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Agnes von Lilien: A Translation by Kari Stolzenburg

Kari Marie Stolzenburg

A thesis submitted to the faculty of
Brigham Young University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts

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ABSTRACT

Agnes von Lilien: A Translation by Kari Stolzenburg

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The novel *Agnes von Lilien* by Caroline von Wolzogen, although celebrated during the period of Weimar Classicism, was not generally well known to English-speaking readers and researchers until recently. This project aims to address this situation by creating an easily accessible English translation of the novel complete with critical annotations for the benefit of researchers and lay readers alike.

The annotated translation presented in this work is an excerpt of the full translation of the work drawn in particular from the first third of the novel. This novel, first published in 1798, reflects many ideals of the Enlightenment, as well as opinions on women's roles and women's education. In the introduction, I trace the way that the novel seeks to gently persuade the nobility and educated middle class to change the world around them. This is done through the ever-present contrasts filling its pages alongside the novel's emphasis on ideal possibilities. Rather than serving as a revolutionary critique, I assert that the story conveys a quiet call for a level of social reform that still assures the nobility their power while nevertheless challenging them to use that power for the betterment of society. Women are urged to extend their reach to the outer boundaries of womanhood rather than being content with the confinement imposed by traditional society.

I conclude that the strength of Wolzogen's text and the trait that draws readers back even centuries later is the fact that, under the cloak of intrigue, adventure, and romance expected from the novel form, the ideals of the Enlightenment shine clearly. In spite of social and political changes over the past two centuries, the call to virtue, industry, reason, and self-improvement, regardless of gender or social class, still maintains its relevance and power for readers in the modern era.

Keywords: *Agnes von Lilien*, Caroline von Wolzogen, Enlightenment, middle class values, women's literature, women's education, women's roles, translation, Weimar Classicism

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I am very grateful to my parents, Steven and Lisa. Your love and support mean the world to me. Thank you for always encouraging me to advance my education and strive for the best.

This thesis is dedicated to my grandfathers, Richard and William. You are loved and missed. God be with you until we meet again. Thank you, Grandpa William, for igniting my interest in the German language, and thank you, Grandpa Richard, for showing me that no one is ever too small to make a difference.

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NOTE ON THIS TRANSLATION

As might be expected, this translation is not a literal translation. Because German and English writing style and grammar vary from each other, the translator has split sentences, changed the order of phrases, or used English idioms in order to remain true to the author's voice and meaning while creating a readable English text. In addition, the translator has tried to maintain a sense of the very formal 19th century style of writing, and therefore the language of the translation may seem stiff and stilted at times.

NOTE ON A PRIOR TRANSLATION OF *AGNES VON LILIEN*

It is important to note that there was one previous English translation of *Agnes von Lilien* by Mrs. Showes¹, which was published in 1801 by William Lane Publishing in London, England. This version is unfortunately out of print, although a single, non-circulating copy resides in the British Library in West Yorkshire, England. Because this translation is not easily accessible if it can be accessed at all, its value has been lost to most of the English-speaking readership. Therefore the time has come for a new translation of this valuable story that would make it available to the English-language readership again.

¹ Although Mrs. Showes was active as an author and translator in the late 18th and early 19th century, there seems to be no record that would permit us to determine her first name.

LIST OF CHARACTERS AND THEIR SIGNIFICANCE

Many characters are only known by their titles.

Agnes –main character; reared by the Pastor as his daughter; daughter of Johannes Charles Hohenfels and the Princess

Pastor (foster-father; father in the town of Hohenfels) –friend of the gentleman known as Hohenfels (see below); temporal and spiritual leader of the town of Hohenfels upon (Johannes Charles) Hohenfels' disappearance

Rosine – Pastor's Housekeeper

Doctor – friend to Hohenfels and the Pastor; first gave the child Agnes to the Pastor under the direction of Hohenfels so she would be reared and kept safe in the Pastor's home

von Salm Family – family who are friends with the Minister; assumed control of Hohenfels' land upon his disappearance; minor aristocracy

Hohenfels (Johannes Charles) – landlord of the village of Hohenfels; secretly married the Princess and then was sent into exile upon discovery; masquerades as an artist as well as the Princess' servant; takes Agnes to visit her mother, the Princess

Countess Amalie von Wildenfels – intelligent noblewoman who takes Agnes in as her companion; her husband is believed to be dead; close friend of Baron von Nordheim

Baron von Nordheim – loves Agnes and wishes to marry her; male protagonist of story; friend of the Prince; advocate for women's education

Julius Alban – loves Agnes but she does not return this love; court nobleman, enjoys poetry; part of the Enlightenment group

Elise von R** -- engaged to Herr Alban; friend of Agnes; part of the Enlightenment group

Herr Alban -- Julius' older brother; engaged to Elise von R**; part of the Enlightenment group

Monarch – ruler over the land; Agnes' grandfather; opposed to a marriage between Hohenfels and the Princess as well as the marriage of Nordheim and Agnes; bitter and angry

Prince – Agnes' uncle; Princess' brother; dislikes his father's court; often away at other courts

Princess – Agnes' mother; secretly married to Hohenfels; chronic ill health

Minister – Monarch's top advisor, non-clerical functionary; manipulative

Madame Barsino – destitute singer who lives on Nordheim's estate; mother of Bettina and Battista; counselor to Agnes

Bettina & Battista – brother and sister; Madam Barsino's children

AGNES VON LILIEN SYNOPSIS

The novel is written as a first person account. The narrator is the main character Agnes, who, at the beginning of the story is eighteen years old. She first tells the reader about her childhood as she was reared by the Hohenfels village Pastor. He has told her that her parents had died when she was very young, which he believes is the truth. The Pastor is kind to her, and she receives an uncommonly extensive education for a woman of that period and station in life.

The actual story begins on an autumn evening when a stranger, the forty-year-old Baron von Nordheim, asks the Pastor for a night's lodgings. Agnes is smitten by Nordheim's looks and demeanor, and over the course of the evening falls in love with him. He also shows a preference for Agnes' company. In the course of conversation, Nordheim is told that the village of Hohenfels once had a kind and circumspect master, who left under mysterious circumstances and has not been heard from since.

The next morning the Countess Amalie von Wildenfels arrives and, after brief conversation with Agnes and the Pastor, leaves with Nordheim. Agnes is downcast at Nordheim's departure, but her foster father has good news to relate – Agnes has been invited by Countess Amalie to be her companion. As Agnes is getting ready to join the Countess, the housekeeper Rosine divulges a conversation she overheard between the Pastor and Nordheim. Nordheim had asked the Pastor, as her foster father, for permission to marry Agnes; however he requested that she not be told, because he wished Agnes to fall in love with him first. With hopes soaring, Agnes then begins her travels to the Countess Amalie's estate.

During her journey, Agnes meets a poor middle-aged artist, Charles, who asks to sketch her portrait. Charles praises her outward features, asserting that they are a reflection of her character, and of all the inner virtues which she possesses. Agnes arrives at Countess Amalie's

manor, and when introduced to the nobility there, she is shocked to see what life is like at the royal court. Fortunately, Agnes also meets three aristocrats who despise the superficiality of the court – Elise, her fiancé Herr Alban, and his brother Julius. They form a small circle of intellectuals and friends, whose purpose is to protect themselves against what they perceive to be the lack of sense displayed by the other members of the court.

Agnes again sees Charles on the street and he asks her to meet him secretly so they can visit Agnes' mother. Agnes is very shocked by this, since she was always told that her parents had died. She meets her mother, who is kind but sickly, and promises to come to see her again soon. When she returns to meet the Countess at a ball, Agnes sees Nordheim and Amalie talking by themselves, which confuses her, since she fears that she has lost Nordheim forever. At this discovery, Agnes becomes ill and Julius arranges to take her home. However, when Nordheim sees them together, he believes that Agnes' affection belongs to Julius, and that he will not be able to win Agnes' heart. Julius has in fact fallen in love with Agnes, but she does not return this affection because she still hopes to be chosen by Nordheim.

Nordheim invites Agnes, the Countess, Elise, Julius, and Lord Alban to visit him on his estate, where they meet his former tutor and a destitute singer with two children, who are in Nordheim's care. He has provided them a place to stay as well as occupations with dignity. Nordheim is still courting Agnes, but a series of unfortunate incidents leads him to suspect that Agnes is committed to Julius.

After Elise tells Agnes of the rumors that Nordheim and the Countess are secretly married, Julius asks Agnes for her hand in marriage, but she refuses even though she has no indication that Nordheim will ever return her affections. Agnes and Julius agree to remain friends, without developing the relationship any further. Later the Countess assures Agnes that

she and Nordheim are not married, and that the complications of their lives will not allow them to ever be more than friends.

Nordheim introduces Agnes to the Prince, who is immediately attracted to her. He shows the group a picture of his sister, and Agnes is amazed to recognize the face as that of her mother.

The thesis provides a translation up to this point in the novel. The rest of the story is as follows.

Agnes realizes that her mother is the Princess and therefore the Prince is her uncle, however she divulges none of this to anyone.

Agnes meets Charles later that night to secretly meet her mother but when she returns, it is dark and her lantern goes out. In trying to find the door to her own room from the balcony, she mistakenly enters through the door to Julius' room. Another door opens and knocks her down – Julius happened to be on the other side. At that moment Nordheim sees both of them and believes that Julius was trying to seduce Agnes. The next morning Elise who had heard Nordheim talking of this to Lord Alban, goes to Agnes and tells of her dismay. Agnes gathers Nordheim, Julius, Elise, and Lord Alban together and tells them of her innocence while still concealing the secret of her mother.

Before the company departs to visit the Prince at his residence, Battista comes and leads Agnes to his mother, Madame Barsino. She tells Agnes that she has seen her in a dream. Then Madame Barsino bluntly asks Agnes who will marry Nordheim – the Countess or Agnes. She forcefully declares that the Countess cannot marry Nordheim and that Agnes should do all in her power to prevent it from happening. She then gives Agnes a box and tells her to open it on her wedding day to Nordheim, and then Madam Barsino makes Agnes promise that she and Nordheim together will care for her children.

The whole company goes to the Prince's residence for a party in the Princess' honor. Here Agnes first sees her mother in the company of others. Agnes also writes letters to her every week since they are unable to speak freely. Charles gives Agnes drawing lessons each week as a cover. The monarch hears rumors that Julius and Agnes wish to be married and he announces his consent. Agnes, embarrassed, responds that for now she wishes to remain unmarried and the situation is particularly unfortunate because Nordheim heard it all.

Agnes then goes to see her mother with Charles. While they are in the carriage, they notice that they are being pursued by a group of riders. Agnes and Charles go to an inn and believe that the riders have not found them when someone pounds on the door – it is Nordheim. Nordheim believes that Charles kidnapped Agnes and demands entry. Nordheim demands that Charles return Agnes to his estate and Charles refuses on pain of death. They are about to duel when Agnes intervenes and confesses her undying love for Nordheim. Nordheim is happily surprised and they embrace for the first time.

Agnes then follows Charles to a carriage which would take them to her mother but the carriage stops and Charles steps out to investigate. He is surrounded by people, Agnes is trapped in the carriage and she hears shots ring out. At this she faints.

When Agnes wakes up a few days later, she is kept in the monarch's summer palace trapped. A physician who is Nordheim's friend tends to her and sends her messages from Nordheim. Then later during the night a secret passage opens and the Prince takes her to see her mother. The Princess relates her whole life story to Agnes including how she loved Johannes Charles Hohenfels and their marriage lead Hohenfels into exile. This is the first time Agnes connects Hohenfels and Johannes Charles as one and the same person, and realizes that he is her father. The Princess continues to explain how she was told that the child born to her and

Hohenfels (Agnes) had died and that Hohenfels had been shot to death. Later when the exiled Hohenfels surreptitiously reentered the country he and his companions the Doctor and Herr von Nordheim (Nordheim's father) found Agnes in the care of a family, and how the Doctor gives Agnes to the Pastor and entrusts her to his care.

The Princess explains how the Minister was the mastermind behind all of this and the current situation where he had Agnes kidnapped and taken to the palace and had Hohenfels imprisoned. The Minister tells the monarch that Hohenfels' child (Agnes) was living in his court and therefore should be forced to marry the Minister's friend, the young Lord von Salm, and then exiled to eliminate the Princess' "shame". In response, Nordheim goes boldly to the monarch to plead for Agnes' release but because the monarch believed Nordheim to be a conspirator, he did not succeed.

The Prince, knowing what kind of man the young Lord von Salm is, tries to persuade the king to let Agnes marry Julius who was to become an ambassador to another court instead of von Salm. This he would have to agree to do on pain of his father's (Hohenfels') death.

Nordheim secretly meets Agnes and informs her that he knows everything from her father and that he has a plan to both free Hohenfels from prison, and to help her escape

The Countess comes to visit Agnes and relates to her, her life story of how her husband and Nordheim were friends, how her husband had a mistress and shortly afterwards the Countess and her husband had separated at the latter's request. How after a while she received the news that he was dead. Then she tells Agnes that she opened the box which Madame Barsino had given to Agnes to keep safe because she saw her husband's writing on a piece of paper which was sticking out of the box. The Countess learns that Madam Barsino was her husband's mistress, Bettina and Battista are his children, and because he felt he did not deserve his wife he

had faked his own death so she could marry another. The letter was dated two years after she was told of his death. The Countess then tells Agnes of her plan to go find her husband who lives in Switzerland.

Nordheim then suggests the plan that Agnes travel to Switzerland with the Countess in order to escape the arranged marriage and that he and Hohenfels would follow. When the monarch hears about the plan he threatens Hohenfels with life imprisonment if Agnes insists on the marriage to Nordheim. However if Agnes marries Julius her father will be set free.

Agnes is then taken to see the king who leads her and the rest of the company to a chapel where a clergyman is waiting. Agnes is very distraught but the physician hands Agnes a note which tells her that her father has escaped with Julius's and Nordheim's help. The physician then informs the monarch that due to a sudden illness Julius is unable to attend the ceremony.

Nordheim, Julius, Elise, Agnes and Hohenfels then all meet at Julius' home where they set the plans for Agnes to go to Switzerland with her father.

Agnes and her father travel to Switzerland and when they arrive they receive a letter telling them the monarch is dead and they can come home safely. Agnes and Hohenfels travel back and one night arrive back at the Pastor's home. There they are greeted by the Pastor and Nordheim. Nordheim tells them how after the Monarch's death, the Prince banished the Minister to a life of seclusion, elevated Julius to the Minister's former position, paid Lord von Salm to leave Hohenfels' lands, restored control of those lands to Hohenfels.

That night Agnes and Nordheim are married by the Pastor in his home. And thus concludes the story.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR^{2, 3}

Caroline Friederike Sophie Auguste von Langefeld Beulwitz Wolzogen was born February 3, 1763 in Rudolstadt in the German state of Thuringia, located just south of the cities of Weimar and Jena. Her father, Carl von Langefeld, was the lead huntsman of the area, as well as a member of the town council. As children of petty nobility, Wolzogen and her younger sister Charlotte were given an extensive education in drawing, music, French, and German. In addition to the usual girl's education, they were also taught science, geography, and literature, and in addition, Wolzogen developed a taste for Greek and Latin texts. (Holmgren 68)

At the unexpected death of Herr von Langefeld when Wolzogen was just thirteen and Charlotte was nine, the family fell into financial trouble. Consequently, when Wolzogen was sixteen her mother arranged for her to marry Wilhelm von Beulwitz, a wealthy man who would assure the family's financial security. Because Wolzogen was so young at the time, it was decided that the couple would wait another five years before the marriage would take place. During this time, in 1783 Beulwitz funded a trip enabling Wolzogen and Charlotte to travel with their mother to Switzerland so the daughters could advance their education. It was there that Wolzogen wrote her first work, *Briefe aus der Schweiz*, published in Sophie von La Roche's journal *Pomona für Teutschlands Töchter*. Wolzogen and Beulwitz were married upon her return in 1784.

It was after Wolzogen's marriage that the sisters became acquainted with their cousin Wilhelm von Wolzogen and his friend Friedrich Schiller. Schiller enjoyed the company of the

² In order to differentiate between Caroline von Wolzogen, Wilhelm von Wolzogen, Charlotte Schiller and Friedrich Schiller, I will refer to Caroline von Wolzogen as Wolzogen, Charlotte Schiller as Charlotte, Wilhelm von Wolzogen as Wilhelm von Wolzogen, and Friedrich Schiller as Schiller.

³ Information for this biography was taken from several sources including the following author's works: Jochen Golz, Friederike Fetting, and Janet B. Holmgren. For full citations see the Bibliography.

sisters so much that he moved closer to the family in order to visit them on a more frequent basis. The little group studied literature –both modern and classic – philosophy, and art. Schiller became increasingly connected to the family, and in 1789 he and Charlotte became engaged. They were happily married the following year.

Wolzogen continued to write, and in 1792 Schiller published her only dramatic work, *Der Leukadische Fels*, in his *Neuer Thalia*. Despite her literary success, Wolzogen was not as fortunate in her marriage as her sister. She and Beulwitz shared little in common and she did not feel that she had the freedom to advance her intellect as she wished. The marital problems were even more difficult for her since her mother considered Beulwitz to be a son, and Charlotte and her husband Schiller enjoyed his company. The only one she could turn to was her cousin Wilhelm von Wolzogen. These two exchanged many letters, until in 1794 Caroline divorced Beulwitz and married Wilhelm. It was the beginning of a very successful marriage. However this strained her relationship with her mother and Charlotte, as they excluded her from the family. She and Wilhelm von Wolzogen lived in Switzerland for the next two years, where she bore her only child, a son named Adolf. The birth of her son seemed to soothe the strained family relations. When Wilhelm von Wolzogen was promoted to chamberlain and moved to Weimar in 1797, Charlotte and Schiller, who were living in Jena, were happy to see them again.

In Weimar, the Wolzogen home became a center for intellectual discussion, where Goethe, Schiller, Herder, Humboldt, Charlotte von Stein, and the Duke Carl August could converse about the latest developments in philosophy, science, art, and literature. During this period, Wolzogen wrote and published her best-known work, *Agnes von Lilien*. Her ability and success as a writer was facilitated not only by her associations with the Weimar Classicists but

also by her husband, who encouraged her in these pursuits. As Wilhelm von Wolzogen was often away on official court business, Wolzogen could focus much of her time on her writing.

Agnes von Lilien first appeared anonymously as a serial novel in Schiller's literary journal *Die Horen*. The work was an instant success, which helped bring the fiscally floundering journal back to solvency. Because of the novel's great popularity, there was considerable speculation as to who its author might be. Some believed it to be a work by Schiller, some by the Jacobi brothers; the literary critic Friedrich Schlegel ventured the guess that the work was written by the literary genius Goethe himself. It was a great credit to Wolzogen's writing abilities that the entire court at Weimar was not only reading her novel but also assuming the author to be some literary master.

In 1798, the book was published as a whole and Caroline von Wolzogen was unmasked as its author. Unfortunately, once it was discovered that the author was not, in fact, a well-known male literary genius, criticism came pouring in from Schlegel and Clemens Brentano. Some critics asserted that Schiller, as her editor, must have done a great deal to make the work passable. Schiller, however, adamantly denied that he had made such corrections. In fact, he added no text to the manuscript—the only major change he made was to the male protagonist's name.

However, not all responses to the book were overtly negative after Caroline was revealed to be the author. Goethe, for instance, condescendingly praised Wolzogen for her work and noted that with a suitable study of literature and writing she could produce something “incomparable”. (Holmgren 83) In spite of its critics, *Agnes von Lilien* launched Caroline von Wolzogen onto the literary stage. In fact, all of Wolzogen's subsequent works listed the author as “die Verfasserin von *Agnes von Lilien*”.

The next twenty years would be a period of tragedy in Wolzogen's life. In 1805, Wolzogen's brother-in-law Friedrich Schiller died, after which Wolzogen's own husband died in 1809. In 1823, Wolzogen lost her mother, followed in 1825 by her son Adolf, and then lastly by her sister Charlotte, who died in 1826. Essentially alone, Wolzogen moved to the outskirts of Jena, where she spent her next years writing a number of major works, chief among which are *Erzählungen* (1826) a reminiscence; *Schiller's Leben* (1830) a biography, and a series of novels: *Die Zigeuner* (1800-1802), *Walter und Nanny* (1801), *Adele* (1839), *Cordelia* (1840), and finally *Alma*, which remained unfinished at her death. In particular, Wolzogen's biography of Schiller gained great popularity. In fact, it is thought that all subsequent biographies of Schiller have some basis in her account. Among her novels, *Agnes von Lilien* continues to be the most successful, held by scholars to be an example of Weimar classicism.

Caroline von Wolzogen lived until 1848, dying at the age of eighty-five. At her death, Wilhelmine Schwenke, her long-time companion, inherited her unpublished works along with instructions to destroy many of her letters. What was not destroyed was published in her *Literarischer Nachlass* in 1848.

INTRODUCTION

“It’s not right for a woman to read. Soon she starts getting ideas...thinking.”

(Trousdale) Although this was said by Gaston, the villain of Disney’s classic film *Beauty and the Beast*, it reflects what many people believed of women in the early 19th century. The climate of negativity towards a woman’s literacy was similarly noted by Friderika Baldinger (b. 1785) in her memoirs when she related that she would have been able to learn more, “if [her] good mother had not believed that the reading of books, besides the Bible or a Hymnal, [was] a mortal sin, and slothful for a young lady.” (Baldinger) Historically, in Europe it was generally considered improper for a woman to expand her mind intellectually. However, once women began to learn to read and write, they were able to exercise their minds, and therefore identify as well as express concerns about the world around them. Men then had access to a new perspective on women’s thoughts and feelings via the literature that recorded them. These thoughts were no longer hidden or only discussed privately.

The novel, *Agnes von Lilien* by Caroline von Wolzogen brought many of these important issues and others forward to the conversation table. To lay the foundation for a better understanding of the author and her work, I will address in this introduction the following culturally and historically significant themes which appear prominently in *Agnes von Lilien*: The rise of the middle class and its values; women’s roles; and finally, women’s education. A brief background for each of the topics will be presented, prior to discussing their impact in the novel. Before proceeding with my analysis of these significant themes in the novel, I will address the unfortunately scant scholarly literature relating to *Agnes von Lilien* which has appeared in the past ten years.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

A review of the scholarly literature surrounding Caroline von Wolzogen's work, *Agnes von Lilien*, reveals that very little critical energy has been devoted to the novel. Although the text has been approached in a variety of ways during the past two decades, none of the criticism unfortunately has dealt with the specific themes I explore in this Introduction.

For example Angelika Schneider's work *Widersprüche weiblicher Selbstentwürfe um 1800: Caroline von Wolzogens Roman "Agnes von Lilien,"* published in 2009, is devoted entirely to an analysis of the novel. Schneider begins with an examination of the three main women in the novel and their history: the Princess who because of her social status is essentially removed from reality; the Countess who through her ongoing personal efforts achieves a high level of intellectual and social autonomy; and Agnes, who is the idealized woman in the sense of a *schöne Seele*, in English "a beautiful soul." She then discusses the pedagogical principle of aesthetic education for women and the conflict between love and education in women's subjectivity. Like Michaela Krug (see below), she concludes with an exploration of social space and the position of the bourgeois family in society.

