

[16] "…so kommen wir zu Ihnen, liebster Keller, mit der inständigen Bitte, uns...die Erlaubnis Ihres Herrn Verlegers zu erwirken zur Aufnahme Ihres "Romeo-und-Julie"-Kleinods in unseren Hausschatz…"

[17] Cf. Keller's letter to Theodor Storm, 16.August 1881: "Ich halte dafür, dass es für Roman und Novelle so wenig aprioristische Theorien und Regeln gibt als für die anderen Gattungen...Das Werden der Novelle, oder was man so nennt, ist ja noch immer im Fluss; inzwischen wird sich auch die Kritik auf Schätzung des Geistes beschränken müssen, der dabei sichtbar wird" (in: Gottfried Keller, *Gesammelte Briefe.* Hrsg. von Carl Helbling. 4 vols. Bern: Benteli, 1950-1954, vol.3,1, p.464).

[18] "Bisher haben sämtliche Verleger...bereitwillig ihre Zustimmung gegeben, da das materielle Objekt, um das sich's handelt, kaum in Betracht kommt ..."

As the narrator of *The Mill on the Floss* exclaims, a propos of his own equivalence between Tom Tulliver's school curriculum and a dietary regimen: "It is astonishing what a different result one gets by changing the metaphor!"[19] The central issue raised here – one that Eliot and Keller would have been very cognizant of -- is that of the kind of subject, or reader, that the novella-object presumes. To the extent that a work of short fiction is raised to the status of a treasure beyond price, it suggests a beholder in thrall to its power, but one whose very receptivity is testament to her own transcendent or "higher" nature. Where, by contrast, the novella appears as little more than a tasty snack, the reader figures as a voracious consumer, mired in and seduced by the most vulgar kind of materialism. (It is perhaps already worth noting that both of these subject positions easily lend themselves to a certain feminization. To this we will also have occasion to return).

That the truth of the "object" is to be found in the subject famously constitutes the key insight of Ludwig Feuerbach, the post-Hegelian philosopher who represents a central point of convergence between Eliot, who was his English translator, and Keller, who was his student. The translation of *Das Wesen des Christenthums* (Feuerbach's *magnum opus*) was the only book that Mary Ann Evans ever published under her own name; as re-issued under her pseudonym in 1957, it remains the standard translation today. Keller attended Feuerbach's lecture series in Heidelberg in 1848-1849, later published as *Vorlesungen über das Wesen der Religion* and based upon his essay *Das Wesen der Religion*, which appeared in print in 1846. As the titles already suggest, Feuerbach in these works seeks to apply the conclusions reached about the Christian faith in *The Essence of Christianity* to other systems of belief, above all so-called "primitive"

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[19] Eliot, *The Mill on the Floss.* A.S. Byatt, ed. London: Penguin, 1979, p.208.

religions. But Feuerbach, who is often (rightly) characterized as having offered a critique of fetishism, had much to say on the subject of treasure or beloved objects. I would like to turn now to the place of his work in this study of Eliot and Keller.

Feuerbach's exemplary case is developed in *The Essence of Christianity,* in which the divine object is revealed to be the human subject in essence, but in a form that is both fantastical and inverted. These are not precisely the same thing: if the inversion in question, as Feuerbach famously puts it, involves a confusion of subject and predicate,[20] the fantastical element concerns a projected move beyond the given or natural limitations (*Schranken*) of the individual human being -- limitations which, according to Feuerbach, can only be lifted by way of identification with the human as species.[21] These two aspects of religious feeling (which Feuerbach himself is admittedly not much concerned to distinguish) are ultimately linked by the phenomenon of wishes, which both motivate the drive to overcome given restraints and project their own fulfillment in an object or fetish. For the Feuerbach of *The Essence of Christianity*, then, the study of religion constitutes "the solemn unveiling of a man's hidden treasures, the revelation of his intimate thoughts, the open confession of his love-secrets" (13). In focusing on the human proclivity for raising objects to the level of the divine – for treasuring beyond all reason -- Feuerbach simultaneously recognizes the power of imagination and bemoans its application to religious objects. The first problem with such fantastical projection, for Feuerbach, is the resulting misperception of the object itself. As he puts it in the fifth of the thirty lectures Keller

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[20] See *The Essence of Christianity* (op.cit.), p.60: "For, according to the principles which we have already developed, that which in religion is the predicate we must make the subject, and that which in religion is a subject we must make a predicate, thus inverting the oracles of religion; and by this means we arrive at the truth."
[21] Cf. Daniel Brudney, *Marx's Attempt to Leave Philosophy.* Cambridge, Mass. and London: Harvard University Press, 1998, pp.32ff.

heard: "as long as an object or essence remains an object of religious devotion, it decks itself out with feathers not its own, namely the peacock feathers of the human imagination."[22] Even more important to Feuerbach is however the consequence of the object's "false" appearance on the (human) subject, who in light of religion misperceives *herself* as an object (e.g. of divine agency). It is this alienation of the human subject in and through the idealization of the object that constitutes the primary target of Feuerbach's critique. From his insight into the nature of religion, Feuerbach accordingly proceeds towards an impassioned plea for the re-channeling of imaginative energy. What has heretofore been invested in objects of worship is to be transferred to the account, as it were, of "proper" objects, or objects that are proper to the essence of the human species.

Summarizing his aim in the twentieth lecture on the essence of religion, Feuerbach characteristically insists that he is not out to destroy or diminish religious feeling, but merely its "object" (*Gegenstand*): "I want only that human beings stop setting their hearts on things that no longer correspond to their essence or need, and that they can consequently believe and worship only in contradiction with themselves."[23] But what are these "objects" according to Feuerbach? On a first level, the answer is simple, for the only proper "object" for man is (the essence of) man: "…there is no other essence which man can think, dream of, imagine, feel, believe in, wish for, love and adore as the absolute, than the essence of human nature itself" (270). Thus Feuerbach comes to his famous conclusion:

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[22] Feuerbach, "Vorlesungen über das Wesen der Religion." In: Feuerbach, *Gesammelte Schriften.* Werner Schuffenhauer, ed. 11 vols. Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1982, Volume 6, p.47: "...solange ein Ding oder Wesen ein Gegenstand religiöser Verehrung ist, solange schmückt es sich mit fremden Federn, nämlich mit den Pfauenfedern der menschlichen Phantasie." All further references will be given in the text.

[23] "…ich will nur, daß der Mensch nicht sein Herz an Dinge hänge, die nicht mehr seinem Wesen und Bedürfnis entsprechen, die er folglich nur im Widerspruch mit sich glauben und verehren kann," 204.

> *Homo homini Deus est*: -- this is the great practical principle: -- this is the axis on which revolves the history of the world. The relations of child and parent, of husband and wife, of brother and friend – in general, of man to man – in short, all the moral relations are *per se* religious…(271).[24]

The elevation of human-to-human relations to sacred ties is, as Feuerbach concedes, not new; what is novel, indeed in his view revolutionary, is the demand that they be regarded as hallowed in their own right, rather than by way of a third term (such as "Christ"). [25] In placing his conclusion at the end of extended musings on the power of love, moreover, Feuerbach attempts to suggest that human relationships are embodiments and enactments of both genuine and (because) natural affection. At the same time, "moral relations" also figure here -- as they will in the fiction of both Eliot and Keller -- as the embodiments of, precisely, moral restraint and even necessity, like the laws of gravity that their role as "axis" metaphorically suggests.

This is far from an isolated case in the work of Feuerbach, for whom objects of human desire appear always to contain their own limit: the Christian God, for example, is not only the being who can break natural law at will, but also the pinnacle of moral discipline.[26] This view of the object is, of course, the result of Feuerbach's conception of the essence of the human subject.

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[24] "*Homo homini deus est* [der Mensch ist dem Menschen Gott] – dies ist der oberste praktische Grundsatz, dies der Wendepunkt der Weltgeschichte. Die Verhältnisse des Kindes zu den Eltern, des Gatten zum Gatten, des Bruders zum Bruder, des Freundes zum Freunde, überhaupt des Menschen zum Menschen, kurz, die *moralischen* Verhältnisse, sind per se *wahrhaft religiöse Verhältnisse,*" in: Feuerbach, *Das Wesen des Christenthums,* in: Feuerbach, *Gesammelte Schriften.* Werner Schuffenhauer, ed. 11 vols. Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1982, Volume 5, pp.414-15, emphasis Feuerbach's. All further references will be given in the text.

[25] "…if I interpose between my fellow-man and myself the idea of an individuality, in whom the idea of the species is supposed to be already realised, I annihilate the very soul of love, I disturb the unity by the idea of a third external to us; for in that case my fellow-man is an object of love to me only on account of his resemblance or relation to this model, not for his own sake" (268).

[26] See the chapters "God as a Moral Being or Law" (III) and "The Mystery of Faith – the Mystery of Miracle" (XVIII).

As the final lecture on *The Essence of Religion* will have it: "The human being does not want everything; he only wants to know what it is that he has a particular preference and affinity for."[27] In order to account for the sway that religion holds over the human imagination, then, Feuerbach must first posit a desire that is per definition immoderate – the drive to overcome given limitations (*Schranken*) -- and then claim that that self-same desire *also* desires its own constriction (*Einschränkung*). It is, I suggest, against this background that Feuerbach's oft-noted affinity for water must be placed.[28] Among the many places that Feuerbach revels in this element in *The Essence of Christianity*, the "Concluding Application" finds it serving as one example of how objects can, and should, be treasured for their proximity to the essence of humanity, rather than on account of their (allegedly) divine source:

> The heathens do not worship the light or the fountain because it is a gift of God, but because it has of itself a beneficial influence on man, because it refreshes the sufferer; on account of this excellent quality they pay it divine honors (274).[29]

This passage looks forward to the lectures on *The Essence of Religion* in suggesting that ancient religions are more (concretely or materially) appreciative of the link between sacred objects and

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[27] "Der Mensch will nicht alles, er will nur wissen, wozu er eine besondere Vorliebe und Neigung hat," pp311f.
[28] Feuerbach discusses water particularly, as might be expected, in his comments on baptism in the chapter "Contradiction of the Sacraments"; he returns to the topic, as we shall see, in the "Concluding Application." The focus is apparent enough for a recent commentator to suggest "hydrotherapy" as a model for the Feuerbachian project; see Brudney, op.cit., pp.55-56.
[29] Die Heiden verehren nicht das Licht, nicht die Quelle, weil sie eine Gabe Gottes ist, sondern weil sie sich durch sich selbst dem Menschen als etwas Wohltätiges erweist, weil sie den Leidenden erquickt; ob dieser trefflichen Qualität erweisen sie ihr göttliche Ehre (448).

the human species than the lofty abstractions of Christianity.[30] Here, water, like light, represents pure, instinctual need (*Bedürfnis*) – there is after all no more pressing or "natural" demand than thirst – that is hallowed by virtue of its centrality to human experience. Strikingly, however, Feuerbach is not content to dwell on the fortuitous correspondence between human demand and natural supply; he just as insistently underscores the sense in which water "extinguishes the fire of appetite," thus contributing to the development of "moral and mental discipline" (275). At the same time that water provides a refreshing and sensually satisfying experience, then, its purifying qualities render immersion in it, for Feuerbach, "the first, though the lowest, of virtues" (ibid.).

For Feuerbach, we might say, things that are properly sacred to humans simultaneously feed the fire (*Feuer*) of appetite and comprise the current or stream (*Bach*) that extinguishes it.[31] It should thus come as no surprise that even as Feuerbach "supplements" (ibid.) his encomium of water with the praise of bread and wine, the famous concluding words of the "Concluding Application" again return him to his "proper" element:

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[30] More precisely, Feuerbach's critique of Christianity has to do with its *apparent* investment in "materialism" (such as the physical body of Christ) and its *essentially* abstract nature. Thus baptism in the Christian tradition simultaneously avails itself of the "natural" qualities of water and cancels them out: In the sacrament according to Feuerbach, "water has a significance in itelf, as water; it is on account of its natural quality that it is consecrated and selected as the vehicle of the Holy Spirit. So far there lies at the foundation of Baptism a beautiful, profound natural significance. But, at the very same time, this beautiful meaning *is lost again* because water has a transcendental effect – an effect which it has only through the supernatural power of the Holy Spirit and not through itself. The natural quality becomes indifferent…"(p237, my emphasis). Just as the beauty of the natural quality of water is "lost" when it is ascribed with supernatural powers, the beauty of humanity is "lost," according to Feuerbach, when it ascribes supernatural powers to objects.

[31] On the dialectic between a notion of boundless desire and the necessity for its restraint in Victorian anthropology and literature (including the novels of George Eliot), see Christopher Herbert, *Culture and Anomie. Ethnographic Imagination in the Nineteenth Century.* Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1991.

It needs only that the ordinary course of things be interrupted in order to vindicate to common things an uncommon significance, *to life, as such, a religious import.* Therefore let bread be sacred for us, let wine be sacred, and also let water be sacred! –Amen (278).[32]

Where (immersion in) water immediately encompasses both desire and its negation, bread and wine can only appear to be sacred when their enjoyment is interrupted. For Feuerbach, profit is best to be gleaned (*abzugewinnen*) from things that "go with the flow," as it were, of humanity's loving investment in itself, which renders religious objects quite literally superfluous.

Feuerbach's vision is of a mighty current of love bearing the human species along in its wake. There is much to be said about the extent to which Eliot and Keller were swept along by Feuerbach's enthusiasm, and literary critics have said at least some of it. In addition to (re)calling attention to documents like Keller's famous "Feuerbach-Brief" or Eliot's correspondence regarding her translation efforts, scholars have produced compelling readings of such texts as Eliot's *Silas Marner* (her shortest novel) and Keller's *Der grüne Heinrich* (which is anything but short), that have convincingly argued for the influence on the fiction of the philosopher's views on human nature and/or the nature of human desire.[33] For the purposes of

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[32] "So braucht man nur den gewöhnlichen gemeinen Lauf der Dinge zu unterbrechen, um dem Gemeinen *ungemeine* Bedeutung, dem *Leben als solchem* überhaupt *religiöse Bedeutung* abzugewinnen. *Heilig* sei uns darum das Brot, *heilig* der Wein, aber auch *heilig* das Wasser! --Amen," 454.

[33] See Ernst Otto, "Die Philosophie Feuerbachs in Gottfried Kellers Roman *Der grüne Heinrich,*" *Weimarer Beiträge 6,* 1960. On the significance of Feuerbach for Keller's work, see also Bernd Neumann, "'Ganzer Mensch' und 'innerweltliche Askese.' Zum Verhältnis von Citoyen-Utopie und bourgeoiser Wirklichkeit in Gottfried Kellers Seldwyla-Novellen" (*Monatshefte* 71, 1979, 145-160). More recently, Mark Lehrer has attempted to find in Keller's novella "Kleider machen Leute" the outlines of what he calls an "anthropological realism" at least partly inspired by Feuerbach (see Lehrer, "Keller's Anthropological Realism: The Scientific Underpinnings of the Early Prose," *The German Quarterly,* Fall 1987, pp.567-581). Also see Gail Hart, *Readers and their Fictions in the Novels and Novellas of Gottfried Keller* (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 1989). The most well-known work of Eliot criticism to focus on Feuerbach's influence is David Carroll's essay on *Silas Marner* ("*Silas Marner*: Reversing the Oracles of Religion." In: *Literary Monographs*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1967, I, pp.165-200). See also A.S. Byatt's comments in her introduction to *The Mill on the Floss*, op.cit., pp.xxix –

this study, it is Feuerbach's investment in what I have called "treasuring" -- the way in which desire expresses and/or alienates itself in objects – that is of greatest interest. I will now attempt to explain why I have found it necessary, in approaching the novellas of Keller and Eliot, to supplement Feuerbach's reflections with the psychoanalytic theory that his work at some points appears to anticipate and, at others, flatly contradicts or even forecloses.

In keeping with the materialist nature of his project, Feuerbach, as we have seen, keeps human desire closely bound up with "need" (*Bedürfnis*), whether biological, psychological, or some amalgamation of the two. That which is cherished, treasured, and even worshipped by the human subject, according to Feuerbach, is either that which is in itself a source of satisfaction (e.g. the [nursing] mother); or, by extension as it were, the perceived provider of such goods (e.g. the father – and/or the gods). Feuerbach's account of how and why human beings are almost gravitationally attracted to certain objects that are perceived to satisfy their need(s) seems at times very close to Freud's concept of anaclisis (*Anlehnung*). Already Freud's early work, such as the *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality,* understands desire to be something that leans upon or is propped up by biological need (e.g. hunger).[34] At the same time, desire in psychoanalysis is never reducible to need: for Freud, sexuality is precisely that drive which has no "proper" object whatsoever by the same token that it tends to appropriate any and every object. With "On Narcissism," Freud introduces what amounts to an alternative model for desire

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xxx. For a more recent reading of *Scenes of Clerical Life* in a Feuerbachian, but even more pertinently Malthusian vein, see Catherine Gallagher, "Malthusian Anthropology and the Aesthetics of Sacrifice," in: Gallagher, op.cit., pp. 156-184.

[34] The key text here is *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* (*Drei Abhandlungen zur Sexualtheorie*), in: Freud, *Studienausgabe.* Mitscherlich et. al., eds. 10 vols. Frankfurt a.M.: Fischer, 1972, Band V. For a reading of this text central to my own understanding, see Jean Laplanche, "The Order of Life and the Genesis of Sexuality," in: Laplanche, *Life and Death in Psychoanalysis.* Translated with an Introduction by Jeffrey Mehlman. Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976, pp.8-24.

that abstracts it even further from biological need; indeed, the concept of "narcissistic object choice" is worked out in contradistinction to "object choice of the anaclitic type."[35] Yet here too Freud would seem to find a precursor in Feuerbach. Already the suggestion of "mirroring" in the philosopher's work – objects, such as God, are for him always projections, and thus reflections, of a specifically human truth -- appear to align themselves with Freud's concept of narcissism. It is thus perhaps no coincidence that a declaration from the lectures on the "Essence of Religion" – "The human being makes into a god that which he is not in reality, but desires to be" ("Was der Mensch nicht wirklich ist, aber zu sein wünscht, das macht er zu seinem Gotte…262) – is highly evocative of Freud's more technical definition of the narcissistic object (the object loved or "chosen" according to the narcissistic type) in "On Narcissism": "That object is loved which possesses the asset that the ego is missing for its ideal" (Was den dem Ich zum Ideal fehlenden Vorzug besitzt, wird geliebt").[36] Nevertheless, Feuerbach -- in this also not unlike Freud himself -- stops short of positing narcissism as the model for human desire. Indeed, such a move would place any "materialist" in an odd position.[37] For narcissism is that circuit which "needs" the object only as a kind of surface (like a still pond) in which to view its "own" desire. Yet precisely because that desire can *only* appear in the place or at the site of the Other -- and never, for example, in the form of an internal drive or urge -- there is a real sense in which it is not the subject's "own" at all. The narcissistic subject is in other words at least as alienated from her

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[35] Cf. "Zur Einführung des Narzißmus," Part II, p.54: "Die Sexualtriebe lehnen sich zunächst an die Befriedigung der Ichtriebe an, machen sich erst spatter von den letzteren selbstständig; die Anlehnung zeigt sich aber noch darin, dass die Personen, welche mit der Ernährung, Pflege, dem Schutz des Kindes zu tun haben, zu den ersten Sexualobjekten werden, also zunächst die Mutter oder ihr Ersatz."

[36] Ibid., p.67.

[37] In *The Parallax View* (Boston: MIT Press, 2006), Slavoj Zizek comes close to elevating the narcissistic (and explicitly feminine) position to the status of not only one, but the sole genuinely ethical position for a materialist; see pp. 81ff. and "Kate's Choice, or The Materialism of Henry James" (pp.125-144).

desire as the Feuerbachian fetishist, who, as we have seen, wants merely to transfer her affection to a more appropriate object (such as another subject) in order to resolve the "contradictions" of the fetish.

The conflict for which the names Freud and Feuerbach here stand concerns an assessment of the prospects for bringing the eternal circulation or bad infinity of narcissistic projection to a halt: while Feuerbach's claim is that the "egoism" of religion can ultimately be overcome through transference of its power to the relationships among human beings, Freud's thought on narcissism opens the way for understanding those relationships themselves as fundamentally mimetic and, therefore, fundamentally alienating.[38] This study is founded on the premise that it is only by going "beyond" Feuerbach and taking (this version of) Freudian narcissism into account that the specifically *literary* implications of treasure in Keller and Eliot can be grasped. This is not only a matter of genre (philosophical treatise vs. narrative fiction); indeed, it has almost become a truism that literary texts generally -- and Eliot's and Keller's in particular -- are often philosophical to at least the same extent that theoretical essays like Feuerbach's avail themselves of literary techniques and rhetoric. Of more immediate concern in this context is the role played by literature within a (very broadly speaking) "Feuerbachian" conception of desire (or treasuring). In brief, the assumption underlying readings of Eliot and Keller in a Feuerbachian vein -- such as my own observation above concerning the striking similarity between Feuerbach's account of human relations and the role they play in the novels of Keller and Eliot -- is that realist literature refers to or re-presents a given reality (e.g. human relations) in much the same way that Feuerbach's philosophy-cum-anthropology aspires to do.

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[38] The classic reading of Freud's (disavowed) "discovery" of mimesis is Mikkel Borch-Jacobsen's *The Freudian Subject* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1982).

Consequently, the logic goes, both literary and philosophical texts can productively be read, perhaps even together, as analyzing, diagnosing, or simply depicting a common "object" (e.g. the laws of human desire as they play themselves out at a given historical moment).[39] Clearly, the problem here is not one of intention: both Keller and Eliot, on the one hand, and Feuerbach, on the other, would and did maintain that their work attempts to provide just such a picture of "given" reality. Nor do I wish to suggest that the mimetic claims of realism can simply be dismissed out of hand.[40] Beyond the perhaps somewhat tired confrontation between empiricists (and/as representatives of cultural studies) and theorists (and/or deconstructionists), this study asks not only about the specifically literary tools and techniques employed in the mimetic or realistic enterprise, but about the specifically literary anxieties that leave legible traces on the fictional text: anxieties that, this study argues, stand in direct relation to the positing of literature as a treasure.[41] In the broadest sense, the value of literature for Keller and Eliot is to be measured by its perceived ability to enable the recognition of what Feuerbach called "the treasure hid in man." But that does not at all mean that the unease I trace here has its roots in a fear that literature – not to mention mankind -- is worthless. Instead, I find their texts to be troubled by the unsettling suspicion that the (mimetic) means by which readers and writers

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[39] For an excellent reading of Eliot in terms of desire and history (following on the theories of René Girard), see the chapter on *Adam Bede* in Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosexual Desire* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985). For an application of Girard's theories to Keller's fiction, see Gail Hart, *Readers and their Fictions in the Novels and Novellas of Gottfried Keller* (op.cit.).

[40] Within Eliot studies, the danger of such dismissal is perhaps represented by the nevertheless highly suggestive readings of J. Hillis Miller (see in particular "Optic and Semiotic in *Middlemarch,*" in: *The Worlds of Victorian Fiction,* ed. Jerome H. Buckley. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1975, pp.125-145). Neil Hertz has most persuasively shown why a "literal" reading of Eliot is necessary. See, by all means, *George Eliot's Pulse* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2003).

[41] To be clear: the claim here is not so much that the practice of (realist) fiction is necessarily fraught with more anxiety than, say, the production and publication of a philosophical treatise, but that the obstacles it both confronts and records possess a different, and specifically literary, quality.

generate meaning are never able to foreclose the dual possibilities of alienation and falsehood that Feuerbach believed could be eliminated from human intercourse.

In this context or against this background, the function of literature as a cultural record or repository intervenes as a further instance in which its role as treasure triggers authorial anxiety. The conventional function of literature as a kind of treasury is something to which Feuerbach makes passing reference in *The Essence of Christianity.* Attempting once again to convey a sense of what "God" has meant to humanity, he remarks: "God is for man the commonplace book (*Stammbuch*) where he registers his highest feelings and thoughts, the genealogical tree on which are entered the names that are dearest and most sacred to him" (pp.63f). As we have seen, the suggestion of Feuerbach's larger project is, in a sense, that the world of human relations become this "book" (or tree): that human beings abandon dusty old tomes, not to mention tree-worship, for the pulsating circulation of living love. Feuerbach himself does not appear to see the irony of producing a book that preaches the abandonment of books, the fetishization of which he moreover goes on to identify as specifically feminine.[42] Yet this does not, of course, make it any less ironic, or the point – should he have cared to make it – any less philosophically relevant (as many thinkers, before and after Nietzsche, have sufficiently demonstrated). It is doubtless also the case that countless writers of fiction have been at least as uninterested in this line of questioning as Feuerbach. In the works of Keller and Eliot, however – thus one claim of this study -- both the motifs of books or literature, on the one hand, and

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[42] "It is a sign of an undiscriminating good-nature (*einer haushälterischen Gemütlichkeit*), a womanish instinct (*ein weiblicher Trieb*), to gather together and then to preserve tenaciously (*sammeln*) all that we have gathered, not to trust anything to the waves of forgetfulness, to the chance of memory, in short not to trust ourselves and to learn to know what really has value for us (*nicht sich selbst zu überlassen und anzuvertrauen, was man Wertes hat kennenlernen*)" (64).

treasure, on the other --and all the more so when they appear together -- are almost always signs of a discomfiting uncertainty regarding the extent to which the validity of literature's claim to constitute a treasure beyond all price can be vouched for.

I have already mentioned some of the reasons why an awareness of the fact that literature *does* have a price – that it is, among other things, a commodity -- might be heightened in the case of the novella, a genre that lends itself to multiple (re)publications and even incarnations. This study accordingly pays particular attention to the publishing history of Keller and Eliot's texts. At stake in this focus is not merely the unearthing of forgotten literary arcana (and this is not, in the first instance, a historical study) but rather a consideration of the way that issues of textual identity and integrity --themselves not unrelated to the vicissitudes of narcissism -- come to be reflected in the themes and operations of the novellas. Of particular interest, as noted above, will be the insistent return to femininity as both a perceived "solution" to the problem of value and -- perhaps consequently -- the source of all the trouble in the first place.[43] This can be seen, most

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[43] For feminist readings of Keller, see Cegienas DeGroot, "Das Bild der Frau in Gottfried Kellers Prosa" (*Amsterdamer Beiträge zur neueren Germanistik* 10, 1980, 185-204); Antje Harnisch, *Keller, Raabe, Fontane. Geschlecht, Sexualität und Familie im bürgerlichen Realismus* (Frankfurt a.M.: Peter Lang, 1994); and Catriona MacLeod, *Embodying Ambiguity. Androgyny and Aesthetics from Winckelmann to Keller* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1998). Feminist literature on Eliot is both more extensive and more in-depth than investigations into Keller, which are largely concerned with his portrayals of female characters. Following the groundbreaking readings of Eliot by Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar (in: *The Madwoman in the Attic. The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination,* New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1979), feminist interest in Eliot reached its peak in the mid-1980s. Of particular relevance for this study are an early essay by Bonnie Zimmerman, "Radiant as a Diamond: George Eliot, Jewelry, and the Female Role" (in: *Criticism,* XIX, Summer 1977, pp.212-222) as well as a recent article by Kate E. Brown, "Loss, Revelry, and the Temporal Measures of *Silas Marner*: Performance, Regret, Recollection" (*Novel*, Spring 1999, pp.222-247). Other feminist readings to which I am indebted include Patricia Meyer Spacks, *The Female Imagination* (New York: Avon Books, 1972); Diane Sadoff, *Monsters of Affection: Dickens, Eliot and Bronte on Fatherhood* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982); Mary Jacobus, *Reading Woman. Essays in Feminist Criticism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986); and Jacqueline Rose, "George Eliot and the Spectacle of the Woman" (in: Rose, *Sexuality in the Field of Vision.* London:Virago, 1986, pp. 105-122). See also Dorothea Barrett, *Vocation and Desire: George Eliot´s Heroines* (London and New York: Routledge, 1989) and Margaret Homans, *Bearing the Word. Language and Female Experience in Nineteenth-Century Women's Writing* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1989). For general introductions to Eliot informed by feminist lines of questioning, see Ruby V.

obviously or superficially, on the level of character. Thus for example: if in "Romeo und Julia auf dem Dorfe" and "Brother Jacob" women are looked to as (role) models for the "proper" commerce with objects, female figures like Züs Bünzlin in "Die drei gerechten Kammacher" and Bertha of "The Lifted Veil" are placed in strange and suggestive relation to fetishistic possessions (a wildly elaborate treasure, in the case of Züs, and the more conventional set of jewels, in the case of Bertha): a relation for which they are heavily, and somewhat heavy-handedly, censured. The recurring suggestion in both Keller and Eliot is that of a fundamental female conservatism, a tendency to cling to things or forms that have outlived their usefulness and are (misguidedly) valued only for their own sake. Yet this conservatism is not unrelated to the genre of the novella itself. Not only is the novella an epic form that invites collection or even hoarding; it is also form of narrative that, paradoxically, tends to focus on moments when time is -- or seems to be -- suspended. Such moments can certainly also be found in novels, including those written by Keller and Eliot; but the novella highlights them for two reasons. In the first instance, its relatively short length prevents moments when all action ceases (such as the page-long description of Züs Bünzlin's treasure in "Die drei gerechten Kammacher") from being balanced out by a large epic sweep. In a related sense, its self-enclosure – the very feature that invites its collection or envelopment in larger volumes of prose – ensures that the "wider" context in which it is placed remains primarily spatial rather than temporal. Far from the eruption of the new or unexpected with which Goethe credited the novella (in his famous citation of the "unerhörte Begebenheit" at its heart), much less the cumulative progression with which

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Redinger's biography (op.cit.); Rosemarie Bodenheimer, *The Real Life of Mary Ann Evans. George Eliot, Her Letters and Fiction* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1984); Gillian Beer, *George Eliot.* (Brighton: Harvester Press, 1986); and Jennifer Uglow, *George Eliot* (London: Virago, 1987).

both Keller's and Eliot's personal political investments are regularly associated, the most typical temporal gesture of the novella, at least in the hands of these writers, is a (usually fruitless) repetition that is consistently identified with the feminine.

As if to underscore the link between treasure and literature, the fetishistic female narcissists that Eliot and Keller take to task are remarkable for a further trait that they do not share with their more proper (though not always less fetishistic) sisters: they are avid, if misguided, readers of fiction. While it is tempting, and certainly not far-fetched, to take this as a kind of swipe at the novella's intended audience, it is also, I suggest, a reflection of authorial anxiety – not least because writers of fiction are always also, necessarily, readers of it.[44] This study accordingly pays particular attention to what has become known as "intertextuality": the ways in which a text establishes its own singularity by means of engagement with or dissociation from other works (including the author's own). I will further argue that the thematization of reading as a female or feminine foible is linked to a deeper discomfort regarding the enterprise of fiction-writing. Both as a potential fetish and by its resistance to any permanent fixation whatsoever, writing threatens to "feminize" the subject who attempts to master it. In light of this (more or less conscious) recognition, Keller and Eliot insistently (re)turn to constellations in which the narcissism that was to be countered, controlled or limited by engagement with the privileged object of literature reappears in ever more intractable guises.

As I hope these remarks have begun to suggest, the ultimate value of the treasure that is there to be "found," or read, in and as the novellas of Keller and Eliot is not a stable entity, but

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[44] The obligatory reference in this context is to Eliot's essay, "Silly Novels by Lady Novelists" (in: Eliot, *Essays of George Eliot.* Thomas Pinney, ed. New York: Columbia University Press, 1963, pp.300-324), with its conclusion that many women – or rather "lady" -- writers lack the "moral quality" that culminates in "an appreciation of the sacredness of the writer's art" (323).

something that is always at stake and in play. It is perhaps this sense of risk that most emphatically distinguishes the fiction of Keller and Eliot from the philosophy of Feuerbach, for whom the essence of the human is always a given and, therefore – no matter how superficially "alienated" – never really alienable. As these readings set out to demonstrate, the novellas of Eliot and Keller are both genuinely invested in locating or pinpointing the value to be ascribed to the human and deeply skeptical about the feasibility of that project's realization in and through literature.

Organization and Method

> It is rightfully said that "where your treasure is, there is also your heart"; our treasure is where the beehives of our knowledge are. We are constantly making for them, being by nature winged creatures and honey-gatherers of the spirit; there is one thing alone we really care about from the heart – "bringing something home."
>
> -Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morals* (Preface)[45]

This dissertation begins with readings of Keller ("Die drei gerechten Kammacher" and "Romeo und Julia auf dem Dorfe") and proceeds to readings of Eliot ("Brother Jacob" and "The Lifted Veil"). This is not coincidental, but neither should it be read in terms of a simple progression. The first consideration in conceiving this study was that texts be included that were similar enough to allow for a fruitful discussion, but not so similar that vital differences, both between and within *oeuvres*, be obscured or played down. The point, in other words, is not only to compare authors with each other, but to read each author with (or against) him- or herself. Although such readings can and do operate within the confines of a single piece, the two texts

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[45] ,Mit Recht hat man gesagt: "wo euer Schatz ist, da ist auch euer Herz"; unser Schatz ist, wo die Bienenkörbe unsrer Erkenntniss stehn. Wir sind immer dazu unterwegs, als geborne Flügelthiere und Honigsammler des Geistes, wir kümmern uns von Herzen eigentlich nur um Eins -- Etwas "heimzubringen."' Nietzsche, *Zur Genealogie der Moral* (München: dtv/de Gruyter, 1988), p.247.

included by each writer are also purposefully presented back-to-back. The move from Keller to Eliot, i.e. from Chapter II to Chapter III, accordingly represents a kind of break or leap, which however will be bridged in ways to be described further in the course of these remarks. [46]

All four of the texts to be read here were written in the early phase of Keller and Eliot's respective careers, between the years of 1856 (Keller's *Die Leute von Seldwyla*) and 1860 (Eliot's "Brother Jacob"). During this period, each writer also published a *Bildungsroman*: the first edition of Keller's *Der grüne Heinrich* appeared in 1855, while Eliot's *The Mill on the Floss*, her second novel, was published in 1860. Not only did both writers draw heavily on their own childhood experiences in composing these works (both of which moreover close with the death of the autobiographical protagonist); those experiences themselves were not entirely dissimilar. Both Keller and Eliot came from a provincial but well-educated family and evince a strong bond to an admired father. The equally significant differences that play themselves out in their adult work should be framed, I suggest, not only in terms of national identity and gender, but also of genre. Indeed, Keller's relationship to the novella is in a sense, and not least an economic one, the precise inversion of Eliot's: while his turn to short-story writing follows on and appears to have something of a compensatory function for what it is fair to call the failure of his first novel, Eliot debuted very auspiciously with the stories that make up *Scenes of Clerical Life;* and while Keller would go on to publish dozens of further novellas, Eliot proceeded to

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[46] As for the decision to place the Keller section first, the reason is simple: Eliot's pieces were composed later. It is moreover almost certain that Eliot was familiar with both Keller novellas before writing her own, while the reverse is patently not the case; surprising as it may be given Eliot's renown, it is doubtful whether Keller ever read anything she wrote. Order of composition does not however fully suffice to explain the order of presentation here: "The Lifted Veil" (1859) was actually written earlier than "Brother Jacob" (1860). (The reasons for placing it last will be discussed further below).

write only two more short pieces -- the ones to be read here -- and had all of her major, which is to say phenomenal, successes as a novelist.

It should thus come as no surprise that within the framework of each author's respective *oeuvre*, the places of Keller's "Die drei gerechten Kammacher" and Eliot's "Brother Jacob" are strikingly different. Not only did Keller, as noted above, publish *Die Leute von Seldwyla* as a kind of atonement for the shortcomings of *Der grüne Heinrich*; "Die drei gerechten Kammacher" quickly emerged as Keller's own favorite among the group.[47] By contrast, "Brother Jacob" was a piece that Eliot held in remarkably low esteem, as evidenced both by disparaging remarks made in her correspondence and by the text's publishing history (e.g. its withholding from publication for a number of years); eventually, it was presented to Eliot's sometime publisher, George Smith, as a gift, in partial compensation for the financial losses incurred by Eliot's (economically speaking) least successful novel, the historical epic *Romola*. Perhaps not surprisingly, these authorial estimations have been reproduced in the criticism, which continues to treat "Kammacher" with the reverence due a masterpiece, however minor, while "Brother Jacob" is ignored or, at best, read for its (e.g. cultural and historical) "content." Yet in many ways, "Die drei gerechten Kammacher" and "Brother Jacob" -- in order of presentation, the first texts of each author -- are the most comparable of all the pieces discussed in this study in terms of their motifs and concerns (of and with treasure). Eliot's "Brother Jacob," in particular, appears to be a closer cousin of Keller's combmaking novella than of "The Lifted Veil," to which it bears little, if any, resemblance. As will, I hope, become clear, reading "Brother Jacob" in the context of treasure generally, and Keller's "Kammacher" in particular,

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[47] See Keller's letter to Hermann Hettner of April 16, 1856 (*Gesammelte Briefe*, op.cit., Band 1, p.428).

opens up new ways of understanding its investments not only in investments, or treasures, but equally in their representation.[48]

The second pair of novellas, "Romeo und Julia auf dem Dorfe" and "The Lifted Veil" are not, at first glance, particularly similar to each other. Like the other two novellas, moreover, they hold very different places in each respective author's *oeuvre*. "Romeo und Julia" remains one of Keller's most famous and most cherished texts (as witness, already, Kurz and Heyse's *Novellenschatz*). Nevertheless, one could well -- and scholars do -- argue about how characteristic "Romeo und Julia" really is of Keller; it sometimes seems as if it is beloved for its very *dis*similarity from other, more representative Keller texts, and Keller often expressed his impatience with the public's fondness for it. "The Lifted Veil," which was originally published anonymously, is, if anything, even more removed from its source: Eliot was not even identified as the text's author until many years after its completion, when it was included in the edition of her collected works, alongside "Brother Jacob" and *Silas Marner.* Moreover, despite the renaissance in the secondary literature that it has recently enjoyed, "The Lifted Veil" has always been considered an exceptional piece.[49] "The Lifted Veil," then, remains the most anomalous of the texts included here, whether viewed in light of the comparison between Keller and Eliot or from within Eliot studies alone. At the same time, the reasons for its strangeness are intimately related to the reasons for its inclusion – above all, of course, its relation to the problem of *Schatz.*

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[48] Needless to say, perhaps, the reverse gesture – the de-mystification or even de-thronement of "Kammacher" -- is not intended.

[49] To some extent, this is true of "Brother Jacob" as well. Yet the reasons for its inclusion here are also more obvious: Eliot's slighter text is much more "Kellerian" – for example, more "materialistic" as well as realistic -- than the patently supernatural piece. I will return to this issue below.

It is due to the negative nature of that relation, which constitutes the subject of Chapter Four, that "The Lifted Veil" is presented as the last in this particular series.

Chapter One, "Judging a Book By Its Cover: Humor and Shame in 'Die drei gerechten Kammacher,'" is concerned with the flip sides of the same, irreducibly narcissistic coin. Both humor and shame have in fact received a fair amount of attention in Keller criticism, but rarely as they relate to each other. As I try to show in my reading of "Kammacher," that relation is best understood in terms of a mimetic economy that is both the subject of the novella (the relationship among the three combmakers) and the key to its representational strategies. In the first part of the chapter, I place Keller's "humor" in relation to Eliot's delineation of "wit." Humor, I conclude, is for Keller, as it will be for Freud, a means of confronting and overcoming (rather than concealing) shame, which is what makes the humorlessness *qua* bloodlessness of the combmakers so significant. Their counterpart, discussed in the second part of the chapter, is the master treasurer and classic (Freudian) narcissist, Züs Bünzlin. The novella's account of sexual difference ultimately turns on the temporal distinction between Züs's fixation on the past as the site of a perfectly gratified narcissism and the combmaker's projection of narcissistic fulfillment on to a statically conceived future. That this "difference" merely masks the much more telling "sameness" that governs the mimetic economy is suggested already by the investment in objects, treasures, and gifts – above all books -- as sites of narcissistic projection and, as such, attempts to cover up or compensate for shame. The third section explores Keller's attempt to resolve this deadlock through a conception of literature as a kind of homecoming. Following Freud's own reading of Keller in *The Interpretation of Dreams*, I discuss the significance of "The Embarrassing Dream of Nakedness" to an understanding of the climactic race that closes "Die

drei gerechten Kammacher." Following Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe's reflections on mimesis, I focus in particular on the figure of the child as the figure of the *mimos* who, by foreclosing an idea of childhood as the site of a desire in any way "primary," locates the (writing) subject in the midst of a homelessness even more radical than that embodied by Keller's wandering journeymen.[50]

Chapter Two, on Keller's "Romeo und Julia auf dem Dorfe," develops and deepens the concerns with mimesis that were introduced in the "Kammacher" chapter. As in the combmaking novella, doubling appears a double problem, operating both on the level of character (in this case, the two farmers Manz and Marti, particularly in relation to the "black fiddler") and of form (i.e. the issue of literary imitation broached in the novella's very first lines). But if the combmaking novella foregrounds sexual difference only to end with the figure of the child as a symbol of generational difference, Keller's version of "Romeo und Julia" reverses this sequence, whereby the famous scene of child's play gives way to the haunting image of the *Liebestod.* Following on analyses of child's play by Freud, Benjamin, and Agamben, the first half of this chapter unpacks Keller's investment in first or original "love objects," such as toys – but also landed property. At stake is the attempt to solidify the opposition, delineated above, between objects that are loved because of the benefit or profit they (are perceived to) bring, and those that are loved (only) in and through the desire of the Other. Keller's investment in establishing the "reality" of object-love appears both in his depiction of childhood and the portrayal of the sexually awakened Sali. Yet if it appears once more in the portrait of Vrenchen as a fetishist, Keller's representation of the feminine ultimately yields to a much more unsettling

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[50] See Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe, *Typography. Mimesis, Philosophy, Politics.* Christopher Fynsk, ed. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1989.

notion of (re)doubling as the irreducibly repetitious – and irreducibly feminizing -- "origin" of representation, one that precisely mirrors the mimetic conflict in which Manz and Marti remain inextricably caught.

The turn to Eliot's "Brother Jacob" in Chapter Three brings with it a more defined focus on the problem of the gift as a crucial aspect of the problematics of treasure, one that had already played a role in the Keller chapters. I consider, first, the novella's framing of Eliot's trademark "sympathy" – and particularly when it is elucidated by (the reading of) fiction -- as a sign or symptom of an obtuse egotism. In a second section, I explore the way that (e.g. maternal) generosity appears in the novella as a counterweight to the protagonist's congenital greed in much the same way that Jacob's idiocy is played off the stupidity of his brother. At stake in this tale of retributive justice or Nemesis, I argue, are two very different concepts of desire, or, more precisely, the extent to which desire, as the expression of subjectivity, can escape the implication in a fundamental sameness. What is underscored by the contrast between Jacob's attachment to certain objects (above all food), on the one hand, and David's desire for narcissistically gratifying recognition, on the other, is the investment of a certain idea(l) of justice in "idiocy" as a point beyond (and/or before the onset of) self-reflection, and therefore one uniquely qualified to sit in judgment on narcissistic self-involvement. In the concluding section, I demonstrate the means by which the narrator places this sense of idiocy in proximity to femininity. While thereby opening the way towards an understanding of Nemesis as the vengeance of those excluded from the law and its protections, the male-identified narrator also appears to justify the marginalization of women, children, and idiots by identifying this "outside" realm as a source of infinite value, indeed of gifts and all giving. This ambivalence reappears, I conclude, at the level

of (the character of) the narrator, who figures simultaneously as an authority on the value the novella posits and a *trompeur* whose "fate" or Nemesis, like that of David Faux, is identical to the mimetic law of the "same" that governs the novella's own economy of representation.

Chapter Four, on Eliot's "The Lifted Veil," represents, as I have already indicated, something of an exception to the rules or patterns that have been established by the other readings, particularly as regards the nature of the novella's investment in "treasure." As we have seen, Eliot's "Brother Jacob," like "Die drei gerechten Kammacher," works hard to extrapolate character from explicitly economic objects (such as coins), while the plot of "Romeo und Julia auf dem Dorfe," like that of Eliot's own *The Mill on the Floss* -- the novel she was writing during the composition of the Gothic piece -- turns on the economic matter of landed property. By contrast, "The Lifted Veil" obsesses on the economy of character to the precise extent that it avoids concrete representations of economic activity: Latimer's wealth, like his power of insight, is simply a given. Yet if "The Lifted Veil" is in this sense the most abstract as well as the least realistic of the pieces discussed here, its preoccupation with the problem of the gift and/as *Gift*, or poison, places it in productive proximity to "Brother Jacob," while its investment in the realm of "spectacle" returns us to the focus on shame and its relationship to femininity that informed the reading of Keller's "Die drei gerechten Kammacher" as well as "Romeo und Julia auf dem Dorfe."

Theatrical spectacle serves in "The Lifted Veil" as a privileged vehicle of sympathy (which in a Feuerbachian vein is everywhere likened with the flow of water) by the same token that it poses an enormous and perhaps insurmountable obstacle to it. As I discuss in the first section of the chapter, the problem of spectacle is first framed as a matter of class, namely the

relationship between Latimer and his servants, before becoming a question of sexual difference and ultimately of the very boundaries between species, another distinctly Feuerbachian concern. In the second section of the chapter, I develop other intertextual connections – to Rousseau, Goethe, and above all Mary Shelley's short story, "The Mortal Immortal" – in order to underscore the implication of character in spectacle as something the narrator of "The Lifted Veil" can neither fully confront nor evade. Finally, the third section explores the way that Bertha, Eliot's most unsympathetic female character, is framed as both a privileged spectator (of Latimer) and herself a frame, screen, or projection wall. "The Lifted Veil" thus throws a new light on the association between fetishism and femininity with which this study has been concerned from the beginning.

With a particular eye to textual excesses, surpluses, and above all remainders, the search for treasure in the novellas of Keller and Eliot promises to yield insight into their "realist" representations of fetishism as well as a certain fetishization of literature that their texts both exemplify and diagnose. By focusing on moments in which the most concrete and material elements give way to speculative abstraction -- and the reverse -- this study hopes to leave its readers with a sense not only that there is still something new to be discovered in these familiar texts, but that they have something vital and indeed urgent to say about the literary vicissitudes of both novelty and familiarity.

Chapter One

Judging a Book by its Cover: Humor and Shame in "Die drei gerechten Kammacher"

…Keller's humor is not a superficial gilded polish, but the unpredictable ground-plan of his half-melancholic, half-choleric nature. This is expressed in the circuitous arabesques of his vocabulary. And if he declares his respect for civil statutes, he learned it in the arbitrariness of the inner world; and underlying both is Keller's most passionate affect: shame.

-Walter Benjamin, "Gottfried Keller"[51]

I

Gottfried Keller's fiction traffics in treasures of all kinds: secret hoards, cherished baubles, and sweethearts lost and found -- not to mention the streaks of good or bad fortune that occasion storytelling. If it sometimes seems that every reference to "treasure" (*Schatz*) in Keller is overdetermined, its implications are nowhere more impenetrable than in the novella "Die drei gerechten Kammacher," where it features conspicuously as an element of both characterization and plot. In a gesture that simultaneously bespeaks the desire to belong in and to set themselves apart from their adopted town of Seldwyla, each of the three protagonists has buried beneath the floors of their common abode a cache of coins that "was bound in time to become large enough"

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[51]"…Kellers Humor [ist] nicht goldne Politur der Oberfläche, sondern der unberechenbare Anlageplan seines melancholisch-cholerischen Wesens. Dem folgt er in den bauchigen Arabesken seines Vokabulars. Und wenn er vor den bürgerlichen Satzungen Respekt bekundet, so hat er ihn in der Willkürwelt des Innern erlernt, und Kellers leidenschaftlichster Affekt, die Scham, liegt beiden zugrunde." Benjamin, "Gottfried Keller. Zu Ehren einer kritischen Gesamtausgabe seiner Werke." In: Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften.* R.Tiedemann und Hermann Schweppenhauser, eds. Bd.2,1. Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1977, p.285. English translation modified from: "Gottfried Keller," in: Walter Benajmin, *Selected Writings.* Volume 2, 1927-1934. Michael Jennings et.al., eds. Trans. Rodney Livingstone and Others. Cambridge, Mass. And London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1999, pp.51-61.

(*und sicherer Berechnung nach mit der Zeit gross genug werden musste*) to purchase the local combmaking workshop, install himself as master, and become a naturalized citizen.[52] The rate at which the combmakers' industrious labors enhance the value of their assets cannot however match the breakneck pace of their own transformation into a "a veritable gold mine" (*eine wahre Goldgrube,* 195, 24) for the master they secretly long to replace. It is thus in a sense his good fortune that Dietrich, the third and youngest craftsman, has yet to amass any significant savings. By way of compensation for the small size of his treasure, he is "richly inventive" (*erfindungsreich*); and his plan to court Züs Bünzlin, the town heiress and proud possessor of a baroquely ostentatious treasure, is quickly adopted by his fellows. Before the scheme can bear fruit, however, the master declares a race to decide the fate of his hopelessly indebted operation; and Züs herself -- rather than using her seven hundred gulden to head off this humiliating prospect -- determines "to bind her own fate to the master's extraordinary idea" (*ihr eigenes Schicksal an des Meisters wunderlichen Einfall zu knüpfen*) and marry the winner (206).

Before the crowd of Seldwylers that has spontaneously gathered to enjoy the "unexpected spectacle" (*das unverhoffte Schauspiel*, 226, 50) of their contest, Jobst and Fridolin engage in a mutual struggle to prevent the other from advancing towards the finish line until they both collapse far beyond it, still "obstinately clinging to each other" (*ganz ineinander verbissen*, ibid). It is left to Dietrich, not through physical prowess but by means of the cunning trickery in which he specializes, to win the hand of Züs, and with it the combmaking workshop. Nevertheless, as

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[52]"Die drei gerechten Kammacher," in: Keller, *Die Leute von Seldwyla.* Mit einem Nachwort und bibliographischen Hinweisen von Gert Sautermeister und Anmerkungen von Hans Lankes. Munich: Goldmann Verlag, 1991, p. 189; English translation by Robert M. Browning: *The Three Righteous Combmakers* in:: Keller, *Stories.* Frank G. Ryder, ed. New York: Continuum Books, 1982, pp.15-51. All further references to the German and English editions, respectively, will be given in the body of the text, with translations modified as noted; if no reference to the English edition is given, the translation is mine.

the last line of the novella recounts, "he had little joy from it, for Züs did not share any of the credit with him (*ließ ihm gar nicht den Ruhm*); she ruled over and oppressed him, and regarded herself as the sole source of all good" (*die alleinige Quelle alles Guten*, 227). As Dietrich concedes all fame, honor, and reputation (*Ruhm*) to Züs, the elder combmakers' confrontation with the jeering Seldwylan crowd is simultaneously the realization that their dreams of glory have been cruel illusions: "When the two poor devils saw how their valiant efforts, by means of which they had thought to outwit the folly of the world, had only served to make this folly triumphant, their hearts almost broke, for they had not only failed in their plan of many years and ruined it wholly, they had also forfeited their reputations (*den Ruhm*) as prudent, calm, and law-abiding men" (227, 50-51). To the two elderly craftsmen, the loss of face will mean literal effacement: Jobst's death by his own hand and Fridolin's subsequent descent into madness.

The alliance between righteousness and (keeping up) appearance(s) has in fact been in operation from the novella's very first sentence, which locates the distinction between the earnestness of the combmakers and the lightheartedness of the Seldwylers at the level of what is provable or demonstrable:

> The people of Seldwyla (*Die Leute von Seldwyla*) have demonstrated (*bewiesen*) that a whole town full of unjust (*Ungerechten*) or frivolous persons can in a pinch continue to survive amid the vicissitudes of time and trade (*im Wechsel der Zeiten und des Verkehrs*); the three combmakers, however, that three righteous men (*Gerechte*) cannot live for long under the same roof without getting in each others' hair (185, 15, translation modified).

That the story of the three journeymen opens with the title (*Die Leute von Seldwyla*) of the volume in which their story is published already suggests the sense in which a cover - like that

over the combmakers' heads, but also like the casing of a book – serves not only as a protective shelter for what it encloses, but as something to be read, judged, and evaluated from the outside. Given the importance of judgment(s) to this novella, is certainly a coincidence, but nevertheless a telling one, that the significance of the combmakers' shared "roof" (the English translation of *Dach*) appears to be inextricable from the matter of *Ruf* or reputation. If the people of Seldwyla themselves are covered, as it were, from the threat of censure by the very fact that they are not in search of an alibi for their frivolity and unrighteousness in the first place, the righteous protagonists are left devastatingly vulnerable to exposure as far less upstanding (*aufrecht*) than they suppose.

