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Tell-Tale Elusiveness:
A Study of the Narrative in
Goethe's *Die
Wahlverwandtschaften*

Alison Summers

PhD Thesis

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ABSTRACT

This Thesis offers a detailed analysis of Goethe's novel, *Die Wahlverwandtschaften*. It argues that the narrator of the novel is a complex entity, whose performance shifts between the disincarnate, un-personalized voice and the involved, personalized teller of the tale. It is suggested that the narrator makes his presence felt through generalizations and comments, and through the existence of a judgmental tone and reflective voice. A detailed reading of the episodes of narrative presence is undertaken.

Central to this thesis is the contention that the narrative style does not remain constant, and the various implications of narrative presence and absence are examined. The interpolated texts within the novel are studied. The reader registers the gaps in the text precisely because such a strong voice has, at times, been heard, and it is this void which is shown to provide the reader with an invitation to interpret and question both the text and the process of patterning by the narrator and by the character themselves. The thesis enters into a debate with Gordon Burgess' *A Computer Assisted Analysis of Goethe's Die Wahlverwandtschaften* and his claim that the narrator is a manipulative character is challenged.

John Banville's *The Newton Letter* is offered as an example of sophisticated intertextual reference and debate between literary works separated by almost two centuries. The issue of the experimenter as on the one hand separate from and on the other implicated in his experiment is discussed. In conclusion, it is argued that the shifting narrative performance in *Die Wahlverwandtschaften* is the key to the enduring appeal of the novel.

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EDITIONS USED:

Reference to Goethe's *Die Wahlverwandtschaften* throughout are given in parentheses following the quotation from volume 6 of the Hamburger Ausgabe –

Goethe Werke, ed. by Erich Trunz, 14 vols (Munich: DTV, 1982)

Identical with 12th edition of the Hamburger Ausgabe (Munich: Beck, 1981)

References to Burgess throughout are given in parentheses following the quotation and are from:

Gordon J. A Burgess, *A Computer Assisted Analysis of Goethe's 'Die Wahlverwandtschaften' . The Enigma of Elective Affinities* (Studies in German Language and Literature vol. 23), (Mellen, Lewiston, Queenston, Lampeter: Edwin Mellen Press, 2000)

References to Banville's *The Newton Letter* are given in parentheses following the quotation and are from:

The Newton Letter (London: Secker and Warburg, 1982)

CONTENTS

Chapter 1	The Interpretative Minefield	1
Chapter 2	Narrative Performance and Narrative Persona	23
Chapter 3	Narrative Presence	28
Chapter 4	Narrative Absence	153
Chapter 5	Conclusion	203
Bibliography		210

CHAPTER I

THE INTERPRETATIVE MINEFIELD

Over the past two hundred years, an intense critical debate has surrounded *Die Wahlverwandtschaften*. Some commentators have condemned the novel as being immoral, incomprehensible, badly written and scandalous, whereas others have praised its stylistic complexities, its understanding of human nature, and its depth. The controversy continues as to the comprehension and evaluation of Goethe's text, with no consensus being reached. In one sense, it is not surprising that a major work of imaginative literature should, over the years, attract very different readings. Indeed one could almost argue that it is the hallmark of the major work that it generates a protracted and controversial after-life. But, even so, there are differences of degree. And, as I think emerges from the following discussion of reactions to *Die Wahlverwandtschaften*, the sheer divergence of opinion as to what the novel actually means is remarkable. And that uncertainty of critical response has, in my view, centrally to do with the ambiguity of the narrative performance that sustains the novel.

On its first publication, the novel elicited forthright reactions. These were mostly concerned with the morality of the text, opponents claiming that it attacked aspects of Christian culture, in particular marriage and canonization, with supporters maintaining that it upheld the victory of reason over the uncontrollable dictates of desire. Of those criticising it for its depravity, Friedrich Schlegel considers it to be an immoral text, because of its negative treatment of marriage,¹ as does the Protestant

¹Friedrich Schlegel, 'Über Liebe und Ehe in Beziehung auf Goethe's *Wahlverwandtschaften*', *Oesterrischer Beobachter*, Vienna, 21 May 1810, Beilage 11 zu Nr. 35. (repr. in *Die*

scholar and writer Joseph Gustav de Valenti twenty years later. He believes that the chemical theory indicates that it is purely sexual impulse which determines which pairs will remain together, and he holds that the entire book is irreligious.² The other major point of disagreement during Goethe's life concerns the style of the writing. Wieland calls the novel a 'Mischmasch', written purely for financial gain and castigates the description of the 'doppelter Ehebruch' as being unworthy of Goethe.³ Rehberg, among others, feels that Goethe is no longer writing for the discerning literary public, the educated few, but has sacrificed the quality of his writing to popular success. His essay in the *Allgemeine Literatur Zeitung* of 1810 marked the start of a plethora of conservative attacks on Goethe and his works.⁴ Rehberg mostly finds fault with Goethe's style, his lack of distinction in modes of register for the different characters, but, as Tantillo remarks,⁵ he is most disparaging of the novel when he suggests that Charlotte should grant Eduard a divorce, because she 'hatte gute Gründe im Überflusse, sich in die Einsamkeit zurück zu ziehen'; he goes on to argue that after her marriage to Eduard, Ottilie should form a 'Verhältnis' with the Architect, which would, after Eduard's death, be her punishment as, in the spirit of 'poetische Gerechtigkeit', the Architect would fall out of love with her.⁶ Other writers also expressed their dislike of the text, although without resorting to publication. According to Leopold von Gerlach, Tieck allegedly called it 'Qualverwandtschaften'

Wahlverwandtschaften: Eine Dokumentation der Wirkung von Goethes Roman 1808-1832 ed. Heinz Härtl (Weinheim: Acta humaniora, 1983), p.113. Further references to this work will be to Härtl.

² Ernst Joseph Gustav de Valenti, 'Über Goethes *Wahlverwandtschaften*', *Evangelische Kirchen-Zeitung*, No.57-61, 16-30 July 1831, ed.by Ernst Wilhelm Hengstenberg (Härtl, pp.341-75).

³ Christopher Martin Wieland, letter to Karl August Böttiger, 16 July 1810, Weimar (Härtl, pp.164-165).

⁴ 'Rezension über die *Wahlverwandtschaften*' (Härtl, pp. 224-32).

⁵ Astrida Orle Tantillo, *Goethe's 'Elective Affinities' and the Critics* (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2001), p.17. Further references to this work will be to Tantillo.

⁶ Rehberg (Härtl, p.106).

and the Grimm brothers found the majority of it simply boring.⁷ By contrast, Charlotte von Schiller was delighted with it, believing it increased Goethe's reputation as a literary genius, and Zelter wrote to Goethe 'ich möchte des Teufels werden daß ich keine solche Zeile schreiben kann.'⁸

Böttiger approved of *Die Wahlverwandtschaften*, as did Abeken, who wrote that the novel was indeed moral, as it demonstrated the ability of the human subject to rise above natural laws by overcoming them. In his discussion of Otilie, he invokes the notion of tragedy, stating that those who cannot overcome the strength of those natural laws will become tragic figures, as she does.⁹ Solger places the novel in the context of contemporary philosophy and argues that, in contrast to the ancient ideas of fate, Goethe insists on individual duty.¹⁰

Goethe's own comments on the novel emphasise its complexity. Although Eckermann reports 'Von seinen Wahlverwandtschaften, sagte [Goethe], daß darin kein Strich enthalten, der nicht erlebt, aber kein Strich so wie er erlebt worden', Goethe clearly felt that this was not germane to the understanding of the novel.¹¹ He remarked to Wieland in 1809 that *Die Wahlverwandtschaften* should be read at least three times before the reader could begin to understand it. He wrote to Cotta that there was much hidden in the work which should inspire multiple readings of it. He reiterated this to Eckermann, saying that there was more than one interpretation to the text; and he predicted to Reinhard that the novel's meaning would remain incomprehensible for

⁷ Wilhelm Grimm wrote to Jacob on 28 October and the 22 November, 1809 that he found the first half boring, whilst Ludwig Grimm nearly fell asleep while it was being read aloud; Wilhelm Grimm, *Briefwechsel zwischen Jacob und Wilhelm Grimm aus der Jugendzeit*, ed. by Herman Grimm und Gustav Hinrichs (Weimar: Böhlau, 1963) (Tantillo, p.7). Ludwig Emil Grimm, *Erinnerungen aus meinem Leben (1794-1823)* (Leipzig 1913) (Härtl, p.213).

⁸ Karl Friedrich Zelter (Berlin, 1809) (Härtl, pp.65-66).

⁹ Bernhard Rudolf Abeken, 'Über Goethes *Wahlverwandtschaften*' (Fragmente aus einem Briefe) (Tübingen:1810) (Härtl, pp.121-27).

¹⁰ Karl Willhelm Solger, 'Über die *Wahlverwandtschaften*' (Leipzig 1826) (Härtl pp.199-202).

¹¹ Goethe, *Gespräche mit Eckermann* (Zurich: Artemis, 1948), XXIV, p.395.

years.¹² This is, of course, the case, and after Goethe's death, as we shall see, the critics often turned to the author's life to achieve a clear-cut understanding of *Die Wahlverwandtschaften*.

Rötscher is commonly credited with having written the first academic review of the novel after Goethe's death, in which he states that a positive moral lesson can be learned from the text.¹³ Grillparzer argues that Goethe has produced 'ein unendliches Meisterstück',¹⁴ and in the same year Weiße wrote of the textual symbolism in a remark that feels strikingly modern – that it was the 'Ausdruck einer sprachlichen Leerstelle'.¹⁵ Gervinus finds fault with the Romantic style of the novel,¹⁶ and although Hebbel praised the dramatic quality of the novel, he was critical of how Goethe negatively presented the social institutions of his time.¹⁷ Rosenkranz shifts the criticism somewhat, as he emphasizes love rather than morality, and finds the novel to be written in such a way as not to give offence even to the most delicate of readers.¹⁸ Julian Schmidt gives the highest praise to the first part of *Die Wahlverwandtschaften*, but finds fault with Ottilie's diary entries, the 'adultery' chapter, and the pace of the second half.¹⁹ The excessive objectivity of the narration, he claims, makes the reader emotionally ill-equipped to deal with the closing chapters. What is interesting about

¹² Goethe, Letter to Cotta, 1 October 1809; Letter to Reinhard, 31 December 1809 (Tantillo, p.xx).

¹³ Heinrich Theodor Rötscher, 'Die Wahlverwandtschaften von Goethe in ihrer weltgeschichtlichen Bedeutung, ihrem sittlichen und künstlerischen Werthe nach entwickelt', in *Abhandlung zur Philosophie der Kunst* 2, (Berlin: Duncker und Humbolt, 1838) (Tantillo, pp.53-57).

¹⁴ Franz Grillparzer, Diary entry (1841) Entry No: 3538. in *Sämtliche Werke*. vol. 10 (Vienna: Kunstverlag Anton Schroll & Co., 1909) (Tantillo, p.50).

¹⁵ Christian Hermann Weiße, 1841 'Über Goethes *Wahlverwandtschaften* und ihre neuesten Beurteilungen', in *Blätter für literarische Unterhaltung in Kleine Schriften zur Aesthetik und ästhetischen Kritik* (Leipzig: Breitkopf und Härtel, 1867) (Tantillo, pp.56-58).

¹⁶ Georg Gottfried Gervinus, *Geschichte der deutschen Dichtung V: Neuere Geschichte der poetischen National-Literatur der Deutschen. Zweiter Teil: Von Göthes Jugend bis zur Zeit der Befreiungskriege* (Leipzig: Engelmann, 1842) (Tantillo, pp.58-61).

¹⁷ Hebbel wrote that the marriage was 'eine von Haus aus nichtige, ja unsittliche Ehe'. 'Vorwort zur Maria Magdalena, (1844) In *Friedrich Hebbel: Werke*. vol. 1 (Munich: Carl Hanser Verlag, 1963). pp.307-38 (p.309).

¹⁸ Karl Rosenkranz, *Göthe und seine Werke* (Königsberg: Bornträger, 1847) (Tantillo, pp.55-57).

¹⁹ Julian Schmidt, *Geschichte der Deutschen Literatur seit Lessings Tod* (4th Ed. Leipzig: Friedrich Ludwig Herbig, 1858) (Tantillo, pp.60-63).

Schmidt's comments is that they criticize Goethe himself. He complains that Goethe puts forward details and facts but never offers the reader any judgment or views. This later becomes one of the main bones of contention in twentieth century criticism, but then it is not Goethe who is criticised or examined, but rather the narrator. However, in the early period, author and narrator are not separated; every fact of the narrative performance is identified with Goethe himself. The narrator is an unknown quantity.

The propensity for biographies in the following years generated many analyses of Goethe's life which endeavoured to show that both he and his works were moral. From 1855 (George Lewes) to 1916 (Friedrich Gundolf) there were many biographers; Hermann Grimm (1877), Bielschowsky, Meyer, Wolff and Heinemann (all published in 1895), followed by Wittowski in 1899, with Engel (1909) and Brandes (1915) being some of the last of this particular phase of Goethe reception. Grimm argued that Goethe was endeavouring to teach himself the danger of not respecting the marriage vows. Bielschowsky finds the novel highly moral, seeing in it Goethe's reprimanding himself over his love for Minna Herzlieb. Brandes, however, cites Nature as being the all-powerful agency at work in the novel.²⁰ A negative review, written by Baumgartner (1882), finds the novel sacrilegious and Otilie anything but a saintly figure.²¹

However in the early twentieth century an attempt was made to break from biographical references; and Walzel, François-Poncet and Hárník achieve this by examining the text in terms of historical details, the contemporary social context and psychoanalysis respectively. Walter Benjamin's 1921 essay on *Die Wahlverwandtschaften* 'seeks to sever the author's life and intentions from the work'

²⁰ Tantilto, pp.68-78.

²¹ Alexander Baumgartner, *Goethe: Sein Leben und seine Werke*, 3 vols (Freiberg: Herder'sche Verlagshandlung, 1882) (Tantilto, pp. 80-82).

and provides the reader with a new kind of approach to the novel.²² He finds fault with many of the previous critics, especially the biographer Friedrich Gundolf. Gundolf claimed to be able to understand Goethe's life by looking at his writings, but maintained that he did so in the service of a spiritual biography, stating that the characters were 'cosmic beings' rather than 'psychological' ones.²³ Walter Benjamin strongly disagrees with this, stating that Gundolf 'versenkt sich [...] in die Welt der Sachgehalte des Goetheschen Lebens, in denen er doch nur vorgeblich dessen Wahrheitsgestalt darstellen kann. Denn menschliches Leben läßt sich nicht nach Analogie eines Kunstwerks betrachten.'²⁴ He maintains that the Novelle *Die Wunderlichen Nachbarskinder* is of utmost importance in understanding the novel, and accordingly delves deep into an interpretation of this section of the text. Above all else, he turns away from biographical approaches to the text. Benjamin maintains that appreciation and comprehension of the work of art is not dependent on the author and his life, and it is the reader's response which is of greater importance. He, like many others, stated that the novel was not about marriage, but rather about the decline and decay of that society, which is highlighted by the various symbols in the text. In fact, Benjamin is the first critic to concentrate on the many symbols of death in *Die Wahlverwandtschaften*. He also removes the characters from culpability in the moral sense, indicating that we should look at the situation in its totality, and recognize that the book is neither moral nor immoral but, rather, that a particular notion of fatality is central to Goethe's narrative.

²² Tantilillo, p.115.

²³ Friedrich Gundolf, *Goethe* (Berlin: Bondi, 1916, repr.1918), p.559.

²⁴ Walter Benjamin, 'Goethes *Wahlverwandtschaften*' in Walter Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften* ed. by Rolf Tiedemann and Hermann Schweppenhäuser, 7 vols (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1972-89), I,i: *Abhandlungen* (1974), p.161.

Nevinson challenges Benjamin's argument, claiming that the theme of *Die Wahlverwandtschaften* is indeed marriage and its problems, and praises Goethe for presenting the reader with an accurate social picture of life at that time. However, he reverts to the previous analytical critical model which makes no distinction between Goethe and the narrator; he criticizes the author for Otilie's diary entries, claiming that they are there 'partly to fill up space and allow the due time to pass' and, as if to justify his claim that Goethe wrote the novel 'in defence of himself,' he states that Goethe 'placed among [Otilie's] brief notes some of his own wise sayings, far beyond the capacity of the fragile girl'.²⁵ It was left to Hankamer to commence the study of the narrator's role in *Die Wahlverwandtschaften* criticism.²⁶ Although he does not separate him entirely from the author, he nevertheless 'highlights the narrator's ironic stance'.²⁷

The post-war critics, however, did begin to examine the narrator as a separate entity. Commentators drew attention to the symbolism, the patternings, and the layers of meaning at work in the text. Stöcklein, Kreutzer and Barnes attempt to personify the narrator, and von Wiese, Lange, Staiger and Barnes insist on the ambiguity of the text. Hatfield makes no mention of the narrator: he still refers to the author as being the controlling, audible voice, although he does examine the role of the reader in *Die Wahlverwandtschaften*'s earlier reception. Finally it is with the publication of Paul Stöcklein's 'Stil und Sinn der *Wahlverwandtschaften*' in 1949 that the reader is obliged to confront the narrator as an all-important component of the novel's rhetoric. Barnes recognized that Stöcklein was the first critic to take the function of the narrator

²⁵ Henry Nevinson, *Goethe: Man and Poet* (London: Nisbet & Co, 1932), p. 197.

²⁶ Paul Hankamer, *Spiel der Mächte: Ein Kapitel aus Goethes Leben und Goethes Welt* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1943).

²⁷ Tantillo, p.161.

seriously and to assess its effect on the novel.²⁸ Stöcklein not only speaks of a narrator, but also gives us a physical description of him.²⁹ He even suggests that the narrator has caricatured himself 'mit Humor' (15) in the novel as the English Lord's companion. Stöcklein talks of his 'analytische, fast wissenschaftlich-lehrhafte, kühl anti-romantische Erzählweise' (9) and indeed, the characters are depicted as if they were elements in a scientific experiment because they are presented 'wie unter Glas', 'so kühl, klar und fein.' Throughout the novel we can feel the narrator's presence, and his rule in writing appears to be 'Sachlichkeit' (12). He praises his style of writing, indicating that his 'lebenskundlichen und philosophischen Bonmots und Betrachtungen mehr rhythmisch gesetzt zu sein scheinen als aus lehrhaften oder bekenndem Drange' (12). We feel him to be a sympathetic character to whom we are drawn and whom we should trust; he is attached to his characters and even shows them 'eine fast väterliche Ironie' (74). As opposed to later critics who find a distance between the narrator and the reader in the method of nomenclature, Stöcklein tells us that it is the narrator's discretion which prevents him from revealing the true names of the characters (15). He tackles earlier criticism of a lack of difference in the characters' registers by saying that the narrator incorporates the quoted speeches into

²⁸ H.G. Barnes, Goethe's *'Die Wahlverwandtschaften': A Literary Interpretation* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1967) p.24. All further references to this work will be to 'Barnes, *Literary Interpretation*'.

²⁹ Paul Stöcklein, *Die Wahlverwandtschaften: Wege zum späten Goethe* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1970), pp.9-81. All further references in this paragraph are shown in parentheses directly after the quotation. He writes that the narrator is 'ein grauhaariges, gepflegtes, vornehmes, faltengeprägtes Gesicht, fraglos noch aus dem achtzehnten Jahrhundert, dem eleganten und rationalen, vergleichbar dem Abbé aus den 'Unterhaltungen', doch weitläufiger, härter und geheimnisvoller' (p.11). He is not alone in presenting the narrator as a physical character. Jakob Wassermann in his introduction to the novel in 1909, wrote that 'Es ist, als säße ein Mann unter uns, ja, mitten unter uns, der von wunderbaren Ereignissen mit einer wunderbaren Stimme und in wunderbarer Eindringlichkeit erzählt; aber trotz des zauberhaften Bannes, in den er uns schlägt, können wir ihn mit Augen nicht sehen. Wir sehen nur das, was er erzählt, denn während er erzählt, schwindet er in den Gestalten dahin, löst sich in ihnen auf, spricht aus ihnen, handelt mit ihnen. Dies versetzte uns keineswegs in Unruhe, es befriedigt uns. Die Worte sind nicht mehr die unseres Umgangs, sondern sie sind durch eine unbegreifliche Kunst in eine höhere Region übertragen; sie sind neu, in ihrer Fügung wird alles zur Melodie; sie sind fremd; desungeachtet nah, näher als die andern, an denen wir müde und träge geworden sind.' Jacob Wassermann, 'Vorrede zu Goethes *'Die Wahlverwandtschaften'* in *Goethes Roman 'Die Wahlverwandtschaften'*, ed. by Ewald Rösch (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1975), pp.90-97 (p.96).

his own stylistic level, and that this benefits the novel because, for example, it adds to Ottilie's naivety because it 'bricht sich reizend fremd in diesem alten Mund bricht' (13).

Although Stöcklein's description of the narrator's physical appearance may be questionable, his essay created the urgently required distance between Goethe the author and the narrator, thus allowing for a sustained discussion of the narrator and the narrative perspective. And the issue of the narrative mode was placed firmly on the map. In part this belonged to a longer tendency in literary criticism as a whole. Two major studies deserve mention in this context, although neither of them specifically addresses *Die Wahlverwandtschaften*. Wayne Booth creates deeper analytical models and ideas on narrative theory and practice:

Narration is an art, not a science, but this does not mean that we are necessarily doomed to fail when we attempt to formulate principles about it. There are systematic elements in every art, and criticism of fiction can never avoid the responsibility of trying to explain technical successes and failures by reference to general principles.³⁰

He differentiates between the author and the narrator, and argues that the 'art of constructing reliable narrators is largely that of mastering all of oneself in order to project the *persona*, the second self, that really belongs in the book'.³¹ Scholes and Kellogg continue with Booth's analysis of the narrator, providing us with a clear explanation of the importance for any understanding of the novel of viewing the narrator as an entity in his/her own rhetorical right:

In any example of narrative art there are, broadly speaking, three points of view – those of the characters, the narrator, and the audience. As narrative becomes more sophisticated, a fourth point of view is added by the development of a clear distinction between the narrator and the author. Narrative irony is a function of disparity among these three or four viewpoints.³²

³⁰ Wayne C. Booth, *The Rhetoric of Fiction* (London: University of Chicago Press, 1961), p.164.

³¹ Booth, p.83.

³² Robert Scholes and Robert Kellogg, *The Nature of Narrative* (New York: OUP, 1966), p.240.

They explain that the writer can 'add an important level of complexity and of potential irony to his story' and this is done by 'the introduction of a self-conscious narrator and an opening of ironic distance between him on one side and the author and audience on the other'.³³

Benno von Wiese writes in 1951 that *Die Wahlverwandtschaften* is the supreme example of Goethe's writing in the symbolic mode and that it is 'das undurchdringlichste und vielleicht vieldeutigste Buch, das Goethe geschrieben hat'.³⁴ He examines the irony of the narrator, speaks of his pathos and talks of the 'rätselhafte Gelassenheit und geheime Ironie des Erzählers' (672). He describes how the narrator enters the text in a discreet manner, 'mit lebenswürdiger Skepsis, mit gesellschaftlicher Verhaltenheit' (672) but at decisive moments withdraws, leaving the reader on his own. Wiese believes that the narrator draws the reader into the text, and in so doing, makes the reader see the 'Rätsel' of his life in the characters' own. He accuses the narrator of being neither willing nor able to solve the mysteries, and at the end he speaks 'mit einer dichterischen Zeichensprache' (673). Even when the narrator does reflect, he does not attempt to interpret or explain events or symbols. For von Wiese, then, the narrator is indeed a complex figure, one whose presence is felt, but on whom we cannot rely.

Staiger draws attention to the narrator's own affinity with Ottilie which makes him an unreliable witness, for it is in passages connected with the young girl that the most misunderstandings occur.³⁵ However, it is not only those passages that are problematic: 'Schon die ersten Kapitel regen ein tiefes Mißtrauen in uns auf. Wir

³³ Scholes and Kellogg, p.53.

³⁴ Benno von Wiese, 'Nachwort' HA 6, pp.672-688, (p.672). Further references are given in brackets.

³⁵ Emil Staiger, '*Die Wahlverwandtschaften*' in *Goethe*, vol. II (Zurich and Freiburg: Atlantis, 1956) pp.475-516, (p.487). All further references in this paragraph in parentheses directly following the quotations. See also W.J.Lillyman 'Affinity, Innocence and Tragedy: The Narrator and Ottilie in Goethe's *Die Wahlverwandtschaften*', *GQ*, 53 (1980), 46-63.

glauben zu verstehen und finden uns alsbald gründlich widerlegt durch eine unerwartete Wendung, verwirrt durch ein rätselhaftes Motiv'(477). He believes that we must be wary from the outset, and although the narrative abounds in commentary and aphorisms, they are not to be found at points where they would offer genuine enlightenment. Staiger, like Benjamin, believes that any understanding is to be found in the symbols. However, Staiger believes that notions of fate and predestination are generated by the narrator (496), and indeed, the narrator himself gives the impression that, in his pain over Ottilie's death, he plays with the 'Möglichkeit einer himmlischen Hoffnung' (508). Staiger finds that the narrator presents us with shifting ground; the reader is never allowed to relax, as the narrative opinions stated and the questions raised are undermined by him later on in the text.

This ambiguity of intention and understanding is a key concept in post-war criticism of *Die Wahlverwandtschaften*, and Barnes's 1959 essay is the first major work of this school.³⁶ He views the novel as presenting a contrast 'between the world of society with its conventional morality and an ideal world in which no social or moral obstacle hinders the expression of true love'. ('Ambiguity' 1) In so doing, the narrator employs irony, used in the 'traditional way', but also irony which is 'directed against the heroine as though to cast doubt on the very qualities which the author wishes to celebrate' ('Ambiguity'12), and he goes on to say that this is 'an ironic device to present this child as innocently destroying Eduard and Charlotte's marriage' (*Literary Interpretation* 204). In fact, he suggests that the 'wide use of irony [...] explains the puzzling nature of much of [Goethe's] narrative. Important facts are sometimes withheld from the reader and a misleading impression is thereby conveyed.' (*Literary*

³⁶ H.G.Barnes, 'Ambiguity in *Die Wahlverwandtschaften*', in *The Era of Goethe: Essays presented to James Boyd* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1959), pp.1-16 (p.1). All further references to this essay will be given as Barnes, 'Ambiguity', all references in this paragraph shown in parentheses directly following the quotations, as ('Ambiguity').

Interpretation 26-27) Barnes suggests a possible solution as to why the narrator does not elucidate the events, and why, indeed, he fails to present the reader with full information. Barnes writes that ‘the fiction is that the narrator is telling a true story, he is not able to elucidate the mystery as might for instance the conventionally omniscient author’ (‘Ambiguity’ 11). He goes on to justify omissions as he claims that the narrator ‘cannot fully explain what he is relating and the structure of the plot is marked by strict economy, which means the exclusion of everything that has no direct bearing on the action’ (‘Ambiguity’ 11). Barnes sees the narrator as a character in his own right, a ‘moralistic’ and ‘un-romantic’ self (*Literary Interpretation* 13-14] who views Eduard in a negative light, whilst allowing Charlotte her emotional faults without passing judgment. He criticizes the narrator’s perspective, making it clearly distinct from Goethe. However, he also views the narrator as a ‘penetrating psychologist’ (*Literary Interpretation* 7) who ‘colours the narrative’ has a heightened sense of narratorial style (*Literary Interpretation* 8) and ‘is fond of making generalizing reflections to add authenticity or significance to his tale’ (*Literary Interpretation* 7). He makes a clear distinction between Goethe and the narrator, but still attributes much of the narrative persona to the author. He remarks that as Goethe aged, his scepticism with regard to love increased and we are witness to this changing viewpoint in *Die Wahlverwandtschaften*:

This scepticism is powerfully stylised by the author’s use of a narrator-persona, one of whose functions seems to be to cast doubt on the absolute value of love by raising conventional or worldly objections to what might be termed the message of the novel. Thus [Goethe] comments, ‘Denn so ist die Liebe beschaffen, daß sie allein recht zu haben glaubt und alle anderen Rechte vor ihr verschwinden’ (*Literary Interpretation* 4)³⁷

Barnes clearly admires Goethe and his construction of the narrator; ‘the author achieves his aim by making the narrator use a plethora of words to veil the mystery of

³⁷ German text from *Die Wahlverwandtschaften*, p. 322.

his story' (*Literary Interpretation* 11). He also finds that the strength of the novel is to be found in 'the structural principles of the narrative' namely 'the contrast between the attitude of the narrator and the tendency of the fable. The tension arising from a romantic story in the mouth of an un-romantic narrator lends *Die Wahlverwandtschaften* its peculiar interest' (*Literary Interpretation* 4). Barnes treats the narrator as different from, but not entirely separate from, the author.