A thorough introduction to the novel appears in *The Women Writers in Schiller's Horen*, published by Janet Besserer Holmgren in 2007. Holmgren's project is both to record the history of Schiller's *Horen* and to examine the involvement of women as authors in this important literary product of Weimar Classicism. After pointing out that *Agnes von Lilien* was one of the most successful and popular contributions to the *Horen*, Holmgren provides the reader with a biography of Wolzogen. She then discusses three main topics found in the work. The first of these, which is educational reform, focuses on the value of aesthetic education based on contact

with classical literature and art. Marriage for love is the second theme Holmgren discusses. In her view, the fact that Agnes marries the man of her choice presents an ideal for women that moves away from the traditional arranged or convenience marriages. And lastly, Holmgren examines the theme of enlightened rule as it appears in the story. Important in her discussion is the fact that the novel points out “the problems that occur under unenlightened leadership,” (78) and shows the “way in which one becomes enlightened.” (79) Holmgren concludes that the happy ending is not just a concession to the novel form. In her words, “in the end good conquers evil because that is what Agnes has earned. The happy ending is Agnes’s reward, a satisfying confirmation that she has won out over court corruption and evil.” (79)

Jeannine Blackwell’s 2004 essay “German Fairy Tales: A User's Manual. Translations of Six Frames and Fragments by Romantic Women” analyzes women’s use of fairy tales from a feminist point of view. She notes that fairy tales “are used for introspection, life narration, as a metaphor for traumatic psychosocial events, social criticism, and – above all – entertainment.” (74) Blackwell treats *Agnes von Lilien* as a fairy tale which follows traditional motifs including a mysterious heritage, abductions and, in the end, the love of a sentimental hero. She then gives a short translated excerpt of *Agnes von Lilien*. Since her argument is tied into the value of dreams and fairy tales, the section she translates is a passage in which Agnes, who has been abducted and is being held prisoner, falls ill and has a symbolic dream about Julius and Nordheim. The physician who is engaged to help her recover from the attack instructs her to read fairy tales in order to raise her spirits. Blackwell provides no further analysis of the story as such, but shows how it fits into the tradition of fairy tale writing and concludes that *Agnes von Lilien* like other women’s fairy tales at the time, “exposed the rough edges and even the pain, as German women begin to appropriate the fantastic.” (95)

⁴ For further information see About the Author page xiv in this Introduction.

In *Auf der Suche nach dem eigenen Raum*, likewise published in 2004, Michaela Krug devotes a chapter to *Agnes von Lilien*. The overall project of Krug's book is to explore the concept of space (*Raum*) as it is experienced differently by women than men. Krug first introduces the mystery surrounding the novel's origins and speculation as to the true identity of the author, followed by a detailed description of the action in the novel. The emphasis in this study is on spaces (*Raum*). For example, a long discussion of the parsonage where Agnes is reared transitions to an exploration of the change in space from the home to the palace, which is viewed as a puppet theater. The article looks at the meaning of inner space (self-portrait), external space (Nordheim's estate), and in-between spaces (visits to her mother) as they are experienced by the Agnes and other women in the novel. Krug views the conclusion of the story as the restoration of the domestic space inhabited by the reconstructed family as Agnes is permanently reunited with her parents and married to Nordheim. In the reclamation of her mother and the achievement of the marriage she has been seeking, Agnes creates a space where she as a woman can thrive. Krug concludes, "Mit der Darstellung der eigenen Geschichte entwirft die Erzählerin ein Selbstporträt, über das sie im bürgerlich-männlichen Gedächtnisraum einen selbst beschriebenen und sichtbaren weiblichen Ort reklamiert." (199)

Catherine Minter, in her 2001 article "Literary 'Empfindsamkeit' and Nervous Sensibility in Eighteenth-Century Germany," uses neurophysiological theories to make the connection between emotional activity and physical reactions as she focuses on "the convergence of the physical and moral realms in the links between nervous and emotional sensibility" (1016) in 18th-century fiction. Although she mentions a few brief examples from *Agnes von Lilien*, she does not analyze the text as such.

In her article “Female Illness and Male Heroism: The Works of Caroline von Wolzogen”, published in 1999, Lesley Sharpe connects female illness with the impotence engendered by the restrictive position of women in society. Citing Wolzogen’s own physical ailments, which she links with the author’s marital difficulties, Sharpe claims that the illness experienced both by Agnes and her mother are the direct result of restrictions placed upon them by male power. She concludes:

As in numerous novels of the time, especially those by women, Agnes and her mother, in the latter's account of her early life, are subject to the physical effects of violent shocks to the emotions, as a result of the high-handed interventions of male characters. Yet Agnes is characterized by a greater composure and steadiness of character and purpose than her mother, and this is due to her superior education. (191-192)

Prior to the scholarly works mentioned above, few other works on the novel have been published. One analysis of note is Todd Kontje’s 1993 article “Socialization and Alienation in the Female Bildungsroman” which applies a Freudian reading to the novel as he looks at the Oedipal structure of the family, in which Agnes’ personal development “takes place under the father’s spell.” (230) He points out that Agnes is first guided by her foster father; this guidance is then transferred to Nordheim, who through a misunderstanding comes into conflict with Hohenfels (son versus father). In the end, when the pastor marries Agnes and Nordheim, the oedipal tension is resolved. As Kontje concludes, “Father, step-father, and husband take part in a private ceremony...as Hohenfels is to resume his rightful position as leader of the community. Wolzogen thus ends her novel with a strong affirmation of the existing patriarchal order in both the private and public spheres.” (230)

Another noteworthy analysis can be found in Friederike Fetting’s 1992 book *Ich fand in mir eine Welt: Eine sozial und literaturgeschichtliche Untersuchung zur deutschen Romanschriftstellerin um 1800 : Charlotte von Kalb, Caroline von Wolzogen, Sophie Mereau-*

Brentano, Johanna Schopenhauer. Fetting focuses the majority of her analysis on the biography of Caroline von Wolzogen particularly in reference to her education and upbringing. She notes the influence that the educational theories popularized by Rousseau and Wilhelm von Humboldt had on Wolzogen's life and asserts that these influences are directly linked with the ideas underlying the novel. In her view, due to these educational theories "konnte Caroline von Wolzogen nicht die Aufforderung entnehmen, ihren Blick der Welt entgegenzuwenden, die Räume der Innerlichkeit zu verlassen. Diese Konsequenz war der Frau verwehrt." (63) Fetting concludes that the concept of development in the novel is monadic because it remains internal rather than presenting an exchange between the poles of the individual and society.

Stephan Brock's dissertation, published in 1914, examined *Agnes von Lilien* as an early example of the female *Bildungsroman*. In his analysis, Brock analyzes the structure of the novel and compares the female *Bildungsroman* with Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister*.

The increase in scholarly interest in *Agnes von Lilien* which has developed in the last two decades is strong evidence that this story, although written over 200 years ago, still presents themes relevant to the experience of contemporary women. From this review of literature it is now possible to move on to the first of the themes prominent to this novel – the comparison of middle class values with those of the upper class.

MIDDLE CLASS VALUES COMPARED WITH ARISTOCRATIC VALUES

Historical Background

During the 18th century, educated people in Europe became excited by a new and progressive philosophy which was called the Enlightenment. Unlike many revolutionary impulses, this novel way of thinking arose to a large degree from the scholarly advancement of

the bourgeoisie. As Andrea van Dülmen points out, “In the eighteenth century, it was not the lower classes who voiced deep-seated dissatisfaction but rather an educated middle class who had reached maturity in the service of the state, the Church, and the economy.”(van Dülmen 9)

The leading thinkers of the German Enlightenment sought to change their world as they were in the middle of it – literally, as the middle class they wished to expand their intellectual and philosophical reach. During this period, those caught up in this visionary view wanted to shake off the chains of the old feudal society in Europe and change it into a haven of education, science, and human reason (Anchor, ix). As the German states would not allow for any kind of radical political change, most of the impact that Enlightenment thought had can be found in the realms of culture and religion. Because those who attempted political revolution risked imprisonment, exile or death, the goal of Enlightenment thinkers in Germany was instead to create change through the persuasion and education of their rulers. Perhaps one of the best illustrations of an enlightened monarchy can be found in Frederick the Great of Prussia who asserted:

My principal occupation is combating ignorance and prejudice in a country where an accident of birth has brought me to power, [I have to] enlighten minds, cultivate morality, and to make the people as happy as it suits human nature, and as the means at my disposal permit. (MacDonogh 341)

As this statement shows, particularly in Germany where political innovation was so restricted, the thinkers of the Enlightenment remained focused on the intellectual, spiritual and moral education of their fellow human beings.

Reflecting their origins in the middle class, as a general rule Enlightenment thinkers championed the values of education, industry, frugality, and virtue. As has been noted:

Enlightenment writers said that a middle class way of life promoted sensibility, love of family, thrift, and hard work –again, in stark contrast to the unfeeling,

promiscuous, and spendthrift habits these reformers saw in the behavior of the nobility. (Smith 764)

That is, these thinkers wished to escape the tendencies among the upper classes to extravagance, empty church ceremony, and squandered time. They sought instead to replace them with a meaningful personal connection to God, wisely and efficiently used resources, and an emphasis on progression based on personal development rather than on birth or social status.

Analysis of *Agnes von Lilien*

Given the impact that Enlightenment thought had on the educated middle classes, it is not surprising to find that many of the ideas under discussion in salons, newspapers and private gatherings found concrete depiction in the novel *Agnes von Lilien*. In a manner that is at once radical and restrained, the text juxtaposes wasteful and resourceful aristocrats, as well as self-interested and altruistic officials, providing both a critique of those who are corrupt and dissipated among the upper classes, and an idealized image of what enlightened leadership could be.

As an example, the first nobleman who appears in the novel is the Baron von Nordheim, whose actions throughout the book demonstrate his love and concern for the people around him. Though an aristocrat, Nordheim chooses to dress in a fastidious and yet simple way, wearing clothing which is never ostentatious. Although understated in his own dress, it becomes clear throughout the story that he is not miserly—rather, he is a careful manager of his resources who prefers to invest his wealth in compassionate care of those on his estate, rather than in ostentatious external display. This careful use of resources is illustrated through the way in which Nordheim cares for the needs of two families on his estate. In the first case, Nordheim's childhood tutor, who has fallen on hard times, comes to his former pupil for help. Rather than

providing money on a short-term basis, Nordheim creates a place for the destitute man by giving him a home and an occupation so that he may better himself and those around him. The second family under Nordheim's care was brought to his attention by a friend whose death left the mother and her two children penniless. Again, Nordheim not only gives them a place to stay, but also sees that the children are given an education provided by the tutor. Because he looks after both the physical and the intellectual needs of his charges, Nordheim represents an ideal (at least from a middle-class perspective) for the way a nobleman should use his resources in a charitable way.

Yet another example of enlightened aristocracy is provided by Hohenfels, the master of the estate where Agnes' foster father lives. At the time when Hohenfels inherits the land, the estate had been very poorly managed, with a resulting decline in productivity. With a great deal of frugality and resourcefulness, Hohenfels redirects the use of the resources available to him.

As Agnes' foster father relates:

Everywhere our Master knew how to access the most advantageous sale of excess products, and thus little by little through the certainty of income the spirit of industry and quiet order grew. Few idle people remained in the community, and minds developed in a healthy and moral way.(12-13)⁵

Hohenfels illustrates thrift and wisdom in his ordering of the estate, by creating a community of industry which expends its efforts efficiently. In doing this, he gained the respect both of his subjects and of other landowners around him. His ongoing concern for the welfare of the estate is demonstrated in the fact that, even when he is forced to leave his land, he gives the Pastor enough funds to continue his work and keep the estate running efficiently. The novel encourages the nobility to be concerned with those over whom they rule and not just with the political whims of the Monarch.

⁵ All page numbers through page 81 refer to the translation included in this thesis. All subsequent page numbers reflect the numbering in the current version of the unpublished manuscript of the translation.

The book also provides a very strong example of the way the nobility should not behave, as demonstrated by the courtiers at the royal court of the Monarch. The protagonist, Agnes, readily observes the high level of sycophancy within the group of courtiers on her first visit to the Monarch's palace. She is surprised to see the way the people act and dress, as well as to experience their lack of intelligent conversation. As she reports:

The caricatures among the courtiers seemed to me at times to be laughable, and at times lamentable. The reverence which they could immediately call from their hearts to their hands and feet the moment the Monarch appeared; a merciful or an angry look which shot through their bodies like an electric shock and changed their natural movements; the instantaneous change of their opinion according to the most recent comment from the Monarch's lips – all of this was incomprehensible to me. I stood as if in front of a doll house, so little humanity and truth spoke to my heart. (38-39)

With this observation, Agnes is calling attention to the lack of integrity among the courtiers, since they are swayed by every turn of the Monarch's opinion. They are like puppets on a string – basing the way they act and the way they think on what they perceive to be the Monarch's wishes. It is clear that this society is a poor façade for a wealthy life in court, inasmuch as the courtiers have jewels, lands, and money, but they are not really free since they are essentially slaves to the Monarch's every whim. The aristocracy fails to advance socially or intellectually, belaboring themselves instead with outdated traditions which hinder their individual development. An excellent example of this can be seen in the Monarch, who “burdened himself and others with stiff, antique French etiquette.” (38)⁶ Those at court were forced to follow the Monarch's backward customs and bow to his wishes, which lagged far behind the forward-looking changes taking place at many other courts. Unlike Nordheim and Hohenfels, most of the people of the court are only concerned with their appearance and social standing; they are insincere in their words and actions, and they care only for themselves.

⁶ This seems to be the author's rejection of the feudal system and chivalric manners which came to Germany from France.

One of the major problems with the Monarch is that the Prince has no desire to stay at home in his father's backward court. Instead, he spends most of his time visiting foreign courts which have more progressive ideals. Recognizing the dangers inherent in a crown prince who despises his own people, Nordheim enlists the Countess Amalie von Wildenfels to help him encourage the courtiers into more enlightened ways of thinking and behaving. As Nordheim explains:

My main goal, to make the seat of the future Lord more agreeable to him, will certainly be accomplished through your efforts. The overall tone, which has been changed by you, gives most of the society a modern air, and the Monarch's son will find it to be less different from the society at B..., which has been so attractive to him up to now. (59)

Using her skills in subtle persuasion, Countess Amalie follows this plan in her attempts to help change the Monarch and his environment; she leads through her example in reaching towards a higher philosophical and intellectual plane. Through her conversation and behavior, she demonstrates to the nobles that it is possible to be on good terms with the Monarch while still maintaining her individual opinions and taste; her life is evidence to the courtiers that it is possible for a person to be a genuine individual, a faithful subject to the Monarch, and a follower of Enlightenment principles. Although as a woman she is not in a position to act in overt ways to change her environment, she uses all the graces and skills available to her within her female role, thus winning for herself a high level of freedom as she moves at will through court society and its activities.

In addition to her eventual friendship with the Countess, Agnes is fortunate enough to find a few other exceptional individuals who share her values among the younger people at court. These include Julius von Alban, his brother Herr von Alban, and Herr von Alban's fiancée Elise, who form a philosophical group separate from the other gossiping, card-playing, sycophantic

members of the court. These individuals try to keep themselves free from the sentimentality of the courtiers, engaging instead in intellectually driven conversation. Their credo, as they present it to Agnes, is very clearly formulated:

We hate deceitfulness, we despise pettiness which only looks at appearance, flee from emptiness, and seek to preserve ourselves from these. Because we are not old and distinguished enough to set the tone in society, we pull ourselves through with Pythagorean silence as best we can. We are bound by our circumstances to lose a large part of our lives in grand society where mediocrity maintains control, but we strive to push ourselves through the currents of society without being ruined. (40)

It seems clear that this group consciously portrays the Enlightenment ideals of reason and knowledge. Although these three young people are unable to exert influence in the same way as the Countess, they act as a foil to the vacuous frivolity of court society, and bring a sense of hope into the text, since they are able to flourish even in the most rigid and backward-looking environment.

In addition to the critique of nobility present in the novel, *Agnes von Lilien* also openly condemns corrupt officials through its juxtaposition of the Minister⁷ and the parish Pastor who is Agnes' guardian. The Minister is power-hungry and cruel; he manipulates the Monarch to the degree that he banishes his own daughter, the Princess, he exiles Agnes' father from his land, and separates Agnes from her mother. Describing the Minister's attempt to capture Agnes and separate her from her father, Agnes' mother relates:

That evening which the Minister's deceitfulness had chosen for our⁸ downfall, was intended for the most beautiful pleasures of love and trust.

I waited longingly for my beloved in my solitary room. Your lengthy stay outside certainly frightened me. When I heard the most frightening sound in the court, I went to a hidden window, saw your carriage surrounded with lights, heard shots and fell back in a faint. (190)

⁷ The person named "The Minister" in the novel is roughly equivalent to an American Secretary of State.

⁸ Here the Princess is referring to herself, her husband Johannes Charles Hohenfels, and her daughter Agnes.

Although Hohenfels is not actually killed, he is imprisoned on the Minister's orders, following his plan to divide the little family, thus improving his own position and helping him increase his power.

Years of listening to the Minister has made the Monarch's heart dark and malevolent. Although he believes that he is acting out of duty to his country, he is in fact entirely manipulated by the Minister, whose prime goal is to gain power for himself and to disempower others. The Prince observes, "I see how much the Minister works to incense my father ever more against Nordheim, to separate him from the whole situation." (202) Although Nordheim has done nothing to threaten the Monarch's authority, he refuses to accept Nordheim as a worthy suitor for Agnes on the Minister's insistence. This is part of the Minister's plan to exclude anyone who gains enough political proximity to the Monarch to actually influence him. In essence, it is the Minister who rules the country, as the Monarch is swayed by his every suggestion.

In contrast, Agnes' foster father, the village Pastor, is as kind and gentle as the court Minister is cruel. The Pastor is the embodiment of Enlightenment ideals and is therefore the best example of the values which the text valorizes—that is, education, thrift, and hard work. A learned man, the Pastor not only reads his Bible but also Plutarch and other Latin and Greek classics. Agnes reports that he is the thriftiest of men and therefore has not suffered from want. He gained influence naturally by befriending the landlord Hohenfels – as Hohenfels attended to the secular needs of his subjects, the Pastor cared for the people's spiritual needs. Upon Hohenfels' disappearance, the Pastor became the secular leader of the village of Hohenfels as well, and he continues to teach the people principles which he and Hohenfels once taught

together. His theory of changing the world begins with providing for the physical needs of the people. As he puts it:

When a people finds a secure livelihood through industriousness, then order and morals naturally follow. True need undoes all moral ties; the person whom it oppresses is in a state of war with society. When the physical needs are moderately satisfied, the soul blossoms into thought by its own power, and the feelings of right and good, of belief and hope spring forth from their mother earth as strong, healthy plants. (12)

The Pastor does not need to force or manipulate people into behaving in ways that he believes are healthy and moral. Instead, he first takes care of the physical needs of those within his reach, and then, through patience and love, persuades them to be orderly and kind, and to educate themselves. The Pastor has gained so many friends in this way that he does not need to worry about his position in society—it has been secured by the respect that others have for him.

Although—or perhaps because *Agnes von Lilien* is strongly rooted in Enlightenment thought, bolstered by the morals and virtues valued by the middle class society within which the novel originated, the clear subtext of the story is not a call for revolution. Rather, it seeks the reformation of society. In particular, the positive characters illustrate the rich fruits yielded by a change in the mind and spirit in keeping with Enlightenment ideals. As the previous examples show, the novel both praises and criticizes the contemporary social situation. While it openly condemns superficiality, wastefulness, and stagnancy, it praises those who are willing to move forward with the times, who are genuine, and who contribute in a positive way to the well-being of the community, even if their reach is limited.

WOMEN'S ROLES

Historical Background

Related to the change in value systems advocated by the protagonists in the novel is the question of the roles and expectations placed on women. History makes abundantly clear that in the 18th and early 19th centuries, middle- and upper-class women in German-speaking lands were expected to remain within the private sphere of home and family.⁹ However, even within that private space, women were required to stay within certain expectations for “appropriate” female behavior. As Ruth-Ellen Joeres has noted:

In late eighteenth century [Germany],...labels connected with behavior and character of women and men arose that created a dichotomization and polarization of specifically gendered traits. Designators like “independent”, “acquisitive”, “public”, “effective”, “abstracting”, “reasonable” were increasingly considered masculine, whereas other descriptors like “domestic”, “modest”, “receptive”, and “submissive” were characterized as feminine. (Joeres 3)

Increasingly, it was believed that it was inappropriate for a “respectable” woman to go out into the world, as that would mean that she was taking on “masculine characteristics”. Instead, she was to stay at home and attend to “domestic” and familial social duties. A woman who displayed more “masculine” characteristics was generally considered to be suspect at the least, and she often was scorned or ostracized by “respectable” society. For much of the 18th century, women were frequently considered to be like children – unable to comprehend and reason and therefore less useful in areas that required any degree of rationality. Joeres describes this situation when she states that:

German women of all classes remained undereducated, undertrained, underutilized, victims of the mystification of gender roles, of the so-called gender characteristics that saw them located in a particular realm of domestic responsibilities. (Joeres 16)

⁹ For more information see the following authors' works: Blackwell & Zantop, Stott & Baker, and Sagarra.

Although knowledge about the world increased exponentially during these centuries, the ability of women to take part in this progress was highly limited. In general, they were trapped by the expectations—or lack thereof—that were placed upon them.

This narrow view of women can be seen in the descriptions of the “ideal wife” recorded by the German author, Christopher Martin Wieland (1733-1813). For example, Wieland suggested that the superior wife would be passive, and so extremely moldable that she would conform completely to her husband’s ideals and tastes. He was also of the opinion that she would be better off knowing very little except the Bible and the almanac. (Wieland 89) In his essay, Wieland extols:

my happiness with a woman...who does not know what an English novel is, and who rarely understands my *Moral Recollections* because to her the language, ornamented with images and poetic figures, appears as incomprehensible as Greek... I do not require the least bit of spirit from my wife; I have had so much of it from my books... (Quoted in van Dülmen 91, my translation)

For Wieland, then, it was essential to marital happiness that the wife come into the marriage with no opinions or personality of her own; it was the part of the husband to impress his mold upon her, and shape her into a meek and passive reflection of himself. Within this limited and very focused sphere, there was little need for development of the mind or intellect. As Georg von der Recke once insisted, a “nobleman needs a good landlady, not a book-lover as a wife.” (Quoted in van Dülmen 129, my translation)

Analysis of *Agnes von Lilien*

Although the conceptions of the female role expressed above confine themselves essentially to women who are seen as beautiful figurines and who are useful around the house, the characters portrayed by Wolzogen in the novel *Agnes von Lilien* reflect a different ideal for

women. Filtered through a woman's perspective, this new alternative illustrated intellectual and personal potentials for women over half a century before the overt struggle for women's freedom began in Germany with the *Frauenbewegung* (Women's Movement) in the 1860s. It is significant, for instance, that Agnes exhibits a high level of emotion, intelligence, courage, and self-reliance. Unlike the traditional woman described by Wieland, Agnes' character demonstrates a view of the world that is greatly influenced by the Enlightenment ideals of knowledge and reason prominent in the instruction she received from her foster-father. She is clever and kind; she thirsts for knowledge, understands the needs of those around her, and participates in a philosophical society. To the degree that is possible within the feminine role impressed upon her, Agnes acts independently, and resists being acted upon. Although she does not step beyond the gender boundaries enclosing her, she pushes those limitations as far as she is able while still remaining an accepted and acceptable woman.

As the novel begins, for example, Agnes lives in her foster father's home, where she carries out a wide range of responsibilities. It is clear from her descriptions of daily life that she performs the traditional domestic tasks required of a woman to perfection, but these fill only the smallest part of her time. In addition to these routine activities, she tends the garden, plays the piano, sings, sews, and studies natural history. But her role in the household does not end there.

In her words:

The long winter nights at the spinning wheel or with knitting needles passed thus: [Father] would read aloud from the ancient texts, and I was required to memorize as well as translate. The art forms of the ancient world were meant to tune my imagination to that which is beautiful and noble, as well as to protect my senses from the influence of that which is common and unworthy. (3-4)

As the novel portrays with great detail, Agnes is not restricted merely to "feminine" activities such as sewing and knitting. Her foster father and his friend, the Doctor, carefully teach her to

exercise her ability to reason in making decisions and learning to understand the world around her. She reports of this training: “[The Doctor] always had something new to teach me from the natural or human world, and showed joy in my comprehension of the lesson.” (4) Agnes plays more the role of confidante to her foster father than that of a child, and the type of upbringing she has enjoyed enables her to transfer these same perceptions to her association with Elise and the Alban brothers within their intellectual circle. The narrative in the novel attempts to illustrate the fact that Agnes never abandons the woman’s role, but rather that her role encompasses both reason and meekness, both love “above all else” (66) and the knowledge that allows her to comprehend the world and her place in it.