The revelation of the combmakers' treasures as ultimately or essentially worthless points above all to a failed process of substitution or translation : although, given time, the coins the three craftsmen keep buried under their floorboards might one day have proven enough to purchase the legal and political status of Swiss citizenship, they cannot buy the public recognition *as righteous* that turns out to be the real object of their desire – and nowhere more graphically than in the final pages of the novella, when the dream of glory turns into a nightmare of humiliation. Far from the heart of the matter, then, the exclusive focus on finances that is attributed to righteousness must itself be "converted" into the terms of another, symbolic, economy in order to be fully accounted for. As can be seen already in the second sentence of the famous opening paragraph, the novella both invites and resists this rendering:

> We are not speaking here, however, of divine righteousness or of the natural sense of righteousness ingrained in the human conscience but of that bloodless righteousness that has stricken from the Lord's Prayer the petition: "And

forgive us our debts (*Schulden*), as we also have forgiven our debtors (*Schuldnern*)!" [53] because such righteousness incurs no debts and has none outstanding (185, 15, translation modified).

As an attempt to isolate the nature of "bloodless righteousness," the (negative) comparison with "divine righteousness" (*himmlische Gerechtigkeit*) or "natural righteousness of the human conscience" (*natürliche Gerechtigkeit des menschlichen Gewissens*) is ultimately less illuminating than obscuring, not least because the introduction of the third term involves a completely different (grammatical) structure: while the first two forms of justice are assigned a specific provenance (the divine kingdom and the human conscience, respectively), "bloodless righteousness" (*blutlose Gerechtigkeit*) appears nowhere, and attached to no one, in particular, thus anticipating the association with wandering and rootlessness that will be further developed in the characterization of the migrant (German) combmakers. [54] Defined as both a deed (erasure or deletion) *and* the justification for it (the lack or absence of debt/guilt), "bloodless righteousness" pertains, I will be arguing, to the relation between the two, that is: to the desire to (re)present oneself as "debtless" or even guiltless. The problem here, that is with the combmakers, is accordingly not so much of a *literal* untruth or contradiction – the righteous of Keller's novella do not in fact owe anyone any money – but rather the sense in which the maintenance of innocence remains irreducibly figurative, and, therefore, unverifiable. Not only

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[53] See Volker Dürr's discussion of Keller's idiosyncratic citation of Matthew 6:12, which both replaces the standard *Schuldigern* with *Schuldnern* and renders the Lutheran *Schuld* as *Schulden.* As Dürr observes, "…*Schuld* and *Schuldiger* have moral dimensions, while *Schulden* and *Schuldner*, which in modern usage literally mean 'debt' and 'debtors,' are tinged with financial allusions" (Dürr, "'Nun sag', wie hast du's mit der Religion?' Gottfried Keller's Critique of Reformed Protestantism in *Meretlein* and Later Narratives." *Colloquia Germanica,* 29, 1996, p.128).

[54] Although hardly incorrect, the rendering of *blutlos* as "anemic" in the English translation of Keller's story (op.cit., p.15) arguably foregrounds the clinical at the expense of the (grotesquely) figurative "bloodless"; all the more so in that in the 19th century, the medical condition "anemic" was commonly rendered *blutarm* rather than *blutlos* (Cf. *Etymologisches Wörterbuch des Deutschen*. München: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 1995, p.153).

is the alteration of a canonical text (even and especially if it is actually performed) a symbolic gesture *par excellence*; while it may be possible, with some difficulty, to avoid incurring debt of a strictly monetary kind, the same cannot be said of obligation itself, such as the "minor wrong" [*Tort*] that Jobst does the landlady in sticking to the letter of their contract and never failing to show up for Sunday dinner (188).

What is most significant about "bloodless righteousness," then, is its inextricability from a process of signification or (self-)representation that attempts to hold the self aloof from what the preface calls the "changeless circulation of things" (*[der] unveränderliche[] Kreislauf der Dinge*, 10): to render the self, that is, a kind of treasure.[55] Given the importance of representation to the development of "Die drei gerechten Kammacher," doing justice to Keller's combmaking novella will entail going beyond literary-critical assessments that would subordinate formal analysis to the desire for enrichment that comprises the novella's main theme[56]; or, on the contrary, radically abstracting the novella's representational strategies from the libidinal as well

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[55] The page number is a reference to the Sautermeister edition (op.cit.) To my knowledge, no English translation of the preface has been published; translations are accordingly mine (see Appendix I for a complete rendering).

[56] The thematic approach to *Die drei gerechten Kammacher* is by far the most well-represented in the critical literature. For a recent example see Erika Swales, "Morality and Economy" (in: Swales, *The Poetics of Scepticism. Gottfried Keller and* Die Leute von Seldwyla. Oxford and Providence, USA: Berg, 1994, pp 106-117). A Marxian-Freudian analysis of "the moment of original accumulation" in *Die Leute von Seldwyla* can be found in Willi Goetschel's "Love, Sex, and Other Utilities: Keller's Unsettling Account," in: Raymond A. Prier and Gerald Gillespie, eds. *Narrative Ironies.* Amsterdam and Atlanta, GA: Rodopi, 1997, pp. 223-235. Although his point about the simultaneous incompatibility and interchangeability of (the economies of) love and money in Keller is well-taken, Goetschel does not even begin adequately to consider the economy of representation, as illustrated by the all-too-economic plot summaries that substitute for readings of the Seldwyla novellas. The economic theme also provides the basis for a recent theatrical adaptation of the novella. "Neue Mitte, ein Stück Globalisierung" (Uraufführung September 2001, Maxim-Gorki-Theater, Berlin) begins with a reading of *Die drei gerechten Kammacher*, which is followed by a transposition of the three eponymous protagonists to contemporary times and economic conditions (the "New Economy"). See www.neuemitte.com and www.kammacher.com for discussions, reviews, and lots of jokes.

as literal economies they are enlisted to depict.[57] Instead, what is called for is an approach that takes representation itself into account as a kind of third economy at work in the novella: one that comes in for at least as much skeptical scrutiny as that directed towards the vain pursuit of love and money, is at least as equally deserving of critical attention. Far from the source "innocent knowledge" (*schuldlose Erkenntnis*) for which Züs (mis)takes it, literary discourse is the place from which any consideration of the novella's "moral" must begin.

I. Wit, Humor, and Shame

If the moral of "Die drei gerechten Kammacher" is contained already in its first sentence, this is not, I will be arguing, the whole story; nor is the famous first line its true beginning. As is already suggested by the co-incidence of the novella's opening words with the title of the volume, Keller's combmaking tale asks, indeed demands, to be read as part of a collection that is itself introduced, in the "Introduction," in terms that do not allow for clear-cut separation between the pieces and their setting[58]:

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[57] An early formalist analysis, Dietrich Pregel's "Das Kuriose, Komische und Groteske in Kellers Novelle *Die drei gerechten Kammacher*" (*Wirkendes Wort* 13, 1963, pp.331-345) is useful not only on its own terms, but also as a reminder that a sense of "humor" is the first victim of critical approaches that decide first *what* the novella is "saying," and only second(ari)ly *how* things are said. A case in point is the contribution of Lilian Hoverland, which takes particular issue with Pregel's essay while displaying an almost complete absence of ironic sensibility (See Hoverland, "Gottfried Kellers Novelle *Die drei gerechten Kammacher.*" *Zeitschrift für deutsche Philologie* 90, 1971, 499-526). A similarly alienating humorlessness also mars Swales's (op.cit.) otherwise insightful account. It is however not only "thematic" critics who refuse to take Keller's jokes seriously. At least equally notable for its piety is a more recent formalist contribution that attempts to read the entire novella in light of Züs's treasure generally, and the Chinese Temple in particular (Theodor Loosli, *Fabulierlust und Defiguration. "Phantastische" Spiele der Einbildungskraft im Prosawerk Gottfried Kellers.* Bern: Peter Lang, 1991).

[58] While critics have paid due attention to the placement of the combmaking novella in a *cycle* of stories (e.g. Hubert Ohl, "Das zyklische Prinzip von Gottfried Kellers Novellensammlung *Die Leute von Seldwyla*," in: *Euphorion* 63, 1969, pp.216-226, as well as Gerhard Kaiser's famous diagram, originally published in: Kaiser, *Gottfried Keller. Das gedichtete Leben.* Frankfurt a. M.: Insel, 1981, p.283), there has been surprisingly little formal consideration of Keller's introductory remarks. Two exceptions are Klaus-Dieter Metz (*Die drei gerechten Kammacher. Interpretation.* München: Oldenbourg, 1990) and Hans P.Gabriel, "Prescribing Reality: The Preface as a Device of Literary Realism in Auerbach, Keller and Stifter," *Colloquia Germanica,* Band 32, 1999, pp.325-343 (esp pp.330-

But I will not in fact relate such stories in this little volume as lie in the depicted character of Seldwyla, but rather some strange remnants (*einige sonderbare Abfällsel*) that happened intermittently, exceptionally as it were, and yet too could only have taken place in Seldwyla (12).

Employing the personal pronoun "I" for the (first and) last time in the entire book, Keller's storyteller here appears quite self-consciously to place his collection under the auspices of Goethe's famous definition of the novella, in his conversations with Eckermann, as the recounting of an "extraordinary event" (*unerhörte Begebenheit*). Yet precisely because the extraordinary or "exceptional" nature of the volume's tales is defined in terms of – that is, in contradistinction to -- a community that never changes, but remains "always the same little haven" (*immer das gleiche Nest*, 9) the book as a whole might well be seen to proclaim the irrevocable priority of continuity ("the changeless circulation of things") over the eruption of the new, novel, or unexpected. In this sense, Seldwyla might well be seen as a kind of allegory for what Keller, in a letter to the literary critic Hermann Hettner, famously called the "dialectic of cultural change" (*Dialektik der Kulturbewegung*).[59]

The combmaking novella, as we have seen, wastes no time in pronouncing the eternal victory of "unrighteousness" over the purported exceptionality of "the righteous." Indeed, perhaps no story in what was to become "Volume One" of *Die Leute von Seldwyla* more literally

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332). (As Gabriel reminds us, the title of the introduction ("Einleitung") is the product of editorial intervention; Keller himself did not preface these remarks with any heading whatsoever).

[59] Keller, *Gesammelte Briefe.* Hrsg. von Carl Helbling. 4 vols. Bern: Benteli, 1950-1954, 1.Band (Henceforth *GB*): "Mit *einem* Worte: es gibt keine individuelle und souveräne Originalität und Neuheit im Sinne der Willkürgenies und eingebildeten Subjektivisten …Neu in einem guten Sinne ist nur, was aus der Dialektik der Kulturbewegung hervorgeht…Und dies ist der beste Fingerzeig, wonach ein Dichter streben und in was seine Ehre setzen soll" (399-400).

fulfills the promise to tell (of) "strange remnants" – leftovers or even waste products. Yet even as "Die drei gerechten Kammacher" thus appears to intervene on an objective or even philosophical level – in the manner of an Enlightenment-style *conte* or a cautionary tale to be collected in a "treasury" of stories or *Schatzkästlein*[60] -- the question of justice is here always already implicated in subjectivity. This is true already in the literal sense that the novella is framed by a preface narrated by an "I"; but at least equally because of the centrality to the combmaking novella of the all-seeing "eye," the omniscient narrator to whom everything that is hidden from the protagonists (not to mention the Seldwylers) appears. Nothing is more tempting than to identify this less than unobtrusive presence with the name, "Gottfried Keller," that is printed on the cover of the volume *Die Leute von Seldwyla*. Taken literally, the name "Keller" is itself suggestive, if not of a treasure, then of the place, a cellar or a crypt, that contains one -- an association that was not lost on Keller himself, who often, and particularly in his poetry, plays with it.[61] Keller's name appears in this tale, which tells of treasures hidden beneath floorboards, only in the most skeletal of guises: it is inscribed, as "G.K.," in the title "Die drei **g**erechten **K**ammacher."[62] As has often been observed, Keller's initials play a similar game of hide-and-seek with the reader of the novel *Der grüne Heinrich*, where the "H" of "Heinrich" follows, in

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[60] For a reading of *Die drei gerechten Kammacher* in light of its relationship to Enlightenment thought and literature, see Klaus Jezierkowski, *Literarität und Historismus. Beobachtungen zu ihrer Erscheinungsform im 19.Jahrhundert am Beispiel Gottfried Kellers.* Heidelberg: Carl Winter, 1979.

[61] On this see for example Kaiser, op.cit., pp.598ff. More recently, as Peter Blickle has pointed out, Thomas Hürlimann's *Das Lied der Heimat* juxtaposes recent revelations about Nazi gold in Swiss "cellars" with the figure and poetry of Gottfried Keller (Hürlimann, "Das Lied der Heimat." In: Hürlimann, *Das Lied der Heimat.* Frankfurt a.M.: Fischer, 1998, pp.445-488; cited in Blickle, *Heimat. A Critical Theory of the German Idea of Homeland.* New Jersey: Camden House, 2002 p152). As Blickle's book concerns the German national idea of *Heimat,* he does not deal explicitly with Keller, except to note [p.152] that a search of his works via the Directmedia Digitale Bibliothek comes up with more hits for "Heimat" [133] than for any other German-language writer represented in the study).

[62] To my knowledge, Lilian Hoverland was the first to point this out (op.cit., 525).

alphabetical order, the "G" of "Gottfried" just as the "K" of "Keller" immediately precedes the "L" of "Lee." This metonymical relationship between the (names of) author and subject is indeed deeply appropriate to the form of the novel's first incarnation: not only because a fictional plot is superimposed on the autobiography of Gottfried Keller, but also because the narrative "I" that appears (only) in the first-person account of Heinrich's youth (*Jugendgeschichte*) is so easy to (mis)take for the personal pronoun of the author. The autobiographical illusion is only heightened by the second edition of *Der grüne Heinrich*, which, by relying on a first-person narrator throughout, precludes the formal inconsistency of the first incarnation that Keller himself was the first to fault.[63]

Like all the tales in *Die Leute von Seldwyla*, the story of the three righteous combmakers consistently adopts the third-person perspective, which indeed is the only one from which certain fates – such as (Jobst's) death or (Fridolin's) madness, but also the eternal life of Seldwyla – can be recounted. The requirements of plot likewise constitute the most common explanation for the formal dissonance of the first edition of *Der grüne Heinrich*: only an omniscient narrator, after all, could grant readers the final view of Green Henry's (green) grave.[64] In the case of the novel, then, one might well argue that the narrative distance of the third person is employed only

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[63] That is, he faulted it already in the (introduction to) the first edition. For a comparison of the two versions and their narrative techniques, see Sautermeister, "Vergleich der Fassungen," in: *Der grüne Heinrich.* Gert Sautermeister et.al., eds. München: Goldmann Verlag, 1989, pp.927-32.

[64] The final passage of the first edition reads: "So ging denn der tote grüne Heinrich auch den Weg hinauf in den alten Kirchhof, wo sein Vater und seine Mutter lagen. Es war ein schöner freundlicher Sommerabend, als man ihn mit Verwunderung und Teilnahme begrub, und es ist auf seinem Grabe ein recht frisches und grünes Gras gewachsen" (*Der grüne Heinrich*, op.cit., p.608). As Hoverland (op.cit., p.524) points out, the tears elicited from the combmakers at the end of the novella, not least because they take place during procession through town on a Sunday in the springtime, recall the famous autobiographical account of the completion of these closing lines on the Sunday before Easter : "Ich habe erst vor sechs Wochen das letzte Kapitel meines Romanes und zwar am Palmsonntag buchstäblich unter Tränen geschmiert und werde diesen Tag nie vergessen" (letter to Hermann Hettner, May 9,1855, in: *GB*, op.cit.,Band 1, p.409).

in order to bring the reader that much closer to (the fate of) the doomed protagonist, the "first" person of the *Jugendgeschichte*. "Die drei gerechten Kammacher" almost precisely inverts this strategy: at the same time that readers are made privy to the combmakers' most intimate secrets, the protagonists are (almost) always kept at arm's length. The result, according to a letter Keller wrote to his friend, the literary critic Hermann Hettner, is one of the "formally most complete and mature" (*formell am fertigsten und reifsten*) pieces of his *oeuvre* to date, and accordingly -- along with *Spiegel das Kätzchen* – the one "of which I was the most proud" (*auf die [ich mir] am meisten einbildete*).[65] Yet while Keller's (self-) assessment would initially appear to place "Die drei gerechten Kammacher" on a higher aesthetic level than the structurally underdeveloped *Bildungsroman,* he simultaneously – in the same sentence – refers to his most cherished works as mere *Schnurren*: jests, jokes, or farces.[66]

Far from antithetical, such a relationship between technical proficiency or refined skill and the comic is central to the traditional concept of "wit" (*Witz*), particularly as opposed to "humor" (*Humor*).[67] The distinction between humor and wit can be found in countless nineteenth-century texts, but was perhaps nowhere more clearly, fully, and wittily articulated than in (the future) George Eliot's review essay on Heinrich Heine, entitled "German Wit" and

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[65] Letter to Hermann Hettner, April 16, 1856, in: *GB* op.cit., Band 1, p.428.

[66] Ibid. As Klaus-Dieter Metz (op.cit., p.68) points out, *Schnurre* is hardly a term indicative of high literary value (much less maturity). Consequently, Metz's "Interpretation" refuses to take Keller's characterization of the novella as a "farce" seriously, insisting instead that it is, as a later chapter heading has it, "More than a Joke" (*"Mehr als eine Schnurre,"* 68). Speaking of *Der Schmied seines Glückes,* a close cousin to *Die drei gerechten Kammacher,* Wolfgang Preisendanz similarly remarks that "Was Keller selbst eine 'Schnurre' genannt hat, nimmt sich…wesentlich anspruchsvoller und komplexer aus" (Preisendanz, *Poetischer Realismus als Spielraum des Grotesken in Gottfried Kellers "Der Schmied seines Glückes."* Konstanz: Konstanz Universitätsverlag, 1989, p.6).

[67] For a recent overview of wit and humor in the German tradition, one that (like both George Eliot's and Freud's) is based in large part upon a reading of Heine (himself one of Keller's most important precursors and touchstones), see Jefferson Chase, *Inciting Laughter. The Development of "Jewish Humor" in 19th Century German Culture.* Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2000, pp. 5-11. As Chase notes, the distinction is hardly limited to German-language discourse; instead, it "represents a greater European linguistic phenomenon spanning the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries" (5).

published the same year (1856) as the first volume of *Die Leute von Seldwyla.*[68] Eliot's essay builds on the contrast between, on the one hand, a "humour" associated –whether positively (mature sympathy) or negatively (childish egotism) – with the passions, or humors; and, on the other, a "wit" that is aligned with the "ratiocinative intellect" in all of its sophistication but also emotional coldness and even cruelty. What gives the piece its particularly comic effect is Eliot's decision to frame the opposition in terms of national identity, whereby "the Frenchman" (e.g. Voltaire) is called upon as a specimen of wit, while "the German" (e.g. Jean Paul) exemplifies humor.[69] This opposition, in turn, sets up Eliot's punning introduction of Heine, a German who lived much of his life in Paris, as "an earnest of that future crop [of German wits and humorists]" (223). At the heart of the essay is the assertion that wit is inherent to all (quality) writing[70]:

Indeed, it may be said that there is no really fine writing in which wit has not an implicit, if not an explicit action. The wit may never rise to the surface, it may never flame out into a witticism; but it helps to give brightness and transparency, it warns off from flights and exaggerations which verge on the ridiculous – in every *genre* of writing it

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[68] Page numbers hereafter to be given in the body of the text refer to: George Eliot, "German Wit: Heinrich Heine," in: *The Essays of George Eliot,* Thomas Pinney, ed. New York: Columbia University Press, 1963, pp.216-254. (Two further editions of Eliot's essays appeared in the early 1990s, both of which reprint the "Heine" piece. They are: *Selected Essays, Poems and Other Writings.* A.S. Byatt and Nicholas Warren, eds. With an Introduction by A.S. Byatt. London: Penguin Books, 1990; and *Selected Critical Writings.* Rosemary Ashton, ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992). An informative study of the development "from a belief in amiable, sentimental humour to an acceptance of intellect as the basis of comedy" in the thought and practice of Victorian writers singles out Eliot's essay for special praise both for its clear summation of common ideas of the Victorian age and the – rather uncharacteristic -- privileging of wit (Robert Bernard Martin, *The Triumph of Wit. A Study of Victorian Comic Theory.* Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974, p.vii; on Eliot, see especially pp. 82-85).

[69] See Chase (op.cit.) for a discussion of the way 19th century German writers viewed humor as a question of national identity (e.g. *deutscher Humor, englischer Humor*), while "Witz" was reserved for the comedy associated with minority but particularly "interested" (or, to use a term that Freud employs liberally in his *Joke* book, "tendentious") groups. Eliot's "joke" in this essay, by contrast, consists in the division of nationalities themselves (rather than divisions within nations) along the lines of "humour" and, or versus, "wit." On Keller's humor see also Wolfgang Preisendanz, *Humor als dichterische Einbildungskraft. Studien zur Erzählkunst des poetischen Realismus.* München: Fink, 1976.

[70] I would thus dispute Martin's (op.cit.) claim that the introduction has "no relation" to the function of the piece as an introduction to Heine's work (p.83).

preserves a man from sinking into the *genre ennuyeux.* And it is eminently needed for this office in humorous writing; for as humour has no limits imposed on it by its material, no law but its own exuberance, it is apt to become preposterous and wearisome unless checked by wit, which is the enemy of all monotony, of all lengthiness, of all exaggeration (220).

If wit is "eminently needed" in humorous writing, that is because it is there obliged not only to enforce a law (of genre), but to lay one down in the first place; humor cannot come into its own without wit.[71] If it is also true that excessive wit – untempered by (particularly "sympathetic") humor --becomes "cold, and thin-lipped, and Mephistophelean," that is: lacking in the warmth of the emotions or passions in which humor traffics (220), this is regrettable, but hardly fatal to the matter of purely *literary* reputation.[72]

In the terms introduced by (the introduction to) Eliot's Heine essay, Keller's combmaking novella is clearly closer to the ironic and skeptical satire of Voltaire – not to mention Heine himself -- than the only mildly enchanting ramblings of Jean Paul.[73] Indeed, I suggest, it is due to both the narrator's wit and the story's own concern with the comic sensibility

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[71] From the purported alliance between wit and quality literary production, the witlessness of the German tradition would seem to be tantamount to a dearth of "fine writing" itself –quite an audacious statement for an essay that opens by citing Goethe! But Eliot does not in fact go this far. The more modest conclusion is that wit is lacking in German literature not altogether, but only there where it would have been most welcome and indeed necessary, i.e. in prose aiming for a comic effect. Indeed, if there is to be an exception to the pronouncement that "among the five great races [sic] concerned in modern civilization, the German race is the only one which, up to the present century, has contributed nothing classic to the common stock of wit and humour," it is Goethe's *Reinike Fuchs*; nevertheless, for Eliot it is the wit Heine who "has shown even more completely than Goethe the possibilities of German prose" (223).

[72] For Martin (op.cit.), this represents "one of the few platitudes of the essay" (82). It is indeed indisputable that Eliot is here much more interested in developing her thoughts on the dangers of wit's absence than those of its excesses (which may be identified with a Faustian figure, but, again, not with Goethe himself).

[73] Metz (op.cit.) is not the first to observe that the combmaking novella is not notable for "humor" in the traditional sense of the term: "Nicht mit liebevollem Humor und gelöster Heiterkeit, sondern mit bitterer Ironie und satirischer Schärfe trägt der Erzähler seinen dreifachen Fall menschlicher Verblendung in einer leichtfertigen Kleinstadt vor" (8); Pregel (op.cit.), similarly notes, "In Kellers Kammacher-Novelle würden wir vergeblich nach den Kennzeichen epischen Humors suchen," 344.

of its characters that "Die drei gerechten Kammacher" can be seen to provide an instructive contrast to what Franco Moretti, in an attempt to characterize the narrator of George Eliot's own masterpiece *Middlemarch*, calls "maturity as humor."[74] Moretti draws on Freud's definition of humor at the end of *Jokes and their Relation to the Unconscious* (*Der Witz und seine Beziehung zum Unbewussten*) – a definition that is itself constructed in opposition to the witticism or joke (*Witz*). As the displacement and indeed *re*placement of pain or embarrassment (*Pein*), humor for Freud is the "highest" (*höchstehende*) – or most fully-developed (*erwachsen*) – "of defensive processes": a kind of pre-emptive strike.[75] For once "distressing affect" takes over, the ego has as it were no choice but to resort to the "automatic" and reflexive modes of defense that humor even more automatically, indeed pre-consciously, "surmounts."[76]

The model for a subject who is always vulnerable to the onslaught of overwhelming emotion is here not (for example) the hysteric, but rather the child: "Only in childhood have there been distressing affects at which the adult would smile today – just as he laughs, as a humorist, at his present distressing affects" (ibid). As examples of such "distressing affect" (*peinlicher Affekt*) that humor counteracts (without denying or repressing), Freud cites pity, anger, pain, and tenderness (*Rührung*). The qualifier *peinlich* would seem to place such "affect"

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[74]Franco Moretti, *The Way of the World. The* Bildungsroman *in European Culture.* London: Verso, 1987, p.221. This thesis is, as it were, the positive version of Martin's lament (op.cit.) that Eliot the novelist is less witty than humorous -- not least because Moretti's praise of Eliot's maturity is somewhat relativized by his concern that she is "perhaps, not angry enough" (as per Freud's thesis that humor re-places distressing affect such as rage). Already in Eliot's essay, anger is associated with "scorching" wit rather than humor, whether "sympathetic" or cruel.

[75] Freud, *Jokes and their Relation to the Unconscious.* In: *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud.* Trans. James Strachey. James Strachey et al., eds. London: The Hogarth Press, 1953-1974, Vol. VIII, p.233; *Der Witz und seine Beziehung zum Unbewussten*, in: *Studienausgabe*. Mitscherlich et. al., eds. 10 vols. Frankfurt a.M.: Fischer, 1972, Band IV, p.215.

[76] Cf. pp. 216-17: "Die humoristische Verschiebung ist…in der Beleuchtung der bewussten Aufmerksamkeit ebenso unmöglich wie die komische Vergleichung; sie ist wie diese an die Bedingung, vorbewusst oder automatisch zu bleiben, gebunden."

in proximity to embarrassment or shame as well as pain or distress (*Pein*), the implicit conclusion being that *every* strong feeling, no matter what its particular nature, is capable of being accompanied or supplemented by the feeling of shame at one's susceptibility to emotion itself.[77] Humor is accordingly conceived not as feeling's expression, but on the contrary as its economization (*Ersparnis*). Similarly, Freudian "wit," far from exhausting its significance in the intellectual or cognitive faculties, produces (the illusion of) meaning only as a "cover" for the pleasure that constitutes the true object of psychoanalytic interest, and that is said to appear in its "pure" form in the imaginative activity of children, namely play.[78]

The strong correlation between jokes and child's play in the *Joke* book makes it all the more striking that "Creative Writers and Day-Dreaming" ("Der Dichter und das Phantasieren") finds humor emerging at the point where the childish things are --seemingly -- abandoned forever:

> When the child has grown and has ceased to play, and after he has been labouring for decades to envisage (*erfassen*) the realities of life with proper seriousness (*mit dem erforderlichen Ernste*), he may one day find himself in a mental situation (*eine seelische Disposition*) which once more undoes the contrast between play and reality. As an adult he can look back on the intense seriousness (*den hohen Ernst*) with which he once carried on his games in childhood; and, by equating his ostensibly serious occupations of to-day with his childhood games, he can throw off the too

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[77] The work of Silvan Tomkins, in particular, has been instrumental in bringing shame to the foreground as an affect prompted by affect itself. See Silvan Tomkins, *Shame and Its Sisters. A Silvan Tomkins Reader.* Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick and Adam Frank, eds. Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1995, esp. pp.133-178. For a comprehensive introduction to recent thought on the subject of shame and what is sometimes called "affect theory," see Paul Gilbert, "What Is Shame? Some Core Issues and Controversies," in: Bernice Andrews and Paul Gilbert, eds. *Shame. Interpersonal Behavior, Psychopathology, and Culture.* New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998, pp.3-38. A suggestive collection of essays on the intersection of shame and literature – including two contributions on George Eliot -- can be found in *Scenes of Shame. Psychoanalysis, Shame, and Writing.* Joseph Adamson and Hilary Clark, eds. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1999.

[78] See Samuel Weber, "The Joke: Child's Play," in: Weber, *The Legend of Freud.* Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000. pp121-137.

heavy burden imposed on him by life and win the high yield of pleasure (*den hohen Lustgewinn*) afforded by *humour.* [79]

Where adults have wed themselves to the "realities of life" (*Wirklichkeiten des Lebens*), children (only) "prop" their games on to "concrete and visible things of the real world" (*Das Kind…lehnt seine imaginierten Objekte und Verhältnisse gern an greifbare und sichtbare Dinge der wirklichen Welt an*, 171-2). The famous conclusion is that "the opposite of play is not earnestness, but rather – reality" (*Der Gegensatz zu Spiel ist nicht Ernst, sondern – Wirklichkeit*, 171). The great earnestness that young people (even those who are not, like Freud's grandson, actually *named* "Ernst") bring to their games is the symbol or symptom of their affective investment (*Affektbesetzung*) in their imaginative activity.[80] Unlike writing, daydreaming, or joke-telling, then, humor is thus emphatically *not* a cover for, but merely the reversal or inversion of this investment in the one, single-minded and utterly shameless wish "to be big and grown-up."[81] Likewise, humor's profit or yield of pleasure (*Lustgewinn*) must be seen to result exclusively from a previously affected and wholly earnest investment in the very "realities of life" that it now spurns.

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[79]Freud, "Creative Writers and Day-Dreaming," in: *Standard Edition,* op.cit., Vol. IX., pp.144-45. Cf. "Der Dichter und das Phantasieren," in: *Studienausgabe,* op.cit., Band X, p.172: Wenn das Kind herangewachsen ist und aufgehört hat zu spielen, wenn es sich durch Jahrzehnte seelisch bemüht hat, die Wirklichkeiten des Lebens mit dem erforderlichen Ernste zu erfassen, so kann es eines Tages in eine seelische Disposition geraten, welche den Gegensatz zwischen Spiel und Wirklichkeit wieder aufhebt. Der Erwachsene kann sich darauf besinnen, mit welchem hohen Ernst er einst seine Kinderspiele betrieb, und indem er nun seine vorgeblich ernsten Beschäftigungen jenen Kinderspielen gleichstellt, wirft er die allzu schwere Bedrückung durch das Leben ab und erringt sich den hohen Lustgewinn des *Humors*."

[80] The reference is to Freud's famous account of the "Fort-Da" game in "Beyond the Pleasure Principle" ("Jenseits des Lustprinzips," *Studienausgabe,* Band III), which, to be sure, does not identify the child by name or relationship.

[81] Cf."Writers and Day-Dreaming," op.cit., 146. "A child's play is determined by wishes: in point of fact by a single wish – one that helps to raise him – the wish to be big and grown up…He has no reason to conceal this wish" (146). Indeed, notes Freud, "even though the child may not play his game in front of the grown-ups, he does not, on the other hand, conceal it from them" (145).

Aside from child's play, Freud's favorite evidence for an ego that has asserted itself at the expense of the now de-cathected "real world" (and, by extension, for the earnestness of that original cathexis) is, ironically enough, a joke (*Witz*) that had been cited already in the *Joke* book, and is -- with acknowledgments -- reprinted in "Der Humor": a convicted criminal being led to the scaffold on a Monday exclaims, "Well, this week is off to a good start!" ("Humor," 277). In a precise inversion of Eliot's claim that quality humor requires wit, Freud's argument is that it takes humor to tell this joke (*Witz*) or very short story, which, as Freud points out, is also a literal form of black or gallows humor (*Galgenhumor*). It is moreover, I suggests, precisely in its relation to death that this joke stands in a very telling relationship to "Die drei gerechten Kammacher," which of course also closes on a hanging. For where the quip of Freud's condemned criminal stands as a sign of his defiance (*Trotz*) in the face of death, Jobst's suicide is correlated with a lack of appreciation of jokes and humor. Indeed, Jobst is introduced as the (only) combmaker who fails to grasp the implications of the master's running gag:

> One day after another the master's wife would put a dish of sauerkraut on the table and say: "That's fish!" and if a journeyman dared say: "Beg pardon, that's sauerkraut!" he was dismissed on the spot and had to take to the road in the middle of winter. But as soon as the fields turned green and the roads were passable, they said, "It is too sauerkraut!" and secured his bundle. For even if the master's wife on the spot threw a big chunk of ham on top of the kraut, and the master said, "My stars, I thought it was fish! But this is most certainly a ham!" they still longed to be off, because all three of the journeymen employed there [slept in one bed and]…got heartily sick of each other in the course of the winter on account of all the jabs in the ribs and frozen sides (186, 16, translation modified).

It is this scene of ribs, jabs, and jibes upon which Jobst enters: "One day, however, there arrived (*Einst aber kam*) an orderly and meek-mannered journeyman from some part of Saxony […]

Jobst…willingly took the sauerkraut for fish and in the spring a little piece of ham with modest thanks“ (*nahm das Sauerkraut willig für Fische und im Frühjahr mit bescheidenem Dank ein Stückchen von dem Schinken*, 16, 186-187, trans. modified). Indeed, throughout his tenure in Seldwyla, Jobst “never took a joke in bad part that was made at his expense” (*nahm keinen Scherz übel, den man sich mit ihm erlaubte*, 192). The combmakers' inability or unwillingness to acknowledge the aggression driving these “jokes” will prove decisive in the further course of their tale. The master's inspiration to hold a race is after all itself nothing but a prank (*Schwank*, 226), a “jocose solution” (*spasshaften Ausweg,* 206) to the problem of two superfluous combmakers conceived in order “to make fun” of all three of them (*machte sich über sie lustig,* ibid.), and made public for the same reason (*der Meister selbst zu seiner Belustigung bekannt gemacht,* 224).

Against this background, the “bloodlessness” of the righteous appears as a kind of literalization of “humorlessness,” a dearth of vital bodily fluids or “humors” that, in the end, returns with a vengeance in the form of sweat, tears, and even blood.[82] The absence of “cheerfulness” (*Frohsinn*) from the daily lives of the combmakers -- Jobst's pointed lack of resemblance to “ Johann the Merry Soapmaker” (187)[83] – indeed comprises the most important distinction between the journeymen and their Seldwylan hosts, whose frivolity (*Leichtsinnigkeit*) is remarked upon in already in the novella's famous first sentence. Where it is the Swiss government intervenes to curb the Seldwyla's overindulgence in political game-

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[82] Cf. pp.48-49 (224-225): “Both men were bathed in sweat and covered in dust; their mouths were gaping and gasping for breath; they neither heard nor saw anything of what was going on around them; great tears, which the poor devils had no time to wipe away, were streaming down their cheeks.”

[83] A reference to Friedrich von Hagedorn's Biedemeyer poem, “Johann der muntere Seifensieder,” (Sautermeister, op.cit., 610n187).

playing, it is (the wit of) Keller's narrator -- according to a pattern very similar to that outlined by Eliot in her Heine essay -- serves throughout the collection to "check" the interminably infantile (humor of the) town. The difference is that while the former process comprises one part or phase of an endless cycle, the storyteller has *always* already inserted himself between the reader and the "humor" of the village that lends its name to his work. The restraint that must be periodically and forcefully imposed upon Seldwyla is thus as it were a constant accompaniment to the telling of its stories, which would otherwise exceed all spatial and temporal bounds: "In such a jolly and strange town, there can be no dearth of all sorts of strange stories and biographies, since the devil finds work for idle hands" (*In einer so lustigen und seltsamen Stadt kann es an allerhand seltsamen Geschichten und Lebensläufen nicht fehlen, da Müssiggang aller Laster Anfang ist*, 12). "Die drei gerechten Kammacher" -- an indirect product, or "strange remnant," of Seldwyla's fertile and endless leisure -- is the story of exhausting labor that comes to a premature and fruitless end not because of the external imposition of governing forces (as is the rule of both local and federal law in Seldwyla), but, on the contrary, because of a precocious internalization of or identification with authority that (mis)takes "the world for a great, well-ordered institution run by police" (*eine grosse wohlgesicherte Polizeianstalt,* 185, 16). What this precocious loyalty to "righteousness" excludes or precludes must therefore itself be recognized as *another* law, one that Benjamin's reading of Keller already identified as "humor": "In its own way, humor is itself a kind of judicial system. It is the universe of enforcement without judgment, a universe in which both verdict and pardon express themselves through laughter. This is the great reservation that stands at the source of

Keller's silence and utterance."[84] According to Benjamin, humor is the occasion when a deep ambivalence, or skepticism, about the articulation of judgment is itself articulated (*wird laut*). What such laughter indicates, above all, is an absence of shame in the face of guilt, which, of course, is not the same thing as innocence or guiltlessness itself. Consisting in (the articulation of) *nothing but* "judgment" (*Urteil*), by contrast, righteousness ultimately finds itself powerless to effect, much less "enforce," anything at all, an all the more bitter fate in that the only adequate response to it -- namely laughter -- has already been foreclosed.

To note that the righteous protagonists of Keller's novella do not laugh, least of all at themselves, is not to say that they know no form of amusement whatsoever. The point repeatedly made by the narrator of "Die drei gerechten Kammacher" is rather that a righteous sense of humor consists in the entertainment of radically *private* jokes:

> For all his modest, meek, and honorable ways, Jobst did not lack a slight touch of inward irony (*innerliche Ironie*), as though he were secretly making fun (*sich heimlich…lustig machte*) of the frivolity and vanity of the world. He seemed to doubt the greatness and importance of things in no uncertain terms and to be aware of a much profounder concept In fact, he assumed now and then such a wise look, especially when he was holding forth as an expert in his Sunday speeches, that one could readily see (*man ihm wohl ansah*) that he actually had much weightier things on his mind, things in comparison to which everything that others were undertaking, building, erecting was only child's play (*ein Kinderspiel,* 189, 19).

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[84] "In seiner Weise ist der Humor eine Rechtsordnung. Er ist die Welt der urteilslosen Vollstreckung, in der Verdikt und Gnade im Gelächter laut wird. Das ist der ungeheuere Vorbehalt, aus dem Kellers Schweigen und Dichten beredt wird" (Benjamin, op.cit., p.221).

If humor for Freud is "great" (*grossartig*) because it faces down the "ideational content bearing the distressing affect" until the world itself appears as little more than "child's play" – an appearance that the humorist himself moreover shows or demonstrates (*zeigt*) – the first clue that the combmaker's contemptuous estimation of others' visions as "child's play" is petty (or *kleinlich*) is the fact that it is to be kept hidden. Far from a triumph of narcissism in the face of distressing or humiliating affect, in other words, the combmakers are caught up in the realm of (no less narcissistic) *fantasy* that, as "Der Dichter und das Phantasieren" notes, is always implicated in shame and, therefore, the effort to conceal itself.[85]

For Freud, as we have seen, the humorist exhibits an indifference to her personal fate that conceals an emotional investment in or cathexis of the world analogous to the "earnestness" of the playing child. By precise contrast, the righteous (combmakers) demonstrate a sense of self-importance that belies their utter lack of interest in, or libidinal cathexis of, their environment:

> The inhuman thing (*Das Unmenschliche*) about this plan was that nothing in [Jobst's] heart (*nichts in seinem Herzen*) obliged him to remain in Seldwyla of all places, neither affection for the region or the people, nor a preference for their political institutions and customs. To all of these he was as indifferent as to his own homeland (*Heimat*), for which he had absolutely no longing. There were a hundred places in the world where he could gain as firm a foothold with his diligence and his righteousness as here, but he had no free choice (*keine freie Wahl*) and in his dreary mind seized the first accidental wisp of hope (*die erste zufällige Hoffnungsfaser*) that offered itself, attaching himself to it and sucking on it in order to grow (*um sich daran zu hängen und sich daran gross zu saugen*, 190, emphasis mine).

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[85] Cf. "Der Dichter und das Phantasieren," op.cit., p. 173: "…[der Erwachsene] weiss einerseits, dass man von ihm erwartet, nicht mehr zu spielen oder zu phantasieren, sondern in der wirklichen Welt zu handeln, und anderseits sind unter den seine Phantasien erzeugenden Wünschen manche, die es überhaupt zu verbergen nottut; darum schämt er sich seines Phantasierens als kindisch und als unerlaubt."

As is already suggested by the way that the parasitic imagery foreshadows Jobst's self-inflicted death by hanging (*sich…hängen*), the fate of the combmaker is inextricably intertwined with, and indeed results from, his homelessness. The failure to have, as it were, both feet firmly planted on the ground already distinguished the "singularly affected gait" of the journeymen, who walk "as though hovering in a higher sphere, especially the cultivated (*gebildeten*) bookbinders, the jolly (*lustigen*) shoemakers and the rare, strange (*seltenen sonderbaren*) combmakers" (17, trans. modified; 187). On a literal level, this groundlessness is itself not without "ground" or reason, namely the slippers (*Schlappschuhen*) that comprise part of the journeymen's (unofficial) uniform (ibid.). More abstractly, it is suggested that the bookbinders' distance from reality is the result of excessive reading and/as fantasizing, while that of the shoemakers is associated with a joviality that recalls that of the Seldwylers themselves.

Only in the case of the combmakers does the figurative explanation for a somewhat otherworldly appearance coincide with that appearance itself: the combmakers *look* "strange" because they *are* strange (*sonderbar*) as well as strangers. The essential foreignness of the combmakers reappears in the narrator's impassioned polemic against righteous adherence to the letter of the law, which is articulated as a dictum or maxim (*Sprichwort*) concerning patriotism:

> *Ubi bene, ibi patria* (*Wo es mir wohl geht, da ist mein Vaterland!*)...as the saying goes, and we will not dispute this maxim for those who can show (*aufzuweisen haben*) a better and more necessary reason (*Grund*) for their well-being in their new fatherland than Jobst; for those who of their own free will (*in freiem Entschlusse*) left their country to gain by vigorous effort some advantage abroad and return well-to-do; nor for those who flee in droves from unlivable conditions and, obeying (*gehorchend*) the call of the age, join the new migration of peoples across the seas; nor for those who have found elsewhere dearer friends than at home or conditions more in keeping with

their personal inclinations or who are bound (*festgebunden*) by some happier human bond (*Band*). But wherever they are, all these people must at the least love the new land of their prosperity, and there too, if need be, exemplify a human being (*einen Menschen vorstellen*). [86]

Reasons or grounds for the love of country, whether a newly-adopted or native land, are something one has to show for oneself (*aufzuweisen haben*) not only as evidence of having *chosen*, or at least chosen to love, a homeland, but equally of (a consciousness of) the *absence* of choice; and indeed, every eruption of unfettered or spontaneous action is here coupled with its limiting or restraining opposite: "leaving" with "returning," "joining" with "obeying," "loving" with being "bound." The irony of righteousness, by contrast, is that a pre-emptive or precocious grasp of or at freedom from ties that bind has *pre*cluded the true exercise of "free choice" (*freien Entschluss*) that is alone capable of exhibiting, displaying, or performing the human being (*einen Menschen vorstellen*).[87]

If Jobst is like a parasite, then, it is not because he is *too* "attached" to (e.g. the material riches of) Seldwyla but because he is not bound to his new home demonstratively *enough*: he does not cherish, much less treasure it. Rather than (simply) a problem of the "heart," the fatalism of righteousness is now framed as a problem of the eye, of (not) seeing and of (not) being seen:

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[86] What Keller puts forth here can thus be read as his own idiosyncratic version of what Jacques Derrida has called "the odyssean structure of economic narrative…[in the sense of an] *economy* and a *nostalgia*, a "homesickness," a provisional exile longing for reappropriation" (Derrida, *Given Time: I. Counterfeit Money.* Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1992, p.7). Interestingly, "nostalgia" itself is a neologism, coined in the late 17th century to describe the psychological state of Swiss expatriates. (Cf. "Nostalgie," *Etymologisches Wörterbuch des Deutschen*, pp.931f.). On the motif of home(coming) in Keller see also Hans Wysling, "Und immer wieder kehrt Odysseus heim. Das 'Fabelhafte' bei Gottfried Keller." In: Wysling, ed. *Gottfried Keller. Elf Essays zu seinem Werk.* Zürich: Verlag Neue Zürcher Zeitung, 1990, pp.151-163.

[87] Browning's translation (op.cit) renders *einen Menschen vorstellen* as "stand up for humanity" (20).

Such righteous are scattered on all points of the earth. They have gone into hiding there (*sich dahin verkrümelten*) for no other reason (*aus keinem anderen Grunde*) than that they happened upon a pipette that secretes a good living and so they quietly suck at it (*saugen still daran*), with no homesickness (*Heimweh*) for their native land nor love for their adopted one, with an eye (*Blick*) neither for the big nor the small picture; they thus less resemble free human beings (*dem freien Menschen gleichen*) than those lower organisms, strange plants and animals, that have been carried by air or water to the spot where they chance to prosper (20, 190, translation modified).

Not only do the righteous lack a certain vision or perspective; they also fail to resemble "the free human being," and, therefore, to appear to others as such. Just as Jobst's practice of "inner irony" renders highly conspicuous (*man ihm wohl ansah*) the fact that a secret is being kept, the very attempt to "hide" (*sich verkrümeln*) oneself in the scattered corners of the earth already identifies the righteous as alien to freedom *qua* "free choice." The irony here is that the explicit and emphatic rejection of the role of chance – such as the coincidence of originating at a certain "point" on the globe – has led to (the appearance of) its absolute tyranny over the life trajectories of the "righteous." In precise contrast to the Seldwylers, who never cease to bear witness to the *idea* of freedom despite the fact that their fate has largely been decided before their birth (starting already with the town's position "a good half-hour from any navigable river" – not to mention the established "aristocracy of youth" that rules the circulation of money and prestige), Keller's eponymous protagonists take destiny into their own hands only to themselves become the very embodiments, symbols, or ciphers for a particularly stubborn species of determinism.

It is moreover here that the significance of the stark opposition between Seldwylan political life – which consists largely in the creation and performance of spectacles – and Jobst's repulsion for public political display lies: "whenever there was some demonstration or

parade, he cowered (*hockte*) in the back of the workshop in mortal fear" (*fürchtete Mord und Totschlag*; 190, 20, trans. slightly modified). As the ending of the story makes sufficiently clear, Jobst is not wrong to fear for his life when crowds gather in the streets of Seldwyla. What is already suggested at this early point is however the intimate relation between the mortal danger that spectacles pose for the eldest combmaker and the implication of righteousness in a narcissistic fantasy that remains eternally beholden -- and therefore uniquely vulnerable -- to shame. Having demonstratively failed to hold shame at bay through (a sense of) humor, the combmakers, even the youngest and cleverest of them, will likewise prove incapable of using their wit(s) to ward off humiliation and disgrace: where Jobst and Fridolin succumb to the ruthless mirth of the Seldwylers, the ridiculousness of Dietrich as well as his bride Züs is mercilessly exposed by the storyteller himself. Such abandonment of fictional characters to the derision of the reader is a characteristic gesture of the *Schwank,* a sub-genre of the fairy tale. In its standard, fantastic form (*Zaubermärchen*), the fairy tale recounts the deeds and thus constitutes the portrait of a "hero."[88] In the so-called *Dummlingsmärchen,* for example, a young person (often the youngest of three) perceived by others to be stupid proves him- or herself clever or even wise, and is rewarded accordingly. ("Die drei gerechten Kammacher" has itself been – negatively -- compared with "The Brave Little Tailor," a prime example of this genre).[89] In a *Schwank* such as "Hans im Glück," by contrast, laughter is induced in the reader at the

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[88] My discussion of the *Schwank* is based Wilhelm Solms's "Die Moral der unmoralischen Schwänke," in: Wolfgang Kuhlmann und Lutz Röhrich, Hrsg. *Witz, Humor und Komik im Volksmärchen.* Regensburg: Röth, 1993, pp.112-124.

[89] Most recently in Metz (1990), op.cit.

explicit expense of the anti-hero, whose foolish antics comprise the bulk of the action.[90] In thus providing an occasion for laughter in the audience, rather than simply telling of the happiness that befalls someone else, the *Schwank* can be seen to border not only on the fairy tale but – to Freud's occasional consternation – the joke (*Witz*).[91] The three righteous combmakers, as well as Züs, are clearly the butt of the "joke" or *Schwank* that "Die drei gerechten Kammacher," at one level, can be seen to comprise. There is however a crucial distinction to be made between the laughter of the Seldwylers and that of the novella's readers; between the prank (*Schwank*) of the master and the *Schnurre* of the storyteller. Above all, it is only the former that can be understood as a "practical joke" in the Freudian (which is also the English-language) sense, "in which a person becomes comic as the result of human dependence on external events…without regard to the personal characteristics of the individual concerned."[92] If in other words the universe of Seldwyla might be seen, in Benjaminian terms, as "the universe of enforcement without judgment, in which both verdict and pardon express themselves through laughter" (op.cit.), this is not true for the novella itself, which provokes laughter in its readers not in the place of a judgment or verdict concerning "righteousness," but as its logical consequence; not "without regard to the personal characteristics" of the righteous, but because of them and, above all, their investment in certain (self-) representations.

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[90] Wolfgang Preisendanz (op.cit.) identifies "Hans im Glück" als eine "'Intarsie' der Novelle *Der Schmied seines Glückes*.

[91] See for example Freud's concern that the *Schadchenwitze* (marriage broker jokes) might be nothing more than *Schwänke* (*SE* VIII, 105). Both *Die drei gerechten Kammacher* and *Der Schmied seines Glückes* bear a noteworthy resemblance to the *Schadchenwitz* in being set against the background of the search for a bride who will fulfill certain "qualifications" (wealth in the *Kammacher* story and a fine-sounding name in the tale of the hapless *Schmied*).

[92] *Jokes*, op.cit., p.199; a footnote alerts readers to the fact that "practical joke" was rendered in English already in the original.

II ***Buchbinderpoesie*** [93]

Throughout "Die drei gerechten Kammacher," the eponymous protagonists are taken to task for their propensity for concealment of "personal" property, from their bundles of coins to their most cherished dreams. Just as Jobst's ethos of modesty and humility successfully disguises the fact that he is "a dirty pig" (*ein kleiner Schweinigel*, 188), there is always a "dirty" underside to the face or façade the righteous combmakers present to the world -- one that the narrator moreover appears to take distinct pleasure in exposing. Thus on the day of the race, when the three men, preparing to leave their living quarters for the last time, appear to be nothing if not forthcoming:

> The strange (*seltsam*) thing was that all three for the first time openly took their treasures out from under their tiles and stowed them in their packs without counting them. For they had long known that each knew the others' secret (*Geheimnis*) and in the time-honored manner did not suspect each other of trespass on personal property: each knew that the others would not steal from him, just as, in the sleeping quarters of journeymen, soldiers and so on there should be neither locks nor mistrust (37, 211, translation modified).

As strange or atypical as it is for the secretive journeymen, their attempt at being "open" with one another is grasped as yet another sign of their closed ranks against the rest of the world, a bond of righteousness that consists in a special, almost fetishistic relationship to "personal property" as a kind of talisman. The combmakers' *Schatz* Züs Bünzlin likewise cultivates an

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[93] Cf. Keller's letter to Hettner of October 15, 1853 (*GB* I), the first to make reference to the *Seldwyla* novellas ("Ein Bändchen Novellen ist ganz spielend entstanden…"): "Das Romanzerogedicht [Keller's Heine satire] werde ich nun doch allein herausgeben, da es in dem Gedichtbändchen nicht mehr Platz hatte, 'weil die vorrätigen gepressten und vergoldeten Pappdeckel zu eng seien.' Das kommt von unserer Buchbinderpoesie. Man wird nächstens leere Einbände kaufen mit schönen Titeln" (381).

ostentatious respect, even worship, for her belongings, only some of which are precious in the conventional sense. Most of these things are locked away in a cupboard that doubles as a treasure chest, the key to which Züs wears around her neck. It would nevertheless be somewhat misleading to describe them as *hidden*. On the contrary, like "the person" of Züs herself (*die Person selbst*), the washerwoman's treasure is all the more conspicuous for being kept under wraps (197). [94]

According to a logic reminiscent of clothes fetishism according to Freud, Züs's love of veils, scarves, and coverings of all kinds -- not to mention boxes, cases, packets, and caskets -- is presented as the flip side, as it were, of a narcissistically motivated impulse towards exhibitionism that is well-served by the courtship of the three combmakers:[95]

All three tried to outdo each other in devotion, modesty and prudence, in the gracious art of allowing themselves to be ruled by their strict mistress, admiring her without any personal advantage, so that when the whole company was together it resembled some strange prayer meeting where the most peculiar witness is borne. In spite of all this piety, however, it constantly happened that one or the other, jumping the track of praise for their common mistress, sought to blow his own horn and found himself, gently reprimanded by Züsi, humiliatingly interrupted (*beschämt*

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[94] "She owned a great many clothes, of which she wore only a few and always the oldest, but she was always carefully and neatly dressed…" (26, 197). See also the travesty of Züs's costume on the day of the race: "She was wearing a wide hat with big yellow ribbons, a rose-colored chintz dress with out-of-style flounces and furbelows, a broad black velvet belt with a copper clasp and red fringed shoes of Moroccan leather. In her hand she carried a big green silk reticule filled with dried pears and prunes and over her head she held an opened umbrella topped by a large lyre made of ivory. She had hung her medallion with the monument of blond hair about her neck and stuck the golden forget-me-not on her breast, and she was wearing white knitted gloves" (38, 218). On the motif of *cross*-dressing in Keller, see Antje Harnisch, "Die sucht, den Mann zu spielen." *German Quarterly,* vol. 68, no. 2, 1995, pp. 147-160.