Reiss also praises the style of the novel and its symbolic qualities³⁸, and finds that it is easy to be deceived on first reading as 'the transparency of the style conceals the depth and value of the thought' (145). However, he disagrees with Barnes's view of the narrator, finding him to be 'detached' (153) and 'insightful' (155). He feels that the narrator's function should be 'to analyse the experiences of the several characters and their relations to one another' (155). His detachment is also seen through his use of aphorisms and reflections, which 'stand out from the course of the action as if they were general laws of life, permitting us to gauge events and experiences' (155). Although the narrator tells the reader very little of external events - Reiss draws the reader's attention to the fact that any information about the world outside the estate is not given by the narrator³⁹ - this is not seen as a flaw by Reiss. In fact, he writes, 'as a result, the novel gains in intensity and avoids the dispersion of attention which would result from a plethora of irrelevant information' (151). Although Reiss disagrees with Barnes's analysis of the narrator's personality, he does endorse his perception of the text's ambiguity. Reiss calls it 'the most perplexing quality' (152) of *Die Wahlverwandtschaften*, that 'simple statements and clear-cut events do not mean what they first signified or adumbrated. While the development of the action appears to

³⁸ Hans Reiss, *Goethe's Novels* (London: Macmillan, 1969), pp.145-222, German edition published in 1963. All further references in this paragraph given in parentheses directly after the quotation.

³⁹ Reiss, p.150 e.g. the Assistant's letter. (264-5).

cast light on obscure passages, new problems confront the reader on further reflection' (152). Ambiguity 'pervades the novel' and it is chiefly generated by the narrator's 'structural irony'; Reiss insists that 'the very strength of the novel resides in its obscurity of deeper meaning' (153). He views the narrator as a self-aware, distanced figure, highlighted in the opening of the second part. The explanation 'or rather apology' (156) given as to the contents of the ensuing narrative, has the function of vastly distancing the narrator from the characters. Moreover, by explaining structure to the reader, the narrator also draws our attention to his own artistic input and to the reader's required input in the act of reading it. He comments that when we hear the narrator reflecting, this shows his self-awareness, and that he reacts 'if not always self-critically, but at least in a manner which is observant and reveals insight' (155-56). Reiss praises the precision of the narrator's style, and its beauty, and its reticence:

If he leaves much unsaid, it is because he is conscious of the limits of linguistic expression; symbols and images often tell us more than precise analysis and are more suited to depicting the subconscious. It also appears as if he knows that no single person is capable of depicting reality comprehensively. (203)

The narrator knows the characters, he knows reality and he acknowledges irrationality, and it is this understanding that he attempts to present in his writing. Reiss believes that the narrator's function is 'no longer to correct the protagonists' vision, but rather to analyse the experiences of the several characters and their relations to one another' (155).

Reiss's sense of the narrator's central import for the understanding of the novel is echoed by other critics. Schwan finds the narrator to be a man of 'souveräner Lebensüberschau'⁴⁰ with Geerdts agreeing that the narrator is 'ein echter

⁴⁰ Werner Schwan, *Goethes 'Wahlverwandtschaften': Das nicht erreichte Soziale* (Munich: Wilhelm Fink, 1983), p.31.

"Mehrwisser".⁴¹ Elm describes the story as, and cites the opening sentence as proving it to be, 'pure Erfindung'.⁴² Elm maintains that Goethe presents the tale as a fiction and not as an 'Imitat empirischer Wirklichkeit,' even agreeing with Stöcklein's comparison with a scientific experiment. Winkelmann, although calling *Die Wahlverwandtschaften* 'the commentator's despair'⁴³ expands upon the three readings of the novel Goethe claimed were necessary saying that there are three levels of 'subtlety that correspond to the three intertwined phases of the narrative: the overt story, the background story that supplements and transfigures it, and the allegorical story that informs the whole'.⁴⁴ Konrad believes that the dominance of the narrator has to do with his multiple functions as he moves between a position of a direct narrator (when he steps out of the 'Handlungskontext' and inserts comments of his own), of an indirect narrator (when he commentates and evaluates from an implicit position), and of a hidden narrator (when he lets the characters act without any form of assessment). She states that the narrator moves between inner and outer perspectives, that he acts as an 'allwissender, manchmal als unwissender Erzähler'. This changing position has a deciding 'Verknüpfungsfunktion', because, as the narrator is not tied to any particular perspective, he can utilize his many stylistic modes in order to link the various sections of his narrative, the plethora of 'vielfältigen Textelementen' which are 'nicht homogen, sondern disparat'.⁴⁵

Stefan Blessin believes that the style of the narrative forces the reader to undertake a careful examination of the text for the repetitions and symbols in the text and he

⁴¹ Geerdts, p.94.

⁴² Theodor Elm, *Johann Wolfgang Goethe: Die Wahlverwandtschaften* (Frankfurt-am-Main: Grundlagen und Gedanken zum Verständnis Erzählender Literatur: Moritz, 1991), p.43.

⁴³ John Winkelmann, *Goethe's 'Elective Affinities': An Interpretation* (New York: Peter Lang, 1987), p.4.

⁴⁴ Winkelmann, p.30.

⁴⁵ Susanne Konrad, *Goethes Wahlverwandtschaften and das Dilemma des Logozentrismus* (Heidelberg: C Winter, 1995), pp..5,22.

claims there is hardly an event which is presented to the reader which is not ‘das Duplikat eines ähnlichen Falles’.⁴⁶ This technique not only replicates the characters’ search for meaning, but also alerts the reader to this process. The narrator has a strong presence, and his style is highly praised by Blessin; he has the ‘Luzidität gerühmten Prosastils’. His comments on the aphorisms are favourable, although he does confuse the narrator and Goethe when he writes that ‘[e]s gilt als ausgemacht, daß Goethe seine Altersweisheit den Romanfiguren in den Mund gelegt hat’ (60). However, Blessin believes that it is the narrator who breaks away from the events in the text in order to turn to the reader and offer generalisations which both illuminate the specifics of the immediate situation, and are challenged by later events (67). This contradictory aspect of the aphorisms results in Blessin finding that the word of the narrator ‘nicht uneingeschränkt zu trauen ist’. Indeed, he argues that the reader is misled by the changing ‘Standort’ of the narrator (86), except when he openly admits that he has spoken from the perspective of the characters. He finds, in this situation, that the reader trusts the ‘aufrichtigen Erzähler’ more than ever (87). But, by the end of the novel, the contradictory nature of the narrator has become ‘auf kleinstem Raum sichtbar’(82). This shifting position of the narrator makes the reader unable to see him ‘in einer eindeutigen Relation zum narrativen Zusammenhang’ and this problematizes the reader’s understanding of the work (86). Blessin sees the narrative presence as being most strongly in evidence when ‘er sich generalisierend über die Figuren gleichsam hinwegsetzt und eine verbindliche Ansicht zu äußern vorgibt’ (86). He believes the narrator creates drama by altering the tenses and sentence length, especially citing the passage concerning Otto’s death, saying that it has ‘deutlich einen dramatischen Akzent, teils weil es im historischen Präsens vorgetragen ist und

⁴⁶ Stefan Blessin, *Erzählstruktur und Leserhandlung: Zur Theorie der literarischen Kommunikation am Beispiel von Goethes ‘Wahlverwandtschaften’* (Heidelberg: C Winter, 1974), p.59. All further references in this paragraph are given in parentheses directly following the quotation.

teils wegen der raschen Folge kurzer und gleichförmig gebauter Satzglieder' (74). However, Blessin finds that the distance generated by the narrator, especially by frequent use of substantives, creates a 'Verfremdung' which has the effect of generalising 'das einmalige und unverwechselbare Geschehen' so that events can reflect and be reflected in other events (77).

Pascal does not find the narrator to be wholly unreliable, but rather, he argues that when the narrator writes in his 'personal role' he is aligned with his characters and so his judgments 'lack the authoritativeness of a non-personal narrator'.⁴⁷ He refers to the narrator as being 'reserved, non-committal', and by his frequent use of free indirect speech the reader can detect the narrator's own thoughts, as it 'bears witness to the guiding hand of the narrator, it is a narrative mode that merges the characters' self-expression with the forward movement of the narrative'. This fusion of the character's words and ideas with the narrative style shows the intent of the narrator, which is not to provide a clear story but to create a text whose stylistic techniques guide the reader to understanding through questioning. This 'ambiguity and irony', according to Pascal, leads us to 'flounder,' a situation which does not 'suit most critics'.⁴⁸ Schlick agrees in part with such readings of the narrator, but he finds there 'is no reason to suspect the narrator [...] of being untrustworthy.' He too calls the narrator 'non-committal' and, echoing Pascal, writes that he does indeed at times, use 'irony or [...] cloud issues through ambiguity' whilst proving 'reliable with regard to the subject of dilettantism'.⁴⁹

⁴⁷ Roy Pascal. 'Free Indirect Speech ('erlebte Rede') as a Narrative Mode in *Die Wahlverwandtschaften*' in *Essays in Honour of Elizabeth Mary Wilkinson* ed. by C.P. Magill, Brian A. Rowley, and Christopher J. Smith (Leeds: WS Maney and Sons Ltd, 1978), pp.146-161 (p.156).

⁴⁸ Pascal, pp.161, 149-50, 156 respectively.

⁴⁹ Werner Schlick, *Goethe's 'Die Wahlverwandtschaften': A Middle-Class Critique of Aesthetic Aristocraticism* (Heidelberg: C Winter, 2000), p.253.

Loisa Nygaard states that earlier critics believed that ‘Goethe used the symbol as a means of transcending the limits of ordinary language, expressing the mysterious and ineffable, and reflecting the essential oneness and unity of all being.’ She says this argument has been accepted for many years, but recently it has been challenged by deconstructionists, who insist that the authorial intent is of little relevance, and the significance of the text is that no single interpretation is possible.⁵⁰ Nygaard highlights the importance of symbols in the understanding of *Die Wahlverwandtschaften* and closely examines these with reference to both the narrative techniques and Goethe’s scientific work *Zur Farbenlehre*. She moves away from the deconstructionist reading of the text, because she feels that, although it has highlighted ‘some interesting points,’ it cannot effectively explain the ‘complex and subtle ways’ in which symbols and signs – which are seen by and generated by both the characters and the narrator – are used.⁵¹ Martin and Erika Swales write that ‘*Die Wahlverwandtschaften* is over-endowed with possible significations’ and it is in part this aspect of the novel which results in it becoming ‘a fiercely claustrophobic text’.⁵² Martin Swales refers to it as a ‘highly self-conscious novel’ in which the readers are ‘frequently aware of [their] own role as interpreters’⁵³ as they are made conscious of the complex subtext which begins from the opening sentence, as ‘we sense that we may be in the realm of conjecture and contingency’.⁵⁴ He sees the narrator as a highly self-aware presence who presents the reader with a situation without manipulating him to any one particular reading of the text.

⁵⁰ Loisa Nygaard, “‘Bild” and “Sinnbild””: The Problem of the Symbol in Goethe’s *Wahlverwandtschaften*”, *The Germanic Review*, 63 (1988), 58-76. p.58.

⁵¹ Nygaard, p.58.

⁵² Erika Swales and Martin Swales, *Reading Goethe: A Critical Introduction to the Literary Work* (Rochester, N.Y; Woodbridge: Camden House, 2002), pp.71-72.

⁵³ Martin Swales, ‘Goethe’s Prose Fiction’, in *A Cambridge Companion to Goethe*, ed. by Lesley Sharpe (Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp.129-146 (p.138).

⁵⁴ Swales, ‘Prose Fiction’, p, 137.

One of the most recent discussions of *Die Wahlverwandtschaften* is a computer-assisted analysis of the text by Gordon Burgess published in 2000. In this, he closely examines the text on the basis of a computerised concordance. This close reading of the text in relation to particular words and their frequency provides us with a novel approach, but, as Burgess admits, *Die Wahlverwandtschaften* ‘does not reveal its secrets totally even to this close, precise, methodological approach’.⁵⁵ His discussion tends to remain at the computational level, which results in him, in some cases, failing to develop his findings into a full literary analysis; but this is evidently not the point of his study. Burgess deals with the ‘enigmatic nature of much that is in *Die Wahlverwandtschaften*’ (xii). He refers to the narrator as ‘intrusive’ on a subtle level (129), as being ‘an interventionist narrator’ (151), as ‘enigmatic’ (167) one with ‘regal authority’ (168), yet his most frequent description of the narrator is as a manipulator. He devotes an entire chapter to ‘the manipulative narrator’ (167-204) describing how he is an ‘intrusive’ and ‘equivocative’ ‘choreographer’,⁵⁶ ‘pulling the linguistic strings of his characters’ fictional inventions’ (244). He criticizes Reiss for failing to take into account, ‘that the narrator repeatedly shapes the reader’s view of what is happening not so much through the content of what he is presenting as through the way in which he presents it – or, indeed, withholds information’ (170). His assessment of Barnes’s findings that the narrator ‘has been employed to conceal as much as to reveal’ is that although, ‘essentially correct’ it is ‘too limited’ (171). Burgess maintains that the ‘narrator’s manipulation of material permeates his whole presentation in equal measure’ (171). Whilst his view of the withholding of information is correct, his presentation of the narrator as being constantly devious and underhand seems to be

⁵⁵ Gordon A. Burgess, *A Computer Assisted Analysis of Goethe’s ‘Die Wahlverwandtschaften’: The Enigma of Elective Affinities* (Mellen, Lewiston, Queenston, Lampeter: Studies in German Language and Literature vol. 23, 2000), p.xiii. Further references to this book throughout this dissertation are given in parentheses after quotations in the text.

⁵⁶ Burgess, subheadings from Chapter 6, pp.176, 186 and 177 respectively.

misleading. The narrator can, on occasion, be 'intrusive', but not simply as a manipulative agent. Sometimes the voice is not clearly audible, or indeed, not present at all. The narrator is a volatile being, one who is unable to form a stable interpretative overview for himself, and who therefore reflects this in his text. He never reaches a privileged moment in the work, neither do his characters and thus neither does the reader. He is, at times, an authoritative narrator, but never an omniscient one. He is both involved and withdrawn, he is judgmental, he conjectures, he is unknowing, he is able to see and read patterns, he is oblivious to patterning, he is sceptical and he is credulous. This equivocation and constant shifting of the ground does not allow any cognitively stable platform to be established on the reader's side from which to view and to understand the novel. The narrator is not superior to the experiential universe of the text, he is not the traditional, reliable narrator who guides the reader through the work, drawing our attention to specific details, clarifying the thoughts and actions of his characters; he is involved, and it is this involvement which goes against Burgess's presentation of him as a sovereign being who manipulates his readers.

From the above survey of scholarship on *Die Wahlverwandtschaften* it is obvious that this novel is one which has provoked, and continues to provoke, many contradictory readings. Although the survey shows that there were various stages in its reception, there has never been a consensus as to its 'meaning' in any one era. There have always been contradictory readings at one and the same time. The debate continues and is no closer to forming a stable conclusion for the majority of critics. This is in part because *Die Wahlverwandtschaften* is so manifestly rich in symbolic implications, and most particularly because of a remarkably elusive narrative performance.

That performance is, by definition, the governing mode of the text. It is a statement that is noteworthy for its irresolution. At one level we have a manifestly disincarnate, non-personalized voice – what Thomas Mann, at the opening of his late novel *Der Erwählte* famously calls the ‘Geist der Erzählung’, the disembodied spirit of the tale, an intelligence that can move with sovereign assurance across, through, and into the inner worlds of the characters and experiences depicted. Yet, at another level, the narrative performance of *Die Wahlverwandtschaften* seems to veer away from that disincarnate, disembodied omnipresence to constitute itself in terms of an incarnate entity, a recognizable human self endowed with likes and dislikes, with personal responses to the experiences being chronicled in the text. That voice can, admittedly, be tentative on occasion; but it can also be forthright, even opinionated. It is such back and forth shifts within a spectrum that extends from disembodied narration on the one hand, to personalized narration on the other, that are central to my analysis in this thesis. We are presented with narrator who at times fulfils the role of an *histor*:

The *histor* is the narrator as inquirer, constructing a narrative on the basis of such evidence as he has been able to accumulate. The *histor* is not a character in narrative, but he is not exactly the author himself, either. He is a persona, a projection of the author’s empirical virtues. [...] a man, in short, of authority, who is entitled not only to present the facts as he has established them but to comment on them, to draw parallels, to moralize, to generalize, to tell the reader what to think and even to suggest what he should do.[...] The commentary, often labelled ‘intrusive’, [...] is simply the *histor* going about his business. It is his business to be present whenever and wherever he wants to be, and to guide the reader’s response to the events narrated. The *histor* has an ancient and natural affinity with his narrative predecessor, the inspired bard of Homeric epic.⁵⁷

But at other times, this ‘intrusive’ narrator removes himself and we are given moments of ‘impersonal narration’, ‘objective narration’ which ‘when conducted through a highly unreliable narrator, offers special temptations to the reader to go

⁵⁷ Scholes and Kellogg, pp. 265-66.

astray'.⁵⁸ It is this volatility of narrative performance that makes *Die Wahlverwandtschaften* such an extraordinary text; and it is on narrative modes that I wish to comment in more detail before moving to the explanation of the novel itself.

⁵⁸ Booth, p.378, p.388.

CHAPTER II

NARRATIVE PERFORMANCE AND

NARRATIVE PERSONA

As has become clear from the foregoing discussion of critical responses to *Die Wahlverwandtschaften*, it is in no sense an innovation to pay particular attention to the narrative modes that sustain the novel. Indeed, if there has been an interpretative orthodoxy of late – both in respect of the corpus of Goethe’s narrative work (to which I shall come in a moment) and in respect of fiction generally – it has to do with a will to theorize process of narrativity. Above all, stress has been laid on the sheer fictionality, the ‘textedness’ of the narrative process. Patrick O’Neill speaks for many recent theoreticians when he writes:

This element of systematic metatextual play leading to a systematic self-relativization centrally characterizes the essentially ludic, self-ironizing nature of narrative as a semantic structure. [...] Not only is narrative discourse always at least potentially subversive of the story, it purports to reconstruct [...]; it is also, always and already, inherently self-subversive as well.¹

In one sense, one knows what O’Neill is after: any narrative, even the most persuasively referential, is an instance of language, is an incarnation of the process of story-telling and not a replication of the substantial world of human action and interaction. But in my view, O’Neill, like so many modern theoreticians, presses his case too hard. It is important to recognize the totalizing thrust of his argument –

¹ Patrick O’Neill, *Figures of Discourse: Reading Narrative Theory* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994), pp.107-8.

‘centrally’, ‘essentially’, ‘always’, ‘always and already’, ‘inherently’. Of course he is right that all narrative is a textual entity: but the global fervour of his argument allows no distinctions to be made between different kinds of narrative. Yet some narratives (and I believe that *Die Wahlverwandtschaften* is one of them) work with particular urgent intimations of character, of knowable forms of human response and behaviour; and simply to say that ‘all is fiction’ does not, in my view, help us to get at all close to the specificity of such works.

In their different ways, two works of narrative theory have helped me to clarify my own approach: Gérard Genette’s *Narrative Discourse*, and Roy Pascal’s *The Dual Voice*. Both are noteworthy for their delight in getting close to the workings of particular texts – Proust’s *À la Recherche du Temps Perdu* in Genette’s case, and various examples of nineteenth century European literature (including *Die Wahlverwandtschaften*) in Roy Pascal’s. Genette helps us to understand complex processes of focalization in Proust’s great novel, whereby the characters, and in particular the young Marcel and also the narrative persona of Marcel, serve as bundles of consciousness sustaining the narrative. He draws attention, for example, to the sliding scale of personalization (focalization) from overt confessional (on the one hand) to dispassionate omnipresence (on the other):

In all these [passages] Proust manifestly forgets or neglects the fiction of the autobiographical narrator and the focalization which that implies – a fortiori the focalization through the hero that is its hyperbolic form – in order to handle his narrative in a third mood, which is obviously zero-focalisation, in other words, the omniscience of the classical novelist.²

Genette is alive to the shifting interplay of cognition that characterizes Proust’s text.

And Roy Pascal is fascinated by the narrative shifts of *Die Wahlverwandtschaften*, particularly by its interplay of personality and impersonality:

² Gérard Genette, *Narrative Discourse* (translation Jane E Lewin) (Oxford: Blackwell, 1980), p.208.

The narrator has a double role. Usually he is non-personal, anonymous, and thus can claim access to the innermost thoughts of the characters and the most private events (though we cannot call him 'omniscient', since certain areas and personas are much better known to him than others, while Otilie's spiritual crisis remains as much a mystery to him as for the characters). But, incompatibly, he appears at times to be an elderly friend of the family, with a personal sympathy that leads him often to express comments of approval, disapproval [...]³

It is precisely this movement back and forth between personality and impersonality that I shall explore in this thesis. Above all, I shall seek to unravel how it is done – to unravel the particular and precise instances of style by which Goethe's text moulds, configures, and re-configures our relationship to the experiential world which it puts before us. This whole shifting process is, of course, the result of a complex deployment of novelistic rhetoric. But to say in the spirit of O'Neill's argument that all is rhetoric entails a failure to meet the interpretative demands Goethe makes on us. Once we enter the text with its extraordinary oscillations between personal and dispassionate narratives, we have, I think, no option but to go beyond the discourse of rhetorical technicality and to talk of a narrator, a narrator who sometimes is a discernible person and sometimes an unspecified teller of the tale.

It is worth remembering that Goethe, in so much of his narrative production, delights in creating a complex field of force where narrative personality and impersonality come urgently into play – and into collision. One thinks, for example, of *Die Leiden des jungen Werther*, in which the intense expression of Werther's subjectivity coexists with the documentary dispassion of the 'Herausgeber' figure; except that that 'Herausgeber' moves challengingly across the registers of a conscientious editor, of a sympathetic witness to Werther's decline, and of a novel narrator who has privileged access to the inner lives of the characters. *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* is sustained by a third person narrative voice, one that approximates to the traditional, sovereign

³ Roy Pascal, *The Dual Voice* (Manchester: MUP, 1997), p.37.

perspective of European novel writing – but one that, on occasion, cannot resist displaying affection, albeit ironically tinged, for the eager young protagonist of the apprenticeship years. The narrative performance in the sequel, *Wilhelm Meisters Wanderjahre* is extraordinary in its volatility. At times we sense the presence of an almost archival, shadowy, collective that keeps track of multiple lives; at others, specified voices take up the narrative. Goethe was, in other words, fascinated by the multiple possibilities inherent in the narrative mode, possibilities of narrative specification and of narrative generalization. And that fascination expresses itself both in his readiness to experiment with possible perspectives (as we have already noted) and also in his delight in incorporating narratives within narratives. *Werther* consists of the protagonist's letters framed by an editorial account; and, additionally, there is an interpolated section which consists, we are told, of Werther's translation of passages from *Ossian*. *Die Wahlverwandtschaften*, as we shall see, has a number of interpolated texts – letters, excerpts from Ottilie's diary, a Novelle of passion told by a visitor to the estate. *Wilhelm Meisters Wanderjahre* is remarkable for its structural complexity in that the novel form becomes a collection of stories told by characters who themselves shift between the role of agent and that of narrator. While Goethe may not be established beyond the field of German Studies as one of the supreme novelists of modern Europe, he ought to be so recognized – not least because he explores the possibilities of narrative, above all of the conflicting claims of personal and impersonal modes, with extraordinary sophistication. It is not, therefore, quixotic on my part to want to detail the shifting modalities of narrative voice in *Die Wahlverwandtschaften*.

Two final remarks before I come to the detailed analysis of the novel text; and they concern, precisely, that detail. In my view, virtually all the key narrative effects in

Goethe's *Die Wahlverwandtschaften* come about by means of an accumulation of tiny details and pointers, often single words of German that are in themselves unremarkable because they still function as components within colloquial speech. They do not, in other words, draw attention to themselves. Yet we need to attend closely to them. And I can only hope that my analysis will not prove wearisome. The narrative performance of *Die Wahlverwandtschaften* is one of surpassing subtlety; and that subtlety has to do with and derives from the cumulative effect of tiny details. The critic has no option but to analyze those minute instances of language. My second prefatory remark has to do with gender. Because, for reasons that I have already mentioned, I hear *Die Wahlverwandtschaften* as a text of which whole sections are narrated by a person whose voice is to a greater or lesser extent foregrounded, I need to refer throughout my analysis to a present, or an absent narrator. And I assign the male pronoun to this being. In part this is to avoid the clumsiness of such locutions as 'he/she' or '(s)he'. But in part, particularly on those occasions when the narrator seems to have unmistakable psychological and pronominal existence, I choose the male pronoun because of the especial affection that links him to Ottilie.

In the following chapter, I will be looking at the narrative and the constant shifting of the narrator's presence; he allows his voice to be heard, and then withdraws himself from the text, making his absence felt all the more strongly. The reader has an urgent sense of narrative presence, however variable, and it is this which I wish to examine in detail.

CHAPTER III

NARRATIVE PRESENCE

GENERALISING MODE

In *Die Wahlverwandtschaften*, the reader is presented from the outset with a diverse and complex narrator. He makes constant demands on us. The problem inherent in understanding the narrator of this text is that we can rarely predict how he will approach and present the events. He frequently alters his style and input, he repeatedly makes broad statements utilising the generalizing mode, both by maxims, and by the use of single words such as ‘solche’ and ‘oft’; he offers judgments, though rarely stated openly, but in compromising situations his voice is not to be heard; he presents himself as an authoritative narrator, with privileged access to the characters’ inner life, moving into their cognitive process, but then misreads, misinterprets or fails to register the modes of signification in the text. He writes in a mode which moves between various rhetorical levels and employs differing styles of composition, patterning and statement; he writes in retrospect, but is fond of modulating into the present tense; he uses direct speech, then indirect and then moves into free indirect speech, suggesting the characters’ thoughts, without presenting them as such, thus furthering the ambiguity of the text as a whole. All these modes force the reader to be aware of him and to inquire into the implications behind the chosen narrative technique. ‘In any reading experience there is an implied dialogue among author, narrator, the other characters, and the reader.’¹ It is not clear to the reader exactly

¹ Booth, p.155.

what relationship the narrator has to the events portrayed, he is not impartial, he is not an active character; he is not wholly omniscient and is not always present, yet the existence of some form of persona, with beliefs and opinions is there to be detected.

We are faced with the problem of a 'meta-voice,' whilst not having true meta-text. The inclusion of the differing texts – the *Die Wunderlichen Nachbarskinder*, the diary entries, the letters – does not present the reader with significant stylistic differences, the language of the characters does not change,² everything is a text within a text, which again draws the reader into the complexity of the narrative. There is no reliable narrator or narrative voice but it is the only voice the reader can look to for guidance. As Blessin states, the narrator's wavering position has a direct bearing on the 'die Irreführung des Lesers'³ It is the reader's decision how much to rely on this unstable narrator, to decide how much to trust him, and as there is no constant presence or continued role which he fills, this shifting standpoint of the narrator makes any stable viewpoint or any one reading of the novel impossible.

Booth speaks of the unprivileged and the confused narrator as being beneficial to the novel in encouraging the reader to seek for the truth. He explains that in order to create confusion in the reader, there has to be 'an observer who is himself confused.' In order to generate 'an air of naturalness [...] then a consistently unprivileged narrator' is a better choice than an 'unnatural mixture of omniscience and limitation' with the author being 'silent and invisible' with 'a nearly complete union of the narrator and reader in a common endeavor':

A very different effect ensues when the narrator's bewilderment is used not simply to mystify about minor facts of the story but to break down the reader's convictions about truth itself, so that he may be ready to receive *the* truth when it is offered to him. If the

² 'Alle Figuren bedienen sich derselben Diktion', Blessin, p.73.