Another point of significance in the narrative is that Agnes does not present these “radical” ideals of womanhood in a vacuum, or as an isolated rebel. This alternate ideal of femininity is also defended by Baron von Nordheim, who encourages Agnes to develop her abilities in all areas. In doing this, he describes his grandmother to Agnes as an example to follow:

My grandmother looks around her more freely, but a noble self-assurance is enthroned on her honest brow. She was also a dutiful, prudent wife, who governed the estate for a few years during my father’s absence almost without any male assistance, entirely according to her husband’s wishes. Everything prospered and progressed happily under her supervision. (68)

Nordheim shows pride in his grandmother, who was able to run her husband’s estate perfectly without a male guide. Because of her ability to calculate, plan, and recognize the needs of the land and the viability of its products, the estate was not just “taken care of”, but rather it flourished under her care. She was often described as having a “*masculine* spirit” (62)—that is, qualities normally attributed to men, such as foresight, initiative, confidence, and determination in the way she met the challenges of managing the estate. Nordheim’s vision of successful,

intelligent, effective women was quite progressive for the time. It is particularly important that the character who embodies the pattern for enlightened nobility also teaches and encourages the actualization of enlightened womanhood in the novel.

In contrast with Agnes, the more traditional conception of feminine behavior is illustrated through the von Salm girls in a negative light. The girls flirt, speak loudly, chat only about social standing, and are generally giddy. During Nordheim's first visit at the Pastor's home, the girls embarrass themselves with their thinly-veiled attempts to attract his attention by boasting about their high status and gossiping to each other:

The ladies spoke much of their trip to S., of the noble families with whom they planned to make acquaintance, and of their relationship to them. They spoke of all this in an uncommonly loud voice, but when all their attempts to gain the stranger's attention were in vain, they whispered furtively to each other that he was hardly a man of rank, because he seemed not to know any of the prominent families in the area. (16-17)

These "typical" feminine behaviors serve only to reveal the superficiality and ignorance of the young women, however. As Agnes reports, "The whispering, which the young ladies often took the liberty of using in an insulting way about another person whom they thought to be unimportant, was unbearable to me." (17) In her account, Agnes, as the ideal enlightened woman, openly condemns the silliness and frivolity of the aristocratic girls, measuring them against the (essentially middle class) standards for womanly behavior which her foster father has instilled in her.

The extravagant and impractical fashions of the upper classes also receive their share of condemnation in the novel. Once again, this becomes clear through a series of juxtapositions embedded in the text. For example, as the von Salm girls and Agnes play a game together, Agnes notes, "The young ladies with their high heels and long trains got caught everywhere and ran so clumsily that they often fell, while I, in my simple afternoon dress and flat shoes, was

light on my feet.”(18) The qualities in Agnes that first attract Nordheim to her are her simple, modest dress and her natural, unaffected grace and beauty. In a real way, her internal strengths and qualities can shine through without the obstruction or distraction presented by ornate, restrictive fashions.

Similar contrasts appear as Agnes is taken to the court by Countess Amalie. The Countess laments that Agnes will not allow her to dress her in the latest fashions:

“The little one is indeed very stubborn, Nordheim,” she said; “you would think that she would allow me to be involved in the smallest way with her wardrobe! I am speaking only of the little things. Chide her! She prefers to waste her precious time with giving an old bonnet a new look, or with dyeing faded things, rather than allowing me to buy such rubbish for her for a few ducats. We have already had a few quarrels about this.” (61)

Agnes exemplifies industry and thrift by using clothing which still has use left in it, and is quite successful in still maintaining a fashionable appearance through her skills and ingenuity with a needle. Agnes refuses to waste resources when she is capable of making things work, and insists on providing for herself to the greatest degree that she can. As she explains:

I can feel, . . . through the generous care with which all my wishes are anticipated in this house, that I could also be raised above concern for the future; but I cannot deny that it appeared to me more fitting to my duty and my innermost feelings, to support myself through my own industry, and to leave the charity of good-natured people for those without means, who cannot help themselves through any talents. (60-61)

Agnes believes she is capable of supporting herself through her portrait painting and therefore is willing to learn and work in order to gain her independence, even though it would be easy to merely depend on the wealth of others—in fact, this is encouraged by the Countess. Because Agnes desires to be self-sufficient, she uses what she already has and does not ask for more.

In a sense, the quietly revolutionary message of *Agnes von Lilien* can be detected most powerfully in the contrast between the upper class courtiers and socialites who form the

backdrop for the novel, and the unwavering example of Agnes herself. With the quiet confidence of an educated, enlightened individual who exercises her ability to reason, evaluate and judge clearly, Agnes cuts through deceit, intrigue, posturing, and a score of other evils rampant in her society as she makes the choices that will determine her future. The failures and successes of the various women in the story all work together to abundantly illustrate this ideal woman's role, which is posited at the core of the novel.

WOMEN'S EDUCATION

Historical Background

One aspect of a woman's role which is accorded particular prominence in the novel is the issue of female education, which once again takes on a reformist nature in its presentation through the ideas and experiences of the characters within the text.

Since the mid-20th century, education has come to be seen by most cultures as essential for both men and women who wish to succeed in industrialized societies, as is evidenced by the student population of college campuses around the world. This however was far from the case for the average woman of the Enlightenment and Romantic periods. Although women of the upper classes were encouraged to read at least religious texts, they were barred from pursuing a higher education. As has been noted, "Their education tended to be much more restricted than that enjoyed by men, and, with rare exceptions, they were barred from subjects such as philosophy, Latin, and Greek." (Stott xii) Most often, the academic world for women was limited to private tutoring, convent schools, or at times, Schools for Elite Girls, and a girl's chance for education was usually determined by the interests of the father or male head of the family. As Jane Sagarra explains in her book *A Social History of Germany 1648-1914*:

Girl's schools continued until the end of the century to offer a curriculum designed mainly for the future housewife and mother. Academic subjects were neglected or poorly taught. It was in Karlsruhe in Baden that the first grammar school for girls was opened in 1894. (Sagarra 418)

As becomes clear throughout this statement, in spite of increasing demand by women for access to improved education, it took almost a full century from the time that *Agnes von Lilien* was written before German schools began to educate girls beyond the most basic skills required by their household responsibilities.

Many women during this time period were aware of the limited possibilities for their intellectual development, and wished for more. For example, in her autobiography published posthumously in 1792 by her husband, Friderika Baldinger (1739-1785) lamented, "I wished so dearly to become learned, and I was annoyed by the fact that my gender excluded me from it. 'Well, at least you can become intelligent,' I thought..." (Baldinger) Others were fortunate enough to receive a higher level of education, but then found that they were out of place in society because of it, as can be seen in the case of the author Johanna Schopenhauer (1766-1838), who was the daughter of a German merchant. As Katherine Goodman reports, Schopenhauer's education:

was exceptional and included French, English, geography, history, and mythology...Of this education she recalls being somewhat ashamed – she even rejected a tutor's offer to teach her Greek – for it was more than was considered appropriate for most young women. (Goodman 6)

Several points are particularly significant here. First, although Schopenhauer was privileged in receiving a broader education than many women at her time, she was embarrassed that she stood out as an educated woman. Next, although her education was considered to be exceptional, it still consisted of a limited range of subjects in comparison to the education given to boys at the time. And lastly, it was the (male) tutor who offered to teach the young Schopenhauer Greek,

but she, as a woman, refused, since she believed the pursuit to be inappropriate to the female gender. That is, often the restraints placed on women's education arose from the women themselves, since education might be seen to limit a woman's femininity and marriageability.

Even less opportunity for education was usually available to girls in middle class families. "This training was much more limited, often allowing only the most basic sense of writing, reading and essential arithmetic." (Stott 205) This generally occurred because the expectations for women remained restricted to their responsibility to direct domestic affairs in the home and rear the children. Jeannine Blackwell and Susanne Zantop note in *Bitter Healing* that:

The eighteenth-century home was not a haven of freedom or inspiration for women. As marriage and motherhood had become the only economically stable female destiny—especially for Protestant women who had no convents for refuge—the home was the place where women were confined by law, socialization, and necessity; it was the exclusive training ground for domestic virtues and skills, it was women's place of work, pleasure, and frustration. (Blackwell and Zantop 21)

Women who desired to expand their learning beyond this sphere were generally criticized, and often became the object of scorn or disdain, since these "superfluous" intellectual pursuits took them outside of the gender limitations set for them, and therefore made them suspect within traditional society. As the philosopher Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) once said:

A woman who has her head full of Greek, like Madam Dacier¹⁰, or who leads exhaustive disputes about mechanics, as does the Marquise von Chatelet¹¹, really only needs to add a beard to this, since it would perhaps make the look of profundity, which they are attempting to acquire, even more recognizable. (Quoted in Feyl 10, my translation)

The typical woman's education was also flawed because generally the purpose of schooling was not to give her a firm grasp on the subject, but rather to make her more socially desirable.

¹⁰ Ann Le Fèvre Dacier (1654-1720) was a French scholar and translator of classical texts.

¹¹Émilie du Châtelet (1706-1749) was a French translator, physicist and mathematician.

Because of this, instruction was often lacking in depth. As Fanny Lewald (1811-1889) lamented regarding her education in a School for Elite Daughters, it was:

organized so as to make us superficial. In a few years, with moderate effort we are supposed to learn that for which one gladly allows the young men ten, twelve years; and in addition, from our eighth into our fifteenth year, if at all possible, we are supposed to become a piano virtuoso, learn English and French and Italian, draw from nature, have explored and be practiced in fine needlework and household needlework, and have learned to dance. Since this is a pure impossibility, they teach us a little bit of each, and we come out of the schools...overfed and yet basically not satisfied...Women are not guilty for their superficiality. (Lewald 145, my translation)

As the examples above indicate, in terms of education women were often placed in an impossible situation, since on the one hand they were criticized for the superficiality of their learning, but on the other hand, they were frequently ridiculed, ostracized or viewed with suspicion if they were intellectually gifted. Because their faulty academic training was such that they could never be prepared to enter the public sphere on equal footing with men, it was very difficult for women to break through the stereotyped labels of “silly,” “weak-minded,” or “naïve” that were often applied to them. As Sagarra has said, “Germany’s political and social backwardness allowed the consensus of opinion to continue almost unchallenged, that the education of women was not necessary, since they had no role outside the domestic sphere.”(Sagarra 407)

Analysis of *Agnes von Lilien*

In direct opposition to the views of women popular at the time of its writing, the novel *Agnes von Lilien* presents an implicit critique of the deficiencies in women’s education during the 18th century, once again through a series of juxtapositions. In this case, the contrasts can be seen most strikingly in three key women: the Princess, Countess Amalie von Wildenfels, and Agnes.

As was noted above, because it was highly improper for a woman to have an extensive education, she was instead put in a position in which she acquired only the most basic skills. Within the noble class, often the main focus of the instruction a woman received was skill in the manners of the court, in order to make her more desirable as a marriage match. In the novel, the Princess is the example of the less formally educated woman. This deficiency results in a great deal of sorrow for her, not just because of the limitations to her knowledge, but also because her lack of education makes her indecisive and insecure. As she compares Agnes' education with her own, the Princess says:

A serious, solid education of the spirit is seldom possible in the circles of the wealthy. [If you had been reared at court] you might have become a little puppet, who would have danced back and forth on the tight-rope of opinion,—and this way [with the Pastor] you have become an independent person who can preserve the better part of herself during the storms of life. (51)

From this quote, it becomes clear that the ideal for a woman of the stature of the Princess is totally unrelated to intellectual development. Since her ignorance left her dependent and weak, she was unable to make informed decisions. As she states:

My understanding did not develop in the proper relationship with my imagination. My lessons were only mechanical exercises. I learned knowledge and skills; but without possessing exceptional talent, they did not develop into something complete in my soul, and only partially occupied me. There was something unoccupied, something superfluous within me, something which struggled for effectiveness in me...(154)

The Princess, is very aware that she lacks real mental development and training; she has longed to be able to occupy her mind in ways not allowed by her social position. She seems to believe that she has no talents, perhaps because they were never brought to her attention, or because she was not allowed to cultivate and polish them. Although she undoubtedly had the ability to learn and study, she felt that a significant part of herself was wasted, as she was reduced to play at court life without anything of intellectual value to say.

The Countess begins her life in much the same way as the Princess – with a superficial education which would make her marriageable and suitable for life at court, but little more. However, when her husband invites one of his friends, the Baron of Nordheim, to visit them for an extended period of time, the Countess first notices what a deficit of education she has had and wishes to change this. As she says:

I had never read and was never surrounded by educated people. Now I found the need, from the circumstances which frequently occurred in Nordheim's conversation, to at least understand the rudiments. I visited my husband's collection of books. My vivid imagination understood and made connections quickly and soon the interests of my own curiosity pushed me further. Nordheim helped me in the most pleasing way. I was always busy. My truly beautiful voice was not developed at all, I did not know what diligence and application were; now I learned to use these talents and Nordheim's applause or criticism taught me to find a correct method. Likewise, a talent for fine art unfolded in me which gave me confidence and purity. (231)

Happily for Countess Amalie, with Baron von Nordheim's help she was able to reverse her state of ignorance and rise to a level of knowledge and reason. She begins to learn and expand her mind, and thus embodies the result that comes when an uneducated woman gains the opportunity to learn. This intellectual development came with a social price, however, since her former associates grew to scorn her. As the Countess relates, "The society from which I had withdrawn since my association with Nordheim now attacked me with merciless slander." (232)

Because she is excluded due to perceived impropriety by those who narrow-mindedly sought to prevent her from expanding her intellect, Countess Amalie and her husband move to a different city. There the Countess chooses as friends those who share her passion for learning, and is accepted into a circle based not upon status, but rather upon respect and esteem. She later notes:

My educated taste protected me from empty society when I then again lived in the city. I loved the solitude, and willingly exchanged it only with a circle where education and taste ruled. Luckily I found myself in one where I was embraced with love.(235)

Although the path is not easy, the Countess transforms herself into a person who is concerned with far deeper and more engaging matters than superficial social standing. Through her intellectual development, she is enabled to find deeper meaning in friends who encourage her in her learning, and who are glad to exchange ideas and insights with her.

However it is Agnes who is the epitome of an educated woman. Because she has the good fortune to gain knowledge from a very young age, seizes this opportunity, and makes something of herself, she is presented as the ideal in regards to her intellectual development. Her foster father insists on instruction that will help her become an intelligent human being, and instead of keeping her locked tightly in the traditional woman's role, he encourages the expansion of her mind. Although he does not invite her to step outside of the expectations for women at the time, he encourages her to expand her sphere as far as possible within the boundaries of what was then considered respectable. He teaches her how to use sound judgment, how to reason, and how to evaluate quality by encouraging her to read classical literature. Her foster father understands that educated people are better citizens of the world, regardless of their gender. Agnes describes the breadth of her education in these terms:

I came to know all the details of agriculture; I kept the fruit and vegetable gardens well-tended. My language studies, exercises in French and German style, geography, and nature studies filled the morning hours left over from household duties. In the afternoons, my father taught me to play the piano, and he let me draw pictures of the copper engravings and plaster casts in his collection in order to give my hands skill and to train my eyes in correct proportion...(3)

Although the Pastor teaches Agnes the typical womanly skills of running a household and tending a garden, he goes beyond this, which, for a country Pastor's daughter, was most

surprising. As is evident throughout the story, Agnes is ideal in her abilities, since she has come to grasp the subjects of her study thoroughly, and with depth of understanding. Perhaps most unexpectedly, as noted above, the Pastor teaches Agnes how to translate classical Latin and Greek. For most middle- and upper-class men, this would have been a natural part of their education, but at the time it was very rare for a woman to gain the opportunity of learning these subjects. The Pastor has a pedagogical goal in this instruction, however, since he believes that the Greek and Latin classics will help Agnes to revere beauty and protect her from all that is low and common.

As was generally the case with women historically, the women in this novel who are educated beyond the usual expectations for their gender are tutored by men who value intelligence and mental acuity in women. For example, the Pastor wishes to make Agnes knowledgeable about everything around her. Although Agnes' grasp of Latin and Greek is very much outside the normal bounds of a woman's education, even rarer is the ability the Pastor carefully cultivated in her, to think analytically, so as to grasp the "why" of her experiences. This is certainly a forward-thinking idea, inasmuch as "there were at that time learned doctors of theology who denied that women had a soul."(Sagarra 408) Therefore it is rightly said that Agnes not only knows more than most of the women she encounters, including her mother and Countess Amalie, but she is also far more clear minded, independent, and assured in her decisions than was generally the case with more traditional women.

Like the Pastor, Baron von Nordheim is atypical, in that he is a strong advocate of independence of mind in women. For example, while at his estate, Nordheim tells Agnes:

I hope that you do not see me as one of those men who enjoy using the crutches of female ignorance for their own advancement. I have long held it to be a harmful prejudice that in our upper classes an acquaintance with antique literature is not

made easier for women through a more thorough education, since these classics unfold the height of true culture so well for the mind and heart (61)

In other words, Nordheim wishes to bring the women within his sphere of influence up to his level of extensive knowledge. As mentioned in the previous section, he provides this advantage to the Countess to help her gain wisdom, and he continues to encourage Agnes in her intellectual development in the same way.

Although in the first pages of the story Agnes clearly articulates the careful education the Pastor has instilled into her, she only begins to understand how rare and exceptional this learning is after she leaves her first home to take up residence with Countess Amalie. As Agnes comes into contact with her mother, who had to secretly obtain books to read and music to play, and with Countess Amalie, who grew up illiterate and occupied only with her beauty, she begins to value more highly the manner in which her intellectual qualities and gifts were carefully nurtured. Likewise, she comes to understand the worth of her ability to make decisions based on clear thought and reason, and her ability to remain herself in spite of societal demands, because of the security she has in her own values and life philosophy. It is in large part Agnes' dawning understanding of the personal strength she has gained through her education that has the power to engage the serious reader in the deeper issues underlying the events of the story—in this case, the value of a thorough education for all people, regardless of gender.

CONCLUSION

Through the ever-present contrasts that fill the pages of *Agnes von Lilien* and its emphasis on ideal possibilities, the novel seeks to gently persuade noblemen and the educated middle class to change the world around them. Rather than a revolutionary critique, the story conveys a quiet call for a level of social reform that still assures the nobility their power and yet challenges them

to use that power for the betterment of the community. Women are urged to extend their reach to the outer boundaries of womanhood rather than being content with the confinement imposed by traditional society.

The strength of Wolzogen's text and the trait that draws readers back, even after the passage of two centuries, is the fact that, under the cloak of intrigue, adventure, and romance expected from the novel form, the ideals of the Enlightenment shine clearly. Careful readers are encouraged to investigate their own views of Enlightenment values, the roles of women, and the value of education for women, as well as urged to reflect on the progress of the world (or lack thereof). In spite of changes in social and political systems, the call to virtue, industry, reason, and self-improvement, regardless of gender or social class, still maintains its relevance and power for readers in the modern era.

AGNES VON LILIEN: PARTIAL TRANSLATION INTO ENGLISH WITH ANNOTATIONS

I was reared in the village Hohenfels, Germany¹² by the village Pastor who brought me up as his brother's daughter. As soon as I was old enough to comprehend, the Pastor told me that my parents had died when I was an infant but that I should look to him as if he were my own father. I granted his request to its fullest extent, for I never felt like an orphan. He was a singular man, and in the story of my upbringing I will be more detailed than I probably should be, because it is in these details that his character is best depicted. His disposition was perfectly harmonious, approaching everything with delight, and without striving to, he spread his influence to a large circle of people. He was easily and gladly engaged in conversation, and understood how to take hold of the most basic part of the most important matters so naturally and easily, that he could unlock the true nature of people.

When I was mature enough to compare the people around me, I often told my father how superior above all others he seemed to be. With a gentle but serious look in his eyes, he would reply: "Few were compelled by fate with such kindly power to remain on the path of righteousness, as was the case with me. Some power is destroyed before it even begins to follow the right path. I have had great pleasures and deep pain, but the fire of pure love has sustained my better life." With such utterances, a lifetime of memories seemed to flood him. His eyes were downcast, and he was lost in his own thoughts. Then quickly, as if enlivened by a new fire, he would turn his attention back to me. He would speak some kind words to me, then give me a little job to do (which I gladly obeyed). I sensed that some kind of feeling weighed heavily on him, which he held in check with great force, and the words seemed to hover on his lips: "You

¹² There is a town in Bavaria, Germany between the cities of Nuremberg and Regensburg with the same name of "Hohenfels", which is relatively close to a few other locations mentioned in the novel, such as Nordheim and Wildenfels. It is unclear whether these villages and towns are the intended location or simply names of locations which the author chose to use.

are most certainly the dearest thing in the world to me!” My father took the same great care in my upbringing which he took with all other duties. He spent time with me in his serious hours, but I was also his favorite diversion in the few unoccupied moments which he granted himself. I remember that at an early age, he taught me to associate work and organization with play; once begun, I must finish the even the lowliest of tasks. I was reared to be gentle and caring, and could not endure any small expressions of discontent from my father. It hurt me most deeply when, after I had committed some rude offense, he would separate himself from me for a few hours. The income which took care of household affairs was quite modest, but a wise arrangement forbade all unnecessary wastefulness on the one hand and also all greed on the other. Nothing was ever squandered, so that there was enough to lead a clean and orderly life, and my youth was rich in all the little joys which prosperity provided.

These ordinary circumstances, guided by the skill of my father, served as the school of comportment for my future life. “You should learn to govern and serve, my dear child,” he told me from time to time; “if you know how to do both with insight and self-respect, then the one is just as easy as the other. Certainly it is the source of all sorts of perversity and confusion in many circumstances, if our ability was developed exclusively for the one or the other. The lack of ability to comport ourselves properly in any situation attracts an army of small evils to us, which eventually darkens our view of the outside world and our inner selves. Therefore, practice all forms of interaction and learn to treat each person according to his individual circumstances. In every relationship, you should behave in the manner which is the freest and least burdensome to others.” His example—his reserved life—explained the deepest meaning of this advice to me.

When I was not called away by household duties, I was mainly in a chamber adjacent to my father’s room. I felt that I lived in complete freedom, and yet I was under constant

supervision. Just as my father never fell into any particular form of empty and petty existence, I too never learned these vices. I lived in a circle of quiet activity, and my youthful cheerfulness developed with a few playmates of my own age. The children of the Lord of the manor, and a few children of farmers in the neighborhood persuaded me to play all kinds of childhood games, and my father was pleased when my physical agility exceeded that of the others. Even Rosine, our housekeeper, was not permitted to scowl when I came home with a torn apron and scarf. I was, however, required to repair them myself, and if she wanted to help me, it was only as a favor. I had a few hours of instruction to accustom me to regular work, but I was unaware that at that time my father was occupied with my education throughout the course of the day.

We lived in a beautiful region, and the diverse and grand natural landscape around me nourished my sense of beauty. The mysteries of nature captivated me early on, and the gentle thrill of awe expanded in my soul into sublime wonder. It seemed to me that kindly nymphs wandered in the changing play of light around the mountain faces and on the brush-covered river bank. I felt in full measure that indescribable magic with which the enjoyment of beauty cradles us. My father took hold of these purest of all life's experiences in order to enliven my deepest being with feelings of God and immortality. My father taught me the Christian religion in its pure form – childlike and simple – as the result of the purest human nature, which we must strive to achieve, and to establish in internal and external lives.