[95] See especially Freud's remarks in "Freud and Fetishism: Previously Unpublished Minutes of the Vienna Psychoanalytic Society." Ed. and trans. Louis Rose. *Psychoanalytic Quarterly* 57 (1988), 147-66, in which clothes fetishism is identified as the female form of exhibitionism (itself already a feminization or "passive" form of the "active" or male desire to look).

unterbrochen) or was forced to listen to her reminding him of the virtues of the others, which he was then quick to recognize and confirm (204, translation modified).

If the combmakers' ostensible devotion to "righteousness" well complements their compliment-hungry mistress, the underlying force of their egotism (*Eigennutz*) undercuts it. It is thus no coincidence that this paragraph plays upon the preface's description of the Seldwylers, whose "power, glory, and leisure" (*Macht, Herrlichkeit, und Gemütlichkeit*) – itself already an echo of the "Lord's Prayer" – has here become "devotion, modesty, and prudence" (*Ergebenheit, Bescheidenheit und Verständigkeit*). If moreover the Seldwylers "must learn for a foreign tyrant.. .to…stand straight and tall," the combmakers enter into the "school" (*Schule*) of the laundress to enhance their righteousness – only to risk exposing it as a sham. It is thus fitting that where the combmakers are "shamed" for any inkling of the desire to (re)present themselves in a favorable light, the Seldwylers' lessons follow on, and from, the most shameless exhibitionism; their "choice" of "jolly and pretty creatures" for wives is correlated with the desire to "show off in public for a few years" (*einige Jahre Staat machen,* 196, 24). Outfitted with clear echoes of the *belle dame sans merci*, Züs can thus also be read as a Freudian female narcissist *avant la lettre*, against whom the narrator – rather ungallantly – pulls no punches. In this he is emphatically to be distinguished from the founder of psychoanalysis, for whom narcissism succeeds in endowing (a "type" of) Woman a certain dignity:

The significance of this type of woman for the love-life of mankind is to be assessed very highly (*sehr hoch einzuschätzen*). It appears namely clearly discernible that the narcissism of one person develops a significant attraction for those who have relinquished the full extent of their own narcissism and find themselves in the pursuit

of object love […] It is as if we envied them the maintenance of a blessed psychic state, an unassailable libidinal position, that we ourselves have since given up.[96]

That males, as a rule, have always already renounced of a portion of their (primary) narcissism (*sich des vollen Ausmasses ihres eigenen Narzissmus begeben haben*) has been deduced from what Freud calls an "over-estimation" (*Überschätzung*) of the love object, itself remarkably reminiscent of Freud's own high estimation (*Einschätzung*) of the female narcissist. Specifically, the lover who has chosen an object "according to the attachment type" is seen to have transferred (*übertragen*) a portion of his "primary" narcissism to the account, or credit, of his beloved, at the explicit cost of his own ego-libido (*eine Verarmung des Ichs an Libido zugunsten des Objektes*, 55).

Freud's distinction between the "male" pattern of object choice and the female, or narcissistic, variety first appears as the contrast between, on the one (male) hand, "objects" that promise narcissistic compensation for a self-love that has been -- at least partially -- relinquished or yielded to the embodiment of an ideal; and, on the (female) other, "objects" that gratify narcissism by reflecting (back) an ideal that is incarnated not only first and foremost, but forever by the self itself:

Strictly speaking, it is only themselves that such women love with an intensity similar to that of man's love for them. Nor does their need lie in the direction (*geht auch nicht dahin*) of loving, but of being loved; and the man who fulfills this condition is the one who finds favor with them (*sie lassen sich den Mann gefallen, welcher diese Bedingung erfüllt*, 55).

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[96] Freud, "Zur Einführung des Narzissmus," in: *Studienausgabe*., op.cit., Band III, p.55, translation mine.

To the extent that the "need" of the narcissist does not go anywhere (*geht…nicht…hin*), it is in a sense not a "need" at all, providing no impetus or forward momentum towards something like satisfaction. Where Man dreams of someday reclaiming his lost narcissism via (his "choice" of) Woman, the narcissist is she who has, as it were, chosen not to "choose"; and this, according to Freud, in order to compensate herself for a "socially stunted freedom of object choice" (*eine Selbstgenügsamkeit…welche das Weib für die ihm sozial verkümmerte Freiheit der Objektwahl entschädigt*, 55). Having foreclosed all libidinal investment (in love objects), it is as inconceivable for the narcissist to lose anything as it is for her to achieve any real gain. This however does not mean that s/he is literally short of "love objects," or suitors.[97] On the contrary: collecting conquests like so many charms on a chain endlessly redoubles or reproduces the original refusal, as it were, to transfer self-love to the account of an object (consequently) held to be special and unique.[98]

What "On Narcissism" can thus be seen to construct is a correlation between femininity and a certain kind of backwardness or conservatism. For while the male desire for "possession" of the beloved object necessarily orients him towards the future as the place where things -- above all, the "object" -- will be different (that is, satisfying), the narcissist is concerned only to sustain her "self-sufficiency" (*Selbstgenügsamkeit*): to fulfill or maintain a "condition" (*Bedingung*) rather than to still a desire that is analogous to (e.g. biological) need. Where the quest for an object chosen according to the attachment (male) type ultimately turns out to have

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[97] As Mikkel Borch-Jacobsen notes in his masterly reading of this text, "woman makes an object choice (needs an object), if only to renounce it" (Borch-Jacobsen, *The Freudian Subject,* Translated by Catherine Porter. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1982, p.111).

[98] "Die Berlocken," in: *Das Sinngedicht.* Gert Sautermeister, ed. München: Goldmann Verlag, 1996.

been nothing more than the attempt to *re*store the narcissistic past, "narcissistic object choice" is that which has yet to distance itself from – much less renounce -- that past, and thus to open itself to a story or trajectory, in the first place. The narcissist's refusal to cast her lot in with (the pursuit of) a "privileged" object thus implies, above all, a refusal to take a gamble on the redemptive promise of time, or the vision of the future as the place of redemption. Always already compensating herself for a narcissistic wound that is never perceived as such, the female narcissist is interested or invested in the future *strictly* as a reproduction – or at best an intensification (*Steigerung*) -- of the past, that is: of "primary" narcissism (55). If she is destined to remain caught in the fetishization of the past as the site of (narcissistic) plenitude and fulfillment, the problem for the lover "according to the attachment type" becomes an exaggerated attachment to, or overdependence on, the future.

In Züs's case, of course, the collection of "love objects" such as the three suitors who precede the three combmakers is echoed or doubled by the ceaseless acquisition of literal objects or things; and among these prized possessions, the most dearly cherished are her books.[99] In contrast to her fellow Seldwylers, who, as a rule, "do not read," Züs "had kept all her schoolbooks from years past and hadn't lost a single one," a particularly superfluous precaution in that "[e]verything to be found in these books," from Schiller's *Die Räuber* to "various *Treasure Troves* (*Schatzkästlein*) and *Gardens of Roses* (*Rosengärtchen*)," was also to be found "in her head" (199, 27). Not only does Züs preserve all the mementos or souvenirs of her life; she "reads" only what she already knows by heart. Given this aversion to novelty of any kind, it

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[99] For a study of the motif of reading in Keller based on the literary theories of Rene Girard, see Gail Hart, *Readers and their Fictions in the Novels and Novellas of Gottfried Keller.* Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 1989.

is no coincidence that the inventory of her treasure suspends the -- in any case limited -- action of the novella for several pages running.[100] Within this extended catalogue, the itemization of books and letters is saved for (almost) last:

> …*finally*, a little book with silver edges bound in sky-blue ribbed paper and entitled *Golden Rules of Life for a Young Woman as Bride, Wife and Mother*; and a small dream-expounder, a guide to letter-writing, five or six love letters and a scarificator for letting blood (*Schnepper zum Aderlassen*) […] as security (*Unterpfand*) for one gulden and forty-eight kreuzers which she had once lent [the surgeon's apprentice] in cash [and] with which she clandestinely (*unter der Hand*) let blood for all the women of her acquaintance and so earned many a pretty penny (25-26, 197, my emphasis).

At first glance, the placement of the lancet among cherished various books and papers seems merely to underscore the arbitrary distribution of the items in the collection. Yet this juxtaposition of, on the one hand, ink on paper and, on the other, skin pierced to release blood also graphically recalls Züs's copy of the Lord's Prayer, "printed in gold letters on a tenuous, red, translucent glassy substance [Züs] called 'human skin'" (25, 196). The suggestion would seem to be that of a hypocritical adherence to a credo of "bloodlessness" that covers (for) an underlying depravity or even bloodthirstiness. That the ostensibly "modest" laundress is a creature of almost insatiable appetite is indeed implied, for example, by the "humorous" explanation given for the refusal of another former lover, the surgeon's apprentice, to pay back the cash he took on loan[101]: "the unworthy fellow maintained that he owed nothing, since she had

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[100] According to Hoverland (op.cit.), the depiction of the treasure constitutes one-sixth of the text.
[101] The intimations of vampirism in the characterization of Züs were first noted by Lee Jennings ("Gottfried Keller and The Grotesque," *Monatshefte* 50, 1958, pp.9-20) and greatly expanded upon by Hoverland (op.cit.)

put the money in his hand at a dance to pay for their expenses and she had eaten twice as much as he" (25). Even before emphasizing this clash between form (restraint) and content (greed), however, it is worth remaining at the level of form itself. For already Züs's preservation of every word of the "Our Father" stands in the most pointed contrast to the censorious gesture of "bloodless righteousness," which on the contrary is said to have "stricken" from the prayer its central petition for forgiveness. In this context, it is Züs's hunger for the "spice" (*den Pfeffer*) of flattery, rather than her more literal appetites, that is noteworthy: "…she was well able to tolerate strong praise; in fact, she loved its spice all the more the stronger it was, and when one praised her wisdom, she would keep as still as could be until the eulogist has poured his heart out, whereupon she would take up the thread (*den Faden aufnahm*) with heightened unction, adding extra touches to the portrait he had sketched" (30, 202). The motif of seasonings or preservatives reappears in the discussion of Züs's idiosyncratic sense of humor. On most days she can be found maintaining "that severe and measured air that always comes over women when they are doing the laundry": "Only when the ironing began did it make way for a greater cheerfulness (*Heiterkeit*), which in Züsi's case was however always seasoned with wisdom (*mit Weisheit gewürzt*)" (26, 198, translation modified). As that which drags Seldwylan *Heiterkeit* back down to earth (the precise inversion of the floating or slightly unhinged combmakers), Züs's "wisdom" underscores what was already intimated by her ability endlessly to spin a thread of self-adulation, namely: that the most egregious of the laundress's transgressions from the ethos of modesty and moderation consists in her (ab)use of discourse, "incessant speeches" in which she displays her ability to "to assign all things their proper place and…to judge all

things…young and old, high and low, learned and unlearned had to submit to her judgment" (27, 199).

Züs's ceaseless articulation of righteousness, in which the exercise of "judgment" covers for more primitive (aggressive and/or sexual) impulses, does not fail to find its precise equivalent in the speeches of the combmakers. Thus for example, when young women enter the workshop bearing fresh fruit, Jobst immediately proceeds to transform his "thousand and one desires" (*tausend und ein Gelüste*) into "a thousand little pieces of advice as to how [his co-workers] might fry or peel the apples they had bought" (*tausend kleinen Ratschlägen, wie sie die gekauften Äpfel braten oder schälen sollten*). This exercise in sublimation is but one example of the way in which the eldest combmaker, as mindfully as he avoids spending money or engaging in trade (*Handeln*), "most scrupulously evaded…all disputation (*Händeln*)":

> …as curious as he was to observe and pass judgment on all kinds of gossip and controversies, because these things provided him with free entertainment while the other journeymen primitively indulged in carousing, still he was careful never to interfere in the affairs of others or to let himself be caught in an imprudent act" (21, 192, translation modified).

Far from successfully concealing his narcissism, Jobst's "careful" avoidance of certain speech acts makes it at least as visible -- or audible -- as the speeches or (Sunday) sermons he does make.

If the realm of the spoken word accentuates the underlying similarity between the "righteousness" of Züs and that of the combmakers, a crucial (sexual and/as temporal) difference emerges through the discussion of (Züs's) writing.

From school and from her catechismal instruction she still retained the skill of writing essays, composing edifying passages for memorization and all kinds of apothegmatic schemata, and sometimes on a quiet Sunday she would compose the most extraordinary (*wunderlichen*) essays by attaching to some euphonious title she had heard or read a string of the strangest and oddest sentences, whole pages full, just as they sprang from her singular brain, as, for example, on the usefulness of the sickbed, on death, on the wholesomeness of renunciation, on the enormousness of the visible world and the mysteriousness of the invisible, on life in the country and its pleasures, on nature, on dreams, on love, something on salvation through Christ, three points concerning self-righteousness (*drei Punkte über die Selbstgerechtigkeit*), thoughts on immortality. She would read these compositions to her friends and admirers and, if she was particularly well-disposed towards someone, would give (*schenkte*) him one or two such essays, and he had to lay them in his Bible, if he owned one (199-200, 27-28, translation slightly modified).

Züs's *oeuvre* consists in a "Kreislauf der Dinge," in which reified or fetishized words are endlessly transferred from one place, or account, to another : originating in the bound volumes of her collection, they find their way to the laundress's "singular brain," and, from there, back on to the page, only to end up -- by way of a primitive or homemade kind of bookbinding -- (back) between two covers. In the pages of the Bible, as well as those of the novella, Züs appears as "a subject…seeking through the gesture of the gift to constitute its own unity and, precisely, to get its own identity recognized so that that identity comes back to it, so that it can reappropriate its identity: as its property" [102]: Holy Scripture, ostensibly charged with reflecting the glory of the

[102] Derrida, op.cit., p.11. Cf. the above-cited "Buchbinderpoesie" letter, in which Keller responds to Hettner's inquiry as to whether he has read Fanny Lewald's new novel *Wandlungen* by conceding that he has not; he nevertheless harbors his impressions of the book's significance : "Wie es scheint, will sie sich mit Gewalt zur Alleinherrscherin beider Geschlechter dies- und jenseits des Rheines erheben und womöglich noch die einzige Romanschreiberin ihrer Zeit sein" (379).

Judeo-Christian divinity, is reduced to reflecting, and thereby guaranteeing, the singularity of Züs.[103]

It cannot however escape notice that the only one of Züs's essays to be referred to by name, *Drei Punkte über die Selbstgerechtigkeit* echoes not just any "euphonious title," but that of the combmaking novella itself. If the "funny" thing about Züs having set out to address *Selbstgerechtigkeit* is that she does not recognize her own self-righteousness (much less the way it continues to be reflected in series of "threes"), the bite of the novella's ironic title is inextricable from the combmakers' presumption or projection of righteousness. A similar chiasmus indeed structures the representation of the sexes throughout the novella. For while the combmakers' show of modesty and humility is ultimately found to contain a (cruel) hint of truth, Züs's altogether more "showy" exhibition of righteousness constitutes an accurate reflection of her character only by way of inversion, or as a mirror image: in her case, it is not righteous pride, but on the contrary modesty or shame that is only skin-deep -- as, for example, when she turns "as red as fire" in being reminded of her ignorance of the origins of tortoiseshell.[104] Züs's relative imperviousness to shame, or her *Schamlosigkeit,* is underscored by the motif of "blindness"– which however can only itself be "seen" by way of her investment in or cathexis of *other* objects or protuberances. Züs is "a shallow nature (*eine kurze Natur*)" who "could not, in spite of all of her imagined wisdom, see beyond the end of her nose" (224, 48); "a learned blind woman" who compensates for the lack of visual sense with the love of "hearing herself talk" (199-200, 28). But nowhere does the laundress's want of penetration become more manifestly

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[103] It is moreover perhaps not entirely a coincidence that this reduction can also be read as a historical regression via the similarity between the name of the (distinctly father-identified) "Zues" and "Zeus," the king of the gods in Greek mythology.
[104] Cf. 218, 43.

legible than by way of the so-called "Chinese Temple." "[C]overed with a veil of seagreen gauze to protect it from dust and unworthy glances," the parting gift of her former suitor, the bookbinder, "commanded a place on Züsi's old-fashioned (*altväterische[n]*) chest of drawers":

> She held it so sacred that she kept it new and unused and put nothing in its multitudinous containers; in addition, she remembered its maker by the name of Emanuel, whereas he was actually called Veit, and told everyone that only Emanuel had ever understood her and fathomed her essence. Only she had never admitted as much to him, but kept him strictly in check, and to spur him on to higher things had often indicated that he understood her least when he imagined he understood her best. In return, he also played a trick on her by placing in a double bottom in the very middle of the temple a ravishingly beautiful letter, dampened with tears, in which he expressed his unutterable sadness, love, devotion and eternal fidelity in such appealing and uninhibited language as only true feeling lost in a fun-house maze can find. But since she had no inkling of this hidden treasure, it happened in this instance that fate was just and a deceitful beauty did not get to see what she was undeserving to behold. In addition, it symbolized that she was the one who did not understand the foolish but honest and sincere nature of the bookbinder. (201-202; 29-30, trans. modified).

A construction of cardboard to which the bookbinder has devoted the "patience, skill, and workmanship" of his trade, the "Chinese Temple" (the very name of which makes subtle reference to the geographical origin of paper) is a bound volume turned inside out, such that the cover has become the only visible or legible content. Instead of marks on a page designed to evoke a certain depth in the mind of the reader, the three-dimensional monument is designed to bear witness to the superficiality of its only beholder. The "Chinese Temple" does not however exhaust itself, or its significance, in exposing (Züs's) depth as an illusion by way of "[m]irrored walls and columns" that open up on to "other mirrors and tiny hidden pictures" (29, 201); it is

also duplicitously designed to hide another, alternative depth in a "double bottom." Thus inverting the function of the green veil, which allows and indeed invites viewers to see (only) that there is something they are unworthy to see, the bookbinder's "hidden treasure" has simultaneously articulated (*aussprach*) *and* concealed an unrequited love which is, strictly speaking, unspeakable (*unsäglich*). Like the letter it clandestinely contains, the Temple both does and does not "say" what it "means"; or, more precisely, what it means is always already ambiguous. For while the superficial and empty form of the piece implies that Züs is not worth loving (*liebenswürdig*), both its status as a gift and the receptacle for a love letter speak to the fact that she is, nevertheless, loved.[105]

By the same token that it thus lends itself to different readings, however, the Temple ultimately renders an utterly unequivocal verdict: the fact that "a false beauty did not get to see what she was undeserving to behold," which is cited as an instance of the justice or rightfulness of fate (*so geschah es hier, dass das Schicksal gerecht war und eine falsche Schöne das nicht zu Gesicht bekam, was sie nicht zu sehen verdiente*, 202). If there is anything of ambiguity or *Doppeldeutigkeit* left here, it follows on, rather than being contradictory of, Züs's own self-serving claim that the bookbinder "was the only one who understood her and fathomed her essence": "In addition, it symbolized that she was the one who did not understand the foolish, but honest and sincere nature of the bookbinder" (*Auch war es ein Symbol, dass sie es war, welche das törichte, aber innige und aufrichtig gemeinte Wesen des Buchbinders nicht verstanden*, 202). If Züs fails to get the bookbinder's joke, its teller or performer himself appears

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[105] Cf. the explanation for the fact that Züs – whose appearance is described as "not without charm" -- has not yet been "taken" or chosen as a wife by one of her fellow Seldwylers: "dass sie um einiger Mittel Willen keine hässlichen oder *unliebenswürdigen* Frauen nahmen," 196, my emphasis.

"foolish" (*töricht*) as well as, or perhaps as a consequence of being, "honest and sincere." Directed in equal measure against Züs's duplicity (*eine falsche Schöne*) and her lack of understanding, by contrast, the final judgment handed down by "fate" points to the correlation between "foolishness" and a fundamental *dis*honesty or hypocrisy.

Züs's duplicity can well be regarded as the consequence of an alliance between femininity and conservatism very similar in kind to the retention of "primary narcissism" outlined by Freud in his essay. Thus, for example, when the three combmakers appear at the door with news of the master's plan for the race:

> [Züs] was much moved and disconcerted by this unexpected event, but she was still the first to regain her composure and, surveying the situation, determined at once to make her own fate dependent upon the master's singular idea, which she regarded as a higher inspiration. [106] Touched, she took out her *Treasure Trove* (*Schatzkästlein*) and stuck a pin between the leaves; the passage she hit upon concerned perseverance in following a worthy goal. Then she let the excited journeymen try their luck and everything they lit upon concerned zealous pursuance of the straight and narrow, going forward without a backward glance, a career of some kind; in short, it all had to do with walking and running, so that it was evident that tomorrow's race was ordained (*vorgeschrieben*) by heaven (33-34; 206-207).

That Züs is "the first to regain her composure" is inextricable from the way that everything – even the most surprising or "unexpected" event – has, in her mind, always already been accounted for. The combmakers, by contrast, cling to the scraps of text she offers as desperately and naively as to the "threads of hope" (*Hoffnungsfaser*) they hoped to find in Seldwyla. Indeed, it is not too much to say that that which Züs's particular (narcissistic) form of blindness does not

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[106] The translation assigns more (devious) agency to Züs than Keller does in rendering *betrachtete* ("looked") in the infinitive ("to look"), as if she had "determined" not only "to make her own fate dependent upon the master's singular idea," but also how to look at it ("as a higher inspiration," 33).

allow her to "see" is the precise inversion of that which the combmakers fail to perceive: while the washerwoman consistently refuses to envision the future as a place of (new) things to come, the combmakers are notable above all for having irrevocably cut themselves off from the past. It follows that where Züs obsessively retains nearly every thing or object that has ever crossed her path, the combmakers take compulsive refuge in the (almost) wholly *im*material realm of fantasy.

It does not contradict the essential dreaminess of the craftsmen to note that the novella's first mention of fantasy or the imagination (*Phantasie*) laments their almost total lack of it. Where the "art (*Kunst*) of the journeymen (*Gesellen*)" consists in adorning their product with "large brownish-red tortoiseshell cloud banks, each according to his fancy (*Phantasie*), so that when one held the combs against the light, one believed (*man glaubte*) to see the most glorious sunrises and sunsets, red mottled skies, storm clouds and other speckled natural phenomena" (16, 186), the elder combmaker performs his task "so soberly and with such dearth of imagination (*phantasielos*) that he always smeared the same three wretched spots (*Kleckse*) on the horn" (17, 188). What is underscored here, once again, is the combmakers' tenuous grasp of reality. And yet, just as Züs's adulation for or "worship" of inanimate objects cannot be equated with a true understanding of them, the combmakers' lack of imagination ultimately expresses itself through a few but highly significant items. Jobst's attempt to avoid all suggestiveness notwithstanding, even the "three spots" on the comb appear to anticipate the fateful encounter of the three combmakers under one roof. An even more resonant – that is fantastic -- relationship to "things" is suggested by Jobst's frantic search of the new combmaker's bags. Ostensibly seeking evidence of the same "folly" or vanity that is so prominent in Seldwyla, Jobst finds instead

… nothing more…than almost exactly the same things (*fast die gleichen Siebensächelchen*) that he owned himself, even down to wooden needle-box, which however in [Fridolin's] case was in the shape of a fish, whereas Jobst, as a joke, possessed an infant in swaddling clothes; and instead of a dog-eared French grammar for popular use, which Jobst sometimes thumbed through, the Bavarian was found to have a well-bound little volume entitled *The Cold and Hot Vat: An Indispensable Manual for Dyers.* Inscribed within were however the penciled words: "Security (*Unterfand* [sic]) for the 3 coppers I lent the Hessian." From this [Jobst] inferred that the Bavarian was a man who kept his affairs in order (*das Seinige zusammenhielt*), and involuntarily surveying the floor, he discovered a flagstone that seemed to him as though it had recently been lifted; sure enough, beneath it he found a real hoard (*richtig ein Schatz*) wrapped up in an old torn handkerchief and tied with a string, almost as heavy as his own, which, by way of distinction, was stuck in an old tied-up sock. Trembling, he replaced the floor tile; trembling from excitement and admiration for this foreign greatness (*fremde Größe*) and deep concern for his own secret (*aus tiefer Sorge um sein Geheimnis*, 22-23; 193-194, translation slightly modified).

As in Züs's conflation of books and a scarificator with which she earns "many a pretty penny," the combmakers presume a fundamental substitutability of "well-bound volumes" for the "real" or proper treasure buried beneath the floorboards. Already suggested by the function of Fridolin's only reading material as security for a loan, this juxtaposition reappears in the misspelling security or deposit (*Unterpfand*) as *Unterfand* – which, if it existed, might be rendered as "something found below." Jobst's exercise in hermeneutics likewise starts not from the *outside* cover of the "well-bound volume," which invites "Dyers" rather than "Combmakers" to open it, or even from the words printed therein, but from penciled scrawls on the cover's in- or underside: a text, moreover, that is only waiting to be erased at a time when debts will have paid in full and, consequently, "justice" restored.

As was already indicated by the (figurative) censorship of the "Lord's Prayer," it is for the righteous as if *all* texts are simply waiting to be "erased" in the name of something "higher," a redemption and/as compensation that is yet to come.[107] Consequently, Jobst's master plan, or plan to achieve mastery, figures both as "his guiding star" (19, 189) and his underlying or ulterior motive "at the *bottom* of all his deeds and endeavors" (ibid., my emphasis), depending on whether it is regarded from the perspective of the present (in which the significance of the plan lies in the future or in the heavens) or that future itself (in which the sacrifices of the present will have been revealed as necessary and meaningful, rather than random and needless). An exclusive focus on the future at the explicit expense of both the present and the past is a prominent feature of Jobst's most characteristic daydream, which -- as if to underscore the inverse relationship between righteousness and any kind of growth or (even plot) development – itself appears to launch the novella for no less than the third time. Having opened with an exposition of its "moral" in the first sentence, "Die drei gerechten Kammacher" begins its story proper with Jobst's arrival in Seldwyla (*Einst kam ein Geselle angereist…*) only to interrupt itself once again with yet another "once":

Once (*Einst*) [Jobst] had been the only journeyman in the shop for several weeks, and during this period he felt as happy as a fish in water. Especially at night he reveled in the broad expanse of bed and made very economic use of this time to indemnify himself for the coming days (*sich für die kommenden Tage zu entschädigen*) and, as it were,

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[107] Perhaps nothing serves to distinguish the combmakers more definitively from their literary successor Silas Marner, whose life "had reduced itself to the functions of weaving and hoarding, *without any contemplation of an end towards which the functions tended*," than this single-minded focus on the future (Eliot, *Silas Marner. The Weaver of Raveloe.* Edited with an introduction by Q.D. Leavis. London: Penguin, 1967, p.68, my emphasis). For a comparative reading of the two texts, including their mutual "antagonism toward providentialism," see James Diedrick, "Eliot's Debt to Keller: *Silas Marner* and *Die drei gerechten Kammacher.*" *Comparative Literature Studies* 20, 1983, pp.376-387.

to triple his person by constantly shifting position and imagining that three were lying in bed together at once, two of whom were entreating the third not to be shy (*sich doch nicht zu genieren*) but to make himself comfortable. This third person was himself (*Dieser Dritte war er selbst*), and thus encouraged (*auf die Einladung hin*) he would voluptuously wrap himself (*wickelte sich…wollüstig*) in the whole blanket or spread his legs wide apart, lie crosswise over the bed or, with innocent pleasure (*harmlose Lust*), turn somersaults in it (21, 192).

The core of this fantastical game or performance consists in the image of "wrapping" (*wickeln*). Etymologically related to "Windel" (diaper or swaddling), *wickeln* will appear again, in the above-cited account of Jobst's very few prized possessions, in the form of a needle-box that, "as a joke" – and once again a private one -- represents "a babe-in-arms" (*scherzhafterweise ein kleines Wickelkindchen*, 193). Jobst's fantasy is indeed legible as a reference to the infantile past, in which two (parental) figures invite or welcome him onto the scene. Crucially, however, this backward glance gleans its significance (only) in relation to the future. Not only does Jobst's vision pre-emptively compensate him "for the coming days"; it does so by gleefully anticipating the reward of narcissistic gratification awaiting him at the end of his "submissive" servitude.[108]

If the combmakers simultaneously under- and overestimate the significance of "objects," then, that is above all because of their idiosyncratic relationship to time, one that differs both from Züs's fixation on the past and from the interest taken in the future by the daydreamer according to Freud. In "Der Dichter und das Phantasieren," Freud presents fantasy as a construct

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[108] In this it precisely anticipates Jobst's later "daydream," the projection of his wishes for the future on a small insect crawling on the ceiling of his room. It is moreover no coincidence that this scene, which finds Jobst lying on his back, represents the literalization of a *Rückblick*, the "backwards glance" that he has already been said to lack; and indeed, even here he continues to look *forward* to having "the best chance of winning out over his rivals" (211, 37).

in which "past, present, and future" events are strung like beads on a chain (*Schnur*) of a wish:

> Consider the case of a poor and orphaned youth (*Jüngling*) to whom you have named the address of an employer where he might be able to find a position. On the way there he may let himself go in a daydream that has aptly (*angemessen*) arisen out of his situation. The content of this fantasy will be something like this: that he is taken on, liked by his new boss, makes himself indispensable in the trade, is drawn into the family of the master, marries the charming little daughter of the house and then himself takes over the business as a partner and later as successor. And thereby the dreamer has replaced (*ersetzt*) that which he possessed in his happy childhood: the protective house, the loving parents and the first objects of his tender affection. You see by such an example how the wish uses an occasion in the present to cast an image of the future in the pattern of the past (*wie der Wunsch einen Anlass der Gegenwart benützt, um sich nach dem Muster der Vergangenheit ein Zukunfstbild zu entwerfen,* 175).

Freud's model, *Muster,* or master fantasy reads like (the outline of) a fairy tale or novella – which, since the essay in question sets out to establish a link between fantasy life and literature, is hardly a coincidence. In particular, the plot is reminiscent of E.T.A. Hoffman's "Meister Martin und seine Kupfergesellen," a novella that "Die drei gerechten Kammacher" skews or parodies by rendering the protagonists three *old* men who, far from wishing to replace the master in order to gain a bride, desire a bride only in order to replace the master.[109] In a manner not dissimilar to the playing child according to Freud, the object of the combmakers' desire is trumped by the "object" of their (narcissistic) identification, that is: by a subject. Against this background, it is more than fortuitous that both the *Wickelkindchen* on Jobst's box and the "fish" on Fridolin's -- like Jobst's fantasy of "wrapping" himself in the bedcovers, where he feels "as

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[109] On the relationship between these two texts see Hinrich Siefkin, "Kellers Novelle *Die drei gerechten Kammacher.* Vom Eigentum und den höheren Sphären der Meisterschaft." *Zeitschrift für deutsche Philologie* 104, 1985, pp.204-223.

happy as a fish in water" -- are potent Christian symbols."[110] Yet the combmakers' Messiah complex or *imitatio Christi* differs substantially from Züs's reference to the departed bookbinder as "Emanuel": if for the combmakers the "last judgment" is still to come, the glorious event to which the laundress and her "objects" never cease to bear witness has always already taken place.

III. *Das Heim(at)liche*

That the arrival of a *Doppelgänger* is simultaneously the greatest single threat and the necessary accompaniment or counterpart to the righteousness of the combmakers follows from the way that each of them remains irrevocably split between his present and (presumed or projected) future identity. At the same time that a double or alter-ego endangers the integrity of the former, it functions as a kind of stand-in for or anticipation of the latter. Thus Jobst's attempt to distance himself from the newcomer Fridolin, whereby the eldest combmaker "kept to himself (*hielt er an sich*) and held his peace about even the simplest matters as if they comprised a great secret (*wie ein großes Geheimnis*)," ultimately serves only to bring the two combmakers closer together, each drawn to the other by a fascination with a presumed "secret," namely their fantasies of future redemption and even glory:

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[110] Cf. Lukas 2:12 (in Luther's translation): "Und das habt zum Zeichen: ihr werdet finden das Kind in Windeln gewickelt und in einer Krippe liegen." In the early years of Christianity, the shape of a fish hung near the entryway to a dwelling served as a (secret) sign of the household's faith. This symbolism has its roots in the reading of the Greek *ichthys* (fish) as an acronym of the names and titles of "Jesus Christ, the Son of God, Savior" (Jesus Christos Theou Hyios Sotar). For other examples of "religious" (Christian) symbolism in the novella, see Keith Leopold, "Religious Satire in Kellers *Die drei gerechten Kammacher.*" *Studies in Swiss Literature/ Aufsätze zur Schweizer Literatur.* University of Queensland, 1971, pp.7-13; and Dürr, op.cit.

For what other reason should [Fridolin] be such a sensible, docile and shrewd customer, if he didn't have something mysterious (*Heimliches*) and very advantageous to himself up his sleeve? Now the pair of them sought to worm information out of each other, all very cautiously and peaceably, by means of hints and insinuations. Neither was willing to give a clear, reasonable answer, but after a few hours each knew that the other was nothing more or less than his perfect double (*sein vollkommener Doppelgänger*, 193, 22).

The "but" (*doch*) here is somewhat mischievous, for of course the mutual recognition between Jobst and Fridolin takes place not *despite* the fact that they refuse to give each other "a clear, reasonable answer," but *because* of their reticence. Just as the audience of Jobst's humorless Sunday sermons "could readily see" (*man ihm wohl ansah*, op.cit.) his "*inner* irony," it is precisely in the combmakers' silence that their "secret" – or rather, the fact *that* a secret is being kept – is not only revealed, but literally made visible (*von weitem anzusehen*, 193).

The temporary solution to the potential conflict inherent in the desire of the two elder combmakers for the same goal or position of "mastery" accordingly lies in the mutual projection of their ideal, or "future," selves onto each other, each seeing in the other that which he is striving to be(come): "It was not so much rivalry as a self-conscious mastery that animated them, and neither disdained to take the other as his model (*sich den andern zum Vorbild zu nehmen*) and to imitate (*nachzuahmen*) such minute traits of perfect conduct as he might lack himself" (23, 194, translation modified). When, following the arrival of Dietrich, "the recognition that had taken place between [Jobst and Fridolin] was…repeated in triplicate," this precarious equilibrium is disturbed, and the situation becomes even "more serious": "…since all three faced each other on equal footing, like the angles of an equilateral triangle, and no intimate relationship was any longer possible between two of them, no treaty or friendly rivalry, all three

were doggedly determined to outlast each other both in bed and in the workshop" (195, 24). Where Jobst and Fridolin have "read" (only) each other as the incarnation of future glory, the arrival of Dietrich forces the fantastic projection of the ideal (back) onto the future itself, and thus to a resolution that will single out, or be to the advantage of, only *one* of them. It is this singularity that is reflected or doubled by "the person" of Züs Bünzlin:

> All three admired her intellect and her eloquence, and in his admiration none thought himself (*dünkte sich*) too lowly to possess such a jewel, especially as this enrichment (*Zierde*) of any household was such a bargain and consisted solely of a non-stop tongue. Whether they themselves are worthy of what they esteem so highly and would know what to do with it is a question such dimwits (*Schwachköpfe*) ask themselves last or not at all, for they are like children who reach out for anything that glitters, try to lick the colors off gaily-painted objects and stick an entire rattle in their mouths, instead of simply holding it to their ear. (218-219; 44-45, translation slightly modified).

The combmakers' failure to ask the question of self(-worth) *first*, far from rendering it irrelevant, secures its utter tyranny over their future in the form of a (narcissistic) projection. This qualitative overvaluation (*Überschätzung*) of Züs accordingly appears as the counterpart to her quantitative over-estimation of herself, as evidenced not only by the collection of countless objects, but the command issued to her three lovers to imagine "that three Miss Bünzlins are suing for each of you and sitting around you…so that I am, as it were, here present in ninefold form, gazing at you with longing from every side!" (214, 40).

The combmakers' confusion and surprise and being presented with this task stems from the centrality to their imaginative "vision" of Züs's singularity as the mirror of their own presumed or projected one. For once the quest for mastery has, through Dietrich's intervention, taken the form of a quest for a mistress, the narcissistic visions of glory that fed the

combmakers' fantasies, and which Jobst and Fridolin turned towards each other, become concentrated in the "one and the same dream [that] hovered nightly over this three-leaf clover":

> …until one night it became so vivid that Jobst flung himself back from beside the wall and shoved Dietrich, Dietrich propelled himself back and shoved Fridolin, whereupon there broke out in the hearts of the sleep-drunk journeymen wild resentment and in their bed a terrible struggle, so that for three minutes they kicked, stomped, and struck out at each other so violently that all six legs got entangled in one another and the whole coil (*Knäuel*) tumbled out of bed with a fearful yell. Fully awake, they thought that the devil had come to fetch them or that robbers had broken into their room. They sprang up with a scream, Jobst took up a position on his floor tile, Fridolin hastened to his and Dietrich to the one beneath which he had already collected a little nest egg, and thus they stood in a triangle, trembling and flailing their arms in the air in front of them, screaming bloody murder and crying: "Go away! Go away!" (*Geh fort!*) until the startled master came in and calmed his crazed journeymen. Trembling with simultaneous fright, rancor, and shame, they finally crept back into bed and lay silently beside each other until morning (32; 204-205).

The combmakers' three-way rivalry has the traumatic effect of bringing the future, or the dream of a "heavenly Jerusalem" (*himmlisches Jerusalem*, 33, 206) ever nearer while simultaneously threatening to revoke its promise forever. Because that promise is not only of heaven on earth, but of their *own* "worthiness," this construct leaves them vulnerable not only to "fright" (*Furcht*) and "rancor" (*Groll*), but also to "shame" (*Scham*).

This nightly visitation (*der nächtliche Spuk*) proves to be a mere prelude (*Vorspiel*) to the unpleasant reality that "two of [the combmakers] are to be let go" (*wandern müssten*, 205). It is at this point that the master presents his "jocular solution" to the problem of singling out only one of the three journeymen, the contest that, in practice, will take on distinctly nightmarish

overtones. Particularly disturbing is the depiction of how Jobst and Fridolin are stripped of certain key accessories in full view of "the ladies" of Seldwyla gathered at "all the windows": "They had lost their hats and canes; two boys were carrying them on ahead, the hats stuck on the canes, while the unruly mob streamed along behind them" (226, 49). In particular, the situation in which the two elder combmakers find themselves recalls or rather anticipates what Freud, in Chapter Seven of *The Interpretation of Dreams,* will call "The Embarrassing Dream of Nakedness": the "dream of being naked or insufficiently clad in the presence of strangers…[and] experiencing shame and embarrassment. One wants to run away or hide oneself and is thereby subjected to a peculiar inhibition, feeling oneself unable to change the distressing situation, of not being able to move from the spot" (*Der Traum, daß man nackt oder schlecht bekleidet in Gegenwart Fremder sei…[und daß man] Scham und Verlegenheit empfindet, entfliehen oder sich verbergen will und dabei der eigentümlich Hemmung unterliegt, daß man nicht von der Stelle kann und sich unvermögend fühlt, die peinliche Situation zu verändern,* 248). No matter how fast they run, the combmakers can no longer hide. Moreover, if the "nature and manner of the exposure" in "Die drei gerechten Kammacher" is "rather vague," so too were the accounts of the patients who had reported an "Embarrassing Dream of Nakedness." Indeed, in Freud's view, "the deficiency in dress, as a rule, is not serious enough to justify the feeling of shame attached to it" (ibid.) Likewise -- however cruelly indifferent the Seldwylers are to the combmakers' plight -- it is clear that its traumatic character is ultimately to be sought in the subjective experience of the two old men.

There is however a sense in which Keller's novella graphically fails to be typical of "The Embarrassing Dream of Nakedness." For that the people of Seldwyla openly regard the

combmakers' distress as riotous entertainment and an occasion for an extraordinary celebration (*einem unerhörten Freudentage*, 225) stands in marked contrast to the comportment of the spectators in the dreams recounted to Freud:

> The persons before whom one is ashamed are almost always strangers whose facial expressions remain indeterminate. In the typical dream, it never happens that one is reproved or even noticed on account of the lack of clothing which causes oneself such embarrassment. On the contrary, the people in the dream appear to be quite indifferent; or, as I was able to note in one particularly vivid dream, they have stiff and solemn expressions. This gives us food for thought (248).

Indeed, this gives Freud so much to think about that he devotes the larger part of his analysis to the contradiction (*Widerspruch*) between the shameful perception (*Schamverlegenheit*) of the dreamer and the (non-)reaction of the "solemn" (*feierliche* -- rather than, as in the *Kammacher* novella, celebratory or *feiernde*) strangers s/he confronts. In particular, Freud ventures the hypothesis that, while the dreamer's own feelings of embarrassment have "somehow been retained" (*durch irgendwelche Macht gehalten*, 249), "laughter, astonishment, or indignation" on the part of the spectators has been eliminated by the power of wish-fulfillment.

In order to lend (a curiously negative kind of) support to this theory, Freud turns to Hans Christian Andersen's modern fairy tale, "The Emperor's New Clothes." Andersen famously tells of two swindlers who claim to have woven a beautiful robe for the emperor that is only visible to the true of heart. The emperor holds a procession to show off his new clothes, and the crowd, afraid of exposure as morally unworthy, pretends to be able to see a beautiful robe. In Freud's view, Andersen thereby shows himself to have been "inspired by the incomprehensible nature of

the dream content to create a new costume in which the situation as it is present to memory will make sense" (*daß der unverständliche Trauminhalt eine Anregung gegeben hat, um eine Einkleidung zu erfinden, in welcher die vor der Erinnerung stehende Situation sinnreich wird*, ibid.). For Freud, by contrast, the content of the dream does not provide the foundation or blueprint (*Grundlage*, 249) for a story, but is itself a character in a larger plot centering on a repressed wish: "The swindler is the dream, the emperor is the dreamer himself, and the moralizing tendency betrays a dim awareness that the latent content of the dream concerns wishes that have been sacrificed to repression" (*Der Betrüger ist der Traum, der Kaiser der Träumer selbst, und die moralisierende Tendenz verrät eine dunkle Kenntnis davon, daß es sich im latenten Trauminhalt um der Verdrängung geopferte Wünsche handelt,* ibid.). What is really at stake in this work of fiction, as in every dream, is "wish-fulfillment"; only the interference and, consequently, distortion of repression make it appear to be a question of "morality."

Although it is consigned to a footnote, not the least of the "clues" to this effect, for Freud, is the importance ascribed in Andersen's story to the child, the only character who dares to voice the truth of the emperor's state of (un)dress. What this suggests, at least to Freud, is that the proper context of the dream of nakedness must be recognized not as the adult realm of kingdoms but childhood, the "impressions" of which "crave reproduction for their own sake, perhaps without further reference to their content, so that their repetition is a wish-fulfillment" (*daß die Eindrücke aus der ersten Kindheit…an und für sich, vielleicht ohne daß es auf ihren Inhalt ankäme, nach Reproduktion verlangen, daß deren Wiederholung also eine Wunscherfüllung ist,* 250). In the context of the Embarrassing Dream of Nakedness, what is "repeated" is childhood in its specific function as the time when "we were seen by our relatives

as well as outside caretakers, maids, visitors in scanty clothing, and we were then not ashamed of our nakedness" (*Nur in unserer Kindheit gab es die Zeit, daß wir in mangelhafter Bekleidung vor unseren Angehörigen wie von fremden Pflegepersonen, Dienstmädchen, Besuchern gesehen wurden, und wir haben uns damals unserer Nacktheit nicht geschämt*, 249-250). Indeed, notes Freud, disrobing not only fails to shame children; it also has an intoxicating effect on them (*wie berauschend auf sie wirkt, anstatt sie zur Scham zu leiten*): "They laugh, jump around, hit their bodies; the mother or whoever is there reprimands them, saying: "Phooey, for shame, you mustn't do that" (*Sie lachen, springen herum, schlagen sich auf den Leib, die Mutter oder wer dabei ist, verweist es ihnen, sagt: Pfui, das ist eine Schande, das darf man nicht*, "Dreams," 250). But perhaps the most palpable evidence of the childish pleasure in exhibitionism (*Exhibitionsgelüste*) emerges whenever a "wanderer" appears: "one can hardly pass through a village in our surrounds without encountering a two- or three-year-old who raises his shirt before the wanderer, perhaps even in his honor" (*…man kann kaum durch ein Dorf in unseren Gegenden gehen, ohne daß man einem zwei- bis dreijährigen Kleinen begegnete, welches vor dem Wanderer, vielleicht ihm zu Ehren, sein Hemdchen hochhebt*, 250).

What links Andersen's child to Freud's is thus above all a certain shamelessness (*Schamlosigkeit*) or even obnoxiousness (*Unverschämtheit*) that, whether through unchecked words or self-exposure, is played out or put on display before an audience of adults. Crucially, however, it is not this performance itself that constitutes the "wish" at the heart of the dream. In contrast to, for example, "Der Dichter und das Phantasieren," in which it is emphasized that the child's earnest game (*Spiel*) is not performed for anyone's benefit but the child's own, Freud here insists that the uninhibited performance is always and necessarily addressed to, even

intended "in honor of," someone else, a third party.[111] Despite the fact that the witnesses to childish exhibitionism are cast as strangers (like the wanderer), in the plural, or both (*vor unseren Angehörigen wie von fremden Pflegepersonen, Dienstmädchen, Besuchern,* op.cit.), the crowd in the dream is ultimately identified as the inverse of *one particular and familiar* love object whose importance stands in direct proportion to his – or, more pertinently, her -- absence:

> The substitute for [those persons who are the objects of our sexual interest in childhood] offered by the dream, the number of strangers who take no notice of the spectacle offered them, is precisely the counter- wish to that single intimately-known person for whom the exposure was intended. "A number of strangers," moreover, often occurs in dreams in all sorts of other connections; as a counter-wish they always signify "secret."

What links secrecy, or the attempt to circumvent exposure, and exhibitionism, which openly stages it, is that both follow on and from the introduction of conscience and/as the consciousness of other people's expectations. If then it is the absence of any "laughter, astonishment, or indignation" that, by the logic of "wish-fulfillment," reveals the crowd to be a cover for the "one" person to whom the exposure was offered (*jener einzlenen, wohlvertrauten Person, der man die Entblößung bot*), that is only because the (m)other, "or whoever is there," functioned in the original or primary scene of exhibitionism as *both* the beloved and, therefore, intended audience of "the proffered performance" (*das gebotene Schauspiel*) *and* the authority

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[111] Cf. above n32.

figure who censors or reprimands (*verweist*) the little exhibitionist: both, in other words, an object of affection or desire and an object of (future) *identification,* the power (of conscience) through which prohibitions will be "retained."[112]

Always already entangled with or enveloped by the (M)Other as both love object and the agent of prohibition, the child -- or, more pertinently, her "ego" – is in a crucial sense never really "naked," but always already accompanied and anticipated by others' expectations. This makes it all the more noteworthy that, in the same chapter of *The Interpretation of Dreams*, Freud provides an assessment of Gottfried Keller that places him at a far remove from Hans Christian Andersen (who Freud will later identify as the source of the least *unheimlich*, if not the canniest, fiction he knows).[113] Unlike his Danish colleague, who was duped by his own version of the "Embarrassing Dream of Nakedness" into believing in the primacy of morality over the fantasy of wish-fulfillment, Keller is said to have provided an occasion when "a sharp poetic eye analytically perceives the transformative process, of which the writer is otherwise the instrument, and follows it back the other way, i.e. traces fiction back to the dream" (*gelegentlich hat ein scharfes Dichterauge den Umwandlungsprozeß, dessen Werkzeug sonst der Dichter ist, analytisch erkannt und ihn in umgekehrter Richtung verfolgt, also die Dichtung auf den Traum zurückgeführt,* 252). This transformation, and therefore inversion, of the transformative process would indeed help to explain why the crowd in "Die drei gerechten Kammacher," unlike that in the Embarrasing Dream of Nakedness, is mocking rather than silent. Freud's reference is not

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[112] On the way that the figure of the mother plays this dual/impossible role in *Der grüne Heinrich,* see Jochen Hörisch, *Gott, Geld, und Glück. Zur Logik der Liebe in den Bildungsromanen Goethes, Kellers und Thomas Manns.* Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1983.

[113] "Wir haben gehört, dass es im hohen Grade unheimlich wirkt, wenn leblose Dinge, Bilder, Puppen, sich beleben, aber in den Andersenschen Märchen leben die Hausgeräte, die Möbel, der Zinnsoldat, und *nichts ist vom Unheimlichen entfernter*." Freud, "Das Unheimliche," in: *Studienausgabe,*op.cit., Band IV, p.268, my emphasis.

however to the combmaking novella, but to the novel *Der grüne Heinrich.* The relevant passage is in quotation marks, followed by Freud's commentary:

"I do not wish, dear Lee, that you should ever come to know from experience the exquisite and piquant truth in the situation of Odysseus, when he appears, naked and covered with mud, before Nausicaa and her playmates! Would you like to know how that goes? Let us keep to this instance. Suppose you are wandering about in a strange land, separated from your home (*Heimat*) and everything that is dear to you, having seen and experienced much, living in sorrow and worry, utterly wretched and forlorn; then without fail a dream will come to you at night that you are approaching your native land (*Heimat*). You see it gleaming and glowing in the most beautiful colors; lovely, gracious, and beloved figures come towards you; and then you suddenly discover that you are running about in rags, naked and covered in dust. A nameless shame and fear seizes you, you attempt to cover yourself, to hide yourself, and awake bathed in sweat. As long as there have been human beings, this has been the dream of the miserable man who has been tossed hither and thither; and thus Homer has drawn this situation from the profoundest and most eternal elements in humanity!"[114]

The profoundest and most eternal essence of humanity which, as a rule, the writer counts on awakening in his listeners, are nothing but these stirrings of the psychic life rooted in the age of childhood that subsequently becomes prehistoric. Behind the unobjectionable and permissibly conscious wishes of the homeless man (*des Heimatlosen*), the wishes of childhood, now suppressed and forbidden, break into the dream; and it is for this reason that the dream which is objectified in the legend of Nausicaa is regularly transformed into a nightmare (*Angsttraum*).

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[114] "Ich wünsche Ihnen nicht, lieber Lee, daß Sie jemals die ausgesuchte pikante Wahrheit in der Lage des Odysseus, wo er nackt und mit Schlamm bedeckt vor Nausikaa und ihren Gespielen erscheint, so recht aus Erfahrung empfinden lernen! Wollen Sie wissen, wie das zugeht? Halten wir das Beispiel einmal fest. Wenn Sie einst getrennt von Ihrer Heimat und allem, was Ihnen lieb ist, in der Fremde umherschweifen und Sie haben viel gesehen und viel erfahren, haben Kummer und Sorge, sind wohl gar elend und verlassen, so wird es Ihnen des Nachts unfehlbar träumen, daß Sie sich Ihrer Heimat nähern; Sie sehen sie glänzen und leuchten in den schönsten Farben, holde, feine und liebe Gestalten treten Ihnen entgegen; da entdecken Sie plötzlich, daß Sie zerfetzt, nackt und staubbedeckt umhergehen. Eine namenlose Scham und Angst faßt Sie, Sie suchen sich zu bedecken, zu verbergen und erwachen im Schweiße gebadet. Dies ist, solange es Menschen gibt, der Traum des kummervollen, umhergeworfenen Mannes, und so hat Homer jene Lage aus dem tiefsten und ewigen Wesen der Menschheit herausgenommen." Keller, *Der grüne Heinrich,* III, 1 (1.Fassung), op.cit., pp.321-322.

That Keller's *Bildungsroman* manages to overturn the hierarchical relationship between psychoanalysis and the "analysand" of literature has, in Freud's view, everything to do with its own function not only as a piece of writing but also as a reading: specifically, a re-casting of Homer's account of Odysseus's half-naked appearance before Nausicaa and her companions. In Keller as in Homer, the motif of "the homeless man" is seen to function as an "unobjectionable" cover for the wishes of childhood that inspire anxiety (*Angst*) to the extent that they are now forbidden fruit.

There is however an equally important difference to be noted: if Keller's *Der gruene Heinrich* is ultimately silent on the subject of the way in which the "lovely, gracious, and beloved" figures react to his nakedness, Homer's text, which according to Freud presents us with "the objectification of the dream," in fact depicts the reaction of Nausicaa's maidens to Odysseus's "manhood" as anything but indifferent: "one look at him sent them scuttling in every direction along the jutting spits of sand."[115] After Nausicaa has calmed them, Odysseus requests that they disappear again: "I should be ashamed to stand naked in the presence of gentlewomen" (108). In this way – that is, due to the civility of the parties involved -- the story of Odysseus's nudity is in fact not one of unmitigated humiliation, but of shame spared or relieved. One source of embarrassment nevertheless remains for Homer's hero: even after he has washed and dressed, he remains a stranger and far from home. Nausicaa assures him that a speedy journey to "the palace of [her] father, King Alcinous," will prove the most expedient means of addressing his difficulty, and adds: "It is quite easy to recognize; any little child could show it to you" (110). It will indeed be a child who points out the way to the palace; unbeknownst to Odysseus, however,

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[115] Homer, *The Odyssey,* Chapter VI, p.105.

she is none other than Athena in disguise. Carefully guarding her own identity, the goddess is disarmingly straightforward about the need for his protection: "…the people here have little affection for strangers and do not welcome visitors with open arms" (112-113). Entrusted to the ears of anyone else in town, Odysseus's confession to the "child" -- "For you see, I am a stranger here, who has come from a distant land and met with misfortune on the way" (112) -- would probably have been more than a cause for embarrassment; it might have led to his expulsion or even death.