³ Blessin, p.86.

reader is to desire the truth he must first be convinced that he does not already possess it.⁴

Scholes and Kellogg also refer to a mode of narration which they call; 'the unreliable eye-witness'. It occurs where the reader 'seeks to understand what the character telling the story cannot himself comprehend' making the reader 'participate in the act of creation'.⁵ The reader asks himself whether the narrative voice is 'internal' or 'external', whether it derives from a character within the tale, with his or her personal viewpoint or a reliable, whether it is an omniscient voice, or that of a wholly impersonal, detached onlooker, with no insight into the characters' inner thoughts or whether the voice is estranged, conscious of his own short-comings.⁶ Booth speaks of the implied author, an 'implied version' of the author, and argues, 'however impersonal he may try to be, his reader will inevitably construct a picture of the official scribe who writes in this manner - and of course that official scribe will never be neutral toward all values.'⁷ Kathleen Tillotson referred to this as a 'second self'⁸ and Booth comments:

It is a curious fact that we have no terms either for this created 'second self' or for our relationship with him. None of our terms for various aspects of the narrator is quite accurate. 'Persona,' 'mask,' and 'narrator' are sometimes used, but they more commonly refer to the speaker in the work who is after all only one of the elements created by the implied author and who may be separated from him by large ironies. 'Narrator' is usually taken to mean the 'I' of a work, but the 'I' is seldom if ever identical with the implied image of the artist. (p.73)

I have reviewed these particular discussions of narrative theory because they highlight an issue that will be at the forefront of my discussion of *Die*

⁴ Booth, pp.284-300.

⁵ Scholes and Kellogg, pp.263-65.

⁶ R. Fowler offers these four basic types of narration in *Linguistic Criticism* (Oxford: OUP, 1986). See Michael J. Toolan, *Narrative: A Critical Introduction* (London and New York: Routledge, 1988), pp, 82-83.

⁷ Booth, pp.70-1.

⁸ In her inaugural lecture at the University of London, published as *The Tale and the Teller* (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1959), p.22.

Wahlverwandtschaften – namely the oscillation of the narrative mode between personality and impersonality. Often one tends to assume that there is a simple either/or: either the narrator is personal or he is impersonal. Yet in a great number of novels – and *Die Wahlverwandtschaften* may, admittedly be a particularly striking example – one and the same narrative voice can encompass both registers, and can move back and forth between them.

OPENING SENTENCE

The opening sentence ‘Eduard – so nennen wir einen reichen Baron im besten Mannesalter’ (242) has elicited from critics a wide variety of interpretations. Stöcklein argues that the opening words generate an aura of authenticity: ‘Er erzählt übrigens wahre Geschichten. Auch der ganze Roman gibt sich als eine solche. Dies ist der Sinn seiner Eingangsworte [...] Den wahren Namen verschweigt die Diskretion des Erzählers.’⁹ However, Spielhagen takes a different view. He is the advocate of unreflected, un-self-commentating realism and as such is rather impatient with, and distrustful of, instances of narrative self-consciousness. He criticizes Goethe’s decision to open the novel in this fashion. He would, he tells us, never have used such a technique, and would have commenced the narrative with ‘Eduard hatte in seiner Baumschule...’¹⁰ Spielhagen believes Goethe’s choice of opening line to be a ‘Kardinalsünde wider die Gesetze des Erzählens’ and the use of the ‘so nennen wir’ with which the narrative authority is so commandingly registered is termed a ‘lapsus linguae’ and a ‘gänzlich überflüssige Notiz’.¹¹ Bolz strongly disagrees with such a reading and criticism, explaining that this technique is symptomatic of the intentional

⁹ Stöcklein, pp.14-15.

¹⁰ Friedrich Spielhagen, *Neue Beiträge zur Theorie und Technik der Epik und Dramatik* (Leipzig: L. Staackmann, 1898), p.92.

¹¹ Jürgen Kolbe, *Goethes ‘Die Wahlverwandtschaften’ und der Roman des 19. Jahrhunderts* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1968), p.145.

irony on the part of the narrator, which justifies the expressly self-aware intervention of the narrator's poetic method.¹² Kolbe's description of the narrative as having 'die leise spürbare Anwesenheit eines fernen Erzählers'¹³ seems to underestimate the narrative technique and the ambiguity inherent in the sentence, which Suhrkamp claims indicates the presence of a modern author.¹⁴ Blessin also views the stylistic technique of the initial sentence as inviting the reader immediately to look into the narrator's 'Unternehmungen'. He also claims that this sentence serves to highlight his lack of omniscience,¹⁵ especially when we later find out that Eduard is an assumed name;¹⁶ all of which dismantles the initial impression of his being an omniscient narrator. However, Blessin does not find this to be a fault, but rather an indication of the sophistication of the narrative technique employed in this text; it involves the reader and motivates him to examine the text and its intentions. Schlaffer, however, plays down the narrative role, and thus the narrative technique, as he finds that the narrator is present in the opening sentence, but hardly evident throughout the remainder of the novel.¹⁷ Bolz believes that by not naming the place and characters,

¹² 'Dieser rechtfertigt nämlich die Härte des Eingriffs in einer ausdrücklichen Selbstreflexion des poetischen Verfahrens', Norbert Bolz, 'Die Wahlverwandtschaften' in *Goethe Handbuch*, ed. by Bernd Witte and Peter Schmidt, 4 vols (Stuttgart, Weimar: J.B.Metzler, 1996-98) III: *Prosaschriften* (1997), pp.152-185 (pp.156-7).

¹³ Kolbe, p.145.

¹⁴ 'Aus dem Stil dieses Romans hat ein bekannter moderner Autor den Stil für sein umfangreiches Werk entwickelt. Beim ersten Satz der *Wahlverwandtschaften* ... glaubt man den modernen Autor zu hören.' Peter Suhrkamp, 'Goethes *Wahlverwandtschaften*' in *Goethes Roman 'Die Wahlverwandtschaften'*, ed. by Ewald Rösch (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1975), pp.192-214 (p.203).

¹⁵ 'Der Erzähler, der in seinen Worten so bereitwillig Einblick in seine "Unternehmungen" gewährt und das Einverständnis des Lesers sucht, hintergeht diesen ebenso wie er sich schließlich selbst als nicht allwissend ausweist.', Blessin, p.94.

¹⁶ "'Ganz gewiß!'" versetzte Charlotte; "unseres Freundes Ankunft behandeln wir billig als ein Fest; und dann habt ihr beide wohl nicht daran gedacht, daß heute euer Namenstag ist. Heißt nicht einer Otto so gut als der andere?"

"[...] Du erinnerst mich", sagte Eduard, "an dieses jugendliche Freundschaftsstück. - Als Kinder hießen wir beide so; doch als wir in der Pension zusammenlebten und manche Irrung daraus entstand, so trat ich ihm freiwillig diesen hübschen, lakonischen Namen ab.'" (258-59).

¹⁷ 'Vom Erzähler, der bewußt begründend, ordnend die Geschichte eröffnet, wird der Leser im weiteren Verlauf kaum noch Spuren finden.' See Burgess, p.169. Heinz Schlaffer, 'Nachwort, to *Die Wahlverwandtschaften* (Munich: Beck, 1981) p.245

Goethe is merely using the ‘Signatur seines Zeitalters,’¹⁸ whereas Elm, as already stated, finds the opening sentence to be pure invention and believes that it points to ‘eine Versuchsanordnung’ in that it presents the tale as a fiction and not as an imitation of ‘empirischer Wirklichkeit’ although it appears to suggest the register of a scientific experiment.¹⁹ Swales also raises the issue of the experimental, demonstrating that, at times, the reader wonders whether the text is ‘a conundrum, an experiment, rather than a novel.’ He goes on to answer this with the remark that ‘the text outflanks us here and suggests precisely this possibility,’ not only with the discussion of elective affinities in chapter four of the first part, but in the very language of the ‘so nennen wir’. After reading this first sentence, our understanding of the narrator is, as it will continue to be, uncertain and ‘we sense that we may be in the realm of conjecture and contingency.’²⁰

Burgess, although agreeing that ‘*Die Wahlverwandtschaften* begins by placing the narrator in the forefront of the reader’s attention,’ (205) insists on the presence of a ‘manipulative’ narrator by disparaging the opening words as being ‘somewhat misleading.’ Instead of viewing the ‘so nennen wir’ as part of the conjecture, experimental tone and ambiguity which pervade the novel, he insists on the devious intent of a calculating narrator. ‘First, [the words] imply that names are unimportant and that the narrator is hitting upon this name by chance, almost as though he has given little or not thought to it. As such, these opening words belie the significance that is going to be attached to names as the novel progresses’ (173). Burgess does not acknowledge the subtlety of narratorial intent, preferring to see the opening sentence and the rest of the novel as being constructed in a manner designed to ‘deliberately

¹⁸ Bolz, p.155.

¹⁹ Elm, p.44.

²⁰ Swales, ‘Prose Fiction’, p.138.

obfuscate and mislead' (172). He disagrees with the view of critics such as Blackall, that the narrator is unable to describe the events and the thematic of *Die Wahlverwandtschaften*, and disputes Swales's explanation of the mixture of registers as having to do with 'how difficult it is to understand and evaluate human experience, how complex are the motivations at work' (172). His view is that we are presented with 'an untrustworthy narrator' as the 'initial words of the novel immediately indicate to the reader that here is a narrator who is in full control of the situation and has complete mastery over his puppet-like figures (if he can name them at will, he can also exercise his will over them in other ways, too)' (174).²¹ In claiming this, Burgess denies the possibility of the experimental register, and underestimates the complexity and the ambiguous play of detail to be discovered within the narrative itself.

The reader is alerted to the narrator's presence from the opening sentence. The narrator's voice is clearly audible, but he starts the novel as he means to go on, in an ambiguous manner. The narrator sets up the characters and scene with no precise details, very few names are used, the narrator preferring to present the minor characters by their functional or social titles (e.g. *der Gehülfe*, *der Graf*, *der Architekt*), yet even those with names are endowed with a degree of anonymity. On the one hand, this opening statement can be seen as the narrator relating an actual event and ascribing different names so as to protect the true identities of those involved, thus giving himself and his account an aura of authenticity. On the other, it could be viewed as the narrator explaining that the 'hero' is wholly fictional and setting up the scene for a didactic, allegorical tale or indeed suggesting that Eduard is an element in a controlled experiment.

²¹ No full names are ever given, either it is a Christian name, e.g. Nanny, Luciane, or it is the surname, e.g. Mittler.

However one reads the opening, the interpolation of ‘so nennen wir’ makes the narrative presence known, and makes the reader complicit in the story-telling from the outset. Far from being the manipulation of the material that Burgess suggests, the imprecision of the description of Eduard, ‘im besten Mannesalter’ is another recurrent stylistic feature, coaxing the reader into uncertain territory. In not giving a precise age it could be seen as diminishing authorial omniscience, or that this is indeed merely a parable. However, throughout the text we are rarely given a physical description of a person, the narrator preferring not to draw our attention to the physical, but rather to operate primarily in the cognitive and symbolic domain.

This ambiguity of understanding is generated not simply by whole phrases, but sometimes it is the inclusion of single words in telling places that indicates possible views and opinions. The reservation or indication of warning or prefiguration can be seen in his use of the verb *scheinen*, the adverb *vielleicht*, the conjunction *als wenn*, followed by the use of the subjunctive. Burgess also comments on the use of ‘wohl’ and ‘zwar’, highlighting the effect these words have on the presentation of ‘narratorial equivocation’ and ‘overt intervention’ (200).

WOHL

Burgess suggests that the reader ‘might expect that the narrator would use ‘wohl’ in statements where, if we accept the pretence of the narrative stance, he really might not be expected to know something with absolute certainty’ (200). He adds that in the example he has chosen ‘Beide Gatten würden auch wohl noch eine Zeitlang geschwankt haben, wäre nicht ein Brief des Hauptmanns im Wechsel gegen Eduards letzten angekommen’ (256) not only can we see the narrator’s lack of ‘absolute certainty’ but we can also see that he ‘comments indirectly on the relationship

between the two marriage partners'. This is indeed the case. The narrative voice is to be heard in many such interjections. This example follows our being told that Charlotte has withheld information about her former intentions in respect of Ottilie and her husband, but before we are told that, we have also been informed that they lived in memories of their former attachment, and thus had little to entertain them in the present.²² Such comments, albeit infrequent and subtle – the narrative voice audible in the 'Übrigens' – give the reader an impression of the couple by the means of a subtly understated narrator. Feuerlicht finds that such terms as 'wohl', 'vielleicht' and 'wahrscheinlich' contribute to our sense of the 'gelegentliche Unsicherheit oder Unwissenheit des Erzählers' which makes the story 'glaubwürdig'.²³ Burgess finds another way in which 'wohl' is used in the narrative, he explains that it 'is also used conventionally for situations where the narrator is describing something strange, wondrous event and is apparently not quite sure as to the veracity of what he is presenting' (195). He cites the passage where Ottilie's presence has influenced the Architect in his painting of the chapel:

Die Nähe des schönen Kindes mußte wohl in die Seele des jungen Mannes, der noch keine natürliche oder künstlerische Physiognomie vorgefaßt hatte, einen so lebhaften Eindruck machen, daß ihm nach und nach auf dem Wege vom Auge zur Hand nichts verloren ging, ja daß beide zuletzt ganz gleichstimmig arbeiteten. (372)

Although Burgess realises the importance of this statement in the narrative, he does not attend to the stylistic register which this sentence contains. The narrator is describing something 'wondrous' but I disagree with Burgess's statement that he is not 'sure of the veracity' of the occasion. The narrator, by using the affectionate adjective 'schön' and calling her a child, demonstrates his attachment to the girl, and I

²² 'Übrigens hatte Eduard mit Charlotten allein weniger Stoff zur Unterhaltung...' (262).

²³ Ignace Feuerlicht, 'Der "Erzähler" und das "Tagebuch" in Goethes *Wahlverwandtschaften*' *Goethe Jahrbuch*, 103 (1986), pp.316-343 (p.329).

believe this sentence shows the narrator's willingness to understand the situation in terms of a human generality with which he is all too familiar. He shares this opinion of her, and of how her presence and her beauty could affect an artist; indeed, it is not entirely clear whether he is speaking from his own perspective, or from the Architect's. Kahn writes of the narrator's use of 'wohl' as suggesting both the narrator's tentativeness and presenting the reported thoughts of the other characters in the episode above.²⁴ He argues that the meaning can never be pinpointed, that by using such interjections, the narrator continues in a complex presentation of events. Another reason, according to Burgess, for the use of 'wohl' is to insinuate doubt. In citing 'Alsdann rückte sich Ottilie wohl näher, um ins Buch zu sehen' (296), Burgess asks, whether it suggests 'that she has some other motive, conscious and subversive, for wanting to sit close to Eduard? Or does it suggest that the elemental forces of attraction are already at work that will finally lead to them moving together from wherever they are separated in the house' (196). He sees the explanation offered by the narrator as being 'somewhat obvious' and 'at odds' with the 'dimensions of interpretation' which are opened up in analysis of this incident.²⁵ What he neglects to comment upon is that this is central to the rhetoric of the narrative mode. By not recalling the previous incident, where Eduard reprimands his wife for reading over his shoulder, the narrator does not manipulate the reader by referring to and commenting on that episode; rather he leaves the reader to hear the echo for himself and form his own conclusions.

The absence of a specific narratorial comment and the inclusion of the 'wohl' highlight the similarities and differences between Eduard's reaction to the two

²⁴ Ludwig W. Kahn., 'Erlebte Rede in Goethes *Wahlverwandtschaften*', *PMLA*, 89 (1974), pp.268-277 (p.275).

²⁵ 'denn auch sie traute ihren eigenen Augen mehr als fremden Lippen...' (296).

women, and the reader cannot fail to register the contrast. This repetition and lack of narrative judgment is emphasised by the comment which follows this episode and which again uses ‘wohl’ – both conjecturally and also to imply that they are very much aware of what is going on: ‘Charlotte und der Hauptmann bemerkten es wohl und sahen manchmal einander lächelnd an’ (297). The remainder of this sentence, however, indicates that Ottilie’s moving towards Eduard was a sign of her ‘stille Neigung’. The fact that Charlotte and the Captain found this episode amusing is intensified by the comment that there was *another* sign which showed Ottilie’s attraction: ‘doch wurden beide von einem andern Zeichen überrascht, in welchem sich Ottiliens stille Neigung gelegentlich offenbarte’ (297). The tone here is casual – as in the opening ‘doch’. Often the narrator includes colloquialisms in his writing, interrupting the flow of his account, as if it were speech. This informality draws the reader into the characters’ situation, lessens the distance between authorial knowledge and reader knowledge and invites reflection: ‘Man kann wohl sagen, daß durch seine Bemerkungen der Park wuchs und sich bereicherte’ (429-30). Another interjection indicates the mood of the narrator, showing how close he is to these characters, that he knows them so well: ‘Zwar fand [der Gehülfe] gegen sich Ottilien nicht ganz so offen wie sonst; aber sie war auch erwachsener, gebildeter und, wenn man will, im allgemeinen mitteilender, als er sie gekannt hatte’ (414). This interpolation sounds like reported thoughts from the Assistant, but it is the narrator expressing his opinion and his interpretation of Ottilie’s actions and inner thoughts, with the ‘wenn man will’ and ‘zwar’ demonstrating his presence and input. ‘Eduard las gewöhnlich, lebhafter, gefühlvoller, besser, ja sogar heiterer, wenn man will, als jemals’ (479). This interpolation also indicates a description of some significance – here, for example, with reference to Eduard’s attempt to make Ottilie speak again: ‘Es war als wenn

er...ihr Schweigen wieder auflösen wollte' (479). We are again presented with the narrator offering a plausible reason as to Eduard's actions, moving in to explain his subconscious. He offers his opinion with the comparison 'als wenn' signifying his overview of the situation and the characters themselves. The narrator interrupts his flow to show his confusion, his need to explain properly how the girl is feeling when the Architect has offended her: 'Otilie ward einen Augenblick - wie soll man's nennen? - verdrießlich, ungehalten, betroffen' (383). The narrator cannot understand how anyone could deliberately cause offence to Otilie, and the clear narrative interjection, followed by three adjectives, reinforces his shocked emotions. Of course, the question remains as to how much offence was caused and should have been taken. The narrative voice is not trying to defend her, rather to explain her emotions in a satisfactory manner.

ZWAR

The narrator continues to make his presence felt in certain parts of the text by his use of 'zwar' and of constructions such as 'und zwar' and 'zwar... aber/doch'. Burgess provides us with a breakdown of the forty-two usages of the word, and he writes that 'und zwar' is used 'exclusively in narratorial commentary, in the conventional usage of emphasising a follow-on thought or aspect' (198).²⁶ However, although this is sometimes the case, Burgess again does not do justice to the subtlety of the narratorial technique. The first occasion when 'und zwar' is used in the novel is in connection with the glass at the laying of the foundation stone. On second reading, given the

²⁶ Burgess cites the following example, adding that it is 'unique in the novel in that it connects two paragraphs: "Der Architekt arbeitete Tag und Nacht, damit am Weihnachtsabend nichts fehlen möge. Und zwar Tag und Nacht im eigentlichen Sinne"' (403).

importance of symbols and the symbolic, any mention of self-generated symbols (here, on the part of Eduard) deserves close attention.

Aber diesmal ereignete es sich anders: das Glas kam nicht wieder auf den Boden, und zwar ohne Wunder. (302-03)

The logic of events does not require the ‘und zwar’ to ‘emphasise the follow-on thought’, but by incorporating the phrase, the narrator negates the claim of fate and destiny raised by Eduard in relation to the glass itself. It is a subtle inclusion of narratorial commentary, which only becomes noticeable on later reading, as on first reading it might either be overlooked, or simply viewed as an obvious and innocuous comment on the action.

In relation to Ottilie’s and Luciane’s attractiveness to men, we are told that the latter’s fiancé often conversed with Ottilie ‘und zwar um so mehr, als er in einer Angelegenheit, die ihn beschäftigte, ihren Rat, ihre Mitwirkung verlangte’ (388). This in itself would not be particularly striking; however it follows on from the narrative description of Ottilie’s beauty and of the fact that she drew all the men to her, despite Luciane’s best efforts to be the centre of attention:

Ein sanftes Anziehen versammelte alle Männer um sie her, sie mochte sich in den großen Räumen am ersten oder am letzten Platze befinden; ja der Bräutigam Lucianens selbst unterhielt sich oft mit ihr, und zwar um so mehr, als er in einer Angelegenheit, die ihn beschäftigt, ihren Rat, ihre Mitwirkung verlangte. (388)

By using ‘zwar’ in this sentence, the narrator draws our attention to the fact that Luciane’s fiancé was indeed drawn to Ottilie, not only by her beauty, but because he trusted her and wanted her advice. The attraction is double – physical and mental – and despite being engaged to Luciane, and ostensibly in love with her, even he – emphasised by the use of ‘selbst’ – comes under Ottilie’s spell. The narrator emphasises this in using the personalised interjection of the emphatic ‘ja’. At Otto’s

baptism,²⁷ we again hear the ‘und zwar’ which is used to underline the sudden recognition by Otilie and Mittler of the similarity which Otto bears to the two absent lovers in the ‘doppelter Ehebruch’.

Mittler, der zunächst das Kind empfang, stutzte gleichfalls, indem er in der Bildung desselben eine so auffallende Ähnlichkeit, und zwar mit dem Hauptmann, erblickte, dergleichen ihm sonst noch nie vorgekommen war. (421)

This episode is dealt with quickly and succinctly, yet the hint of narratorial input is of relevance. The shocking facts are conveyed to the reader in a non-emotive register, but the use of such words as ‘solche’, ‘stutzte’ and ‘und zwar’ indicate that the narrator cannot resist making some comment, although offering no overt judgment. It is the suggestive voice which is heard, the narrator making his presence felt in an assured yet understated manner. Later, we are given an insight into Otilie’s dreams and longings and the connection between the seemingly telepathic dreams of Eduard and Otilie is evident but, yet again, not stated by the narratorial voice:

Wenn sie sich abends zur Ruhe gelegt und im süßen Gefühl noch zwischen Schlaf und Wachen schwebte, schien es ihr, als wenn sie in einen ganz hellen, doch mild erleuchteten Raum hineinblickte. In diesem sah sie Eduarden ganz deutlich, und zwar nicht gekleidet, wie sie ihn sonst gesehen, sondern im kriegerschen Anzug, jedesmal in einer andern Stellung, die aber vollkommen natürlich war und nichts Phantastisches an sich hatte: stehend, gehend, liegend, reitend. Die Gestalt, bis aufs kleinste ausgemalt, bewegte sich willig vor ihr, ohne daß sie das mindeste dazu tat, ohne daß sie wollte oder die Einbildungskraft anstrebte. (422-23)

In comparison to the report of Eduard’s dream which is in direct speech, the reader can observe that Otilie’s is more sensitive, caring and shows a deeper understanding.²⁸ The narrator uses ‘schien’ to introduce doubt as to the extraordinary quality of these events, whether they are actual or whether they are the product of Otilie’s desires and fears. She sees Eduard, or appears to see him, not dressed as she

²⁷ p.421. For further analysis of this event, see p.55 below.

²⁸ ‘Da ich ihr nahe war, träumte ich nie von ihr; jetzt aber, in der Ferne, sind wir im Traume zusammen, und sonderbar genug: seit ich andre liebenswürdige Personen hier in der Nachbarschaft kennengelernt, jetzt erst erscheint mir ihr Bild im Traum, als wenn sie mir sagen wollte: “siehe nur hin und her! Du findest doch nichts Schöneres und Lieberes als mich.”’ (354).

remembers him, but dressed for combat, and by using ‘und zwar’ the narrator appears to lend credibility to her extraordinary ability to see her lover in everyday situations, with no admixture of the fantastic. It is not clear whose words these are, whether they are reported speech of Otilie, or whether the narrator is moving into the omniscient mode, and this together with the use of the verb ‘scheinen’ and the repetition of recounting a dream adds to the potential narrative power of this moment. It is the voice of an assured narrator who makes no bold claims, but presents the ‘facts’ in such a manner so as to present his opinion with a sure approach without forcing the reader unquestioningly to accept his view. The narrator offers his viewpoint on the musical performance Otilie and Eduard give in an overtly positive mode:

Sie hatte seine Mängel so zu den ihrigen gemacht, daß daraus wieder eine Art von lebendigem Ganzen entsprang, das sich zwar nicht taktgemäß bewegte, aber doch höchst angenehm und gefällig lautete. (297)

The whole passage is littered with narrative interjection, by the use of ‘zwar’, ‘eine Art von’ and ‘aber doch’. However, we find ourselves asking whose opinion is being reported here. It could not be the Hauptmann’s or Charlotte’s as the next paragraph tells the reader of their opinion of the duet; hence, the words must be the reported thoughts of Eduard or the narrator. The correction of ‘Anzupassen wußte ist nicht der rechte Ausdruck’ (393) indicates that it is someone who is concerned with the implication of the words, and the deeper thoughts involved in the entire passage, although tender, seem to be too authoritative for Eduard. The reader has noticed that the narrator is drawn to Otilie and this affectionate description of the duet shows how involved he can, at times, become. By using ‘zwar nicht...aber doch’ he more than justifies the lack of correct musical tempo, and even continues with this by remarking that the composer himself would have taken pleasure in listening to this performance.

We are faced with this dilemma as to whose words are being recounted when we are told of Ottilie's sudden realisation of the futility of keeping the house and gardens in good order for Eduard as he was away in the world. It is again prefigured with the use of 'scheinen';

und es schien ihr, als wenn alles, was bisher für Haus und Hof, für Garten, Park und die ganze Umgebung geschehen war, ganz eigentlich umsonst sei, weil der, dem es alles gehörte, es nicht genösse. weil auch der, wie der gegenwärtige Gast, zum Herumschweifen in der Welt, und zwar zu dem gefährlichsten, durch die Liebsten und Nächsten gedrängt worden. (432)

It is likely that this reaction to Eduard's danger is Ottilie's impression rather than the narrator's informed opinion, and the inclusion of 'und zwar' in this context highlights the superlative and as such, implies a biased opinion, as no facts are present. However, as in many cases, we cannot be sure; the narrator does endeavour at times to present himself not just as knowing, but as one who is closest to understanding Ottilie. He also shows this, when he talks of Charlotte's confinement:

Sie [Ottilie] hatte sich zwar völlig ergeben; sie wünschte für Charlotten, für das Kind, für Eduarden sich auch noch ferner auf das dienstlichste zu bemühen; aber sie sah nicht ein, wie es möglich werden wollte. (420)

On reading the 'zwar...aber' construction the reader hears Ottilie's knowledge of what is right, but her despair at how that is to be achieved. We hear the narrator's empathy with her, and his understanding of her inner turmoil.

Burgess does not consider any of these episodes. He does however, state that 'in four cases it is possible that the viewpoint is not that of the narrator' which does show 'the complex and subtle nature of the narratorial stance overall' (196). The examples he invokes to show the possibility of the expression not coming from the narrator are as follows; two on the walk to and from the Mooshütte, one during Ottilie's and Charlotte's conversation in French and one concerning Eduard's drinking habits.²⁹

²⁹ pp.258, 259, 282, 347.