My fortunate ability to think and my quiet sense of beauty gave my father the idea to teach me classical languages, about which he loved most enthusiastically. The long winter nights at the spinning wheel or with knitting needles passed thus: he would read aloud from the ancient texts, and I was required to memorize as well as translate. The art forms of the ancient world were meant to tune my imagination to that which is beautiful and noble, as well as to protect my

senses from the influence of that which is common and unworthy. Often a vulgar object penetrates our mind through the allure of novelty, and due to a lack of beautiful images to supplant it, we embrace it with intense desire.

I was always busy and interested in important matters. This allowed my father to hold the reins on my imagination. Open air and exercise strengthened my body. I came to know all the details of agriculture; I kept the fruit and vegetable gardens well-tended. My language studies, exercises in French and German style, geography, and nature studies filled the morning hours left over from household duties. In the afternoons, my father taught me to play the piano, and he let me draw pictures of the copper engravings and plaster casts in his collection in order to give my hands skill and to train my eyes in correct proportion.

My days passed cheerfully and naturally, and the love of my father filled them with happy exchange. Every rural occupation was a small activity for us, which interrupted the usual way of life. Diligence became a pleasure for me again when I could see that my father was pleased with my progress.

My father lived mostly alone, and among the many acquaintances in the neighborhood, he had only kept an elderly doctor as a family friend. The Doctor was a man of serious, strict manners and highly specific ideas. As a child I was afraid of him, but the more I grew up, the more I learned to respect him and almost to love his company, because he always had something new to teach me from the natural or human world, and showed joy in my comprehension of the lesson. I was sincerely sorrowful at his death. With this friend, my father lost the only companion with whom he could exchange ideas and I, the pleasure of many an instructive conversation.

Our association with the Salm family, our estate owner, became less interesting to me the more my good taste developed. My father, however, sent me to visit them frequently so that I could learn to adapt my idiosyncrasies to society, and remain free from the expression of a certain singularity which one easily gains in solitude. Through a naturally good disposition which made me happy to see everyone joyful and free in his own sphere, I learned easily to adopt the tone of conversation which was appropriate for the family, and to hide those aspects of my character which they could not understand. The daughters loved my company, because I neither rivaled them in resplendent fashions nor in so-called fine manners. If my natural decency and my clean, simple afternoon dress received praise from their parents or a stranger who had come to visit them, the characteristics of a Pastor's daughter were so decidedly under the sphere of their possibilities, that no mounting envy interrupted their goodwill towards me.

Notwithstanding their good conduct towards me, I still felt like a stranger in their home, and when I returned again to my father with the expression of sincere longing, he would tell me with a thoughtful look: "My child, my child! You are so accustomed to living in the breath of love, I fear you will not feel at home anywhere else." In this manner, I reached eighteen years of age.

It was on one of the first frightening evenings of autumn. A dense fog hung in the valleys, the wind blew stormy gray clouds across the eastern sky, and the western sky was ablaze in a deep purple-red. Yellow leaves flew from the mostly barren tree-tops and fluttered past the windows. The crackling of the fire in the fireplace gathered the entire small household together. All images of the approaching winter played in the warmth of the first rising flames, and each member of the family – Rosine, my father, and I – considered in thought the cycle of tasks, the joys and sorrows which was anticipated during the coming winter.

My father was sitting in his armchair with that wise calm that is accustomed to the change of season and indifferently sees the years go by as days. He set his open copy of Plutarch¹³ down, as it was getting dark, and took out the large print Bible to select a text for the next Sunday's sermon. Rosine walked back and forth in the room, taking the cleanly scrubbed dinner service from the kitchen, which I then carefully arranged in the closet at the back of the room. Someone rang the doorbell, and my father called out, "Agnes, my child!" – I was already at the front door. It was quite dark, but I could still discern that an unfamiliar figure had come in. "May I help you sir?" I asked, and he replied, "I am a traveler and very tired – they do not have room for me in the inn. Might I hope that the Pastor will forgive me if I request a night's lodging?"

The voice was engaging and aroused a strange feeling in my heart, so that I announced the customary hospitality of my father with a more lively expression than usual. "My father will be happy to grant it to you." I said, "Please come in." He reiterated his request to my father, who gave him a hearty welcome, and sat down again at his table by the window to write down some of the thoughts which had occurred to him to say in his sermon. The stranger was a tall, handsome man. His clothes were very simple and indicated neither poverty nor wealth. I brought a chair to the fire for him and sat down opposite him with my knitting. The flames in the fireplace cast a bright glow over his face, and I saw strong, pleasing features which no longer reflected the first fullness of youth. Meanwhile, Rosine brought in a lamp, my father continued to write, and all was quiet. I searched in vain for a few words to begin a conversation, but nothing which came to mind seemed good enough. I had never been more afraid of saying something insignificant than in that moment. The fear that he might take my silence for neglect

¹³ Plutarch was a Roman author who wrote biographies of famous Greeks and Romans in order to exemplify certain virtues or morals.

or lack of good breeding was just as embarrassing. He seemed, however, not to demand conversation and looked silently at the fire. Occasionally he glanced about the room, but he looked only once at me. There was something inexpressibly attractive in his dark brown eyes. They took in their surroundings mildly and quietly, but at the same time, so deeply penetrating, that it seemed as if they wanted to catch sight of the deepest recesses of the heart. My yarn fell to the ground. He picked it up and gave it to me with straight-forward, good-natured politeness. The strands tangled around his hand, which rested in mine for a few seconds, and a ring fell from his finger. As I was untangling the ring from the yarn, I had time to read the name *Amalie* inscribed in the ring's blue enamel.

The stranger took it back, blushing slightly. Was it his bent position or his closeness to the fire which had caused this? Or was it perhaps that the ring excited more vivid feelings within him? Was it the name of his sister, his beloved friend, or his wife which he wore on his finger? These questions chased each other through my mind, and at the same time. I noticed his finely formed hand which had just lain in mine. My father then put a book marker in his Bible and approached the fireplace. Cordially he took his leather cap from his head with his left hand and gave his right hand to the stranger and again welcomed him. "Would you care to smoke a pipe of tobacco in the cold autumn air?" my father asked. The stranger nodded in agreement. I then carried the teatable to the fire; thus all was in order, and our little circle became more intimate as the blue smoke swirled in gentle clouds and the good tea gave off a soothing fragrance. In true Greek fashion, we did not begin to converse until after the guest had eaten.

“You probably came today from A¹⁴.?” my father asked. “Then you had a terrible trip, it is one of the worst roads in the country.” “As bumpy and nearly impassible as the road is,” replied the stranger, “the people who live along it appear to be so friendly and kind that one would be willing to put up with it if it could be like this everywhere.”

My Father: “Yes, there are honest, good people here, and I hope everywhere. For twenty-five years my world has been limited to a small circle within a few hours of this place, and when things seem dark and confusing, I always have a certain way to make things clear again.”

The Stranger: “Which is?”

My Father: “I try to become acquainted with the most individual circumstances of the person who seems fundamentally bad and corrupt. His age, station, education, temperment, level of wealth, friendships, etc. Then I look into my own heart, and indeed much of his behavior is then more easily explained, which had seemed terrible to me outside of those circumstances.”

The Stranger: “Do you believe in the seeds of evil in human nature?”

My Father: (smiling) “Not in the way that you perhaps mean, sir. However, I believe and feel that there are seeds of weakness in every human heart. I believe that not everyone can keep himself in the beautiful freedom of the heart; that he often desires that which he should not have, and thereby becomes a slave, because he abandons the balance of his inner self, where he could have been Lord and King.”

The Stranger: “Then we are agreed! Oh how it pleases me when I find a mind that retains unity with itself—which keeps its own truth and love alive! Whoever strives to stay in this beautiful circle of humanity cannot err, because truth and love are the essence of religion and philosophy, and maintain the health and grace of feeling. Well, you are the privileged Pastorate”

¹⁴ During the 19th century, it was a common practice of authors to use a single capital letter followed by asterisks to indicate a location or last name. This was intended to create a sense that this is a real location or name whose real name needs to be concealed. [This was done whether this is a fictional story or not.]

– he continued with a friendly smile—“and I think I am in the company of one of the most modest and therefore the most experienced men. How does the soul preserve itself the most freely in the struggle with the conflicting impressions from without, and the corruption around it?”

My Father: “Friend, above all I would like to tell you: All good gifts come from above – from the Father of Light!”

The Stranger: “And if there are souls who only know the way toward the Light? The closed blossom turns toward the side from which the ray of light approaches it, but the dark barriers do not weaken, and its colors remain dull and weak. What should these do?”

My Father: “Rejoice in the anticipated Light until fate or a new, until now unanticipated power in their soul shatters the barriers. Every true heartfelt desire points to the compelling force of a distant object.”

The stranger got up briskly from his seat, went to stand right in front of my father and looked into his eyes intently but also with kindness. My cheeks flushed a glowing red. “You true disciple of your Lord,” he said in a gently raised voice, as he took both of my father’s hands, “you possess his meekness and his great spirit; how long I have searched in vain for a soul like yours!” My father looked deeply content, and from this moment a more cordial understanding existed between the three of us. What sensitive person has not had such moments, in which the soul, just as if it had been displaced into a more refined element, perceives more tender, intimate relationships, and is capable of becoming more easily and more firmly connected to another whose beauty he sees in a purer, more exalted light!

Rosine had set the table and served supper, which consisted of our usual two dishes, and was only increased by a small dessert because of our guest.

My father had the habit in his home of always keeping a small supply of goods on hand so as to be able to entertain. There was never pestering, and no stranger could perceive through an uncommon hustle and bustle in the kitchen and cellar that he had caused us inconvenience. I asked the stranger to enjoy the humble meal, and he responded graciously that there was nothing humble about that which was served with kindness and grace; he said he had never eaten better rice porridge –and it truly did taste splendid to him. The simplicity, the nobility in his conduct touched me in particular, as I had never noticed such in any other man of my acquaintance. I especially was pleased with his silence towards me. It seemed to me that he intended respect with it, as if he thought that I was too good for common, inconsequential conversation. I often caught his eyes looking at me, and the quiet interest I took in his conversation with my father seemed not to escape his notice.

The conversation began to pick up again when the young Lord von Salm, the son of the master of the estate, entered. He had just come from the university to visit his parents during the holiday. However impertinent the young man might otherwise be, he was very quiet in the company of my father, who did not allow any triviality which was presumptuously spoken to go unpunished. He looked intently at the stranger, who seemed to impress him in spite of his simple attire. For a long while he considered a question, which he finally blurted out during a pause in the conversation; for if he could not be brazen without being punished, then he was shy. He also did not want to give the stranger a bad impression, and therefore always brought up something intellectual. “May I inquire, sir, whether you have good Latin teachers at the school in your city?” This time I was quite pleased with his question, because I hoped through it to find out something about our guest’s place of residence. The answer only partially satisfied me. “For the past three years I have been traveling outside of Germany, Lord von Salm, and therefore I do not

know the present state of the schools.” After this the stranger spoke with my father about the usefulness of learning ancient languages thoroughly in one’s youth, and finally they came to a discussion of their favorite authors. I was pleased to see how much my father respected the opinion of the stranger, and to notice the diverse beauty and grace which unfolded

in his features with the vibrant interest of intellect.

Lord von Salm, half embarrassed and half annoyed not to have a part in the conversation, whispered to me that he was going to get his sisters for me. How much I would rather have done without their company this evening! The stranger turned to me when Lord von Salm had left, and asked me if this family were my only company, and whether I enjoyed living in such solitude. I replied that rarely did I wish for more varied society, and that I could never bring myself to look for it, if thereby I must leave the company of my father. Tears came easily to my eyes when I thought of leaving my father, because he himself spoke often with emotion of the certainty of separation, which sooner or later would inevitably come. This evening, since the arrival of our guest, I was so strangely tense that I tried in vain to hold back the tears. “Dear child,” said the stranger with animation while kindly looking into my eyes, “do not hold back these beautiful tears. Nothing bespeaks the wisdom of the parents and the goodness of the children with as much certainty as their love for their father’s home.” My heart was pounding, and a sweet thrill that I had never before felt coursed through me. We were all silent for several minutes and the stranger stared straight ahead in a fixed yet kindly way. Finally he turned to my father and said with softer voice: “How lucky you are to have such a daughter!” “Yes, I am as happy with her as though she were my own.” – The stranger looked at the Pastor questioningly, and for the first time in my life I felt there was something mysterious about my existence. When my father cast his eyes down and was silent, the stranger closed his lips, which had been opened

for a question. “Do you also reap visible blessings in your parish?” he asked after a few moments of reflection. “Yes, thanks be to God,” my father replied, “My efforts are not in vain. They were a wild people when I came – self-serving and thieving as a result of laziness and lack of skill, and full of belligerence due to ignorance and mistrust, but now they are starting to bring themselves to order.”

The Stranger: “Which methods have you employed?”

My Father: “Sir, I began in the opposite way than is usually employed. It seems erroneous to me, when people believe that one must begin all culture at once with the intellectual. I believe that people always begin too early with that, before the physical is in order; and so-called enlightened attitudes are only dead blossoms if they are not nourished by the healthy stem of a pure and orderly life. When a people finds a secure livelihood through industriousness, then order and morals naturally follow. True need undoes all moral ties; the person whom it oppresses is in a state of war with society. When the physical needs are moderately satisfied, the soul blossoms into thought by its own power, and the feelings of right and good, of belief and hope spring forth from their mother earth as strong, healthy plants. The experiences which I have had in my small social circle seem to me to be conclusive. I was fortunate enough through the help of my former Master, to be able to do much for the prosperity of this village. Our former Master was not only an exceptional agriculturalist, he also knew all the products and needs of the surrounding area to the letter, and understood to a high degree the art of how to treat people and to guide them to fulfill his good purposes. He instituted the cultivation of the area and all the work of his subjects according to the needs of the neighboring communities, as much as the characteristics of the earth permitted. Because he possessed the trust of everyone, his spirit connected everyone together, and every single person found an

advantage in his methods of estate management. Everywhere our Master knew how to access the most advantageous sale of excess products and thus little by little through the certainty of income the spirit of industry and quiet order grew. Few idle people remained in the community, and minds developed in a healthy and moral way. In the beginning, more demands were placed on the purse of their Master than on my spiritual services. Now, with a quiet and industrious life, and after the impressions which the young people received, with whom I immediately conversed myself in the beginning, now the largest part of my parish comes to me with sincere feelings of nobler needs. The youth desire enlightenment about many objects of thought, and often rules of life from me, while the adults like to speak about their hopes after death. Oh why was our excellent Master snatched away from us so soon?!”

“When did he die?” asked the stranger, visibly moved. “I do not even have the consolation of knowing that his soul has gone to a better hereafter,” replied my father. “He is perhaps still living in misery, in a sorrowful confusion, or in captivity. If he is still living, only violent force could separate him from us, and cause this fearful silence of death towards hearts which so dearly loved him. He lived with his whole heart in this little village, the circle of his benevolence – he did not willingly leave it – loved impenetrable night surrounds his fate!”

The stranger’s emotions intensified even more, and he asked with a quavering voice, “What were the circumstances surrounding his disappearance?”

“It has been eighteen years since one morning our Master commanded that his fastest horse be saddled. He dressed in his hunting clothes, rode on past my house, and called to me to come to the garden gate, which a little further from the street. He gave me a pouch and said, ‘Here is a little money for our arrangements for my subjects. There may be obstacles to our plans in the near future. I think this amount should suffice to secure them for a while. Farewell

my dearest friend.’ He turned his face from me; but I perceived a peculiar tension in him, and his hand seemed to tremble when he gave the pouch to me. A sense of foreboding raced through me, and as I lifted my arms to grasp his hand and catch his last words, he spurred his horse and was gone and out of my sight as quickly as an arrow leaves the bow. He looked back at me once more, turned back only once and I have not seen him since.

“It has been eighteen years, but that moment is still present in my soul, and I never see the little path that leads into the forest without again feeling all the dread of his departure. There he rode away and took his last anguished look at his estate. Everyone loved him, and in the prime of manhood at thirty years of age, bursting with potential, he had to leave it all! The anxiety of those first uneasy days after he disappeared was inexpressible. I found the amount of two thousand Thalers¹⁵ in the sack, and this heightened my concern, as if it had been an inheritance; at least it implied a long absence. I knew his financial circumstances. His possessions were not without debt, and only through a very strict economy in all his personal expenditures was he able to gain a surplus, which he then used for the good of his subjects. In the five years that he lived among us, I watched him act continually according to a strict plan, to free his estate from debt and insure himself an independent income through wise management. He could not have had two thousand Thalers to spare, and a strange and drastic situation must have made him deviate from his plan. He had often told me how happy he was with the feeling that he could live free and independently on his lands. No other circumstance could attract him as this did, because none other seemed as natural and honorable.

“The subjects, who were accustomed to seeing their master every Sunday as they enjoyed themselves, overwhelmed me with questions about him, and I had to attempt to hide my agonizing concern. He had, as if it were in jest, paid his huntsman and steward their wages in

¹⁵ A silver coin used in Germany for several centuries and the word “Thaler” is related to the English word “dollar.”

advance for the next three years, because he he had extra money right then. I sent them and a few of my most trustworthy farmers to search out the surrounding area, but none could discover a trace of the abode of our beloved master. A few weeks passed in this way; the farmers became more and more restless and pressed me with questions. When I finally had to tell them that I knew as little as they did and shared in their concerns, there was general despair. They stormed through the entire castle, and on the same evening with torch in hand they searched through all the hunting grounds and forests in the area. They maintained that someone had murdered their beloved master and they had to search out the assassins. No one had any desire to work until they had found him. It was harvest time, but they would rather risk losing their livelihood for the entire year than have to blame themselves for not doing everything they could for their master. After many failed attempts, they finally listened to my admonitions; their pain became quieter and they went back to their usual work. The hope which I instilled in them, that the departure of their master was voluntary and of short duration because he had made provisions for them at his departure, was the best way to establish peace and order again. I myself nurtured this sweet deception until I took a trip to S., where a trusted friend of my master lived. This friend asked me to stop all investigations; he seemed to be acquainted with the sad secret of our master's flight. 'View our friend as dead – only through a miracle will he be able to come back to us; my duty does not allow me to tell you more.' – These words dashed all my hopes.

“Lord von Salm was able to have his own way with the knights, and as co-vassal, he also received the administration of the estate; after a year he moved here; he found everything in the best condition, and no new debts had appeared in the account books. The desk in our master's chambers was completely empty, and the huntsman said that our master had burned many

documents during his last days on the estate. Nowhere have I been able to find any trace of his residence since then. Two years ago his friend in S. died, and with him my last hope vanished.”

The stranger became more and more emotional. With wet eyes he pressed my father’s hand and stared silently in front of him for a long while. As the tears once again filled his eyes, he hid his face in his folded hands.

As often as I had heard this story, I always listened with the same interest. Since childhood, it had been my favorite entertainment to hear my father talk of his friend who had disappeared. When the elders of the village were gathered together on beautiful summer evenings under the linden trees, and my father and I, after returning from our evening walk, rested a while in their company, often one of them would lay his hand trustingly on my father’s arm, and would whisper in his ear, “Our master will certainly come to us again!” More of them would come up, and they would talk of his governance and longed to return to it, as to the golden days gone by.

The vivid impression which this story made on our guest sincerely pleased me. For me, it was as if his sympathy with such a recurring topic of our discussion made him even more at home in our family. I also was filled with the dim suspicion that he was somehow more closely involved in our beloved master’s mysterious fate than he expressed. There was a significant silence in our little circle; our hearts silently drew closer to one another. But to my dismay, the young family von Salm interrupted us.

The young ladies had dressed in their Sunday best when they heard about the stranger, and they entered the room with graceful curtsies and a French exclamation. After they had greeted the stranger formally and genteely, they looked eyed him up and down with curios eyes. They then whispered to each other that, although his clothing was not of the latest fashion, he still had

proper manners. He thanked them politely for their curtsies, and after a few quick glances at the ladies, he withdrew with my father to the window. The ladies spoke much of their trip to S., of the noble families with whom they planned to make acquaintance, and of their relationship to them. They spoke of all this in an uncommonly loud voice, but when all their attempts to gain the stranger's attention were in vain, they whispered furtively to each other that he was hardly a man of rank, because he seemed not to know any of the prominent families in the area.

The whispering, which the young ladies often took the liberty of using in an insulting way about another person whom they thought to be unimportant, were unbearable to me. I therefore suggested a game. The young ladies, who had already given up hope of gaining the attention of our guest through their brilliant conversation, now abandoned themselves completely to their most unrestrained mood, and chose *Blinde Kuh*¹⁶. The adjoining room was opened, and the young Lord von Salm had to blindfold his eyes. He did so only after repeated teasing from his sisters, since he still held the stranger in high regard and yet hoped to assert some of his scholarliness at a pause in the conversation. At long last the game began, and although I was still half listening to my father's and the stranger's conversation, I could only make out disjointed words. I heard my name repeated several times; they spoke eagerly. The stranger's eyes sought me often and his gaze burned like lightning in my soul. At every pause in the conversation, he came closer and closer to where we were playing the game, and seemed to view it with interest. The young ladies with their high heels and long trains got caught everywhere and ran so clumsily that they often fell, while I in my simple afternoon dress and flat shoes, was light on my feet. It pleased me greatly to feel that the eyes of the guest followed only me, and for the first time I noticed with pleasure, whenever our shadows crossed one another on the white wall, that I had a more slender figure than that of the other young ladies. Finally it was my turn to be blindfolded.

¹⁶ A game similar to Blind Man's Bluff.

For a few minutes I ran about the room, and then to the door where my father and the stranger were standing, and grasped the stranger's arm in order to bring him into the game. I did this in an expression of the happy youthful spirits in which I was often caught up in such games –often I would even tease my father thus. After I had already grasped the stranger's arm, it suddenly occurred to me to ask myself whether I should have done such a thing. And my uninhibited nature wondered again about this question, whose mysterious meaning I could not fully understand. In this confusion, I continued to hold onto his arm, until he released it from my grip and embraced me.

Oh, sweet moment of life, when spirit and mind first soar heavenward like a lovely flame, how pervasive you remain in a sentimental nature! I was reared properly in the highest purity and chastity of thought and imagination, and this was the first man in whose presence I felt completely feminine. Since he had arrived, I felt as if enveloped in that enchanted fabric which seems to create the look of love, and in which all our actions become finer, more tender, and more meaningful. I trembled at his touch, and a profound sacredness surrounded his being, which quavered oppressively in my chest. In this indescribable sweet mixture of the first impulses of my heart, I stood speechless and did not try to flee from the sweet force which surrounded me. “Do not fall, dear child,” he said softly when finally I pushed his arm softly away, and he embraced me again. I tried to hide my deep feelings with a jest, and demanded that he take my place in the game. He loosed the blindfold from my eyes. When I looked at him, his gaze was fixed upon me, and an inexpressible sweetness tempered the seriousness of his eyes. – “You caught me dear, do you also want to keep me captive?” he said in the most tender, but also half serious tone, which seized me at the core in the modulation of his resonant voice. For a few moments, he participated in our game in a lighthearted and joyful way; his handsome figure as

well as the great ease and grace of his movements were displayed in all their charms. When he withdrew from playing, he gave me back the blindfold and said that I had made him twenty years younger since actually one should not wear Cupid's blindfold in his fortieth year.

With those last words, he looked at me sharply; it seemed to me as if he were looking for a rebuttal in my eyes. Shortly thereafter he asked my father for permission to retire because he was exhausted and had a long day of traveling before him the next day. He went softly from the room without taking leave either of me or of the rest of the company. My father followed him.