It is, I want to suggest, above all in the context of this relationship between adult and child that the above-cited excerpt from *Der grüne Heinrich* – with which Freud, to whom the passage was recommended "by a friend," may or may not have been familiar – is of interest. The only child to appear in Keller's novel is the one to whom the Homeric retelling is addressed, namely the young boy Heinrich (who, since the episode constitutes part of the "Jugendgeschichte," is in both editions also the narrator). The story is recounted by his first "real" teacher or "master"; when chapter headings are added in the second edition, this section will become known as "A Miracle and a Real Master" (*Ein Wunder und ein wirklicher Meister*). The artist Römer has recently returned from an extended sojourn abroad – above all, as his name suggests, in Rome – and agrees to instruct Heinrich in the ways of draftsmanship against the wishes of the boy's mother, who is duly concerned about the influence of one who "has returned to his homeland so isolated and unknown" (*so einsam und unbekannt in seiner Heimat angekommen sei*). Heinrich nevertheless loyally continues to attend lessons, even plundering his own savings (*Sparkästchen*) to finance them. But what he learns from their encounters, and from

the cautionary tale of the homeless man's dream in particular, is not primarily drawing but rather a new form of reading:

> As it indeed seems I am destined always to discover a new path by ways of fits and starts, brief flashes and catchwords, these hints of Römer's, particularly of the piquant, had more of an effect that if I had spent years reading Homer on my own. I was eager to discover such things myself, and thus learned to read with more consciousness and intention.[116]

This passage is the only one of the entire chapter that will fall victim to the censorious tendencies of the elder Gottfried Keller when he prepares the second edition of *Der grüne Heinrich* for publication. Particularly given Keller's "timid" tendency always, as Benjamin points out to move towards "decorum, correctness" when editing his own work – itself reminiscent of Freud's famous analogy between dream-work and censorship – it is of course possible that this deletion centers on the reference to "the piquant."[117] But perhaps Keller also grew nervous at the suggestion that "conscious and intentional" reading is inextricable from a process of imitation and (mimetic) identification such as that in which the combmakers will find themselves hopelessly entangled.

"Die drei gerechten Kammacher" -- unlike *Der grüne Heinrich* (Heinrich and Römer), *The Odyssey* (Athena and Odysseus), or *The Interpretation of Dreams* (the child "exhibitionist"

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[116] "Da es mir einmal bestimmt scheint, immer ruckweise und durch kurze Blitze und Schlagwörter auf eine neue Spur zu kommen, so bewirkten diese Andeutungen Römers, besonders diejenigen auf das Pikante, mehr als wenn ich den Homer jahrelang so für mich gelesen hätte. Ich war begierig, selbst dergleichen aufzufinden, und lernte dadurch mit mehr Bewußtsein und Absicht lesen" (*Der grüne Heinrich,* op.cit., p.322).

[117] See Benjamin,op.cit., p.56: "Keller's deliberate whittling away at the form of the language is indeed inhibited; he was quite timid in reading his own works. We can see from the textual apparatus of the *Complete Works* how for the most part it was the desire for decorum, correctness, that led him to make changes, and only rarely the wish for greater imaginative precision."

and the wanderer) -- not to mention George Eliot's *Silas Marner* (Eppie and Silas) -- does not know such an alliance between the young, on the one hand, and passersby or outcasts, on the other. Not only is it "two boys" who aggravate the combmakers' humiliation by making their lost property into effigies; Jobst in particular is the victim of a childish audacity that is decisive in the further course of the race:

> They were already near the city gate, whose towers were occupied by curious onlookers waving their caps; the Saxon and the Bavarian were running like frightened horses, their hearts full of torment and anxiety; at this moment a street urchin (*Gassenjunge*) knelt like a goblin (*wie ein Kobold*) on Jobst's sack and let himself be pulled along to the cheers of the bystanders. Jobst turned around and entreated him to get off, even striking at him with his cane, but the boy only ducked and grinned at him (225, 49).

Like the boy in Hans Christian Andersen's fairy tale, this youth is utterly without compunction. But whereas the shamelessness of Andersen's child stems from his unadulterated relationship to the truth in the face of adult hypocrisy – from his role, as his father puts it, as "the voice of innocence" -- Keller's uncanny boy treats the business of his elders as if it were a theatrical performance or, perhaps, a game. What we have here is thus the precise inversion, or even perversion, of "humor" in Freud's account, according to which youthful seriousness is relieved or alleviated by mature joviality: in "Die drei gerechten Kammacher," it is the old men who have wagered everything on the future, and the young urchin, as well as the boys who parade the combmakers' effigies through the streets, who have nothing left to lose nor, by extension, anything to hide.

Reading Freud by way of Keller, one would have to conclude that the "Ernst" of the (playing or speaking) child is at least as much a projection of the adult audience – and perhaps particularly the humorist -- as the reverse process, whereby the child projects all seriousness onto the adult world of (what s/he takes to be) heartfelt investment and earnest desire. In that case, however, shamelessness, like the audacity of Keller's street children, would appear not so much as the symptom of narcissism as a signal of its "absence" -- at least in all its naked isolation. Just as the child (exhibitionist) always performs for the benefit of a third party, in other words, the "narcissistic" subject must be recognized as one who has always already transferred all value – including, indeed especially, the value of the "self" -- to the account of an Other of whom s/he is a "mere" imitation or echo. Against this background, the figure of the urchin in Keller's novella stands (in) for the – strictly speaking impossible -- position of the minor or the *mimos*: the one who, by way of imitation, represents (nothing but) imitation or mimesis itself.[118] Far from stopping at or with the homeless outcasts of Seldwyla, moreover, this open-air performance immediately contaminates, as it were, the combmakers themselves. By doubling them -- or, since they are already each other's *Doppelgänger*, by *re*-doubling them -- the "goblin" accordingly constitutes the very opposite of an "evil demon of discord" (*ein böser Dämon des*

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[118] See Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe's discussion of the *mimos*: "That is, in effect, anyone at all, but a 'just anyone' who signals himself (if we can use this kind of expression) as 'such,' who exhibits 'his' non-identity, who brings along in 'his' history (Oedipus), or 'his' function (the king), in 'his' *ethos* (the fool) or 'his' trade (the actor, the artist), the dreaded evidence of the primal status and undivided rule of mimetic confusion" (Lacoue-Labarthe, "Typography," in: *Typography. Mimesis, Philosophy, Politics.* Ed. and trans. Christopher Fynsk. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998, p.116). A key footnote elaborates: "Oedipus confuses the familial roles; the king represents all the functions; the fool mixes up words and deeds; and the actor represents ethical and ethological virtuosity, in the sense in which the Greeks spoke of 'ethological' mimes. To this list one might add, by way of example, thinking of a famous passage from *The Gay Science* (Aphorism 361) 'the' Jew and 'the' woman: in short, everyone (and history has ceaselessly confirmed this in a terrifying way) of whom "one" can say that they do not have visibly – do not manifest – any property, that they always offer themselves *as* (something they 'are' not). Thus all of those, as well, to whom 'one' denies, in the very name of proprietary defensiveness, the right to property" (ibid., p.116n117). To this list I would further add – as the legal status of "minority" already suggests – the *child* (who of course in Freud becomes Oedipus as well as – e.g. in "On Narcissism" -- the king ("His Majesty the Baby").

Zwiespaltes, 207) against which Züs had cautioned her three suitors. Far from the climax of a rivalry that centers on the common or mutual cathexis of an object (much less a treasure), what the games and/as performances of the street children gesture towards is the radical absence of any quality or "property" – including, indeed perhaps especially, a *home* – with and through which a subject might legitimately and unmistakably identify herself.

The threat, and therefore the anxiety, with which "Die drei gerechten Kammacher" finally confronts its readers is not so much the return of repressed and (that is, because) forbidden wishes of childhood as the fear that those wishes themselves are secondary and derived; that, as Lacoue-Labarthe has it, "the 'self'-styled 'subject' might 'consist' of nothing more than a series of heterogeneous and dissociated roles, and to fraction itself endlessly in this multiple borrowing." [119] It will therefore come as no surprise that the story does not come to a definitive close with the unhappy ends of the *Doppelgänger* Jobst and Fridolin. It (re)turns, first, to Dietrich, the youngest and wittiest combmaker whose superiority over the other two extends to encompass more literal attributes, or treasures:

> Jobst was leaning on a stout bamboo cane, Fridolin on an ash staff, flamed and painted red and black, while Dietrich had a fantastic giant of a staff, twined about with an untrimmed network of branches.
> He was almost ashamed (*schämte sich beinahe*) of this ostentatious accoutrement, which was a relic of his early days on the road, when he had been by no means as settled and sensible as he was now (38, 212).

Dietrich's misplaced shame makes him the most exemplary of the story's "moral" that righteousness does not "pay" in the straightforward sense that it is not (narcissistically)

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[119] "Typography," op.cit., p.129.

gratifying nor, by extension, productive of pleasure or joy (*keine Freude*). Yet no sooner has this lesson or moral been articulated than it is immediately overturned by Züs's belief that she is herself "the source of all good" (*die Quelle alles Guten*), an unswerving faith to which the novella has ceaselessly borne witness by way of her inimitable "gift" for mimicry, her constant (mis)quotations from "sources" of all kinds and genres. Even as it amuses the reader, the *Schwank* of Züs and Dietrich is thus not without its premonitions of an utter rootlessness, or radical homelessness, that haunts the ego as the price of its most cherished treasures.

Chapter Two

Mirroring Mimesis Through the Ages: "Romeo und Julia auf dem Dorfe"

I

The world of Keller's writing is a mirror world – even down to the fact that something in it is fundamentally inverted, left and right having changed places. While the active and weighty maintains its order seemingly intact, the masculine imperceptibly changes into the feminine, the feminine into the masculine.
-Walter Benjamin, "Gottfried Keller"[120]

Mirrors not only appear in Keller's fiction almost as often as treasures; like the "mirrored walls and columns" that open up on to "other mirrors and tiny hidden pictures" in Züs Bünzlin's beloved Chinese Temple, reflective surfaces in his work often stand in suggestive relationship to cherished objects. Perhaps no novella renders this association more graphic than the *Märchen* (fairy tale) of "Spiegel, das Kätzchen" ("Mirror, the Little Cat"), the last story in the first volume of *Die Leute von Seldwyla*. Called Spiegel because of his shiny coat of fur, the cat tells – under just the kind of severe duress that inspired Scheherazade -- the story of a secret cache of gold coins. Because Spiegel's mistress had ill-advisedly used them as a means of testing her lover's capacity for distinguishing the "love of money and goods" (*die Liebe zu Geld und Gut*)

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[120]"Eine Spiegelwelt ist die Welt der Kellerschen Schriften – freilich auch darin, dass etwas in ihr von Grund auf verkehrt, rechts und links darinnen vertauscht ist. Während das Tätige, Gewichtige in ihr scheinbar unangetastet seine Ordnung wahrt, wechselt das Männliche ins Weibliche, das Weibliche ins Männliche unmerklich hinüber" Benjamin,op.cit., p.291. English translation modified from: Walter Benjamin, *Selected Writings.* Volume 2, 1927-1934. Michael Jennings et.al., eds. Trans. Rodney Livingstone and Others. Cambridge, Mass. And London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1999, p. 57.

from the "love of herself" (*die Liebe zu sich selbst*), the glittering pieces of metal become a fetish, first fondled like the lover she loses to death and subsequently banished from sight forever.

My study of Keller's early novellas focuses on precisely the two categories of (love) object upon which Spiegel's mistress founders. As we have begun to see, it is questionable whether, in Keller's fictional universe, a fundamentally narcissistic desire (*die Liebe zu sich selbst*) can be distinguished with any rigor from the love of things (*die Liebe zu Geld und Gut*). This problem reappears in "Romeo und Julia auf dem Dorfe"in a uniquely powerful way. Yet to the extent that "Spiegel, das Kätzchen" can serve here as a kind of allegory for the operations of Keller's *Liebesnovelle*, it is above all because of the way that the problematic of (the source of) object love is framed as a problem of storytelling. For Spiegel does not tell this tale of disappointed love merely to save his skin; instead, he proposes to use it, as he explains to his own lover, to "pay back in kind" (*mit gleicher Münze zurückzahlen*) his tormentor, the sorcerer Pineiß, by tricking him into what promises to be a tortuous marriage – a marriage remarkably similar to the Nemesis that the author/narrator of "Die drei gerechten Kammacher" used to exact retribution on both the obnoxious Züs Bünzlin and her self-righteous suitor Dietrich.

The intersections between allegorical plots and allegories of plotmaking make it all the more striking that "Romeo und Julia auf dem Dorfe" itself appears as kind of mirror-image of the "Kammacher" story.[121] In particular, the "unhappy ever after" that characterized the loveless marriage of Züs und Dietrich is replaced by the passionate but futureless union of Vrenchen and

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[121] For a reading of the entire *Seldwyla* cycle as an almost kaleidescopic hall of mirrors, see Gerhard Kaiser, *Gottfried Keller. Das gedichtete Leben.* Frankfurt a. M.: Insel, 1981. On the motif of mirroring in Keller, see Hans-Dietrich Irmscher, "Konfiguration und Spiegelung in Gottfried Kellers Erzählungen." *Euphorion* 65, 1971, pp.319-333.

Sali. The larger implications of this shift are already suggested by the problematic of *Heimat* with which we concluded our reading of the combmaking story. As we saw, "Die drei gerechten Kammacher" takes its departure from what is presented as the willful and (therefore) unethical homelessness of the wandering journeymen, such that Jobst's death appears as a fitting and perhaps even just conclusion to his self-imposed exile. Home or homeland in "Romeo und Julia auf dem Dorfe," by contrast, figures as a given, or a gift, the loss of which constitutes the story to be told. Far from appropriate, not to mention just, the death of the protagonists in "Romeo und Julia," like the death of the protagonist of *Der grüne Heinrich*, explicitly takes the place of integration into adult society -- even as childish an exemplar of it as Seldwyla.

The contrast between the *Liebesnovelle* and the *Schwank* can thus also be usefully framed in terms of genre. Unlike "Die drei gerechten Kammacher," which as we saw inverted the motifs and structures of *Der grüne Heinrich*, "Romeo und Julia" follows, or appears to follow, the pattern of a novel of development -- only to end in tragedy. In its intimation of the negative or or failed *Bildungsroman*, "Romeo und Julia auf dem Dorfe" not only echoes *Der grüne Heinrich*; it also anticipates George Eliot's *The Mill on the Floss*, for which it likely served as an inspiration.[122] Indeed, both Keller's novella and Eliot's novel attempt a kind of dual fictional biography, in which the development of "Boy and Girl" (the title of the first book of *The Mill on the Floss*) into man and woman is traced in tandem. Superimposed on this material, almost anthropological account of (the development of) sexual difference is the story of the previous generation, itself a story of an ultimately fatal error in judgment, or the error of using a legal

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[122] For comparisons of the two works see Allan Casson, "*The Mill on the Floss* and Keller's *Romeo und Julia auf dem Dorfe,*" *MLN,* Vol. LXXV, 1960, pp.20-22; and E.A. McCobb, "Keller's Influence on *The Mill on the Floss.* A Reassessment," *German Life and Letters,* 1980, 33, 199-208.

form of judgment as a means of more metaphysical retribution.

If "Romeo und Julia auf dem Dorfe," like *The Mill on the Floss*, attempts to bestow upon the fate of the economically underprivileged the dignity of tragedy, there remains a basic irony in the fact that it is precisely the effort of two petty (both narrow-minded and modestly propertied) farmers to endow their own lives with enhanced dignity or honor (*Ehre*) that leads to the premature and self-inflicted death of their children -- not to mention the permanent dispossession of the black fiddler. In what amounts to a kind of motto for the tale, Keller's narrator observes that "it is not only on thrones that 'defenders of the realm' miscalculate, but also at times in the lowliest huts; and when they do, they reach an end the exact opposite of that which they were trying to attain, and all at once the shield of honor is a tablet of disgrace" (112, 130, translation modified).[123] For our purposes of tracing the vicissitudes of "treasure," it is crucial to note that the farmers´ sense of honor -- not unlike the "righteousness" of the three combmakers – will prove disastrous not because it is too materialistic, but, on the contrary, because it is not materialistic enough; not because of a falsely posited causal relationship between property ownership and honor, but because of a failure to regard the connection with the proper gravity, casting it as "harmless" (*gefahrlos*) rather than deserving of the most profound respect. This necessity or law is suggested already by the plot: with the hindsight provided by the novella's *dénoument*, Marti's madness, Manz's miserable marriage, and Sali and Vrenchen's suicide (suicide, madness, and marriage constituting the same three fates upon which "Die drei

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[123] "A Village Romeo and Juliet," in: Gottfried Keller, *Stories.* Frank G. Ryder, ed. New York: Continuum Books, 1982, trans. Paul Bernard Thomas and Frank G. Ryder, p. 112; "Romeo und Julia auf dem Dorfe," in: Keller, *Die Leute von Seldwyla.* Mit einem Nachwort und bibliographischen Hinweisen von Gert Sautermeister und Anmerkungen von Hans Lankes. Munich: Goldmann Verlag, 1991,p.130. All further references to the English and German texts, respectively, will be given in the body of the text.

gerechten Kammacher" closed) appear simultaneously as the logical consequences of and variations on the fiddler's original or foundational exclusion from the privileges of property ownership and/as proof of citizenship (*Heimatschein*).

Taken as a cautionary tale, then, "Romeo und Julia auf dem Dorfe," like "Die drei gerechten Kammacher," would seem to suggest that there is something, like treasuring, that could hold, or rather could have held, the destructive and irreducibly mimetic nature of their conflict at bay. It is just such a capacity to treasure that the love between Sali and Vrenchen represents. Indeed, I will be arguing, "Romeo und Julia auf dem Dorfe" aims to give positive form, both more wholly and directly than "Die drei gerechten Kammacher," to this projected other of mimetic desire. It is thus no coincidence that where the three combmakers consistently mistook one meaning of *Schatz* (a repository for monetary value) for another (a term of endearment), *Schatz* appears in "Romeo und Julia" exclusively, and to all appearances fully appropriately, as a name for the precious and cherished beloved.[124] Despite the undeniably powerful representation of romantic love in the novella, however, the attempt to remove both desire and, by extension, the text from the realm of mimesis that the fathers so fatefully inhabit is ultimately unsuccessful. Keller's *Liebesnovelle* finally fails, in other words, to establish a ground -- or a home -- that treasuring could call its "own."

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[124] This begins at the latest during the first scene of their courtship: "Suddenly Vrenchen paused and said, 'And so it's all decided, then, that we've each got a sweetheart (*Schatz*)? Doesn't it seem that way to you?…'" (85, 101, trans. modified).

II. Identification, Papers

Having begun with the sense in which "Romeo und Julia auf dem Dorfe" reflects and inverts some concerns of "Die drei gerechten Kammacher" – a tendency to which we will periodically return – I would like now to address the parallel juxtapositions that are internal to and indeed constitute the structure of the text.[125] Already the title can be read as a "mirror" image, whereby "Romeo und Julia," on the one hand (or side), and "auf dem Dorfe," on the other, bear equal weight and/or responsibility for the arc of the story, i.e. for the lovers' death. The course of events is thus massively overdetermined: Sali and Vrenchen are doomed because their literary precursors were, and for similar reasons (a family feud), but also, and equally importantly, because they are at home in "the village," where their identities and stories are well-known and where they have no -- above all economic -- prospects.

It is thus no coincidence that the crucial scene in which Sali and Vrenchen buy each other the (secret) gift of a "ring" immediately gives way to their encirclement and enclosure by their fellow villagers, who surround them in a "ring" from which they feel the immediate need to escape.[126] If on the one hand nothing could be clearer than the contrast between this constrictive atmosphere and the love that liberates, however briefly, Sali and Vrenchen (a liberation that moreover, as many commentators have pointed out, is consistently associated with nature in opposition to the civilization of the village), the co-incidence of the two "rings" also points to an underlying, and deeply unsettling, symmetry between them. The famous opening lines of the

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[125] Almost every commentator on the novella notes its parallel structure. See, for example, Erika Swales, "*Romeo und Julia auf dem Dorfe:* The Dialectic of Order and Freedom," in: Swales, *The Poetics of Scepticism. Gottfried Keller and* Die Leute von Seldwyla. Oxford and Providence, USA: Berg, 1994.

[126] Cf. p.124: "Sali kaufte für Vrenchen ein goldenes Ringelchen mit einem grünen Glassteinchen, und Vrenchen einen Ring von schwarzem Gemshorn, auf welchem ein goldenes Vergißmeinnicht eingelegt war […] W'hrend sie in diese Dinge sich versenkten, waren sie so vergessen, daß sie nicht bemerkten, wie nach und nach ein weiter Ring sich um sie gebildet hatte von Leuten, die sie aufmerksam und neugierig betrachteten."

novella continue this dual track in reflecting (on) the relationship to the literary past in mimetic terms that can themselves be seen to anticipate the nature of the conflict between the fathers:

> To tell this story would be a pointless imitation (*eine müssige Nachahmung*), were it not founded upon an actual occurrence, thus demonstrating how deeply rooted in human life are those plots (*Fabeln*) on which the great works of the past are based. Such plots are relatively few in number, but they are constantly reappearing in new clothes, at which time they oblige one's hand to set them down (52, 65).

The problem of imitation (*Nachahmung*) (re)appears at what one is tempted to call a meta-fictional level at the same time that it, as we shall see below in more detail, constitutes that tale's content or theme. In the novella's original incarnation, however, the reproach against which the storyteller preemptively defends his story is not that of mimesis but a danger that – as Robert Holub has pointed out – appears to be its antithesis: the spirit of invention or fancy (*Erfindung*).[127] How does the threat of an overactive or even tyrannical imagination come to be displaced by that of all-too-slavish imitation?

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[127] See Holub, "The Desires of Realism: Repetition and Repression in Gottfried Keller's *Romeo und Julia auf dem Dorfe*," in: Holub, *Reflections of Realism:* Detroit/USA: Wayne State University Press, 1991, pp.101-131.The original opening paragraph read: "Auch diese Geschichte zu erzählen, würde eine müssige Erfindung sein, wenn sie nicht auf einem wahren Vorfall beruhte, zum Beweise, wie tief im Menschenleben jede der schönen Fabeln wurzelt, auf welche ein grosses Dichterwerk gegründet ist. Die Zahl solcher Fabeln ist mässig, gleich der Zahl der Metalle, aber sie ereignen sich immer wieder aufs Neue mit veränderten Umständen und in der wunderlichsten Verkleidung" (*HKKA,* 21, 171). This version appeared both in the Vieweg edition of 1856 and (with the minor alteration of deleting the opening "Auch," a reference to the story *Frau Regula Amrain* that preceded *Romeo und Julia* in the first edition of the collection), the novella's re-publication in Paul Heyse's *Novellenschatz.* As Robert Holub points out, the changes anticipate criticisms made by Alexander von Villers in his "Brief eines Unbekannten" -- notwithstanding the fact that Keller declared the piece to be "inaccessible even for irritation" ("selbst für den Ärger unzugänglich"): "A story can be an invention, but it cannot be an invention to 'tell' a story" ("Eine Geschichte kann eine Erfindung sein, aber es kann keine Erfindung sein, dass man eine Geschichte 'erzählt'"). Indeed, in the second edition it is precisely the *telling* of the story – rather than the story itself – that is defended against the charge of

In a first instance, the belated reference to mimicry appears designed to address the original version's perhaps unwittingly audacious suggestion that it is "Romeo und Julia auf dem Dorfe" itself – rather than *The Most Excellent and Lamentable Tragedy of Romeo and Juliet* – that figures as the model for "great works" of literature.[128] Yet if the introduction of the problem of *Nachahmung* is indeed intended as a compensatory gesture of humility, a further acknowledgement of the debt already recognized, or claimed, by the title, that only begs the question as to what, precisely, is being re-produced when one work of fiction reflects the influence of another: only, it seems, if the answer is "real life" (as opposed to literature) will the "copy" be hailed as a valuable and worthy (as opposed to pointless) one. This proclaimed allegiance to verisimilitude makes it all the more striking that the passage so dramatically fails, in either of its incarnations, to establish any clarity regarding its own origins in an "actual occurrence." The discovery by subsequent Keller scholarship that the source(s) might be found in the gossip of the author's day does little to change this. For what nevertheless remains unclear is how any "real event" whatsoever, whether reported in a newspaper article or passed along by word of mouth, could appear as the *Fabel* of young love that ends prematurely in death without the intervention of Shakespeare's tragedy, itself the re-working of a still older motif that heralds, as Keller was doubtless aware, from the Italian tradition of the novella.[129]

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mimesis. Villers's letter and Keller's response are reprinted, among many other places, in Jürgen Hein's edition of *Erläuterungen und Dokumente* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1971, pp.46ff.; hereafter: Hein).

[128] Similarly, "*ein* grosses Dichterwerk" was altered to read "die grossen alten Werke," thus appearing to refer to Shakespeare's tragedy (among others) rather than – at least in the first instance -- the novella itself.

[129] That Keller's tale is far from having a single source is well-known. The account (re-)printed in the *Zürcher Freitagszeitung* on September 3, 1847 of the suicide of two impoverished Leipzig teenagers likely merged in Keller´s imagination with the fate of a young couple that had drowned themselves near Zurich at around the same time. With reference to the German newspaper item, Gail Hart further observes that "the notorious 'wirklicher Vorfall' that inspired the novella had already passed into a vaguely romancelike form (possibly influenced by Shakespeare's tragedy) by the time it came to Keller's attention. Keller then based his story *not* on a real event that

As devoutly as it might wish to establish the priority of one (reality) over the other (its representation), then, the opening paragraph of *Romeo und Julia auf dem Dorfe* can in the end do little more than cast "life" and "literature" as two sides of the same coin or -- as in Keller's reply to Bertold Auerbach's critique of the title – two sides of (a piece of) paper: [130] "First of all, that which we [realists] ourselves write is also printed on paper, and in this aspect (*von dieser Seite*) belongs to the world of books; and secondly Shakespeare, albeit printed, is nevertheless nothing but life itself, not a lifeless reminiscence."[131] As in the first lines of the novella itself, Keller's letter addresses the matter of priority (*First…secondly*) only to leave it unresolved: "Shakespeare" is always already great literature by the same token that, and indeed only because, his work is always already "life." [132] Just as the "side" (*Seite*) or aspect of Keller's

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re-creates one of those 'Fabeln…auf welche die grossen alten Werke gebaut sind," but on a second- or thirdhand report of that event…It is furthermore difficult to believe that he did not recognize this" (82). Thus although it is true that, as Eric Downing puts it, "Keller´s *A Village Romeo and Juliet* grounds its realism at least in part on some extraliterary event," the reality of that event nevertheless remains inseparable from its "literary" or at least journalistic incarnation (Eric Downing, "Double Takes: Genre and Gender in Keller's Twice-Told Tales, the *Seven Legends.*" In: Downing, *Double Exposures. Repetition and Realism in Nineteenth-Century German Fiction.* Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000, p.93). In *Romeo und Julia* as in *Eugenia,* "Keller's narrative retelling" is consequently constituted "through mimetic reflection" (ibid.,108); like the legend, the novella too is a (at least) "twice-told tale."

[130]Cf. Auerbach, "Gottfried Keller von Zürich" (originally printed in: *Beilage zu der Augsburger Allgemeinen Zeitung,* Nr. 108, 17.April 1856): "Der Titel…erscheint mir durchaus unpassend: er octroyirt eine Stimmung (freilich um sich dadurch auch vor einem Vorwurf zu schützen), und versetzt in jene Literatenliteratur die nicht vom Leben ausgeht, sondern von der gedruckten Welt und ihren Erinnerungen, und die doch wohl nun überwunden ist" (reprinted in: Hein, op.cit., p.40).

[131] Keller to Auerbach, *GB* 3,2, p.186: "Erstens ist ja das, was wir selbst schreiben, auch auf Papier gedruckt und gehört von dieser Seite zur papiernen Welt, und zweitens ist ja Shakespeare, obgleich gedruckt, doch nur das Leben selbst und keine unlebendige Reminiszenz."

[132] Cf. Keller's letter to Ferdinand Weibert of August 29, 1875, when the title had to be accepted as a *fait accompli* but its justification in the opening paragraph remained open to question: "Den Eingang der Erzählung betreffend, so kann derselbe nicht wohl weggelassen werden, da der Titel, der nun nicht mehr zu ändern ist, einige Worte erfordert. Namentlich ist mir daran gelegen, zu sagen, dass das Hauptmotiv der Geschichte sich wirklich wieder begeben hat, weil nur dadurch die ganze Arbeit sich rechtfertigt. Es steht diese Schrulle wahrscheinlich in keiner Ästhetik, aber es ist etwas Wahres daran. Auf diese Weise ist mein Werklein keine Nachahmung; wohl aber ging ein Landsmann von mir unter die Nachahmer, der sofort nach der Erscheinung von 'Romeo und Julie' einen 'Lear auf dem Dorfe' schrieb. Ob Turgeniew beim Schreiben seines 'Lear in der Steppe' mein Büchlein kannte, weiss ich nicht" (*GB* III, 2, 262; reprinted in Hein, op.cit., p.50). The logic here seems straightforward enough, but its bearing on Keller's

argument remains inextricable from the "sheet" (*Seite*) on which it is printed, "life" and "literature" cannot be severed into separate economies or households for the simple reason that each can always already be taken to represent or even embody the material of the other: if on the one hand both life experience and literary texts can be fruitfully mined for literary treasure, it is equally legitimate to view the product that is the end or apotheosis of writing as irreducibly "literary" or, on the contrary, (evidence of and/or testimony to) "life."

The intimations of an irreducible chiasmus at the heart or the origins of fiction are further developed in the next paragraph. Like the evocation of *Nachahmung* that introduces the prefatory remarks, the image of the hand that closes them was also a later addition or afterthought. Its intriguing suggestion is that the writer has gotten a "hold" of his material – that is, his plots -- only to the extent that they have already secured a hold on him, forcing his hand, as it were (*zwingen…die Hand*). Remarkably, however, it is only when (*alsdann*) the fable is itself already covered and/or restrained by "clothing" (*Gewand*) -- or, as the first edition had it, a "disguise" (*Verkleidung*) -- that it can "appear" (*in die Erscheinung…treten*) in order both to compel the writing hand and to be set down or held fast in its (her?) turn. Recent assertions notwithstanding, this should not be taken to mean that the essence of fables stands to be revealed, or disrobed, once and for all.[133] For as Gail Hart has aptly observed, the claim here is not only "that 'real' human behavior determines the great plots of fiction, but [that] these plots themselves recur 'in neuem Gewande'… In other words, the human behavior that generates fictions also

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own piece nevertheless remains obscure: after all, "Lear auf dem Dorfe" is not repudiated for being an imitation of Shakespeare, but rather for imitating *Keller* ([not] imitating Shakespeare…).

[133] Cf. Thomas Koebner's musings on this passage: "Hält man sie, die Fabel, an ihrem neuen Gewand fest (so wird die Überlegung im ersten Absatz fortgeführt), wird sich wohl die nackte Wahrheit enthüllen (so setze ich den Gedankengang fort)" (Koebner, "Gottfried Keller: *Romeo und Julia auf dem Dorfe.* Die Recherche nach den Ursachen eines Liebestods." In: Keller, *Romeo und Julia auf dem Dorfe.* Stuttgart: Reclam, 1999.

styles itself after fictions."[134] It is precisely this hint at the infinite circularity of fictionality that provides for the potential confusion, or exchange-ability, between *Erfindung* and *Nachahmung*[135]: by the same token that every work of fiction presupposes an act of mimesis, every imitation – whether in life or of it – is instigated by (a) fiction. From the very beginning, then, *Romeo und Julia auf dem Dorfe* invites a recognition of fables not simply as "few in number" (*die Zahl…ist mässig*) but as natural resources or literary treasures that never give themselves to be counted (*gezählt*) or enumerated (*aufgezählt*) in the "first" place: in the end as at the beginning, fables can only be *re*-counted (*erzählt*).[136] The novella's opening intimations of reiteration without beginning or end are all the more material to a reading of "Romeo und Julia" in that its central event – the double suicide of the young lovers – is framed, from the outset, as a repetition. What the Romeo-and-Juliet plot repeats is moreover not only the tale given most canonical "costume" by Shakespeare, but the story of the two fathers, who in turn bear their own literal as well as narrative debts to the black fiddler, the legitimate but dispossessed heir to the third field.

Over the course of the novella, Manz and Marti regress from exemplars of hardy manhood to childlike obstinacy and, finally, helplessness. At the story's opening, the two fathers

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[134] Gail Hart, *Readers and their Fictions in the Novels and Novellas of Gottfried Keller.* Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 1989, p.64.

[135] For Robert Holub, it remains "curious that 'Erfindung' and 'Nachahmung'…can be exchanged by Keller so easily" (134). Along with the paragraph's other revisions, this substitution becomes for him a matter of determining "why it was so important for Keller to insist on the repetitive nature of the novella" (ibid.) For Holub, the answer involves the postulation of incestuous wishes as the novella's most potent "source." As unusual as the comments on the derivative nature of literature may appear within the larger context of 19th-century realism, however, they are quite typical for Keller himself. For more on this subject this see, for example, Rolf Selbmann, *Gottfried Keller. Romane und Erzählungen.* Berlin: Erich Schmidt Verlag, 2001, pp.7ff, as well as Downing, op.cit.

[136] On the role of "number" (*Zahl*) in Keller criticism, beginning with Hugo von Hofmannsthal's "Unterhaltungen über die Schriften von Gottfried Keller," see Hans-Dietrich Irmscher, "Konfiguration und Spiegelung in Gottfried Kellers Erzählungen." *Euphorion* 65, 1971, pp.319-333.

are ostentatiously presented as each others' *Doppelgänger,* two men of the same age and social position who tend their land in precisely the same manner and clothed in the same costume of "strong twill" (*Zwillich*) – the double-weave of which serves as yet another indication of their status as virtual twins -- in which "each fold had its unchangeable place and looked as if it were chiseled out of stone" (ibid.)[137] If the fathers' mutual resemblance, at least when regarded "from a certain distance," is the very opposite of threatening, that is because it is, to all appearances, mediated by their mutual affinity with the (cultural if not natural) environment: "they looked exactly alike, *for* they represented the original type of the region" (my emphasis). This point is underscored once again by allowing the "costume," which in the form of *Zwillich* underscored a strong resemblance, to figure as the sign of difference the moment it is exposed, as it were, to the elements:

> …at first sight, one could have distinguished them only by the fact that the one wore his white cap with the peak tipping forward over his brow, while the other's fell back on his neck. But even that alternated between them, depending upon the direction in which they were plowing; for when they met and passed each other on the crest of the ridge, where there was a fresh east wind blowing, the one who was facing it had the peak of his cap thrown back, while that of the other, with the wind behind him, stuck out in front (53, translation modified; 65-66).

Far from disappearing when blown away by the next breeze or (third) glance, the resemblance that appears from a distance becomes even more pronounced the closer, and the longer, one looks, finding its culmination in a single instance of seemingly total correspondence between the two men: "Es gab auch jedesmal einen *mittleren Augenblick,* wo die schimmernden Mützen

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[137] Cf. Holub (op.cit.), who interprets their similarity in light of the thesis that they are the same person (at least in – the author's – fantasy).

aufrecht in der Luft schwankten und wie zwei weisse Flammen gen Himmel züngelten" (66). In a striking instance of what Erika Swales has called the (admittedly rather heavy-handed) *Dingsymbolik* of the novella's first half, this "middle instance" foreshadows the catastrophe to come by gesturing towards the very opposite of mediacy and, therefore, moderation.[138] Indeed, it is not too much to say that the story of Manz and Marti traces the path of their resemblance from the level of "symbol" to that of (psychological) "reality." Thus abstracted from its ground in a common culture (of cultivation), the identification of Manz with Marti takes on an immediacy that, by threatening irrevocably to compromise the individuality of the two men, likewise undermines the transmission of the very order that their similarity first appeared both to represent and to uphold.

Like the perspective of the narrator, which as in the combmaking story moves from the distanced vantage point of the opening sketch to a disarmingly intimate portrait of individual characters, the story of Manz in Marti is of a progressive loss of "distance," of an ever- further encroachment onto the literal as well as psychological territory of another person. Pretending not to see each other as they clandestinely move in on the literal territory of the field, the farmers in fact see little else – least of all the untended plot that is (ostensibly) at stake, literally as well as figuratively "between" the two men (… *der mittlere [Acker]… den wüsten Acker in der Mitte…den mittlern herrenlosen Acker*, etc.). Indeed, far from taking on ever more importance over the course of the narrative, "the little piece of land" is said to have been "the mere germ, or the foundation, of an inextricably complex case and a new mode of life" (63, 78). That for which the third field lays a foundation is moreover a "mode of life" without foundation, the loss

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[138] See Swales (op.cit.) for a different reading of the hat's significance.

of all orientation and perspective: from the time the first lawsuit is filed, the lives of Manz and Marti "were like (*glich*) the nightmarish torture of two condemned souls, who, floating down a dark stream on a narrow board, fall to quarreling, thrash the air, and seize and destroy themselves (*sich selber anpacken und vernichten*), each thinking he has hold of the cause of his misfortune" (77, 63, translation modified). As the ambiguity of the reflexive verb underscores, (mis)taking the other simultaneously entails a failure to recognize the self *in* (the mirror of) the other: the very essence of a mimetic crisis.

If the problem "between" Manz and Marti can be conceived as that of an (unacknowledged) *over*-proximity of the Other to the self, the dispossession of the black fiddler results from the inverse, namely a stubborn refusal to put the self in the place of another. It is thus no coincidence that the justification the two farmers provide for their fateful actions --that is, for their failure to take any action on behalf of the field's rightful owner – rests on the distinction between documents that verify identity, and identity "itself" as so singular as to be virtually unknowable:

"…How in the world are we to know that he is the grandson of the trumpeter? As for me, even if I fully believe to have recognized the old man in his dark face, I still say: to err is human, and the least scrap of paper, the tiniest shred of a baptismal certificate would satisfy my conscience better than the faces of ten sinners!"
"Why, naturally," said Marti. "Of course he claims that it is not his fault if he wasn't baptized! But what are we supposed to do, make our baptismal font portable and carry it about in the woods? No, it remains fixed in the church, and what's portable is the bier we have hanging outside on the wall!…" (55, 69)

According to the two farmers' circular and almost proverbially cynical logic (according to which it is *only* death that remains certain, taxes being precisely what are placed in doubt by the

fiddler's inability to prove citizenship), the authority of legal documents rests on an accurate or truthful reflection of "facts" that themselves can only be established by way of other legal documents – and not, for example, "sinful human faces." Indeed, it is not too much to say that for these two "original types of the region," the law is always to be conceived in opposition to countenances such as the fiddler's, who is not only dark-skinned, but has a "trumpet" of a nose unmistakably, and indeed almost obscenely, like that of his grandfather, the trumpeter – and thus a heritage as plain as the nose on his face.[139]

It is in light of this body of evidence, or the fiddler's body *as* evidence, that the farmers' hypocrisy becomes most graphically legible: at the same time that the fiddler's distinguishing features are proclaimed immaterial to the documentation of his identity, they remain central to the justification for his ongoing exclusion from the rites, rituals, and archival practices of the community. In refusing, as a matter of "conscience," to vouch for the black fiddler's identity as the grandson of the trumpeter – which, as the musician later assures Sali and Vrenchen, would have been a matter of swearing an oath in court – Manz and Marti ironically seal their own fate as an echo of the outcast's. The difference is that, whereas the fiddler's predicament is exemplified by the absence of even a scrap of paper, the disgrace of Manz and Marti, or the sum of all of their (mis)calculations, is figured by their mutual investment in *one* flimsy voucher:

> [Manz and Marti] allowed themselves to be seduced into all sorts of swindles, and every year they put money into all the foreign lotteries, tickets for which circulated abundantly in Seldwyla […] Occasionally the people of

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[139] "He had, in fact, a terrible nose. It stuck out from his withered, black face like a big square; or rather it looked more like a stout cudgel or a club which had been thrown there. Under it a small, round hole of a mouth, through which he was all the time puffing and blowing and hissing, puckered itself up and contracted in a strange way. "

Seldwyla amused themselves by inducing the two farmers, without their knowing it, to buy shares in the same ticket, so that each would base his hope for the other's ruin and destruction upon one and the same chance (63, 78).

Manz and Marti's attempt to write the body out of the law, as it were, leads to their suspension in a kind of legal limbo, but to a very physical, or literal, form of entrapment that finds its culmination in their fistfight by the river.[140] It is nevertheless not immediately clear what the "lesson" or object of this narrative irony is. On a first level, the suggestion appears to be that bodies such as the fiddler's must serve as the standard of truth against which legality must be measured. On this reading, human bodies – e.g. the physignomy of the fiddler -- would serve as the analog to the "actual occurrence," or hard-nosed reality, that underwrites the poetic license of Keller's novella. The fathers´ transgression would in other words consist in a refusal to accede to a kind of "reality principle." This reading is complicated, however, by the tacit acknowledgment that the "reality" of the fiddler´s physical appearance is itself only accessible by way of a process of interpretation: in order to carry any weight whatsoever, his countenance must be placed in a certain context (e.g. family resemblance). From this perspective, the problem becomes not the repression of reality as such, but on the contrary the denial of (the primacy of) its re-presentation.

What the two farmers´ attempts at self-defense and self-justification overlook, in sum, is the paradox whereby literalism is only legitimate, or becomes a form of legitimacy, *after* an act of interpretation or leap of faith -- such as the one requested of them by the fiddler -- has been made or performed. The "dirty secret" of the bourgeois order exposed here is not that of an

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[140] For an intriguing reading of the motif of the duel in Keller, including this scene, see Peter von Matt, "Gottfried Keller und der brachiale Zweikampf." In: Hans Wysling, ed. *Gottfried Keller. Elf Essays zu seinem Werk.* Zürich: Verlag Neue Zürcher Zeitung, 1990, pp.109-132.

obscene corporeality, but of an unverifiable fiction at the heart of the very documentation that is itself called upon to verify fact. By extension, the lesson of the story of Manz and Marti is that the law cannot subsist on, much less bear witness to, the "singularity" of identity, but can only deduce or derive the latter from an even deeper strata of interconnectedness, whereby individual identity is "vouched" for and, in this sense, constituted by (the testimony of) others. In disavowing the "foundation" of civil society in an irreducible intersubjectivity, Manz and Marti come to experience it at the level of their own persons, or *am eigenen Leibe,* by "actually" becoming the fools that others take them for.

By the same token that the two farmers' insistence on the independent verification of identity has led to the utter loss of self-determination, their fetishization of the trappings of legality and civility culminates in a form of barbarism. The problem of savagery or degeneracy is broached once again when, at the end of the novella, the narrator insists, as against the philistine opinions of the newspaper-reading public, that the young people's deed is not to be attributed to their moral degeneracy (*Verwilderung*). On the contrary: the passionate desperation of Sali and Vrenchen is framed as the ineluctable consequence of having taken the promise of bourgeois society – which is above all a promise to keep its citizens at a safe distance from *Verwilderung* -- at its word.[141] The question thus arises: what separates the "literal-mindedness" of Sali and Vrenchen from the fatefully destructive rigidity of the fathers? In order to begin to answer it, it is neessary first to return to the scene of their childhood.

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[141] On this cf. Erika Swales, op.cit.

III. Play/Land

"Romeo und Julia auf dem Dorfe" opens on a scene that juxtaposes, as if on two sides of a mirror, not only the two farmers, but, equally, the generations. Like their fathers, the as yet unnamed boy and girl engage in a vehement struggle over "property" in the form of a worn-out doll. Yet if this tussle over a plaything serves as a kind of analogy or allegory of the fathers´ weightier disagreement, it also figures as its inversion: while Manz and Marti allow the object of contention -- the piece of land -- to serve as a kind of cover for their subjective rivalry, the "objects" (toys) of the children are as quickly abandoned as they are embraced, revealing the true stakes of the game to have been the players themselves. A key instance of this foregrounding of subjectivity is the non-verbal exchange that follows on the boy's dismemberment of the girl's doll:

> The evil-doer (*Missetäter*), seeing her crying so violently, finally began to feel bad and stood before the supplicant (*Klagenden*), anxious and repentant. When she became aware of this, she suddenly stopped crying and struck him several times with the doll. He made believe that it hurt him and cried ouch! so naturally that she was satisfied, and they now joined forces in resuming the dissection and destruction (57, 70, trans. modified).

What lends this scene its pathos as well as comic undertone is the unspoken agreement of the children to engage in a kind of "play-acting" (*...er tat…als ob*…) that is however the precise inversion of the "play-acting" of the adults. Where in other words the farmers pretend *not* to see each others' transgressive violation of the third field, the children utilize pretense in order to negotiate what would otherwise have been a stalemate. Only when a precarious equality has been established do boy and girl proceed to engage in the "destruction and dissection" of objects

that no longer stand in for a conflict between the two of them, but on the contrary enable their joint activity of play.

The almost ritual performance of conflict and conflict resolution has revealed the derivative nature of "objects" as substitutes (or fetishes) for their owner-subjects at the same time that it has broken the spell, as it were, that the object of land holds over their fathers. Against this background, it should come as no surprise that the favorite pastime of the children is utterly aim- as well as and object-less:

> [The little girl] began to sing, monotonously repeating the same words over and over again (*immer die nämlichen*), while the little boy, who was feeling so drowsy and lazy that he did not know whether to lie down or not, squatted beside her and joined in. The sun shone into the singing girl's open mouth, lighting up her dazzling white teeth and suffusing her round, red lips. The boy saw the teeth, and, holding the girl's head, examined them curiously…
> Then he counted the little girl's teeth, and as the number did not come out to thirty-two, he kept beginning all over again. The girl held still a long time, but as the eager counter did not seem about to start, she got up hurriedly, exclaiming; "Now let me count yours!"
> The boy then lay down among the weeds, and the girl leaned over him, putting her arms around his head. He opened his mouth and she began to count; "One, two, seven, five, two, one," – for the pretty child had not yet learned to count.
> The boy corrected and prompted her, however, and she too began all over again a great many times. This game seemed to amuse them more than any they had tried that day (58, 71f.).

The signal words of repetition (*…dann…Nachdem…endlich…begann es…[d]ann…bis… eine Weile…aufs neue …wieder …wieder… aufs neue…wieder…immer die nämlichen… unzähligemal von neuem*) are underscored by the mimetic impulse driving the children's game.

Not only does the little girl model her "counting" after that of the boy; the boy for his part seems to be imitating the adults responsible for his education. Finally – or rather initially -- Vrenchen's singing, which is not part of the game but provokes it, recalls the senseless buzzing of the fly that the children trap in the empty head of the doll before burying it.

From the drama of restitution and reconciliation that precedes the doll's "dissection and destruction" through its burial and finally the counting game without beginning or end, what is suggested here is a certain affinity as well as contradiction between child's play and ritual. Giorgio Agamben's essay "In Playland," which takes its title and leitmotif from the children's book *Pinocchio*, puts forth the hypothesis of "an inverse relationship between play and rite" that is helpful here.[142] According to Agamben, "ritual fixes and *structures* the calendar; play, on the other hand…changes and destroys it" (69). Following Benveniste, play is to be conceived of as the "topsy-turvy sacred," in which "each element [of the ritual] is re-enacted time and time again" (Benveniste) without any story, or myth, to provide for meaning:

> Playland is a country whose inhabitants are busy celebrating rituals, and manipulating objects and sacred words, whose sense and purpose they have, however, forgotten. [In this way] they free the sacred, too, from its link with the calendar and with the cyclical rhythm of time that it sanctions, thereby entering another dimension of time, where the hours go by in a flash and the days are changeless (70).

Although Agamben does not put it in these terms, his distinction between play and ritual can be articulated by way of the different role assigned to repetition: while ritual provides a context (e.g.

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[142] In: Agamben, *Infancy and History. Essays on the Destruction of Experience.* Translated by Liz Heron. London: Verso, 1993, pp. 67-87.

myth) in which recurrence has a specific, and consistent, meaning, play comprises what might be called *pure* repetition (or pure form), performances of a "sacrament" abstracted from any content whatsoever that, as in *Pinocchio* (the source for the idea of "playland"), literally results in months of Sundays.

While ritual transforms event, an interruption in time (diachrony), into structure, or timeless meaning (synchrony), play does the reverse by abstracting all significance from a repetition without limit. Play and ritual together, in fine structuralist fashion, comprise "*a single machine, a single binary system, which is articulated across two categories which cannot be isolated and across whose correlation and difference the very functioning of the system*" (Agamben 74, emphasis in original). As a "differential margin between diachrony and synchrony," the product of this system, according to Agamben, is nothing less than "*history*" or "*human time*" itself (75, emphasis in original). The relevance of Agamben's remarks to Keller's novella can be seen already in the way that, from the moment the children have finished eating until they fall asleep in the grass, the "wilderness" of the third field provides at least temporary respite from the "sacred time" (Agamben) of rituals, such the midday meal, in which the children participate, but which they do not (yet) understand. Here again the ambivalence between the children's implication in the adult world and their resistance to it is central to the scene:

Thus the long morning had partly passed, when a charming little cart, hardly visible as it started up the gentle slope, drew near from the direction of the village. It was a child's wagon, painted green (*ein grünbemaltes Kinderwägelchen*), in which the children of the two plowmen, a boy and a little wisp of a girl (*ein kleines Ding von Mädchen*), were bringing out their fathers' lunch. In the cart there was, for each man, a fine loaf of bread wrapped in a napkin, a jug of wine with glasses, and some extra little delicacy (*Zutätchen*) which the fond housewife had sent along for her hard-working husband. Also packed in it were all sorts of strangely shaped apples and pears, which

the children had gathered on the way and bitten into; likewise a doll, absolutely naked and with only one leg and a dirty face, sitting like a young lady between the two loaves and enjoying the ride (53-54; 66-67, translation slightly modified).

In a first instance, the appearance of the children's vehicle on the horizon just as midday is breaking allows the *Fuhrwerklein* to figure as a "charming," scaled-down and domesticated echo of Helios's awesome chariot. Indeed, this scene is the main instance that Benjamin cites of the "miniaturization of antiquity" (*Verschrümpfung der Antike*) in Keller's work. [143] Yet miniaturization is of course also a key feature of the toy, and as such not only an echo of tradition, but, as Agamben points out, a challenge or at least exception to its smooth functioning. A similar ambiguity characterizes the apples and pears the children have gathered. At the same time that the fruit echoes or mimics the delicacies prepared by the thoughtful housewife, the children's bite marks serve to place the found objects at a once-remove from the domestic or economic sphere of (re)production and into the realm of the "once, no longer" that Agamben finds evoked by all playthings. Keller's two children thus appear here as what Agamben calls "humanity's little scrap-dealers," who "play with whatever junk comes their way" (Agamben 70). Even their interest in the doll, which is already missing a leg when the story begins, increases in proportion to its resemblance to "junk": its components, from legs to stuffing to "empty" head, are, from the perspective of play, at least as inspiring as (the loss of) its form.

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[143] Benjamin, "Gottfried Keller," op.cit., p.289.

Having trans- and disfigured the doll´s head into a kind of Delphic oracle in miniature, Keller's boy and girl proceed to subject it to a diminutive burial rite [144]:

> …after both children had held the head to their ears, they solemnly (*feierlich*) placed it down on a stone. As it still had on the red poppy hood, the resonant object now resembled an oracular head, and the children with their arms around each other listened in profound silence to its revelations and tales.
> But prophets always awaken terror and ingratitude; the bit of life in the poorly formed image aroused the children's human propensity to cruelty, and it was decided to bury the head. Without asking the imprisoned fly's opinion, they dug a grave, laid the head in it, and erected over the spot an imposing monument of field-stones. Then they began to feel a sense of dread, because they had buried something with life and form, and removed themselves some distance away from the eerie site (*unheimlichen Stätte*; 56, 71).