Burgess offers no comment at all on the first two. In the description of the hut, we read:

Als sie die Mooshütte erreichten, fanden sie solche auf das lustigste ausgeschmückt, zwar nur mit künstlichen Blumen und Wintergrün, doch darunter so schöne Büschel natürlichen Weizens und anderer Feld- und Baumfrüchte angebracht, daß sie dem Kunstsinn der Anordnenden zur Ehre gereichten. (258)

Although there appears to be no overt comment in this, the use of ‘zwar...doch’ could indeed come from any of the three characters. The narrator has been writing in a descriptive mode, adding his opinion of the Hauptmann’s polite manner and explaining the change in Charlotte’s reception of him. I believe that his use of ‘zwar’ emphasises the distance from nature that Charlotte, who is the artist indicated, has. It is a subtle inclusion of a potentially undermining comment, as although there are natural aspects to the arrangement, the flowers are artificial. As the novel progresses, this construction (‘zwar...doch’) will often be used to follow a positive comment with a contradiction; here it prefigures the praise, and lends the character a sympathetic aura. Following the description of the Hauptmann and his ability to refrain from ‘übler Humor’ it could be viewed as his thoughts, but at this stage of the novel, it appears unlikely. The second case Burgess cites appears to be a descriptive one – again from the mouth of the traditional narrator: ‘Und so gelangte man denn über Felsen, durch Busch und Gesträuch zur letzten Höhe, die zwar keine Fläche, doch fortlaufende, fruchtbare Rücken bildete’ (260).

This appears to confirm the view of the narrator as one who values nature and is content simply to acknowledge the landscape. Again, it is not wholly certain as to whether it is the narrator who is speaking, but when we consider that this spot will be the position of the new house, it gains significance. This ridge is fertile, and will be chosen by Ottilie to be the better plot for the new building, because it will be hidden

from view and give the impression of being in another world.³⁰ The added description of the fertility of the land could be seen as a further example of man's control over nature: he does not choose to use the land's power, but rather to control it and move it into the orbit of society. This is the first time this ridge is mentioned, and it is of great importance to later events. The third case appears to fall more easily into Burgess's category: 'Besonders ergetzte sich Charlotte an einer zufälligen, zwar genauen, aber doch liebevollen Schilderung der ganzen Pensionsanstalt' (282). Burgess simply comments that 'whether this is Charlotte's view or the narrator's is unclear' (197). I share this view, but would also add that either way, it implies both the childish nature of Otilie, and also an affection for her.

With reference to the final case, Burgess again writes that 'we may well ask' who is speaking, and that although it seems to him that it is Charlotte, 'the explanatory addendum could be hers or the narrator's, or it could even be Otilie's thoughts, as interpreted at second hand by either Charlotte or the narrator' (197-198). Otilie makes comments about the excessive nature of men's drinking habits. The narrative continues:

Charlotte gab ihr recht, doch setzte sie das Gespräch nicht fort; denn sie fühlte nur zu wohl, daß auch hier Otilie bloß Eduarden wieder im Sinne hatte, der zwar nicht gewöhnlich, aber doch öfter, als es wünschenswert war, sein Vergnügen, seine Gesprächigkeit, seine Tätigkeit durch einen gelegentlichen Weingenuß zu steigern pflegte. (347)

This passage is significant for the revelations it offers the reader. This is the first time we have heard Otilie criticise Eduard, and it is the above paragraph which links her comments to Charlotte's husband, whether that be through the narrator's personal input, or his reporting Charlotte's thoughts. Here, it is used to diminish our opinion of

³⁰ In this quotation, Otilie, in direct speech, uses the 'zwar....nicht....aber' construction: 'Man sähe zwar das Schloß nicht, denn es wird von dem Wäldchen bedeckt; aber man befände sich auch dafür wie in einer andern und neuen Welt, indem zugleich das Dorf und alle Wohnungen verborgen wären.' (295).

the man, because we are told by two characters that, although he is not an alcoholic, he does drink too much too often. I do not agree that this could be Otilie's reported speech, but accept Burgess's discussion of whether it is Charlotte or the narrator. It is clearly Charlotte and her thoughts in the beginning of the paragraph, but, as we have seen, the narrator can slip an understated comment into reported speech or any descriptive mode.

One example that Burgess does not include in this analysis of who is speaking is in relation to the Gehülfe: 'Zwar fand er gegen sich Ottilien nicht ganz so offen wie sonst; aber sie war auch erwachsener, gebildeter und, wenn man will, im allgemeinen mitteilender, als er sie gekannt hatte' (414). In this extract, the tone tends towards the informal, almost colloquial - with the use of 'wenn man will' - and so indicates reported speech or thoughts. It could be seen as the narrator offering his interpretation of the situation, but the personal tone together with the implied absence and prior knowledge of Otilie, lend weight to the argument that this is the thought of the Assistant. The following extract concerning Eduard's recollection that the trees were planted on the day Otilie was born follows direct speech from Eduard to himself, but then moves into third person perspective, by naming him. 'Zwar diese Pflanzung konnte nicht darin erwähnt sein, aber eine andre häuslich wichtige Begebenheit an demselben Tage, deren sich Eduard noch wohl erinnerte, mußte notwendig darin angemerkt stehen' (334).

However, the merging of Eduard's thoughts with a distant narrative creates a feeling of intimacy. The thought process of Eduard, with the 'zwar', the modal verbs 'konnte' and 'mußte', and the emphasis of 'noch wohl', draws the reader into the text, and the ensuing change into the present tense and repetition of 'wie' adds to this sense

of complicity. In the process, the character of the narrator is not undermined, but rather emphasized: ‘Aber wie erstaunt, wie erfreut ist Eduard als er das wunderbarste Zusammentreffen bemerkt’ (334).

Burgess mentions other examples of the use of ‘zwar’ to continue his argument of the manipulative narrator. He refers to the use of it in conjunction with other words³¹ to ‘present two sides of a picture or an argument [...] in an imbalanced way so that the reader is left in no doubt as to which interpretation to place on the statement’ (198). Added to this, when this is used in conjunction with a negative to emphasise the two, albeit ‘imbalanced’, sides of the argument Burgess states that this shows the ‘favourite tool of the manipulative narrator’ (199). While I agree that the narrator does indeed use this stylistic technique, I strongly disagree with the conclusions that Burgess draws. The first use of ‘zwar’ with a negative occurs when the narrator describes Eduard’s untidiness in paperwork: ‘Zwar von Natur nicht unordentlich, konnte er doch niemals dazu kommen, seine Papiere nach Fächern abzuteilen’ (266). As Burgess points out, although ‘it seems that something positive is being said [...] in fact the negative second clause assumes overriding and lasting significance’ (199).³² This sentence clearly indicates a judgment of Eduard and his capabilities, and, whilst not damning, does add to the frequent criticisms of the man. It not only proves the superior knowledge of the narrator, as he knows Eduard’s habits, but in so doing shows apparent restraint on the part of the narrator, thus increasing the force of the criticism.

In the opening of the second part, the narrator makes an obvious intervention, and draws the reader into a kind of complicity. Here, the narrator uses the construction to

³¹ ‘aber’, ‘doch’, ‘aber doch’, ‘dennoch’, ‘allein’ or ‘jedoch’.

³² Burgess also accurately states that this construction is ‘additionally underpinned by the double negative in the first clause and the negative in the second’.

justify his decision to include an episode: ‘Unter andern gab ihm eines Tages ein junger Rechtsgelehrter viel zu schaffen, der, von einem benachbarten Edelmann gesendet, eine Sache zur Sprache brachte, die, zwar von keiner sonderlichen Bedeutung, Charlotten dennoch innig berührte’ (360). The narrator explains that he chooses to relate this episode as it has an effect on the ensuing events, and thus pre-empt any criticism on the reader’s part for its inclusion whilst also emphasising his role in the text, and in our reading of it.³³ He informs us that on re-reading the letters from the school, Charlotte does not learn anything new, but certain traits of the girl become more obvious and noticeable to her, such as her moderation in eating and drinking.³⁴ The use of ‘zwar’ in this context together with Charlotte’s increased awareness of Ottilie’s eating habits, act as a comment that prefigures her demise. This is not at this stage to enter into the debate surrounding Ottilie’s death; but we need to note that the stylistic device draws our attention to a potential problem, and reiterates the truth contained in the letters concerning Ottilie. The narrator also uses this technique in a similar situation, namely, to justify his inclusion of certain aspects of the text. In introducing Ottilie’s diary, he explains that although some days offered no real events, they did allow conversation: ‘Übrigens waren diese Tage zwar nicht reich an Begebenheiten, doch voller Anlässe zu ernsthafter Unterhaltung’ (368). In doing so, he again offers his narrative technique up to scrutiny, and attempts to avoid any criticism by means of a prior explanation. The reader is then aware of his apparent justification for inclusion of the diary and, as we have been informed of the lack of action, we have no reason to criticise a lull in events in the narrative. He also demonstrates his superior knowledge after the interpolated text *Die Wunderlichen*

³³ ‘Wir müssen dieses Vorfalles gedenken, weil er verschiedenen Dingen einen Anstoß gab, die sonst vielleicht lange geruht hätten.’ (360-1).

³⁴ ‘Sie [Charlotte] fand zwar bei dieser Untersuchung nichts Neues, aber manches Bekannte ward ihr bedeutender und auffallender. So konnte ihr zum Beispiel Ottiliens Mäßigkeit im Essen und Trinken wirklich Sorge machen.’ (282-83).

Nachbarskinder. He establishes this omniscience before recounting the tale; the use of 'zwar', shows he knows what will ensue;

Denn nachdem der Begleiter durch manche sonderbare, bedeutende, heitere, rührende, furchtbare Geschichten die Aufmerksamkeit erregt und die Teilnahme aufs höchste gespannt hatte, so dachte er mit einer zwar sonderbaren, aber sanfteren Begebenheit zu schließen und ahnete nicht, wie nahe diese seinen Zuhörern verwandt war. (434)

However, he also reveals that he knows the true events, which were not exactly as the tale records:

Diese Begebenheit hatte sich mit dem Hauptmann und einer Nachbarin wirklich zugetragen, zwar nicht ganz wie sie der Engländer erzählte, doch war sie in den Hauptzügen nicht entstellt, nur im einzelnen mehr ausgebildet und ausgeschmückt, wie es dergleichen Geschichten zu gehen pflegt, wenn sie erst durch den Mund der Menge und sodann durch die Phantasie eines geist- und geschmackreichen Erzählers durchgehen. (442)

Although Burgess quotes two of these examples he offers no comment on them, other than that they show the use of 'zwar' as being 'associated with overt intervention by the narrator.'³⁵ He does find that another characteristic of the use of 'zwar' 'is to underpin narratorial equivocation' (200) and examines the episode concerning the picture in the *Tableaux Vivants* of *Paternal Admonition* by Ter Borch. 'Diese, eine herrliche Gestalt im faltenreichen, weißen Atlaskleide, wird zwar nur von hinten gesehen, aber ihr ganzes Wesen scheint anzudeuten, daß sie sich zusammennimmt' (393). He states that the 'whole description is hedged with uncertainties', pointing out that 'scheint' appears five times in the entire description of this painting, whilst not making any comment on the use of 'zwar', other than showing the narrator to be equivocal.³⁶



³⁵ *Die Wahlverwandschaften* p.368 and p.360. These are examined in the previous paragraph.

³⁶ See Burgess p.202, and Susan Sirc, 'Monkeys, monuments and miracles: Aspects of imitation of word and image in *Die Wahlverwandschaften*', *GLL* 47 (1994), 432-448.

After the baby is born, we are told that Mittler was the first friend to visit the new mother, and the episode hints at a negative reading of the former priest. We are informed that he learned of the birth from his 'Kundschafter' and that 'er fand sich ein, und zwar sehr behaglich' (420). The narrator tells the reader that he 'hardly' hid his triumph from Ottilie and shouted it to Charlotte. This all results in him appearing as a gloating meddler, who lacks any concern for Ottilie, which the narrator clearly feels. Again, it is a combination of stylistic techniques which allows the narrator to express an opinion on events. Burgess comments that the narrator's 'positive attitude' (199) emerges in the following quotation:

Es hatten sich zwar seit der Zeit die Umstände so verändert, es war so mancherlei vorgefallen, daß jenes vom Augenblick ihm abgedrungene Wort gegen die folgenden Ereignisse für aufgehoben zu achten war; dennoch wollte sie auch im entferntesten Sinne weder etwas wagen, noch etwas vornehmen, das ihn verletzen könnte, und so sollte Mittler in diesem Falle Eduards Gesinnungen erforschen. (468-69)

He also finds that the narrator expresses a positive view of Ottilie in the narrative:

Luciane hatte die Pension verlassen, Ottilie konnte freier zurückkehren; von dem Verhältnisse zu Eduard hatte zwar etwas verlautet, allein man nahm die Sache, wie ähnliche Vorfälle mehr, gleichgültig auf, und selbst dieses Ereignis konnte zu Ottiliens Rückkehr beitragen. (412)

In this quotation, however, it is the reported thoughts of the Assistant, and not the narrative voice which is heard. The use of 'zwar...allein' in this context suggests that the Gehülfe is justifying his actions in his mind. It also shows the view of such relationships, that if they happened, then they cannot have been serious and can therefore be overlooked as no social impropriety has been committed. Of course, the reader knows how wrong this opinion is, and hence, the Assistant is viewed as naïve; but we have also been told of Ottilie's feelings for him, and so, yet again, we see how love can affect objectivity. The passage also makes a comment about Luciane, in that even an employee of the school can see how Luciane has a negative effect on Ottilie.

Burgess notes two occasions when the ‘zwar’ constructions express criticism of Luciane. ‘Firstly her untimely arrival: “Diese [Otilie] wußte zwar um die Ankunft Lucianens; im Hause hatte sie deshalb die nötigsten Vorkehrungen getroffen; allein so nahe stellte man sich den Besuch nicht vor” (377). And then about her over-prolonged performance with the Architect:

Er [der Klavierspieler] dankte Gott, als er die Urne auf der Pyramide stehn sah, und fiel unwillkürlich, als die Königin ihren Dank ausdrücken wollte, in ein lustiges Thema, wodurch die Vorstellung zwar ihren Charakter verlor, die Gesellschaft jedoch völlig aufgeheitert wurde, die sich denn sogleich teilte, der Dame für ihren vortrefflichen Ausdruck und dem Architekten für seine künstliche und zierliche Zeichnung eine freudige Bewunderung zu beweisen. (381)

The first of these quotations hints at the thoughtlessness which is later to emerge from Luciane at times. It is not especially critical. The added use of ‘man’ furthers the distance with which the narrator attempts to present this viewpoint, and hence, we are offered a non-committal, non-personal judgment. The second example Burgess gives is also not clearly critical of one person only. The pianist was at a loss because of the length of time the Architect took to draw the monument, and then because the time was lengthened by Luciane’s desire to have the urn drawn on top of it. He begins to play a jolly piece involuntarily, so there is no deliberate attempt at ruining Luciane’s performance. This is not to say that she is not in some way at fault, but we do hear greater criticism of her in other ways, and this example seems to be the least of slights.

As Burgess correctly states, the majority of the uses of ‘zwar’ occur in the narrator’s report rather than in direct speech. Exceptions are rare: it is used three times in letters³⁷, once in *Die Wunderlichen Nachbarskinder*³⁸ three times in direct speech,³⁹

³⁷ Burgess counts only the first two examples, no mention is made of the third one, the Beilage.

and at least once in indirect speech.⁴⁰ Hence, it is a locution that is employed by the narrator rather than his characters, and as such it is an important narrative technique which, broadly speaking, establishes a climate of relativity and conjecture.

SOLCH

The narrator finds a variety of unobtrusive methods to express his judgment. By employing 'solch' or 'oft' he invites us to anticipate his assessment of a situation. It is understated and unemphatic, but this makes it all the more powerful. One example of the narrator cloaking his judgment by the use of the all-embracing 'solche' is to be seen on the arrival of the Baronesse and the Graf. The reader is told that 'das gute, reine Kind sollte ein solches Beispiel so früh nicht gewahr werden' (305). This appears to be the opinion of Charlotte, although it is not rendered in direct speech, nor is it offered as indirect speech. The narrator seems to suggest that it is Charlotte's

'Bei diesem allen kommt jedoch in Betrachtung, daß sie manchmal, wie ich erst spät erfahren habe, Kopfweh auf der linken Seite hat, das zwar vorübergeht, aber schmerzlich und bedeutend sein mag.' (Nachschrift der Vorsteherin, p.264).

'Man hörte mich mit Aufmerksamkeit an; doch als ich geendigt hatte, sagte mir der vorsitzende Prüfende zwar freundlich, aber lakonisch: 'Fähigkeiten werden vorausgesetzt, sie sollen zu Fertigkeiten werden.' (Brief des Gehülfen, p.278).

'Was ich ihr von der französischen Sprache, die zwar mein Fach nicht ist, schrittweise mitteilte, begriff sie leicht.' (Beilage des Gehülfen, p.265).

³⁸ 'Seine fortgesetzte Aufmerksamkeit, ohne daß er zudringlich gewesen wäre, sein treuer Beistand bei verschiedenen unangenehmen Zufällen, sein gegen ihre Eltern zwar ausgesprochenes, doch ruhiges und nur hoffnungsvolles Werben, da sie freilich noch sehr jung war: das alles nahm sie für ihn ein, wozu die Gewohnheit, die äußern, nun von der Welt als bekannt angenommenen Verhältnisse das Ihrige beitrugen.' (436).

³⁹ Burgess only finds two examples of this, once by the Count and once by Eduard, but fails to notice the speech by the builder. The example Burgess gives of Eduard's speech is 'Zwar ist es ein jammervolles, ein schmerzen-, ein tränenreiches; aber ich finde es mir so natürlich, so eigen, daß ich es wohl schwerlich je wieder aufgebe.' (355).

'Ich habe sie heute im Gehen Beobachtet; noch immer möchte man ihren Schuh küssen und die zwar etwas barbarische, aber doch tief gefühlte Ehrenbezeugung der Sarmaten wiederholen, die sich nichts Besseres kennen, als aus dem Schuh einer geliebten und verehrten Person ihre Gesundheit zu trinken.' Graf's direct speech. (317).

'Des Maurers Arbeit', fuhr der Redner fort, 'zwar jetzt unter freiem Himmel, geschieht, wo nicht immer im Verborgnen, doch zum Verborgnen.' (Builder's Speech, 301).

⁴⁰ 'Allein desungeachtet hatten schon manche Gemeindeglieder früher gemäßbilligt, daß man die Bezeichnung der Stelle, wo ihre Vorfahren ruhten, aufgehoben und das Andenken dadurch gleichsam ausgelöscht; denn die wohl erhaltenen Monumente zeigen zwar an, wer begraben sei, aber nicht, wo er begraben sei, und auf das Wo komme es eigentlich an, wie viele behaupteten.' (361) This is the reported speech of the villagers.

unacknowledged feelings - ‘wenn sie die Ursache gewissermaßen ganz untersucht hätte...’ Or perhaps his evaluation of events is prejudiced by his beliefs concerning those involved? The use of ‘Das gute, reine Kind’ is indicative of the narrator’s voice and the adjective ‘solches’ again includes judgment on the class of moral values the two visitors have in pursuing their extra-marital relationship. However, this is clouded in ambiguity, as Charlotte’s reservations seem only to be based on Ottilie’s presence and not on any moral or religious views; she is willing to overlook her friends’ transgressions due to their lengthy friendship. The use of ‘ungelegen’ (‘Charlotte [war] ihre Ankunft gewissermaßen ganz ungelegen’) contains no judgment but may be an understated hint of hypocrisy. In any event, nothing overt is said; in fact the lack of any viewpoint is noticeable. Following a précis of their relationship, with the comment that ‘man [billigte] nicht alles seinen Freunden’ the reason given as to why Charlotte does not want them there uses the word ‘solche’. The narrator relates her inner thoughts (which these must be) and adds his own assessment of those involved in a few, inconspicuous words. No comment is made concerning the illegality or immorality of the visitors’ behaviour, but then, no judgment is passed on any illicit relationships in the text. But here, as it is prefaced by the description of an innocent child, this ‘solch’ would appear to contain narrative judgment on the behaviour of the Graf and the Baronesse.

But this judgmental tone, however well disguised, does not last, for when the couple arrive, the narrator’s response is unmistakably positive. ‘Den Grafen sowie die Baronesse konnte man unter jene hohen, schönen Gestalten zählen, die man in einem mittlern Alter fast lieber als in der Jugend sieht’ (307). His predisposition to judgment appears not to blinker him, and so at this stage, we are offered a two-sided presentation of the characters, albeit a controlled one. However, three paragraphs

later, we hear ‘das Gespräch war lebhaft und abwechselnd, wie denn in Gegenwart solcher Personen alles und nichts zu interessieren scheint’ (308) and we then are told that the characters spoke French so as not to create a ‘Mißverständnis’. The use of ‘solch’ together with the detail that they did not want their servants to understand their conversation lead the reader to believe that the ensuing conversation will be somewhat risqué – because of the presence of the adulterous couple who are somewhat fickle in their speech and manner. The use of this single word does alter the overall tone of an apparently neutral statement and gently pushes the reader into a judgmental mode. It is only on second reading, or attentive first reading, that these inconspicuous opinions become noticeable. When Otilie and the Architect are painting the chapel, it is their intention to leave the pillars plain, but we are informed that ‘aber wie in solchen Dingen immer eins zum andern führt, so wurden noch Blumen und Fruchtgehänge beschlossen, welche Himmel und Erde gleichsam zusammenknüpfen sollten’ (372). It is ambiguous what ‘such things’ are: is he referring to the creative process, the influence of Otilie on the Architect, or is this another prefigurative comment as to the ending? They both make something which should have been simple complicated, and the fact that the narrator says ‘obschon die Kränze sehr reich ausgestattet wurden’ creates the suggestion that it would have been better to adhere to the initial plan, and not spoil the design with rich embellishments. The narrator had previously stated that Otilie was a higher being than the others: ‘Nach einer solchen Region blicken wohl die meisten wie nach einem verschwundenen goldenen Zeitalter, nach einem verlorenen Paradiese hin’ (368). This is the first time that we clearly hear the implication that Otilie is a heavenly creature, and the force behind this is not only metaphorical but in some sense theological. The

narrator sees Ottilie in her innocence and purity as being better than the world in which she lives.

In describing the discussion of Ottilie's education, we are told that the Graf and the Baronesse give their opinion. There is nothing in this comment, but the fact that the narrator tells us that now they 'konnten nunmehr in ihren neuen Verhältnissen zusammen eine solche Untersuchung anstellen' (412) highlights the change in their situation. Before this, they could not be seen to be together and inquiring about a reputable boarding house, but now their adulterous lives have been made respectable by marriage, and so they can enter the social world together. Another decisive social and supposedly religious event is Otto's baptism:

Es bedurfte der entschiedenen Zudringlichkeit dieses Mannes [Mittler], um die hunderterlei Bedenklichkeiten, das Widerreden, Zaudern, Stocken, Besser- oder Anderswissen, das Schwanken, Meinen, Um- und Wiedermeinen zu beseitigen, da gewöhnlich bei solchen Gelegenheiten aus einer gehobenen Bedenklichkeit immer wieder neue entstehen und, indem man alle Verhältnisse schonen will, immer der Fall eintritt, einige zu verletzen. (420-21)

Another generality arises here concerning 'solche Gelegenheiten' and the narrator indicates how much of an effect Mittler has on the entire situation, combining his previous vocation and his meddling nature. He chooses the name, the priest, the godparents and organizes the guests. The self-assertiveness of this man is noted without condemnation – as is the fact that he has clearly insulted some people.

By using 'solch' the narrator avoids having to pass judgment on Ottilie and her actions. 'Die Folgen einer solchen Zuneigung stellten sich ihrem weltgewandten Geiste nur allzugeschwind dar' (315). This 'solche Zuneigung' is that which the Baroness detects between Eduard and Ottilie, and one which she is determined to halt. What, then, is this type of relationship? Again, we are not informed, but it is made obvious by the fact that she is attempting to remove Ottilie from the estate that the

Baroness fears an illicit relationship. Once more, no comment is made about her motives – nor is there any judgmental tone to be found in respect of Otilie and her attraction and possible danger.

Many examples of the narrator's use of 'solch' are located in general truths, some of which betray his feelings, some of which are employed for other purposes. When Charlotte and Otilie present the Architect with a waistcoat they have made, the narrator comments: 'Eine solche Gabe ist die angenehmste, die ein liebender, verehrender Mann erhalten mag' (406). This observation, about personalised gifts, also betrays some of the narrator's feelings; although it is presented as a maxim, it is specific to the situation and to his inner thought.

'Solch' recurs in the passage which describes Eduard's music-making:

Charlotte spielte sehr gut Klavier, Eduard nicht ebenso bequem die Flöte; denn ob er sich gleich zuzeiten viel Mühe gegeben hatte, so war ihm doch nicht die Geduld, die Ausdauer verliehen, die zur Ausbildung eines solchen Talenten gehört. (257)

Here we can hear the narrative judgment about Eduard's musical abilities, and also a critical explanation of why he will not improve: he lacks the patience and perseverance required. The notion of what is necessary for the 'Ausbildung eines solchen Talenten' is invoked in order to criticize the amateurishness of Eduard's music-making. However, when he is accompanied by Otilie, the overall effect is praised, so the change in the narrator's opinion is noticeable and the reader is able to see the narrator's fondness for Otilie and all that she does.

The beginning of chapter 8 in the second part of *Die Wahlverwandtschaften* is a paragraph of maxims dealing with the constant interplay of past and present in human affairs and the propensity of people not to concern themselves with the immediate past, but either to be held in the here and now, or to cling on to the distant past. The

narrator then goes on to state: ‘Zu solchen Betrachtungen ward unser Gehülfe aufgefordert’ (417). As many of the generalisations which open the chapters come from the narrator, we assume that this one is like the others. However, we are told that the Assistant has similar thoughts to those, so a measure of ambiguity is created. Is this the narrator and is this relevant to the main characters, or is it an expansion of the character of the young man? On occasion the characters have recourse to maxims. Otilie in her diary, Charlotte in chapter 10 part 2, both produce long lists of them – and these appear to be the outpourings of their emotions, thoughts and hopes. But in the case of the Gehülfe, the narrator is indicating that this is not one of the Assistant’s own opinions, and so we must ask why it is included, and why this kind of thought is attributed to the Assistant. The narrator always qualifies his broad statements with proof in the ensuing action, and here we know that Charlotte is looking to the future, not the recent past and that their marriage is based on memories to which they hoped to return. Otilie clearly thinks of the recent past, as that is where her experiences with Eduard lie. If opinions such as these, spoken by the Assistant, are valid, may we then trust in what he says and predicts? It is not easy for us to be sure of our ground.

‘Solch’ is also used for understatement, most spectacularly in relation to Otto.

Das Gebet war verrichtet, Otilien das Kind auf die Arme gelegt, und als sie mit Neigung auf dasselbe heruntersah, erschrak sie nicht wenig an seinen offenen Augen; denn sie glaubte in ihre eigenen zu sehen; eine solche Übereinstimmung hätte jeden überraschen müssen. (421)

This is the first time that Otilie notices that Otto has her eyes. It is indeed a shocking discovery, yet the narrator chooses to use ‘solch’ and merely implies a degree of generality. Otilie truly believes she sees a likeness, and if this indeed is the case, then this situation would be shocking to anybody. In using this all-embracing adjective, the narrator appears to be forcing the reader to confront the implications of a freak

resemblance between child and adult. At one level, the reader is unsure as to whether there is a resemblance (one notes the 'glaubte'). At another level, given the fact that, as we know in what circumstances the child was conceived the possibility of some kind of telepathic transference of desire cannot be discounted. The narrator moves swiftly on to relate how shocked Mittler was when he noticed the resemblance to the Hauptmann. All this is related in an understated fashion, and the narrator's voice is hardly to be heard. After the death of the child, we are told that the Major's reaction to it was that 'ein solches Opfer schien ihm nötig zu ihrem allseitigen Glück' (461). This is indeed shocking, but depersonalising it in this fashion, by using 'solches', distances the mother and baby's tragedy. This understatement is used again when highlighting the difference between the young, innocent girl and the older more knowledgeable woman.

Charlotten war eine solche zufällige Verletzung auch durch Wohlwollende und Gutmeinende nichts Neues; und die Welt lag ohnehin so deutlich vor ihren Augen, daß sie keinen besondern Schmerz empfand, wenngleich jemand sie unbedachtsam und unvorsichtig nötigte, ihren Blick da- oder dorthin auf eine unerfreuliche Stelle zu richten. (432)

This 'solch' is presented to show the divergence of emotion between Charlotte and Otilie. Such a statement is nothing to a woman who is used to *faux pas*, but not to a sensitive young lover. It sets up a direct comparison between the two reactions to Eduard's absence and, as she is the one who shows her distress, Otilie emerges in a more positive light than his wife. The narrator does have sympathy for Charlotte at times, despite his obvious bias towards her niece. A further observation, and a definite voice are to be heard in the following sentence: 'Die Hoffnung, ein altes Glück wiederherzustellen, flammt immer einmal wieder in dem Menschen auf, und Charlotte war zu solchen Hoffnungen abermals berechtigt, ja genötigt' (470).