When he had left the room, the young ladies and their brother were overflowing with a thousand conjectures and questions about the appearance of the stranger. They likewise pressed me to tell all the little details of his arrival. The presence of my father made them a bit more reserved. He had established a noble tone in his house, and all unnecessary, empty chatter was forbidden as much as possible because it only arises from small personalities and also nurtures them again. The young Lord von Salm, who could recognize the value of intellect and culture well enough that he could express great respect for it, overflowed with the praises of the stranger. "An excellent man!" he declared with that affected enthusiasm into which people of little ability easily degenerate. "In truth an excellent man!" he began again, "How beautifully and honestly he speaks! What a fire is in his eyes! How something great and distinguished fills his entire demeanor, as if everything that he plans to do is waiting for him, and as if everywhere he were the master." "And through simplicity and understanding, the master," replied my father, "which is the best master." The young ladies broke in and added that he had good fashion sense. Out of respect for my father they seemed to suppress the criticism which hovered on their lips. Overall they seemed to have noticed that the little attention which he had given to the young company was directed only towards me. How happy I was when the company finally departed and left me

to the thoughts of my heart! My father immediately bade me good night, and asked me to prepare breakfast for seven o'clock. For the first time in my life I was even glad to leave my father. I arranged the essentials for the next day and went to my room. I sank into a chair next to my bed and gave myself up to the lovely images which powerfully penetrated my soul.

Only the events of the previous evening occupied my thoughts, but in such enchanting colors, which shone over my entire being like the sun at the dawning of a new day! My soul burst with an exalted power I had never before felt. A world of sweet premonitions enveloped me, and instead of a flat twilight, my life with all its heights and depths appeared very clearly before my mind's eye. I still felt the pressure of his hand again and again – I childishly laid my hand on the part of my arm which he had touched, so that I could, as it were, hold onto the feeling and let it echo in every nerve.

Sweet, magical feeling of love, where spirit and mind unite into an all-powerful tone! I enjoyed these few moments, full and pure, in all the charm of the sweet, mystical dawn which veils the joy of love in the heart of a modestly raised girl. To give myself to that which was inexpressible, exalted and beautiful, which appeared to me as the form of a god; in him, through him just to live, to feel – all this burst in my soul, and my heart melted in the power and in the succession of these blissful images. The midnight hour passed in this way, and after I had laid out a nice white morning dress for the next day, I tried in vain to go to sleep. Sweet dreams surrounded me, and the beloved man appeared to me in a thousand forms and in a thousand different situations.

Morning broke. – “In a few hours, you will see him,” I said to myself. The strange fear gripped me which people feel in meeting all those who are highly respected and revered. The sleepless night also made me physically exhausted. With a trembling hand I dressed and crept

quietly through Rosine's room so as to let her enjoy another hour of sleep. I hardly dared to breathe in the hallway as I passed the door of the beloved man. Once again when I came into the living room, I was overcome by the scenes of the past evening. The maid had had not yet arisen to clean it, and everything was scattered around just as when I had left it last evening. I sat down on the chair where the beloved man had sat yesterday. The red dawn flamed in the east, the tops of the mountains were transfigured, and soon they were gilded by the rays of light. The distant mountain chain and the lower hills which enclosed in our valley swam in the blue scents of autumn, and the most harmonious play of color enlivened the lovely landscape. The river shown silver from the gradually disappearing shadows of its banks. How new this beloved, so well-known place appeared to me. His image was mixed in everything I saw, and everything beautiful appeared to me only to be a part of his essence. The maid came into the room to clean it, and just to excuse the strangeness of my early awakening, I remarked on how late she had arisen. "It is not so late," she replied, "and anyway the stranger would like to rest."

These words, the first I heard that day, suddenly separated me from the friendly images of my inner world, just as the hostile shears of the Fates separate life from the golden light of day. "The stranger!" I repeated to myself: "that is what he is and probably will always remain to you, and you gave him your whole heart so readily." The tears spilled from my eyes, and I hurried to my father's chambers, which I personally cleaned every morning, with quiet steps so as not to disturb his morning slumber with any untimely noise.

The curtains on the inside of the glass door were parted and I saw his face turned towards the door. What dignity and serenity hovered over his honest brow, whose wrinkles had only been etched by quiet thought! What sweetness the gently parted lips breathed, around which interest, compassion and caring love drew gentle lines! His kind, benevolent hand lay on the

blanket and pressed gently on his quietly breathing chest. This quietness enveloped me and I breathed more lightly and quietly. “Oh, to live for these two gentlemen!” I said to myself, “Neither without the other could make me completely happy!” I performed my usual chores and then went into the kitchen to organize breakfast.

After all the household duties were in order, I sat down at the piano to wait until my father awoke. No sooner had I opened Naumann’s *Cora*¹⁷ and played a few inspiring chords from the beautiful chorus “Spirit of all Worlds”, than I heard the door behind me open. My heart pounded and the notes blurred before my eyes. It was the beloved man, and all the magic of my dreams swirled around his being! The fear that my feelings would be displayed on my face almost brought me to a state of painful confusion. He greeted me softly – his voice seemed even more moving than on the previous evening. He did not let me get up from the piano, and accompanied my trembling notes with the purest, most perfect song. Peace flowed through me, the red dawn blazed all around us, and the sublime meaning of this music filled my soul. I could soon accompany him with my voice, and our voices blended as purely with each other as the very breath of love. My father came out of his room while we sang, and stood quietly behind us. After I had finished playing, the stranger went kindly to my father and took his hands. “We have held our morning prayer – Dear Father, oh how I would like to begin every day with such devotion! The quiet spirit of your home has captured me. You are happy, you do not want for anything; I lack only one thing – and perhaps you can give it to me.” At this he pressed the hands of the older man more forcefully to his chest, and he looked at me. I stood up trembling, pushing the chair in against the piano. My father looked cheerfully into his eyes, and while the man still held his hands, he said gently: “Gladly, gladly, if I can!” I could not stay there any

¹⁷ *Cora och Alonzo* [the original Swedish name] is an opera written in 1782 by German composer Johann Gottlieb Naumann.

longer; I crept past the stranger and rushed to a window on the landing, the tears flowing down my cheeks. When I returned with breakfast, it seemed to me as if I had interrupted their conversation. My father looked very serious, the stranger deeply moved, and it seemed as if a cloud were hovering over him. His ring caught my eye again as he thoughtfully drank his cup of coffee, and like a weight, the name dragged my heart back from the golden, magical world.

“The name is not meaningless,” I said to myself. “Such a sophisticated man does not wear such a keepsake unless it is of great worth to him. I wonder whether he has only one sister?” When my father left for a short while, the man came near and gently touched the locks of hair which cascaded over my shoulders. Then with a moved, soft voice he said, “Good, dear child, oh how I would like to do something for your happiness!” Then my heart swelled again with pleasant hopes, and the name “Amalie” was forgotten. The stranger prepared to leave; a shiver ran through me as he took his hat and walking stick. “Perhaps this is the last time I shall ever see him,” a voice foretelling sorrow whispered to my soul, since he had not said anything about his residence nor his other affairs. Trembling, I stood, and leaned on the window ledge because my knees began to quaver as he bade my father goodbye with a heartfelt embrace. Then he approached me, tenderly put one arm around my waist and pressed his lips against my glowing cheek. “Do not forget me,” he said in a sweet voice, and I could barely hold back the tears that sprang to my eyes. He was already at the door and looked back at me again, when we heard the rumble of an approaching carriage. He glanced through the window and ordered the driver to stop, since he wanted to get in immediately. However, a woman called to him through the carriage window – she wanted to stop and rest here for a half an hour. He replied that they had little time to lose, but she was already climbing out of the carriage before she fully comprehended his answer, and my father had hurried to the door to greet her.

Receiving the woman allowed me no time to abandon myself to my feelings – but I was in a most discordant mood. Joy at the delay in the stranger’s departure, and this new person who so quickly pushed between my friend and me, fought each other in my heart. His demeanor seemed to be more forced since her coming, but it expressed his affection and respect for her. Her features were beautiful, but they indicated more intellect than feeling. The veneer of the fine world which overlaid her conduct alienated but did not offend me. In addition, she only greeted me with that same mechanical courtesy which is to be found among those with fine manners.

“Your absence, my dear friend, worried me,” she said in an undertone in French. “I feared you had had an accident.” He bowed his head to thank her for her interest, and then turned to us. “I have passed one of the happiest evenings of my life with this lovely company, and wish you had been able to enjoy it with us.” The woman looked at me sharply, and after that comment paid more attention to me. Not a single word was said from which I could decipher their mutual relationship. It seemed to me that they shared a great familiarity; in vain I hoped to hear the word “sister”; it was too dreadful to think that perhaps they might be married.

When I came back into the room after performing a small errand, I felt that they had been speaking about me. The woman asked me to sit next to her and took my hand, was unexpectedly happy to become acquainted with me, and hoped that we would see each other again soon and frequently, so that we could get to know one another better. The stranger’s eyes were fixed on us with deep satisfaction. I began to see the woman as a connection between him and myself. This perhaps influenced my conduct towards her with a sense of affection. Oh to see him, to associate in his social circle, how significant this seemed to me in the moment of separation! The woman spoke a great deal and perceptively with my father about literature, foreign countries, and

morals. How interesting it would be to be in her company, if she were the sister of the beloved man!

For the second time, the moment of farewell came, but the situation had changed. The purity of the first unmixed feelings in the meantime had been colored with many little emotions by the woman's interference. Pride had the strongest effect, as I wished to hide the deepest feelings of my heart from the eyes of the keenly observant woman. I followed the company to the coach with strangely gloomy spirits. "We will see each other again, my dear child," said the woman as she gave me a parting embrace. "Your good father has promised me." The beloved man silently pressed my hand to his lips again; he said nothing that gave hope of seeing him again soon. "Dear Father," he said again with a look of silent love for us, "A man descends from heaven to the earth when he parts from you. I desire your blessing!" But how painfully my heart trembled when he turned to the woman with these words: "Dear Amalie, do you not feel as I do, that one can only leave this hospitable house reluctantly?" "This is Amalie then," I said to myself. "Oh such a fortunate, fortunate woman to fly through the open, beautiful world at the side of the most charming man! Such a sweet occupation to care for him and also to be in the tender care of his love!" My father stood thoughtfully beside me until the rattling of the carriage faded into the distance. He then took my hand and told me to rest a few hours. I trembled at his touch. The thought of being alone with the one in whose presence no secrets could be kept in my heart, seized me, and weeping, I fell sorrowfully into his arms. "My dear, dear child," he said in a soft, comforting voice, "you need rest very much. Try to sleep for a few hours; you are overwrought. You will find me in the garden."

In vain, I tried to follow my father's advice; sleep eluded my troubled mind. I went to do my household chores, and I most enjoyed putting the stranger's room in order. My father was

quiet and pensive during the midday meal, but very tender towards me. When I rose after the noon meal, he asked me to join him in the garden.

We sat on a small hill from which we had a clear view of a narrow valley, where a forest stream roared between dark pines. He took his *Home*¹⁸ from his pocket, and read the moving lament of Andromache¹⁹. My own feelings of pain fled; my entire being was ravaged by Andromache's pain, and when the spell of the elevated poetry ended, it was as if my soul had been bathed clean by stream of exalted life.

I loved, but I loved more purely. My longing was quiet and sweet. The image of the beloved man remained in my peaceful heart in all of its beauty, simple and vast, like the moon on the surface of a quiet lake. Thus love ceased to be an illness for me. The days of the week passed in their usual cycle of simple occupations. Everything had its appropriate time, but everything was so wisely scheduled, that every pedantically tiresome aspect was avoided. Those who have never known the benefit of a monotonous life only see it as boredom. However, those who have experienced the way the soul finds its better self in active solitude after the distractions and turmoil of the world, the way it finally nestles into the external stillness and order and drinks it in, these will probably call this the happiest way of life.

Thus the image of my friend was woven into all my daily occupations, but the welling of desire in my heart was tender, and my yearnings gentle. My father was much more attentive and tender towards me than usual; at least his attention seemed to be fixed on me more continuously. His silence about the new emotions in his heart moved me. He felt them deeply, but with tender forbearance, he avoided every word which could have led to an explanation. Such moments of silence are generated by years of friendship. The souls seem to approach each other more and

¹⁸ Homer was a blind Greek poet who wrote both *The Iliad*, and *The Odyssey*.

¹⁹ Andromache is a character from Greek mythology--The wife of Hector was captured by the Greeks at the fall of Troy.

more closely, as though they no longer needed words. But this silence, which was so valuable to me and so beneficial to my wounded heart, also seemed to me to be an evidence that my love was hopeless.

“Oh, this Amalie is his wife!” an inner voice often told me, but another refuted the first, saying, “No, he would not have allowed himself such affection towards you. Was not the whole purpose of his conversation that he wished me to be his?” My hopeful heart gladly attended to the second voice!

In Rosine’s conduct there was a strange solemnity. In accordance with my father’s example, all unnecessary chatter between us was also forbidden, and we respected one another too much to have ever desired to say something that was not appropriate and reasonable. Rosine, who still struggled with her old habit of chattering, and who moreover was so certain of the most grateful respect from me as her pupil, in my father’s absence sometimes let herself sometimes go unchecked in one of her talkative moods. Now for several days, I waited in vain for a word about the new event, which must have made an impression on her in such a monotonous life as ours. Oh how I would have loved to hear the beloved name spoken by any living being. It would have been a testimony to me of the reality of the whole scene, which often threatened to escape my soul like a muted dream.

Many days elapsed without any word from the stranger. With curious haste, I received all the incoming letters and examined all the inscriptions and wax seals with care, for I knew the large circle of people with whom my father corresponded. Finally on the fifth mail delivery day, a letter with a large unknown seal appeared. With trembling hands I handed it to my father when he awoke, and because of my glowing impatience, I forgot to bring his breakfast. The old man examined the inscription and seal, slowly unfolded the letter and sat down to quietly read it.

I knew all the fine wrinkles on the quiet face of my father. Trembling, I discerned the true impact which the contents of the letter had on him, a certain astonishment in which some joy was mixed, but which soon vanished into a dark cloud of pain that crossed his brow. My anxiety grew as he hastily pocketed the letter and, with a forced air of calm, quickly asked for his breakfast. The day passed as if stormy, sultry air were hanging heavily over us, so that it was difficult to breathe. The usual household chores were done, but the pensive face of my father spread gloom throughout the house.

After his return from a solitary walk, my father found me alone in a room. I was depressed because he had avoided being alone with me all day, and I already held the doorknob in my hand, ready to leave. “Stay here my child!” he called to me, “I have very important things to tell you that are weighing heavily on my heart – and which I will only be able to endure peacefully with patience and faith in God’s grace. The time has come that we must part.” I flew to him with a loud cry, his tears dripped onto my cheeks and we held each other silently. After our pain had eased a little, he continued with a trembling voice: “Providence entrusted me with your upbringing, my dearest and only child, and I found the sweetest occupation of life therein. God did not made me rich, but I made it my duty to save enough of my small yearly income that after my death you would be free from want and dependence. My only worry was where you would live. There were none within the circle of our acquaintance, until now, to whom I could entrust you with good conscience. My friends live too far away, and are all involved in family relationships that are not appropriate for you. We must look for a place of refuge for you after my death. Dry your tears – a seventy year old man must be as acquainted with death as he is with sleep, and we will find each other on that day when we all rise again!” A bright ray of light fell

from his eyes into my soul, and life vanished before of me like a cloud, with its joy and distress; I looked calmly at my father and up towards heaven.

“My dearest child, as much as I will suffer through your absence,” my father continued, “I am grateful to Providence for the hint as to a future place for you to stay, with people who are worthy of my respect, and who through mental cultivation and fine manners will be able to make your life charming and happy. The woman who recently visited us is the Countess von Wildenfels. Her appearance conveys refinement and education, but I also know her character through one of my trusted friends, and I can entrust you to her guidance without worry. She wishes you to stay with her this next winter as her companion, and because of the particular interest that she has taken in you, she wishes to help you acquire a few more small talents which you would not have the opportunity to develop if you remained here in our isolated home. If you are content with the Countess and your new way of life with her, she would like you always to remain in her company. She currently resides in D...” “I will see him again!” was my first feeling at these words from my father, but the sweet hope which filled my heart at these words was quickly dispelled by the painful feelings of imminent separation from him. “You will try out your new situation for six months,” said my father to me as he perceived my deep pain, “if you do not like life with her, then you may come back here to me until I die, and I will commend you to our Heavenly Father. But I cannot hope to buy the sunshine of a few days for myself, at the expense of the peace of your future life. Do all you can to make up your mind to be happy in the new world into which you will enter.”

The Countess wanted to send her chambermaid to bring me to her in only three days. My soul seemed to dissolve in painful feelings. All the joys of a happy childhood, all of the hours of awakening youthful fantasy which I had enjoyed by myself arose again during the days leading

to our separation, and impressed themselves more firmly on my mind. I walked through the village, and with a heart deeply moved, received faithful blessings from the good farmers. My father, who enjoyed giving an account of his actions to the wisest ones in the community, had also talked with them about my trip, and had told them that he must seek out a residence for me after his death. Some of the wealthiest pled with him not to worry about the future, and wanted to force me to accept gifts which were quite considerable for their circumstances. With every parting that I had to experience, I already felt the most painful one –the separation from my father.

The Salm family received my farewell visit with uncommon solemnity. “I will perhaps embrace you as a great lady when we see each other again,” said the oldest daughter as I left. I paid no more attention to her words than I would to a normal girlish joke, and I repeated it to Rosine in that tone. The good old woman looked searchingly at me for a few minutes, took me into her chambers with secretive silence, and locked the door behind us. She held me close to her, covered my face with kisses and tears and declared: “You are guiltless, dear child, thank heaven, you are guiltless! – Oh I was so sad; I imagined that you knew about the stranger’s marriage proposal, and I was worried that I had lost your love and trust, because you had not said a word about it to me. Now I realize that I misjudged you. You can be silent towards me, but to play-act and pretend ignorance, you cannot do that, my dear sincere girl.” “What are you chattering about, Mother?” I replied, staring at her with wide eyes. “Dearest child, you will know everything, but you must be silent about it, even to your father, hard as it may be for you. No, I do not understand your father, even though I find everything else he does to be right – may he forgive me for disclosing everything to my dear Agnes.

“Do you remember that morning, dear, when that handsome stranger was staying with us? One time you left the room quickly, and he stayed alone with your father; I was in the adjoining room. You know it is only separated from the main room by a wooden wall, and I understood every word which was spoken. Because they were talking of you, my heart committed this to memory; I have not forgotten one syllable of the conversation. ‘Lovely girl!’ the stranger cried when you had closed the door. – ‘Oh I pray that this truth and purity in your being will never be distorted, then I would be the happiest man alive at having found you! My Father, our hearts are unified in the love of truth; between us there is no need to evade the issue – you will come to know me completely. I would like to know your daughter well – and if everything is the way you want it to be—as I believe is the case—then I ask you with my whole soul: Father, give her to me to be my wife! – And I promise you, she will be a happy woman.’ ‘She alone can give herself,’ said the Pastor. Then he said that you are not his daughter. ‘It doesn’t matter to me whose daughter she is,’ replied the stranger. ‘I possess the qualities that most fathers generally look for in a marriage for their daughters: I am wealthy and of high birth. However, if the father of her spirit finds me worthy to be happy with that lovely creature, then I will be three times as happy. I am not asking anything about her material situation, because I am independent, but you will find that I am an exceptional man who will open his soul to you. I will write to you. My address is: Baron von Nordheim in D. From this day forward, do not have any worries concerning your lovely child’s material existence. If she cannot be my wife, then I will give her a fortune that will secure her independence; but she cannot know a single word of my plans.’ ‘I am deeply touched by your goodness,’ your father said.’ ‘It would be a great comfort to me to leave this world with my Agnes as the wife of a noble man; her birth is an

unfathomable mystery to me, and even my suspicions about it I must keep locked in my heart. All I am able to say is -----‘ And then you came back into the room, my child.”

I felt wonderful, clear, and light at this relation of their conversation. His wife, the closest, most intimate relationship to this amiable man! I pondered this with quiet delight. Even so, I almost felt ashamed to have learned something against my father’s will, and the embarrassing feeling that I must hide something from him allowed me to think of my separation from him more calmly.

The day of departure dawned. My soul was filled only with all the nameless love that I had received. I sat speechless at the feet of my father as the carriage approached. He wanted to comfort me, but tears choked his words: “God bless you through time and eternity my daughter!” he called out with a quavering voice. At last we parted with that quiet exaltation of soul which is only found in deeper feelings.

My companion was a good, harmless creature, who sought to paint my new situation in the most brilliant of colors. For the first time, I thought about my birth and the social standing of my parents. I found myself foreign and alone in the world without my father’s companionship. The feeling was painful to me, and I was only able to encourage my soul through my efforts to remain myself and not to allow any external circumstance to have power over me. Earnestly, I decided to focus all of my thoughts only on the improvement of my talents, which I now could acquire. This would fill up my solitude, and would secure my independence in every period of life. I thought it would be delightful to acquire a sum of money for a fine painting, and then to surprise my father unexpectedly with a book he had wanted for a long time. I knew that he had often gone without in order to give me a small gift.

The tendency which filled my heart was too pure for me to be able to connect it with a prospect of external happiness. When I thought of the beloved man, all circumstances were beneath me, just as when, for faithful souls, every earthly thing disappears in thoughts of heaven

On the second day of my journey, we ate the noon meal in N... The cold forced us to stay in the common room until a special chamber had been warmed for us. There were many travelers there. Except for the usual questions and conversations, no one of the company paid any particular attention to me. A man sat thoughtfully near the fire. When he saw me, he stood up and for several minutes looked at me penetratingly. "Where are you traveling to, my pretty child?" he asked; and as I replied: "To D..." he shook his head and murmured: "So young, so beautiful!" He was a fairly tall and wore a ragged, dark blue overcoat. His black hair was dissheveled, and his dark eyes looked piercing beneath his high forehead. His linen was very fine and clean. He took out his writing tablet and asked me my name and the place where I would be staying. Then he asked me to sit in more favorable light, as he wished to draw my portrait.

His manner seemed strange to me, but it was accompanied by such candor that I could not deny his request. "You were born under a happy star!" he declared, after he had drawn a few lines. "There is nothing conflicting in your features, lovely child! Oh, do not tire of maintaining this beautiful unity through the innermost striving of your soul! Your whole virtue is in remaining the way nature created you. These clear blue eyes have the power to divide truth from error, and under the clear arch of your brow, thoughts develop purely and delicately. How finely your little nose is rounded, still uncertain as to whether it will mold itself more to caution and intelligence, or to goodnatured, almost frivolous devotion. But the transition from nose to lip was drawn by a good angel with the finger of love. Your mouth is firm and genuine and speaks

only truth and love. Dear Girl, oh do not let those unprofaned lips speak anything else! May God give you a joyful love; then you can become a perfect woman.”

He worked on his drawing during this speech, which he seemed to regard as a monologue. When he had sketched out the main features, he held the paper in front of me and said in a solemn tone: “This is how you are now; the fullness of youth must fade away in time, but I hope that in thirty years the same pure spirit will still breathe through these forms. If I were to see you again and you were sunk to the level of a common wife, then this drawing should be your punishing judge. Should coquetry ever play in these direct, loyal eyes, or should the mouth that breathes love ever twist to shallowness and falsehood –oh I have already seen more such fallen angels! Just like a poor farmer in a field destroyed by hail, which a few hours earlier had still been adorned by blooming crops, I have so often traveled through the ruins of mankind. Dear girl!” he cried as he kindly offered me his hand, “Do me the pleasure of remaining a pure, simple woman to whom truth and love are more important than anything else.”

The whole individual being of this man had moved me. There was such truth in his tone and countenance, that everything caricature-like vanished from his strange behavior. “Will I see you again soon?” I asked with heartfelt interest, which did not escape his gaze. “Good child, I seldom know what I will do. My time is not my own, and my work follows the great course of events, whose thousand wheels also drive my person along with them. I may perhaps observe you in silence, invisible to you, when you least expect it. Perhaps I will demand admittance as an artist to see you. You are well disposed towards the arts. Practice them diligently, and like the voice of a true and wise friend, they will bring clarity and peace to your soul.” He escorted me to the carriage and placed a rolled-up painting across from me. “Take this as a little keepsake. It is a talisman,” he said smiling, “which you will have before your eyes in the hour of love; then

remember again, lovely girl, that you wish to be a happy mother.” Without listening to my thanks, he disappeared from my view, and I was amazed when I unrolled the canvas to find an excellent copy of Raphael’s *Madonna della Sedia*²⁰.