If players, according to Agamben, are those who are "busy celebrating rituals…whose sense and purpose they have…forgotten" (op.cit.), the doll's head in Keller´s serves the children as an uncomfortable and discomfiting reminder of something, even and especially – as the role of "prophet" suggests – something that is still to come. Most literally, of course, the children's "monument" (*Denkmal*) of stones foreshadows the one soon to be erected by Manz at the site of the contested third field. Although the children cannot possibly be aware of either this parallel or its significance, what their activity anticipates is the power of the synchronic (i.e. ritual) as the other of play's endless repetition and, therefore, the fact that play *has* an other or opposite. According to Agamben, this realization is indeed the "stumbling block" of play: "if the

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[144] This is indeed Benjamin's main example of the miniaturization of antiquity in Keller's work and, by extension, the main support for his thesis that Keller "glaubte seine Zeit zu geben und in ihr gab er Antike." For a reading of *Romeo und Julia auf dem Dorfe* that takes its explicit departure from Benjamin's essay, see Winfried Menninghaus, "Romeo und Julia auf dem Dorfe. Eine Interpretation im Anschluss an Walter Benjamin." In: Menninghaus, *Artistische Schrift. Zur Kompositionskunst Gottfried Kellers.* Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1982.

transformation of synchrony into diachrony were really complete, it would leave no traces, and the miniature would have to correspond with its model" (80). That is why, at the end of the game, toys "being embarrassing residues, must be hidden and put away" (ibid.) – just as, conversely, ritual objects are disposed of when the rite has been performed. Having "buried something with life and form" is, from this perspective, eerie or uncanny (*unheimlich*) in its effect on Keller´s boy and girl above all because of the way it mirrors – and thereby inverts – rituals such as those that the fathers cite in authorizing their own extra-legal deeds: baptism (which gives form, in the form of a name, to a new life) and funerals (which are of course entrusted with burying the dead, not the living).

What Agamben's anthropological reflections can help us appreciate is the sense in which Keller's proto-anthropological depictions in "Romeo und Julia" capture the radical timelessness of child's play as its most significant feature, or its mode of entering into the play of human significance. Indeed, the strength of Keller's portrayal, and perhaps one of the reasons for its enduring popularity in the annals of German literature, is its stalwart refusal to ascribe any particular, much less linear, motive to the children's activities. What the games of the boy and girl in Keller's novella emphatically do *not* resemble, then, is Freud's depiction of child's play in "Der Dichter und das Phantasieren," with its insistence, as we saw in Chapter One, on the single wish "to be big and grown-up." Rather than displaying (and/as failing to conceal) the desire to be like adults, child's play in Keller's novella not only performs, but at least temporarily realizes the wish to be released from the constraints of linear time – or, more precisely, never to submit to them in the first place.

To the extent that growing up is construed as a more or less willing subordination to the

calendar -- precisely the submission that the people of Seldwyla, as will be recalled, refuse -- it is tempting to conclude that it is not the children's wish to grow up but rather the fathers' failure to do so that is at the heart of the crisis in "Romeo und Julia auf dem Dorfe." Yet it is important to realize that the fathers' childishness does not resemble child's play as it is depicted by Keller, but rather as it is theorized by Freud in "Der Dichter und das Phantasieren," that is: as an activity that grasps the future as the site of wish-fulfillment. Manz and Marti's attempt to hold the site of the "third field" in reserve (like the combmakers their treasures) is simultaneously an attempt to hold the future in abeyance as the place where their dreams will come true. Far from having served as the original or model for this temporal structure, as Freud will suggest, the childhood of the "boy and girl" we meet in the novella's opening pages has not yet entered into this temporal mode of calculation, whereby the future is destined to compensate for the shortcomings, or heal the narcissistic wounds, of the present. The sign of this, as we have seen, is their mode of interaction with their playthings, which bears little resemblance to the mimesis diagnosed by Freud in "Der Dichter und das Phantasieren." Not only are the children's found objects-cum-toys cast away as quickly as they are gathered; to the extent that they – like the prophetic doll's head -- "stand in" for the future, they are perceived not as promising, but as deeply uncanny.

Given that child's play functions in "Romeo und Julia auf dem Dorfe" as a counterweight to the narratives or myths that endow rites with a meaning that is subsequently projected onto the future, it should come as no surprise that the "boy" and "girl" will have to be subjected to the equivalent of a rite of passage before taking up their rightful place as protagonists of the story. Only now, at the threshold of adulthood, are "Sali" (Salomon) and "Vrenchen" (Verena)

introduced as anything but the children of "Manz" and "Marti":

> For they no longer went out to the field together, since the ten-year-old Salomon, or Sali, as he was called, was now old enough to be with the larger boys and men; while brown Vrenchen, though a fiery little maid, had to go around in the watchful company of her own sex, in order to avoid being teased by the other girls as a tomboy. Nevertheless, once during each harvest, when everybody was in the fields, they would use this occasion to climb up the wild stone barrier that separated them and push each other down from it. Although it was the only contact they ever had with each other, this annual ceremony seemed to be all the more carefully cherished, as their fathers' fields came together nowhere else (59, 73).

With the onset of puberty and the hardening of lines of sexual distinction as well as the submission to an "annual ceremony" as the foundation of significance, the "object" – namely the piece of land – that is fetishized by the fathers begins to take its place not only in the actual life, but – perhaps more importantly -- in the fantasy life of the children. In their case, however, the future that the fetish represents is not a blank slate upon which wishes can be inscribed. Instead, it more closely resembles the true state of the field, which is strewn with rocks and other obstacles. Against this back- or rather foreground, in which a future together is foreclosed by the combination of parental disapproval, an unfortunate (but also overdetermined) accident, and the absence of economic prospects, Sali and Vrenchen will reach their final and fatal conclusion that "death and annihilation" constitute "a mere breath, a nothing, and they thought less of it than a spendthrift thinks, squandering the last penny (*seine letzte Habe*) he has, how he is going to live the next day" (135). As the metaphorical conversion of the calendar into currency works to suggest, the Sali and Vrenchen of the second half of Keller's novella no longer find themselves in playland, but in a world governed by both linear time and the ownership of private property.

IV. Possession

I would now like to turn to what many readers consider, with good reason, to be the heart of Keller's story, the love affair between Sali and Vrenchen. For reasons that will, I hope, become clear, I begin my discussion with Freud's account of (gender-specific) fantasy in "Der Dichter und das Phantasieren." Here, Freud argues that ambition (*Ehrgeiz*), on the one hand, and eroticism (*Erotik*), on the other, together comprise the dual source of all fantasy life. He then proceeds provisionally to align the predominance of each with masculinity and femininity, respectively – only to leave the matter of their potential substitutability unresolved:

> But it is not our wish to emphasize the opposition between the two trends, but rather the fact that they are often united. Just as, in many altar-pieces, the portrait of the donor is to be seen in a corner of the picture, so, in the majority of ambitious phantasies, we can discover in some corner or other the lady for whom the creator of the phantasy performs all his heroic deeds and at whose feet all his triumphs are laid. Here, as you see, there are strong enough motives for concealment; the well-brought up young woman is only allowed a minimum of erotic desire, and the young man has to learn to suppress the excess of self-regard which he brings with him from the spoilt days of his childhood… [145]

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[145] *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud.* Trans. James Strachey. James Strachey et al., eds. London: The Hogarth Press, 1953-1974, p.147 (translation modified); Freud, "Der Dichter und das Phantasieren," in: *Studienausgabe.* Mitscherlich et. al., eds. Frankfurt a.M.: Fischer, 1972, Band X, p.174: "Doch wollen wir nicht den Gegensatz beider Richtungen, sondern vielmehr deren häufige Vereinigung betonen; wie in vielen Altarbildern in einer Ecke das Bildnis des Stifters sichtbar ist, so können wir an den meisten ehrgeizigen Phantasien in irgendeinem Winkel die Dame entdecken, für die der Phantast all diese Heldentaten vollführt, der er alle Erfolge zu Füssen legt. Sie sehen, hier liegen genug starke Motive zum Verbergen vor; dem wohlerzogenen Weibe wird ja überhaupt nur ein Minimum von erotischer Bedürftigkeit zugebilligt, und der junge Mann soll das Übermaß vom Selbstgefühl, welches er aus der Verwöhnung der Kindheit mitbringt...unterdrücken lernen."

Reading this passage in *The Freudian Subject,* Borch-Jacobsen quite reasonably asks: "…why should we not hold the opposite view? Why should I not desire the Lady to the extent of my 'ambition,' in other words, to the extent that I desire to accede to the place from which she is to be possessed?" [146] What Borch-Jacobsen's question points up is the potential arbitrariness of Freud's claim as to what is primary and what is secondary in each gendered "case." Yet certainly as noteworthy as Freud's insistence that male ambition serves as a cover for sexual desire, rather than the reverse, is the failure to suggest an analogous inversion for female eroticism (e.g. that her investment in sexual life conceals a closet but all-the-more dominant narcissism). Instead of postulating what the chiastic structure of the passage seemed to promise, in other words, namely that (at least in this provisional scheme) Woman is the exact mirror image or the complement of Man, Freud suggests that the ambition of the typical young woman has been not simply sublimated or sublated, but swallowed whole or "devoured" (*aufgezehrt*) by the investment in romantic love. This move is all the more striking given the famous psychoanalytic truism – put forth among other places in this very essay -- that the ego "never renounces anything." Yet clearly it is only on the condition that female ambition is sexualized without remainder that the "primal" or primary nature of sexuality itself can be maintained. In other words – and this brings us back to the thrust of Borch-Jacobsen's objection – if narcissism can serve as the temporally and causally primary motivator of desire for Woman, why not for Man as well?[147]

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[146] Mikkel Borch-Jacobsen, *The Freudian Subject.* Translated by Catherine Porter. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1982, p. 31. Indeed, if Freud ultimately subordinates both male *and* female ambition to eroticism, Girard (upon whose thought Borch-Jacobsen's critique is at least partly based) does the reverse: for him, all eroticism, or object love, is at bottom a form of nakedly narcissistic ambition, namely the all-consuming, mimetic desire to "be" the Other.

[147] Freud himself arguably goes on to perform precisely this reversal in "On Narcissism." On this see Sarah Kofman, *The Enigma of Woman. Woman in Freud's Writings.* Catherine Porter, trans. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1985, pp.48ff.

In my view, the Keller of "Romeo und Julia auf dem Dorfe" is struggling with issues similar to those that preoccupy Freud in the "Daydreaming" essay. Aside from obvious differences of both genre and aim, both writers are concerned to provide a compelling (re)presentation of "object love," or libidinal attachment, that would not only be distinct and distinguishable from the love of self, or narcissism, but causally and temporally prior to it. If "Romeo und Julia auf dem Dorfe" resists the temptation to find in childhood a kind of model for adult desire, Keller is, if anything, more inclined than the founder of psychoanalysis to posit femininity as a condition (as it were) in which the passionate attachment to "objects" -- including, but not limited to, other people -- is paramount. While femininity appears to Freud, in this essay as elsewhere, a mystery or enigma that cannot quite be explained according to the "given" male model, but that does not quite contradict it either, [148] "Romeo und Julia auf dem Dorfe" seeks to find in "womanly feeling" the counterpart to and, as such, the natural completion or even apotheosis of male desire. At the same time, I will be arguing, Keller's *Liebesnovelle* can be seen to undercut this particular fantasy of sexuality by calling repeated, if undeniably anxious, attention to the mimetic mechanisms that fuel not only desire in both sexes, but -- and in a related sense -- the mechanisms of literary production as well.

That the Freud of "Der Dichter und das Phantasieren" provides a useful foil for understanding Keller's text is suggested already by the portrait of Sali as a young man. Far from exhibiting an ambition that can be un-covered to reveal an investment in love, as Freud's model foresees, Sali has "turned his eyes from the future" (66; *wandte die Augen von der Zukunft ab,* 81) and leads an almost utterly aimless existence until he meets Vrenchen (again). For Keller's

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[148]The most important texts on femininity in Freud's work remain Luce Irigaray's *Speculum of the Other Woman* (Cornell: Cornell University Press, 1985) as well as Kofman's *The Enigma of Woman* (op.cit.).

young man -- as for a young woman according to Freud– it thus appears that the question of future status and identity has been subordinated to the establishment of a love relationship. As we have seen already in Chapter One, Freud's vision calls for a male tendency to "hide" his sexual desire behind the (slightly) more acceptable desire for self-realization, as in the "typical" daydream of a young man who finds a wife as a kind of side-effect of the pursuit of worldly success. Sali's fantasies upon becoming re-acquainted with Vrenchen, by contrast, bypass the struggle for achievement in order to pursue a straightforwardly romantic goal:

> …[Sali]… noticed nothing; he walked along, lost in visions of happiness (*in glückseligen Bildern*). He was conscious neither of rain nor storm, darkness nor misery. Everything within him and without him was light, bright, and warm, and he felt as rich and secure (*wohlgeboren*) as a prince (*Königssohn*). He kept seeing the fleeting smile on that beautiful face so near his own, and now for the first time, a good half hour later, responded to it. Filled with love, he laughed and smiled through night and storm at her sweet face, which seemed to appear out of the darkness on every side, causing him to believe that Verena must of course see him as she walked along, and be aware of his laughter (74, 91).

Instead of being hidden in a "corner" like the portrait of a donor in an altar-piece, Vrenchen's image (*Bild*) dominates the scene of Sali's fantasy entirely. What this suggests is a certain inversion of the *Ehrgeiz* and *Erotik* pair sketched by Freud. Rather than achieving a certain ambition in order to please his Lady, in other words, it is *only* the anticipated possession of the beloved, abstracted from any worldly concerns whatsoever, that allows Sali to feel himself a "prince" and his possession of Vrenchen to appear as analogous to "a kingdom" (*ein Königreich*).

Sali's replacement of the drive towards accomplishment in the (secret) name of love with the pursuit of love itself is clearly related to his rebellion against and even rejection of his father Manz and the mimetic rivalry in which he has become embroiled. Sali's love for Vrenchen not only constitutes an embrace of the very object, the patronymic "Marti," to which his father has forbidden access; it is literally impossible for him to distinguish the name of the beloved from the beloved herself[149]: "For nothing compares to the wealth and the unfathomable depth of that happiness which appears to the human being in such a clear and distinct form, baptized by a parson and well provided with a name of its own, one which does not sound like other names" (75, 91, translation modified). The irony of Sali's enchantment with the singularity of the name does not stop with the fact that both "Sali" and "Vrenchen" – each already a corruption of another name (Salomon and Verena, respectively) – are stand-ins for the names of "Romeo" and "Juliet," not to mention the anonymous teen-agers whose fate becomes the subject of lurid newspaper stories. The reference to baptism (*Taufe*) also pointedly recalls the "missing" *Taufschein* of the black fiddler, whose name is not recorded even by Keller's storyteller. If Sali remains blissfully unaware of this, the reader is not; and what it suggests is the inextricability of the fantasy of the name not only from "romantic" idealization of the other, but from the (frustrated) aspiration to make a name for oneself -- the very pursuit of personal honor on which the fathers founder.

If Sali's infatuation with Vrenchen is anything but hidden behind loftier (-seeming) goals, the phantasmatic character of the objects to which Manz and Marti cling, already suggested by their fetishization of the legally inaccessible and in any case seemingly

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[149] At the same time, Sali's reflections are clearly designed playfully to evoke Romeo's famous soliloquy ("What's in a name?..").

unsalvageable field, has become painfully obvious by the time their children (re)discover each other. Having taken on a distinctly ghostly appearance, the two men turn to games of luck at the explicit expense of the landed property that was ostensibly at stake in their rivalry. Marti's neglect of his house and grounds spills over into his inattention to his daughter (and/as the memory of his wife), while Manz's relationship to the "Mänzin" regresses to an almost catatonic state. Yet despite himself, as it were, Manz remains fascinated by Sali: "…he was almost exactly as his father had been at the same age, and this fact imbued the latter with an involuntary respect for his son, in whom, with his confused conscience and painful memories, he respected his own youth" (81). By the same token that Manz's "respect" for his son is fueled by his narcissistic investment in his earlier self, it also anticipates a future rivalry along the same mimetic lines as the one in which he and Marti are catastrophically engaged. That Manz's fears of (or hopes for?)[150] such a struggle are not displaced is graphically illustrated by the violence that erupts between Sali and his father's enemy when Marti discovers them together in the field. True to his name, Salomon sits in judgment not only over his own father, but over Vrenchen's as well:

> [Sali and Vrenchen] stood as if petrified, and at first Marti also stood still looked at them with a wicked stare, pale as lead. Then he began to rave terribly, making wild gestures and calling them names; at the same time he reached out in fury to seize the young lad, intending to strangle him. Sali, terrified by the wild man, dodged and retreated a few steps, but he rushed up again when he saw the old man seize the trembling girl instead of him, give her such a slap that the red wreath fell off, and twist her hair around his hand in order to drag her away and mistreat her further. Without thinking what he was doing, he picked up a stone, and, half in fear for Vrenchen and half in anger, struck the old man on the head. Marti first staggered a bit and then sank down unconscious on the stone pile, dragging

[150] What I mean to suggest is that perhaps, like Mr. Tulliver in *The Mill on the Floss*, Manz wishes for his son to redeem him – which, in a terrible way, he does.

with him his daughter who was screaming pitifully. Sali freed her hair from the unconscious man´s hand and lifted her up; then he stood there like a statue, helpless, his mind empty (85, 102).

It is almost as if each of the three characters in this remarkable scene takes a turn at playing the role of the "prophet" first introduced by the children's uncanny game: in addition to the movement of "petrification" to the children, Marti, and back, Vrenchen has donned the poppies that adorned the doll's head, while Sali confronts the scene with a mind as "empty of thought" as that of the doll. Finally, in a more figurative form of being buried alive, Marti collapses unconscious on top of (rather than hidden beneath) a gravestone-like heap after ranting and raving in a grotesque echo of the buzzing fly.

This is not the last time that earlier scenes of the boy and girl at play will be called upon to underscore the difference between childhood and (early) adulthood. In instigating their courtship, Sali and Vrenchen also revisit their "counting game":

There [Vrenchen] lay, her eyes blinking in the sunlight; her cheeks shone crimson, and her mouth was half open, permitting two rows of white teeth to gleam through…Sali was beside himself with joy to see the slender, beautiful young thing before him, and to feel that she was his own; it seemed to him he possessed a kingdom.

"You still have all your white teeth," he laughed. "Do you remember how often we counted them once? Can you count now?"

"These are not the same ones, you child," said Vrenchen. Those came out long ago."

In his simplicity Sali now wanted to play the old game again, and count the shining, pearly teeth. But Verena suddenly closed her red mouth, straightened up, and began to twine a wreath of poppies, which she placed on her head. The wreath was thick and broad and gave the brown-skinned girl of charm and magic; poor Sali held in his arms something rich people would have paid a great deal for, if they could have had it as painting on their walls (83; 99-100).

As a single and singular object, Vrenchen neatly corresponds to Sali´s own "simplicity" (*Einfalt*), according to which the possession of the beloved is like the possession of "a kingdom" or, in more bourgeois terms, the possession of a work of art. Yet although this single-mindedness is cast as childlike by the narrator as well as Vrenchen ("Du Kind"), it also marks the distance that has been travelled since childhood, when the *Reiz* or charm of the counting game adhered to pure repetition *without* goal or aim; now it is Vrenchen's "playfulness" itself that appears as something to be owned like a picture on the wall.

This reading of Sali's desire for Vrenchen as the drive to "possess" her is not meant to suggest that Keller distinguishes the sexes along these lines; on the contrary, Vrenchen is, if anything, even more "possessive" than Sali. This can be seen, first of all, on her (growing) preoccupation with marriage. The implication of matrimony in the question of possession – both in the sense of having a legal claim on one's partner and the foundation of a jointly-owned household -- is underscored by Vrenchen's response to the black fiddler's invitation to live "without obstacle and constraint" (*ohne Hindernis und Schranken*, 131) – which also means without a permanent home. Observing a strikingly attractive couple at the "Paradiesgärtlein," Vrenchen remarks:

"The young fellow with the horn and the girl with the silk dress belong to each other that way, and they're said to have been very much in love. They say last week the girl was false to him for the first time (…) I'd never want to be untrue to you, though I'd be willing to endure anything else to get you (*um dich zu besitzen*)" (84, 113)

In addition to providing a telling instance of Vrenchen's proclivity to identify with other (particularly female) characters, this passage is revealing of her particular mode of possession. Just as Sali imagines that Vrenchen is "his" as a painting might be, an analogy is consistently drawn between Vrenchen's desire to be the rightful owner of beautiful objects and her wish to be in legal custody, as it were, of Sali -- a desire to which she is more than willing to sacrifice more spontaneous sexual impulses.[151]

The strong association in Keller's work between femininity and a fetishistic relationship to objects will be recalled from our discussion of "Die drei gerechten Kammacher" and the more than a little grotesque character of Züs Bünzlin. Yet if Züs clearly represents the perversion of the impulse to treasure or cherish, she can nevertheless be located on a kind of continuum with Vrenchen. The stark association between femininity and possessiveness helps to explain the radically different effect to which the narrator's description of Vrenchen at the midnight dance anticipates the role of the woman in male fantasy as depicted by Freud: "Vrenchen, who carried her love house devoutly and wistfully (*andächtig und wehmütig*), resembled a holy church patroness on pictures of old, who holds the model of a cathedral or cloister that she founded (*gestiftet*); but the pious foundation that Vrenchen had in mind could never be realized" (112, 126). Although suggested by the almost ridiculous figure of a girl wearing an oversized cookie purchased at a church fair, the quite earnest point is the incongruence between the beauty of Vrenchen's sensibilities and her (economically determined) impotence to realize them. Indeed, the fact that Vrenchen is unable to buy the clothes she wants or keep house in grand style never fails to gain the sympathy of the narrator, who repeatedly suggests the naturalness of a young

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[151] Here Keller would seem to be echoing the teachings of his teacher Feuerbach, that desire also desires its own limitation.

(and pretty) girl's attachments to pretty (and expensive) things. A key instance of this feminine fetishism is Vrenchen's desire to find the proper costume – above all the right shoes – for the big day. Sali's efforts to procure them for her with "the largest sum he had ever had in his life" are a melancholy hint of the bourgeois comfort he is unable to offer his bride over time, and are, consequently, infused with as much pathos as her attachment to the gingerbread house.

The effects of Vrenchen's fetishism are however highly equivocal: at the same time that her investment in pretty things is set in proximity to the young girl's love for Sali, indeed as its prerequisite, it also threatens to trump it as the driving force rather than a secondary effect of her desire: the very wish to be Sali's bride is stimulated by a series of (day)dreams, role-plays, and imaginative projections.[152] At the outset, the dream of a wedding that visits Vrenchen at night finds its daytime counterpart in the fantasy that she recounts, with great gusto, to her gullible neighbor. What Vrenchen imaginatively projects is the comic version of her own life story: far from having landed a man who won the lottery, as she playfully but convincingly claims, this would-be bride has of course drawn the shortest straw when it comes to financial security. That Vrenchen has entertained this fantasy of wealthy idleness before is suggested by the great detail with which she sketches the portrait of the "well-to-do city dweller," down to the delicacies to be served on her table. Far from simply remaining pie-in-the-sky, moreover, the fantastic image of the (well-heeled) bride reappears over the course of the day both as a story Vrenchen tells of herself and as a role others project upon her. At the restaurant where the couple eats their midday meal, both the hostess and the spiteful waitress (mis)take the two young people for a

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[152] "Though the renewal of Sali and Vrenchen's passion is apparently spontaneous, the course of their brief life together is dictated by Vrenchen's (nocturnal) dream of a wedding and by the light verse they read at the church fair" (Hart 76). As we shall see, a series of identifications with the neighbor, the landlady, the waitress, and the dancing girl – not to mention the mother(s) – can likewise be placed in this category.

bridal couple:

> So they sat comfortably at the table for a long time, as if they hesitated and feared to leave this charming illusion…Verena…sat there, modest (*züchtig*) and bashful (*verschämt*), like a real bride. She played this rôle partly out of roguery and a desire to see how it felt, and partly because she was actually in that mood. Her heart was almost breaking with anxiety and ardent love, so that she felt oppressed within these four walls and wished to leave (82, 121).

That this scene has lasting effects is suggested by the narrator's account of Vrenchen's state of mind at the dance later that evening: "…ever since noon, when the landlady had thought she was a bride-to-be and she had presented herself as such without correction, the idea of being a bride had flamed in her blood, and the more hopeless she was, the wilder and the more uncontrollable it became" (113;*…denn schon seit dem Mittag, wo jene Wirtin es für eine Braut gehalten und es eine solche ohne Widerrede vorgestellt, lohte ihm das Brautwesen im Blute, und je hoffnungsloser es war, umso wilder und unbezwinglicher,* 131, translation modified).[153] It is a difficult task – even or especially for Vrenchen herself -- to distinguish between her actual or genuine sentiment and the part that she has taken on; or, by extension, between an internal compulsion or wish to be a (much less Sali's) bride and the imposition of that role upon her by the fantasies and expectations of others.

The contrasting portraits of Frau Marti, Vrenchen's mother, on the one hand; and Frau Manz, or "die Mänzin," on the other, throw a new light on these motifs. The behavior of the two women following the ruin of their families is certainly, as the narrator laconically puts it,

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[153] The translators have rendered "es eine solche ohne Widerrede vorgestellt" as "she had introduced her as such without correction," mistakenly attributing the action of "presenting" to the hostess rather than to Vrenchen herself.

"quite distinct." Somewhat jarringly, it is the death of Frau Marti that – not least in being imparted to the reader in a single brief sentence – appears to the narrator to be the less radical of the two: "Marti's wife, who was a decent person, was unable to endure their ruin; she pined away and died before her child was fourteen years old" (64; *Die Frau des Marti, welche von guter Art war, hielt den Verfall nicht aus, härmte sich ab und starb, ehe ihre Tochter vierzehn Janre alt war,* 79). That death, or the ultimate renunciation, can appear the logical consequence of a "good sort" faced with material ruin suggests that Frau Marti's passion has been invested almost without remainder in the "objects" of her affection; and, in the end, her investment is not without return. As the narrator repeatedly emphasizes, Frau Marti's death has had a "restraining" influence on Vrenchen, whose fiery wildness might otherwise have burned out of control. In pointed contradistinction to her husband, who has immolated everything at the altar of his ambition, Frau Marti's stubborn adherence to her household go(o)ds provides her daughter with the only orientation or anchor she will have in life. [154]

Where Frau Marti is thus seen to counteract – however modestly – the effects of her husband's downfall, Frau Manz re-doubles the catastrophic consequences of the feud, thereby eliciting vastly more comment on the part of the narrator:

> Manz's wife, on the other hand, adapted herself to the changed mode of life. All she had to do in order to become a partner in this bad business was to give free rein to a few feminine faults she had always had, and let them grow into vices. Her fondness for delicacies developed into inordinate greed; her volubility into a radically false and deceitful habit of flattery and slander, so that every moment she said the exact opposite of what she thought, kept everything

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[154] There is a noteworthy parallel here to the Dodson sisters of *The Mill on the Floss* – and Maggie's mother in particular -- in their attachment to their "household gods" or Penaten in the form of linen, china, and clothing.

in turmoil, and hoodwinked her own husband (*ihrem eigenen Mann ein X für ein U vormachte*). The candor she originally displayed in more or less innocent gossip developed now into the harden shamelessness (*Schamlosigkeit*) of her new way of life. So instead of suffering at the hands of her husband, she thumbed her nose at him. If he acted badly, she put on airs, denying herself nothing; and thus she sprang into full bloom as the mistress of this household in decline (*gedieh zu der dicksten Blüte einer Vorsteherin des zerfallenden Hauses*; 64, 79).

The catalogue of Frau Manz's transgressions is not a little reminiscent of the inventory of Züs Bünzlin's possessions. Like Züs, moreover, Frau Manz is typified by a failure of restraint and/or an excess of (implicitly sexual) appetite. Strikingly, however, this does not lead to the exercise of unrestraint, as it were: even as it is suggested that Frau Manz's sexuality is excessive, she does not in fact cuckold her husband, but merely "hoodwinks" him.

The "badness" of Frau Manz -- as opposed to the goodness of Frau Marti -- consists in other words not so much in deeds as in false and misleading words. As in "Die drei gerechten Kammacher," what at first glance appeared to be a matter of illicit desire is almost immediately overwritten, as it were, by the problem of mis-representation. Yet Frau Manz's most significant transgression concerns neither sexuality nor language in and of themselves, but the (household) economy that, in Keller's world, provides for their exchange and, therefore, their value. Unlike Frau Marti, Frau Manz embraces, or tries to embrace, the violation and dissolution of her home, greeting its expansion to include the public space of a pub not as a loss, but as an opportunity for self-expression and self-display. The narrator needs no great prodding to transform this impulse into travesty:

The rather stout woman had put together a peculiar outfit, in which she thought herself irresistible; in addition to an undyed country skirt of linen, she wore an old, green silk jacket, a cotton apron, and a shabby white collar. Over her

temples she had curled her hair – no longer thick – into funny-looking spirals and had stuck a high comb into the knot at the back. Thus she pranced and danced about in an effort to be graceful, puckered up her mouth comically to make it look sweet, tripped elastically to the table, laid down the glass or plate of salted cheese, and said with a smile:

"How about that? Isn´t that nice? Fine, gentlemen, fine!" and more such nonsense. For although she generally had a glib tongue, she was now unable to say anything clever, being a stranger and not knowing her guests (69, 84).

It is painfully obvious that precisely those characteristics – attention to costume and a "glib tongue" -- found to be so attractive in a young woman during her courtship are made to seem ridiculous and even repulsive in the "case" of a matron. Yet as tempting and as plausible as it may be to read this caricature as a misogynist swipe at any (middle-aged) woman who would dare leave the confines of the private sphere, our consideration of the combmakers has prepared us to recognize that the kind of familiarity Frau Manz has (more or less voluntarily) exchanged for life as a "stranger" is not simply a precious commodity or even a treasure in Keller's world, but the pre-condition or framework for any emergence of value. In a strictly analogous sense, a house(hold) is not only an object of value or exchange *within* a given economy, but, as the *oikos*, the site or foundation of every economic transaction, the "natural" limitation without which nothing meaningful or valuable can emerge.

The notion of property ownership as something both sacred and potentially fatal insistently reappears in the account of the lovers' final day. I have already noted Vrenchen's attention to her "costume" (which mirrors not only Frau Manz's preoccupation with her outfits but Sali's dandyism, which he has inherited from his mother). Even more pointed is the episode at the church fair, where Vrenchen and Sali buy each other gifts. If these presents seem to figure as harbingers of their suicide, this is first of all because they are obtained with the "last pennies"

with which the lovers' last hours will be compared. But it also has to do with the mode of reading that informs their gift-giving, one that seems immediately to give rise to its own mimetic (re)production. Sali, it will be recalled, buys for Vrenchen a gingerbread house, and she a heart for him; on each is written a short poem that appears to have emerged wholesale from the depths of folk wisdom, but was in fact composed by Keller himself:

> They eagerly read the verses, and never has anything printed and rhymed been more highly appreciated or more deeply felt than were these gingerbread mottoes (*Sprüche*); for *they regarded what they read* as something written especially for them, so appropriate did it seem.
>
> "Oh!" sighed Verena, "you're giving me a house! I've given you one too, and our only real one; because our hearts are now the houses we live in, and so we carry our homes around with us, like two snails. We have no other!"
>
> "But then we're two snails, each carrying the other's house," said Sali.
>
> And Verena replied, "Then there's all the more reason why we should stick together, so that each of us may be near home!"
>
> *They did not realize* they were formulating just the kinds of witticisms as were to be read on the variously shaped cookies, and they went on studying this sweet and simple literature of love which lay spread out there, stuck for the most part on differently decorated hearts of all sizes. They found everything beautiful and uniquely applicable (106, 123-124, my emphasis).

The first mistake for which the narrator gently, if undeniably patronizingly, chides Sali and Vrenchen is their perception of the verses as "uniquely applicable" to their situation; their touching but also laughable faith that words meant for consumption -- indeed digestion -- are (at least as far as they are concerned) eternal and profound. Yet there are at least two senses in which this "applicability" is quite literally true: not only were the poems written by Gottfried

Keller for the purposes of inclusion in the story, but the themes are indeed suggestive of the stuff of their tale: that the only "currency" accepted in the house Sali gives to Vrenchen is made up of "kisses" aptly characterizes the juxtaposition of sexual attraction and abject poverty in their relationship. The manner in which these modest verses play upon the content of the novella is indeed not a little reminiscent of the way that Züs's essay on "Drei Punkte über die Selbstgerechtigkeit" did not fail to capture certain aspects of "Die drei gerechten Kammacher" -- beginning, of course, with its title. Like Züs's fanatical productions, the gingerbread rhymes can moreover be seen to prophesy or even determine the further course of the tale, as when Vrenchen cites the motto of her gift to Sali ("Doch süsser als der Mandelkern ist meine Lieb' zu Dir") before leaping on to the barge and to her death. [155]

It is however the narrator's second ascertainment of error on the part of Sali and Vrenchen that is of greater consequence: their failure to "realize" that their own "witticisms" appear comparable to the gingerbread mottoes not because of a common reference point, but "purely" as poetic productions*:* "*They did not realize* they were formulating just the kinds of witticisms as were to be read on the variously shaped cookies…" (op.cit.) What Sali and Vrenchen believe instead is what one would expect any "realist" to underwrite, namely that language, even of the most figurative kind, refers to something (in this case love, or more specifically their own love story) "beyond" itself. It is here, at the level of content, that Sali and Vrenchen seek, and find, correspondence; what the narrator finds, in addition – and, crucially, without their awareness -- is a structural similarity between the verses and the lovers' discourse. As tempting as it might be to ascribe Sali and Vrenchen's error their provincial background, this

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[155] Cf. Gail Hart, op.cit., p.77: "…the *Pfefferkuchensprüche* not only apply to the lovers' thoughts and behavior, they also determine them."

mode of reading is not so easily reducible to a lack of education. For one thing, the (mimetic) reading and/as (re)writing in which Sali and Vrenchen (like and unlike Züs Bünzlin) engage is far from limited to the distinctly unsophisticated "genre" of sugar icing. In particular, the lovers' vision of themselves as carrying each others' houses in the internalized or interior form of each others' hearts anticipates the narrator's "own" characterization of those hearts as the living shrines for the "last flicker" of "the honor that had formerly shone in their houses." Their "witticisms" thus echo not only popular literature, but equally the "great" literature that "Romeo und Julia auf dem Dorfe" arguably constitutes, and with which it in any case invites comparison -- already with its title.

If this conflation or possible confusion between "high" and "low" does not appear as the simple mistake of under-read village youth, that does not mean that it is not anxiety-provoking for the narrator. This anxiety is tangentially but revealingly related to Freud's discussion of literature in "Day-Dreaming and the Creative Writer." In speaking of literature proper, or what constitutes proper as opposed to popular literature, Freud maintains that it is only a serious or artistic writer who can "put us in the position of enjoying our own fantasies free from every reproach and without shame" (*…dass uns der Dichter in den Stand setzt, unsere eigenen Phantasien nunmehr ohne jeden Vorwurf und ohne Schämen zu geniessen*): a best-seller may be enjoyable (as well as relatively inexpensive, though Freud leaves this aside) -- but there is a price to be paid in self-respect.[156] The difference between "high" and "low" literature is thus seen to hinge on their relative success in concealing readers' investments in, as Freud puts it, "His

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[156] Freud, op.cit., p.179.

Majesty the Ego (*Seine Majestät das Ich*), hero of every daydream as of every novel."[157] That which great literature conceals with its sophisticated bag of tricks is the investment in a fantasy of the ego that, were it not thus covered, would erupt in shame. For Freud, of course, the motive both for investment in the ego and for hiding that investment is irreducibly libidinal. But what if – and as we saw above, this is a possibility that Freud's own essay leaves open – the anxiety surrounding exposure and concealment is itself always already "egotistical," or narcissistic? What if, in other words, the investment in the ego that is concealed by figurative writing of a certain caliber threatens to shame the reader not because of some deeper level of (sexual) motivation, but purely because of the (infinite) process of mirroring or projection that it provokes?

At stake, then, is the extent to which literature can be thought to have or possess a foundation outside of itself. If it does not – if "literature" marks the space of a kind of self-sufficient and therefore irreducibly narcissistic economy – the blow to its dignity might be grave indeed. In the context of "Romeo und Julia auf dem Dorfe," both the threat (of a literature without limit) and the promise (of a literature that might be grounded or founded in more worldly and thus more legitimate economies) are potentially symbolized by the second gift that Sali and Vrenchen purchase at the fair -- each without the other's knowledge -- and which they will not present to each other until the (self-authorized) marriage ceremony that precedes and sanctifies their suicide. Taken together, the rings symbolize the "sameness" of the lovers, or the sense in which they mirror one another: the fact, for example, that they had "had the same idea" of presenting each other with a ring. Before these gifts can symbolize a union, however, Sali must

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[157] Ibid., p.176.

undergo a kind of conversion to the "womanly feeling" ostensibly embodied by Vrenchen:

> Sali's love was certainly just as strong as Verena's, but for him marriage was not such a living, burning question – not so much a definite either-or, an immediate to-be-or-not-to-be – as it was for Verena, who was capable of feeling only the one thing, and saw in it with passionate decisiveness a simple issue of life or death. But now at last he saw the light, and what was womanly feeling in the young girl at once became in him a wild and hot desire... (116, 134).

Even as it has been prepared by Vrenchen's obsession with marriage, the ascertainment of her "single-mindedness" is surprising, even jarring, in that her emotional life has up to now appeared as quite drastically, perhaps even hysterically, *in*consistent.[158] Whether her horrified awe of the black fiddler is suddenly displaced by uncontrollable laughter at his ugliness or her grief at her father's condition tempered by amusement at his incoherent outbursts, Vrenchen is characteristically unpredictable and spontaneous. The hypothesis that it is her sexual awakening that has channeled the girlish unruliness into a single stream, rendering her "capable" of feeling only "the one thing," is complicated by the way that, as we have seen, Vrenchen's desire to be a bride as both inspired by and dependent on the suggestions and models of others. That Vrenchen's irreducibly derivative longing to possess (*besitzen*) Sali is indeed more aptly characterized as the narcissistic desire to "be" someone (else) – like a bride -- is further suggested by the hesitancy with which "das weibliche Gefühl" is identified as sexual; it only appears as "wild and hot desire" when it is received, as it were, by Sali, who having "seen the light" of Vrenchen's exclusive focus on him in turn converts her feeling into a wave of sexual passion that envelops them both. Far from the original source of this passion, however, Sali's

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[158] On the "singularity" of Green Henry's desire, see Hörisch, op.cit.

"conversion" to a single-minded focus takes its cue, as we have seen, from Vrenchen. The "object" towards which his desire tends or for which it strives would thus appear to be not so much the girl "herself" as the position of the one who answers or responds to (the perception of her) desire for him: in other words, the imitation of an imitation.

To the extent that each lover in "Romeo und Julia auf dem Dorfe" responds not so much to the other person as to a fantasy of love, the desire for possession of the other appears as itself symptomatic of the subject's "own" possession by mimetic desire. As the source and the product of imitation without end, "mature" sexual love, with all of its potential fatalities, thus comes in "Romeo und Julia auf dem Dorfe" to resemble nothing so much as the literature in and through which its story – which moreover is never simply its own -- is eternally (re)told.

Chapter Three

Idiocy and the Gift: "Brother Jacob"

I

I don't want the world to give me anything for my books except money enough to save me from the temptation to write *only* for money.

-George Eliot to John Blackwood[159]

If the success of Gottfried Keller´s short story collection *Die Leute von Seldwyla* helped to compensate both the author and his publisher for the disappointing sales of his first novel*, Der grüne Heinrich,* George Eliot made a gift of what would be her final novella and by far her shortest piece of published fiction, "Brother Jacob," to George Smith, the editor of *Cornhill Magazine* as well as the hapless publisher of *Romola*.[160] Appearing anonymously in the *Cornhill* in 1864, "Brother Jacob" was not affixed with the celebrated name of George Eliot until the publication of the Cabinet edition in 1878, when it joined the likewise anonymously published story, "The Lifted Veil," and *Silas Marner* in a single volume. In negotiations concerning this edition, Eliot's long-standing publisher Blackwood (whom his most prized author never made a gift of anything) struggled in vain against the juxtaposition of what he considered her most ill-

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[159] *GEL* III, 152.

[160] Eliot's historical novel proved a financial as well as critical disappointment despite the fact that the author had received the unprecedented sum of £10,000 to write it.

conceived works with her best-loved, as well as shortest, novel.[161] That Eliot herself shared his low esteem for "Brother Jacob" is suggested already by its inauspicious debut. Although the novella was composed during the same period as *Silas Marner*, the slighter piece lingered for four years in Eliot's drawer, only to be buried in the anonymous pages of a periodical for a further fourteen. *Silas Marner,* by contrast, was immediately issued in a single bound volume that prominently displayed the name (or rather pseudonym) of its famous author, for whom it made a tidy profit at the same time that it helped shore up an already considerable reputation before the relative indifference and even rejection that, as Eliot anticipated, was to greet *Romola*.[162]

The similarity between the publishing history of "Brother Jacob" and the story that the novella tells is doubtless something of a coincidence. Nevertheless, it is hardly to be overlooked that matters of giving and taking – as well as coincidence -- are central to both. As readers will recall, "Brother Jacob" recounts the tale of a young man named David Faux, who has been supplied with only a meager share of the world's material goods. Inspired by a boyhood visit to his uncle, a butler, Faux trains as a confectioner -- only to find that the sought-after station does not after all promise to satisfy his "soaring ambition."[163] In order to finance his emigration to

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[161]Blackwood, for his part, was often known to make Eliot presents, such as her beloved pug. It might moreover be possible, at a stretch, to construe Eliot's late essay "Address to Working Men by Felix Holt" as a "gift" to Blackwood; certainly she wrote it at his request. Moreover, in what might be considered a kind of negative gift-giving and/as sign of respect, Eliot often withdrew (or threatened to withdraw) manuscripts that did not meet with Blackwood's wholehearted and almost uncritical approval. Indeed, Ruby Redinger speculates that it was Blackwood's negative response to "The Lifted Veil," which included the caveat that perhaps "others are not so fond of sweets as I am," that may have "germinated into 'Brother Jacob'" (Redinger, *George Eliot: The Emergent Self.* London: The Bodley Head, 1976, p.435). Also see Donald Gray, "George Eliot and her publishers," in: *The Cambridge Companion to George Eliot.* George Levine, ed. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 2001.

[162] Like the composition of *Silas Marner,* the writing of "Brother Jacob" interrupted Eliot's work on *Romola*

[163] George Eliot, "Brother Jacob," in: *The Lifted Veil. Brother Jacob.* Helen Small, ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999, p.55. All further references to this edition will be given parenthetically in the text.

Jamaica, where he expects to meet a "princess" who will support a life of luxury at his pleasure, Faux steals a hoard of guineas belonging to his mother. He is caught in the act of burying the coins for later, clandestine retrieval by his elder brother Jacob, an idiot who can be temporarily pacified but not silenced with bribes of candy. Thus in possession of the coins -- if not, as he had calculated, the appearance of innocence -- David leaves for the West Indies. The second part of the tale relates the fortunes of "Edward Freely," a confectioner who has opened a shop in a small village called Grimworth. Confronting deep-seated prejudices against newcomers to the community, he boldly proceeds to court the daughter of the most esteemed family in town while holding the village women in thrall with his expensive wares as well as adventurous tales of life in the colonies. Just as he is poised to make his engagement to Penelope ("Penny") Palfrey official, Freely reads an advertisement in a newspaper addressed to David Faux. Readers are finally confirmed in their suspicions that "Freely" is Faux when he, correctly, presumes the notice to concern his paternal inheritance. In part three, Faux returns home to claim the legacy that he thought the robbery of his mother had cost him -- and for which, readers now learn, he had already managed to compensate himself by way of petty blackmail. Back in Grimworth, Faux continues his courtship of Penny, winning over her mother with interest in her recipes and her father with invented accounts of rich and powerful uncles as well as a "very fine Jamaica rum" (73). On the very day the Palfrey family visits Faux to finalize the engagement, Jacob bursts into the shop, looking for the brother now forever linked in his mind with sweet-tasting treats. It is however not Jacob himself, but the eldest brother Jonathan, the emissary of their mother, who finally reveals David's "true" identity – that is, his identity as (a) "Faux" -- to the villagers, who drive him out of town in a hail of mockery. The novella ends on a

characteristically moralistic note: "Here ends the story of Mr David Faux, confectioner, and his brother Jacob. And we see in it, I think, an admirable instance of the unexpected forms in which the great Nemesis hides herself" (87).

Where "Brother Jacob" centers on a character who consistently claims more than his due, the very act of the novella's publication casts the author as one who is very conscious of and conscientious about settling debts and avoiding obligation.[164] At the same time, the subsequent inclusion of the tale among Eliot's collected works can only mean that the "gift" presented to Smith did not include the rights to re-publication, rights which reverted to the author after the novella's appearance in *Cornhill Magazine*. While this return to the name of "George Eliot" was in the first instance a financial matter, it also helped to guard against misunderstandings such as the famous "Liggins affair," in which Eliot was embroiled at the time of the novella's composition.[165] As regards its reception, it indeed seems fair to say that the name of the author is the fate of the text of "Brother Jacob" just as the name of the father, in the "unexpected" form of his idiot brother, will constitute the Nemesis of David Faux: by common critical consensus, the literary value of the novella rests solely on its relationship to the body of work penned by "George Eliot."

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[164] As Redinger relates, Smith had originally offered Eliot 250 guineas for the slighter story, "sight unseen; but George Eliot had made no move to accept his offer" (Redinger, op.cit., 446). In summing up the negotiations with Smith, Redinger concludes: "…in every way available to her, George Eliot had proved to her own satisfaction that she was not a mercenary author" (451). This is of course not necessarily to maintain that Eliot was always or consistently generous; Lawrence Jay Dessner, for one, finds in her dealings with the Blackwood brothers evidence enough of "a rapacious greed" (Dessner, "The Autobiographical Matrix of *Silas Marner,*" *Studies in the Novel* 11, 1979,p.257). However one may stand on this question of Eliot's character, Dessner is certainly correct that "[in] her letters to Blackwood and to others [Eliot] is often uncomfortably self-conscious of at least seeming to be greedy" (Dessner 264).

[165] See particularly Rosemarie Bodenheimer, *The Real Life of Mary Ann Evans. George Eliot, Her Letters and Fiction.* Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1994, esp. pp.148-160; and Susan de Sola Rodstein, "Sweetness and Dark: George Eliot's *Brother Jacob.*" *Modern Language Quarterly,* 52/53, 1991, pp.295-317.

In general, readers have been hard-pressed to object to Eliot's own assessment of "Brother Jacob" as a "trifle."[166] Surprisingly little notice has however been taken of the pun – a trifle being of course a rich dessert as well as a matter of little significance. This omission is all the more surprising in that recent criticism has been remarkably sensitive to the subtle as well as obvious parallels between George Eliot and David Faux, her "most unpleasant" protagonist (Knoepflmacher): the pseudonymous writer of crowd-pleasing as well as critically acclaimed fiction and the "contriving" and conniving confectioner who operates under a false name.[167] It is, to be sure, only as a bagatelle that the word "trifle" appears in "Brother Jacob" itself: in an echo of a LaFontanian fable concerning a fox and some irretrievable grapes, Faux declares his father's legacy to be only a "trifle" at the very moment when he is certain that it will never become his (60).[168] In appearing to dismiss or belittle her text as not worthy of her talents – which in accordance with the etymology of "talent" also means the coins or guineas she voluntarily forfeited upon its publication -- Eliot simultaneously identifies herself both with her protagonist's trade and his (after all quite limited) choice of words.

If recent critics have made much of a perceived or unconscious resemblance between Marian Evans/George Eliot and David Faux/Edward Freely, they have perhaps had too little to say about the text's own preoccupation with similitude and correspondence. Already the

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[166]*GEL*, 4:157. In the same missive, Eliot refers to "Brother Jacob" as "a low tale," a clear echo of the narrator's assessment of Grimworth as "a low place."

[167] See especially Bodenheimer and Rodstein, op.cit.; Dessner (op.cit.) and J.S. Szirotny ("Two Confectioners the Reverse of Sweet: The Role of Metaphor in Determining George Eliot's Use of Experience." *Studies in Short Fiction* 21, 1984 pp.127-144) also discuss various autobiographical aspects of the tale. Karen Mann also devotes a fair amount of attention to the novella in her book, *The Language that Makes George Eliot's Fiction* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1983).

[168] Peter Allan Dale notes that at this time, Lewes was at "work on a story based on 'The Fox Who Gets the Grapes,' which appeared in *Blackwood's* two months later as 'Mrs. Beauchamp's Vengeance' (Vol. 89, 1861, pp. 534-537)." Dale, "*Brother Jacob* and the Physiology of Common Life." *Philological Quarterly* LXIV, 1985, pp.17-35, p.34n10.

epigraph casts the tale as having been written "for" the audience who most resembles its main character:

Trompeurs, c'est pour vous que j'écris,

Attendez-vous à la pareille.

[Deceivers, I write for you;

Await the same fate!]

Nothing indeed could be clearer than that the aptly named David Faux is a *trompeur* – if not a "sharper," swindler, or counterfeiter (the timid Faux not having the stomach, as it were, for true crime).[169] Not only does the French name Faux translate as "false"; it also, as the villagers of Grimworth point out, bears a telling similarity to the English "fox," a common epithet for a cunning and deceptive personage as well as the main character in the fable from which the epigraph is lifted.[170] Like the fox in La Fontaine's morality tale, moreover, Faux is subject to a kind of automatic mechanism – hardly original to or within Eliot's *oeuvre* -- whereby deception generates its own demise. There nevertheless remains a sense in which "Faux" and (the La Fontanian) "fox" are what in language pedagogy is referred to as "false friends," or misleading cognates. For whereas, in the fable of "The Fox and the Stork," the mode in which the

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[169] Cf. pp.76-77: "It is possible to pass a great many bad halfpennies and bad half-crowns, but I believe there has no instance been known of passing a halfpenny or a half-crown as a sovereign." Since David was "too timid to be a sharper, or venture in any way among the man-traps of the law," he is obliged "to fall back on the genuine value there was in him – to be content to pass as a good halfpenny or, to speak more accurately, a good confectioner."

[170] Rodstein points to a possible reference to Isaac Faux, *a.k.a.* Fawkes, a possibility which is particularly suggestive in light of Bodenheimer's observations on the relevance of Isaac Evans, Eliot's brother, to the tale (see esp. pp.151f).

protagonist receives his just desserts is pointedly identical or at least parallel (*pareille*) to that which set it in motion -- the deceiver (the fox) is himself deceived by him (the stork) whom he set out to deceive, and in a pointedly analogous manner -- what catches up with David Faux in the form of his brother is hardly "the same" mode of contrivance that characterizes his own operations. On the contrary: lacking the power of sympathetic projection or, in the words of the novella, "imagination," idiots are precisely those for whom matters of "form," propriety, and even property play no role whatsoever – which is why nothing restrains them from breaking into candy shops and helping themselves.

If in La Fontaine the appearance of generosity in both protagonists is belied by the form (vase or plate) in which purported hospitality is extended, the defining contrast in "Brother Jacob" is rendered as the discrepancy between the stupidity, which is also moral degeneracy, of David Faux and the purely ignorant, if not necessarily innocent, idiocy of his brother. A great deal of the fable's irony resides in the greater intractability of the former. For if what the story illustrates, as we shall see, is that idiocy can, and perhaps even must, be integrated into both morality and narrative, stupidity remains – in precise inversion of a favorite conceit of the fairy tale -- beyond the reach of either.[171] Thus for example, the repeated appearance, in the novella, of what is variously called Fate, Nemesis, or Jacob fails to prompt in David anything resembling insight, or to teach him any lessons: whether caught by his brother in the act of stealing, sent home from the colonies in disgrace, or driven out of the town of Grimworth, David's faith in his own self-worth remains unshakable. These futile and fruitless repetitions simultaneously serve to indicate a fundamental problem with the claim to have written the story "for" deceivers --

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[171] I am referring to the common fairy-tale motif in which the youngest and most foolish brother is ultimately revealed to be in every sense the most gifted.

presumably the last readers who would recognize themselves in the pages of a morality tale or, if they did, be at all unsettled by such recognition. It is thus hardly a coincidence that this distinctly un-edifying scene of reading is central to the characterization of the novella's protagonist, who reads "Inkle and Yarico" in great sympathy with "poor Mr. Inkle."[172] From here it is not far to the conclusion that every *trompeur* worthy of the name would, likewise, empathize with the put-upon David Faux, conveniently overlooking any hint of narrative irony -- no matter how liberally applied.[173] "Brother Jacob," then, is not only a text in which authorial or narrative sympathy appears only in ironic form ("poor Mr. Freely"; "poor Penny"; "poor Jacob") but a text in which readerly sympathy ("poor Mr Inkle") figures as suspect, a self-protective and self-serving form of blindness and even stupidity.

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[172] Helen Small gives this succinct account of the tale: "...in the *Spectator*...March 1711, Richard Steele told the story of a beautiful native American Indian woman, Yarico, who saved the life of a young London merchant, Thomas Inkle, only to be taken by him to Barbados and sold into slavery. When she pleaded with him that she was carrying his child he used the information to drive up her sale price" (p.98n50).

[173] Cf. Avital Ronell, *Stupidity* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2002): "The stupid cannot see themselves. No mirror yet has been invented in which they might reflect themselves. They ineluctably evade reflection" (p.18). Cf. also p.45: "One reason the gods themselves are said to renounce all hope of combating stupidity is that it offers no place of intervention that would not merely produce a boomerang effect, returning stupidity to the sender who has presumed to launch an attack against its self-contentment." My reading of "Brother Jacob" is deeply indebted to Ronell's important book.