Again, the proof of the maxim is given by relating it to one of the characters. This is a rare example of the narrative voice appearing to feel for Charlotte, and the correction of 'berechtigt, ja genötigt' highlights its input all the more. The narrator shares his hopes for Charlotte, and appears to offer some hope for the unfortunate woman, or is it that he knows the outcome and so allows some pity to come to the fore?

OFT

Another word encapsulating a wide range of meanings and interpretations that the narrator frequently uses, is 'oft'. Because of the presence of this single and unobtrusive word, narrative reliability is established, and superior knowledge indicated. By using it in relation to particular characters and their actions, the narrator shows that this observation about their character demonstrates that he knows them and their habits, he is a reliable witness to events, as he knows how they usually behave and think. One telling instance is: 'Hier sagte sie oft mehr, als sie zu wollen schien' (282). Yet here we are faced with a narrative conjecture, one that claims to know what she wants, the use of 'schien' indicating his opinion in this case. However, placed with this 'oft', the opinion appears to be reliable, due to his apparent long-standing knowledge of Ottilie. He demonstrates his knowledge of Eduard's movements outside the realm of the novel, by explaining to us that the 'Wirtshaus' to which he knows that Ottilie will go is well-known to him, not only by relating the story of the owner's son's medal, but by the statement that; '[Eduard] sah Ottilien allein oder so gut als allein auf wohlbekanntem Wege, in einem gewohnten Wirtshause, dessen Zimmer er so oft betreten' (471). Eduard feels comforted as Ottilie will be in his realm, where he has so often slept; and his normal environment

will be enriched because of her presence. The repetition of ‘allein’, qualified by ‘so gut als’ is also an insight into the mind of Eduard, as although, it is not stated that these are his thoughts, these details and hopes must come from Eduard and not the narrator.

Another example of this use of ‘oft’ is that of showing knowledge of the characters’ habits and can be seen in the discussion of whether or not to send Ottilie back to the boarding school. ‘Der Graf und die Baronesse, welche so oft in den Fall kamen’ (412) were asked for their assessment on such matters as these, but what ‘these matters’ are is not stated. The fact that they offer their opinion on all events is veiled in this comment, which refrains from stating that they ‘meddle’ as much as Mittler. Private moments related to the reader show the narrator’s further observations on the characters but more importantly they establish his position as a knowing reliable reporter. ‘Wie oft aber lag diese nachts, wenn sie sich eingeschlossen, auf den Knieen vor dem eröffneten Koffer und betrachtete die Geburtstagsgeschenke, von denen sie noch nichts gebraucht, nichts zerschnitten, nichts gefertigt’ (351). This statement full of despair on behalf of Ottilie is made all the more poignant through the use of the adverb as this event must happen frequently, and her anguish is made more emotional through the repetition of ‘wie oft’ in the sentence which follows it. In the second of the two episodes of reading over Eduard’s shoulder, we are told that ‘ja [Eduard] hielt oft längere Pausen als nötig, damit er nur nicht eher umwendete, bis auch [Ottilie] zu Ende der Seite gekommen’ (296-97). We are told that this is a frequent occurrence, and we are told the reason why Eduard does it. The narrator makes no comment on the previous episode involving Eduard’s wife and the reader hears this gap in the text, and is then forced to fill it by conjecturing why the narrator fails to mention it. This response is the direct opposite of Eduard’s reaction to Charlotte reading over his

shoulder in chapter four of the first part; then he got annoyed, and felt obliged to offer his explanation why. Here he actively encourages it. Although the narrator does not refer the reader to the earlier incident, the connection cannot be overlooked. The use of 'oft' highlights the extremity of the contradiction in Eduard's character, which is prefaced by the narrator's explanation of why Ottilie needs to look at the words. In the former incident, Eduard's reaction is explained after the event, and although perfectly plausible, the impression given is that of an egoist. Here, the emphasis is on Ottilie and the reasons are stated before the event, as if to answer pre-emptively any criticism of the double standards.

The narrator makes frequent wide-ranging observations throughout, with the result that the reader is invited to understand through universal statements, without the narrator himself being required to make an overtly critical or laudatory statement. 'Wie oft schlägt man einen Weg ein und wird davon abgeleitet! Wie oft werden wir von einem scharf ins Auge gefaßten Ziel abgelenkt, um ein höheres zu erreichen!' (428) These remarks come from the mind of Charlotte and are used to express general truths reflecting her inner confusion and need for advice. They are those of everyday speech and used by a woman attempting to resolve a complicated situation, but when they come from the mouth of the narrator, another meaning of more general application is implied: 'Und wie oft kommt nicht jeder in diese Gefahr, der eine allgemeine Betrachtung selbst in einer Gesellschaft, deren Verhältnisse ihm sonst bekannt sind, ausspricht!' (431-2)

This rhetorical question is another observation which comments on the previous speech by the Englishman. We know, although not as well as the narrator, that the comments made concerning the absent master of the house affect the two women, but

the narrator speaks out in the broadest terms when he knows the details. Here again, the narrator encourages us to feel for the women, but particularly Ottilie, by involving us and our understanding. Feuerlicht argues that the opening of part two is the clearest indication that the narrator wants to present the novel ‘als einen wahren Bericht’ as he provides the reader with an ‘angebliche Quelle’ and draws the us into understanding through generalisations.⁴¹ It begins with a dictum concerning the mirroring of life in narrative art, namely that when the main players leave, a minor character comes to the fore: ‘Im gemeinen Leben begegnet uns oft, was wir in der Epopöe als Kunstgriff des Dichters zu rühmen pflegen’ (360). This ‘oft’ is utilised in its broadest sense, deliberately involving the reader all the more, by using ‘wir’ and ‘uns’. Here he uses this technique to include us in a shared understanding, and goes on to prove it with the arrival of the Architect. In so doing, he draws our attention to the stylistic techniques involved, and to the fact that this is a work of fiction which mirrors life. ‘Oft’ occurs again in an all-important moment of narrative commentary:

Auch diesem wundersamen, unerwarteten Begegnis sahen der Hauptmann und Charlotte stillschweigend mit einer Empfindung zu, wie man oft kindische Handlungen betrachtet, die man wegen ihrer besorglichen Folgen gerade nicht billigt und doch nicht schelten kann, ja vielleicht beneiden muß. (297)

In this section of the text, the reader is unsure how to judge this episode. The reference to the ‘wundersamen, unerwarteten Begegnis’ sounds as though it comes from Eduard, but presented through the words of the narrator, and the onlookers watch as one watches children. Is this to suggest that the two ‘musicians’ are childish or that they have a child-like naivety? The narrator avoids an explanation by implying that the reader knows these situations and so must know the answers himself. He carries on to say that one’s response to the two is that

[man sie] ja vielleicht beneiden muß. Denn eigentlich war die Neigung dieser beiden ebensogut im Wachsen als jene, und

⁴¹ Feuerlicht, p.326.

vielleicht nur noch gefährlicher dadurch, daß beide ernster, sicherer von sich selbst, sich zu halten fähiger waren. (297-98)

In this short space of time, the narrator uses 'vielleicht' in two ways. The former shows him suggesting the possibility that the reader should or could feel envious of such a relationship. The second expresses his understanding of the characters and what could happen; he moves back into the role of omniscient narrator who knows not only what could happen, but what will happen. In this commentary the narrator involves us the readers in reflections concerning emotional maturity and immaturity. The implications are in many ways sombre – to the effect that even those people who seem to have self-control may be as vulnerable as those who let their emotions rule them. The narrative voice here is both authoritative and impersonal, both judgemental and compassionate.

VIELLEICHT

Again, in his desire to speak only in the broadest terms the narrator informs us that 'junge Frauenzimmer sehen sich bescheiden vielleicht nach diesem oder jenem Jüngling um, mit stiller Prüfung, ob sie ihn wohl zum Gatten wünschten' (427).⁴² Here, the narrator appears to be suggesting how women seek their partners, a somewhat fallacious assertion as the young girl in this context is Otilie, and this is not what she does. This generalisation is therefore qualified by the use of 'vielleicht' but he goes on to present general opinions about older women, thus demonstrating how the Baronesse and Charlotte view the situation of Otilie.

The narrator also makes his presence felt through the suggestive word 'vielleicht'. However, as with so many of the stylistic features of his account, this is not always

⁴² See section on 'wohl' for more detail on the use of 'wohl'. pp.35-39.

what it seems. Not only does he suggest characters' motives, but he goes more deeply into their sub-conscious: 'Vielleicht kam hierzu, ihm selbst unbewußt, ein anderer geheimer Antrieb' (402). The narrator is now moving into the realm of the subliminal. He is suggesting the reasons behind the Architect's desire to stay, and so now we hear him as the typical omniscient narrator, although the conjecture is only advanced as a possibility. We will never be allowed to be sure. The narrator goes on to offer his opinion about Ottilie's reaction to Eduard's child:

Durch diese sonderbare Verwandtschaft und vielleicht noch mehr durch das schöne Gefühl der Frauen geleitet, welche das Kind eines geliebten Mannes, auch von einer andern, mit zärtlicher Neigung umfassen, ward Ottilie dem heranwachsenden Geschöpf soviel als eine Mutter oder vielmehr eine andre Art von Mutter. (445)

But is this Ottilie's subconscious reaction or the narrator attempting to transform her into an angelic maternal being? The actual reasoning behind the attraction to one's lover's child seems somewhat twisted, but the use of 'vielleicht' is a suggestive attempt by the narrator, accentuated by the personal addition of 'noch mehr', to present Ottilie's action in a positive light. Elsewhere in the text the conjectural register makes itself heard:

Charlotte benutzte des andern Tags auf einem Spaziergang nach derselben Stelle die Gelegenheit, das Gespräch wieder anzuknüpfen, vielleicht in der Überzeugung, daß man einen Vorsatz nicht sicherer abstumpfen kann, als wenn man ihn öfters durchspricht. (250)

In this episode, close to the beginning of the novel, the narrator offers a possible explanation for Charlotte's actions. After establishing himself as the reliable voice within a traditionally descriptive narrative, he then becomes an unsure, but reflective narrator. This does not diminish his authority. Rather by suggesting as opposed to stating his opinion, he encourages the reader to share his sentiments and to trust him. However, the reader no longer knows how to view the narrator. Kahn suggests that,

using 'vielleicht', the narrator shows himself to be 'vorsichtig-unsicher'.⁴³ Is he a reliable source? Is it his opinion that he is introducing? Here we have the voice of the narrator suggesting Charlotte's reasons for raising the topic of the Hauptmann's visit again. Not only does the narrator show his presence by the use of 'vielleicht' but also the use of the impersonal 'man' presents us with a generalisation which cannot be attributed to any one of the characters. The maxim, which immediately follows, does not clarify these questions; rather it raises the issue of whether this is a true story or a general fable, applicable to all members of society, an assertion advanced by the use of aphorisms and fundamental truths.

In the reported speech of the Englishman, 'vielleicht' is used to add to the sense of the characters' desire for correctness and to atone for indiscretions.

Otilie folgte Charlotten, wie es die beiden Fremden selbst verlangten, und nun kam der Lord an die Reihe zu bemerken, daß vielleicht abermals ein Fehler begangen, etwas dem Hause Bekanntes oder gar Verwandtes erzählt worden. (442)

This is reported speech of the nobleman informing his companion that maybe they have committed another faux pas. This was evident to the reader before we were told why by Charlotte, so what is the narrator telling us by including this 'vielleicht'? It is reflecting the formality of the Englishmen, but also further drawing our attention to this indiscretion. This episode links the previous hints we have been given by the narrator regarding the Hauptmann's past, but again, we are left without the full details; the narrator withdraws, informing us only that this had happened to the Hauptmann, but not exactly as it had been told. Yet again, the reader is forced to fill in the gap and ask why the narrator withholds information from us. This story does develop into one about Otilie, so anything that is not directly relevant to her is not

⁴³ Kahn, p.275.

expanded upon. On occasion, however, the narrator can offer general propositions about human behaviour:

Unter allem, was die Einbildungskraft sich Angenehmes ausmalt,
ist vielleicht nichts Reizenderes, als wenn Liebende, wenn junge
Gatten ihr neues, frisches Verhältnis in einer neuen, frischen Welt
zu genießen und einen dauernden Bund an soviel wechselnden
Zuständen zu prüfen und zu bestätigen hoffen. (452-53)

The narrative voice is present here, by its presentation of the generalisation with the additions of ‘vielleicht’ and ‘als wenn’. The expressed sentiment appears to be ironic to the reader, although in Eduard’s mind it would be valid. Again it is said in contrast to Charlotte’s and the Major’s situation, which is presented as a colder, more practical relationship, a more mature one. We are not entirely sure whether this is Eduard’s voice or the narrator’s. The most obvious example of this style of writing is to be seen during their walk to the mill. Throughout this episode, Eduard’s feelings towards Ottilie become clear (‘ein himmlisches Wesen...das zarteste weibliche Wesen’) and direct speech is used. However, the narration then moves into the descriptive mode, and the characters’ voices are not to be heard. Thus the comment, ‘Es waren vielleicht die zwei schönsten Hände, die sich jemals zusammenschlossen’ (293) becomes all the more intriguing. Is it the narrator’s opinion, is it another effusion of Eduard’s, or is it a combination of both? Throughout the novel, Feuerlicht argues that the inclusion of ‘vielleicht’ introduces an element of verisimilitude into the novel with the uncertainty of the narrator. However, he finds this passage unworthy of such a ‘gelassener Erzähler’ and states that: ‘Sicherlich geht er zu weit, vielleicht in die bedrohliche Nähe des Trivialromans’, and argues that it is the very inclusion of the suggestive ‘perhaps’ which aggravates the passage: ‘Das *vielleicht* macht diese Übertreibung noch crasser’.⁴⁴

⁴⁴ Feuerlicht, p.328.

The criticism of Eduard's flute playing, which is apparently shared by all with the exception of Ottilie, derives directly from the narrator. However, it is a subtle comment, and is negative without seeming prejudiced: 'Er führte deshalb seine Partie sehr ungleich aus, einige Stellen gut, nur vielleicht zu geschwind' (257). Another veiled criticism of Eduard, not openly derogatory due to the escape clause of 'maybe' is: 'Eine seiner besondern Eigenheiten, die er jedoch vielleicht mit mehreren Menschen teilt, war die, daß es ihm unerträglich fiel, wenn jemand ihm beim Lesen in das Buch sah' (269). The narrator protects himself, by suggesting that others could share this 'besondere Eigenheit'.

MAN

A particular frequent feature of the narrator in *Die Wahlverwandtschaften* is the constant use of the impersonal 'man'. There are 568 occasions when 'man' is to be found in the text, with 75 occurring in letters, the diary, or the *Novelle*, and 187 to be found in the characters' speech. Of the remaining 306, some are used in a manner which indicates nothing other than the normal usage of the indefinite third person singular. However, many contain judgment, avoid names and invite general assent, some show the narrator's opinion, and others disclose hints as to the future events. Many examples of 'man' are to be found in the generalisations that avoid any obvious personal input from the narrator:

Den Grafen sowie die Baroness konnte man unter jene hohen, schönen Gestalten zählen, die man in einem mittlern Alter fast lieber als in der Jugend sieht; denn wenn ihnen auch etwas von der ersten Blüte abgehn möchte, so erregen sie doch nun mit der Neigung ein entschiedenes Zutrauen. Auch dieses Paar zeigte sich höchst bequem in der Gegenwart. Ihre freie Weise, die Zustände des Lebens zu nehmen und zu behandeln, ihre Heiterkeit und scheinbare Unbefangenheit teilte sich sogleich mit, und ein hoher Anstand begrenzte das Ganze, ohne daß man irgendeinen Zwang bemerkt hätte. (307)

This is yet another universal comment, but this time directly and simultaneously linked to the Graf and the Baronesse. It includes his judgment on the pair, seen in the ‘fast lieber’ and ‘unter jene hohen, schönen Gestalten’. Again, these are types, not referred to by name, just rank, and the narrator gives no exact description of them, but by making such statements he includes us in the narrative, as we must share the understanding of such comments. A similar generality can be heard in a remark such as the following:

Man müßte ganz in Gesellschaft schweigen, wenn man nicht manchmal in den Fall kommen sollte; denn nicht allein bedeutende Bemerkungen, sondern die trivialsten Äußerungen können auf eine so mißklingende Weise mit dem Interesse der Gegenwärtigen zusammentreffen. (433-34)

Once again we are presented with a further observation which is of particular relevance to those involved, as we can see from Charlotte’s response that what has been said has affected her. We know that more is to come, as we are told in the next paragraph that the story of *Die Wunderlichen Nachbarskinder* was ‘verwandt’ to the listeners. Whilst describing the portfolio of the Architect, the narrator’s obvious admiration for his work is audible. He has previously criticized his dilettantish ways, but now is overcome with praise of his sketches: ‘Aus allen Gestalten blickte nur das reinste Dasein hervor; alle mußte man, wo nicht für edel, doch für gut ansprechen.’(456) His voice interrupts the statement with ‘doch’ and includes everyone in the use of ‘man’.

Some of the uses of ‘man’ allow no character to be named, which works to different effects. Whilst looking at the view from the new house’s plot on Ottilie’s birthday, the topic of the joining of the lake is raised. It is done in an impersonal manner, with the actual suggestion being made by an unspecified ‘einer’. No person is named, thus preventing any direct apportioning of blame for the idea which will cause so much

harm.⁴⁵ ‘Man fürchtete sich zu verletzen, und gerade die Furcht war am ersten verletzbar und verletzt am ersten’ (465). This refers to both women attempting to avoid hurting one another after the death of the child. The situation is obviously a perilous one, and the tentative nature of their relationship is accentuated by the impersonal usage of ‘man’. In the crystal experiment, we are told ‘man war einen Augenblick ungewiß’ (445) after hearing that the Englishmen wanted to carry out further experiments on Ottilie. This ‘man’ can only refer to Ottilie and Charlotte, and it is the latter who has ‘eine starke Apprehension’ in respect of this art (although why is not made clear), and therefore does not allow any further action to be taken. So, is this ‘man’ Charlotte, or the silent Ottilie, or rather is it a combination of the two, with Charlotte finally realizing ‘wovon die Rede sei’? On Ottilie’s collapse we are dramatically informed that ‘man kommt’ (483). This short statement reinforces the speed and anxiety surrounding the incident. This impersonal ‘man’ prevents any one person being specified and introduces a note of detachment which continues in the distanced account of events: ‘Man ließ sie gewähren’ (282). This comment, innocuous by itself, follows many indications of Edward’s ‘Neigung’ to Ottilie. It shows that everyone lets her be what or who she wants to be. It is a short precise statement which gives no personal details. ‘Man sah sich des Tages weniger, und mit desto mehr Verlangen suchte man sich des Abends auf’ (296). These examples of ‘man’ refer to the four main characters of the first part, but why not use their names or their relations to one another, e.g. ‘die Freunde’? Again, it could be seen as a desire to create distance and an impression of an ‘impartial’ narrator performing a scientific experiment. Time and again we hear generalizations from the narrator:

Doch wäre man zu keinem Entschluß gekommen, kein Schritt
wäre geschehen, hätte nicht ein unvermuteter Besuch auch hier
eine besondere Anregung gegeben, wie denn die Erscheinung von

⁴⁵ ‘Nun sollten nur noch, rief einer, die drei Teiche zu einem See vereinigt werden.’ (303).

bedeutenden Menschen in irgendeinem Kreise niemals ohne Folge
bleiben kann. (412)

This is the theme of the novel, an external element being introduced to the compound, and the reaction which occurs is to be witnessed. The use of the subjunctive and the impersonal 'man' allows it to sound more dispassionate, the people involved are not named in this context, and so the personal aspect is not accentuated. It avoids drawing our attention away from the narrator's purpose, and heightens his desired effect. On Ottilie's unexpected return, she goes to her room to find that 'Man hatte alles weggetragen, nur das Kofferchen, unschlüssig, wo man es hinstellen sollte, in der Mitte des Zimmers stehengelassen' (475). This is on Charlotte's orders but the impersonal presentation of it heightens the isolation of Ottilie. 'Sie sagte sich alles, was man sich sagen kann, ja sie antizipierte, wie man gewöhnlich pflegt, den leidigen Trost, daß auch solche Schmerzen durch die Zeit gelindert werden'(320). Once again, the use of the impersonal, rather than the personal form, removes us from her pain and prevents us from becoming emotionally involved. However, as more detail is given, sympathy is evoked, but we are not clear as to the precise nature of Ottilie's feelings.

'Man bediente sich der französischen Sprache, um die Aufwartenden von dem Mitverständnis auszuschließen, und schweifte mit mutwilligem Behagen über hohe und mittlere Weltverhältnisse hin' (308). This 'man' excludes all the servants, so it can only mean the six characters currently at the Schloß, and is as vague as the euphemisms which state that they used French so as to avoid misunderstandings; the hypocrisy of those involved is not openly stated, but left for the reader to ascertain. 'Manchmal mochte man gern etwas nur halb verstehen, öfters wurde aber doch ein Ausdruck, wo nicht durch den Verstand, wenigstens durch die Empfindung mißdeutet' (465). This is followed by two other instances when the impersonal

pronoun is used where the fact that everything must be done with such care and delicacy comes across in this distanced style of writing.

The characters frequently use 'man' in their direct speech: and they display a fondness for generalizations:

Charlotte tritt hinzu und bittet ihn, ein Vergnügen zu verschieben, das jetzt nicht am Platze sei, das in dem gegenwärtigen Augenblick nicht genossen werden könne; sie erinnert ihn, was man dem Geretteten und dem Retter schuldig sei. (337-38)

Charlotte does not name the rescuer (der Hauptmann) and neither does she say that Eduard and she should be grateful. The impersonal touch here adds to our understanding of her emotions towards him, her guilt, and sense of social propriety and expectation. On the other hand, we have Eduard, whose love produces a different effect on his thoughts:

Er bemerkte gar bald, daß man ihn und Ottilien auseinanderhielt, daß man ihm erschwerte, sie allein zu sprechen, ja sich ihr zu nähern, außer in Gegenwart von mehreren; und indem er hierüber verdrießlich war, ward er es über manches andere. (329)

In this passage, Eduard clearly feels that everyone is against him; this comes from aspects of his character already seen, and, on second reading, from what we know about his excessive nature. The use of 'man' reflects his paranoid assumption that everyone is involved in this enforced separation, and that no one is prepared to help him. 'In diesem Augenblick sah man Ottilien herankommen, und die Baroness sagte schnell zu Eduard, er möchte von dieser vorhabenden Herbstreise ja nichts reden; denn gewöhnlich geschähe das nicht, worauf man sich so lange voraus freue' (316). Although this is reported speech, and also a truism, by attributing the 'man' form to the Baroness the narrator invites us to hear the duplicity regarding her plans, heightened by the adjective 'schnell':

Da man auch die gewöhnlichen und dessen ungeachtet nur zu oft überraschenden Notfälle durchdachte, so wurde alles, was zur Rettung der Ertrunkenen nötig sein möchte, um so mehr

angeschafft, als bei der Nähe so mancher Teiche, Gewässer und Wasserwerke öfters ein und der andere Unfall dieser Art vorkam. (267-68)

This use of ‘man’ is included in a statement, which warns the reader of the dangers to come and presents the Captain as a responsible and cautious man. This only becomes clear on second reading, as the fate of Otto is then known. Throughout the text, there are several pre-emptive comments or events concerning drowning and the danger of water; this of course is the first, but remains a warning and also shows us the character of the Hauptmann; he is scrupulous and aware of danger. This sentence is presented as a wide-ranging view concerning safety awareness, but is all the more relevant in the case of these characters and their fates. This is heightened as Eduard then ‘lets slip’ (‘entschlüpfte’) that the captain had been involved in a drowning incident, but no further details are given then. The narrator informs us that Charlotte also knows of the event, but all decline to elaborate:

So setzen alle zusammen, jeder auf seine Weise, das tägliche Leben fort, mit und ohne Nachdenken; alles scheint seinen gewöhnlichen Gang zu gehen, wie man auch in ungeheuren Fällen, wo alles auf dem Spiele steht, noch immer so fortlebt, als wenn von nichts die Rede wäre. (332)

The narrator concludes with a generalisation, which is unusual as he normally uses it to comment on a specific event. This time, however, the narrator is hinting much more at the horrors to come – one thinks of the reference to ‘ungeheuren Fällen, wo alles auf dem Spiele steht’ – and to the fact that everyone carries on pretending nothing had happened. In this case, nothing has really happened, so this is the narrator knowing that this is the start of a monumental sequence of events whereas the characters are more or less unaware of what is in store. ‘Ein solcher Zustand erhebt den Geist, indem er das Herz erweitert, und alles, was man tut und vornimmt, hat eine Richtung gegen das Unermeßliche’ (291). Here again we are faced with another indication of the narrator’s presence and judgment. He makes a grandiose statement,

uses 'solch' to reinforce the relevance of his inclusion of this general observation, and because he backs up his opinions with facts, we tend to assume that the rest of the generalisation will come to pass. Here, then, we seem to hear the voice of a sovereign narrative presence. But elsewhere the 'man' vibrates with more personal responses:

Die neuen, modischen Gewänder erhöhten ihre Gestalt; denn indem das Angenehme einer Person sich auch über ihre Hülle verbreitet, so glaubt man sie immer wieder von neuem und anmutiger zu sehen, wenn sie ihre Eigenschaften einer neuen Umgebung mitteilt. (283)

This use of 'man' appears to be a personal opinion masked by using the impersonal 'man' form. Based on the narrator's clear admiration of the girl, this comment has to be his point of view on Ottilie as it is not even disguised as a dictum concerning women and their fashion.

The narrator's voice is to be heard at various points, not only when passing judgment on the characters. 'Ottilie war kindlich heiter, nach ihrer Weise konnte man sie offen nennen.' (322) This is the narrator's personal opinion re-emerging after his comprehensive observation about love. He shows that he knows her and can therefore judge what mood she is in and can pass valid judgments about her. He rarely does this with any of the other characters, thus showing his increasing affinity with Ottilie. He is not doing it to prove to the reader that he knows his characters, rather it seems that he feels himself close to Ottilie, and therefore can speak with authority about her, her character and her thoughts.

Wir hören von einer besondern Einrichtung bei der englischen Marine. Sämtliche Tauwerke der königlichen Flotte, vom stärksten bis zum schwächsten, sind dergestalt gesponnen, daß ein roter Faden durch das Ganze durchgeht, den man nicht herauswinden kann, ohne alles aufzulösen, und woran auch die kleinsten Stücke kenntlich sind, daß sie der Krone gehören. (368).