The next day I arrived in D... It was evening when we rolled up to the house of the Countess. A long row of rooms was lit. I was told that a large company was assembled, and she had ordered that I be led to her chambers. After a few moments the Countess herself came, in very glittering attire, which made my welcome a bit more festive than I wished, since I had prepared myself to greet her with love and openness. “I perceive how much you have sacrificed for me in the separation from your father, my dear child,” she said after an embrace. “I will do everything I can to make your loss more bearable. If you wish me to be pleased with you, then please tell me with all the frankness of a dear friend, everything that you desire. I must leave you now for a few hours – I was not able to escape the company today. If you would enjoy it, look around in my rooms at the books and engravings. Afterwards my lady-in-waiting will dress you, and I will come and get you when it is time for dinner. Please forgive me, that I am taking the pleasure of seeing you dressed this evening according to my tastes. I noticed at our first brief meeting that we have the same waist size, and I had a dress made according to the latest fashions. We must not spoil the fun of the old children whom one so often encounters in the better circles,” she added with a smile, and left me.

I walked around the rooms, and the elegant grandeur which I saw everywhere made a pleasing impression on me. My imagination was active, and I imagined myself in the varied situations which could possibly await me in this house. The bedroom of the Countess was the room most suited to my taste. All the shapes were pleasantly calming, and the light green silk of

²⁰ A painting of the Virgin Mary with the Christ Child held close in her arms by Italian artist Raffaello Sanzio da Urbino (1483 – 1520).

the bed curtains floated like a light cloud in pictureque folds around the bed and the windows. A beautiful antique lamp was fastened by golden chains in the middle of the ceiling and cast a soft light on everything around the room. Between the windows, directly across from the bed, a silk drape cascaded down over a painting. I raised it and found –a picture of Nordheim in beautiful, brilliant truth. Oh, right then it seemed to me that it had only been a moment since he had left me! The lovely magic of his presence coursed through my senses like the returning spring sun through the nerves of an invalid. All mist had disappeared; he was mine again, and sunshine and kind existence shone around me. The lovely magic soon disappeared. I examined the painting. He had been painted life-sized, standing before a herma²¹ which presented the bust of the Countess. One of his hands rested on the marble, and his head was slightly lowered as if he were lost in contemplation.

What kind of intimate relationship must he have with this Amalie? No other portrait was in this room, as if it were a sanctuary of love, prepared only for this one man! The Countess stood near me without my noticing her. Her large searching eyes were fixed on me. She seemed unwilling to take note of my embarrassment, and in a light tone said: “You will find that the picture was excellently painted and that the likeness is superb! I always take care of it in this way so as to protect it from dust.” She pressed on a spring and a tapestry panel covered the painting. She pushed a small couch under the draperies, and escorted me from the room. It seemed to me that a cloud descended over her, and her conduct was a little less warm, but still she said kindly: “I will now take you to the rooms that have been prepared for you. You may occupy them as long as you like; I always lose my dear little companions too soon, and apply all my arts in order to hold them. Perhaps a certain spirit will help to draw a magical circle around them.”

²¹ A monument consisting of a four-sided shaft tapering inward from top to bottom and bearing a head or bust.

I had a parlor, a bedroom, and a dressing room, and all three were charmingly decorated and equipped with every convenience. In spite of my reluctance, I had to let the chambermaid dress me, and when I was finished, the Countess led me to the company. “You may perhaps never have been in such a large social circle, as that into which I will now introduce you,” she said to me as we made our way down a long gallery. “Your fine sensibilities will help you find a suitable, pleasant demeanor for each situation. Incidentally, the art of the large social circle, dear child, is the way of insignificance.”

Most of the company was playing cards. The Countess presented me at a few tables as *Fräulein von Lilien*. *Lilien* was the family name of my father, which I had always heard with joy and pride when it was applied to me, but the *Fräulein*²², caught my attention. It was repulsive to me to adorn myself in strange apparel, and my pride could not accommodate itself to any pretense. For the time being, I had to silently let it go. People asked a few empty questions, to which I replied with equally superficial answers. The Countess asked me to sit with her party, and she greeted me with the most pleasant regard, which soon drew general attention to me. After the game was finished, it seemed that everyone to say something to me, and questions about my previous residence and my journey alternated with flattery. The Countess was able in a clever way to cut short all inquiries about my former circumstances. For the first time, this inspired in me a grateful and tender affection towards her, because since Rosine’s revelations, the feeling of a strange, mysterious existence weighed heavily on my heart.

At the dinner table, to which the greater part of the party had gone, the conversation was more cohesive, and I could sketch the characters of several people. I still knew little of the conventional life and the language of people of the world. My simple principles found so many

²² I have kept the original German word in the text as there is no real way to translate this effectively into English. This German word refers to the title of an upper-class lady. Agnes is bothered because she does not feel herself an upper-class woman and therefore believes it a false title.

paradoxes, which good sense can easily reconcile through habit. It was just as natural to me as the way night follows day to sorrow for the deceived and hate the deceiver, preferring virtue to honor and honor to the pursuit of one's own advantage. In the judgment of this company, I saw all these concepts turned upside down. Even the passions which require exceptional strength of mind, such as love and ambition, were mocked by many people in that group. The height from which they looked down upon all real relationships in existence seemed to me to be a dreadful desolation; only thorns and thistles grow on the rocky ground of egotism. The Countess gave no sign either of blame or of approval. Her character remained spotless in my eyes. But why were these people part of her social circle? Only one young woman, and two young men who sat by her side, attracted me through their charming, simple demeanor. One of the men often cast observant glances around him when a vulgar, disgraceful opinion was expressed, or showed through subtle sarcasm the senselessness of what was said. The lady had been introduced to me as Fräulein von R**, and I felt that she and her two neighbors watched me keenly.

As a general rule, the Countess passed several evenings each week in the company of the Monarch, and I had to accompany her. The Monarch was between sixty and seventy years old, and still burdened himself and others with stiff, antique French etiquette, which the German royal sons had learned at the court of the French kings, and had transplanted to their own ground, though admittedly in a somewhat reduced form. Through age and habit, the Monarch had learned to move almost naturally in this heavy armor of ceremony. Towards the ladies, he observed the dignified high politeness of the old chivalric times, so that his appearance for them was not displeasing. However, except for the sphere of fine manners, he could not allow himself at any time to stray into being tolerable. His children sought to live at a distance from him as much as possible, for they only found a despot in their father. His son was away traveling as

much as decency allowed, and only rarely did he visit his father. The Princess, whom people said was one of the best and gentlest souls, lived with her married sister under the pretext of poor health.

The caricatures among the courtiers seemed to me at times to be laughable, and at times lamentable. The reverence which they could immediately call from their hearts to their hands and feet the moment the Monarch appeared; a merciful or an angry look, which shot through their bodies like an electric shock and changed their natural movements; the instantaneous change of their opinion according to the most recent comment from the Monarch's lips—all of this was incomprehensible to me. I stood as if in front of a doll house, so little humanity and truth spoke to my heart. The Monarch paid quite a bit of attention to me when the Countess introduced me, and my natural candor, as something uncommon, appeared not to make an unpleasant impression on him. The Countess knew perfectly how to act around the Monarch and how to frequently turn this hard mass of old, rusted feelings and perceptions into a pleasant performance. I concluded from this that the intellectual poverty of the courtiers perhaps persuaded the Monarch to treat them as nothing but machines. Fräulein R**, the two Lords of Alban, and the Monarch's physician (who thought of himself as indispensable) all remained as their natural, genuine selves.

After dinner Fräulein R** came and introduced the two Alban brothers to me. "You were bored during dinner," said Fräulein R**, "but we enjoyed watching you very much. Nature and grace are seldom an occurrence here. I hope you will join us in the future. As you see us here," she continued, smiling, "there are three of us, the two Lords of Alban and I, a small state within the greater state of this company. The younger Lord of Alban believes from his observations of your countenance that you must belong to our group, and I agree."

“If you only accept quiet, peaceful citizens into your state,” I replied, “then I think I can earn your trust. For great transactions and negotiations, I hope that you will not wish to use a country girl who still knows so little of the world anyway.” “For those whom Nature has made so rich,” replied the younger Lord of Alban, “art can teach them little.” “Only give yourself over to us without any conditions; just allow us to make Fräulein Lilien acquainted with our constitution!” exclaimed Fräulein R**, and she led me to a window. “The two Lords and I,” she continued, “have grown up together from childhood. A good guardian angel protected us from some of the follies of the world around us. We may perhaps have others, but we still remain happy and harmless. We hate deceitfulness, we despise pettiness which only looks at appearance, flee from emptiness, and seek to preserve ourselves from these. Because we are not old and distinguished enough to set the tone in society, we pull ourselves through with Pythagorean silence²³ as best we can. We are bound by our circumstances to lose a large part of our lives in grand society where mediocrity maintains control, but we strive to push ourselves through the currents of society without being ruined. You must, however, first observe our way of being and test it.” She continued, “I thank the existence of this small society for much of my moral education. Many good people silently have the same kind of alliance among themselves, but gradually a kind of listlessness creeps in among them which in the name of tolerance, in the end lets them and everything else go wherever it can or will. We avoid this through a rule that every eight days we must give an accounting of our observations to each other. Sharing our thoughts forces us to clarify our perceptions. We live happily among the variety of people who are around us, due to this alliance. I also found the the joy of my heart in our small circle. The elder Lord of Alban is to be my husband, as soon as our family circumstances allow it. My

²³ The Pythagoreans believed that silence cultivated self-control, and those who wished to be Pythagoreans were required to observe a five year silence.

future brother-in-law is actually the heart of the whole affair because of the great vitality of his intellect and his imagination. The quieter, but no less profound insight of my Alban creates a pleasant contrast to the glowing fantasy of his brother. Often experience teaches us that Julius (that is the name of my brother-in-law) through his imagination, has deceived us and himself. We tease him, but still believe him again the next time. Share your observations and your experiences with us, if you wish; and in return take a vow of sincerity and friendship from us.”

Julius von Alban came over to us and said somewhat solemnly: “Accept this vow from three people who strive for a high sense of beauty. Still free from every darkened breath of worldly pleasure, the heavenly clarity of your soul will reflect things in the truest mirror.” “With much pleasure, dear Fräulein R**,” I answered “I will present my best thoughts to you and your friends, because I expect instruction from you.” Julius seemed to expect more warmth from me, but it had always been in my nature that an exalted expression dampened my true feelings. My father always taught me to use great words only for truly great things.

I spent each evening in the same company, though in different houses. Fräulein R** and the two Lords of Alban were witty and charming. My heart opened to her. Her tender affection for her fiancé especially attracted me; the breath of love is so refreshing to a yearning soul. The Countess was very kind to me, but the smooth manners of the world, and perhaps even more, my doubts about her relationship with my friend, restrained every confidential word in my heart. She also seemed only to want to affect my appearance, and told me after the first days: “I am pleased with your social manners, and am also impressed by the way your father cultivated the free and beautiful nature in you. You possess the elements of fine breeding, gentle and humble courtesy, and a cheerful spirit which always comprehends the situation of the moment correctly, and finds the most suitable thing which should be done about it.”

Incidentally, we seldom saw each other alone, and I could not understand how the Countess, who had so much spirit and taste, who was in such a free situation, wasted the largest part of her time with empty, spiritless company. I admired her talent for living with the large crowd without losing any of her finer individuality. She knew how to expertly use the proper distance required by fine breeding to keep her relationship with unfamiliar people at the simplest, best level, and to spare herself the expression of every kind of lowly sentiment. Because she herself remained free from passionate emotions in the quarrels of small, paltry vanity, she became the confidante of every faction. Only rarely did she show a spark of her superior intellect, before which triviality and miserable egotism fled back into shadows, like birds that fear the light. In smaller, more select circles, she often seemed to be a student of Aspasia.²⁴ Every small talent seemed enhanced in her presence, and every noble, true human feeling was strengthened. The conversation was generally only interesting because of her spirit, but in such quiet, fleeting ways that its effectiveness was only enjoyed, not noticed, like the element²⁵ which always surrounds us. I respected these talents, but at a certain age, onesidedness acquires trust and love rather than breadth.

The dear name was not mentioned, and my quavering lips dared not to ask. Had he not commanded that his letters were to be addressed to D...? Why was such a distinguished man never thought of? And above all, why did the Countess not utter a word about him, when she had certainly surprised my heart when I was gazing at his portrait? The first passionate desire awakens in the young mind all forces of virtue and vice. A painful suspicion filled my heart: perhaps the Countess took me into her home in order to separate me from my beloved, and perhaps to suppress his fleeting inclination towards me in my absence. Perhaps he was even then

²⁴ Aspasia was a woman living in Athens during the time of Plutarch, who was known for her intelligence, rhetoric, and political prowess.

²⁵ The element which she refers to here is oxygen.

searching for me at my father's house without finding me, and the greatest joy in life – his love – would be forever lost to me. This whole situation, together with my homesickness for my father, cast a pall over my spirit, which my new friends noticed with concern, and they tried to distract me through redoubled kindness.

The company of the Alban brothers became more and more interesting to me, especially through the knowledge of the political world which they shared. They both had worked in the most important businesses, and knew the people who controlled the state machinery. I read the more current histories of the European states, and learned to string together the events from which the tableau of the contemporary world emerged. The two brothers were happy with my vibrant mind and understanding of these relationships, but with a wounded heart I felt that Fräulein R** distanced herself from me as I grew closer to the two brothers. Her eyes looked on me with worry and anxiety when I spoke with her fiancé, and she was never entirely at ease and jovial unless she saw that I was engaged with Julius alone. Julius grew more intimately attached to me with each passing day. My hobbies became his, he educated himself with the most delicate sense according to my taste.—His mode of expression became simpler as his feelings became deeper, and my heart could not deny him a gentle affection.

Because Fräulein R**'s disposition made it necessary for me to seek out his company exclusively, he gave himself up entirely to the hope that I loved him. Out of consideration for Elise von R**, I could not reveal the reason for my behavior to him, and I suffered because of the delusion about my heart which I perhaps raised in him. Julius was a handsome young man. His figure and facial features were perfectly symmetrical, but overall he was lacking in that expression of energy, of peaceful self-existence to which a feminine heart joyfully clings. He had a talent for poetry and was often lost in his own realm of verse at times when he should have

been showing dignity and power in the real world. Only that true son of heaven, genius, has the right to appear as a stranger on earth, through the clarity of his inner world. My tastes had been too refined by reading the ancient classical authors for me to find Julius' poetry charming. But I myself was usually the subject of his songs, and they often spoke to my heart because he presented them to me with such pure good nature and modesty.

Elise told me in plain terms that she gladly saw me as her future sister-in-law. In the colorful views of life and plans which we dreamed of with simple, joyous youthful fantasy, it was simply assumed that we would live together forever.

I longed for an independent existence. My happy ignorance of the circumstances of possessions had fled. Pride and an almost sickly sensitivity took the place of my carefree existence. I received the smallest gift with inexpressible reluctance. Only those from my father did I receive without hesitation, but his limited circumstances caused me pain of a different sort. It is with an indescribable feeling, hovering somewhere between joy and pain, that we receive a gift from a poor friend.

When I had unpacked my trunk in D**, I found a package with fifty Louis d'ors²⁶, along with a note written in my father's hand: "Take these and spend them without worry. I enjoy my greatest joy in you." I took it with a pledge of the greatest frugality; and in order to avoid gifts from the Countess as well, I adopted the greatest simplicity of dress. It cost me a great deal of ingenuity to always be well dressed and in the latest of fashions, in order not to draw the attention of the Countess – otherwise I was forced to accept a new piece of clothing. The fear that I would become a burden to my father, even with the most limited needs, often clouded my view of the future with worry. I practiced my talent for painting – exclusively portrait painting –

²⁶ A French gold coin used in France beginning in 1640 and used until the French Revolution. After the French revolution it was issued as a 20 Franc gold piece.

which was not exactly to my taste. I saw this as a means of maintaining an independent existence, and of providing my father a more comfortable life in his old age, by freeing him from all worry about me. The more true fondness I found in Julius, the more determined I was not to give him my hand in marriage, since I could not give my whole heart to him alone. He was content to be in my company and assured of my friendship. He waited for admission of more vibrant affection on my part, which I firmly denied, with the passage of time, and through the quiet power of his true love. The earnest desire of our whole little company to accept me into their family touched me even more because my situation was completely unknown to them. My friends never allowed themselves to ask about my circumstances; they seemed only generally to know that in regards to wealth they were not good. From their complete silence about my past, I could even conclude that they suspected the secret of my birth. I remained entirely silent about it, because the mystery of my existence became more and more painful to me. Only in the case that Julius became more pressing in his proposals would I undertake to tell him, through a frank confession of my whole situation, of the difficulties there would be in an alliance with me.

It was a bright, clear morning. With Elise, I enjoyed on one of the public promenades the cheerful rays of sunlight that I had long missed. Among the many known and unknown people who passed by, I caught sight of the artist whom I had met on my journey. He walked past us a few times without a greeting and then stopped at the end of the avenue by which we must inevitably pass. I was about to speak with him as a friend and thank him for his painting, but he interrupted me and presented me with a small, delicate portfolio as he said: "I am a traveling artist, dear girl. Look through these pages. Please do me the honor of returning this to me tomorrow at this same hour in this same place. My address is Johannes Charles." He was out of our sight before I could answer, and the portfolio remained in my hands. We looked through it

on a bench on the promenade; it contained some finely executed landscapes and many sketches, mostly of Swiss panoramas. Among these I found a letter addressed to Agnes Lilien with the request to open it alone. Elise joked about the incident and demanded to see the letter. "I will not betray anyone's trust," I said half seriously, and put it away with the thought that perhaps it contained a frank confession of his needs, which he would rather risk discussing with me than with a stranger. I hurried to my room to open it. It contained the following lines in a small, delicate, feminine, script:

"My dearest Agnes, your mother is writing these words; oh, difficult circumstances have held me bound until now! I could not make myself worthy of this name – the circumstances still burden me and only under the cover of deepest secrecy can I enjoy the happiness of seeing the one who is dearest to me in the world. Johannes Charles will bring you to me tomorrow evening at about six o'clock. No one must know of these lines and of your visit; look for an excuse get away. If it is impossible for you to find a reason tomorrow, then come another evening. But hurry, I am ill and yearn for a glimpse of you; I can only stay a short while in this place where I can see you. You can put your complete trust in Johannes Charles, he is my friend."

My mother – my mother! I cried, and the power of the sweet new feeling found expression in a flood of happy tears. "I will get to know the holiest bond in nature!" I cried, "I will never be an abandoned creature again, upon whom, even in the tender outpourings of friendship, people always look with a certain pity!"

But how could my father in Hohenfels deceive me? Why could he not have at least cheered my heart with a quiet intimation of this happiness?

I was lost in these thoughts. My admiration for my father did not allow the slightest tarnish of guilt on his holy image. He did not wish to deceive, but rather he himself was

deceived, I finally said to myself. In his care and mercy he did not want to trouble me with the thoughts of uncertain circumstances. Was I not rich enough in his love?

I then recalled everything that Rosine had said about the conversation between my father and Nordheim, and every doubt about my father's conduct disappeared.

With growing impatience, I awaited the next day so I could speak with Charles. The winter festivities were nearing their end and people were therefore more eager to take part in them. The next day was the masquerade ball, and this made my plan to disappear from the house easier. I placed a note in Charles' portfolio as a precaution in case I would not be able to speak to him unobserved. On it I wrote the following: "I will come at the appointed time; please call for me at six o'clock at the garden gate. I am ready to follow you anywhere." For the first time, I would need a roundabout route in order to arrange a solitary morning walk for myself. My situation and the trust of my father had preserved me from all small untruths, which are compelled by the tyranny of appearance. With a reluctant heart, I planned my retreat into deceit. A repugnant feeling generally attracts reflection. "What would happen" whispered an evil demon in my ear, "if, instead of going to Elise, as I had said, I entered the street leading to the promenade? What would happen if they were using your inexperience in order to lead you into a trap? Is it not folly to come?" But the dear, dear name – and she is ill! In order to obtain counsel from my father in Hohenfels, I would need to leave her in uncertainty, I could perhaps lose her – never see her.

Charles stood in front of me. "I am coming, yes I am coming," I said to myself. "My heart requires it, even if the world should misunderstand me." Charles' straightforward, noble face restored my peace. Often in moments of need a guardian angel appears in this way, just as loyalty and truth now opened to me in his features, and banished all shadows of deceit. He was

cleanly dressed; his brown, usually wildly disheveled hair lay naturally, albeit in an orderly way around his forehead and cheeks, and in his manner there was something solemnly still. “You will find my answer in the portfolio. How is my dear mother?” I whispered in his ear as I handed him the portfolio, because some of my acquaintances began to approach me. “Your mother is happy in the hope that she will see her beloved child,” he replied, “I hope that her illness was only due to the long and quick trip. You will come this evening – I read it in your countenance.” I waved a yes and quickly left.

The Countess went to an assembly at five o’clock, from which she then wished to go directly to the ball. Under the pretext that I was ill, I received reluctant permission to remain at home. In order to avoid all the inquiries and gossip of the servants, I dressed as if I wished to secretly go to the ball in order to surprise the Countess and my friends. The Countess loved such scenes. At the worst, she would find this act to be one of youthful thoughtlessness, which would be natural and pardonable due to my lack of knowledge of the world. In a white Grecian dress, covered with a long veil, I hurried into the garden at six o’clock and forbade any company, because no one but my chambermaid was to know how I was dressed. Charles was already waiting for me and silently led me through the streets which were the least used in the city, until we reached a gate where a carriage waited for us. He helped me to get in and sat next to me. The night was very dark and I could recognize neither the road nor the location. I had to tell him which measures I had taken in the Countess’ home to cover my absence. He praised my prudence and said, “May the bells of foolishness thus at last serve the true feelings of nature, which they otherwise so often drown out with their tinkling!” He was otherwise quiet and withdrawn, his voice was more gentle, as though he were trying to cradle my agitated soul in serenely. We had already driven an hour, as it seemed to me, and an anxious doubt seized my

heart. Charles seemed to sense it immediately. “Dear, dear girl, do not be afraid. We are almost at our destination. Oh if only I could take away every doubt...” He faltered, his voice quavered, he took my hand in both of his, and pressed it to his lips; I felt that he was crying. His pain filled my heart with such force that I felt I was the cause of it. The future explained this strange premonition to me only too well.

A large illuminated house shone out of the dark night before me; it stood alone and was surrounded only by a few adjoining buildings. “Here you will see your mother” Charles said to me. We drove along a long garden wall and the carriage stopped at a small door. I shuddered as I stepped out of the carriage. The nearness of an inexpressible joy and the fear of an unknown evil pressed down on my chest almost to the point of suffocation. My innocence and inexperience with the conventions in D...hid from me things that I could have feared. Now I felt the need to go forward with a clear mind, and my heart gathered its strength in order to face every situation. The little door led to a long, narrow hallway which was only sparsely illuminated by a single lamp. Charles opened a side door and asked me to go inside. I entered a dark room; Charles closed the door behind me, and bade me wait there. After a few moments a door across from me opened, from which a dim light escaped, and a gentle voice called: “Come in my Agnes, your mother is waiting for you with impatience.” I followed the sound of this voice and in the dim glow of a single wax candle, which burned in the recess of the room, I saw a figure in a white dress. She lay on a sofa and her arms were outstretched towards me. “Oh my child! My child!” she called out, “Finally, after yearning so long!” She held me close and the softest emotions of nature and love moved my soul. My mother sobbed. – “Oh, that I was forced to do without you for so long, that all my love for you could only be whispered in the fruitless sighs of longing. – But thank heaven! I have you now!” She sank back down on the sofa,

exhausted. Her eyes closed, and when from time to time they opened to look at me, within them burned the finest fire of a loving spirit which strove, as it were to express its entire strength through them, since the other organs were bound by the force of her illness. I searched for essences to soothe her spasms on the nightstand that stood before us, and wanted to get the light from the far corner of the room. "For heaven's sake, do not touch the light," my mother cried vehemently, "we will never see each other again!" These strange words filled me with fear, although at the same time their meaning was incomprehensible to me. I handed her the vials of medicine so she could choose the one she desired, and I gave her a few drops of it. Then I sat at her feet and tried to calm her mind with quieter conversation.