II

A child, more than all other gifts
That earth can offer to declining man,
Brings hope with it, and forward-looking thoughts.
-Wordsworth, "Michael"
epigraph to *Silas Marner: The Weaver of Raveloe*

In taking a particularly intrepid form of obtuseness as its target, Eliot's novella would appear, from the very beginning as well as the all-too-appropriate ending, to cut off any prospect that either the reading or writing of literature might give rise to the new, the surprising, or the "unexpected."[174] A certain irony in the relation of "Brother Jacob" to its genre thus becomes apparent: far from working towards a surprise, the "novella" tells of nothing new under the sun – least of all a gift.[175] Indeed, if the gift is a dominant motif of "Brother Jacob," that is only to the extent that there is no giving in the novella that is not both preceded and eventually trumped by taking, no gesture of generosity that does not degenerate into something that can only be characterized as its opposite -- whether greed, retribution, or vengeance. This is most evident, of course, in the characterization of David Faux. Already the theft of the maternal legacy that inaugurates David's story is attributed to a perceived absence of largesse: "If his mother would have given him her twenty guineas as a reward of [his] noble disposition, he really would not

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[174] Indeed, the last line does not claim that the appearance of Nemesis itself is a surprise; only its "*form*," that is: its incarnation in and as an idiot, is declared "unexpected."

[175] Eliot was probably familiar with Goethe's definition of the novella, in his "Conversations with Eckermann," as "eine sich ereignete unerhörte Begebenheit"; the "unexpected" of the last line can even be read as translation of "unerhört." This definition is itself a new variation on the etymological relationship of the "novella" to the "new" generally and the law in particular. For a consideration of "Brother Jacob" in light of the German novella tradition, see James Diedrick, "George Eliot's Experiments in Fiction: 'Brother Jacob' and the German Novelle" (*Studies in Short Fiction,* XXII, 1985, pp.461-468). Diedrick points in particular to the "presence in 'Brother Jacob' of the double, of disguise, of ritual unmasking and...grotesque realism," all of which serve to align Eliot's work in the shorter genre more closely with Keller's than any of her longer novels.

have stolen them from her, and it would have been more agreeable to his feelings" (52). What is signaled by the narrator's irony is of course not simply that Faux is greedy, but that he is deluded. Against all common sense or what the storyteller likes to call the "law of sequence," Faux expects gifts, or "rewards," to fall in his lap like manna from heaven. Like Godfrey and Dunstan Cass in *Silas Marner* or Fred Vincy in *Middlemarch,* Faux succumbs to what is essentially "a form of gambling" with his life.[176]

The counterpart to David's conviction that "Providence" has something special in store for him is an exaggerated vigilance regarding the act of giving: "David was not a young man to waste his jujubes and barley-sugar in giving pleasure to people from whom he expected nothing" (53). David's expectations are thus simultaneously the limits of his imagination. Writ large, as it were, or rendered as plotline, this is the very essence of his Nemesis: in the expectation of his father's legacy, he returns home despite the clear danger of encountering the monstrous Jacob there. This return against the dictates of common sense may of course simply be taken as yet another sign or symptom of David's stupidity; but what is perhaps particularly striking is that the narrator does not even attempt to justify this plot twist on material grounds. Rather than the money itself, in other words, it is what might paradoxically be called the expectation of surprise that tempts David, who after all has already been united with his "Penelope," to complete his odyssey and return home: "even a small gain is pleasant, and the promise of it in this instance was *so surprising*, that David felt his *curiosity* awakened" (77, emphasis added). Like the proclaimed "unexpected"-ness of Jacob's role as Nemesis, this "surprise" or "curiosity" cannot by any means be said to stem from anything genuinely new; on the contrary, David is seduced

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[176] This reading of Fred's character is proposed among other places in Alan Mintz, *George Eliot and the Novel of Vocation.* Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, England: Harvard University Press, 1978, p. 144.

into coming home by the apparent manifestation of the very parental (and more specifically, though he does not know it, maternal) magnanimity that, in its perceived absence, was seen to justify his turn to theft.

Against this background, the name Faux bestows upon himself cannot but appear, at least in the first instance, wholly ironic:

> Edward Freely was the name that shone in gilt letters on a mazarine ground over the doorplace of the new shop – a generous-sounding name, that might have belonged to the open-hearted, improvident hero of an old comedy, who would have delighted in raining sugared almonds, like a new manna-gift, among that small generation outside the windows. But Mr Edward Freely was a man whose impulses were kept in due subordination; he held that the desire for sweets and pastry must only be satisfied in a direct ration with the power of paying for them (63).

The irony of Faux's pseudonym is that he takes a name appropriate not to himself, but to his (youthful fantasy of) other people as it is expressed upon his departure for the colonies[177]: "He would never steal any more, but there would be no need; he would show himself so deserving, that people would make him presents *freely*" (60, my emphasis). The larger irony of the tale as a whole is that the very presupposition of a source of the "freely" given – whether his mother, a mythical "princess," or indeed the generalized population of the West Indies -- impedes the occurrence of generosity: in the end, Faux will emerge neither as the giver or receiver of gifts, but only of debts and obligations.

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[177] To the many biographical parallels between Faux and his creator, the "generous-sounding name" should be noted; as many Eliot biographers recount, she accounted for her pseudonym by telling "her husband John Cross that she picked the name because George was Mr. Lewes's Christian name, and Eliot was *a good mouth-filling,* easily-pronounced word" (cited in Kathryn Hughes, *George Eliot. The Last Victorian.* London: Fourth Estate, 1998, p.186, my emphasis). Ruby Redinger (op.cit.) further speculated that the chosen surname spells out not only loyalty but a debt to "George **L**ewes": "To 'L' I owe it."

There nevertheless remains a sense in which the name "Freely" applies quite accurately and even literally to Faux. In particular, the adverb "freely" and the adjective "free" consistently appear in conjunction with descriptions of David's speech patterns. It seems, in other words, that the one exception to David's constitutive stinginess is language. The early observation that a "curse" was the "only thing [David] ever did bestow gratuitously" is thus to be taken verbatim both with regards to Faux's ill-fated alias, which ultimately reveals itself to be a self-imposed curse, and when expanded to include other examples of his markedly self-assured statements. But David's habit of holding forth first becomes evident in his confidences to his mother:

> First, he spoke *freely* of his intention to start shortly for Liverpool and take ship for America; a resolution which cost his good mother some pain, for after Jacob the idiot, there was not one of her sons to whom her heart clung more than to her youngest-born, David (52, my emphasis).

While in the first instance (re-)emphasizing David's habit of calculating "costs" only when it is he who will be expected to pay them, this passage more subtly connects his proclivity for speaking "freely" with his constitutive avarice. David's lack of verbal inhibition, his readiness to bear the lion's share of the exchange known as conversation, will indeed cost him: most obviously in the form of his pseudonym, a secret just waiting to be exposed, but also by pointing up the discrepancy between the economy represented in his discourse and the one embodied by his person: "...at the Oyster Club he was sometimes a little *free* in his conversation, more than hinting at a life of Sultanic self-indulgence which he had passed in the West Indies..." (68, my emphasis). It is perhaps no coincidence that this "slip" provides the occasion for a rare narrative

intervention on behalf of David Faux: "...in the dark hints that David threw out at the Oyster Club...I really think he was doing himself a wrong..." (76). The ostensible defense is of course the opposite, and again the point is that Faux fails to see any connection whatsoever between "wronging" (i.e. deceiving) others and a price that he may, indeed, someday be required to pay.

Because the "wrong" that David does himself is purely economic in nature – in risking eventual exposure, he foolishly throws himself at the mercy of others (or "readers") no more generous than he is – it violates, before or beyond any moral principle, his own allegedly sacredly held principle of rational calculation. A similar privileging of fantasy above fact governs David's fraught relationship to the written word, which is not limited to the reading of novels. Given different circumstances, the narrator hints, David (believes he) would have been a novelist himself:

> If he had fallen on the present times, and enjoyed the advantages of a Mechanics' Institute, he would certainly have taken to literature and have written reviews; but his education had not been liberal. He had read some novels from the adjoining circulating library, and had even bought the story of "Inkle and Yarico," which had made him feel very sorry for poor Mr Inkle; so that his ideas might not have been below a certain mark of the literary calling; but his spelling and diction were too unconventional (50).

The problem is that a lack of "liberal" education means David takes too many, rather than too few, "liberties" with the language. He cannot be a writer, in other words, not only because his ideas are fantastic, but because, and in a related sense, he is incapable of limiting or disciplining himself when forming sentences on the page any more than he does in conversation. David's conversion of "imaginative literature" into a form of "knowledge" that can be applied to the

"practical purposes" of creating a character capable of keeping the townspeople's interest -- "Mr Edward Freely, the orphan, scion of a great but reduced family, with an eccentric uncle in the West Indies" (79) – will likewise eventually founder on garrulousness rather than reticence: it is (only) because he offers himself as a figure of identification (much like "poor Mr. Inkle") in the explicit stead of "the open-hearted, improvident hero of an old comedy, who would have delighted in raining sugared almonds, like a new manna-gift" that he will be pilloried with such glee by the very "boys" whom he disdained to shower with sweets.

While "Brother Jacob" is in many respects little more than a character study of its egocentric protagonist, David Faux is in fact not the only figure through which the nature of the gift and its expectation is explored. Certainly Faux is not alone in the world of the novella with his wariness about giving "freely." Even the munificence of "the trustees of Mr Zephaniah Crypt's Charity" is extracted only "under the stimulus of a late visitation by commissioners," and is significant largely for its status as "a double source of profit to the calculating confectioner" (66). Communal or social giving thus has more in common with David's own practice of blackmail – or, as the narrator wryly puts it, "charitably abstaining from mentioning some other people's misdemeanours" – than with anything like a gift (77).[178] It should accordingly come as no surprise that it is ultimately David who is put in charge of administering aid to – which with his disposition amounts to withholding aid from -- the poor. There is indeed no single figure, or institution, in the novella who delights in giving. Only David's (as well as Jacob and Jonathan's) mother begins to approach an ideal of generosity:

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[178] On charity in *Middlemarch,* see Daniel Siegel, "Losing for Profit" (in: Karen Chase, ed. *Middlemarch in the Twenty-First Century.* London: Oxford University Press, 2006, pp.157-176).

Good Mrs. Faux could never forget that she had brought this ill-conditioned son into the world when he was in that entirely helpless state which excluded the smallest choice on his part; and, somehow or other, she felt that his going wrong would be his father's and mother's fault**,** if they failed in one tittle of their parental duty. Her notion of parental duty was not of a high and subtle kind, but it included giving him his due share of the family property; for when a man had got a little honest money of his own, was he so likely to steal? To cut the delinquent son off with a shilling, was like delivering him over to his evil propensities. No; let the sum of twenty guineas which he had stolen be deducted from his share, and then let the sum of three guineas be put back from it, seeing that his mother had always considered three of the twenty guineas as his; and, though he had run away, and was, perhaps, gone across the sea, let the money be left to him all the same, and kept in reserve for his possible return. Mr Faux agreed to his wife's views, and made a codicil to his will accordingly, in time to die with a clear conscience (78).

Mrs. Faux is "good" not because she is overly or excessively bountiful -- because she wishes to give pleasure beyond all reason -- but on the contrary because she is admirably measured: value, turning on the standard of (not) "one tittle," is a matter of tit for tat, of equitable exchange.

The exceptionality of Mrs. Faux, then, rests not so much on an alternative model of generosity as on a sensibility significantly more "realistic" than David's: giving the right amount, or what is owed (rather than, as her son would have it, an excessive reward) will prevent or preclude outbreaks of unlimited and uncontrolled desire. For the mother, clearly, "giving" is never – not even, or especially, in the realm of imaginative projection – to be divorced from "taking"; on the contrary, each is the other's presupposition as well as end result. What distinguishes Mrs. Faux's reflections on possible consequences of her actions, or her gifts, from David's self-serving considerations as to "whether an action would harm himself, or whether it would only harm other people" (58) is thus not the rational spirit of calculation as such, but, more fundamentally, the temporal source of the reasoning that lies behind it. Like many other

admirable Eliot characters -- or at least characters Eliot's narrators urge her readers to admire -- Mrs. Faux begins from the idea of the past as a time in which a debt, or fault, was incurred through the very fact of birth itself: if not (though this is certainly not to be excluded) her own, then the birth that she has "given" her children.[179] Mrs. Faux's sons have in other words not (only) provided her with "forward-looking" thoughts, as the epigraph to *Silas Marner* will have it, but endowed her with a consciousness that will always, also, look back.

If David's inheritance is in his mother's view nothing more or less than his due, this is at least equally true in an ironic sense: from the moment the son exerts a claim upon it, the "gift" of the mother becomes *Gift*, or poison. This is because David is focused exclusively on the future as a means of compensation for the past he perceives to have been deficient in gifts. It is moreover precisely this tendency towards abstraction from personal history, itself aligned with an inversion of birth order (the plan of the youngest, David, to "anticipate" his brothers on the morning of the theft, 57)[180] to which the novella provides a corrective – not least through the figure of the mother or orderly birth-giver herself. This can be seen in the way that, in addition or as a complement to her inability to "forget," Mrs. Faux shares with many other minor and female characters in Eliot the cultivation of an intimate and domestic space, whether a private cupboard, a work basket, or, as here, a drawer.[181] While notably reminiscent of Züs Bünzlin's

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[179]For a reading of *The Mill on the Floss* in terms of this relationship to fundamental or original obligation, see Neil Hertz, *George Eliot's Pulse.* Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2003; Chapter 4, "Mr. Tulliver's Life-in-Debt."

[180] Many critics have noted the biblical motif suggested by the names David and Jacob (and Jonathan); while Jacob is the younger son who usurps his older brother's birthright, Jacob is here literally David's, if not Jonathan's elder, and yet, more figuratively, stuck in an eternal childhood that indeed encroaches upon the legacy of all of his brothers. For more on how "Brother Jacob" extends, and inverts, the David-and-Jonathan constellation that reverberated throughout *The Mill on the Floss*, see Bodenheimer, op.cit.

[181] In the famous Chapter 17 of *Adam Bede,* which finds the narrator musing upon his craft, he also pointedly reflects: "I have seen many an excellent matron, who could never in her best days have been handsome, and yet she

famous wardrobe in "Die drei gerechten Kammacher," Mrs. Faux's bureau serves an entirely different purpose: the preservation of the past not as a model for the narcissistic gratification to be expected from the future, but as a testament to the temporal and ethical priority of relationship over the isolated individual. It is this cache that David is said to discover at and as the outset of his adventures:

> Having been at home a week or two partaking of the family beans, he had used his leisure in ascertaining a fact which was of considerable importance to him, namely, that his mother had a small sum in guineas painfully saved from her maiden perquisites, and kept in the corner of a drawer where her baby-linen had reposed for the last twenty years – ever since her son David had taken to his feet, with a slight promise of bow-legs which had not been altogether unfulfilled. Mr. Faux, senior, had told his son very frankly, that he must not look to being set-up in business by *him*: with seven sons, and one of them a very healthy and well-developed idiot, who consumed a dumpling about eight inches in diameter every day, it was pretty well if they got a hundred apiece at his death (51).

Although the guineas do not increase in value or generate any interest while "reposing" in the (box in the corner of the) drawer, they still hold the promise of bearing fruit one day; and it is for this reason that they remain analogous to the bodies once clothed in the baby-linen. This brief account of home economics nevertheless includes two forms of excess: the "leisure" granted

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had a packet of yellow love-letters in a private drawer, and sweet children showered kisses on her sallow cheeks" (224). In *The Mill on the Floss*, a certain fetishism characterizes not only Maggie's relationship to her doll, but the tendency of all the Dodson women to transform their household goods into household gods or Penaten (Aunt Glegg's habit of always wearing the oldest clothes from her wardrobe incidentally echoes Züs's similar practice in *Die drei gerechten Kammacher*). In *Silas Marner*, it is the childless Nancy who cherishes a drawer reminiscent of Mrs Faux's: "Was there not a drawer filled with the neat work of her hands, all unworn and untouched, just as she had arranged it there fourteen years ago – just, but for one little dress, which had been made the burial-dress?" (*Silas Marner. The Weaver of Raveloe*. David Carroll, ed. London: Penguin, 1996, p.155). By a coincidence that could hardly have been anticipated at the time of *Silas Marner*'s composition, "Brother Jacob" would remain in Eliot's drawer for precisely the same period (fourteen years).

David following the completion of his apprenticeship, on the one hand; and the treasure "painfully saved" by his mother, on the other (the pain doubtless consisting in the constant temptation to put the guineas towards the upkeep of the family). David is congenitally drawn to the latter just as he is consistently tempted to regard "uncles" as an eventual, and implicitly maternal, source of capital.[182] The defining contrast here must accordingly be recognized as the Aristotelian distinction between (home) economics -- the acquisition of wealth for a pre-defined end, namely the household --and chresmatistics, the limitless drive to create wealth for its own sake.[183] For what David fails to perceive is that the mother's treasure represents not the apotheosis but the *limit* of the family's resources; it stands in opposition to the household economy by the same token that it exists, or subsists, only because the house and its extensions (drawer, corner, box) contains, surrounds, and thus also keeps and protects it.[184]

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[182] For an analysis of the "uncle" motif in *Middlemarch*, see U.C. Knoepflmacher, "*Middlemarch*: An Avuncular View." In: *Nineteenth-Century Fiction,* 30, June 1975, pp.53-81. As Knoepflmacher notes at the outset of his essay: "The word 'uncle' is derived from *auunculus* – a mother's brother" (53).

[183] "Wealth-getting (*chrematistike*) has no limit in respect of its end, and its end is riches and the acquisition of goods in the commercial sense. But the household branch (*oikonomike*) of wealth-getting has a limit, inasmuch as the acquisition of money is not the function of household management" (Aristotle, *Politics* 1257b, cited in Mark Shell, *The Economy of Literature.* Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978, p.92). There is also a rough analogy here to Mintz's discussion of "[Max] Weber's types of traditional and antitraditional economic ethics. [The former] stresses the older values of family and community and views work as a means of maintaining the physical basis of these institutions... [The latter]... stresses the improvement of one's own estate, regardless of older ties, and requires that a man be judged on the basis of his worldly achievements" (Mintz, op.cit., 114). See also Deanna Kreisel's useful discussion of the implication of *The Mill on the Floss* in "a broader cultural debate between the optimistic Ricardian vision of unlimited economic growth and the pessimistic Malthusian strain…that warned of inadequate demand and ultimate stagnation" (Kreisel, "Superfluity and Suction: The Problem with Saving in *The Mill on the Floss*," in: *Novel,* Fall 2001, p70).

[184]On *Silas Marner*'s negotiations with capital-ism*,* see Jeff Nunokawa, "The Miser's Two Bodies: Sexual Perversity and the Flight of Capital in *Silas Marner.*" In: Nunokawa, *The Afterlife of Property: Domestic Security and the Victorian Novel.* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994. Nunokowa's study moves perhaps too quickly in identifying the woman/wife in Victorian fiction generally as a "virtually inalienable treasure" and, therefore, the endpoint of a search for a form of property "immune from loss" (10). For a more differentiated analysis of Eliot's particular relationship to loss and mourning, one that not coincidentally comes to center on the "couple" of mother/child rather than man/woman, see Kate E. Brown, "Loss, Revelry, and the Temporal Measures of *Silas Marner*: Performance, Regret, Recollection." *Novel*, Spring 1999, pp.222-247. On the economy of loss in *Middlemarch,* see Daniel Siegel, "Losing for Profit," op.cit.

By "abstract[ing] the guineas from their wooden box and slip[ping] them into a small canvas bag," David externalizes a potential dynamic or dynamic of potentiality that is destined to be kept by and within the household circle, its "natural" limit (54). In thus violating the household order, what David fakes or contrives is moreover nothing less than a process of generation, an operation first suggested to him by Jacob himself -- or more particularly the involuntary "clutching and throwing" of his right hand, which "promised to scatter [the guineas] like seed over a distant bramble" (55). When the hand instead involuntarily "pauses" in a gesture of apparent contemplation, "another resource" occurs to David, namely the idea that Jacob can be fooled into thinking that the coins are in fact "seeds." By demonstrating to his brother the "process" whereby buried coins are transformed into candy, he convinces Jacob to cover the entire box with handfuls of earth and wait for "to-morrow," when the coins will allegedly have produced their strange and delightful fruit. The confectioner's problems begin, then, with the attempt to "contain" the coins *qua* spilled seed (again) – how to "manage to cover them" (ibid.) once they have been exposed to the elements and, more pertinently, his brother:

> ...for Jacob knew his mother's guineas; it had been part of their common experience as boys to be allowed to look at these handsome coins, and rattle them in their box on high days and holidays, and among all Jacob's narrow experiences as to money, this was likely to be the most memorable (54).

This passage stands in marked contradiction to the description of David's relationship to the coins. While the "idiot" Jacob is presumed to remember the guineas from his experience of childhood, David is said first to "ascertain" his mother's possession of the coins during his leisure time following his apprenticeship, when he is already full-grown. There are at least three

possible explanations for this discrepancy. The first is a certain clumsiness or absent-mindedness on Eliot's, or the narrator's, part; perhaps s/he merely forgot David's proclaimed ignorance of the coins' existence.[185] A further possibility is that David's "ascertainment" of the guineas consists not in the literal perception of their existence, but in a kind of conversion process, whereby the coins are belatedly translated from the quasi-ritualistic objects of his childhood to tokens to be exchanged on the common market. While David has now come to understand them in this new light, Jacob evidently continues to comprehend only that the coins are his mother's -- not the use to which his brother will put them.[186]

Finally, and in a related sense, one might conjecture that it is David, rather than the author-narrator, who "forgets" the coins (or at least their significance) – in pointed contrast both to his mother and, of course, Jacob. The dedication to remembrance, or at least the inability to forget, indeed comprises a significant link between David's mother and his brother Jacob, who, as critics have duly noted, has an excellent memory for faces and places to which he has become attached.[187] Mrs. Faux's attachments are however of a markedly different kind than those of either of her cherished sons. By treasuring her keepsakes and refusing to forget the past, Mrs. Faux is fully engaged in the work of mourning. In continually presuming loss to be both his alone and something that can (and should) be compensated for by future events, David refuses this position -- if not the show of it. Indeed, the whole point of burying the coins is to enable his presence at home when the theft is discovered, when his mother will invariably be "in grief about

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[185] William Myers, for one, finds "Brother Jacob" to be "intolerably clumsy" (as well as "cold, trivial, and spiritually mean"). Myers, *The Teaching of George Eliot.* Totowa, New Jersey: Barnes and Noble Books, 1984, p.234.
[186] As Rodstein puts it, David's fetishization of money is a "more mature" version of his brother's attachments to food (Rodstein, op.cit., p.304).
[187] Both Rodstein and Bodenheimer make this point in different contexts.

her guineas" (52). The contrast to Jacob could not be more pointed: where David plays lip service to his mother's grief, his idiot brother *only* remembers – but never mourns. Jacob's rediscovery of David in Grimworth is accordingly not a restitution of loss, but the closest the novella comes to a representation of pure profit:

> Jacob was eating pie by large mouthfuls, and looking round at the other good things in the shop, while he embraced his pitchfork with his left arm and laid his left hand on some Bath buns. He was in the rare position of a person who recovers a long absent friend and finds him richer than ever in the characteristics that won his heart (81).

The prerequisite for Jacob's enjoyment of good things is that he does not regard them as tokens of self-worth. Above all, and in direct contrast to his younger brother, Jacob does not anticipate that he will be given to "freely." This is so first because he does not imagine that the objects of his desire are "given" to him at all; although he remembers the source of "good things" with unerring precision, he does not comprehend, much less acknowledge, the sacrifices that these benefactors – notably his parents and eldest brother Jonathan, as well as, more begrudgingly, David himself -- make on his behalf. At the same time, Jacob backs up demands with the (however implicit) threat of retributive violence if he is challenged: "It was a difficult matter to use force with Jacob, for he wore heavy nailed boots; and if his pitchfork had been mastered, he would have resorted without hesitation to kicks" (85). This absence of hesitation or inhibitions means, of course, that Jacob's desires are quite literally limitless. As Mrs. Palfrey observes in response to David's all-too-generous assessment that everyone might have been "born idiots": "I don't know where there'd ha' been victual for us all then" (82). The "housewifely light" in which Faux's would-be-mother-in-law regards "the matter" of idiocy is the light of the *oikos* of

which Jacob is the representative to the precise extent that he, like the mother's "other" treasure, is its limit.

The final sense in which Jacob avoids any encounter with loss or mourning involves his incapacity for regarding presents as compensation -- much less a bribe. This is particularly evident on the "occasion" of David's apparently spontaneous bestowal of sweets upon his brother:

> ...David, with a promptitude equal to the occasion, drew out his box of yellow lozenges, lifted the lid, and performed a pantomine with his mouth and fingers, which was meant to imply that he was delighted to see his dear brother Jacob, and seized the opportunity of making him a small present, which he would find particularly agreeable to the taste. Jacob, you understand, was not an intense idiot, but within a certain limited range knew how to choose the good and reject the evil: he took one lozenge, by way of test, and sucked it as if he had been a philosopher; then, in as great an ecstasy at its new and complex savour as Caliban at the taste of Trinculo's wine, chuckled and stroked this suddenly beneficient brother, and held out his hand for more...(53).

It never occurs to Jacob to *earn* the lozenge any more than to earn his own keep. Yet neither can he be said to wager his self-worth on the arrival of either sweets or sustenance. For by the same token that he is "not to be wrought upon by imaginary fears" (54), Jacob is also immune to imaginary hope, that is: to a wager on a future outcome unsupported by any evidence of the senses but flattering to the ego. It is nothing less than this absence of any investment in self-image that renders his "character," as the narrator remarks, "so uncertain and fluctuating...that I doubt whether he would not have puzzled the astute heroes of M.de Balzac, whose foresight is so remarkably at home in the future" (56). If David consistently places himself in proximity to the novelistic, Jacob, it seems, belongs to a completely different literary genre.

Jacob's non-relation to loss and mourning, on the one hand, and anticipation or expectation of reward, on the other, singles him out as the inversion of David's desire, which, as we have seen, is "at home" nowhere but "in the future" -- not even in the future's closest geographical approximation, the New World. In fact, the interest that Jacob now demonstrates in David as " a sort of sweet-tasted fetish" is the literalization, and therefore the negation, of the chrematistic belief that it is (only) interest that begets more interest (55). For what Jacob's attachment to his brother can be seen to prove or demonstrate is that "interest" can in fact stem from another "source" than (the reflection and promise of) money. Far from imitating the desires of others – most obviously his brother -- Jacob wishes (only) to "have" certain "objects," above all food. In a consummate incarnation of Freudian desire according to the attachment type (*Anlehnungstypus*), in other words, Jacob's "love" for others is contingent upon the extent to which they are regarded not as role models, in the pattern of David's uncle, but as the (subsequently fetishized) source of these desired goods, for which the original or model is the mother. [188] In mistaking David for a "honey-pot," Jacob gives form to object desire *tout court* -- the prerequisite for which is the failure to recognize itself as such and thus enter into the speculative operations of the superego, the realm of mimetic desire.

The contrast to David's psychic economy could not be more graphic. Where Jacob embodies the untamed and unlimited desire for possession *qua* consumption (of an object), David incarnates the mimetic desire to dis-place and take the place of the idealized Other *qua* Subject. Unlike his brother, Faux does not demand gifts for their own sake, much less for the

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[188] Freud, "Zur Einführung des Narzissmus" (in: *Studienausgabe,* Band III, pp.37-68). Rodstein also notes Jacob's "close connection with his mother" as "figured by his insatiable appetite" (307). To Jacob, then, David becomes a kind of mother-substitute.

sake of the pleasures of consumption, but rather as semi-permanent signs or demonstrations of his own value. While David thus appears to desire nothing -- and in fact he desires no object, no *thing*, in particular -- what he does want is to be envied, or to at least appear as the subject, rather than the object, of desire: "David liked to be envied; he minded less about being loved" (86). Like the combmakers of Keller's novella, David Faux is faulted not for fetishism but for its disavowal: in contrast to Silas Marner, for whom fetishism is a miserably limited but ultimately fruitful mode of connection to the world, David's solipsism does not even extend to the "objects" around him. Instead, what readers are presented with in David Faux is a classic case, as it were, of mimetic desire (re)presenting itself as object desire – such representation comprising, in the parlance of the novella, the "contrivances" of the confectioner. Yet it is precisely the appropriateness of Faux's punishment to his (non-)crime that raises a further contradiction, for in its light it hardly seems in the least "unexpected" that David's Nemesis would take the "form" of an idiot. On the contrary, it would appear that idiocy functions as the fount of retributive justice precisely by virtue of being external to its irreducibly mimetic operations. It remains to be seen how it is that idiocy does, after all, come to stand (in) for the threat of "the same," the "law of averages" to which all subjects, without exception, are themselves subject.

III

A gift that would claim to control money and preserve itself from any simulacrum, would that still be a gift or already a calculation clinging or recalling one – naively, sometimes with authority – to the reassuring distinction between the natural and the artificial, the authentic and the inauthentic, the originary and the derived or borrowed?
-Jacques Derrida, *Given Time: I. Counterfeit Money*[189]

To read "Brother Jacob" with the expectations raised by other Eliot texts is invariably to be disappointed; to keep to the culinary theme of the novella itself, "Brother Jacob" – unlike, for example, its immediate successor *Silas Marner* -- is not a piece that readers can sink their teeth into. In place of Eliot's signature talent for creating depth in her characters, whose interior lives are among the compelling and resonant in Victorian fiction, readers are offered the murmurs of an "idiot" alongside the blatantly self-serving articulations of a man whose intelligence is clearly no match for that of his storyteller. Yet if David's sympathy with "poor Mr. Inkle" is a symptom of his stupidity, the narrator's own lack of empathy with his anti-hero is anything but the mark of wisdom. Indeed, to a degree perhaps unmatched anywhere in Eliot's fiction, the teller of David's tale is deeply and perhaps irredeemably implicated in the "moral" of the story he wishes to relate.

Although "Brother Jacob" is not presented as an autobiographical text, the first-person personal pronoun is more intrusively present in its narration than of any other of Eliot's works --

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[189] Derrida, *Given Time: I. Counterfeit Money.* Trans. Peggy Kamuf. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1992, p70.

with the single and singular exception of "The Lifted Veil."[190] Most of these occurrences are couched in expressions of opinion and judgment ("I doubt...I think...I fear...I am convinced...I am grieved to add...I am not ignorant that...I have known...I really think...I believe...I admit...I am obliged to confess...I hope"), and contribute much to the stylistic flavor of the piece as imitative of an 18th-century morality tale The first of these appearances, already on the very first page, introduces a figure familiar from Eliot's fictional world, one whose exceptionality is misunderstood or misread by others as misguided caprice or, in the famous opening salvo of *Middlemarch*, "mere inconsistency and formlessness"[191]:

I have known a man who turned out to have a metaphysical genius, incautiously, in the period of youthful buoyancy, commence his career as a dancing-master; and you may imagine the use that was made of this initial mistake by opponents who felt themselves bound to warn the public against his doctrine of the Inconceivable. He could not give up his dancing-lessons, because he made his bread by them, and metaphysics would not have found him in so much as salt to his bread. It was really the same with Mr David Faux and the confectionery business.[192]

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[190] "The Lifted Veil" is unique among Eliot's works of fiction in being related entirely in the first person (with the final exception of last published work, "The Impressions of Theophrastus Such," a collection of fictional essays or, as Dale [op.cit.] suggests, fables). "Brother Jacob" fits the more prevalent pattern in presupposing an essentially omniscient narrator who nevertheless periodically speaks of himself in the first person (I will return to the question of gender below). Because "Brother Jacob" is so short, the density of these self-references is much higher than in, say, a novel like *Adam Bede* or *The Mill on the Floss.*

[191] "Prelude," in: *Middlemarch.* Rosemary Ashton, ed. London: Penguin, 1994, p.3.

[192] According to Helen Small, the editor of the latest edition of "Brother Jacob," the "doctrine of the Inconceivable" can be read, at least in part, as a reference to the philosophical debate surrounding "inconceivability" which raged during the 1850s. In a letter to Sara Hennell, Eliot expresses her "admiration for an 'article on Sir William Hamilton's doctrine of contradictory inconceivables." The fact that this has here become the "doctrine of the Inconceivable" – singular and, therefore, with no implication of contradiction or conflict – makes it a more suitable analogy to the single-mindedness of David Faux. A key text in this context, again according to Small, is Herbert Spencer's response to John Stuart Mill's consideration of the Universal Postulate, first published in the *Westminster Review* in October 1856 as an article and later as a chapter in his *Principles of Psychology* (1855). Spencer's essay was simultaneously the occasion for a twofold debt to George Eliot (Marian Lewes). Not only had Eliot "made a gift of Mill's *Logic* to Spencer in 1852, so that he credited her with having introduced him to Mill's writing" on the subject; she also "suggested a revision" to the article "which he gratefully adopted for the book " (GEL II 145; Small 97). Here again one thus encounters the matter of the gift in the context of the question of

The sense in which the dilemma of the philosopher and that of David Faux are "the same" can only be grasped in the context of vocation, or rather its "displacement," which Alan Mintz has identified at the core of Eliot's late novels, *Middlemarch* and *Daniel Deronda*.[193] In particular, the troubled philosopher and the disaffected confectioner illustrate the anxiety and uncertainty introduced by the increased mobility of middle-class society in Victorian England. As Mintz points out, such mobility – which, as in Faux's case, often comprised a geographical as well as class component -- "widened man's responsibility" with regard to vocation; over the course of the nineteenth century, "the necessity of working at redemption in the station in which [an individual] found himself gave way to the responsibility of choosing that station" in the first place (Mintz 20).

The narrator's somewhat jarring comparison between Faux and a philosopher is of course far from the first time that the theme of vocation has been broached in the novella, which in fact opens with ruminations on the often ill-fated search for a calling:

Among the many fatalities attending the bloom of young desire, that of blindly taking to the confectionery line has not, perhaps been sufficiently considered. How is the son of a British yeoman, who has been fed principally on salt pork and yeast dumplings, to know that there is satiety for the human stomach even in a paradise of glass jars full of sugared almonds and pink lozenges, and that the tedium of life can reach a pitch where plum-buns at discretion cease to offer the slightest enticement? Or how, at the tender age when a confectioner seems to him a very prince

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"limits" (or their transcendence). For a study of Spencer's and Eliot's mutual "anxiety of influence," see Nancy Paxton, *George Eliot and Herbert Spencer. Feminism, Evolutionism, and the Reconstruction of Gender.* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991.

[193] Mintz, *George Eliot and the Novel of Vocation,* op.cit. For a more recent treatment of Eliot's negotiations with vocation and gender, see Dorothea Barrett, *Vocation and Desire. George Eliot's Heroines.* London and New York: Routledge, 1989.

whom all the world must envy…how is he to foresee the day of sad wisdom, when he will discern that the confectioner's calling is not socially influential, or favourable to a soaring ambition? (49)

The ironic repetition of contrasting pairs ("fatality" and "bloom"; "young desire" and "tedium of life"; "tender age" and "the day of sad wisdom"; "seems" and "discern") works to suggest that what appears to be the "gift" or blessing of a specific vocation might, in time, reveal itself to be a curse.[194] It is in this that a calling is itself comparable to the product of David's (false or misguided) vocation: from an alternative (adult) perspective – one that was gaining ground in Eliot's time -- sweets are not the makings of "paradise" but a severe, if not fatal, detriment to health.[195] Regarded from this vantage point, the cases of the pastry-maker and the dancing master are indeed precise mirror images of each other: where the failed philosopher cannot make a living pursuing the truth, the confectioner will not find it as simple a matter as he imagined to earn a livelihood from falsehood. What remains unclear is how this "lesson" about the unprofitability of untruthfulness can be translated, or converted, into a moral about the desirability, or, more literally, the profitability of honesty – all the more so in that truth, in the form of philosophy, is here acknowledged to be anything but lucrative. The all-too-precise parallel between the two callings is indeed the source of another ironic reversal: whereas the

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[194] According to Mintz, modern notions of vocation have their roots in Puritanism, specifically "the anxiety of predestination and the strategies for its mitigation" (10). From this perspective, Faux's biography reads as a biting, because wholly secularized, parody of spiritual evolution as envisioned by the Puritans, who encouraged aspiring saints "to consider themselves as if they were already chosen" (ibid.) Not only does Faux share this *certitudo salutis,* with its concomitant belief that one's status will become evident in one's "works"; his rather abrupt break with his family, itself not a little reminiscent of Christian's abandonment of his wife and children in *Pilgrim's Progress,* reflects the Puritan belief that "claims based on blood and sentiment could easily conflict with the...single-minded pursuit of salvation" (13). For a reading of *Silas Marner* in light of *Pilgrim's Progress*, which Eliot was re-reading in 1860, see Q.D. Leavis's introduction in: Eliot, *Silas Marner. The Weaver of Raveloe.* Q.D. Leavis, ed. London: Penguin, 1967.

[195] On this see Szirotny, who traces Eliot's suspicion of sweets throughout her works; and, especially, Rodstein.

philosopher's in any case only modest financial prospects are foiled by the wholly unjust prejudices of his colleagues, the only thing preventing Faux from spinning tall tales into gold is retributive "justice" itself. At the narrative level, the economics of such careful and calculated plotting registers as a deep satisfaction, whereby the "melancholy task" of narrating "the gradual corruption of Grimworth manners from their primitive simplicity" is "cheered by the prospect of the fine peripateia [sic] or downfall by which the progress of the corruption was ultimately checked" (63).

The narrator's strikingly personal investment in the checks and balances of retributive justice, whereby the failure of Faux's vocation is in every sense the realization of the narrator's, contrasts particularly starkly with the equally fortuitous twists of fate in *Silas Marner.*[196] If Godfrey Cass is subject to what Eliot called "a very mild" Nemesis, that is above all because his debt to his daughter, and by extension to Silas, has been converted into guilt even before his external "peripateia or downfall." The guilt of David Faux, by contrast, is never to be articulated by the man himself, but only a -- at least -- third party:

(A learned friend, to whom I once narrated this history, observed that it was David's guilt which made these prongs formidable, and that the *mens nil conscia sibi* strips a pitchfork of all terrors. I thought this idea so valuable, that I obtained his leave to use it on condition of suppressing his name). (53)

The presentation of the "idea" of David's guilt is marked by at least a double suppression: calling attention to the pitchfork as the symbol of a debt which Faux himself fails to

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[196] For a recent, thought-provoking treatment of this problem, see David Sonstroem, "The Breaks in *Silas Marner.*" *Journal of English and Germanic Philology,* October 1998, pp.545-567.

acknowledge, much less articulate, the anonymous author-narrator withholds the name of a "learned friend" (who moreover misquotes the reference to classical literature) within the confines of a parenthesis.[197] Far from upholding the separation between teller and told, however, these multiple distancing techniques have almost the opposite effect of underscoring the narrator's own stake in establishing the nature of David's fear as "guilt"-induced. The contrast with *Silas Marner* is here again instructive. Godfrey's brother, Dunstan Cass, is like Jacob in the habit of carrying a kind of totem (albeit a whip instead of a pitchfork) symbolic of the violence he repeatedly threatens; and indeed, like the "idiot," Dunstan is able quite handsomely to profit from his brother's vulnerability to guilt and shame. Crucially, however, Dunstan Cass, is not, like Jacob, an "unstable character"; on the contrary, his trust in "Providence" allows him to weather any number of storms until the encounter with the one that ends his life. (In this, as has often been pointed out, he bears a striking resemblance to David Faux as well as Silas's own "spiritual" brother William Dane). While Dunstan's stipulations thus operate in the service of his own ego at the same time that, and because, they echo the precepts of Godfrey's superego, Jacob's demands are not brought in the name of anything larger than themselves, which is why they remain utterly random and unpredictable; indeed, as we have seen, only the context of David's "contrivances" that allows the (non-)logic of Jacob's desire to appear as the agent of retributive justice.

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[197] As Small points out, *mens nil conscia sibi* translates literally as "a mind not conscious of itself." It is most likely "a misquotation of Virgil, *Aeneid,* i.604: 'mens sibi conscia recti,' 'a mind conscious of rectitutde'"; or, alternatively, "an allusion to Horance's urging of the advantages of a clear conscience in ghis *Epistolae*, I.1.60: 'Hic murus aeneos esto/Nil conscire sibi, nulla pallescere culpa,' 'Let this be as a brazen wall of defence, to be conscious of no guilt, to turn pale at no accusations.'"

The relatively free-floating nature of Jacob's "character" makes it all the more noteworthy that the apprehension of his final role as Nemesis is ostentatiously filtered by the narrator, who "think[s]" he sees in the story "an admirable instance of the unexpected forms in which the great Nemesis hides herself" (87). The repeated insertion of the storyteller's own thought (occasionally mediated by way of a "learned friend" or "philosopher") between the reader and her interpretation of the fable suggests that his obtrusiveness is inseparable from matters of gender and class -- if not, strictly speaking, from the first-person pronoun. Thus perhaps one of the most revealing passages concerning the identity of the narrator takes no recourse to the "I" whatsoever:

> Jacob had recently discovered a remnant of sugar-candy in one of his brother's tailpockets; and, since then, had cautiously kept his hold on that limb of the garment, perhaps with an expectation that there would be a further development of sugar-candy after a longer or shorter interval. Now every one who has worn a coat will understand the sensibilities that must keep a man from starting away in a hurry when there is a grasp on his coat-tail. David looked forward to being well received among strangers, but it might make a difference if he had only one tail to his coat (59).

By way of implicit association with "every one who has worn a coat," the narrator subtly identifies himself as a (gentle)man – and not for the first time in Eliot's *oeuvre*.[198] Indeed, such

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[198] Diane Sadoff observes that "the significant detail of coattails appears in each of Eliot's narrators' meditations upon boyhood, as memory links itself to the initiation into manhood" (Sadoff, *Monsters of Affection: Dickens, Eliot and Bronte on Fatherhood.* Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982, p.106). This makes it all the more noteworthy that *Silas Marner* itself famously begins with an image that is avowedly autobiographical. Eliot's account of the impression left upon her by a peddler with his pack as the seed of *Silas Marner* is discussed in Dessner (op.cit.), among other places.

sartorial references are favored means through which Eliot's storytellers are gendered male.[199] At the same time – indeed almost by the same (castrating) token – Jacob himself is associated with femininity. Beyond his proximity to mourning or melancholic maternity, Jacob is further aligned with the "proud beauty" of a "Sally Lunn" (yet another punning reference to pastry) in figuring not only as one who does not wear coat-tails, but as someone to whom – consequently -- gifts are to be given (53).[200] It might be objected that Jacob extracts his tribute not out of love or desire, but out of fear of reprisals should his limitless and infantile demands fail to be met; and yet even the seduction of "Miss Sarah Lunn" appears, in David's eyes, "as a means of *conciliating* proud beauty" (53, my emphasis).

Even and especially as (Victorian) women do not or must not appear to make any demands whatsoever – as witness Penny's hesitancy to speak her desire for "a particular sort of chimney elements" (79) -- femininity and idiocy can be seen to meet in their potential confusion with Nemesis as "both distributive justice and the enforcing power of vengeance."[201] If, like beggars (or children), idiots "can signify the absolute demand of the other, the inextinguishable appeal, the unquenchable thirst for the gift" on the grounds of their exclusion "from the process of production and commerce," women are both included (as objects) and excluded (as subjects or agents) at the same time.[202] In this they resemble nothing so much as the "maiden perquisites"

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[199] Cf. Bodenheimer, op.cit., p.125: "George Eliot's early narrators...announce themselves in coats while displaying an intimate knowledge of domestic and emotional detail which bespeaks the petticoat." For a reading of the "coat-tail" episode in *Felix Holt,* see Hertz, op.cit., Chapter 5 ("Some Words: Repeating, Remnant, Remainder-man"). Both Bodenheimer and Hertz refer readers to Diane Sadoff's groundbreaking study (op.cit.).

[200] In the frontispiece, "Mother's Guineas," that appeared *Cornhill Magazine,* and is reprinted in Helen Small's edition (op.cit., p.48), Jacob appears wearing a kind of robe or gown.

[201] Derrida, *Given Time: I. Counterfeit Money*, op.cit., p.140.

[202]Ibid., p.137 and 140. Eliot's concern with issues of feminism and property rights is filtered through her friendship with Barbara Bodichon, author of *A Brief Summary of the Most Important Laws Concerning Women* (1854), among

or hidden treasures with which they come to be identified.[203] It is thus no coincidence that Jacob's bottomless desires – the impulses which occasion "the fatal necessity of being kind to this ogre" (55) – are once more gendered feminine by way of the image of the "Gorgon or Demogorgon" upon which Part One closes, which itself anticipates the allegory of Nemesis ("herself") to appear in the novella's last lines.

If the threat (of Nemesis) that haunts David is a distinctly feminine one, this is not so much because femininity is his "Other," but on the contrary because of its discomfiting proximity to his "own" psychic economy. At the outset, Faux's fantasy to emigrate to the colonies rests on the desire not so much to *have* a princess as to *be* a "prince," a figure whose value does not have to be earned or proven and who is, consequently, an "object of envy." If a certain fantasy of feminization is already discernible here, Faux cum Freely quite literally profits from the inactivity of women in the second part of the tale. Most telling is the fact that he fosters female idleness even when it is not in his direct interest. In particular, the plan to keep Penny literally and figuratively "above" any work in his shop means that his bride is destined to take up the labor- and yet care- free place that Faux would like to have secured for himself via the quest that took him to the colonies. There remains however a crucial difference: where the young Faux considered himself without any obligation to marry his "Princess Yarico, [who] would want him to marry her, and make him presents of very large jewels beforehand" (57), Penny is to "earn" her dubious leisure through unconditional obedience to her husband. From the "guileless princess" (60) of Part I, whose credulity would have lain in her willingness to give without

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other works on the political and economic status of women in Victorian England. For a useful account of their friendship, see Jennifer Uglow, *George Eliot.* London: Virago, 1987, Chapter 4.

[203] The apotheosis of this identification in Eliot's fiction is of course the substitution of Eppie for the hoard of coins in *Silas Marner.*

condition or reserve, Faux's attention has shifted to a woman is "as neat pink and white double daisy, and as guileless" (69). Penny's ignorance consists not in her bounteousness, which has been replaced by the paternal dowry, but in her readiness to be provided for. This shift in, indeed inversion of, the object of Faux's designs, if not his desire, would however itself have been unthinkable without an intervening submission to another "woman" cum allegory:

> Fate was too strong for him; he had thought to master her inclination and had fled over the seas to that end; but she caught him, tied an apron round him, and snatching him from all other devices, made him devise cakes and patties in a kitchen at Kingstown. He was getting submissive to her, *since she paid him with tolerable gains*; but fevers and prickly heat, and other evils incidental to cooks in ardent climates, made him long for his native land; so he took ship once more, carrying his six years' savings, and seeing distinctly, this time, what were Fate's intentions as to his career (77, my emphasis).

Faux's belated acknowledgement of the power of "Fate" represents a de facto dethroning of the "Providence" upon whom he had heretofore relied, and of whom the princess was to be the mortal representative. For the difference between Providence and Fate is nothing less than the difference between a gift, or something given "freely," and an exchange, a quid pro quo. Unlike Providence, who was judged to be as it were by nature "fonder of [Faux] than of other apprentices" (54), Fate is a taskmistress who does not provide anything without asking for something in return.

If Penny's enforced passivity is meant to bolster masculinity as the exclusive provenance of activity, then, it also reflects or mirrors Faux's own relationship to Fate (and, by extension, Nemesis) – even and especially as the sign of acquiescence, in his case, is not leisure but, on the

contrary, labor. The difference between Providence and Fate is accordingly rendered as sexual difference, and both distinctions revolve around the question of how, or at what level, one "shows" oneself to be deserving of gifts or rewards. For Faux, as it will be recalled, the sign of Providence's favor was quite literally skin-deep: "Having a general idea of America as a country where the population was chiefly black, it appeared to him the most propitious destination for an emigrant who, to begin with, had the broad and easily recognizable merit of whiteness" (51). He accordingly sets out "in search of a country where a young gentleman of pasty visage, lipless mouth, and stumpy hair would be likely to be received with the hospitable enthusiasm which he had a right to expect" (50-51). If Providence marks David Faux as a blank page upon which a glorious future is to be written – an image that is ironically echoed by the later comparison between Faux and a "white dog" with "no marks on him" (78) -- the manifestation of destiny takes on more complex and, accordingly, more resplendent form. It is true that "the stranger with a sallow complexion and a buff cravat" is himself even paler following his adventures in the colonies (61); but in the imagination of the town, he is aligned both with the "faery landscape in Turner's latest style" that adorns (half of) his shop window (63) and, above all, the colorful tales of his adventures: "Such conversational talents as these, we know, will overcome disadvantages of complexion; and young Towers, whose cheeks were of the finest pink, set off by a fringe of dark whisker, was quite eclipsed by the presence of the sallow Mr Freely" (67).

Like the garish colors of his window display, Faux's rhetorical flourishes represent the artificial and, therefore, false, while young Tower's complexion reveals his "true" colors and/as a color that is "true" and loyal (e.g. to Penny). It is thus hardly a coincidence that the narrator uses the (almost) final lines of the novella to record that Penny's daisy-like complexion "had not

altered" even following the stroke of fate that takes her fiancé; like Penny's guileness, the compatibility of her coloring with (true) "blue" remains a constant. According to the same logic, of course, the non- or pale color of "the sallow Mr Freely" can be seen to be revelatory of Faux's (lack of a) genuine character. Indeed, not least among the disconcerting aspects of "Brother Jacob" for devoted readers of Eliot is the seeming tendency of the text to underwrite, rather than challenge, a correspondence between external appearance and inner and/as moral truth: in place of Eliot's characteristic emphasis on the ambiguity of signs generally (and beauty in particular), the author of this piece would appear to grant aesthetic impressions absolute authority – even and especially as the basis for irony.[204] Nowhere moreover is the narrator more biting than in his rendition of Faux as the village gossip:

> For some time, he was quite general in his attentions to the fair sex, combining the gallantries of a lady's man with a severity of criticism on the person and manners of absent belles, which tended rather to stimulate in the feminine breast the desire to conquer the approval of so fastidious a judge. Nothing short of the very best in the department of female charms and virtues could suffice to kindle the ardour of Mr Edward Freely, who had become familiar with the most luxuriant and dazzling beauty in the West Indies. It may seem incredible that a confectioner should have ideas and conversation so much resembling those to be met with in a higher walk of life, but it must be remembered that he had not merely travelled, he had also bow-legs and a sallow, small-featured visage, so that nature herself had stamped him for a fastidious connoisseur of the fair sex (68).

The difficulty in discerning whether the narrator's sarcasm is directed towards Faux or the sexual "double standards" to which he ascribes is characteristic of the treatment of gender issues in

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[204] On Eliot's appreciation of the arbitrary nature of signs, see, for example, J.Hillis Miller, "Optic and Semiotic in *Middlemarch,"* in: *The Worlds of Victorian Fiction,* ed. Jerome H. Buckley. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1975, pp.125-145.

Eliot's fiction generally (and *Middlemarch* in particular).[205] The important thing to note here is however the fact that, far from shoring up his masculinity, Faux's self-appointed role as "a fastidious connoisseur of the fair sex" serves primarily to identify him with the gossiping women to whom he, in a twofold sense, appeals. To the extent that the relationship between Faux and "the feminine breast" is less one of connoisseurship than resemblance, in other words, the epithet "lady's man" takes on a different and more literal connotation: Faux attracts the women of Grimworth, and Penny in particular, not by the power of his own charms, but by mirroring their own self-image as the most qualified and authoritative judges of "the fair sex."

Beyond the subtle hint of women's complicity in their own subjugation, what this depiction of desire suggests is that Faux's competitiveness for the attention (and the money) of the ladies of Grimworth is simultaneously a competition or rivalry *with* them.

At the same time, the narrator's account of Penny's feelings for Faux/ emphasizes another favorite female self-image, that of the loyal or constant devotee to the not-so-fair (if sometimes deathly pale) sex. Nothing could be clearer, however, than the sense in which this fantasy of debasement ultimately operates in the service of the same self-aggrandizement as the cultivation of "fastidious judgment" in matters of "luxuriant and dazzling beauty." In this sense, the question the town asks of Faux/Freely when the match becomes known – "Was it love? And not rather ambition?" (68-69) could just as easily be posed of the young girl. In re-writing the diminished stature and unsightly appearance of her suitor into a romance, first, by recasting him as a "public character, almost like Robinson Crusoe or Captain Cook" (70); and, secondly, by regarding his lowly profession as "an opportunity of showing her faithfulness" (71), Penny

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[205] On this ambivalence in *Middlemarch*, see Mintz, among many others.

shows herself to be at least as much a "creature of mimesis" as David himself. More subtly, the narrator paints a "picture" of the couple's mutual narcissism by way of a striking, and boldly colored, image: "Dear little Penny! She certainly did look like a fresh white-heart cherry going to be bitten off the stem by that lipless mouth. Would no deliverer come to make a slip between that cherry and that mouth without a lip?" (79-80). Not only is Faux's liplessness, particularly when set against the image of the "cherry," a distant echo of the "bloodlessless" of Keller's combmakers; in an entirely different fashion from the sense in which Züs corresponds to her three suitors, the very absence of blood or passion in Faux reappears in Penny's *qua* the cherry's "white heart" -- a heart that is not only literally virginal, but empty of anything but literary romances.