This story prefaces Ottilie's diary, and so explains the narrator's purpose in including these extracts. It shows his intentions, and the fact that he points it out, makes the

reader doubly aware of his presence and his power in the selection of material. He combines the impersonal ‘man’ with ‘wir’ again inviting us to be complicit in the telling and reading of this work, which is rapidly and overtly becoming Ottilie’s story and he justifies this (how successfully is up to the reader to decide) by this tale, and the comment regarding its style (the coherent thread – the red thread). ‘Weil aber die meisten derselben wohl nicht durch ihre eigene Reflexion entstanden sein können, so ist es wahrscheinlich, daß man ihr irgendeinen Heft mitgeteilt, aus dem sie sich, was ihr gemächlich war, ausgeschrieben.’ (383) This is another justification of Ottilie’s diary and her style, making us aware of his presence and referring us back to his previous comments about the red thread. We are forced to be conscious of him and the literary context of the text, but then he disappears, so his voice, guidance, opinions are not to be found. Feuerlicht finds the narrator’s uncertainty in ‘dieser einfachen Angelegenheit’ contrary to his ‘gewohnten Allwissenheit’ but suggests that it adds to the reality of the tale: ‘Die Unsicherheit des Erzählers [...] erhöht zwar das Gefühl, daß es sich um eine “wahre” Geschichte handelt’.⁴⁶

The concept of the temporal and the desire to live in the past has already occurred in the novel when we are told:

Alle diese Dinge richteten die Einbildungskraft gegen die ältere Zeit hin, und da er zuletzt mit den Anfängen des Drucks, Holzschnitten und den ältesten Kupfern seine Unterhaltung zierte und die Kirche täglich auch, jenem Sinne gemäß, an Farbe und sonstiger Auszierung gleichsam der Vergangenheit entgegenwuchs, so mußte man sich beinahe selbst fragen, ob man denn wirklich in der neueren Zeit lebe, ob es nicht ein Traum sei, daß man nunmehr in ganz andern Sitten, Gewohnheiten, Lebensweisen und Überzeugungen verweile.(367)

Here, the narrator raises the issue of historical change. There has been discussion of the past and the present, and it has been established that the relationship of Eduard and Charlotte is based on the past, on their memories and Eduard’s tenacious grasp on

⁴⁶ Feuerlicht, p.334.

the dreams of his youth, but here the issue of the shift in society as a whole is raised. This theme figures in the novel specifically in terms of the role of the upper classes. So why does the narrator discuss it now? Not, admittedly that he actually discusses it, but by presenting it in this way – that of the non-committal, impersonal comment – he puts it in the mind of the reader, and thus invites us to look at the four characters and their actions in the light of this comment.

There are episodes in which ‘man’ is used to veil the voice behind them.

Man sah in ihm ein wunderbares, ja ein Wunderkind, höchst erfreulich dem Anblick, an Größe, Ebenmaß, Stärke und Gesundheit; und was noch mehr in Verwunderung setzte, war jene doppelte Ähnlichkeit, die sich immer mehr entwickelte. (445)

Again, the reader is not sure who it is who views the child as a prodigy. Obviously the mother and those close to her would view it as wonderful, but the ‘Wunderkind’ sits uneasily with the rest of the statement, and so with the ‘ja’ it appears to be the voice of the narrator, and if so, then why? Due to the reader’s experience with the narrative mode, it would not be incorrect to see this as a pointer towards future events, with the narrator displaying his superior knowledge, and inviting us to question why this child is a ‘Wunderkind’. However, other instances would appear to derive from the characters, but edged with narrative agreement. ‘Nicht umsonst hatte man ihm dann in der Taufe ihren beiderseitigen Namen Otto gegeben.’ (453) This all must be Eduard’s voice, but it is not presented as such. If it does belong to Eduard, then by using the impersonal ‘man’ he avoids any personal connection with the child. However, it could be interpreted as the narrator offering his opinion of what Eduard might be thinking, or it might be that he himself is reading more significance into the boy’s name. If this is the case, then the reader is invited to seek hidden meanings in ‘Otto’, who is increasingly seen under a symbolic aspect.

Elsewhere the narrator comments on general social attitudes, without expressing an opinion:

Luciane hatte die Pension verlassen, Otilie konnte freier zurückkehren; von dem Verhältnisse zu Eduard hatte zwar etwas verlautet, allein man nahm die Sache, wie ähnliche Vorfälle mehr, gleichgültig auf, und selbst dieses Ereignis konnte zu Otiliens Rückkehr beitragen. (412)

Here the narrator is informing us that the situation between Otilie and Eduard was known, and accepted; there is a social comment in this, implying hypocrisy, but the use of 'one knew' or 'it was known' distances anyone from direct blame. 'Eine doppelte Ehe war nicht ohne Aufsehn gestört; man dachte an Scheidung' (305). This 'man' appears to be that of society, propriety and moral values; the impersonal pronoun is indicative of the moral tone and expectation, not only the narrator's judgment, but that of society in general. In fact, the only person who appears to act upon his morals is Mittler, although his actions are presented as being somewhat eccentric. 'Man suchte ihn [Mittler] zu begütigen, aber vergebens.' (306) This is possibly the only time where Mittler can be seen in a positive light; he expresses his beliefs without demanding the same code of others. The 'man' here must refer to Charlotte and Eduard, as the others were not there, and Otilie is supposed to know nothing about this, so why not say 'the couple'? Again, 'man' could have been employed to understate direct narrative judgment and comparison between morals and actions.

However, the narrator does not shrink from being judgmental, although, as in the rest of the novel, this is often couched in tentative sentences. He offers opinions without claiming they originate from any of the characters, so they must be seen as coming from him.

Er [Eduard] äußerte sich nach seiner Weise freundlich und angenehm; denn wenn er, empfänglich wie er war, leicht aufloderte, wenn sein lebhaftes Begehren zudringlich ward, wenn

seine Hartnäckigkeit ungeduldig machen konnte, so waren doch alle seine Äußerungen durch eine vollkommene Schonung des andern dergestalt gemildert, daß man ihn immer noch liebenswürdig finden mußte, wenn man ihn auch beschwerlich fand. (250)

This has to come from someone who knows Eduard, seen by ‘nach seiner Weise’ and ‘wie er war.’ We are not informed that Charlotte has this attitude towards her husband, and this use of ‘man’ hides the judgment of the narrator without him openly stating this. ‘Je mehr man die Sache durchsprach, desto günstiger erschien sie, und Eduard konnte seinen Triumph nicht bergen, daß Ottilie den Gedanken gehabt. Er war so stolz darauf, als ob die Erfindung sein gewesen wäre’ (295). This use of ‘man’ is unemphatic. It allows the length of the conversation to be cut down to a summary of the result, and so indicates that the contents themselves were of no great importance, hence ‘man’ is used and not the characters’ names or the third person plural. The narrator chooses to relate to us the feelings of Eduard, the possessive, proud man, and makes the actual discussion or theme of secondary importance to presenting Eduard in a negative light. The criticism is rendered all the more negative by no comment being made, leaving it up to the reader to draw his own conclusion:

Es ist eine so angenehme Empfindung, sich mit etwas zu beschäftigen, was man nur halb kann, daß niemand den Dilettanten schelten sollte, wenn er sich mit einer Kunst abgibt, die er nie lernen wird, noch den Künstler tadeln dürfte, wenn er über die Grenze seiner Kunst hinaus in einem benachbarten Felde sich zu ergehen Lust hat. (370)

This seemingly innocuous generalisation which precedes the comment about the Architect’s painting of the chapel, is loaded with prejudicial intent. The ‘man’ who is seemingly praised is the Architect; the somewhat patronising tone belongs to the narrator and conceivably derives from his jealousy of another admirer of Ottilie. He criticizes his efforts before we get a chance to see or hear anything of them, and so we know that the reports we will eventually get will be biased and possibly unreliable. He is criticizing without openly stating his opinion and is hiding behind ‘man’ and

again including us in this judgment, or at least attempting to do so. ‘Und so entstand gegen die bisherige Art zu leben ein ziemlich fühlbarer Gegensatz, um so mehr, als der Gehülfe nicht ganz dasjenige billigte, womit man sich die Zeit über ausschließlich beschäftigt hatte’ (407). The Assistant does not approve of their ‘exclusive occupation’, but the narrator’s voice remains absent, and indeed we cannot tell from this what opinion he has of it. The use of ‘man’ means that Ottilie’s name is not mentioned. But, as she was the centre of attraction in the *Tableau Vivant* that the Gehülfe happened to witness and he did not see the others, the criticism is probably directed more towards Ottilie than the others.

‘Man hatte immer ein gutes Verhältnis erhalten, ob man gleich nicht alles an seinen Freunden billigte’ (305). This refers directly to Eduard and Charlotte, and this appears to indicate that they overlooked the questionable behaviour of their aristocratic friends. Again the impersonal ‘one’ distances us and them from active involvement, but also implies some superior moral judgment on the part of the narrator. What he does not state is that Eduard actively helped them further their illicit relationship; this comes later. Charlotte is concerned because of Ottilie’s presence, which is somewhat hypocritical, but the narrator makes no comment. In a key passage later in the novel the narrator contrasts the emotional world of the two women:

Denn freilich war der Zustand beider Frauen sehr verschieden. Wenn alles beim alten blieb, wenn man in das Gleis des gesetzmäßigen Lebens zurückkehrte, gewann Charlotte an gegenwärtigem Glück, und eine frohe Aussicht in die Zukunft öffnete sich ihr; Ottilie hingegen verlor alles, man kann wohl sagen alles; denn sie hatte zuerst Leben und Freude in Eduard gefunden, und in dem gegenwärtigen Zustande fühlte sie eine unendliche Leere, wovon sie früher kaum etwas geahnet hatte. (351)

The outpouring of the narrator’s sympathy for Ottilie is remarkable here. The use of ‘man’ is an attempt to hide the fact that it is his voice which is expressing these sentiments, but to no avail, the repetition of ‘man kann wohl sagen alles’ makes it all

the more obvious. ‘Ja, hätte man eins von beiden am letzten Ende der Wohnung festgehalten, das andere hätte sich nach und nach von selbst, ohne Vorsatz, zu ihm hinbewegt’ (478). This narrator’s personal opinion is used to heighten the understanding of the power of these two people, and the interjection of ‘ja’ together with the subjunctive all combine to allow the narrator’s voice to be heard. The exaggeration of this description shows how the narrator is emotionally involved with Ottilie’s plight:

Unterdessen kann man bemerken, daß Ottilie kaum Speise noch Trank zu sich nimmt, indem sie immerfort bei ihrem Schweigen verharret. Man redet ihr zu, sie wird ängstlich; man unterläßt es. Denn haben wir nicht meistens die Schwäche, daß wir jemanden auch zu seinem Besten nicht gern quälen mögen? (476)

All this is dealt with by using ‘man’. One can feel the tension of the situation with the girl, and here it becomes all the more pronounced. The narrator indicates to us that she is starving herself, but nothing is done about it, so the question of blame appears to be raised and equally apportioned, but with the understanding that it is difficult for the others to force her. The final ‘man’ of the text is as ambiguous as most of the others. It derives from the narrator, and avoids stating that the pair are indeed holy, thereby evading any definite narrative conclusion: ‘und wie er in Gedanken an die Heilige eingeschlafen war, so konnte man wohl ihn selig nennen’ (490).

WIR

Another feature the narrator uses in generating a particular voice is the inclusion of ‘wir’ and ‘uns’. Not only does this choice of pronoun make the narrator’s presence felt in the text, it also actively includes the reader. In keeping with the shifting ground on which the narrator works, this use of the personal pronoun is not constant, yet when it does enter the text, it rarely disturbs the flow of the narrative, but rather draws

the reader further into the complicity generated by the word. As with all of the narrative techniques, this one is used with a variety of implications. Burgess sometimes imputes the use of the plural pronoun to the ‘intrusive narrator’ who emerges as a kind of ‘choreographer’ and at other times it simply is used to ‘introduc[e] a generalising reflection’ (176, 177, 180). The notion of ‘choreographer’ is another term by which Burgess intends to establish the manipulative character of the narrator, and, again, I would suggest that it is not such a deceitful trait; rather it is part of a narrative technique which expresses on the one hand an omniscient narrator, and on the other an involved witness to the events described.

The first use of ‘wir’ is in the opening sentence, as has already been discussed in a previous section and immediately draws the reader into the text and the presence of a narrator. He then moves into his role as the editing narrator,⁴⁷ by introducing the letters from Ottilie’s boarding school:

Einem weitläufigen Briefe der Vorsteherin, welcher sich wie gewöhnlich über der Tochter Fortschritte mit Behagen verbreitete, war eine kurze Nachschrift hinzugefügt nebst einer Beilage von der Hand eines männlichen Gehülfen am Institut, die wir beide mitteilen. (263)

Burgess refers to this use of ‘wir’ as ‘introduc[ing] an allegedly authentic document’ (178) and the implication of a less than honest narrator is made in the above comment, by the use of ‘allegedly’. I will look at the interpolated texts later on in this thesis, but I dispute Burgess’s suggestion of trickery. This second use of this pronoun, in the third chapter, re-establishes the narrator’s presence after his authoritative opening statement. We have heard much conversation between the characters, and the narrator has appeared to be absent; there has been no personal voice. But this brief preface to the letters allows us to hear him, and draws us into the text by a direct narratorial

⁴⁷ This is reminiscent of the editor of *Die Leiden des jungen Werther*, who makes his presence known from the outset: ‘Was ich von der Geschichte des armen Werther nur habe auffinden können, habe ich mit Fleiß gesammelt und lege es euch hier vor, und weiß, daß ihr mir’s danken werdet.’ HA, 6, p.7.

device. We are included; we have been presented with the details of the relationship mainly through direct speech, and now the narrator re-enters our awareness and sets up reader expectation of narrative involvement and commentary. The narrator includes his own feelings in certain uses of 'wir', and in his description of Otilie as 'ein wahrer Augentrost' the reader can feel that, although 'wir' is used, this surely must be the narrator's own opinion, using the personal plural pronoun both to include the reader and to appear to protect himself from uttering an entirely personal opinion: 'Dadurch ward sie den Männern, wie von Anfang so immer mehr, daß wir es nur mit dem rechten Namen nennen, ein wahrer Augentrost' (283).

The most frequent use in the narrative of 'wir' as a mode of introduction is before Otilie's diary entries. Again, these will be examined in a later section but the three instances of its use demonstrate the audible narrative voice and the effect it has on the text.⁴⁸ The narrator concludes the first book with the promise of a deeper insight into Otilie through looking into her diary. In this one sentence the reader hears both 'wir' and 'uns' and thus, not only is his anticipation awakened for the second book, but he feels that he is given a privileged position in the understanding of both Otilie and the narrator. The narrator not only allows us to bear witness to his process of discovery, but he actively includes us in it: 'Einen Blick jedoch in ihr Inneres gewährt uns ihr Tagebuch, aus dem wir einiges mitzuteilen gedenken' (359).

We have to wait a chapter until we have access to the diary, but during that time the narrative presence is strong, with seven uses of 'wir' and 'uns' and five instances of 'zwar.' When we approach the diary entry, the preface to it is one of the most prominent examples of a clear narrative voice:

⁴⁸ Also, one example is quoted in the 'man' section, and dealt with there: 'wir hören von einer besondern Einrichtung bei der englischen Marine.' (368). See p. 73 above.

Wir nehmen daher Gelegenheit, von demjenigen, was Ottilie sich daraus in ihren Heften angemerkt, einiges mitzuteilen, wozu wir keinen schicklicheren Übergang finden als durch ein Gleichnis, das sich uns beim Betrachten ihrer liebenswürdigen Blätter aufdringt. Wir hören von einer besondern Einrichtung bei der englischen Marine. (368)

The justification of the inclusion of these extracts is further explained by the expansion of the red thread metaphor, and the reader is drawn further into the tale by the frequent use of the inclusive pronouns. The reader now knows why the narrator has chosen the extracts we are provided with, so he is obliged to look for the threads of ‘Neigung und Anhänglichkeit’ (368) and, because we have been assured that by looking into the diary, we will be given an insight into the girl, we approach the text with high expectations. Finally, the narrator reiterates that we are involved in the text and in the choices by stating: ‘Selbst jede einzelne von uns ausgewählte und mitgeteilte Stelle gibt davon das entschiedenste Zeugnis’ (368).

After three further extracts without direct narrative intervention, the voice suddenly returns to preface the penultimate entry. The reader has been given instruction, albeit in an unemphatic way. He has therefore approached the entries with some sense of the narrator’s intent. But then, tantalizingly, the narrator withdraws. This narrator is never a constant voice. The introduction to the diary entry in chapter seven reminds the reader of the previous preface and the narrative voice is reinforced by the interjection ‘jedoch’: ‘Dieser Vorfall mag jedoch zu einem Gespräch Anlaß gegeben haben, wovon wir die Spuren in Ottiliens Tagebuch finden’ (415).

Not only does the narrator make his presence felt by prefacing the interpolated texts, he also speaks of the narrative process, again in the first person plural pronoun, making us aware of our role in the reception of the work. The reader is alerted to the stylistic process and of the gesture of inclusion; this gives a heightened awareness of

the act of reading, and reminds us that it should not be mere passive acceptance, but should include an active input on the reader's part. As mentioned above, the first chapters of the second book abound with narrative presence. The opening paragraph of the second part includes three occurrences of the personal pronoun, as well as a narrative generalisation concerning the similarities between art and life:

Im gemeinen Leben begegnet uns oft, was wir in der Epopöe als Kunstgriff des Dichters zu rühmen pflegen, daß nämlich, wenn die Hauptfiguren sich entfernen, verbergen, sich der Untätigkeit hingeben, gleich sodann schon ein Zweiter, Dritter, bisher kaum Bemerkter den Platz füllt und, indem er seine ganze Tätigkeit äußert, uns gleichfalls der Aufmerksamkeit, der Teilnahme, ja des Lobes und Preises würdig erscheint. (360)

The reader has directly before been informed by the narrator of the reason for including Otilie's diary, and hence is conscious of the narrator's presence. This statement reinforces this presence, and the impression is again given of an assured narrative authority, a guiding hand, and one who welcomes the reader into his inner circle. Not only does the narrator use 'wir' and 'uns', but the inclusion of 'nämlich' indicates narrative thought directed solely at the reader. The informality of such an interpolation emphasises the connection which the narrator appears to want to establish with us, and so again raises the notion of trust between reader and narrator. In this example, this trusting and close relationship is continued for a long period of time, only to be taken away by the manifestly conjectural comments on the painting of the chapel. The upshot is that the reader has to negotiate between an assertive and an utterly tentative narrative voice.

The narrator uses 'wir' to explain himself in the first book. During the walk of the four characters to the mill, Otilie and Eduard separate from Charlotte and the Hauptmann, and the reader is informed of Eduard's emotions concerning Otilie.⁴⁹

⁴⁹ 'ein himmlisches Wesen...das zarteste weibliche Wesen' (291-2).

After this insight, the narrator states: ‘Wie dies gemeint sei, erfahren wir sogleich’ (292). This prefiguration of narrative explanation not only reassures the reader of the competence of the narrator in relating the facts, but also of his presence. This is repeated when the narrator appears modestly to state that he will not be able to do justice to the mason’s fine rhyming speech: ‘Ein wohlgeputzter Maurer, die Kelle in der einen, den Hammer in der andern Hand, hielt in Reimen eine anmutige Rede, die wir in Prosa nur unvollkommen wiedergeben können’ (299).

Burgess comments that this ‘professed inability of the narrator to convey his subject adequately’ is to be heard in the conventional use of this ‘wir’. However, although this may be a conventional narrative technique, the narrator of *Die Wahlverwandtschaften* uses it to establish a connection with the reader, to engage his trust and understanding, only then to withdraw his voice and to abstain from making any such comments.⁵⁰ The fact that the narrator only uses this technique three times should indicate that it is not simply another conventional use of ‘professed inability’ but rather that it contributes to the reader’s uncertainty regarding the narrator’s standpoint. In the first chapter of the second part, the narrator justifies his inclusion of the discussion surrounding the gravestones, and goes on to explain: ‘Wir müssen dieses Vorfalls gedenken, weil er verschiedenen Dingen einen Anstoß gab, die sonst vielleicht lange geruht hätten’ (360-61).

⁵⁰ Burgess cites a passage where the narrator ‘with false modesty, protests the difficulty of describing Eduard’s state of mind, and then proceeds to do so at some length: “Was von dem Augenblick an in der Seele Eduards vorging, würde schwer zu schildern sein. In einem solchen Gedränge treten zuletzt alte Gewohnheiten, alte Neigungen wieder hervor, um die Zeit zu töten und den Lebensraum auszufüllen. Jagd und Krieg sind eine solche für den Edelmann immer bereite Aushilfe. Eduard sehnte sich nach äußerer Gefahr, um der innerlichen das Gleichgewicht zu halten. Er sehnte sich nach dem Untergang, weil ihm das Dasein unerträglich zu werden drohte; ja es war ihm ein Trost zu denken, daß er nicht mehr sein werde und eben dadurch seine Geliebten, seine Freunde glücklich machen könne.”’ (359). Here again, we hear the narrative voice in the generalisation concerning ‘such situations’. The narrator is not denying his ability to describe Eduard’s thoughts, but is distancing himself from the opinions shared. His inclusion of a generalisation is an attempt to allow the reader to understand and empathize.

Again, the inclusion of an unmistakable narrative interjection, 'vielleicht', adds to the expression of the narrator's voice and intentions. As it does ten pages later with reference to the Architect: 'Mit so billigen Gesinnungen betrachten wir die Anstalten des Architekten zum Ausmalen der Kapelle' (370). On another occasion the narrator tells the reader that: 'Wir wagen nicht, ihren Schmerz, ihre Tränen zu schildern' (346). Here, it is not clear why 'we' dare not attempt to portray Otilie's pain. Perhaps the implication is that the narrator would not feel equal to describing the hurt which such a being feels. In any event, by not describing it, and by including the reader in the 'wir', he places the onus on the reader by implying that the sorrow in Otilie is more that he can describe and more than we can feel. By entering the text here, and by stating that he will not write about a character's emotional state, he does not diminish his credibility, but subtly enhances it. On other occasions he enters the text and shows his empathy for the man: 'Von diesem einsamen Freunde können wir so viel sagen, daß er sich im stillen dem Gefühl seiner Leidenschaft ganz überließ' (352). By using 'we', he establishes a connection with the reader, and also one with Eduard. He understands, or is attempting to understand, what the man is doing, and this interjection offers no judgment, but indicates a softening of the narrator's view of Eduard, and by including the reader in the sentence, he includes the reader in that emotion.

The narrator also uses 'wir' and 'uns' to remind the reader of past events or characters already encountered. In the discussion of the gravestones discussed above, not only does the narrator justify his inclusion of the episode, he reminds us that he has already informed us of Charlotte's activity regarding the churchyard: 'Wir erinnern uns jener Veränderung, welche Charlotte mit dem Kirchhofe vorgenommen hatte' (361). The opening sentence of the final chapter of Part One not only reminds us of the character,

Mittler, but includes judgments, albeit veiled in narrative obliqueness, on him and reminds us of the less than positive impression generated by his previous appearances:

Daß jener wunderlich tätige Mann, den wir bereits kennengelernt, daß Mittler, nachdem er von dem Unheil, das unter diesen Freunden ausgebrochen, Nachricht erhalten, obgleich kein Teil noch seine Hülfe angerufen, in diesem Falle seine Freundschaft, seine Geschicklichkeit zu beweisen, zu üben geneigt war, läßt sich denken. (352)

His initial description in this passage appears to be a positive one – ‘wunderlich tätige Mann’ – yet the pronoun of inclusion – ‘jene’ – hints that this is not wholly in praise of Mittler. The narrator, although reminding the reader that he has seen the former priest in the novel, makes little comment on him. But even so, the narrator makes his presence felt, includes the reader by reminding him of the shared experience of meeting Mittler at a previous juncture; but any overt judgment is absent. In this short paragraph, the reader is both assured of the narrator’s presence, and denied any definite opinions from the narrator. Prefacing Mittler’s diatribe on the breaking of the Tenth Commandment, the narrator writes: ‘Brach nun einmal unter Freunden seine Rede los, wie wir schon öfter gesehen haben, so rollte sie ohne Rücksicht fort, verletzte oder heilte, nutzte oder schadete, wie es sich gerade fügen mochte’ (481). The narrator again reminds us of previous experiences where the reader has witnessed Mittler’s torrent of thoughtless opinions. The narrator does not go into detail, but rather leaves the reader to his own reflections on the text he is reading. This is the penultimate use of ‘wir’ in the novel. It is important for the narrator to set the scene for Ottilie’s demise, and despite the reader knowing what Mittler is like, he feels the need to remind the reader. In so doing, the reader is involved in the ensuing action, and is prompted to sympathise with the recipient of his ‘sermon’. The narrator is present in this episode, expressing his negative emotion towards Mittler, but again, never openly stating his disapproval. We hear this in the description of him as ‘Der

hartnäckige Mann' who knows that if one waits for long enough, the right moment will present itself: 'es [gibt] einen gewissen Moment [...], wo allein das Eisen zu schmieden ist.' The damning narratorial judgment is audible in the use of 'nach seiner Weise'(481). None of this is complimentary and the implication is that, if Mittler does good, it is purely coincidental – 'verletzte oder heilte, nutzte oder schadete, wie es sich gerade fügen mochte'. The emergence of the narrator in this episode comes before the most ambiguous phase of the novel, namely that depicting Otilie's death and funeral. It allows us to hear a personally involved narrator before we are returned to a more dispassionate persona.

On two occasions, the narrator uses 'wir' to interrupt the narrative with a comment where he appears as Burgess puts it, 'simply to abandon his narrative and his characters.'(179) The first occurs during the *Tableaux Vivants* episode, where he interrupts the descriptive passage with the rhetorical question: 'Was sollen wir noch viel von kleinen Nachstücken sagen, wozu man niederländische Wirtshaus- und Jahrmarktsszenen gewählt hatte!' (394). Burgess suggests that he 'seems merely to tire of describing' the *Tableaux Vivants* and so abruptly ceases. The inclusion of 'wir' suggests that the reader must also feel no need for further explanation. The second example of this is, according to Burgess, 'even more abrupt, and of rather more consequence.'(179) 'Was sollen wir bei diesem hoffnungslosen Zustande der ehedem gattlichen, freundschaftlichen, ärztlichen Bemühungen gedenken, in welchen sich Eduards Angehörige eine Zeitlang hin und her wogten?' (490). Burgess states that this shows that all efforts which are being made by those around Eduard 'are peremptorily dismissed by the narrator' and adds that the following sentence – 'Endlich fand man ihn tot' (490) – is 'grotesquely comical'. Barnes comments on 'the narrator's impersonal style' in regard to the 'frequent use of "man" in the last chapters

of the novel', which he believes could be viewed as 'excessive'. He expands upon this argument, stating that: 'The manner in which Eduard's death is related is, for instance, almost too impersonal'.⁵¹ Burgess argues that it is as though the narrator finds 'Eduard [...] a lost cause [and] has now run out of patience with him and cannot get rid of him quickly enough' (179). However, it could be argued that, at this juncture of the narrative, only those events which have an effect on Ottilie are particularly important. The treatment of Eduard's death is laconic; but if one examines the amount of narrative devoted to the emotions of other characters, this brevity is in keeping with the rest of the text, and hence, is what 'we,' the readers would expect. Again, the narrator, making his presence and emotion felt, makes the reader complicit in not examining the other characters, and assumes a greater interest in Ottilie than in Charlotte, the Hauptmann and the doctor. This final example of 'wir' in the text concludes the active 'intrusion' of the personal narrator, and although we do hear a narrative voice, it is disincarnate and ambiguous in the final paragraph.

The frequent use of 'wir', 'uns' and 'unser' generally implies inclusion. There are five examples of the narrator speaking of 'our friends', drawing the reader into the action and emotion in the text.⁵² He also refers to the Assistant as 'unser Gehülfe'.⁵³ If we view them as our friends, then we have to be more involved in the work than

⁵¹ Barnes, *Literary Interpretation*, p.13.

⁵² 'Bei unsern Freunden waren die entstehenden wechselseitigen Neigungen von der angenehmsten Wirkung.' (290-91).

'Eine innere Geselligkeit mit Neigung, wie sie sich unter unseren Freunden erzeugt hatte, wird durch eine größere Gesellschaft immer nur unangenehm unterbrochen.' (304).

'Die Neueintretenden, welche unmittelbar aus der Welt kamen, wie man sogar an ihren Kleidern, Gerätschaften und allen Umgebungen sehen konnte, machten gewissermaßen mit unsern Freunden, ihrem ländlichen und heimlich leidenschaftlichen Zustande eine Art von Gegensatz, der sich jedoch sehr bald verlor, indem alte Erinnerungen und gegenwärtige Teilnahme sich vermischten und ein schnelles, lebhaftes Gespräch alle geschwind zusammenverband.' (403).

'Um so mehr läßt sich erwarten, daß unsern beiden Freunden, indem sie wieder nebeneinander wohnten, täglich und stündlich zusammen umgingen, gegenseitig nichts verborgen blieb.' (452).

'So bewegte sich auch in dem täglichen Zusammenleben unserer Freunde fast alles wieder in dem alten Gleise.' (479).