"How indebted I am to you, my dear mother, for the upbringing which you arranged for me through the honorable Pastor of Hohenfels! With the tenderness of a father he cared for me during childhood." "I know, my dear Agnes," she interjected. "Oh how it pleases me to recognize this equanimity in your character, this temperance in your feelings, which was lacking in your mother, to her misfortune. My dearest child, my life has been a tapestry of suffering. My health is broken, at only forty years of age. If I could only enjoy this earthly life with you for a long time! My deepest sorrow is that I cannot yet determine the moment when I can freely and openly recognize you as my daughter before all the world. If you are very careful and silent, then we can see each other often; but with the smallest carelessness, this joy would be lost to us forever. Your birth is legitimate, you are of a noble family. When it becomes necessary, I will enable you to prove it. After my death you will receive the documents which you will need. You will then learn my story and will lament with me the sad disposition of circumstances which robbed me of the sweetest joy – to take over the care for your upbringing myself. This purse contains twenty thousand Thalers in banknotes, to secure you an independent existence if you

can be content with a modest living. Knowing your upbringing, I hope this will be the case. As I did not know whether I would be able to leave you such a fortune, I had this arranged as simply and economically as possible. Your father in Hohenfels himself will now be told that you possess a considerable income.” In answer to the question of whether I might write to him about the happy news that I had found her, she replied, “No, he will find out soon through secure means.”

She spoke much about my education, and seemed quite content with the course of the upbringing which my father had pursued. “Almost it seems that I should thank Providence for forcing me to keep you at a distance from the circles in which I became unhappy,” she said in a lively tone. “A serious, solid education of the spirit is seldom possible in the circles of the wealthy. You might have become a little puppet, who would have danced back and forth on the tight-rope of opinion,—and this way you have become an independent person who can preserve her better self during the storms of life. How I look forward to the time when you can live with me as a friend. I must tell myself a thousand times that for your own good, I must still do without this joy.” “My dear mother!” I exclaimed, “my greatest happiness would be to live with you, and especially now that I could hope to bring you some relief through my care. What eyes can watch more faithfully than those of yours Agnes? And do you think that I can be calm when I am distant from you and must remain uncertain about your health? And what do you call the best for me, if it is not deliverance from this fearful situation?” — “Be still! seductive girl,” she said and laid her finger on my lips, “be still! You must submit to the measures which I must now take for both of us.” “Yes, if it is for you!” I exclaimed sadly. “You will receive daily news from me, my best child!” my mother said gently. She had one of those pure, sonorous voices which always speaks to the heart, and she knew how to give it the most varied inflections; she

had a tone for every emotion of the soul. Overall, she seemed to me to be one of the most tender, sensitive creatures for whom every word, every quiet movement was meaningful, as part of a harmonious whole. Her feet rested under a blanket, her nightgown was thick and had many folds, but because it was made from white material, in the shimmer of the dim light I could still see the lovely contours and the true proportions of her figure. Her hands were delicate and had the finest dainty form. A deep bonnet hid her face. Her forehead, cheeks, and chin were completely hidden, and in the gloomy room I could only recognize the rest of her features in a very wavering outline. Only by her loving, tender voice, it seemed to me, I would be able to recognize my mother among a thousand unknown figures.

When I noticed that she avoided being seen by me, I had to exercise all power over my curiosity and only dared to cast fleeting glances at her. Among a thousand tender expressions, among the most pleasing hopes for the future, my mother did not say a word about her external circumstances; only after I was once again separated from her did I think about this. She urgently advised me several times to take the greatest caution. "Hide your fortune as well," she said. "Charles will bring you the interest income, and soon I will arrange a meeting with your father in Hohenfels, during which you can agree with him on the most beneficial way to invest your money. For now, your stay with the Countess is helpful for our meetings." A clock on the wall chimed nine o'clock. "My Agnes, oh, there chimes the hour of our parting! This hour of pleasure was the fruit of tear-filled years, but now I have enjoyed it purely, as purely as delight is allowed to us mortals! To see such a lovely creature in the blossom of her beauty and innocence before me, and to be able to thank nature that I have the most intimate, most tender relationship with her! I hope that my Agnes will become a happy creature, a quiet, wise mind that comprehends life with free energy, instead of letting itself be carried away by the turbulent

current – let this be your fate! May a happy nature teach you in your early youth what we are and can be in this world. It has taught me painful lessons! Tell me darling, does your heart already have strong affection for someone?”

Charles appeared in the doorway through which I had entered. “Oh it is time!” my mother cried, and the surge of emotion which moved my heart at her question mixed with the tears of our parting. Her arms hugged me tightly, and with loud weeping and moaning she let me go. Charles tore me forcibly away from her bed, and when I loudly complained about the cruelty of leaving my mother in this condition, she herself called out to me, “Go, go my child! Hurry!” Charles rang the bell before we left the room and told me to be quiet, my mother was now in the hands of her chambermaids, who were deeply devoted to her and would treat her with the most tender care.

During our return trip, we arranged the way we could see each other in the future, and how I could receive daily news from my mother. Charles was to appear at the house as an art teacher and thus in the most natural manner would obtain the opportunity of seeing me for an hour each day. My heart was filled to overflowing with joy in finding myself in such happy circumstances, with wealth, station, a loving mother, independence, and the hope of creating a worry-free life for my father in Hohenfels! “How much pure joy you have given me, Eternal Providence!” I cried, and took Charles’ hand, to convey my happy state to the nearest sensible creature. Charles pressed my hand and said: “What a pleasure it is to see a joyful soul who, in the fullness of her heart, turns to the Eternal One above the clouds! Gratitude was certainly the first sacrifice which a noble soul brought to the Immortal Ones. A request is a sign of weakness; the depressed heart groans for help. I honor those who in misfortune rely on their own strength,

and do not send any cry of pain to the heavens. However, a soul who is freed from earthly bonds, in whom life ebbs and flows pure and free, must feel close to divinity in gratitude and love.”

The clouds had dissipated and the stars shown brightly. Charles continued: “Look how the heavens have opened their thousand eyes to look into your joyful heart and smile back an eternally happy future! The joy of man is like a high cresting wave which inevitably must go back to the depths; but the memory of the wealth of the heart remains with him who accepted it as a glimpse of a better world, and does not allow any pleasure to tempt him with arrogance.”

At the theater we had to part, though I would gladly have listened to Charles longer. His meaningful discourse brought light to my soul, just as beautiful lyrics develop the dark sentiments of music. My soul became clearer, resolutions and rules for my future life aligned themselves in this atmosphere.

I looked for the doors of the ballroom, in order to enter unnoticed among the throngs of masked people, but by accident I found myself in one of the adjacent rooms, which was separated by a few other rooms from the ballroom. Next to the side door through which I entered, there was an alcove draped with a curtain – this was halfway drawn. I heard voices quietly whispering behind the curtain. I thought I recognized the sound of the Countess’ voice, and wished to hear more clearly to see if I was correct, and then, according to my plan, to surprise her with my presence. I hoped thereby to destroy any trace of my absence from the house. I stayed a few moments in the corner of the room; the voices spoke more and more quietly. I had already come close to the door which led into the adjoining room when my eyes discovered a mirror in whose reflection I saw the hidden figures in the alcove. I recognized the Countess in confidential conversation with a man.

She held his hands between her own and leaned her head against his chest. The face of the man was turned away from my view, but the tall noble figure reminded me immediately of the beloved image which remained so clearly imprinted in my soul. He is here, and not for me! I felt with pain; he has not even asked about me. Grippled with anxious doubt, I stood as if chained to the floor.

Then the figure turned and I indeed recognized the features of my beloved. "Let us go now, dear," he said, and both approached the door. "Will we see each other tomorrow?" she asked tenderly; I could not understand his answer.

Stunned, I fled into the ballroom and sank into a chair. My heart pounded powerfully in my chest and I felt as if I was about to faint. The Countess passed close by me supported on the arm of my friend. I could neither move nor speak, and I trembled with fear that she would recognize me. Under these circumstances I was incapable of bearing the sight of the beloved man, and I also did not want to appear to him as childish and thoughtless.

These fearful prospects increased my malaise. I was near to fainting, and because I did not see any acquaintance nearby, I remained rigid and numb, reclining in my chair in the fear that any moment I would lose consciousness. Julius appeared before me like a guardian angel. He had recognized me and came over to me; I asked him to lead me immediately to another room where I could breathe some fresh air. Removal from the deafening music, and a few refreshments brought me back to my usual self. Still I felt incapable of remaining in the tumult any longer, and especially of meeting Nordheim with the composure and dignity I wished to display. I asked Julius to order me a carriage to take me home. He urged me to rest a few more minutes. His tender care, through which the sympathy of his heart was so obvious, touched me deeply. Gratefully I squeezed his hand. "My dear Agnes, I am newly inspired. What

happiness!” he cried. This was the first perceptible sign of tender affection which he had received from me. I had given it to him with the most impartial heart; only when I realized how deeply he felt it did I regret that I had done it. He hastened to fulfill my repeated request for a carriage.

With the imprudence so natural to a pure heart and simple country manners, I locked the doors of the room in order to be seen by no one else. A window opened to the courtyard, and I waited behind it for Julius’ return. People made repeated attempts to open the doors which led to the adjoining rooms, and one group left after their failed attempts with immoderate bursts of laughter. Julius returned to take me to the carriage. He was somewhat embarrassed when he noticed the locked doors and heard my relation of the attempts to open it. I asked him to tell the Countess that I had been at the ball, but that a sudden attack of nausea had forced me to return home immediately.

Scarcely had we gone out the doors and through a narrow gallery when Nordheim approached us. It was impossible to avoid him, and I had neglected to put my mask back on because Julius had said he would lead me down a side staircase where we would not see anyone. With some effort I held myself erect, supported on Julius’ arm, so powerfully did my beloved’s appearance affect me. We stood under the sconce attached to the wall, and Nordheim’s face was fully illuminated. “What! I have found you here again?” he said with a gentle voice, as his keen eyes assessed Julius. My voice trembled, I stuttered a few confused words –I wanted to surprise the Countess...I became ill...Herr von Alban is good enough to accompany me home. A look at Julius made my situation more painful. A glowing red flamed across his cheeks; he did not dare look up, and I felt that he shared my confusion. “I will not detain you here any longer,” said Nordheim, and with a stiff bow, he left us.

“How thoughtless of me; what have I done!” cried Julius when we were alone again. Only several weeks later on another occasion did I find out from Elise the reason for this strange outburst, which Julius himself did not wish to explain to me.

In the urgent awkwardness about my nausea, Julius had inadvertently led me into a room to which the young gentlemen of a certain class had given a bad reputation. In Nordheim’s faltering manner and searching glance he first realized the gravity of his mistake, and my childish imprudence in locking the doors made the incident even more suggestive. He wanted to spare me this unpleasant discovery, and was too reserved to give the necessary explanation of this accident to Nordheim, with whom he intended to seek a closer acquaintance. How much I had to suffer through this delicacy, which was so natural in Julius’s situation!

Julius left me at the carriage, upon my most urgent pleading. I was confused by the power of the sweet and painful impressions I had received that night. My slumber was only a feverish exhaustion, and my dreams repeated the deeply felt scenes in the strangest combinations. With the dawn, the truth rose before me with its lovely glow. The thoughts of my mother, the prospects of my so happily changed financial situation, and the intimation of a brighter future calmed my heart about the loss of my beloved. But what should I do here, here in this house, if his love had not called me here? Why had I trusted Rosine’s prattle and had not taken the meaningful silence of my father to be the pole star of my feelings? He does love this Amalie...why did I not listen to the name which called out to me in warning from his ring during the first fifteen minutes of our acquaintance? –The name which forced itself in like a demon foretelling misfortune between the first surging emotions in my heart for him?

The Countess came in an uncommonly elegant morning dress to visit me. An amiable glow enveloped her whole being; her movements were lighter and the tone of her voice softer.

His kisses seemed to float towards me from her lips. After kind inquiries about my illness, about which she had been informed by Julius, she asked if she might have breakfast brought to my room. "But you must first get dressed!" she called to me when she was already halfway out the door. "I will be bringing someone else with me. That will be fine will it not?" She hurried away without waiting for my answer. Her manner seemed a mockery under my circumstances. I was emotionally hurt, but since I had left my father's house, I had learned enough about the essential art of mastering my outward appearance.

"I will not get dressed," I decided in an outburst of unsound pettishness; "I will show Amalie that I am not competing with her for the advantages of figure and adornment!" A blue silk scarf was carelessly tied around my hair, and I simply wrapped a shawl around my everyday white morning dress; in truth, I draped it so that it lay close around my body, and just covered my arms and chest in lightly picturesque folds. "You will be cold and reserved," I told myself, but no sooner had the beloved man entered the room and greeted me in a gentle and friendly manner, than I told myself: "No, you will be genuine and simple!" A heartfelt question about my father's health soon banished all restraint. With his dear name all confusion disappeared and I felt as if I were in the happy confidence of my early youth.

It seemed strange to me that he seemed to have completely forgotten how we had seen each other the day before. I had to speak a great deal, and the Countess entirely played the role of a pleasant friend. She gave me the opportunity to develop my thoughts in the best way, and knew how to spin the thread of conversation so ingeniously that my limited knowledge was woven in to it in the most natural way.

"Do you know, Nordheim," she said at a pause in the conversation, "that this dear girl and I still know very little about each other? We have hardly spent two quiet, uninterrupted

hours together. I also long to be away from the society of cards and dice, like a child who looks out of the cramped, stuffy school to open fresh air. Had it not been for you, I could hardly have stood it this long.” “I heartily thank you for your kind sacrifice, my dearest friend,” replied Nordheim. “Because of your comments, I am no longer a stranger on the field which I am to cultivate. My main goal, to make the seat of the future Lord more agreeable to him, will certainly be accomplished through your efforts. The overall tone, which has been changed by you, gives most of the society a modern air, and the Monarch’s son will find it to be less different from the society at B..., which has been so attractive to him up to now. I wish that pleasing impressions would bind his inclinations to his country. I have not sought the trust of the Prince – but since I have won it, I will honor it and spare no sacrifice to keep a noble soul at peace with himself through the fulfillment of duty.”

“Your comments about the people in D... are so subtle, so apt, presented with such a simple sense of truth, that someday I will read them to our Agnes as a model of this style. The line of truth always appears to your pure, steady gaze, aloof from the obsession with mockery, which prefers to embrace the bad, because wit and caprice can better play with it, and likewise aloof from the weak-minded good nature that is unable to see through the external veneer of a person’s character. In their societal manners, in their leisure hours people most easily reveal their individuality. It is most important to know the fundamental tone of each person, whether love or egotism dominates his actions! It pleases me that you have found a few people of substance among the businessmen, towards whom I will be doubly attentive in my scrutiny.”

“Do you mean the two Alban brothers? They seem to be individuals of exceptional worth,” replied the Countess. “To my delight, our Agnes has become very well acquainted with them. I was silently pleased with this intelligent choice. What do you think of them, dearest

Agnes, and as you know them even better than I, which of the two brothers do you prefer?" To this I replied, "In terms of character, both are equally worthy of respect. Both have only the purest intentions. I could not distinguish between their talents. It seems to me that the elder has a more stable view, whereas the younger has a quicker one. He always surveys a wider field than his brother. The elder almost always deduces correctly in his smaller circle. The younger in his broader circle admittedly is sometimes wrong, but he honors the truth above all, and is always inclined to test every different opinion against his own. Incidentally I cannot judge completely because I am more closely acquainted with Julius than with his brother."

I had said this with the greatest candor, but a sly look from the Countess made me lose my composure as I praised Julius, and I almost faltered because the inferences came to mind which Nordheim might draw about an intimate relationship between Julius and myself. I was ashamed of this egotistical notion, and made up my mind that where it had to do with the benefit of a friend, all the moods of love must be set aside. With glowing cheeks and trembling voice I continued: "Julius seems to me, through the restless activity of his spirit and noble warmth of his heart, to be made to pursue a wide circle of activity with dignity."

Nordheim sat with downcast eyes, and only now and then cast a glance towards me. He did not respond to my utterances, spoke again about me, looked through my paintings, and was amazed that I was only practicing portrait painting and completely neglected landscapes. I told him candidly of my thoughts about it. I said that I had only chosen this branch of art in consideration of my own economic situation and that of my father in Hohenfels. "O dear soul!..." he said, and laid his hand tenderly on my arm. I felt that he held back a generous offer out of delicacy. I was moved, and seized the moment in his presence to give the Countess her due concerning her behavior towards me. "I can feel," I said, "through the generous care with

which all my wishes are anticipated in this house, that I could also be raised above concern for the future; but I cannot deny that it appeared to me more fitting to my duty and my innermost feelings, to support myself through my own industry, and to leave the charity of good-natured people for those without means, who cannot help themselves through any talents.” “Dear child, oh do not mention a word of this to me!” cried the Countess as she embraced me. This was the first expression of a more animated feeling which I perceived in her; she appeared to me in heightened graciousness. Tears glistened in her eyes, as she raised her head from embracing me, and with singular grace she smiled through her tears. “The little one is indeed very stubborn, Nordheim,” she said; “you would think that she would allow me to be involved in the smallest way with her wardrobe! I am speaking only of the little things. Chide her! She prefers to waste her precious time with giving an old bonnet a new look, or with dyeing faded things, rather than allowing me to buy such rubbish for her for a few ducats²⁷. We have already had a few quarrels about this.”

Nordheim gazed at us with silent satisfaction, paced around my room, and lingered especially at my bookcase. He took my Greek *Homer*, in which a few pages of my translations were placed. “May I, dear Agnes?” he asked as he took out one of the pages. I answered a bit confused: “It is a project which I undertook with my father’s help while living with him in Hohenfels.” “It pleases me, dear girl,” Nordheim replied, “that you practice the Greek language. I hope that you do not see me as one of those men who enjoy using the crutches of female ignorance for their own advancement. I have long held it to be a harmful prejudice that in our upper classes an acquaintance with antique literature is not made easier for women through a more thorough education, since these classics unfold the height of true culture so well for the mind and heart” The Countess asked me to show Nordheim the portrait of her which I had

²⁷ A small gold coin used throughout Europe and issued from Venice beginning in the 14th Century.

begun. I brought it from the adjoining room, and as I reached the door, I heard Nordheim say the following words: “No, it is impossible with such truth and such a spirit!” These words were puzzling to me, and only through Elise’s revelation about the unfortunate room in the theater did they subsequently become understandable.

Elise came to inquire after my health, and spoke with the most natural ease about my illness during the ball. Nordheim’s entire attention was fixed on our conversation, though he appeared to only be occupied with my painting.

“But is it not so, Fräulein R...,” said the Countess playfully, “the little one should never be let out of our sight again! Shy little bird, where in all the world did you find the heart to lose yourself alone in such a throng of people?”

A clever answer already hung on my lips, which would have gotten me out of the situation with a jest, when Nordheim’s look fell on me, intent and questioning. My strength failed; it seemed impossible for me to say something untrue to him. My breath was labored, my voice caught, and the glowing embarrassment brought tears to my eyes.

Elise, who believed that I found a form of censure in the words of the Countess, tried to free me from my embarrassment.

“Appoint me to be the private tutor of our Agnes over all that concerns etiquette, madam,” she said to the Countess. “I would be proud at least to be able to surpass her from this paltry side, since I would certainly fail at any other.”

I could look up again. Nordheim stood very earnestly across from me.

“I fear, my friend,” I said to Elise, “you would find a very unteachable student in me. I feel only too well that I was not made for high society, and the sweet freedom of my childhood

in Hohenfels will always make it difficult for me conform to the artificial barriers of society with ease.”

“You are too serious, dearest Agnes,” said the Countess. “Would you like to go for a pleasure trip?” said Nordheim. “Open air and exercise are the best medicine for our friend.” Elise had a previous engagement for lunch and could not join us away from society. The Countess and I accepted the suggestion with pleasure.

We drove away at noon. Nordheim hurried on ahead of us on horseback. The whole area sparkled in the sunlight. My eyes peered longingly across the wide expanse, trying to find even a trace of the house where yesterday I had enjoyed the purest happiness. My efforts remained fruitless. The area was dotted with villages and country houses in such abundance, and was crossed with so many streets, that it was impossible for me to recognize again the way I had taken. In an old majestic pine forest through which the road led, we found Nordheim again. He rode a wild, spirited horse with great skill; often he cast a friendly glance into the carriage. “Have you ever seen a more handsome man, dear Agnes?” said the Countess to me, “ever a man whose whole being shows such nobility, such grace? And such a heavenly unity is in all his actions and his life!” – My heart silently agreed with her feelings; she understood and looked ahead thoughtfully.

Now the densely overgrown forest opened, and the most charming landscape came into view before us. To the east, a wide river flowed over an endless surface, and to the west, its banks pressed on through two mountain ranges, which created the most unique shapes. Imposing cliffs bent towards us over the reflection of the river, alternating with pleasant meadows in which simple, yet neat houses were scattered at random. Atop one of these cliffs stood a palace whose gray walls towered with a severe character of steadfastness.

“Where are you taking us, Nordheim?” called the Countess, “That is your estate, is it not?” “Yes,” he replied, “and I hope you will make do with the meager entertainment which I can offer you today.” The forest was connected with the cliffs upon which the palace stood, by a lovely meadow valley. We wished to thoroughly enjoy this and determined to walk through it on foot.

The young grass beneath our feet was intersected by clear streams which flowed from the cliffs and, wreathed with fresh green, trickled in soft lines through the valley. The poplars and other shrubbery already wore tender leaves, and the hawthorn stood in full bloom. Only through the neatly kept paths did one notice the work of man in this valley, where otherwise the lovely freedom of nature reigned.

Our path led us past some graceful cottages where fruit trees and vegetables had been planted. An old man with a dignified countenance was busy in one garden arranging the grape trellises. Here, more careful cultivation brought forth the appearance of a mild climate. The grapevine tendrils wound from tree to tree and formed delicate arches. The old man greeted us silently and continued with his work. A boy and girl burst out of the second house. Judging from their size, they both seemed to be between fourteen and sixteen years of age and both showed good breeding. Their lively black eyes and dark hair, their warm facial complexion, and their articulate gestures gave them a foreign air in our country. “Wait a minute!” called the boy to Nordheim in Italian, “My sister is bringing you violets.” The girl approached modestly and her restrained vivaciousness gave her whole being a delightful grace. With a pleasant curtsy she gave Nordheim a bouquet of violets and quickly skipped away again. As she hurried away she called to us: “I am hurrying to get flowers for the ladies also.” “No, I want to do that!” the boy called and ran after her. Midway, he turned around and asked Nordheim if he could bring

his flute and his sister's guitar to play music for the ladies. "Please do so when we get to the house, Battista; the ladies are weary at present," replied Nordheim, in spite of the Countess' request not to spoil the children's fun.

When the boy was gone, Nordheim told us that he had dismissed Battista's request out of consideration for his mother who, upset by a strange twist of fate, fled the view of strangers, or endured it only occasionally out of courtesy, but with painful inner struggles. The sister hastened to us with her violets. Battista took one of the bouquets from her and gave it to me with a natural refinement, while his sister gave hers to the Countess. Nordheim gave her his hand in parting, which she impetuously pressed to her lips. We only glimpsed the mother through the window, a noble and expressive face with fading beauty. "You populate your English garden with living residents," said the Countess. "They are more interesting than the bombastic hermits which are found everywhere these days, and the empty farmhouses which a sympathetic heart can only look upon with the thought: Happy people should live here!"