Penny is however not the only one who has been prepared, as it were, for David Faux's contrivances by the contrivances of literature. The "young Mrs. Steene," the first villager to purchase the wares of the new confectioner and pass them off as her own, fills her spare time with fiction-induced daydreams[206]:

> I fear she had been rather over-educated for her station in life, for she knew by heart many passages in "Lalla Rookh," the "Corsair," and the "Siege of Corinth," which had given her a distaste for domestic occupations, and caused her a withering disappointment in her husband (64, my emphasis).

[206] It is perhaps noteworthy that only one letter separates "Steene" from "Steele," the author of the story "Inkle and Yarico" (see above, note 14).

It is particularly noteworthy that literature's gift/Gift of dissatisfaction and discontent is here ascribed to an *over*-abundance of "education."[207] For this "excess" is of course the same one that obliged the narrator to conclude that David Faux is *under*-educated, if not for his "station in life," then for the station to which he aspires. The same skill level – a certain proficiency in reading isolated from any context, even and especially that of literature itself, which would "give" that reading meaning and significance – thus appears in the case of a young woman as a surplus, but in that of a young man as a deficit.

The novella, to be sure, will quickly restore Mrs. Steene to her "rightful" place in the kitchen. Yet the young woman's "*withering* disappointment in her husband" serves to align her with the castration threat suggested by "proud beauty" as well as Jacob's looming and quasi-allegorical presence – if not with Penny, who, in sitting "by the side of her yellow and rather *withered* lover...was quite tremulous at the greatness of her lot" (79, my emphasis). Readers of Eliot will perhaps be reminded of another witheringly disappointed wife, Dorothea Brooke. A crucial (class) difference adheres to the fact that Dorothea will not have to prepare her husband's meals. For it is only because of its competition with cooking and baking that Mrs. Steene's reading -- in conjunction with many (particularly the female) townspeople's (mis)"reading" of Mr. Freely -- has the ravaging potential of an "infection" or "perversion" (65). Through the village women's more literal transactions with the confectioner, "the business of manufacturing the more fanciful viands was fast passing out of the hands of maids and matrons in private families, and was becoming the work of a special commercial organ":

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[207] A similar moment, itself reminiscent of the biting satire directed towards Züs's reading habits in *Die drei gerechten Kammacher,* occurs in *Silas Marner* with its snide reference to over-educated ladies who cite Schiller.

I am not ignorant that this sort of thing is called the inevitable course of civilization, division of labour, and so forth, and that the maids and matrons may be said to have had their hands set free from cookery to add to the wealth of society in some other way. Only it happened at Grimworth, which, to be sure, was a low place, that the maids and matrons could do nothing with their hands at all better than cooking; not even those who had always made heavy cakes and leathery pastry. And so it came to pass, that the progress of civilization at Grimworth was not otherwise apparent than in the impoverishment of men, the gossiping idleness of women, and the heightening prosperity of Mr Edward Freely (66).

This passage is typical for the satirical operations of the novella in that both sides of the equation -- specialization and its opposite -- come in for almost equally harsh condemnation. Given the admittedly somewhat absurd choice, however, leathery pastry is to be preferred over idle gossip for the simple but compelling reason that it is the product of labor rather than leisure. It is moreover at this point that the narrator appears to countenance and even justify – if only as the lesser of two evils -- the single-minded application of a single principle to all women, or at least all the women of Grimworth ("even those" who cannot cook) – just the operation that is taken to task in the famous "Prelude" to *Middlemarch,* where the authoritative narrator sardonically muses that "if there were one level of feminine incompetence as strict as the ability to count three and no more, the social lot of women might be treated with scientific certitude" (4).

The echo or rather anticipation of *Middlemarch* make it even more disturbing to recognize a similar argument and even turn of phrase from the "Finale" to that novel, which cites a general helplessness to discern "what else that was in her power [Dorothea] ought rather to have done" aside from being "known in a certain circle as a wife and mother" (836). Particularly striking when reading these lines in conjunction with "Brother Jacob" (as opposed, again, to *Silas Marner*), is that, in the novella, children do not figure as a major outlet for female energies

– much less the source of a vocation.[208] Not only are women in Grimworth much busier at the stove than at the cradle; parents in general appear in the novella almost exclusively as the legal guardians of *adult* children. Just as Mrs. Faux is found more often looking back than forward, "mothers and fathers" in the novella comprise a conservative force who are "naturally more slow and cautious in their recognition of the new-comer's [Freely's] merits" (67). If parents are right to be cautious – a point of view that the novella, in direct opposition to *Silas Marner*'s spirited apology for "wandering men," strongly encourages – that is because Faux is able to profit from precisely that which the lack of narrative attention to young children throws so starkly into relief, namely: female idleness.

In Grimworth, women's empty hours, un(ful)filled by the pursuit of even as fleeting a calling as child-rearing, are to be occupied either with the (associated and even intertwined) activities of gossip and reading, on the one hand, or household labor -- above all cooking -- on the other. This contrast is the basis for the reversal that characterizes the end of Mrs. Steene's story: "Young Mrs Steene renewed her efforts to make light mince-pies, and having at last made a batch so excellent that Mr Steene looked at her with complacency as he ate them, and said they were the best he had ever eaten in his life, she thought less of bulbuls and renegades ever after" (87). The development from romantic fantasy fostered by literature to genuine, if modest, achievement in the kitchen, is of course precisely the same as that undergone by Faux.[209] Unlike Mrs. Steene's, however, David's "conversion" from dream to reality (or Providence to Fate) does

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[208] The absence of children and/or childhood presents a further correlation between the novella and *Middlemarch,* whose "people," as Mintz notes,"exist in the space of isolated adulthood." See Mintz, op.cit., pp.81ff. See also Moretti's account of *Middlemarch* as the site of a "maturity" lacking in Dickens, not to mention Virginia Woolf's famous characterization of the novel as "written for grown-ups."

[209] As Rodstein points out, this is a precise inversion of Eliot's own path from detested "cheese-making" and pie-baking to writing.

not constitute the end of -- much less a happy resolution to -- his story. Women like Mrs. Steene or Penny, who from birth are destined to be put out to pasture, can be forgiven, as it were, for imagining their lives from the vantage point of a field of dreams or "daisies": "Poor little Penny! the days were so very long among the daisies on a grazing farm, and thought is so active – how was it possible that the inward drama should not get the start of the outward?" (71).

In making up for the paucity of activity, female fantasy has in other words a compensatory aspect that is objectively, if not subjectively, lacking in David's case – which indeed is why his dissatisfaction with his lot is already tantamount to a crime. And yet Faux's outstanding debt, in the form of the guineas stolen from his mother, is one that, as he is well aware, is not acknowledged or recognized by (the) law: "it is not robbery to take property belonging to your mother; she doesn't prosecute you" (51). Far from identical with the law "itself," the appearance of Nemesis constitutes the vengeance of those excluded from the law's protections as well as obligations. Yet is this what the narrator "thinks" he "sees" in the moral of the story? On the contrary: it would seem to be precisely by way of the identification of Nemesis as "feminine" that the original or originary exclusion from the law – the impossibility for a Mrs. Faux, for example, of establishing a relationship to her own will and testament that is not mediated by her husband -- is redeemed and even justified. The mark of this is that femininity in "Brother Jacob" is posited not only as the eventual source of retribution *qua* redistribution, but, by the same token, as an endless resource or a kind of gift, like Mrs. Steene's – or Dorothea's -- unpaid labor.[210]

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[210] The name *Doro*thea of course means "gift" (of god).

In the end, then, "Brother Jacob" allows itself to be read simultaneously as feminist fable and reactionary tract: as diagnosis and condemnation of a patriarchal system of law, on the one hand, and, on the other, its impassioned defense: one that would locate a or even perhaps *the* good in the "giving" that the legal situation of minors in Victorian England both enables and dismisses (as a "trifle"). This ambivalence is reproduced in the identity of the narrator as an enfranchised male who can authoritatively attest to the value the novella attempts to posit and, by extension, censure David Faux for failing to appreciate. Yet no amount of brandishing the first person pronoun (in a manner reminiscent of nothing so much as Jacob's pitchfork) can fully preclude the possibility that the narrator is embroiled in his own mimetic rivalry with Faux, the stakes of which involve his own "feminization" or infantalization.[211] For the anxiety that haunts "Brother Jacob" is not primarily that of Faux -- who, if anything, is not anxious enough -- but the storyteller's fear that s/he is, after all, perhaps little more than a *trompeur* whose "fate" can only be subjection to "the same" law of Nemesis and/as mimesis that governs the novella.

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[211] This rivalry would therefore be the "worthy" successor to that between "G.K." and Züs Bünzlin that was traced in Chapter 1.

Chapter Four

Curtain Up: "The Lifted Veil" and the Spectacle of Character

I

Why tell a tale of impious tempting of Providence, and soul-subduing humiliation? Why? answer me, ye who are wise in the secrets of human nature! I know only that so it is; and in spite of strong resolve – of a pride that too much masters me – of shame, and even of fear, so to render myself odious to my species – I must speak.
-Mary Shelley, "Transformation"[212]

In the novellas we have considered up to now, cherished objects -- from sweethearts to buried chests of coins -- bear witness to the treasuring subject's desire to reap a profit from the forward march of time, whether by holding the future in reserve as the site of an oft-deferred fulfillment; holding on to gifts that have already been brought; or, at the very least, offsetting losses that have been wrought. "The Lifted Veil" knows no such treasures, but only the musical snuff-boxes, rings, and gem-studded brooches that the novella's unhappy but wealthy characters exchange as gifts or brandish as talismans. Even the overestimation or *Überschätzung* of a beautiful young woman -- the closest the novella comes to a representation of treasuring -- appears not in the context of grappling with or subjecting oneself to time, but as a symptom of a

[212] In: Shelley, *Collected Tales and Stories,* op.cit., p. 121.

supernatural untimeliness, the "gift" of foresight without insight that has been bestowed or imposed upon the first-person narrator, Latimer.[213]

The disturbance in the temporal economy to which Latimer is subject(ed) further inverts, because it literalizes, the laws of a monetary or at least capitalist economy: while Latimer's own father, a banker, seeks and finds profits in speculating on future values, the son reaps only loss from his visions of things to come.[214] The dearth of treasure in "The Lifted Veil" seems moreover to have reproduced itself at the level of the novella's reception, beginning with its very first readers. Far from the "gem" of "Romeo und Julia auf dem Dorfe," Eliot's meditation on love's elusiveness appears in the author's correspondence and journals as something of little value indeed: where "Brother Jacob" was presented to its publisher as a gift, "The Lifted Veil" was offered for publication to John Blackwood as a "slight story" of which the writer herself thought "nothing" (*GEL* III, 41); indeed, Eliot noted in her private diary that the text's composition served above all as "a resource when my head was too stupid for other work."[215] A text that contains or into which has been put so little of the author's "thought" -- whether deliberation or (value) judgment -- certainly does not appear to promise great things. Perhaps it should therefore come as little surprise that the epigraph sings the praises of a kind of willful ignorance:

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[213] On the way that "The Lifted Veil" replaces the past with the future as a source of moral restraint, see Charles Swann, "Déjà Vu: Déjà Lu: 'The Lifted Veil' As An Experiment in Art." Literature and History, 5, No.1, Spring 1979. On the various plays on "sight" in the novella, see Nicholas Royle ("On Second Sight: George Eliot." In: Royle, *Telepathy and Literature. Essays on the Reading Mind.* London: Basil Blackwell, 1990, pp.84-110).
[214] On the relationship between Latimer's powers of speculation and his father's speculative profit-making, see Terry Eagleton, "Power and Knowledge in *The Lifted Veil.*" In: K.M. Newton, ed., *George Eliot.* New York: Longman, 1991, pp.53-64.
[215] George Eliot, *Journals,* op.cit., p.77, entry for April 26, 1859.

Give me no light, great Heaven, but such as turns

To energy of human fellowship;

No powers beyond the growing heritage

That makes completer manhood. [216]

If light is the gift of "great Heaven," it is also *Gift*, or poison, which is why it is also asked that it *not* be given ("Give…no"), or, like medicine, be given only in particular quantities or qualities.[217] The preponderance of negation, which underscores the epigraph's anti-enlightenment stance, clearly corresponds to the melancholy nature of the tale. Yet the epigraph is also positive, both in its counteractive or analgesic function and in the strict sense of positing something, indeed

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[216] George Eliot, *The Lifted Veil. Brother Jacob.* Helen Small, ed. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1999, p.15. All further references to this edition will be given parenthetically in the text.

[217]The motif of poison, along with that of medicine, runs throughout "The Lifted Veil," culminating in Mrs. Archer's accusation that Bertha "means to poison" her husband (42). The precursor to this is Latimer's contemplation of the "portrait of Lucrezia Borgia," during which he reports "a strange poisoned sensation, as if I had long been inhaling a fatal odour, and was just beginning to be conscious of its effects" (19). The sensation of "a strange intoxicating numbness…like the continuance or climax of the sensation I was still feeling from the gaze of Lucrezia Borgia," accompanies Bertha's appearance on the scene, and during his prevision of their marriage Latimer feels the "barren worldliness" and "scorching hate" of Bertha's "pitiless soul…clothe me round like an air I was obliged to breathe (ibid.). A more literal connection between poison/medicine and Latimer's story is suggested by the fact that his vision of Prague is interrupted by Pierre bringing in his "draught" (9), while the prevision of his father's late arrival in the company of Bertha occurs when he "has just taken a tonic in the prospect of immediate exercise that will carry off the stimulus" (11). In rhetorical terms, Latimer laments that "the fear of poison is feeble against the sense of thirst" (20) before going on to compare his dilemma to Faust's: "It is an old story, that men sell themselves to the tempter, and sign a bond with their blood, because it is only to take effect at a distant day; then rush on to snatch the cup their souls thirst after with an impulse not less savage because there is a dark shadow beside them for evermore" (20-21). He further characterizes the prevision of Bertha's "pitiless soul" as "that hideous vision which poisoned the passion it could not destroy" (21). In their function as poison, Latimer's visions invert the ecstatic effect that the potion in Mary Shelley's "The Mortal Immortal" (long recognized as source material for "The Lifted Veil") has upon its protagonist, Winzy: "I will not attempt to describe the sleep of glory and bliss which bathed my soul in paradise…" (in: Mary Shelley, *Collected Tales and Stories.* Charles E. Robinson, ed. Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976,p. 223). Yet it is not only the gift of vision that figures as poison; Latimer also characterizes Bertha's own "gifts" or charms as, for example, "hashish" (29) while fear of her rejection is fear of "corrosive acid" (24) and the early days of their marriage result in a state of **"**intoxicated callousness" (30).

three things[218]: "human fellowship," a "growing heritage," and "completer manhood," whereby "fellowship" and "heritage" seem to figure as synonyms. The expression of the "idea" Eliot claimed the novella embodies thus takes the form, in the epigraph, of an endless circulation or flow: it is not only fellowship that completes manhood but -- by the same token -- manhood that enables fellowship (and/as a growing heritage).

In this rather convoluted way, the tale's motto, which was appended to the text at the same time (1878) that "The Lifted Veil" first appeared under the name "George Eliot," is highly suggestive of Eliot's literary-critical position as it is laid out in other texts she authored. Both her fiction and non-fiction, including the early essays and even translation work, famously promote the view that serious literature must encourage a sense of shared humanity or Feuerbachian species-being. (We will return to the question of gender that both "fellowship" and "manhood" beg). The relationship between these large, indeed sweeping issues and the particularities of "The Lifted Veil" is however anything but clear, despite compelling lines of connection that have been drawn by some of the novella's most insightful readers.[219] In this chapter, I will be concerned with the way that the problem of character in the novella is entwined with the problem of spectacle suggested already by the epigraph's plea for (no) light. Indeed, if certain financial and temporal conceits – Latimer's wealth as well as his gift -- clearly render its protagonist a very singular as well as peculiar case, the foregrounding of spectacle (re-) instates a

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[218] According to her own account, Eliot composed the epigraph in order to "counteract the tale's painfulness' (*GEL* V, 380).

[219] See for example Swann, op.cit.; Gillian Beer ("Myth and the Single Consciousness: *Middlemarch* and *The Lifted Veil.*" In: Ian Adam, ed. *This Particular Web: Essays on Middlemarch.* Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1975, pp.91-115); and Neil Hertz, "Behind *The Lifted Veil*: Rousseau." In: Hertz, George *Eliot's Pulse.* Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2003, esp. pp.56-57.

general problem involving the extent to which individual character can be perceived, much less comprehended, by others.

In the novella, as in many of Eliot's works, spectacle functions as a privileged medium for the transfer of sympathy between characters – and, by extension, between character and reader. Yet Eliot is also deeply cognizant of the threat posed to sympathy's emergence by spectacular and theatrical artifices.[220] In critical considerations of Eliot's work, the difference between spectacle as an obstacle to sympathy, on the one hand, and as its promise, on the other, has often been found to hinge on the figure of (the) woman.[221] In "The Lifted Veil," this figure is Latimer's love interest, Bertha Grant. In the body of the text, Bertha quite explicitly replaces the "great Heaven" that is entreated (not) to "give" light in the epigraph. Her name notwithstanding, it is not a gift Bertha gives or grants but one she receives from Latimer that calls attention to this substitution: an opal, which to Latimer represents "an emblem of the poetic nature, changing with the changing light of heaven and of woman's eyes" (17).[222] Becoming ever "harder" and more "cutting" over time, Bertha's eyes are more immediately reminiscent of the "diamond eyes" of her serpent brooch than the warm tones of the "poetic" opal. Appearing to emit, reflect, or refract not too little but "too much" light, Bertha -- like the gold of Midas or the ring of Gyges – appears to come attached with a curse.

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[220] On the figure of theater in Eliot, see David Marshall, "*Daniel Deronda* and the Wisest Beholder," in: Marshall, *The Figure of Theater. Shaftesbury, Defoe, Adam Smith, and George Eliot.* New York: Columbia University Press, 1986, pp. 193-240.

[221] On sympathy and the spectacle of Dorothea in *Middlemarch*, see D.A. Miller, *Narrative and Its Discontents. Problems of Closure in the Traditional Novel.* Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1981. On spectacle and femininity in *Daniel Deronda,* see Jacqueline Rose, "George Eliot and the Spectacle of the Woman," in: Rose, *Sexuality in the Field of Vision.* London:Virago, 1986, pp. 105-122.

[222] On the symbolism of jewels and their relation to femininity in Eliot, see Bonnie Zimmerman, "Radiant as a Diamond: George Eliot, Jewelry, and the Female Role," *Criticism,* XIX, Summer 1977, pp.212-222.

If Bertha's accursedness is emphatically to be distinguished from the Nemesis embodied by "Brother Jacob" -- the character and the text – this is above all because the "spoils," as it were, cannot in this case be divided between the main character and the narrator. Where in "Brother Jacob" the storyteller registers his deep satisfaction with the way David Faux is paid back for his transgressions in full, Latimer not only gives his own account of his fate in "The Lifted Veil," but is deeply invested in the effect that its portrayal of both injustice and untimeliness will, as he hopes, have on the reader. In its presentation as autobiography, then, Eliot's Gothic tale situates the problem of treasure squarely at the level of the "cover," the veil, or the defense mechanism that a first-person account can always, rightly or wrongly, be suspected of comprising. As much as he might shrink from scrutiny, or attempt to shine the spotlight upon others – above all Bertha -- Latimer will not fail to make a spectacle of himself; the only question that remains is whether, or to what extent, this spectacle grants the reader insight into his character.

II

Sit divus, dummodo non sit vivus (let him be a god provided he be not living), said the Roman magnates of Romulus; and so men say of women, let them be idols, useless absorbents of precious things, provided we are not obliged to admit them to be strictly fellow-beings, to be treated, one and all, with justice and sober reverence.
-George Eliot, "Margaret Fuller and Mary Wollstonecraft"[223]

Before proceeding further, it is worth reminding ourselves of the novella's plot. According to his own account, Latimer has grown up the pampered and, in equal measure, neglected second son of a wealthy banker and his second wife, who dies when her son is still a

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[223] In: *Essays of George Eliot.* Thomas Pinney, ed. London: Routledge, 1963, p205.

child. Like many Eliot protagonists, Latimer is somewhat fitfully educated and has no real vocation, though he dreams of being a poet. The sudden appearance in his life of the orphaned Bertha Grant coincides with the awareness of a twofold change in his consciousness[224]: first, the "breaking in" upon the mind's eye of visions that are fulfilled, down to the letter, in the future; and, secondly, the intermittent "obtrusion" (13) -- this time more aurally conceived -- of the secret or unarticulated thoughts of others, with the notable exception of Bertha herself. Latimer refers to each of these gifts in turn as instances of "double consciousness"; and indeed, neither the premonitions of the future nor the flashes of insight into other minds ever manages to dislodge a stream of visual as well as verbal reflection that the writer of this autobiography has no trouble recognizing as his own.[225] Although Latimer at first wonders if his expanded imagination is the long-awaited call to poetry, his search for confirmation of his powers' validity – will the reality of Prague coincide with his hallucinatory image of it? -- takes its urgency from the sole desire to know whether a vision of Bertha as his wife is likewise destined to come true, which seems particularly unlikely in that she is by now engaged to his older (half-) brother Alfred. Following Alfred's sudden death (of which Latimer has no premonition whatsoever) and the seemingly fated marriage to Bertha, Latimer finally gains access to the thoughts of his wife, who is duly recognized to be petty, shallow, and irredeemably self-centered. Latimer's increasingly obsessive visions are consequently robbed of any "object" but himself, centering exclusively on his future wanderings and death. Around the same time, Latimer's telepathic

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[224] Malcom Bull takes this co-incidence of Bertha's appearance and Latimer's gift as a suggestion for "the possibility that Latimer is magnetized by Bertha at their first meeting." See Bull, "Mastery and Slavery in *The Lifted Veil*." *Essays in Criticism* 48, 1998, pp.244-61

[225] On the status of "double consciousness" as a "semi-technical term in this period," see Helen Small's explanatory note in: George Eliot, *The Lifted Veil. Brother Jacob,* op.cit, p.94n21.

powers begin to fade, cutting him off even further from the people around him. Even the murder plot that Bertha and her maidservant have hatched against him is not revealed by way of his gift, but unveiled in the notorious deathbed scene that (almost) closes the tale. Having died from an "attack of peritonitis" (38), the servant Mrs. Archer is re-animated, via an experimental blood transfusion, by Charles Meunier, the friend of Latimer's student days who is now a famous scientist. Rather than simply confirming Meunier's genius, however, Mrs. Archer uses her brief return to life to unmask the "evil genius" (*Daniel Deronda*) that animates the beams of her mistress's eyes.[226] If this (anti-)climactic episode does not add much to Latimer's knowledge of his wife's character, it does grant him new insight into resurrection as (nothing but) repetition: "Great God! Is this what it is to live again…to wake up with our unstilled thirst upon us, with our unuttered curses rising to our lips, with our muscles ready to act out their half-committed sins?" (42).

Ostensibly because Bertha now knows, rather than simply suspects, what Latimer knows about her (we will return to the status of Bertha's knowledge), the two divorce, leaving him at the mercy of both his servants and his telepathic powers, which have returned with a vengeance: "I know all [the servants'] thoughts, their feeble regard, their half-wearied pity" (43). It is in this state of imperfect isolation, tortured by visions of his death, that readers find Latimer at the tale's beginning, which is also the (hallucinatory) account of his end:

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[226] Cf. the famous opening lines of *Daniel Deronda*: "Was she beautiful or not beautiful? and what was the secret of form or expression which gave the dynamic quality to her glance? Was the good or the evil genius dominant in those beams?" (Eliot, *Daniel Deronda.* Graham Handley, ed. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1984, p.3. Further references will be given parenthetically in the text). The novella's single use of "evil genius" refers to Mrs. Archer, Bertha's double: "I had a vague dread that I should find her mixed up with the dreary drama of my life – that some new sickening vision would reveal her to me as an evil genius" (35).

...I shall only have time to reach the bell, and pull it violently, before the sense of suffocation will come. No one will answer my bell. I know why. My two servants are lovers, and will have quarreled. My housekeeper will have rushed out of the house in a fury, two hours before, hoping that Perry will believe she has gone to drown herself. Perry is alarmed at last, and is gone out after her. The little scullery-maid is asleep on a bench...I make a great effort, and snatch at the bell again. I long for life, and there is no help (3).

The circularity that we noted in the epigraph is repeated in the form of the novella itself, which closes upon the very vision of the narrator-protagonist's death upon which it opened.[227] Indeed, despite G.H. Lewes's claims to find the story "very striking and original,"[228] "The Lifted Veil," like "Brother Jacob," promises to deliver little that is genuinely new or novel; even the "new revelation" that provides the tale with its climax is immediately unveiled to its world-weary witness as nothing more "an old pain recurring with new circumstances" (42). Indeed, Latimer has built his text on the premise that there is nothing new to be said or written, for only if his experience, as singular as it is, can be (re)integrated into the circulation of sympathy that (at least potentially) binds the members of the human species to each other will "The Lifted Veil" have had any value to him personally – and that only posthumously.

Latimer's investment in the foreclosure of novelty makes it all the more striking that his labor in writing his autobiography is set, from the very beginning, in opposition to the inherently reproductive labor of his servants. For at the latest when the story has been read through to the

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[227]On the phantasmal nature of this circular structure, see Julian Wolfreys, "Phantom Optics: George Eliot's *The Lifted Veil*." In: Wolfreys, *Victorian Hauntings. Spectrality, Gothic, the Uncanny and Literature.* New York: Palgrave, 2002: "In the narrative which carries the reader back in time even at the same time as it is moving forward toward the eventual end, scenes from a future which is also a past are projected as double phantom moments: as the narrative of the scene told with hindsight, and as the scene which is projected in the narrator's mind (as foresight) in anticipation of its arrival" (75).

[228] In Lewes's own correspondence with Blackwood, he characterizes the piece as "quite new and piquant" (*GEL* iii, p.55).

end and thus returned to its beginning, it becomes possible to read the "help" that fails to come to Latimer's aid at the moment of his death in the literal sense of the "household help" that has played a key if understated role throughout his life.[229] Already the sheer number of attendants in the novella is striking, all the more so given its modest dimensions (only "Brother Jacob" is shorter).[230] The presence of domestics is moreover doubly obtrusive, for in addition to appearing often they also consistently perform a kind of surveillance over their masters -- or, as in the case of Mrs. Archer and Fletcher, their mistresses.[231] The correlation between servants and scrutiny goes back at least to Latimer's account of his studies in Geneva ("I was under careful surveillance, and allowed no late wanderings"), through Pierre's ostentatious, if probably insincere, shows of concern ("Monsieur se ne trouve pas bien?") to the account of a "sentinel" at the Belvedere Palace, whose "proximity" Latimer wishes "to avoid" (19). In addition to providing a stock example of the people to whose thoughts Latimer is privy, servants or

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[229] U.C. Knoepflmacher early on called attention to the absence of assistance of the kind that comes to most other Eliot protagonists, whether in the form of "one of those 'rarities' mentioned by the narrator of Adam Bede – someone of a higher nature" or a less complex variety: "Early in the story, Latimer is soothed by the 'simple, waking prose' of his servant; later, however, he avoids and is avoided by those simpler human beings like Mrs. Hackit or Mrs. Poyser or Dolly Winthrop who might have given him the benefit of their native shrewdness and sympathy […] No such creatures cross Latimer's way." (Knoepflmacher,"Escape Through Fantasy: 'The Lifted Veil,'" in: Knoepflmacher, *George Eliot's Early Novels: The Limits of Realism.* Berkley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1968, p.147).

[230] A list of the servants and attendants in "The Lifted Veil," in order of their appearance, would include: the housekeeper; "Perry"; the scullery maid; the groom and groomsmen; Latimer's tutors; the servants in Geneva who keep him under "surveillance"; Pierre; the sentinel at the museum whose scrutiny Latimer avoids; the German courier (Schmidt); the Jewish cicerone in Prague; the "man dashing off at full speed" following Alfred's death; "the servants in our house" who prefer Bertha to Latimer; Fletcher; Mrs. Archer; "two female attendants" at the deathbed; and Latimer's last servants (who are identified at the beginning as the housekeeper, Perry, and the scullery maid…)

[231] There is some suggestion that Fletcher is blackmailing Bertha for "the public house and farm at Molton" the mistress wishes her to have – this being the "apparently indifferent nature of the errand" Bertha is on when she fulfils Latimer's vision of their encounter in the library (34).

attendants are also a requisite attribute of his clairvoyant episodes.[232] Thus Pierre presides over both the visions of Prague and the first, hallucinatory sighting of Bertha; the avoidance of the sentinel immediately precedes, if it does not precipitate, the vision "of hell" that will be Latimer's marriage; and the confirmation of the accuracy of his vision of Prague, sealed by "the patch of rainbow light…in the shape of a star," is co-witnessed by Schmidt, the German courier.[233]

The circumstances of Latimer's death might thus be thought to mark a kind of reversal, in which the master fills the thankless role of witness to his underlings' (melo)dramas, while they take little note of his existence -- or its annihilation. But despite the scrupulous attention paid to Latimer by his servants, it is clear, at the latest from the point when he can read their minds, that they have always had significantly less interest in him than he in them. At times, such as the period immediately following the death of Latimer's mother, it appears that what the young master wants from his servants is nothing short of love: the "groomsmen" of his father's estate, in particular, are cited as woefully inadequate substitutes for the "loving eyes" and "glad arms" that Latimer has lost with his mother (5). Perhaps in consequence of the longing that they prompt but cannot satisfy, the "loud resonance" of the grooms' voices exercises an irresistible attraction over the boy at the same time that he lives in mortal fear of it. The pull of such contradictory impulses is certainly characteristic of Latimer's interpersonal relations. Already the childhood encounter with the phrenologist Mr Letherall, "a large man in spectacles" who inspires

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[232] For an account of how closely servants and psychic activity were associated in Victorian culture, see Brian McCuskey, "Not at Home: Servants, Scholars, and the Uncanny." *PMLA,* March 2006, pp.421-436.
[233] It is curious to note that all of these attendants – as opposed to the domestics Bertha and Latimer employ -- are foreign (Swiss, Austrian, German). On the implication of "The Lifted Veil" in the opposition English/Continental, see Knoepflmacher, op.cit., esp. pp.140-142.

Latimer's "first true hatred" by "pulling [his] head about as if he wanted to buy or cheapen it" bears witness to Latimer's deep ambivalence at being made into a "spectacle" himself (6) – and yet he agrees to sit for the portrait painters of Geneva, who admire his "half-womanish, half-ghostly beauty," even allowing them to use his image to portray "a dying minstrel" (14).

Throughout "The Lifted Veil," Latimer's inclination to shrink from scrutiny in (the telling of) his story is matched only by his thirst for attention and approbation; a desire for recognition and sympathy does constant battle with the fear of over-exposure and (self-) betrayal both in his appeals to other characters as well as his future readers. [234]

Latimer's interactions with his servants appear as a further, but particularly telling, instance of his obsession with how others (do not) see him. Indeed, according to Latimer, the butlers, housekeepers, cicerones, couriers and the like are above all failed interpreters of their master's character -- and perhaps also of "The Lifted Veil," of which they, as the discoverers of his manuscript as well as his body, will probably constitute the first readers. Coming very close to

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[234] Rosemary Bodenheimer's biographical reading sees Latimer as the expression of George Eliot's "guilt about what she saw, and how she saw, during the long period of her life when her vision, like Latimer's, was unconnected with any creative activity" (135.) Yet Latimer appears much more concerned with "betraying" his own secrets than anyone else's: "I shrank from the idea of disclosing to any one what might be regarded as a pitiable peculiarity, most of all from betraying it to my father, who would have suspected my sanity ever after "; "I had never allowed my diseased condition to betray itself, or to drive me into any unusual speech or action"; "I felt a shock of alarm lest such an anticipation of words -- very far from being words of course, easy to divine -- should have betrayed me as an exceptional being, a sort of quiet energumen" ; I suppose I must have shuddered, or betrayed in some other way my momentary chill of horror ; "[Bertha] had begun to suspect, by some involuntary betrayals of mine, that there was an abnormal power of penetration in me –" ;"…the absent melancholy that made me answer her at cross purposes, and betray utter ignorance of what she had been saying." Of course Latimer's obsession with "betraying" his secret may be read as evidence of his (and, by extension, George Eliot's) "guilt," but more immediately, or superficially, it indicates Latimer's passionate attachment to the "impressions" he makes upon others; the fear is that if he betrays himself, others will in turn "betray" him by rendering – or confirming – their unfavorable opinion of him.

the position taken by Eliot's "humoristic" essay "Servants' Logic," Latimer attempts to ascribe their deficiencies to the nature of servants as a class (if not a species)[235]:

> Even the servants in our house gave [Bertha] the balance of their regard and pity…I was kind and just to my dependants, but I excited in them a shrinking, half-contemptuous pity; for this class of men and women are but slightly determined in their estimage of others by general considerations, or even experience, of character. They judge of persons as they judge of coins, and value those who pass current at a high rate (33).

Not only those who possess no independent financial means, "dependants" also comprise the class with no independent means of rendering judgments on character. Under the influence of those whom they perceive to have influence with others, they simply mirror or reflect the current of opinion, passing on the unfavorable impression Latimer leaves on his peers as well as the high esteem in which the beautiful and witty Bertha is universally held.

If this estimation of servants is a relatively transparent attempt to flatter the presumably more discriminating reader of "The Lifted Veil" into recognizing Latimer's true worth, the distinction Latimer makes between the value of character and the value of coins has broader and more urgent implications for a reading of the novella. Like "the housemaid" in the famous passage from *Middlemarch*, the servants of "The Lifted Veil" can help us, however unwittingly,

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[235] Eliot, "Servants' Logic," in: *Essays of George Eliot.* Thomas Pinney, ed. New York: Columbia University Press, 1963, pp. 391-396. For one of the few discussions of this essay in the critical literature, see Dorothea Barrett, *Vocation and Desire: George Eliot´s Heroines.* London and New York: Routledge, 1989, pp.103-105. It would be telling to compare the humorlessness of "The Lifted Veil" with the highly questionable "humor" of "Servants' Logic." See also Eliot's final work, *The Impressions of Theophrastus Such* (especially the piece entitled "Debasing the Moral Currency").

to see the "exclusivity" of Latimer's "optical selection."[236] In particular, they – or more particularly their characterization at the hands of Latimer -- force the question as to whether there is another way to read "character" than the one Latimer so bitterly denounces, one that would *not* take recourse to (the metaphor of) coins or coinage. Indeed, I suggest, not the least of Latimer's aims in writing his autobiography is to establish divergent scales on which to weigh or measure the value of character, on the one hand, and coin or money, on the other. It is precisely to this attempt that the text's conspicuous evasion of concrete or material representations of money and financial status -- to a degree unmatched by any other work of fiction penned by Eliot – should be attributed.

It is not so much that Latimer's wealth is not adequately accounted for; like Daniel Deronda, the narrator of "The Lifted Veil" figures as one of those "young men in whom the unproductive labour of questioning is sustained by three or five percent on capital which somebody else has battled for" (*Daniel Deronda*). As in many other Eliot (and indeed Victorian) texts, moreover, the machinations of plot intersect at crucial points with the literal, financial fortunes of the characters, as when the death of Latimer's elder brother Alfred propels him into the position of heir.[237] Crucially, however, Latimer's inheritance is not a factor in his marriage to Bertha: as he points out, "she was an heiress, who would soon be of an age to decide for herself"

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[236] See *Middlemarch,* Chapter 27: "An eminent philosopher among my friends, who can dignify even your ugly furniture by lifting it into the serene light of science, has shown me this pregnant little fact. Your pier-glass or extensive surface of polished steel made to be rubbed *by a housemaid*, will be minutely and multitudinously scratched in all directions; but place now against it a lighted candle as a centre of illumination, and lo! the scratches will seem to arrange themselves in a fine series of concentric circles round that little sun. It is demonstrable that the scratches are going everywhere impartially, and it is only your candle which produces the flattering illusion of a concentric arrangement, its light falling with an exclusive optical selection. These things are a parable. The scratches are events, and the candle is the egoism of any person now absent – of Miss Vincy, for example" (p.264, my emphasis).

[237] For a helpful account of Eliot's implication in economic issues of the day, see Tim Dolin, *George Eliot.* London and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005, pp.132ff.

(17).[238] Unrelieved -- or unburdened -- by more concrete material considerations, financial worth is of vastly less weight and consequence in this novella than it is in the novels -- or even "Brother Jacob." Where for example *The Mill on the Floss*, the novel Eliot was working on during the composition of "The Lifted Veil," moves irredeemably towards disaster from the five hundred pounds Mr Tulliver has borrowed from his sister-in-law (in unholy conjunction with the three hundred owed by his sister), Latimer names not a single sum in recounting his life story: the losses his text records, from death to divorce, are, as it were, "purely" personal.

"The Lifted Veil" is also the only one of Eliot's works in which no identifiable community – not even as "low" a place as Grimworth – has a major role to play. Although Mrs. Filmore, the adoptive mother of Bertha, is identified as a "neighbor," we never learn where Latimer is from (and he appears to spend much of his time abroad in any case). Like the idea or value of character, community in "The Lifted Veil" is an abstraction, a matter not so much of historical co-existence in a geographical spot but, as the epigraph would have it, "human fellowship." The relative insubstantiality of financial as well as communal matters in "The Lifted Veil" is only exacerbated by the replacement of an omniscient and authoritative narrator with Latimer's first-person voice. Where the storyteller of *The Mill on the Floss* manages to weave an entire epic out of water and its movements – some naturally and some economically motivated (the crisis occurring literally at the point of their collision) -- Latimer can only gush: "I was glad of the running water; I could watch it and listen to it gurgling among the pebbles, and

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[238] Already here we can note a significant departure from Mary Shelley's "The Mortal Immortal," in which the narrator's fiancée, also named "Bertha," is deeply preoccupied with her future husband's financial prospects. This is one of the ways in which Shelley, in the account of Charles E. Robinson, is portrayed "as a ridiculous coquette who deserves the embarrassment she experiences," thus insuring "that the reader's sympathy will be reserved for Winzy" (*Collected Tales and Stories,* op.cit., p.390). Although Eliot's Bertha is also clearly designed to "deserve" her punishment, the question as to whether this will "insure" the reader's sympathy for Latimer is left suggestively open.

bathing the bright green water-plants, by the hour together. I did not want to know *why* it ran; I had perfect confidence that there were good reasons for what was so very beautiful" (7).[239] Even if he had the knowledge or resources to do so, the narrator of "The Lifted Veil" does not care to muddy the waters, as it were, with considerations of a mere physical or material -- much less economic -- nature. As if in echo of this "poetic" apprehension of water, Latimer's (double dose of) "double-consciousness" often figures as a stream, a flow, or a current: if clairvoyance is like "a stream of thought [that] rushed upon me like a ringing in the ears not to be got rid of, though it allowed my own impulses and ideas to continue their uninterrupted course" (18), his premonition of marriage with Bertha is likened to "the roar of threatening waves" before it is finally submerged by the "syren melody" (the syren also of course being a water creature) that is Bertha's presence (26).

The insistent and deeply Feuerbachian metaphor of water is however far from erasing or washing away the fundamental difference between the two registers of Latimer's gift, which is a temporal one.[240] In the case of telepathy, the two "streams" that fail to meet and mingle are two versions of or perspectives on the present, while the gift of prescience reveals the (anticipation of the) future to be powerless over the effects of that present on an individual such as, for example, Latimer. Bertha, the syren or "Water-Nixie" (11) herself serves as the incarnation of both of

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[239]The water motif is reminiscent of the prologue to *The Mill on the Floss*, whose narrator is "in love with moistness" (8). On the cinematic nature of this prologue and its relationship to memory, see Evelyne Ender, "George Eliot's Movie-in-the-Brain," in: Ender, *Architexts of Memory: Literature, Science, and Autobiography.* Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2005, pp.75-90. "The Lifted Veil" adds a further turn of the screw to the play of credence and skepticism regarding the status of images as memory (or fantasy) that Ender traces here, for when encountering evidence for the validity of his vision Latimer "remembers" not a past event as such, but his memory of a vision of it. (Cf. Wolfrey's account, cited above [n16]).

[240] On the Feuerbachian motif of water, see the Introduction.

these failures or obstacles.[241] In a first instance, she is Latimer's "oasis of mystery in the dreary desert of knowledge" -- the only person capable of blocking the flow of Latimer's clairvoyant stream (18). At the same time, Bertha -- or rather the vision of her middle-aged self – proves powerless to change the "course" Latimer has set out upon (33). It is this latter constellation, in which the spectacle of the moment ("the slim girl Bertha") consistently eclipses the vision of the future ("that Bertha with the fuller form, the harder eyes, the more rigid mouth") that, Latimer believes, applies beyond his own "strange" case:

> Are you unable to give me your sympathy -- you who read this? Are you unable to imagine this double-consciousness at work within me, flowing on like two parallel streams that never mingle their waters and blend into a common hue? Yet you must have known something of the presentiments that spring from an insight at war with passion…(21).

If Latimer here calls upon the sympathetic imagination of the reader to bridge the gulf separating the "two parallel streams" of the present and the future (by way of a past in which they "must have known" something of a similar or comparable kind), he frequently associates not only his gift(s), but sympathy itself with water and its currents. Already the "trivial schoolboy text" in which Latimer indulges at the outset of his tale likens the fellow-feeling that has always eluded him with "the rain" held off by the "hard" wind; similarly, a request for understanding figures as a "moist timid entreaty" waiting to be frozen by "an icy unanswering gaze" (4) – not unlike the "swimming eyes" that Latimer turns upon Bertha (27). Most memorably, Latimer figures

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[241] As Bonnie Zimmerman points out, the use of "water-nixie" in *Adam Bede* ("such lovely things without souls") – like the nickname "Lamia" bestowed upon Gwendolen Harleth -- is part of Eliot's "typography of artificial femininity" (Zimmerman, op.cit., pp.222-223).

sympathy as water by emphasizing the scorching dryness of the Prague that appears to his mind's eye. For if Latimer's vision, and the power it represents, is "new and wondrous," what he sees is unspeakably old: "a city under the broad sunshine… unrefreshed for ages by the dews of night, or the rushing rain-cloud; scorching the dusty, weary, time-eaten grandeur of a people doomed to live on in the stale repetition of memories" (9). Instead of "gurgling among the pebbles, and bathing the bright green water-plants," like the stream of Latimer's reveries, the Moldau "seemed to me a sheet of metal" – an image that reappears in the form of the "stunning clang of metal" that startles him out of his hallucinatory daydream. The trivial source of the sound – Pierre having knocked over one of the fire-irons – serves, once again by way of a servant, to underscore the arid lovelessness of Latimer's life.[242]

A crucial instance of the novella's figuration of sympathy as water or flow occurs immediately following the above appeal to the reader's sympathy, as Latimer feels himself obliged to discard the relatively comforting notion that foreseeing his brother's death (rather than his marriage to Bertha) would have made all the difference:

> In after-days I thought with bitter regret that if I had foreseen something more or something different (…) pride and hatred would surely have been subdued into pity, and the record of those hidden sins would have been shortened. But this is one of the vain thoughts with which we men flatter ourselves. We try to believe that the egoism within us would have easily been melted, and that it was only the narrowness of our knowledge which hemmed in our generosity, our awe, our human piety, and hindered them from submerging our hard indifference to the sensations and emotions of our fellow (21-22).

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[242] Bertha's "pitiless soul" is likewise described in terms of "its barren worldliness – its scorching hate" (19).

Sympathy is like a flood that, in theory if not in practice, submerges "hard indifference" to objects or people who are not caught up in one's passionate and invariably egocentric attachment to the present. Precisely in pre-figuring the future readings of "The Lifted Veil," which in Latimer's view are bound to be wanting in empathy with him, sympathy's failure here figures as an obstructed flow or failed mingling of the waters. In particular, Latimer's suggestion that more knowledge would fail to change the status of "generosity," "awe," or "piety" sets knowledge (as grounds for judgment or the objective ascertainment of value) and sympathy on two tracks or courses as divergent as those of the present and the future.

Just as the value of character is to be judged wholly apart from more literal questions of value (from science and pseudoscience to economics), we might say, the emergence of sympathy – like Latimer's apprehension of bubbling streams -- has nothing to gain from asking *why*.[243] In what could be called the weak version of this thesis, knowledge simply fails to contribute anything to sympathy; a stronger formulation would maintain that knowledge actively hinders or obstructs its flow. Within the confines of Latimer's tale, evidence for an inherent opposition between sympathy and knowledge or intellect is given via the relationship with Latimer's friend, Charles Meunier, whom he meets during their student days in Switzerland:

> Strange! that with my vague mind, susceptible and unobservant, hating inquiry and given up to contemplation, I should have been drawn towards a youth whose strongest passion was science. But the bond was not an intellectual one; it came from a source that can happily blend the stupid with the brilliant, the dreamy with the practical: it came from community of feeling. Charles was poor and ugly, derided by Genevese *gamins*, and not acceptable in

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[243] This is also the "moral" of the apocryphal "legend of St. Ogg's" that Eliot's narrator recounts in *The Mill on the Floss*; having been ferried across the Floss by Ogg, the Virgin appears in her most glorious form and speaks: "Ogg the son of Beorl, thou art blessed in that thou didst not question and wrangle with the heart's need, but wast smitten with pity, and didst straightaway relieve the same" (*Mill,* Book I, Chapter XII, p.116-117).

drawing-rooms. I saw that he was isolated, as I was, though from a different cause, and, stimulated by a sympathetic resentment, I made timid advances towards him (8).

The "community of feeling" that flows between Latimer and Meunier is, paradoxically, the most concrete representation of community in the novella. This makes it all the more striking that the sympathy between them is surrounded by anxiety ("timid advances"); even the "sympathetic resentment" that Latimer feels on behalf of his friend might be read as the paradoxical characterization of their friendship itself.

Latimer, and by extension "The Lifted Veil," is indeed manifestly anxious about sympathy and fellowship – not to mention manhood. It is thus hardly a coincidence that economic and class distinctions re-appear precisely at the moment of greatest fellow-feeling (which itself comes as the two young men are floating on the waters of Lake Geneva). For the friendship between Latimer and Meunier requires the very differences it simultaneously appears "happily" to blend. In particular, Latimer's pedigree helps soften the blow of being treated as little more than a sounding-board by his intellectual superior:

I listened dreamily to the monologues in which he unfolded his bold conceptions of future experiment and discovery. I mingled them confusedly in my thought with glimpses of blue water and delicate floating cloud, with the notes of birds and the distant glitter of the glacier. He knew quite well that my mind was half absent, yet he liked to talk to me in this way; for don't we talk of our hopes and our projects even to dogs and birds, when they love us? (8)

It is completely immaterial whether Latimer understands or has any knowledge of the subject on which Meunier holds forth – so immaterial, in fact, that he might as well be of another species

instead of merely another class.[244] Yet if "The Lifted Veil" can here be seen to posit a negative correlation between sympathy and knowledge, it stops short of installing ignorance (in the manner of the epigraph) as a prerequisite for fellow-feeling.

Where Latimer's only friendship works to suggest that the twains of sympathy and knowledge shall never meet, the "antipathy" between Latimer and his brother -- the prime example, aside from marriage to Bertha, of sympathy's failure -- is actively deepened by the supernatural increase of Latimer's knowledge. For Latimer sees "Alfred's half-pitying contempt for me…not in the ordinary indications of intonation and phrase and slight action, which an acute and suspicious mind is on the watch for, but in all their naked skinless complication" (15). The "unhappy gift of insight" is unhappy because it unravels the ties of brotherhood that the imagination or illusion of sympathy might have woven; no matter how conciliatory or soothing Alfred's spoken words, they fall on Latimer's ears with "the sensation of grating metal" (14).

The reanimation of Mrs. Archer stands in a telling relationship to these instances of (non-)"fellowship" between men.[245] At a first level, it can itself be viewed as yet another instance of "male bonding": among other things, the experiment presents an opportunity for Latimer and Meunier to re-connect. But if this is the story's most incredible moment, it is not only because of the science-fiction overtones inherent in the lurid scene of reanimation, but because of Latimer's seemingly seamless, if not necessarily sympathetic, identification not with

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[244] Similarly, the fact that "the very dogs shun" Latimer underscores his isolation from human fellowship (25). On the importance of animal imagery to *The Mill on the Floss*, see Dinah Birch's "Introduction" to the latest Oxford edition (op.cit.), pp.xi-xii.

[245] The mimetic nature of the rivalry with Alfred, whereby Bertha seems to be desired by Latimer only because and to the extent that she "belongs" to his brother, has often been noted. (See for example Mary Jacobus, "Hysterics Suffer Mainly from Reminiscences." In: Jacobus, *Reading Woman. Essays in Feminist Criticism.* New York: Columbia University Press, 1986,,p.265). Bertha again appears in this light when Meunier arrives on the scene full of "admiration" for her. On the Girardian dynamic in *Adam Bede,* see Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosexual Desire.* New York: Columbia University Press, 1985 (Chapter 8).

Meunier, but with Mrs. Archer, a woman, a domestic, and a would-be accomplice to murder: "Great God! Is this what it is to live again…to wake up with *our* unstilled thirst upon us, with *our* unuttered curses rising to our lips, with *our* muscles ready to act out their half-committed sins?" (42, my emphasis).[246] The "we" to which Latimer takes recourse, in defiance of the categories of gender as well as class,[247] would appear to be that of humanity, or species, itself -- the level, to cite the "jejune" words of Cicero cited in *The Mill on the Floss*, of "*Mors omnibus est communis*."[248] What is "common" to each specimen of humanity, and by extension forms the basis of commonality between Mrs. Archer and Latimer – namely death -- is rendered "visible" in a moment that not only marks each of them as absolutely singular, but is itself identifiable as a spectacle. More precisely, it is presented as a spectacle within a spectacle: while Latimer directs his readers' attention to the (un)dead hand, that hand in its turn points accusingly at the spectacle of the "quivering and helpless" Bertha, "despairing of devices, like a cunning animal whose hiding-places are surrounded by swift-advancing flame" (42). In reducing Bertha to the level of the creaturely or animal, the transfusion scene transfers to Mrs. Archer Latimer's haunting question as to whether Bertha was really "woman born of woman, with memories of childhood,

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[246] It is interesting to note the similarities – and differences – between Latimer's outburst and that of Stephen Guest at a comparable moment of "enlightenment" (when he realizes that Maggie is refusing to marry him): "'Good God!' he burst out, at last, 'what a miserable thing a woman's love is to a man's! I could commit crimes for you – and you can balance and choose in that way…" (477). The irony is clear: what Stephen perceives to be a deficiency in the love of woman is, in the view of the novel, its great strength, namely: the inability to commit "crimes," or cause suffering, in the name of love. By the same logic, the female criminals Bertha Grant and Mrs. Archer must necessarily be "unloving women," which perhaps makes Latimer's sympathy for or at least identification with them all the more striking.

[247] For a different take on the violation of gender and class boundaries in this scene, see Kate Flint, "Blood, Bodies, and *The Lifted Veil*." *Nineteenth-Century Literature,* 51/4, 1997, pp.455-73.

[248] "'*Mors omnibus est communis*' would have been jejune, but she liked to know the Latin" (*Mill,* op.cit., p.148). This "commonality" has been transformed or translated into sympathy in the novel's climax, the death of Maggie and Tom, and its motto, David's lament for Jonathan and Saul: "In their death they were not divided" (*Mill* 522). On Maggie's struggles with Latin and with language generally, see Mary Jacobus's essay on *The Mill on the Floss* in her *Reading Woman*, op. cit.

capable of pain, needing to be fondled": it is now the maid who has been at least momentarily elevated to her mistress's former position as the "cruel immortal." Paradoxically, then, the moment of fatal fellowship, or rather fellowship in fatality, articulated by Latimer simultaneously (re-) brands Mrs. Archer as "common" (Latimer already held her to be "coarse," 35) while isolating or distinguishing her from every other human before or since: her case is the exception (the lifting) that proves the rule (of death as "veil").

If what might be "breeding about the hearts of two unloving women" (41) is not birth but death,[249] the rebirth brought about by Meunier's experiment renders Mrs. Archer a spectacle of the characteristically or generically human at the expense of her humanity itself. As a privileged spectator to this spectacle, Meunier appears here as Latimer's double; but he is also his mirror image or inversion.[250] For while Latimer's attention is focused on Mrs. Archer -- and only by extension on the object of her attention -- the scientist is arrested and indeed "paralysed" not so much by his patient's resurrection as by Bertha's precipitous fall from grace (which has long ceased to interest Latimer or, by extension, the reader).[251] That "life ceased to be a scientific problem" to Meunier means, among other things, that Woman has ceased to function as an object – whether of admiration (as Bertha has been up to now) or, as in the case of Mrs. Archer, examination – and yet Meunier's paralysis simultaneously bears testament to the difficulty of conceiving "her" in any other way. Like Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (not to mention her

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[249] The suggestion of pregnancy begins with "the lapse eight or nine months" leading up to the climax (35) and even the way that Latimer's "relation to what we call the inanimate was quickened into new life" during this period, when Bertha is said to be "living in a state of expectation or hopeful suspense" (36).