⁵³ 'Zu solchen Betrachtungen ward unser Gehülfe aufgefordert.' (417).

simple bystanders, we are constantly invited to examine our role and our position with regard to the novel. He rhetorically asks, in relation to the *Tableaux Vivants*: ‘und wer kennt nicht den herrlichen Kupferstich unseres Wille von diesem Gemälde!’ (393). Again, the narrator includes the reader in the text and shares his knowledge with him.

GENERALISING COMMENTS

By direct appeals to the reader’s knowledge and understanding, the narrator creates his own intimacy with the reader. This is nowhere more apparent than in his use of generalisations which serve to establish interpretative common ground. They elucidate and establish ‘universal relevance’ (Burgess, 180). In using generalisations, the narrator presents the reader with an assured self, one who is on occasion certain of his ground in spite of his fondness for conjecture. Blessin highlights the effect of the generalisations and their purpose in the novel, stating that: ‘Die Spruchwahrheiten unterbrechen einen Geschehensvorgang, indem sie diesen in einer weitgehend abstract formulierten und zeitlosen Aussage auf seine allgemeine Bedeutung hin zusammenfaßt’. And he suggests that the narrator’s presence is felt most strongly when ‘er sich generalisierend über die Figuren gleichsam hinwegsetzt und eine verbindliche Ansicht zu äußern vorgibt’.⁵⁴ Barnes finds that the narrator’s generalisations serve an ‘ironic purpose’ and that, whereas his ‘customary narrative style is marked by a sparing use of epithets, by brevity and concreteness’ his use of maxims displays ‘an abstract quality of his reflective style which becomes almost mannered in its tendency to amplification and repetition’.⁵⁵ Reiss finds that the

⁵⁴ Blessin, pp.60 and 86.

⁵⁵ Barnes, *Literary Interpretation*, p.8.

narrator, in using 'general assertions or observations [...] is concerned [...] with discovering the general in the specific, and with discerning its symbolic value'.⁵⁶

The narrator employs many generalisations, some of which use, or are prefaced by, 'wir', thus emphasising the reader's assumed participation. Burgess finds three reasons for using generalisations. 'Firstly, it validates what is happening within the narrative fiction. [...] Secondly, it invites the reader's complicity in understanding and sympathising with what is going on in the novel. [...] Finally, it also suggests that the narrator's own presentation and interpretation of events is justified. [...] Thus, this rhetorical use of 'wir' becomes a self-validation on the part of the narrator'(180-181). While I agree broadly with Burgess, I have misgivings about the last point which implies an element of narrative trickery. We hear the assured generalising voice throughout the text, but, in keeping with the pervasively shifting narrative ground, it too is not constant. When the ladies are left alone on the estate, the narrator writes of the differences between missing something or someone, and the pain which attends this loss at times: 'Wir vermissen ungern gering scheinende Gewohnheiten, aber schmerzlich empfinden wir erst ein solches Entbehren in bedeutenden Fällen' (345-46). Here the narrator is including us in a generalisation by using a personal, as opposed to an impersonal pronoun, and he is also generating sympathy for Otilie's plight by including the reader. He opens the thirteenth chapter in the second part with a generalisation concerning confidences, and then goes on to reveal details about the discussions Eduard and the Hauptmann had when they lived together. 'Völlig fremde und gegeneinander gleichgültige Menschen, wenn sie eine Zeitlang zusammenleben, kehren ihr Inneres wechselseitig heraus, und es muß eine gewisse Vertraulichkeit entstehen' (452). Not only does this illustrate the ensuing events,

⁵⁶ Reiss, p.155.

justifying the candour of their conversations, but it also allows the narrator to reveal that the Hauptmann, as did Charlotte, intended Eduard to marry Otilie.

When the Baroness enters the scene and realises what illicit relationships are being formed, she sets a plan in motion to stop Eduard and Otilie having the opportunity to further their affection (409). The narrator is highly generalising in this section. He begins with the sweeping statement that: ‘Verheiratete Frauen, wenn sie sich auch untereinander nicht lieben, stehen doch stillschweigend miteinander, besonders gegen junge Mädchen, im Bündnis. Die Folgen einer solchen Zuneigung stellten sich ihrem weltgewandten Geiste nur allzugeschwind dar’ (314-15). This comment allows the narrator not only to draw the reader into the text by means of an assured statement from an apparently ‘worldly’ narrator, but also justifies and explains the ensuing actions, which show the Baroness attempting to move Otilie away from the estate, and into a position of a lady’s companion. The narrative then proceeds to generalise about the Baroness’s ostensible strength, although the narrator cannot view this woman as wholly positive and implies, through the use of ‘wir’, that she suffers inner loss:

Denn niemand besaß sich mehr als diese Frau, und diese Selbstbeherrschung in außerordentlichen Fällen gewöhnt uns, sogar einen gemeinen Fall mit Verstellung zu behandeln, macht uns geneigt, indem wir soviel Gewalt über uns selbst üben, unsre Herrschaft auch über die andern zu verbreiten, um uns durch das, was wir äußerlich gewinnen, für dasjenige, was wir innerlich entbehren, gewissermaßen schadlos zu halten. (315)

By not personalising these remarks the narrator creates a distance from the characters and includes the reader in his reflections on forms of human nature. The very use of the personal pronoun implies inclusion, and suggests the position of general agreement as regards human motivation. The strong narrator is evident in the powerful assertions he makes; gone is the tentative suggestive voice, now replaced by

a confident, vigorous narrator. He carries on in the passage with the generalising mode, seen in his use of ‘meist’ and ‘eine Art’ – both illustrating his personal opinion – and finishes with a further generalisation using ‘wir’ which warns the reader against malicious joy, and this intensifies our compassion for the intended victim:

An diese Gesinnung schließt sich meist eine Art heimlicher Schadenfreude über die Dunkelheit der andern, über das Bewußtlose, womit sie in eine Falle gehen. Wir freuen uns nicht allein über das gegenwärtige Gelingen, sondern zugleich auch auf die künftig überraschende Beschämung. (315)

This section includes many examples of ‘wir’ and ‘uns’ as well as the non-personal generalisations, and as such, provides the reader with a great sense of narrative presence, control and knowledge.

In such generalisations the reader is not given an absolute explanation of what the characters are thinking, but the tone of suggestion is not one of uncertainty, it is confident and forthright. In the double adultery scene, this is put to powerful use, with the fact presented that Charlotte had been crying immediately followed by the generalisation about human strength and weakness: ‘Sie hatte geweint, und wenn weiche Personen dadurch meist an Anmut verlieren, so gewinnen diejenigen dadurch unendlich, die wir gewöhnlich als stark und gefaßt kennen’ (321). The narrator is not telling the reader that the reason that Eduard was sexually attracted to his wife was because she had been crying; rather he is making a suggestion based on a general truth. In so doing, he uses ‘wir’ and not ‘man’ and so makes the reader party to this understanding, and again, invites the reader to examine his own preconceptions. This notion of potential guilt is raised in respect of Ottilie’s anorexia. The narrator makes frequent use of the impersonal ‘man’, yet then turns to the reader, drawing him into the comprehension of this terrible fate, asking a rhetorical question, which includes us all in this failure to be stronger for the sake of friendship and love: ‘Denn haben wir

nicht meistens die Schwäche, daß wir jemanden auch zu seinem Besten nicht gern quälen mögen?' (476).

The narrator uses 'wir' in other generalisations with no notion of blame or guilt. He speaks from the heart when he rhetorically asks: 'Wie könnten wir sonst die entfernten Geliebtesten in stündlicher Gefahr wissen und dennoch unser tägliches, gewöhnliches Leben immer so fortreiben?' (376). This generalisation follows non-personal generalisations such as 'Glücklicherweise kann der Mensch nur einen gewissen Grad des Unglücks fassen' and the generalising statement: 'Es gibt Lagen, in denen Furcht und Hoffnung eins werden, sich einander wechselseitig aufheben und in eine dunkle Fühllosigkeit verlieren.' By providing the reader with such universal statements the narrator seeks to raise the importance and significance of events; he includes general maxims, and invites the reader to become more aware and more reflective:

Wenn gewöhnliche Menschen, durch gemeine Verlegenheiten des Tags zu einem leidenschaftlich ängstlichen Betragen aufgeregt, uns ein mitleidiges Lächeln abnötigen, so betrachten wir dagegen mit Ehrfurcht ein Gemüt, in welchem die Saat eines großen Schicksals ausgesäet worden, das die Entwicklung dieser Empfängnis abwarten muß und weder das Gute noch das Böse, weder das Glückliche noch das Unglückliche, was daraus entspringen soll, beschleunigen darf und kann. (371)

This long generalisation is followed by a generalisation about *our* feelings and duties, and raises the notion of fate once more. The narrator does not mention who this person with a great fate is, and indeed does not apply this to any one of the characters in the following paragraphs. However, it is evident to the reader who he is talking about – Ottilie – and thus offers a suggestion as to how we might view her. The notion of fate is raised periodically during the novel, but generally by the characters in their search for meaning and symbolic significance; here, it is the narrative voice which raises it, and, as in all of the generalisations, we sense the presence of an

assured self. The narrator does not commit himself to any definite statements about fate and destiny, yet invites us to reflect on the terms. After the death of the child, the narrator includes a generalisation about luck,⁵⁷ following his description of Otilie's attempts at helping the doctor, 'zwar wie in einer andern Welt wandelnd' (458). The reader hears the narrative voice in the 'zwar' and registers the notion of helplessness. He later raises this issue when talking of man's nature forming his life, man's purpose and his adaptability. The narrator makes generalisations concerning the external components of man's experience, and then moves into more personal reflections, including us in his understanding. He speaks of elements, but makes no overt reference to the discussion on elective affinities in the first book. The reader hears this echo and so is not only made aware of the narrative style, the 'red thread' which is being woven into the text at this juncture, but is also actively drawn into it by the use of 'wir' and the assumed universal understanding raised by the assured narrator. A similar gesture towards the generality of human experience can be heard in the following passage:

Was einem jeden Menschen gewöhnlich begegnet, wiederholt sich mehr, als man glaubt, weil seine Natur hiezu die nächste Bestimmung gibt. Charakter, Individualität, Neigung, Richtung, Örtlichkeit, Umgebungen und Gewohnheiten bilden zusammen ein Ganzes, in welchem jeder Mensch wie in einem Elemente, in einer Atmosphäre schwimmt, worin es ihm allein bequem und behaglich ist. Und so finden wir die Menschen, über deren Veränderlichkeit so viele Klage geführt wird, nach vielen Jahren zu unserm Erstaunen unverändert und nach äußern und innern unendlichen Anregungen unveränderlich. (478)

The narrator does not always directly include the reader by the use of the pronoun, often he merely places the generalisation in the text immediately before a related action. One thinks of the following generalisation:

Junge Frauenzimmer sehen sich bescheiden vielleicht nach diesem oder jenem Jüngling um, mit stiller Prüfung, ob sie ihn wohl zum Gatten wünschten; wer aber für eine Tochter oder einen

⁵⁷ 'denn das höchste Unglück wie das höchste Glück verändert die Ansicht aller Gegenstände'. (458).

weiblichen Zögling zu sorgen hat, schaut in einem weitem Kreis umher. (427)

The narrator concludes this generalisation ‘So ging es auch in diesem Augenblick Charlotten’. The narrator presents the reader with a confident description of Charlotte’s feelings, and invites us to share in the generalisation. In explaining the reception of the Architect by the two women, the narrator again uses a general explanation highlighting the power of women and the laws of society:

Das weibliche Geschlecht hegt ein eignes, inneres, unwandelbares Interesse, von dem sie nichts in der Welt abtrünnig macht; im äußern, geselligen Verhältnis hingegen lassen sie sich gern und leicht durch den Mann bestimmen, der sie eben beschäftigt; und so durch Abweisen wie durch Empfänglichkeit, durch Beharren und Nachgiebigkeit führen sie eigentlich das Regiment, dem sich in der gesitteten Welt kein Mann zu entziehen wagt. (406)

Here, the reader knows the characters and whilst this, by definition, is not a specific remark, the implication is that this applies particularly to the Architect. There will be no impropriety, and he will be their new companion to provide both them, and the reader, with entertainment. Thus the narrator employs prefigurative indicators, some being more immediate and clearer than others. He tells us: ‘Es ist mit den Geschäften wie mit dem Tanze: Personen, die gleichen Schritt halten, müssen sich unentbehrlich werden, ein wechselseitiges Wohlwollen muß notwendig daraus entspringen’ (289).

And immediately he follows this by informing us that Charlotte was moving closer to the Hauptmann, as had been shown by her alteration of her plans according to his recommendations. After relaying this information in a dispassionate manner, the narrator then turns to Eduard and Ottilie. The generalisation allows him succinctly to divulge information, assuming knowledge and understanding, by using a phrase, or a situation which has to be applied by the reader leaving the narrator to examine other events. He explains Charlotte’s outward restraint on hearing about the imminent departure of the Hauptmann by using a generalisation concerning women: ‘denn die

Frauen, gewohnt, sich jederzeit zu bändigen, behalten in den außerordentlichsten Fällen immer noch eine Art von scheinbarer Fassung' (314).

He then goes on to justify Charlotte's lack of emotional display by immediately stating: 'Doch hörte sie schon nicht mehr...' This inclusion of such a statement indicates the narrator's desire to understand, despite the fact that he finds outward expression better, reliable, and more true to nature. During the English Lord's stay, we have already seen what effect some of his comments have on the ladies, and the narrator undercuts the influence of his words on both women⁵⁸, especially on Ottilie, by informing us that each was interested for different reasons. They both wanted to hear of his travels, Charlotte preferring the general, whereas Ottilie wanted to hear about places Eduard had been before, which is explained by the universal truth:

denn jeder Mensch hat in der Nähe und in der Ferne gewisse örtliche Einzelheiten, die ihn anziehen, die ihm seinem Charakter nach, um des ersten Eindrucks, gewisser Umstände, der Gewohnheit willen besonders lieb und aufregend sind. (430)

It is in extending this conversation that Ottilie gets upset, and the reader is again offered further insight into Ottilie's despair.

The narrator's reference to the power of attraction reminds us of the chemical discussion. In subtle ways the narrative makes us hear various echoes without making overt reference to the chemical discussion. The first refers to a vessel in which the addition of certain ingredients makes the mixture boil over. This is an oblique reference to what happens when another element is added to a mixture, (the matter has been raised in chapter four).⁵⁹ The second is an echoing of 'Verwandschaften':

⁵⁸ See above pp.65-66.

⁵⁹ 'Überhaupt nimmt die gewöhnliche Lebensweise einer Familie, die aus den gegebenen Personen und aus notwendigen Umständen entspringt, auch wohl eine außerordentliche Neigung, eine werdende Leidenschaft in sich wie ein Gefäß auf, und es kann eine ziemliche Zeit vergehen, ehe dieses neue Ingrediens eine merkliche Gärung verursacht und schäumend über den Rand schwillt.' (290).

Jugendfreundschaften wie Blutsverwandtschaften haben den bedeutenden Vorteil, daß ihnen Irrungen und Mißverständnisse, von welcher Art sie auch seien, niemals von Grund aus schaden und die alten Verhältnisse sich nach einiger Zeit wiederherstellen. (446)

In the above quotation, the narrative voice is heard in the interjection ‘von welcher Art sie auch seien’ and appears to indicate that everything will work out for the best due to the friendship between the two men. However, although initially this appears to be the case, it does not hold true in the long run.

Other generalisations allow a comment to be made on the unfolding tale without overt intervention; ‘Der Haß ist parteiisch, aber die Liebe ist es noch mehr’ (329). The narrator writes, immediately after this statement that ‘auch Ottilie’ distanced herself from Charlotte and the Hauptmann. This statement is in direct relation to Ottilie, but the assured narrator does not wish, or does not feel it necessary openly to state that Ottilie was acting according to natural reactions; rather, by prefiguring the girl’s action with such a comment, the justification is presented in a neutral manner with no overt personal involvement.

As I have already noted, the narrator introduces the Count and Baroness with a generalisation, assigning them to a group – ‘jene hohen, schönen Gestalten’ (307) – and without altering his tendency to refrain from giving physical descriptions of his characters. The universal descriptive metaphor of their being past their first bloom allows the reader to have some sense of the couple. The reader is reassured by the narrative intervention, the bond between narrator and reader is strengthened through the use of a universal comment. His conviction, when it appears in the text, allows the reader to pause – albeit briefly – on stable ground, and form his own views based on a reliable, self-assured narrator. He assures us that ‘Jede Anziehung ist wechselzeitig’ in explaining the relationship between the Count, the Baroness and

Ottolie, adding his own barbed comment that, ‘Wer weiß, was diese in Zeiten lebhafterer Leidenschaft gegen sie angestiftet hätte’ (413).

Reiss writes that some of the narrator’s ‘reflections stand out from the course of the main action as if they were general laws of life, permitting us to gauge events and experiences. The reader thus sees the action not immediately but, so to speak, through the eyes of another person’.⁶⁰ At times, the narrator’s personal opinion appears to be veiled in a generalising comment. For example, he states, after first seeing Ottolie: ‘Schönheit ist überall ein gar willkommener Gast’(281). This is of course a truism, but placed in the centre of a largely descriptive passage, it can hardly be the utterance of one of the characters and therefore, the reader must assume it is the narrator’s personal – and general – opinion.

The narrator informs us that on some occasions the characters themselves are aware of such generalisations, and this knowledge affects their actions. The reader is told that, because Charlotte knows that some conversations can be detrimental to those involved, she deliberately tries to steer the conversation away from Eduard when talking with Ottolie:

Sie wußte recht gut, daß nichts gefährlicher sei als ein allzufreies Gespräch, das einen strafbaren oder halbstrafbaren Zustand als einen gewöhnlichen, gemeinen, ja löblichen behandelt; und dahin gehört doch gewiß alles, was die eheliche Verbindung antastet. (310)

Eduard is also conscious of certain generalities being of relevance to him and his situation and so the reader hears the comment: ‘Ein ausgesprochenes Wort ist fürchterlich, wenn es das auf einmal ausspricht, was das Herz lange sich erlaubt hat; und um nur für den Augenblick auszuweichen’ (343). Mittler is also credited with a generalisation and this has direct bearing on his attempt to slow the pace of events.

⁶⁰ Reiss, p.155.

‘Doch schien es ihm rätlich, erst eine Weile zu zaudern; denn er wußte nur zu wohl, daß es schwerer sei, gebildeten Menschen bei sittlichen Verworrenheiten zu Hülfe zu kommen als ungebildeten’ (352).

None of these generalisations are put into indirect speech. The narrator formulates each construction, so as to present the reader with the characters’ thoughts, without making any assertive statement. As such, they could be the narrator’s own interpretation of events, but in either case, by the employment of such maxims, a clarity of thought and deed is offered in a confident manner.

The characters themselves do express generalisations, none more so than in Otilie’s diary, which will be examined later in this chapter. The list which could be attributed to the Assistant in chapter eight of part two has already been discussed, but Charlotte also gives a variety of such comments after the birth of Otto, when she and Otilie are walking up to the new house:

Auch auf dem festen Lande gibt es wohl Schiffbruch; sich davon auf das schnellste zu erholen und herzustellen, ist schön und preiswürdig. Ist doch das Leben nur auf Gewinn und Verlust berechnet! Wer macht nicht irgendeine Anlage und wird darin gestört! Wie oft schlägt man einen Weg ein und wird davon abgelenkt! Wie oft werden wir von einem scharf ins Auge gefaßten Ziel abgelenkt, um ein höheres zu erreichen! Der Reisende bricht unterwegs zu seinem höchsten Verdruß ein Rad und gelangt durch diesen unangenehmen Zufall zu den erfreulichsten Bekanntschaften und Verbindungen, die auf sein ganzes Leben Einfluß haben. Das Schicksal gewährt uns unsre Wünsche, aber auf seine Weise, um uns etwas über unsere Wünsche geben zu können. (428)

The narrator introduces these as ‘mancherlei Betrachtungen’ and concludes with the detail that she continued to think ‘Diese und ähnliche Betrachtungen’ for the duration of the walk. He offers no commentary on those chosen, but, as he suggests that he has selected the above from a large collection, the reader feels that they must be of some general import as to her state of mind. The reader assumes that, as all other generalisations have direct bearing on our reading of the text, these too must allow us

insight into the character of Charlotte. We seem to be eavesdropping on Charlotte as she uses general reflections in order to reassure herself and to clarify her emotions and hopes.

All the examples of using generalisations within the narrative imply a self-possessed, confident narrator. Yet we must not forget that this assured voice is only one part of the narrator's persona. It co-exists at every turn with a tentative voice, which expresses possibility rather than certainty.

INTERJECTIONS AND THE PERSONAL VOICE

The narrator is fond of placing individual words or phrases of judgment within the narrative, such as 'als wenn', 'eine Art von', 'glücklicherweise' and 'auf eine Weise', and interjections such as 'ja', 'jedoch', 'leider', and 'vielmehr'. In so doing, he expresses his opinion, shows his preferences, prefigures and makes reference to previous episodes and so establishes his position as a personal, forthright narrator. Feuerlicht again cites the interjections, 'leider', 'glücklicherweise', 'unglücklicherweise', and 'ach' as strengthening the appearance of 'einer wahren Geschichte' as we see 'die gefühlsmäßige Teilnahme des Erzählers an den Ereignissen'.⁶¹ Many of the words or phrases are used in conjunction with forms of generalisation; but they can also relate to the conjectural mode, for example, to 'scheinen', 'vielleicht' and 'solch'. Many are also used with the conditional, which also intimates the presence of the conjectural narrator.

The use of pronouns of generalization, such as 'jener', 'kein', 'all' occurs throughout the narrative, especially in generalisations. We have already seen one of the first uses

⁶¹ Feuerlicht, p.326.

of ‘jener’ when introducing the Graf and the Baroness (307) and with reference to Mittler (352). ‘Jener’ can be used for emphasis, and in consequence, a narrative voice is heard. At times the narrator uses this demonstrative pronoun with the purpose of referring to a previous incident without having to state this. The reader is told ‘Eduard erkannte die Züge jenes zudringlichen Bettlers’ (339) – which recalls Eduard’s previous uncharitable meeting with the man, and the contrast with Eduard’s current apparent generosity is raised in the reader’s mind, without any overt narrative comment being made. The narrator uses the impersonal ‘man’ in the following extract in order to refer to Charlotte’s original plans for the path. ‘Nur konnte man sich von jener ersten Vorstellung, nach der Charlotte die Sache einmal angefangen hatte, nicht ganz losreißen’ (288). Not only does this refer to the characters and their thoughts and actions, but by including ‘jener’ the narrator draws our attention to the previous disagreements and Charlotte’s hurt feelings. No mention is made of this, but the emphatic pronoun reminds the reader to be alert, to make connections between various parts of the text.

The narrator uses ‘kein’ in a similar manner. The reader hears his voice in the narratorial interjections ‘Nur war keine Frage,’ (289) ‘so war bei ihm keine Frage’ (403) ‘ist kein Maß mehr’ (328) and ‘also keineswegs’ (380). The narrator tells us that when Ottilie recognises the voice of the Assistant, her feelings and thoughts hurry to and fro ‘mit einer Schnelligkeit, die keinesgleichen hat...’ (405) He criticizes Eduard by moving into the present tense and explaining that ‘in Eduards Gesinnungen wie in seinen Handlungen ist kein Maß mehr’ (328). A comment from an observer is clearly audible in this sentence. The narrator repeats this construction later on in the text; when speaking of Ottilie he explains: ‘denn in ihrem Herzen war kein Raum mehr’ (390). The empathy is evident from the narrator’s point of view, and the reader

can establish a narrative presence, one which has moved from the tentative to openly invoked omniscience. However, this is not to remain a constant perspective, as the narrator then returns to the more tentative presentation of his narrative. He moves into the subjunctive and qualifies this with a generalisation:

Doch wäre man zu keinem Entschluß gekommen, kein Schritt wäre geschehen, hätte nicht ein unvermuteter Besuch auch hier eine besondere Anregung gegeben, wie denn die Erscheinung von bedeutenden Menschen in irgendeinem Kreise niemals ohne Folge bleiben kann. (412)

The use of ‘doch’ as well as the impersonal ‘man’, the repetition of ‘wäre’ and ‘kein’ all indicate an input from the narrator, not only justifying his inclusion of the ensuing events and offering an explanation, but proving himself to be knowledgeable and confident of not only what did happen, but also of what *could have* happened.

This presentation of the narrator as a reliable one is further reinforced by his introduction of the adverb ‘immer’. By using this, the narrator can indicate a criticism of one of the characters, comment on the events, assure his readers of his understanding of the characters, and expand his generalising mode. There are at least six examples of his using ‘immer’ in a criticism of Eduard, all of which are understated, but nevertheless, to be felt through the text. We have previously looked at the first example of this:

Er äußerte sich nach seiner Weise freundlich und angenehm; denn wenn er, empfänglich wie er war, leicht aufloderte, wenn sein lebhaftes Begehren zudringlich ward, wenn seine Hartnäckigkeit ungeduldig machen konnte, so waren doch alle seine Äußerungen durch eine vollkommene Schonung des andern dergestalt gemildert, daß man ihn immer noch liebenswürdig finden mußte, wenn man ihn auch beschwerlich fand. (250)

Here, the established acquaintance the narrator has with the character of Eduard is shown through ‘nach seiner Weise’ and the insinuation of continued experience of his actions and thoughts, ending with ‘immer noch’ reinforces the reader’s belief in a largely omniscient narrator. After criticising Eduard’s organisational skills, the

narrator informs us that Eduard had always been displeased with his scribe – ‘bisher immer unzufrieden gewesen war’ (267) – until the Hauptmann reorganised their work. Again, there is no overt criticism directed at Eduard in this comment, but given that the narrator shows that over a long period of time the scribe has not been able to carry out his work as Eduard wished, and we are then told that it is due to Eduard’s interrupting him and piling on new work before the old work had been finished, the implication is that Eduard has always been impatient and thoughtless towards those of a lower rank than he. This suggestion of impatience, seen in his irritation at Charlotte reading over his shoulder is heightened by the detail the narrator provides, namely that he always takes care to sit so that no-one can look over his shoulder: ‘Er pflegte sich auch deswegen in solchem Falle immer so zu setzen, daß er niemand im Rücken hatte’ (269).

The narrator informs us of Eduard’s deep and melodious voice and his former fame due to his recitation skills. The narrator then tells the reader that conversations are often stimulated by Eduard’s reading, and so, in the case of the episode referred to above, it is intimated that what Eduard will choose will be of relevance because such extracts are ‘immer willkommen’(268). After being informed of this, the fact that Eduard then gets so cross indicates his small-mindedness. This criticism continues with the narrative voice stating ‘Eduard hatte bei zunehmenden Jahren immer etwas Kindliches behalten’ (289). The inclusion of ‘immer’ reinforces the personal touch of the narrator, as it is not strictly necessary to the sentence, and indicates a private view of the character, one which, considering the details already provided by the narrator, could be considered. The reader knows, if not at this stage, then soon after, that the narrator is not generally dispassionate in matters concerning Eduard. However, the

reader does notice that Eduard acts in an immature manner at times, and so this comment cannot simply be disregarded as a biased view.

‘Immer’ also occurs in other generalisations, generally in connection with other generalising words, such as ‘wir’, ‘unser’, ‘man’, ‘solch’ and ‘gewöhnlich’:

Wie könnten wir sonst die entfernten Geliebtesten in stündlicher Gefahr wissen und dennoch unser tägliches, gewöhnliches Leben immer so forttreiben? (376)

Eine innere Geselligkeit mit Neigung, wie sie sich unter unseren Freunden erzeugt hatte, wird durch eine größere Gesellschaft immer nur unangenehm unterbrochen. (304)

so glaubt man sie immer wieder von neuem und anmutiger zu sehen, wenn sie ihre Eigenschaften einer neuen Umgebung mitteilt. (283)

Die Hoffnung, ein altes Glück wiederherzustellen, flammt immer einmal wieder in dem Menschen auf, und Charlotte war zu solchen Hoffnungen abermals berechtigt, ja genötigt. (470)

Es bedurfte der entschiedenen Zudringlichkeit dieses Mannes, um die hunderterlei Bedenklichkeiten, das Widerreden, Zaudern, Stocken, Besser- oder Anderswissen, das Schwanken, Meinen, Um- und Wiedermeinen zu beseitigen, da gewöhnlich bei solchen Gelegenheiten aus einer gehobenen Bedenklichkeit immer wieder neue entstehen und, indem man alle Verhältnisse schonen will, immer der Fall eintritt, einige zu verletzen. (420-21)

The above examples show the use of ‘immer’ works together with other words to establish intimations of universal applicability. They are all unemphatic, subtle yet they form a consistent pattern. And they suggest the presence of a reliable narrator. He tells us that Charlotte kept her worries about Eduard ‘für sich allein immer in Gedanken’, thus demonstrating his omniscience. The narrator also informs the reader that in keeping the lovers apart, the situation was not improved: ‘Schweigend hält sie daher die Liebenden noch immer auseinander, und die Sache wird dadurch nicht besser’ (331). The combination of ‘immer’ with ‘noch’ however adds to the impression of a personal voice behind the statement. Hence, even within the generalizing mode the narrator’s performance is ambiguous. At one level he seems dispassionate and reliable; but at others, his empathy, sympathy or veiled judgment manifest themselves.