"There is perhaps more coincidence than planning on these grounds" replied Nordheim with a smile. "If our guardian angel means well, he holds our duty before us just when we are at the point of committing folly. You have guessed it, the plan had already been made to create a park in this valley. One house was supposed to be a gothic chapel and the other a Greek temple. A friend with whom I have for many years been in the strictest confidence, recommended to me on his deathbed a singer whom he had supported, and who had lost her exquisite voice due to a severe illness at the birth of his second child. She and her children were left helpless upon the death of my friend, and I had my gothic chapel converted into a simple home for her. The children grew up and revealed talent, and I was at a loss as to their education because I did not wish to separate them from their mother. Then one morning an old tutor of mine arrived who

had served me very well in my youth, and who now, after struggling in vain with fate, was looking for refuge. He possesses diverse and exhaustive knowledge and also has a good way of communicating it. “He should occupy your Greek temple”, I thought. I offered him a modest annual salary, which he accepted with pleasure, and from which he, with true philosophical simplicity, lives quite happily and with the greatest independence. The children have become dear to him and he applies himself faithfully and diligently to their education. I am happy to see a circle of peacefully living people united in this little meadow. When I am here, I spend many pleasant evenings.”

A comfortable path lined with trees led from one side over the back of the cliffs to a drawbridge. A myriad of charming flower beds decorated the cliffs. Only from one side was it quite uncultivated and bent its formless masses, between which wild thickets grew, threateningly over the river. We went over the drawbridge into the spacious courtyard in order to see the inside of the building. The gates were decorated with two coats of arms and all the decoration, in an antique style, it was cleanly cut in stone and of the best workmanship. “I have been very careful,” said Nordheim, “to keep from disrupting the old character of this building through modern patchwork. I often think I hear the language of earlier times within these vaulted halls. I gladly flee from the flat modern world to these rough walls, where only solid and strong forms surround me – even if they are a little flamboyant.” We went through a large room whose main adornments were lifesized family portraits, most of which were painted by fine artists. There was a row of firm honest faces in which strength was the most prominent expression. Coats of arms and titles stood at their feet, and most of them had held offices in the first princely houses in Germany, except for Nordheim’s father and grandfather, who did not possess any titles.

The Countess noticed this and Nordheim told her smiling, “The talents of fortune at court were extinguished here in our family, or constitutions changed and required other talents than we could inherit from our honest ancestors. What should the proud, honorable knight do with French political intrigue? And the courageous and spirited ones despised idle court service. My grandfather noticed which way the winds of the times were blowing and, after he had become acquainted with the world by traveling, he retired to his estate. He again purchased these two villages which you see here along the river. For many years they had belonged to the family, and they were only lost by the most recent owners, because these preferred to play the part of the great servant in the city rather than the lord of their own manor. My grandfather was a wise landlord and a diligent father to his subjects.

“He continuously worked on creating an independent fortune for his posterity, and because his ancestors had thought so little about their posterity, he often was forced to think about them at his own expense. He had a great affinity for magnificence. His tastes were developed in the great cities of Europe, but he subordinated all his pleasures to wise frugality. He lived comfortably but very simply, and forbade all luxury which only indulged opinion without creating real enjoyment of life. His friends were always welcome at his table, but it was never filled with abundance. Every stranger was welcomed in his home. Because he had abandoned all the restraint of vain appearance, things rarely bothered his good temperament, and I still remember that, as a child in my grandfather’s house, I always felt as free as a bird that had been let out of its cage.

“My father lived with the same ideas as my grandfather and was only frequently in S** because he had a friendly relationship with the Monarch.” “And should such an upright, thriving house die out, dearest friend!” said the Countess as she laid her hand on Nordheim’s arm. “If

only a noble son," she continued – but her voice trembled and faltered, and a strange agitation was apparent in her whole being. Her cheeks flushed and tears glistened in her eyes.

Nordheim's eyes fell upon me, just as in that moment in Hohenfels, when he had said to my father, "There is only one thing which I lack, and you can perhaps give it to me!" He took the Countess' hand and mine together and said, "We will leave that to the future, my Dearest Ones!" The Countess' unrest rose ever higher and Nordheim led me to the other side of the room, as though he wished to give her time to collect herself. "Our Agnes must also become acquainted with my foremothers," he said. "Do they not seem to have been gentle, quietly active souls whose glance, accustomed to being confined to a small circle, looks deeply and sharply at the things closest to them? The flower bouquet in their hand or the gold wedding ring on their finger seems to occupy their thoughts, and a sweet memory of their wedding day seems to float in their pure imagination. My grandmother looks around her more freely, but a noble self-assurance is enthroned on her honest brow. She was also a dutiful, prudent wife, who governed the estate for a few years during my father's absence almost without any male assistance, entirely according to her husband's wishes. Everything prospered and progressed happily under her supervision.

"My mother is missing here. You will see her in my room; I enjoy being under her eyes. She also had, as we unfairly express it, a *masculine* spirit. The lovely ability of a feminine mind to discover, as it were, within itself a new area of responsibility in a new, foreign situation, should be seen by us men more as a power dwelling within their gender, rather than being seen by us only as an exception. We are even more unfair in this judgement because we have positive advantages over women, and are decorated with many feathers which, in the end, we owe only to our stronger claws. The advantages of an earlier scientific education and diverse living conditions should be crucial on our side for power of character, for prudence in difficult

situations, if an inner wealth of nature did not truly compensate women. But nature has not favored everyone in this way. Only a few resist through a fortunate predisposition, the power which a false upbringing exercises over them from earliest childhood. The ignorance and lack of character to which they are usually condemned by their circumstances brings forth the most bitter fruits their entire lives, and who must savor such but ourselves? The ruin of many families originates chiefly from the weakness and shortsightedness of the women. Stubborn self-will is the consequence of a restricted mind and usually exists together with childish timidity. The oppressed nature takes revenge; we are the ones who are cheated because we wish it to be so. Because most of us are not able to tolerate and love strength in women, they look only for the widely praised gentleness, and accept it without examining it. Oh how true gentleness, which is the life of every lasting relationship, is unmistakeable in the grace of its expressions! Happy is she who possesses it and who takes pleasure therein. Only from such spirits can we expect clemency, if the original sin of arrogance stirs within us. Ignorant souls use the raw weapons of nature against us –deviousness and subterfuge.”

The Countess approached us; she wanted to take another stroll through the remaining rooms. On both sides of the room were two round towers which were transformed into very pleasant rooms by a few decorations. One served as a parlor, and the other as a library. From the library one went down a row of gracefully furnished rooms, some of which contained excellent collections of copper engravings and a few exquisite paintings. Lastly we found ourselves in a small rotunda which captured light from above, and in which castings of the greatest classical statues were arranged. It was the first time that I had seen these immortal works, in which the purest spirit of art lives on forever, in such perfection.

Fräulein R... with her elderly aunt and both Alban brothers came in the evening. Nordheim had invited them. Julius greeted me with his usual uninhibitedness, but one look from Nordheim, directed towards us, made me think there was something a little too free in his behavior towards me. Out of gratitude for the tender kindness with which he had attended me the previous evening, I forced myself to abandon all restraint towards him in my conduct. I noticed painfully that Nordheim sought every opportunity to bring Julius and me together, like two lovers whose tender relationship is widely known. He spoke much with Julius, gave evidence of pleasure at his knowledge, and at the spirited expression which he gave his very unique ways of perception.

We spent the greater part of the evening in the collection of classical statues, and viewing the beautiful figures put us in an elevated mood.

With Nordheim, our senses and understanding were equally enlivened, and his comments gave me new concepts and purer enjoyment.

Just as every pleasure dissolves into nostalgia, our conversation also ended with the observation that the first happy, beautiful youthful age of art will never return in its fullest brilliance.

Nordheim led me to my room. The glory of the soul seemed to light up his whole being and a strangely sacred quiet was in his character.

“How happy we are,” he said, “when we meet a charming person who, in her lovely unity gives us a sense of the infinite which lives in the classical artistic forms! The purity of the senses knows no bounds, and transforms us with heavenly freedom throughout life. Whatever form fate may give to our relationship,” he said as he grasped my hand, “I am grateful to the vision of you, lovely creature, for a sweeter life!”

I was speechless—my soul dissolved in the purest love. We were suddenly at the door of the room. Elise stood by me and wished us a good night.

“What a beautiful life awaits us, dearest Agnes!” said Elise when we were alone in our room. “Now more than ever I hope with my Agnes to make one family, one household. Julius is more hopeful since yesterday; his love is tender and true. You will be happy with him, just as he and all of us will be inexpressably happy because of you.”

“If only I could, Elise, if only I could love Julius as he deserves!” I replied. “We have often spoken of it,” Elise said after a little reflection. “Your coldness to everything which speaks of love seemed to be a strange phenomenon in a soft and loving heart. Julius asserts that you are of too high and rich a nature for passion, and your tranquility of mind originates, not from a lack of vigor, but rather from the same high tendencies which would multiply his happiness rather than reducing it. I still think,” she continued, smiling, “that the green-eyed monster of jealousy would always guard the golden fruit of wisdom with wide open eyes.” “I do not understand you, Elise,” I replied, a bit hurt by what she had said.

“I know the sacred heart of my dear Agnes,” said Elise, “and know that it is incapable of offending love and trust. I could be certain of the bliss of our Julius at your side. It was a private sorrow between us that gave rise to what I said. Julius was very anxious this whole evening because of the attention and respect which Nordheim paid to you. When Alban and I jokingly reproached him, he said, ‘He would be a dangerous rival, or rather, against a man of such merit there could be no contest.’ Alban comforted Julius with the well known relationship between Nordheim and the Countess.”

“Which is?” I asked with forced coldness.

“Rumor has it that they are secretly married. Rumors are certainly often false, but since the Countess has been a widow for over ten years, and during that time has held Nordheim in the highest confidence, also because since the death of her husband she has had no other lover, there are certainly reasonable grounds for such an assumption. – Oh, you are unwell, dear girl,” Elise cried earnestly. “Your complexion has changed so rapidly! Or did I offend you by my comments about the Countess? Please forgive me, but your coldness towards the lady, which I have often noticed because she is actually very amiable, this misled me just now into saying those things about her with frankness.”

My changing color had a deeper reason than my good Elise supposed. I calmed her, and she soon left me to solitude and reflection.

All of the pleasant magical color with which love illuminated the future for us was extinguished in doubt concerning Nordheim’s affections. I only saw a dark and formless twilight before me, and the effort to work through it was the only thing I truly knew. The greatest necessity for the moment was for me to tear Julius away from his illusions. I wished to confess my love and my anguish to him, and our almost identical situation would bind us in a firm friendship. Julius himself, perhaps driven by his doubts about Nordheim, gave me the opportunity to do this the following morning.

After we had taken breakfast, the company dispersed. The Countess went to her room, Nordheim to his chambers. Elise walked back and forth in the large hall with her friend, and I stayed alone at the piano with Julius. He played one of my favorite sonatas with great dexterity, and then spoke of his love and wishes to be united with me forever.

His face was so pure, so good, so unassumingly hopeful, that I could not withdraw my hand, which he held between both of his. “Oh if you could only attune yourself to my wishes,

dear Agnes,” he cried, “what a happy family we would make! My brother and Elise, our best, closest friends, who think and feel harmoniously with us, would live together with us. And your father would also live with us, would he not? You would banish all that is empty and meaningless from my life. Your great mind would lead all my actions to that which is most beautiful and noble. You yourself should live as freely and carefree as the truth of your beautiful nature dictates. Could you not also be happy, if we are all happy because of you? Oh you must be! Say something, dearest girl.”

The honest efforts of his good natured, genteel soul touched me deeply, but the more tenderness I felt towards this soul, the more I felt that I could not give him my all, and that it would not be right to give myself half-heartedly.

“Oh dearest Agnes, you are moved,” cried Julius. “Speak – but you are silent. Oh, I have misunderstood you, I have offended you!” he cried out painfully and buried his face in his hands. – “No dearest soul,” I said, “No, how could that be possible! – Julius—if only I could— oh if I could only love you above all else, as you deserve!”

“Above all else? My dear Agnes, how could I require that of you? Let us not deceive each other, my dearest. A heart like yours, in which such diverse varieties of strengths develop, such a heart cannot love one man above all else.

“Only do me this one pleasure, allow me to make you as happy as I am able. Your favor is a thousand times more, is deeper, more tender than what other women call love.”

It was a defining moment. The unstable relationship with Nordheim, perhaps only conceived in my mind, hovered before me; and Julius’ pure and tender love pierced my heart. I squeezed his hand more firmly and hid my tear-filled eyes on his shoulder. A noise interrupted us, and I lifted my eyes. Nordheim stood in the doorway, but withdrew as soon as he had come.

Would I not embrace the image of this unequalled, charming man with longing desire forever, even in Julius' faithful heart? This question preoccupied my whole soul. My lips quivered, and I was at a loss for words, and also without clear feelings.

Julius sat with his back towards the door and had not seen Nordheim. He asserted that love for him had touched my heart so deeply. "Oh dearest Agnes," he continued, "only one lovely word from your lips, which will raise the sweet anticipation which I take from this silence into hope! Never have I seen you so moved – is it for me? Yes, it is the tender affection of your soul for mine."

The delusions, through which Julius interpreted my confused feelings to his benefit, were deeply painful for me. I felt that I must be entirely truthful with him, that I must present the state of my heart purely to him, with a total sacrifice of all femininity. He still held my hand, and said gently: "Why do you turn your lovely eyes away from me? Oh Agnes, could you love me?" – "If I did not already love you, I would be able to," I replied with my face turned away from him as my hand pressed his. "Merciful Heavens!" he cried out in tones deepest pain. "Not for me!" After a few moments of the most intense emotion, as his chest heaved in deep anguish and his eyes fought back the tears, he turned again to me as he cried: "And yet for me! Who can rob me of this tender affection which enlivens my soul? Who can take the fervent, faithful concern, which is intertwined with my entire being? Did I not first feel the entire depth of my nature after the force of this love of your all-conquering beauty, which excited all my strength! Yes, I wish to live for you, you shall be my most tender concern, as you could have been my sweetest joy."

"You shall know everything my dear friend," I said to him. "my love and my pain. Oh Julius! Why did a previous impression have to close my heart against to your affections – this impression which may not lead me to happiness?"

When Julius saw that I was determined to make him my confidant he helped me make my confession with that gentle delicacy which guesses one's thoughts before they have formed themselves into words. When I finally had to speak the name of Nordheim, he was shocked, as though he had heard something quite unexpected.

“Your love, dear Agnes, will be bound with suffering,” he said. “The help of friendship can perhaps lighten the worries of your heart. I make a holy vow to be your friend and only *your friend*. I am promising a great deal, but I wish to and will keep this promise.”

How dear Julius was to me at this moment! I promised myself silently to carry his happiness in my heart and always to meet him with unwavering honesty and truth.

“We must join the rest of the party now,” said Julius; “I see that they are already assembling in the garden. If you cannot be mine, dearest Agnes, then in the future I must be more circumspect in my behavior so as not to give the world any false impressions about our relationship. Forgive me for voicing my feelings too loudly up to now. It will not happen again. Only when we are alone will you find my open heart, which is so filled with thoughts of you, expressed upon my lips.”

The party had gathered in a small pavilion. Nordheim looked at me fleetingly when I approached him, as if he wished to save me from embarrassment. He greeted me with the same attention as before, and yet there was a certain cold politeness mixed into his manner, like a strange color, and the sweet trust that had existed between us had disappeared. My heart felt heavy. He seemed to me to be inexpressibly loveable. Even the distance which he maintained towards me hinted at a tender sympathy of his heart for me, which was inevitably hurt by the situation in which he had found me with Julius. Oh how I would have liked to open my whole soul for him to see! Battista and his sister were invited to delight us with their promised music.

Both were gracefully dressed, and their blossoming figures, filled with youthful vigor as they sat under a flowering tree, radiated the magic of their simple heartfelt melodies around them, and this conveyed to all of us an almost ideal mood. The children played a foreign song and the girl infused the whole sense of melting tenderness into the sweet melody. Under the shadow of her wide eyelids and long eyelashes, at times a fiery glance shot forth. It was always aimed at the same object, at Nordheim.

“Bravo, Bettina!” said Nordheim, as he clasped the little girl’s hand and pushed back the black curls which had fallen across her face in the fervor of her song. “When did your mother teach you this little song?”

“Upon my request,” replied Bettina, “she taught it to me a few days ago when we heard that you would be returning.”

“Thank you my child!” said Nordheim pleasantly. Bettina pressed his hand to her lips and hurried away.

“Poor Bettina!” cried the Countess with a sad look as she watched her go.

“Why do you pity Bettina, dear Countess?” asked Nordheim. “I myself am counting on your generosity to ensure the lovely little creature a happy fate.”

“I was not thinking of Bettina’s external circumstances when I pitied her,” said the Countess. “But it certainly does cause me pain to see the young soul already ablaze with the full glow of passion, which she breathed with such touching frankness into her song.” Nordheim replied: “Should we mistrust the great gifts of nature, my friend? That which is most noble rides on the glow of passion.” “Certainly, my friend,” said the Countess. “But when a tall, proud tree, shattered by lightning, falls before our eyes, or a sweet soul dies away in the prime of life, succumbing to the violence of some passion, is not our heart overcome with all the pain of such

destruction? Particularly,” she added, “when our own painful fate teaches us to recognize the inner feelings of the person in her most secret depths?”

The ladies went to their room to dress. I took Bettina with me. The lovely creature, full of youthfulness and life, attracted me, and the intimate true tones of nature in her affection for Nordheim perhaps contributed quite a bit to increasing the appeal which her entire being had for me.

At first she was quiet and reserved, but when she felt that I meant well and was loyal to her, she chatted pleasantly and easily about her home life, her activities and her circumstances. “My mother,” she said among other things, “talks about finding accommodations for me in a good house in the city, where in time, I would probably find a good man and in this way ease the concerns of our benefactor for us. It is presumptuous, she says, to burden him with our entire existence.

“I believe she is right, but ...” The poor little one burst into a flood of tears. I told her to remain calm; Nordheim was too kind to compel her to take steps to which she was not inclined. He himself would not consent to let her mother rob herself of the joy of seeing her. “Oh, what comfort you have given me!” she declared vivaciously. Her beautiful black eyes looked towards heaven; she put her hands over the cross about her neck and pressed it firmly to her breast. “My whole life will be poured out in prayer for the happiness of the kindest, most noble man,” she continued, “Oh I am indebted to him for everything! What more can I do for him! – If I were like my brother, if I had enough strength in my arms to break a horse, if I could shoot and wield weapons, I would never leave his side. I would follow him on journeys as his squire, I would remain with him though all dangers, and no accident should befall him. If he were wounded or sick, I would not leave his bedside. My mother has taught me how to bind wounds and care for

the sick. Oh, and how careful I would be! No one but I would touch him; and no one else would watch at his bedside, so that his sleep would not be driven away from his beloved eyelids by any careless movement.”

A glowing red flush spread across her face; only then did she realize that she had revealed her innermost feelings to me.

The beautiful inclinations of a mind capable of strong, deep impressions, which unfolded themselves so sweetly in her discourse, instilled in me a heartfelt affection for her. I promised her love and care for her future life, and she delighted in the hope of writing to me often.

Through a messenger from the city I received the following letter: A person who is very important to you wishes to receive a few lines from you. Ideally she wishes for an answer to the last question which she asked you before the moment of your departure chimed. In the midnight hour you will find a trusted messenger ready and waiting. He will wait for you through every night that you remain at this residence, by the hedgerow right across from the little gate that leads into the garden. Wait until time and circumstances present the most opportune moment for you.

Johannes Ch.

I hurried to write to my mother immediately, and spent every moment of the day with this when I could steal away unnoticed from the company. In regards to the question of whether I already had felt a vibrant affection for some man, I replied: The joy and hope of my life are fastened through love *on one* beloved person, and if fate were to separate me from him, then I wish to live unmarried solely for my dear mother and my father in Hohenfels.

Nordheim received an unexpected visit from the Prince, who due to a meeting with his sister, was staying for a few days in a summer palace in the area.

The Prince combined a handsome figure with an engaging demeanor. Through his lengthy sojourn in foreign countries, the sharpest edges which power and flattery of necessity create in a character, had been polished off. His behavior was simple and genteel, and yet on some minor occasions it was revealed to be nothing but acquired manner. People approached him without feeling that trust which only a beautiful nature, only a benevolent soul, is able to inspire. The Prince's affection for Nordheim expressed itself animatedly. The way he struggled for Nordheim's respect and strove to detect approval or censure in his eyes was palpable.

While the gentlemen looked around in the more distant gardens, the Countess went to her room and asked me to accompany her. As soon as we were alone, she said: "Dearest girl, among people who are not strangers, but rather, who through the same love of beautiful and good things are intertwined with each other, sooner or later there comes a moment of profound convergence, if hostile circumstances do not come between them. I wanted to wait for that moment between us, because it is with affection as it is with certain fruits, which, when they come to the exact moment of ripeness, fall of their own accord most beautifully into our hands. The web of strange misunderstandings which threatens to develop between us changed my resolve. Dear child, I feel that my more experienced hand must divide these tangled threads and preserve in our minds the beautiful integrity and clarity for which we were both born. Oh Agnes, life is short, and we lose the greatest part of it through misunderstanding. I not only wish to spare myself every reproach of fate, lovely child, but even more to bring sweet calmness into my soul, because I protected a gracious spirit from strife within itself. I do not seek to know the secrets of your heart, but receive from me the assurance that Nordheim will never be mine.

“In unfavorable circumstances the youth of my life, at my heart I rescued only ruins and these cannot create complete happiness for a man who was able to preserve for himself the beautiful grace of youthful feelings. I do not deny that I believe it to be my enviable lot to live in the deepest, most peaceful relationship with the most lovable man. But the candor of this confession can also vouch for the truth of my assurance to you, if you and I otherwise should need it. “Dear soul,” she said tenderly and embraced me, “remain certain within yourself that you have loved him; and when one has once loved him – can she ever break her heart away from him again? My situation was unhappy and strange, and my state of mind became the same. A free and beautiful vision of life was lost to me early; I must atone for the debts of my own heart and am only able to maintain my inner peace with the strictest vigilance over myself. My existence is struggle and labor. Now enough, dear, leave me and believe with certainty that I do not stand in the way of your happiness.” I sank mutely into Amalie’s arms; her words had seized my heart, and I was filled with respect and compassion.

Even more than her words, an unspeakable expression of the deepest suffering, which appeared for the first time before me in her face, opened my soul with deep affection for her. Under the dominion of worldly customs, she had grown accustomed to covering her sorrow with a veil of lightheartedness, which fell from her at this moment of heartfelt confidentiality.

“Poor Amalie!” I said in my innermost heart. “Out of which painful confusion our fate is to resolve itself, I do not yet comprehend!” —

The gentlemen soon came back from their walk, and the party assembled for tea. The Prince spoke with candor about his current and future circumstances. “I hope,” he said, “in such an animated circle of good people to remain a good person, and to find relaxation and enjoyment with you after discharging my responsibilities. I hope,” he continued, “that you will also find my

sister worthy of sharing the pleasure of your company. She is a good, amiable creature, and enlivened by the grace of her company, my court will take on a more charming form.” He showed the Countess a portrait of the Princess, and afterwards also Elise and me. These features caught me with such force! The fading recollection of the characteristics of my mother awoke in my soul— I trembled, blushed and hid my emotions from the eyes of the company only with the greatest effort. The Prince, who stood closest to me, sought to read my reaction with his searching eyes. My imagination transformed the soft, lovely lines in this portrait of the Princess into the tender, passionate glance of my mother and the pure proportions of her figure, which constantly hovered in my mind.

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