[250] On the structure of doubling in this scene and how it works to place both Latimer and "George Eliot" at a once-remove from the "crime," see Neil Hertz, op.cit.

[251] There is also a suggestion of mirroring or complementarity in the way that Latimer draws "the shroud of concealment" around himself in Meunier's presence, "as we automatically perform the gesture we feel to be wanting in another" (38).

mother Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*), "The Lifted Veil" can here be seen to raise the question as to whether, or in what sense, females can be grasped as "fellow creatures" – without definitively answering it.[252] This ambivalence, I am arguing, is itself a symptom of anxiety not only about womanhood, though it is certainly that, but equally about spectacle, which does not at all seem equipped to answer the questions of identity and identification that it provokes.

III

…there is no more expedient way to make a spectacle of oneself than to display one's stupidity.
-Avital Ronell, *Stupidity*[253]

In her letter to Blackwood, Eliot characterizes "The Lifted Veil" not as "a *jeu d'esprit,* but a *jeu de melancholie*" (*GEL* III, 41). While many readers -- from Henry James ("a great mind at play") to Charles Swann ("Eliot's Experiment in Art") -- have wittingly or unwittingly echoed Eliot's own casting of the piece as a *jeu,* the more theatrical sense of "play" has figured in critical discussions mainly in the guise of melodrama. Yet both aspects of Latimer's (double dose of) double-consciousness quite insistently ask to be framed by or translated into theatrical

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[252] See David Marshall, "*Frankenstein,*or Rousseau's Monster: Sympathy and Speculative Eyes," in: Marshall, *The Surprising Effects of Sympathy. Marivaux, Diderot, Rousseau, and Mary Shelley.* Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1988, pp.178-227. According to Marshall, "Mary Shelley's story about the denial of sympathy, fellow feeling, and fellow creatures seems to draw upon Wollstonecraft's critique of the ideology of sexual difference," which in turn follows Adam Smith in maintaining that sympathetic "identification will only be possible if we recognize an other as a fellow creature, as a member of the same species" (199; see also the Appendix on Mary Shelley and Rousseau, pp.228-233). Comparisons of "The Lifted Veil" to *Frankenstein* go back at least to Knoepflmacher (op.cit.); see in particular Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar, "Made Keen by Loss: George Eliot's Veiled Vision," in: Gilbert and Gubar, *The Madwoman in the Attic. The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination.* New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1979, pp.443-477.

[253] In: Ronell, op.cit. p.52. The context is a discussion of the shameful exhibitionism on display in Rousseau's *Confessions.*

metaphors: while his premonitions are consistently described not only as the lifting of veils or curtains, but in photographic, indeed almost proto-cinematic terms, his telepathic gift reveals others to be accomplished thespians in social life, weaving the "web of their characters" out of "rational talk," "graceful attentions," "wittily-turned phrases," and "kindly deeds" (14).

In taking paranormal powers of vision as its theme, "The Lifted Veil" implicates itself in a problem that, in Eliot's last novel, will come to be associated with the figure of the "Princess," a professional stage actress and Daniel Deronda's long-lost mother.[254] At their first meeting, the Princess tells her son that she wished him to grow up an "English gentleman," without knowledge of his Jewish heritage. In response to his request to know why she has now decided to break her silence, Daniel's mother gives an impassioned speech on the unfathomable groundlessness of the reasons that we give for our actions. The narrator continues:

> This speech was in fact a piece of what may be called sincere acting: this woman's nature was one in which all feeling – and all the more when it was tragic as well as real – immediately became a matter of conscious representation: experience immediately passed into drama, and she acted her own emotions. In a minor degree this is nothing uncommon, but in the Princess the acting had a rare perfection of physiognomy, voice and gesture. It would not be true to say that she felt less because of this double consciousness: she felt – that is, her mind went through – all the more, but with a difference: each nucleus of pain or pleasure had a deep atmosphere of the excitement or spiritual intoxication which at once exalts and deadens (539).

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[254] On the Princess and Latimer see also Judith Wilt ("George Eliot: The Garment of Fear," in: Wilt,*Ghosts of the Gothic. Austen, Eliot, and Laurence*. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1980, pp.173-230): "…Alcharisi has lived, through her art, 'a myriad of lives,' accepting and mastering that exposure to multiple identities that was a horror to the Latimer of 'The Lifted Veil.'"

It is not only because of the coincidence of the term that this passage can help to add a further dimension to Latimer's "double consciousness."[255] Like the Princess, Latimer finds himself in a particular and peculiar state with regard to his own feelings: "My self-consciousness was heightened to that pitch of intensity in which our own emotions take the form of a drama which urges itself imperatively on our contemplation, and we begin to weep, less under the sense of our suffering than at the thought of it" (24). The first person plural helps to suggest that such a state is "nothing uncommon," as the narrator of *Daniel Deronda* will have it. Rather, both the "sincere acting" of the Princess and the vastly less controlled, indeed almost hysterically heightened self-consciousness of Latimer imply that there is something inherently theatrical about the experience of emotional life as well as any attempt to represent that life to others: while Latimer's patently sincere (if not always sober) self-dramatization bears witness to the first tendency, his "insight" into the minds of others obliges him to confront the second.[256]

The consequences for sympathy of Latimer's telepathic glimpse "behind the scenes" of interpersonal discourse are complex, even convoluted.[257] On the one hand, the afflicted narrator often seems to suggest that sympathy is only possible when conversation is clothed or cloaked with the veneer of civility; bereft of such a surface or skin, we would confront each other, in the memorable imagery of the above citation, as "fermenting heap[s]" or in all of our "naked skinless complication," as Latimer finds himself confronting Alfred. But on the other hand, the course of at least one relationship in "The Lifted Veil" works to imply that sympathy, far from

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[255] For a different reading of the significance of the Princess to "The Lifted Veil," see Jacobus, op.cit., pp.272f.
[256] Cf. Marshall, "*Daniel Deronda* and the Wisest Beholder," op.cit., pp.216ff..
[257] At least one critic has coined an appropriately convoluted term to describe the implications of Eliot's work in both "The Lifted Veil" and *Daniel Deronda*: "telepsychology." See Nicholas Royle, "On Second Sight: George Eliot," op.cit.

being left untouched or even threatened, is enhanced by increased insight into others' minds. For the story of Latimer and his father is one of sympathy (re)gained by the "the lifted veil" itself:

> As I saw into the desolation of my father's heart [following Alfred's death], I felt a movement of deep pity towards him, which was the beginning of a new affection – an affection that grew and strengthened in spite of the strange bitterness with which he regarded me in the first month or two after my brother's death. If it had not been for the softening influence of my compassion for him – the first deep compassion I had ever felt – I should have been stung by the perception that my father transferred the inheritance of an eldest son to me with a mortified sense that fate had compelled him to the unwelcome course of caring for me as an important being (28).

Latimer's privileged view of an ongoing mourning process provides a corrective to the conclusions he would have drawn based solely on the perception of his father's dismissive attitude towards him. (Lest readers be tempted also to ascribe the latter impression to his supernatural powers, Latimer pointedly adds that "any neglected child for whom death has made vacant a more favoured place" would "understand what I mean," 28). Strikingly, however, the dynamic of this father-son reconciliation is far from subordinating the importance of what Latimer calls "leaflets" –surface or superficial signs, such as words or gestures. On the contrary: the most important thing about Latimer's supernatural powers, in this instance, is the way he employs them in order to achieve what he and his readers know to be only a show of naturalness: "Gradually…my new deference to [my father's] wishes, the effect of that patience which was born of my pity for him, won upon his affection" (ibid.). By the same token that the father-son "act" is revealed to be necessary not so much to maintain the appearance of affection as to give rise to affection in the first place, the spectacle of death works to sanctify their bond as one of

fellowship: "In the first moments when we come away from the presence of death, every other relation to the living is merged, to our feeling, in the great relation of a common nature and a common destiny (28).[258] The "presence of death" here manages precisely the task at which it failed in the case of Mrs. Archer: it redeems spectacle, thus transferring even death itself into a "presence" or even a present.

If, as U.C. Knoepflmacher observed in one of the first serious studies of "The Lifted Veil," it never once occurs to Latimer that Bertha "might respond to a lever within his own reach," with regards to his father Latimer employs his "gift" consciously, conscientiously, even strategically, to change the direction and tenor of their intercourse – deciding to play the game, as it were, which also means to play a part (obedient and devoted rather than jealous and resentful son).[259] Deference in particular is a mask or cover for an underlying "pity" that, if expressed or signaled more directly, might be (mis)taken for contempt -- an association that Latimer himself makes more than once, from his insight into the servants' "shrinking, half-contemptuous pity" to the perception of Alfred's "half-pitying contempt." In thus selectively covering and displaying his emotions – in dissimulating -- Latimer indeed succeeds, however temporarily, in altering not only his father's sentiments, but his own, thus re-establishing the lost paradise of the past: "My softened feeling towards my father made this the happiest time I had known since childhood" (28). Childhood, it will be recalled, was relatively happy for Latimer

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[258] In the most recent analysis of "The Lifted Veil," Thomas Albrecht argues that this scene marks the novella's implication in a "conversion narrative" (one that culminates in the expulsion of the evil Bertha from the text), a plotline that is familiar from Eliot's novels. Contrary to what Albrecht implies, however, the "we" to which he here ascribes so much importance appears elsewhere in the novella, both before this passage (in addresses to the reader) and after it -- notably in the re-animation scene, which, despite the fact that his subject is "ethics," Albrecht does not deign to discuss at all. See Albrecht, "Sympathy and Telepathy: The Problem of Ethics in George Eliot's *The Lifted Veil*." *ELH* 73, 2006, pp.437-463.

[259] Cf. Knoepflmacher, op.cit., p155.

for a twofold reason (that itself anticipates the twofold nature of his gift/curse): first, the fact that "then, the curtain of the future was… impenetrable"; and second, the possession of "a tender mother" (4). If the future is not yet foreseeable, the tenderness of the mother is perceptible only through its outward expressions -- not dissimilar to those that Latimer lavishes upon his grieving father -- rather than any supernatural insight into her "heart." Sympathy and even love are thus seen to depend upon the very signs that Latimer's clairvoyance not so much drowns as hollows out.

In the first instance, Latimer's sense that his extrasensory powers set him apart further exacerbates his already considerable reserve – when, that is, those powers are not disregarding all propriety and inhibition (as when Latimer finishes Alfred's sentences for him or blurts out declarations of love to Bertha). Indeed, it appears that Latimer has written his autobiography as a kind of wager, to see whether the "waters" of sympathy are strong enough to overpower the aversion he excites in others – including, presumably, his readers ("Are you unable to give me your sympathy?"…). Will readers, in other words, decide that Latimer's powers render him a monster – or even a different species? Or will we -- like Latimer when confronted with the spectacle of his father dying or Mrs. Archer returning from beyond the veil -- on the contrary decide that death, whether foreseen or not, is indeed the great equalizer, and identify with our "fellow" man?

Latimer's gamble in writing this text is thus both like and unlike the chance taken by the protagonist of Mary Shelley's "The Mortal Immortal."[260] Already the title of what would

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[260] "The Mortal Immortal" (op.cit.) was first published in the 1834 edition of the *Keepsake,* an annual aimed at young female readers that makes an appearance in *The Mill on the Floss* when Bob Jakin brings Maggie a "superannuated" exemplar (Book Fourth, Chapter III, p.282). On the publishing history of Shelley's story, see "The

become Shelley's most frequently anthologized short story suggests the problem of (not) belonging to the human species. As in "The Lifted Veil," moreover, the answer is cast in terms of mortality. Shelley's narrator, Winzy, is frustrated with his inability to answer a simple question – "Am I, then, immortal?" --that has preoccupied him "for now three hundred and three years," since he inadvertently swallowed an unidentified potion. The text records his proposed solution to the puzzle: "This very day I conceived a design…an expedition, which mortal frame can never survive…Thus I shall put my immortality to the test, and rest for ever – or return, the wonder and benefactor of the human species" (230). "The Lifted Veil" represents a similar temptation of fate and/as death: just as the journey to Prague tests the validity of Latimer's previous hallucination, down to "the patch of rainbow light… in the shape of a star" (23), his formation of the letters that he has seen "a thousand times" in visceral anticipation of his death constitutes a bold throwing down of the gauntlet that is almost akin to suicide. For Winzy, the stakes of the existential as well as epistemological game involve fame and, by extension, "vanity." As he concedes, the final "judgment" over his work will quite literally be left to his readers: if we have heard his name before reading this autobiographical sketch, then he was in fact immortal; if not, we have at least now been aware of his compromised or partial exceptionality (thus posthumously satisfying his vanity).[261] As Latimer's renunciation of fame in the opening pages of "The Lifted Veil" suggests, his wager is significantly different; not only does his renown not have any relationship to anything but the text itself, but that text does not, simply by virtue of its existence, satisfactorily resolve the question of his gifts' validity and/as

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Mortal Immortal: A Hypertext Edition." Michael Eberle-Sinatra, ed. Romantic Circles (University of Maryland), 2002. (http://www.rc.umd.edu/editions/mws/immortal/index.html)

[261]Cf. the opening paragraph of "The Mortal Immortal": "I will tell my story, and my reader shall judge for me…" (219).

his own exceptionality. This autobiography might, after all, be nothing but (a) fiction; and yet, even if this is so, the appeal to our sympathy remains.

The figure who signals that the proper place or context for the appeal to readerly sympathy is the problem of spectacle is one whose name is mentioned early on in "The Lifted Veil": Jean-Jacques Rousseau.[262] When Latimer comes to compare himself to "Jean-Jacques," he has just been reflecting on his failure to become a poet, his "dumb passion" that, in an echo or anticipation of the epigraph, "brings with it a fatal solitude of soul in the society of one's fellow-men," when he recounts the strange relief he found from isolation in its very amplification:

> My least solitary moments were those in which I pushed off in my boat, at evening, towards the centre of the lake; it seemed to me that the sky, and the glowing mountain-tops, and the wide blue water, surrounded me with a cherishing love such as no human face had shed on me since my mother's love had vanished out of my life. I used to do as Jean-Jacques did – lie down in my boat and let it glide where it would, while I looked up at the departing glow leaving one mountain-top after the other, as if the prophet's chariot of fire were passing over them on its way to the home of light. Then, when the white summits were all sad and corpse-like, I had to push homeward, for I was under careful surveillance, and was allowed no late wanderings (7).

As has often been noted, this scene is an echo of Rousseau's autobiographical texts: both Book Twelve of the *Confessions* and the Fifth Walk of the *Reveries of the Solitary Walker* recall his habit of floating in a boat, acquired while he was residing in a kind of exile on the Island of

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[262] For another reading of (the autobiographical) Rousseau's relevance to Eliot's novella, see Neil Hertz, op.cit. See also Hugh Witemeyer, "George Eliot and Jean-Jacques Rousseau," *Comparative Literature Studies,* 16/2, 1979, esp. pp125-126. On Rousseau's significance to *Frankenstein,* as mediated by the writings of Shelley's mother, Mary Wollstonecraft, see Marshall,"*Frankenstein* or Rousseau's Monster," op.cit.

Saint-Pierre in the Lake of Bienne.[263] Like Rousseau, Latimer feels a maternal presence in the "wide blue water" surrounded by sky and mountains.[264] Indeed, despite the emphasis on the fact that Latimer is the only human in the scene ("no human face"), this is, paradoxically, an image of "fellowship" and indeed a spectacle of sympathy that stands in stark contrast to what is waiting back at shore[265]; while Latimer is "under careful surveillance," Rousseau feels himself "out of the reach of the wicked" as long as he is on the water.

A paranoid sense of being watched is not all that Latimer and "Jean-Jacques" share. There are many other echoes of the autobiographical Rousseau, and of the *Reveries* in particular,

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[263] See *Confessions,* Book 12: "Souvent laissant aller mon bateau à la merci de l'air je me livrois à des reveries sans objet et qui pour être stupides n'en étoient pas moins douces. Je m'écriois parfois avec attendrissement: ô ma mère, me voici sous ta seule garde; il n'y a point ici d'homme adroit et fourbe qui s'interpose entre toi et moi. Je m'éloignois ainsi jusqu'à demi lieue de terre; j'aurois voulu que ce lac eut été l'ocean" (*Confessions.* Tome 2. Introduction et commentaires de Bernard Gagnebin. Librarie Générale Francaise, 1972, p.458); "Often, abandoning my boat to the mercy of wind and water, I would give myself up to a reverie without object, and which, for being foolish, was nonetheless sweet. At times, filled with emotion, I would cry aloud: 'O nature! O my mother! Here at least I am under your guardianship alone; no cunning or treacherous man can come between us here.' In this way I would drift up to half a league from the shore; I should have liked this lake to be the ocean" (*Confessions.* Angela Scholar, trans. London: Oxford University Press, 2000, p.630). Also see the Fifth Walk of the *Reveries*: "…et pendant qu'on était encore à table, je m'esquivais et j'allais me jeter seul dans unbateau que je conduisais au milieu du lac quand l'eau était calme, et là, m'étendant tout de mon long dans le bateau les yeux tournés vers le ciel, je me laissais aller et deriver lentement au gré de l'eau, quelquefois pendant plusiers heures, plongé dans mille reveries confuses mais délicieuses, et qui sans avoir aucum objet bien determine ni constant ne laissaient pas d'être à mon gré cent fois préférables à tout ce que j'avais trouvé de plus doux dans ce qu'on appelle les plaisirs de la vie (*Les rêveries du promeneur solitaire.* Présentation par Erik Leborgne. Paris: Flammarion, 1997, p. 113); …leaving [the others] at table I would make my escape and install myself all alone in a boat, which I would row out into the middle of the lake when it was calm; and there, stretching out full-length in the boat and turning my eyes skyward, I let myself float and drift wherever the water took me, often for several hours on end, plunged in a host of vague yet delightful reveries, which though they had no distinct or permanent subject, were still in my eyes infinitely to be preferred to all that I had found most sweet in the so-called pleasures of life (*Reveries of the Solitary Walker.* Peter France, trans. London: Penguin Books, 1979, p.85).

[264] Surprisingly, perhaps, Rousseau does not avail himself of the French homonym "mer/mère," wishing instead that the lake (*lac*) were an "ocean" (*océan*).

[265] Cf. Marshall on the reappearance of this scene in *Daniel Deronda*: "The well-known passage in which Eliot poses Deronda as both Wordsworth and Rousseau – floating in a boat on the water, forgetting himself in a 'half-involuntary identification of himself with the objects he was looking at, thinking how far it might be possible habitually to shift his centre till his own personality would be no less outside him than the landscape' – is only a Romantic application to nature of the imaginative transport that Smith less romantically described in relation to other people" ("The Wisest Beholder," op.cit., p.214). As in *Daniel Deronda,* floating in boats has a more intimate relationship to plot in both *The Mill on the Floss* and *Romola*: where Deronda's "passivity" is transformed into the active rescue of Mirah, the earlier female protagonists had been relieved of crucial decisions in being swept along by a current.

in “The Lifted Veil.” Where for example Latimer sums up his childhood with the resigned conclusion “that my nature was of the sensitive, unpractical order, and that it grew up in an uncongenial medium, which could never foster it into happy, healthy development” (7), Rousseau claims, in the Third Walk, to have “learned from early experience that I was not made for this world, and that in it I would never attain the state to which my heart aspired” (48). And where Rousseau, already in the First Walk, claims to be “devoting my last days of leisure” to “examining and describing…an exceptional situation” (33), Latimer promises to “use my last hours of ease and strength in telling the strange story of my experience” (4). Even Latimer’s susceptibility to servants finds a model in Rousseau, who “cannot tell how much gold was extracted from me by the grumpy and glum faces of valets doing unwilling service in the houses where I was once foolish enough to let myself be dragged” (Ninth Walk, 148). It is moreover this subordination to subordinates that leads, in Rousseau, to the desire for solitude: “It is only when I am alone that I am my own master, at all other times I am the plaything of all who surround me”(ibid.).

Both Latimer and Rousseau appear in their autobiographies as seekers of sympathy. It is however precisely as regards the value or significance of the autobiographical gesture that they part company. For Rousseau, the *Reveries* will prove their worth not only in the minds and in the judgment of others, but, perhaps above all, to a future self:

> If, as I hope, I retain the same disposition of mind in my extreme old age, when the time of my departure draws near, I shall recall in reading [my reveries] the pleasure I have in writing them and by thus reviving times past I shall as it were double the space of my existence. In spite of men I shall still enjoy the charms of company, and in my decrepitude I shall live with my earlier self as I might with a younger friend (First Walk, p.34).

Rousseau plans to use his text as a means of sympathizing with the younger Rousseau, thus becoming the text's ideal reader as well as its writer. Rousseau's concept of the future of his piece as a kind of "revival" of the past and/as the self accordingly represents the precise inversion of Latimer's account: "If…I were to live on to the age most men desire and provide for…I should for once have known whether the miseries of delusive expectation can outweigh the miseries of true prevision. For I foresee when I shall die…" (4). Like Rousseau, Latimer too envisions the scene of sympathy as a scene of reading – and yet that scene will be necessarily posthumous: "…we all have a chance of meeting with some pity, some tenderness, some charity, when we are dead" (ibid.). Writing in anticipation of death in the explicit stead of old age, Latimer produces a "space" that, far from "doubling" or even expanding, contracts over the course of the tale to the dots on the last page: "I have seen [these figures I have just written] on this page in my desk unnumbered times, when the scene of my dying struggle has opened upon me…" (43).

If Rousseau can thus be seen to insert himself in the complex question of Latimer's relationship to the future -- his own and his future readers – his final autobiographical work also anticipates the dilemma raised by the onset of clairvoyance, or what Latimer calls "insight" into other minds. In recounting the story the "ring of Gyges," which according to legend rendered the wearer invisible (a power, incidentally, also ascribed to the opal)[266], Rousseau's autobiography begins to sound a great deal like Latimer's "strange story": "…seeing men as they are and reading their inmost thoughts without difficulty, I should have found few men who were likeable

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[266] See Helen Small's notes to "The Lifted Veil," p93n17; on the ring of Gyges, see Marc Shell, *The Economy of Literature.* Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978, Chapter One.

enough to deserve my full affection and few who were odious enough to deserve my hate"(Sixth Walk, 102). As in Latimer's case, knowledge of others' "inmost thoughts" stands in an ambivalent relationship to sympathy. In Rousseau's account, the imaginary possession of the ring of Gyges would operate as a further intensification of the "indifference" towards others and their opinions that Rousseau repeatedly proclaims throughout the book. Yet this attitude, he maintains, "only concerns their relations with me, for in their relations with one another, they still arouse my sympathy, and I can feel for them *as I would for characters in a play*" (Sixth Walk, 101, my emphasis). This state of regarding others as actors or players is precisely where we find Latimer at the end, as well as the beginning, of "The Lifted Veil." Even before he unwittingly becomes embroiled in his servants' melodramas, Latimer speaks of the "pity" he has developed for "every living thing" – including the recalcitrant Bertha (37). During his years of wandering and exile, this tendency is even more pronounced: "Once or twice, weary of wandering, I rested in a favourite spot, and my heart went out towards the men and women and children whose faces were becoming familiar to me; but I was driven away again in terror at the approach of my old insight" (42). In this scene, or rather as the beholder of other people's lives as if they were scenes (from a play), Latimer is again strongly reminiscent of the Rousseau of the *Reveries*, who can turn every chance encounter into an occasion for reflections on his own capacity for sympathy when confronted with the spectacle of humanity.

The influence of Rousseau on -- or the influx of his writings in -- the pages of "The Lifted Veil" serves once more to implicate sympathy in the dynamics of spectacle, and of scrutiny, that Latimer is (allegedly) trying to escape. Surprisingly, perhaps, the effect of Latimer's foresight -- or the intermittent lifting of "the curtain of the future" -- on his capacity

for sympathy, like that of his insight, would seem to be less than fortuitous: as we have already had occasion to note, Latimer's visions of his life with Bertha, his future wanderings and his death work only to alienate him from his family, friends, and even his servants. That an absence of connection to other people is inherent to his powers of prevision is suggested already by the fact that when they are at their peak, his ability to listen in on others' thoughts is at its nadir, while at the same time his "relation to what we call the inanimate was quickened into new life" (36). Although Latimer's insight has exposed social intercourse as little more than play-acting, his ever-increasing distance from the theater of the drawing room does not eradicate spectacle, but merely displaces it:

> The more I lived apart from society, and in proportion as my wretchedness subsided form the violent throb of agonized passion into the dullness of habitual pain, the more frequent and vivid became such visions as that I had had of Prague – of strange cities, of sandy plains of gigantic ruins, of midnight skies with strange bright constellations, of mountain-passes, of grassy nooks flecked with the afternoon sunshine through the boughs: I was in the midst of such scenes, and in all of them one presence seemed to weigh on me in all these mighty shapes – the presence of something unknown and pitiless…And beyond all these, and continually recurring, was the vision of my death – the pangs, the suffocation, the last struggle, when life would be grasped at in vain (36).

Like his earlier habit of sky-gazing from his perch on a boat in the middle of Lake Geneva, Latimer's visions of strange landscapes seem designed to substitute for human love and sympathy – even and especially as they spectacularly fail to do so. In Switzerland, "the cherishing love" that Latimer found in "the sky, and the glowing mountain-tops, and the wide blue water" helped to compensate him for the absence of even a single loving "human face" in his life since the death of his mother – much as his mother herself compensated both for the

lovelessness of the father as well as the hint of castration in the boy's "blindness."[267] Here, the series of compensatory substitutions upon which Feuerbach lavished so much attention (divine love figures for human love, and, he confidently predicts, vice versa) has come to an end or at least a crisis, culminating in "a worship of devils" and/as "the presence of something unknown and pitiless."[268] This catastrophe is moreover precipitated by nothing so much as the vicissitudes of spectacle itself. It is in other words above all because Latimer continues to look for something that he finds, if not simply nothing, then its "presence" -- in the form of the absence of both knowledge ("unknown") and sympathy ("pitiless"). If it is moreover Bertha who appears as the paradoxical embodiment of such absence, doubly conceived, she is also consistently associated with the spectacle and theater that fail to deliver on their promises of revelation and/as love.

IV

PRINZESSIN. Wenn's Männer gäbe, die ein weiblich Herz
Zu schätzen wüssten, die erkennen möchten,
Welch einen holden Schatz von Treu und Liebe
Der Busen einer Frau bewahren kann,
Wenn das Gedächtnis einzig schöner Stunden
In eueren Seelen lebhaft bleiben wollte,
Wenn euer Blick, der sonst durchdringend ist,
Auch durch den Schleier dringen könnte, den
Uns Alter oder Krankheit überwirft,
Wenn der Besitz, der ruhig machen soll,
Nach fremden Gütern euch nicht lüstern machte:
Dann wär uns wohl ein schöner Tag erschienen,
Wir feierten dann unsre goldne Zeit.
-Goethe, *Torquato Tasso,* II,1

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[267] Cf. p.5: "I had a complaint of the eyes that made me blind for a little while, and she kept me on her knee from morning till night."

[268] See particularly Part I of the Introduction to *The Essence of Christianity*, "The Essential Nature of Man" (in: Feuerbach, *The Essence of Christianity.* George Eliot, trans. Buffalo, New York: Prometheus Books, 1989, pp.1-12).

In Eliot's fiction, the association between femininity (or more particularly female beauty) and theatricality, which was also found to be at work in "Brother Jacob," goes back as far as her first story collection, *Scenes of Clerical Life*, in which the impassioned Caterina of "Mr. Gilfil's Love Story" is placed in the proximity of both opera and at least the appearance of murder (a similar constellation reappears in *Middlemarch* in the story of Lydgate and Laure). That Bertha appears as the incarnation of "the spirit of intrigue" (16) also looks forward, as has often been noted, to Rosamond of *Middlemarch* and Gwendolen Harleth of *Daniel Deronda* -- not to mention the dissimulating, but certainly not beautiful, David Faux of "Brother Jacob." It is true that Bertha, unlike Gwendolen, has no ambitions to be a stage actress; rather, her performances are limited to "the narrow theater which life offers to a girl of twenty" (*Daniel Deronda*). Within this small theater of society, however, Bertha is well-known as a wit. Indeed, no qualifier is more often associated with her than "playful" ("playful patronage"; "playful sylph"; "her tone of bandinage and playful superiority"; "her playful tyranny"). The implication, of course, is that Bertha is toying with Latimer's affections – as for example in her flirtatious response to his gift of the opal, which she wears in a hidden or veiled place near her heart. This act – in the double sense of a deed and a theatrical gesture – creates the greatest surge of passionate feeling that even the sensitive Latimer has ever known: "I was completely fooled by this, and for two days shut myself up in my own room whenever Bertha was absent, that I might intoxicate myself afresh with the thought of this scene and all it implied" (17).

The first half of Latimer's story – the (anti-)love story -- is full of such incidents, or, more pertinently, "scenes," in which Latimer plays the rapt audience to Bertha's self-conscious performances. These scenes might be considered prologues, or *Vorspiele,* in a twofold sense. In

a first instance, they play themselves out in front of a curtain, mere preludes to the lifting, on the night Latimer's father dies, of the veil that "had shrouded Bertha's soul" (31) -- an unveiling which will find an even more (melo)dramatic as well as pictorial sequel or *Nachspiel* in the resurrection of Mrs. Archer (which in turn became the subject of a painting, H.É. Blanchon's *La transfusion du sang*, in 1879). Secondly, these scenes falsely represent (*vorspielen*) a world in which Bertha – in an echo or re-enactment of the love of Latimer's mother -- might recognize and even cherish his qualities. The question of responsibility for these misrepresentations is one that preoccupies Latimer intensely, though he never comes to a conclusion or verdict. At times he seems to suggest that his passion for Bertha be ascribed to his own willful blindness. Early on, for example, Latimer emphasizes the limits of his youthful imagination (which, significantly, are identical to their heights): "For a young enthusiast is unable to imagine the total negation in another mind of the emotions which are stirring his own…sometimes, in moments of happy hallucination, he believes they may be there in all the greater strength because he sees *no outward sign* of them" (16, my emphasis). A similar mechanism appears to be at work following Alfred's death, when Latimer and Bertha avoid speaking to each other: "the additional screen this mutual reserve erected between us only brought me more completely under her power: no matter how empty the adytum, so that the veil be thick enough" (29).

In these passages, Bertha's "emptiness" or blankness appears a matter of fact to which Latimer's own proclivities – which may or may not be common to all men – have blinded him. Yet at other times, Latimer casts his obsession, or at least its continuation, as the product of Bertha's artful performances, as if the problem consist not so much in his lover's emptiness, but rather the willful attempt to "cover" it up: "Bertha's behaviour towards me was such as to

encourage all my illusions, to heighten my boyish passion, and to make me more and more dependent on her smiles" (16). In his most plaintive tone, Latimer laments that Bertha "made me believe that she loved me":

> Out of the subtlest web of scarcely perceptible signs, she set me weaving the fancy that she had always unconsciously loved me better than Alfred, but that, with the ignorant fluttered sensibility of a young girl, she had been imposed on by the charm that lay for her in the distinction of being admired and chosen by a man who made so brilliant a figure in the world as my brother. She satirized herself in a very graceful way for her vanity and ambition (30).

Terry Eagleton is not alone in finding these lines somewhat less than convincing.[269] Indeed, it is not difficult to suppose that the short distance between "no outward sign" and "the subtlest web of barely perceptible signs" —such as the "light banter" that "was all the sign Bertha's mysterious self ever made" (26) -- being bridged by Latimer's own imagination. Following the unveiling of Bertha's "soul" after their marriage and his father's death Latimer appears fully to concede his own role in fashioning his bride as an idol: "I created the unknown thought before which I trembled *as if it were hers*" (32, my emphasis). Latimer appears in other words to be caught up in the dynamics not only of what psychoanalysis will call "transference" (where Bertha stands in for the m/other), but projection, in which it is one's own characteristics that are attributed to another.[270] The above passage, for example, can already be seen to apply terms to

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[269] "This…is a remarkably complex affair for conveyance by 'scarcely perceptible signs.'" Eagleton, op.cit., p.60.

[270] See for example Mary Jacobus: "In the specular scheme which 'The Lifted Veil' shares with Freudian theory, Bertha's brightness is bestowed on her by Latimer's look, then translated into a fetishistic veil of metaphor" (op.cit., 267). Jacobus is referring here to the etymological relation of "Bertha" and "bright" or light. Albrecht also makes the suggestive observation that sympathy itself figures as a fetish in "The Lifted Veil." However, Albrecht's

Bertha that are at least equally relevant to Latimer himself: not only is it the narrator who displays the "ignorant fluttered sensibility of a young girl" (particularly when it comes to reading "signs"), but his attraction to Bertha is far from unrelated to the "brilliant figure" she makes in "the world," to which their servants are so alive.

As Latimer seems to realize even as he attempts to lay the blame at her doorstep, making Bertha and/as femininity the stake of "The Lifted Veil" would seem to put too great a weight on what are after all very slight shoulders (like the "crown" of hair that is consistently contrasted with her slender neck). To the extent that Bertha embodies the dilemma of the novella, in other words, it is in her role as stand-in for the problem of spectacle. Like literature, the visual arts promise, or seem to promise, to expand the range of the self and while threatening to expose that purported expansion as little more than the self's own projection(s). Indeed, from Bertha's first appearance in the text, which is also an apparition, she is repeatedly placed in literal and figurative proximity to the walls, curtains, and screens upon which images can be projected as well as viewed – as in the "dissolving view" with which Latimer compares his visionary powers (10). When Latimer first catches (a prescient) sight of his future wife, she is standing in front of a "Chinese painted folding screen" that veils or masks the doorframe. Latimer calls attention to the identification of Bertha with the screen or closed door (Latimer will later speak of her in terms of "the closed secret of a sarcastic woman's face," 15) by way of a *non sequitur*: in underscoring the un- or supernatural nature of his premonition, he remarks that he had "heard no

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argument that as long as Latimer cannot "read" Bertha, she appears to be "different from himself" is undermined by his failure to take the dynamics of projection into account. This in turn leads to simple mistakes such the claim that the "oriental alphabet" image refers to Bertha, when in fact it applies to "recollections of the past" ("Lifted Veil," p.35). Similarly, Albrecht repeatedly cites the line "the dark veil had completely fallen" as if it had relevance to Bertha; instead, it is a figurative characterization of Mrs. Archer's death.

footsteps" and "seen no door open" before perceiving the presence of company (11). Yet as he goes on to inform us, the "Chinese painted folding screen…stood before the door," where it would in any case blocked the view, if not the sound, of a door opening (12). As it turns out, Latimer's sense of the figures having simply "appeared" before the screen is testament not only to the fantastical quality of the vision, but part of its prescient nature: when the guests actually arrive, Latimer is in the bedroom, where he can neither hear (their footsteps) nor see them emerge; when he enters the room, they are simply there, in the place of the "nothing" that had been "between myself and the Chinese painted folding screen that stood before the door" (ibid.).

In a second instance, it is Latimer's vision of the future – or rather a "shadow" of that vision -- that inserts itself "between" the two young people while they are walking in the garden: "…for a moment the shadow of my vision – the Bertha whose soul was no secret to me – passed between me and the radiant girl, the playful sylph whose feelings were a fascinating mystery" (26). The moment passes, and with it the "shadow," that "was no longer the object nearest to [Latimer]"; instead, the nearest "object" is Bertha herself (26). Rather than doubling the screen, Bertha has here come to replace it, a shift that foreshadows the penultimate scene in this series. Having just witnessed the death of his father, Latimer seeks out his wife in her "private sitting-room":

She was seated in a leaning posture on a settee, with her back towards the door; the great rich coils of her pale blond hair surmounting her small neck, visible above the back of the settee. I remember, as I closed the door behind me, a cold tremulousness seizing me, and a vague sense of being hated and lonely – vague and strong, like a presentiment. I know how I looked at that moment, for I saw myself in Bertha's thought as she lifted her cutting grey eyes, and looked at me: a miserable ghost-seer, surrounded by phantoms in the noon-day, trembling under a breeze when the leaves were still, without appetite for the common objects of human desire, but pining after the moonbeams. We

were front to front with each other, and judged each other. The terrible moment of complete illumination had come to me, and I saw that the darkness had hidden no landscape from me, but only a blank prosaic wall… (32).

The emphasis here, as in the characterization of the "young enthusiast," is on the gap between subjective expectation (poetic or romantic) and objective reality (prosaic and even banal). Yet this scene is as rife with suggestive contradiction as its precursor. In the first instance, the perspective of the viewer – Latimer – shifts from "back" to "front" without any indication of a turn. Coming in the door, and closing it "behind" him (but without turning back towards the door?), Latimer has a view of Bertha's "back," her neck, and "the back of the settee" -- a settee being, precisely, a piece of furniture with a back. As the narrator of *Daniel Deronda* will warn, this perspective can easily function as a veil or a screen: "If you have any reason for not indulging a wish to speak to a fair woman, it is a bad plan to look long at her back; the wish to see what it screens becomes the stronger" (563). Yet how is that screen lifted, so that the two figures end up "front to front" with each other? We are not told, an omission that is all the more glaring given that the simultaneity of Latimer's entrance and that of his vision (of what Bertha sees in him) is pointedly underscored: "I know how I looked *at that moment*" (32). More probable than Latimer having crossed the room (which would take at least a bit of time) or Bertha turning around (which would be difficult on a settee) is the silent presence of a mirror that would reveal Bertha's face when she "lifted her cutting grey eyes and looked at me" (32). But why would the writer of *Adam Bede,* with its famous foregrounding of mirrors in their particular relation to female narcissism, remain silent on this point?[271] And would one still speak of being "front to front" if both frontal perspectives are mere reflections – and if that "front" or face, in

[271] See *Adam Bede*, especially Chapter 15, "The Two Bed-Chambers."

the case of Bertha, bears more than a little resemblance to a screen or a back, namely: a "blank prosaic wall"?

I have dwelt on these inconsistencies because of the way that they seem to me to frame or even allegorize another, more abstract question of mutual regard. At issue, as Latimer recognizes, is the matter of judgment: "We were front to front with each other, and judged each other." In a first instance, judgment appears to negate or at least block sympathy, as it will on the following page: "So much misery…may be compressed into a sentence! And men judge of each other's lives through this summary medium…and feel themselves wise and virtuous" (34).[272] Yet it is not a "sentence" that comprises the "medium" through which Latimer and Bertha judge each other; instead, each of them appears him- or herself as a "medium" in the psychic sense of the word, with special, and specifically visual, insight into the other.[273] The very mutuality of this scene of judgment accordingly raises the specter of mirroring and even of doubling – the exteriorization, as it were, of Latimer's double-consciousness.[274] If Latimer suddenly resembles Bertha in standing in judgment over rather than trembling before his spouse, Bertha now appears to be almost as paranormally gifted as her husband, with uncanny "insight" into the wholly invisible forces -- the "ghosts," the "phantoms," the lack of appetite or desire and yearnings for the "moonbeams" -- that move him.[275] There is however an important difference:

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[272] And as it will -- above all through the character of Tom Tulliver -- in *The Mill on the Floss.*

[273] For a reading of the narrator of "The Lifted Veil" as a medium, see Jill Galvan "The Narrator as Medium in George Eliot's 'The Lifted Veil.'" *Victorian Studies* 48, 2, Winter 2006, pp.240-248.

[274] For Thomas Albrecht, too, "the misanthropic Bertha… is unveiled here by Latimer as his own uncanny double" (op.cit., p442).

[275] Cf. Bodenheimer, p.136: "This vision of himself as he appears to her eye is a turning point for both characters: Latimer is freed from his subjection to her, while she comes to hate him for his intrusive assessment of her…he hates her because of the way she sees him, and yet, he is precisely the hateful inquisitorial being she sees." See also Terry Eagleton's witty and no less apt characterization of this moment: "In a curious flash of esoteric knowledge, a

where Latimer judges Bertha for, in essence, judging rather than sympathizing with him, what Bertha finds wanting in Latimer is not sympathy – she disdains his "pity" much as the Princess will rebuff the proffered sympathy of her son Daniel – but rather the right or proper judgment. Like David Faux, or indeed any narcissist, Bertha would rather be admired than loved. It is thus not the fact that Latimer judges her, but the unflattering verdict he issues that Bertha cannot accept (or that she judges): implicitly, Latimer's failure to participate in (the theater of) their life together implies that in his judgment, even the moonbeams are more interesting than she is. Indeed, just as Bertha alone was immune to Latimer's clairvoyance before their marriage, it is now he who, as he rather proudly recounts, is immune to her charms: "[Bertha]…found herself powerless with me, except to produce in me the chill shudder of repulsion – powerless, because I could be acted on by no lever within her reach…I lived under influences utterly invisible to her" (32). What the above scene suggests is that although those "influences" may be "invisible" to Bertha, their invisibility is not. On the contrary: the immateriality of Latimer's desire – the fact that he was "dead to worldly ambitions" – makes an appearance both in Bertha's mind and on the stage of "the world," rendering Bertha, in its eyes -- and therefore the eyes of the servants -- "really pitiable to have such a husband" (33).

Bertha's unspoken if not uncommunicated demand is thus that Latimer play the role for which he recommended himself in becoming the husband of a "graceful, brilliant woman…who smiled on morning callers, made a figure in ball-rooms, and was capable of that light repartee which… is accepted as wit" (33). If Bertha's popularity is at least partially attributable to her gift for satire, her wit also operates on Latimer: "The most independent people feel the effect of a

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preternatural power known only to the poetic few, Latimer sees that his wife rightly thinks him an idiot […] The worst blow is that he lacks a monopoly on 'clairvoyance'" (Eagleton, op.cit., pp.60f).

man's silence in heightening their value for his opinion – feel an additional triumph in conquering the reverence of a critic habitually captious and satirical" (15).[276] Indeed, if Bertha features as a spectacle for Latimer's eyes from her very introduction into the text, she is also introduced as a spectator, and even a critic, in her own right, apt to remain "critical and unmoved in the most impressive scenes" as well as "inclined to dissect all [Latimer's] favorite poems, and especially contemptuous towards the German lyrics which were [his] pet literature at that time" (15). In this light, Bertha thus appears as a telling counterpoint to the "private critic" whose opinion on "The Lifted Veil" is cited in the correspondence with Blackwood. This was Eliot's companion G.H. Lewes, who, prior to his self-invention as a scientist, was a literary critic with a strong interest in theater generally and Goethe in particular.[277]

Latimer's reference to Goethe's *Faust* has often been noted.[278] Yet surprisingly little attention has been paid to the role of Goethe's *Torquato Tasso*, a play that Lewes had unsuccessfully attempted to translate in the 1830s (and which he went on to savage in his Goethe

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[276] As Judith Wilt (op.cit.) points out, a penchant for satire is one of Gwendolen's major characteristics .

[277] Lewes published a volume of criticism entitled *On Actors and Acting*; for reprints of many of the essays collected there, see Alice R. Kaminsky, ed. *Literary Criticism of George Henry Lewes.* Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 1964; and Rosemary Ashton, ed. *Versatile Victorian. Selected Writings of George Henry Lewes.* London: Bristol Classical Press, 1992. On the influence of Lewes's scientific work upon Eliot, and "The Lifted Veil" in particular, see Richard Menke, "Fiction as Vivisection: G.H. Lewes and George Eliot" (*ELH* 67, 2000, pp.617-653).

[278] "It is an old story, that men sell themselves to the tempter, and sign a bond with their blood, because it is only to take effect at a distant day; then rush on to snatch the cup their souls thirst after with an impulse not less savage because there is a dark shadow beside them forever more" (20-21) As Bonnie Zimmerman points out apropos of *Daniel Deronda*, diamonds such as those that appear on the brooch Bertha wears (in the vision of their marriage and in its realization) are also a *Faust* motif: Mephistopheles bids with them for Gretchen's soul (Zimmerman, op.cit., p.223). There is also a hint of Goethe's novel *The Sorrows of Young Werther* (*Die Leiden des jungen Werthers*) in Latimer's lament that he "went dumbly through that stage of the poet's suffering, in which he feels the delicious pang of utterance, and makes an image of his sorrows" (24). Yet there are also intimations of *Tasso* already here: not only is the influence of *Werther* on the drama famously recorded by Goethe in his *Gespräche mit Eckermann* (cf. the conversation of 3.Mai 1827: "Sehr treffend nennt [Ampère]...auch den Tasso einen gesteigerten Werther..."); the specific motif of dumbness and the articulation of sorrow in relation to the poet reappears in the classical drama, above all in the famous verses 3432-3434: "Und wenn der Mensch in seiner Qual verstummt,/Gab mir ein Gott zu sagen, was ich leide" (V, 5).

biography).[279] That role, I suggest, has above all to do with role-playing itself. In a first instance, the reference to *Tasso* provides an opportunity – indeed the only one – for Bertha to put her reputed "wit" on display.[280] In a manner akin to Freudian dissections of *Witz* (one thinks in particular of the famous Cracow joke), Bertha's characterization of Latimer's resemblance to Tasso is indeed witty: "'I need never take the trouble of invention in order to deceive you, my small Tasso' -- (that was the mocking name she usually gave me). 'The easiest way to deceive a poet is to tell him the truth'" (26). An illustration of Latimer's credulity follows immediately upon these words, for no sooner has Bertha playfully "assigned" Latimer the role of Tasso than it seems almost immediately to take possession of him. In a clear echo of the crisis of Goethe's play, in which the eponymous hero gives voice to his love for the "Princess" (who like the "Princess" of *Daniel Deronda* is named Leonora),[281] Latimer blurts out his love for his brother's fiancée just as Tasso declares himself to the sister of his patron Alfons, transgressing the strictly hierarchical rules of the court. Bertha's response verifies that she has understood this connection: "'Ah, Tasso's mad fit has come on, I see'" (27). Rather than Alfons, it is Bertha --

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[279] According to the Lewes of the Goethe biography (Lewes, *The Life and Works of Goethe: With Sketches of His Age and Contemporaries, From Published and Unpublished Sources.* 2nd ed., revised by the author. Leipzig: F.A. Brockhaus, 1858, Volume II, Chapter IX), the play is weak – indeed "the weakest of Goethe's serious dramatic efforts" -- because there is "no drama" in it; the piece is "purely psychological" (87) and, as such, "thoroughly German" (97). Similar complaints have of course been made about "The Lifted Veil." Eliot records reading *Tasso* in her Berlin journal of 1854 (*The Journals of George Eliot.* Margaret Harris and Judith Johnston, eds. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1998, pp.38f). In *Daniel Deronda,* Mrs. Arrowpoint is writing a biography of Tasso – which, as Judith Wilt points out, makes her a prime target for Gwendolen's satirical commentary (Wilt, op.cit., p.215).

[280] Helen Small speculates that Latimer would have been more attracted to Byron's version of Tasso ("The Lament of Tasso"). Yet Bertha's reading preferences are also relevant here, and the text seems to take some pains to point out that both she and Latimer read German. Moreover, the scenes in Goethe's play that, as I discuss, are echoed in "The Lifted Veil" are not recounted in the Byron poem.

[281] In fact, there are two Leonores in *Daniel Deronda* just as there are two in *Tasso* (where the names were a matter of historical or biographical record): Leonore is also name of the Princess's aunt.

both lover and tyrant -- who sends Latimer to his room: "Let him go home and keep his head cool" (ibid.).[282]

Latimer certainly shares at least as many characteristics with Tasso as he does with Rousseau, who in any case constituted one of the key models for Goethe's (anti-) hero.[283] These include "a suspicious mind," an obsessive, morbid, and at times paranoid preoccupation with others' views of him, and, as Bertha notes, a passion (if not a realized vocation) for poetry.[284] Most pertinently, perhaps, both Latimer and Tasso have trouble distinguishing between representation -- mere (role-)playing or spectacle -- and reality. If Bertha's game-playing (e.g. the concealment of the opal ring in her cleavage) is taken all-too-seriously by the lovelorn Latimer, it is a staged ceremony centering on a laurel wreath that confuses Tasso -- or even, according to some readings, drives him insane. Subsequent to these episodes of (over)valuing the implications of play and playfulness, both Latimer and Tasso are so overwhelmed by the perceived "drama" of their individual lots that they become insensible to the social theater going on around them, refusing or at least failing to play the role that has been assigned them (trophy husband and patronized artist, respectively).

Whether or not it is related to his oft-noted over-sensitivity or hyper-receptivity, Latimer's inability and/or unwillingness to dissimulate renders him socially obtuse; although he is far from unintelligent, he often – as during what Latimer calls "the incident of the opal ring" -- makes the impression of being stupid or at least "foolish" (16). The single exception to a

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[282] When Latimer does go home, he will discover that his brother has been thrown from his horse and has died from a head injury. Bertha's words would perhaps not register as an anticipation of the disaster had not her being alone in the garden already been denoted "a rare accident" (25).
[283] Cf. Goethe, *Italienische Reise* (Neapel, zum 17.März 1787, while Goethe was at work on *Tasso*), cited in: *Hamburger Ausgabe,* Band 5, p. 498: "Manchmal gedenke ich Rousseaus und seines hypochondrischen Jammers, und doch wird mir begreiflich, wie eine so schöne Organisation verschoben werden konnte."
[284] Cf. Witemeyer, op.cit.

characteristic insistence on authenticity that often appears somewhat obnoxious -- in Bertha, at least, it inspires a murderous rage -- is, as we have seen, Latimer's intercourse with his father shortly before his death. Confronted with the closest thing he knows to a master, in other words, Latimer manages to engage in the kind of play-acting that, for a character like Bertha's, is a matter of habit. What this suggests is that what appears to be "purely" an issue of character is quite immediately implicated in issues of relative power and position. In particular, Bertha's wit and even brilliance can be read as a symptom of the kind of "artful stupidity" that characterizes relationships of "servants to masters and mistresses, soldiers to superior officers, children to parents, and students to teachers" -- relationships, in other words, of dependency.[285] Bertha's wealth, like Latimer's, insures that this dependency is not directly economic: unlike Gwendolen Harleth, she is not obliged to marry for money. Nevertheless, as a beautiful woman, and/or a woman invested in appearing beautiful, Bertha is dependent on the evaluative judgment of men, which is presumably why Latimer's refusal to give her (what she considers) her due is so infuriating.[286]

Although the weighty question of a woman's beauty also famously opens *Daniel Deronda*, it is easy to overstate the sense in which Bertha anticipates the character of Gwendolen Harleth; after all, Latimer also shares many of the later figure's characteristics, not least in "roving from one foreign watering-place or Parisian apartment to another" (*Daniel Deronda,* Chapter 3). Just as Latimer loses his mother early in life, Gwendolen loses her father; both figures become caught up in jewel-encrusted, Gothic machinations that bring them to the brink

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[285] Ibid., citing Musil, p.86

[286] The only hint as to Bertha's motivation for marrying Latimer – a question that, as many commentators have pointed out, does not seem to interest the man himself in the slightest -- is the bond she shares with his (dying) father, who not only appreciates her "tact and acuteness" but is himself associated with her adopted mother (30).

of hysteria; and both marry partners that they (subsequently) discover to be blanks or voids.[287] The difference, of course, is that Grandcourt's blankness reflects or projects the power of his economic and class position, while what I have been suggesting is a link between Bertha's blankness and her status as a "dependent," which is only reinforced when she exchanges her status as orphan for that of bride. After her marriage, Bertha indeed "found herself powerless," as Latimer puts it (when speaking, characteristically, in a more figurative sense). For in Victorian England, there is no such thing as the (legitimate or legal) property of a married woman: everything she "has" is given or granted to her by her husband, the sole owner and administrator of "their" worldly goods.

If in *Daniel Deronda* the minority status of married women is illustrated by the transfer of diamonds from the illicit possession of Lydia Glasher, the mistress, to Gwendolen, the legitimate and thus even more radically dispossessed wife, in "The Lifted Veil" it is intimated by Bertha's all-too-intimate contact with servants.[288] In the form of the hapless Mrs. Archer as well as Fletcher, who asks (or blackmails?) her mistress for a piece of land, servants for Bertha become what she herself represents for Latimer: a "screen" that serves the dual purpose of covering for disavowed transgressions and providing a surface upon which they can be projected. Far from remaining without consequence for a reading of "The Lifted Veil," then, these myriad dependencies speak to the fundamental difficulty not only in judging characters (as if they were coins), but of locating – even or especially in spectacle -- an original or originary source of the

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[287] On Grandcourt as void, see Judith Wilt, op.cit.

[288] For an attempt to think Gwendolen's predicament through the problem of gift/*Gift* (as well as *Mitgift* or dowry), see Marguerite Murphy, "The Ethic of the Gift in George Eliot's *Daniel Deronda.*" *Victorian Literature and Culture* 34, 1, 2006, pp.189-208.

uncanny “blankness” that insistently flares up when confronting, or judging, our fellow creatures.

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