He openly states his initial impression of Eduard as a spoilt individual who married for money, not for love, did everything for himself, and despite all his wealth, still wanted many and various things:

Von Jugend auf das einzige, verzogene Kind reicher Eltern, die ihn zu einer seltsamen, aber höchst vorteilhaften Heirat mit einer viel älteren Frau zu bereden wußten, von dieser auch auf alle Weise verzärtelt, indem sie sein gutes Betragen gegen sie durch die größte Freigebigkeit zu erwidern suchte, nach ihrem baldigen Tode sein eigener Herr, auf Reisen unabhängig, jeder Abwechslung, jeder Veränderung mächtig, nichts Übertriebenes wollend, aber viel und vielerlei wollend, freimütig, wohlthätig, brav, ja tapfer im Fall - was konnte in der Welt seinen Wünschen entgegenstehen! (249)

Although the narrator admits that Eduard could also be open, charitable and honest, these qualities are only listed, and not expanded upon – unlike the negative characteristics – and the final compliment of being brave is included with a clear interjection – ‘ja’ – and a qualification – ‘im Fall’ – and as such, does not make as strong an impression as the negative features. The inclusion of narrative comments ‘auf alle Weise’, ‘ja’ and the final rhetorical question, clearly shows the narrator and his opinions. The narrator uses ‘auf eine Weise’ and all its forms in a variety of contexts and for a variety of reasons. It reinforces his authority, allows comment and creates generalisations. It enables the narrator to present his interpretation of events, and to qualify them. We are told that: ‘Auf manche Weise hatte daher die Gesellschaft durch Ottiliens Ankunft gewonnen’ (283), and the narrator then proceeds to inform us how Ottilie improved the lives of Eduard, Charlotte and the Captain. We are also told that the company reverts to talking of the past, thus referring the reader to the detail given that Eduard and Charlotte only had the past in common: ‘Hatten auf diese Weise die beiden Freunde am Gegenwärtigen manche Beschäftigung, so fehlte es nicht an lebhafter und vergnüglicher Erinnerung vergangener Tage, woran Charlotte wohl teilzunehmen pflegte’ (262). The construction of this sentence allows the memories to be placed more in the forefront of the description, thus reiterating the

narrator's comments concerning the marriage. In the episodes concerning reading over the shoulder, Eduard's double standards are revealed in the inclusion of 'auf alle Weise', emphasised with the use of 'ja' and although no direct reference is made by the narrator to Eduard's prior anger at his wife:

Alsdann rückte sich Ottilie wohl näher, um ins Buch zu sehen, denn auch sie traute ihren eigenen Augen mehr als fremden Lippen; und Eduard gleichfalls rückte zu, um es ihr auf alle Weise bequem zu machen, ja er hielt oft längere Pausen als nötig, damit er nur nicht eher umwendete, bis auch sie zu Ende der Seite gekommen. (296-97)

In an episode where no direct narratorial intervention is clearly seen, any hint of a narratorial voice takes on great importance. The narrator shows his growing affection for Ottilie when he describes her duet with Eduard as being played in 'eine so liebevolle Weise' (297). And he continues to show his knowledge of the characters, especially Ottilie and her thoughts, by the following comment, neutralised by the impersonal pronoun: 'Ottilie war kindlich heiter, nach ihrer Weise konnte man sie offen nennen' (322).

Using 'nach ihrer Weise' indicates narratorial superiority as he knows what each person's 'way' is. The narrator uses this, together with the pronoun of inclusion, in 'So setzen alle zusammen, jeder auf seine Weise, das tägliche Leben fort...' (332). It also allows the narrator to refer to the previous passage so as to avoid further unnecessary descriptions.⁶² Prefacing this 'Weise' with an adjective also allows the narrator's opinion to be heard, but not explained at length. The narrator shows his impression of both the Captain's answer and Eduard's comment by describing the former's reply as being 'auf eine ebenso geschickte als nachdrückliche Weise' (448)

⁶² 'Führten sie auf diese Weise gar manchmal die unerfreulichen Begebenheiten des Tags auf die Betrachtung der Vergänglichkeit, des Scheidens, des Verlierens, so waren ihr dagegen wundersame nächtliche Erscheinungen zum Trost gegeben, die ihr das Dasein des Geliebten versicherten und ihr eigenes befestigten und belebten.' (422).

'Auf diese Weise zeigte sich der häusliche Zirkel als ein Scheinbild des vorigen Lebens, und der Wahn, als ob noch alles beim alten sei, war verzeihlich.' (479).

as Eduard's. The narrator also mentions that the event concerning the Hauptmann and the danger of drowning has affected him 'auf [eine] seltsame Weise' (268). He speaks of the Graf talking to the Captain in 'eine verständige und bescheidene Weise' (316). All of these excerpts indicate a normal use of the word within a narrative, but they can also be seen to show the presence of a subtly commenting narrative voice.

The narrator emphasizes his self-assurance by the use of the inclusive 'eine von' and the comparative 'eine Art von...'. Charlotte's response to the advances of Eduard is explained by the generalising description of her being 'eine von den Frauen, die, von Natur mäßig, im Ehestand ohne Vorsatz und Anstrengung die Art und Weise der Liebhaberinnen fortführen' (321) and the book in which Ottilie becomes engrossed causing her to take the boat across the lake, was 'eins von denen, die ein zartes Gemüt an sich ziehen und nicht wieder loslassen' (454). Neither of these sentences is particularly forceful, but they do go some way towards explaining the actions of the women in the differing situations. The inclusion of such generalities in reference to specific characters, allows the narrator to establish his own narrative style and description of events. The voice here is a confident, sympathising, poised one, one which inspires confidence in the reader.

The narrator continues in this vein with multiple uses of 'eine Art von...' and its variations. He tells the reader that the Hauptmann was 'in dieser Art des Aufnehmens sehr geübt' (260) with reference to the required survey work on the estate, thus entering into the role of established narrator. More often, though, he uses this construction in the self-assured mode of narrative, to describe by means of a generalisation to which the reader will be able to assent. He informs the reader that Charlotte wrote the letter to the Captain 'mit einer Art von Hast' (257) and prefaces

that with ‘aber doch’ following the description of her writing agreeably and obligingly.⁶³ Not only are we told that this ‘sort of haste’ was not usual for her, again showing the narrator’s knowledge of his characters, but his voice is to be heard in the use of this phrase and the interjection of ‘aber doch’. The resulting blot and Eduard’s jovial and wholly inaccurate response to this act as a type of prefiguration for the alteration of the life that Charlotte and her husband have, up till now, enjoyed. This prefiguration is also to be seen when we are told that Otilie looked at the dead Priest ‘mit einer Art von Neid.’ The euphemistic word ‘Eingeschlummerte[r]’ together with the rhetorical question which must be from Otilie – ‘Das Leben ihrer Seele war getötet; warum sollte der Körper noch erhalten werden?’ (422) – conspire to convey Otilie’s torment at being without Eduard. This suggestive register and then lack of comment on the perception of death as a release from earthly suffering, results in the reader being unsure as to Otilie’s state of mind.

The introduction of the Graf and the Baroness has already been discussed. They are described by means of a generalisation, and we are then told that they initially formed ‘eine Art von Gegensatz’ to Eduard and Charlotte. This, however, soon is overcome – ‘der sich jedoch sehr bald verlor’ (308). Again, the narrator makes his presence felt by the use of ‘eine Art von’ and the emphatic conjunction ‘jedoch’. This presence is reassuring for the reader, the narrator demonstrates his acquaintance with the new arrivals, and on these terms, his authority is established. He shows his understanding of the characters by placing this construction within statements, thus establishing himself as an assured narrator. Whilst boating on the lake, Charlotte repeats to the Captain her wish to be on land, ‘mit einer Art von Ängstlichkeit’ (325); Eduard, on

⁶³ ‘Sie schrieb mit gewandter Feder gefällig und verbindlich, aber doch mit einer Art von Hast, die ihr sonst nicht gewöhnlich war; und was ihr nicht leicht begegnete, sie verunstaltete das Papier zuletzt mit einem Tintenfleck, der sie ärgerlich machte und nur größer wurde, indem sie ihn wegwischen wollte.’ (257).

being handed Otilie's note by Charlotte, who mistakes it for his handwriting, attempts to alleviate his distress through 'eine Art von Humor' (331); the Architect's appearance was 'von der Art, daß es Zutrauen einflößte und Neigung erweckte' (360); Eduard presses Charlotte to wed the Captain in such a way as to demonstrate that 'eine Art von wahnsinnigem Unmut ihn ergriffen [hat]' (476); Charlotte has witnessed 'eine Art von heiterer Selbstzufriedenheit' (480-81) in Otilie. All of the above show the narrator using 'eine Art' to include the reader in his generalising comments in the portrayal of his characters. He also uses it to show judgment, or to pass comment. He tells of the Baroness eliciting information from the Assistant in a subtle, yet effective way: 'Sie regte daher den Gehülfen auf eine leise, doch wirksame Art klüglich an' (413). We have already seen how manipulative she can be, and the narrator's somewhat negative comment on her methods is felt here and in the ensuing descriptive passage. His voice can be heard in the episode concerning the raising of Otto:

Durch diese sonderbare Verwandtschaft und vielleicht noch mehr durch das schöne Gefühl der Frauen geleitet, welche das Kind eines geliebten Mannes, auch von einer andern, mit zärtlicher Neigung umfassen, ward Otilie dem heranwachsenden Geschöpf soviel als eine Mutter oder vielmehr eine andre Art von Mutter. (445)

Not only does the narrator use 'vielleicht', 'vielmehr' and 'eine Art von...' but he places them all within the one sentence, with the subjective description of a 'sonderbare Verwandtschaft'. The narrator is empathising with his characters, specifically Otilie, and when we consider the outcome of the novel, this episode of Otilie's bond with the child could be viewed as further narrative justification for her deep sorrow at his death. He shows Otilie's desire to rectify the situation she has caused 'durch irgendeine Art von Tätigkeit' (433) whilst hiding her own pain and love for Eduard. In this passage, the narrator shows Otilie's deep emotion and her

despair by the use of 'irgendeine' and the non-specific 'Art von' highlights the young girl's intention of doing good. We know that this does not come to pass, but this passage shows the narrator empathising with Ottilie's despair, and reflecting this in his writing.

One such phrase is 'als wenn' which is used sparingly throughout the narrative.⁶⁴ Its first use has already been mentioned in relation to the use of 'vielleicht'⁶⁵ and presents the reader with a generalisation. This employment of 'als wenn' is seen in another generalising comment: 'Es gab Gelegenheit, über die Gegend, über Anlagen zu sprechen, die man nach einer solchen Übersicht viel besser zustande bringe, als wenn man nur einzeln, nach zufälligen Eindrücken, an der Natur herumversuche'. (261) More often than not, however, the narrator uses this phrase to express his voice, to suggest his knowledge, to remind the reader of past events, to empathise or to express his judgment. He offers the explanation of Eduard's gaiety prior to Ottilie's death: 'Es war, als wenn er, so gut durch Fröhlichkeit als durch Gefühl, Ottiliens Erstarren wieder beleben, ihr Schweigen wieder auflösen wollte.' (479)

The narrator presents the reader with an insight into Eduard's mind and his intentions, but by using 'als wenn' he utilises the suggestive mode, whilst retaining the assured self; the narrator's presence is felt, but no manipulation occurs, no omniscience is assumed. He intimates his knowledge of future events when talking of how the four continue their lives after the night of double adultery, and when each realises the growing affections within the group. Again, this is cloaked in a generalisation, using 'als wenn' and also alludes to the darkness to come. The group are carrying on 'jeder

⁶⁴ It is used 39 times in the novel, 27 times within the narrative, and 12 times in the characters' speech.

⁶⁵ 'Charlotte benutzte des andern Tags auf einem Spaziergang nach derselben Stelle die Gelegenheit, das Gespräch wieder anzuknüpfen, vielleicht in der Überzeugung, daß man einen Vorsatz nicht sicherer abstumpfen kann, als wenn man ihn öfters durchspricht.' (250).

auf seine Weise... als wenn von nichts die Rede wäre' (332). The reader is placed in the position of being superior to the characters at this point in time, as the narrator has chosen to inform us of the characters' emotions and also entered the text himself as an assured commentator. We hear the narrator's voice in his empathy with the characters. Yet again, these passages do not make it entirely clear whether they are the narrator's thoughts, the characters' thoughts or the narrative presentation of what he believes could be the emotions of his characters: 'Ihm war, als wenn ihm ein Stein vom Herzen gefallen wäre, als wenn sich eine Scheidewand zwischen ihm und Ottilien niedergelegt hätte' (293).

The feelings of Eduard are running high in this episode, and the use of the subjunctive could indicate reported thoughts, but it could easily be seen as the narrator's empathetic interpretation. The words are poetic, and full of fulfilled hope. Whether both of these derive from Eduard remains unclear. The reader is left to question whose emotions these are. At the end of the description of the chapel ceiling, the narrative reads: 'es schien, als wenn Ottilie selbst aus den himmlischen Räumen heruntersähe' (372). The decision to paint Ottilie's face was an unconscious one on the part of the Architect, and the use of 'schien' and the subjunctive together with 'als wenn', makes it a matter of conjecture as to where this force came from, although the reader registers the suggestion of Ottilie's saintliness. The narrator's voice is not clear, but his input is felt, albeit in an unobtrusive and tentative manner. On Luciane's arrival, the narrator tells the reader, 'Es war daher, als wenn ein guter Geist für Ottilien gesorgt hätte...' (376) as she now would not be able to be quiet and unoccupied. This is clearly narrative conjecture, his affinity with the young girl allows him to feel relief at such an event and he expresses this in the conditional manner. In referring to past events the narrator emphasises the dire situation into

which the group have entered. The following sentence uses ‘als wenn’, but also the demonstrative pronoun ‘jener’, the present tense and the subjunctive to convey the emotion felt by both the characters and the narrator: ‘Der Schmuck an Früchten und Blumen, der dieser Zeit eigen ist, ließ glauben, als wenn es der Herbst jenes ersten Frühlings wäre; die Zwischenzeit war ins Vergessen gefallen’ (479).

The reader cannot fail to notice the differing degrees of narratorial authority at work in the text. At times we feel abandoned, yet at others, we are aware of moments of clear narrative comment. The narrator constantly changes his position, and refuses to provide the reader with a reliable presentation of characters and events. He uses such emotive words as ‘leider’ and ‘glücklicherweise’ and other interjections to indicate his feelings within the text. Feuerlicht explains that by using such words, the narrator shows the reader that: ‘er [nimmt] an den Ereignissen und Erlebnissen warmen Anteil’.⁶⁶ One of the most obvious occurs during Otilie’s despair at the death of the child: ‘Sie reißt ihren Busen auf und zeigt ihn zum erstenmal dem freien Himmel; zum erstenmal drückt sie ein Lebendiges an ihre reine nackte Brust, ach! und kein Lebendiges’ (457). This is a deeply painful – even embarrassing – moment. Otilie exposes her breasts for the first time, and the reader’s acquaintance with her purity, her age and her shyness makes her desperation manifest. The young girl, not knowing what to do, opens her blouse and presses a ‘living being’ to her. The despair that the narrator feels on knowing the outcome, the pain caused to such a pure creature, and the futility of her actions is depicted in the ‘ach!’ The child is already dead, and Otilie has no knowledge of how she might resuscitate him. The repetition of ‘Lebendiges’ with the negation and incomplete sentence, indicate the narrator’s anguish and his knowledge that no description could possibly accurately portray this

⁶⁶ Feuerlicht, p.327.

event. The exclamatory ‘Alles vergebens!’(457) continues the narrative empathy, echoing the brevity of ‘ach!’ and adding to the powerful emotional force of the narrator’s account.

The narrator is urgently present in this section, telling the reader that her ‘zartes Herz’ had won the help of the heavens,⁶⁷ and also that Otilie’s ‘unschuldige Brust’ was white as marble and cold as stone: ‘und leider auch an Kälte dem Marmor gleicht.’ All the narrator’s feelings concentrate on Otilie’s innocence, his sympathy in this episode is primarily for Otilie. This incident has important implications for how Otilie responds, how her feelings change, and what she then does. The narrator is at pains to stress her blamelessness – Charlotte’s impatience is suggested as the main reason that she decided to row across the lake.⁶⁸ The narrator is clearly involved with Otilie. His closeness to her has been obvious throughout the text, and in showing his attraction towards her, his understanding of her and his pain at knowing her sorrow, the narrator is seen to be involved in the events depicted, not coldly standing outside and observing from a distance. This short scene is dealt with quickly, but far from coldly. The narrator succeeds in involving the reader, his concern is with Otilie, and, in this way his personalised voice is used to powerful effect.

‘Leider’ is also used infrequently, and to great effect in the personalised voice. The first occurrence is in the double adultery chapter. The narrator writes that: ‘Sie brachten einen Teil der Nacht unter allerlei Gesprächen und Scherzen zu, die um desto freier waren, als das Herz leider keinen Teil daran nahm’ (321). This is immediately followed by the comparison with Eduard’s emotions in the morning.⁶⁹ The narrator makes few judgments within this chapter, but the inclusion of ‘leider’

⁶⁷ ‘Auch wendet sie sich nicht vergebens zu den Sternen...’ (458).

⁶⁸ ‘Sie kannte Charlottens ungeduldiges Harren nach dem Kinde.’(456).

⁶⁹ See p.126 for a fuller explanation.

indicates his belief which he shares with Eduard, that what the couple did was ‘ein Verbrechen’. The narrator’s tenderness towards Ottilie is expressed in his brief review of the events of the previous twelve months, when his voice appears to be expressing Ottilie’s possible thoughts: ‘Wieviel hatte sie sich seit jener Zeit nicht erworben! aber leider wieviel hatte sie nicht auch seit jener Zeit wieder verloren!’ (424). Again, the reader is not entirely sure whose thoughts these are, but the inclusion of ‘leider’ would suggest a sympathetic voice – presumably the narrator’s.

The use of the adverb ‘leider’ links with notions of fortune and misfortune. One thinks of a remark such as the following: ‘Es entging ihr [Ottilie] leider keine von den Betrachtungen, die sie dabei zu machen Ursache hatte. Glücklicherweise kann der Mensch nur einen gewissen Grad des Unglücks fassen’ (376). Here, the expression of gladness used in conjunction with a generalisation directly applies to the previous statement and the narration continues with further generalisations. Later, the narrator expresses his unhappiness that no-one was present to paint Ottilie as the Virgin Mary, despite explaining that her beauty excelled any possible depiction by any painter: ‘Unglücklicherweise war niemand da, der diese ganze Wirkung aufzufassen vermocht hätte’ (404). This paragraph appears to be wholly the narrator’s voice and thoughts, as he explains that the Architekt could not view the whole tableau. This use of ‘unglücklicherweise’ has to be from the narrator’s point of view, and again indicates his admiration for the young girl. Another example of ‘unglücklicherweise’ occurs in the passage describing the misfortune of the boat being on the other side of the lake when the boy almost drowns at the celebrations: ‘Unglücklicherweise war der Kahn auf der andern Seite, mit Feuerwerk gefüllt, nur langsam konnte man ihn ausladen, und die Hülfe verzögerte sich’ (337). Or when Nanny becomes infected and cannot go with Ottilie: ‘Unglücklicherweise traf sie dabei in die Zimmer der Maserkranken und

empfand sogleich die Folgen der Ansteckung' (470). In this case, the fact that Nanny could not accompany her mistress is indeed a great misfortune, as Eduard then has the opportunity to meet with Ottilie.

We have seen many examples of the modal particle 'ja' and in fact it is the most frequent narrative interjection throughout the text.⁷⁰ It is a very subtle inclusion, and generally acts to generate emphasis. As with previous examples, this is used in connection with criticism of Eduard, with a description of his loyalty as being 'eine hartnäckige, ja romanhafte Treue' (249) which finally resulted in his 'possessing' Charlotte. It is used for purposes of emphasis in generalizations and in conjunction with 'sogar' the narrator indicates his presence and his view of the general situation.

Denn wenn der Smaragd durch seine herrliche Farbe dem Gesicht wohltut, ja sogar einige Heilkraft an diesem edlen Sinn ausübt, so wirkt die menschliche Schönheit noch mit weit größerer Gewalt auf den äußern und innern Sinn. (283)

Narrative comments are indicated by the introduction of 'ja', the narrator adding to his comment, which gives the text an assured feel, and it sounds sometimes as if it were spoken, rather than being carefully considered writing: 'Ottilie hatte schnell die ganze Ordnung eingesehen, ja, was noch mehr ist, empfunden' (282). He refers to the reaction to the duet of Eduard and Ottilie as being childish, and then intimates that one could even be jealous of their connection – 'ja vielleicht beneiden muß' (297-98). This interjection of 'ja' suggests a degree of emotion on the part of the narrator. He expresses his opinion on Eduard's unreasonable behaviour concerning the impetuosity of the plans for the estate. Eduard criticises the actions of Charlotte and the Hauptmann, complaining that they were acting against their agreement, but it is due to Eduard that the second agreement is carried out, and his haste is responsible

⁷⁰ pp.36, 38, 40, 58, 59, 60, 62, 63, 70-1, 75, 79, 83, 98, 100, 104-6.

for the decreased amount in their funds. It is left to the narrator to point out that Eduard brought this alteration about and he does this with the use of 'ja':

Er fühlte nicht, daß er selbst durch sein heftiges Treiben die Kasse zu erschöpfen auf dem Wege war; er tadelte bitter Charlotten und den Hauptmann, daß sie bei dem Geschäft gegen die erste Abrede handelten, und doch hatte er in die zweite Abrede gewilligt, ja er hatte sie selbst veranlaßt und notwendig gemacht. (329)

His voice is to be heard in defence of Otilie's connection with the Graf: 'Sie hatte sich ihm genähert, ja sie ward von ihm angezogen, weil sie durch sein gehaltvolles Gespräch dasjenige zu sehen und zu kennen glaubte, was ihr bisher ganz unbekannt geblieben war' (413).

This use of emphasis allows the narrator's stylistic input to be seen, as well as his own interpretation of the events. In including these intensifications the narrator enters into the text as a creative voice, and so involves the reader as dynamic partner. He shows his understanding of Otilie: 'Sie war offen, ja gesprächig' (464). He emphasises Eduard's response to Otilie *not* reading over his shoulder (again, the reader must remember the previous episodes, as the narrator does not actively make reference himself): 'ja er ward unruhig, zerstreut, wenn sie nicht hineinsah, wenn er nicht gewiß war, daß sie seinen Worten mit ihren Augen folgte.' And he also corrects his own narrative: 'Eduard las gewöhnlich, lebhafter, gefühlvoller, besser, ja sogar heiterer' (479). Narrative emphasis is also placed on Otilie's abhorrence of food; 'ja sie fällt fast in Zuckungen, als man die Tasse dem Munde nähert' (483) and on the strength of emotion between Eduard and Otilie: 'Ja, hätte man eins von beiden am letzten Ende der Wohnung festgehalten, das andere hätte sich nach und nach von selbst, ohne Vorsatz, zu ihm hinbewegt' (478). 'Ja' is a powerful example of the narrative voice. It is subtle, and as such, allows the narrator to hint at a personalised voice without entering into full first-person statement.

The coordinating conjunction 'jedoch' is also used to pass comment on events, and is another example of narrative presence. After hearing of the imminent departure of the Hauptmann, the narrator describes Charlotte's sense of calm and clarity after composing herself: 'Sie faßte sich jedoch und bekräftigte das Gesagte mit Ruhe und Klarheit' (313) Eduard overcomes his doubts and worries on writing to Ottilie a second time; 'Er fühlte einiges Bedenken, einige Besorgnis, die er jedoch überwand' (330). These narrative interjections show a presence acutely aware of the necessity of narrative accuracy. The narrator enters into the emotions of the characters and succinctly describes them, whilst intimating his reaction to them. In the above quotation, the fact that Charlotte overcame her emotions is joined to the remainder of the sentence, not with a neutral 'und' but with a judgmental 'jedoch'. So too is the reaction of Eduard after being 'caught' by his wife in an attempt to write to his would-be lover. This is heard in a stronger sense, when the Hauptmann (now Major) cannot grieve for the child: 'Der Major entfernte sich, Charlotten tief im Herzen beklagend, ohne jedoch das arme abgeschiedene Kind bedauern zu können' (461). Here, the narrator makes no comment as to whether this is immoral or understandable, but by choosing to use 'jedoch', he implies that this reaction could be primarily compassionate. The narrator also shows his omniscience by introducing a contrary opinion, which is later proved to be the correct one. In the case of the drowning boy, whom the Hauptmann rescues, the narrative stresses that the rescuer brought him to the bank although he was already feared dead:

Des Hauptmanns Entschluß war gefaßt, er warf die Oberkleider weg, aller Augen richteten sich auf ihn, und seine tüchtige, kräftige Gestalt flößte jedermann Zutrauen ein; aber ein Schrei der Überraschung drang aus der Menge hervor, als er sich ins Wasser stürzte, jedes Auge begleitete ihn, der als geschickter Schwimmer den Knaben bald erreichte und ihn, jedoch für tot, an den Damm brachte. (337)

The boy survives, and the 'jedoch' prefigures this fortunate occurrence. The narrator also informs the reader that Charlotte paid much attention to Otilie without appearing obvious ('ohne es jedoch merken zu lassen' (464)), but the reader is placed in a privileged position by having this revealed to him. And the narrator again draws the reader's attention to a detail, namely Otilie's unpacking of her trunk;

Das Bedeutendste jedoch, was die Freunde mit stiller Aufmerksamkeit beobachteten, war, daß Otilie den Koffer zum erstenmal ausgepackt und daraus verschiedenes gewählt und abgeschnitten hatte, was zu einem einzigen, aber ganzen und vollen Anzug hinreichte. (480)

The narrator also uses 'vielmehr' to correct, to emphasise and to show his knowledge within the narrative. After the telling of *Die Wunderlichen Nachbarskinder* we are told that:

Der Erzählende machte eine Pause oder hatte vielmehr schon geendigt, als er bemerken mußte, daß Charlotte höchst bewegt sei; ja sie stand auf und verließ mit einer stummen Entschuldigung das Zimmer; denn die Geschichte war ihr bekannt. (442)

Not only does this passage emphasize the description of Charlotte's agitation with 'ja' but the correction of 'machte eine Pause' to 'schon geendigt' serves to emphasise the narrator's presence. His insight is shown when he provides the reader with an explanation of Eduard's actions in the Inn;

Er sah Otilien allein oder so gut als allein auf wohlbekanntem Wege, in einem gewohnten Wirtshause, dessen Zimmer er so oft betreten; er dachte, er überlegte, oder vielmehr er dachte, er überlegte nicht; er wünschte, er wollte nur. (471)

This correction of Eduard's mental process is used to generate a higher state of tension, Eduard is confused and the narrative reflects this, including a personalised contribution in the form of 'vielmehr'. The narrator utilizes this word to criticise Mittler, again in an understated manner. The reader is told that, after winning the lottery, Mittler bought himself an estate and set about trying to solve everyone's problems. The narrative continues with the comment that he kept to the strong principle of never staying in any place where he could not be of use. However, this is

relativized by the narrator, who states that this was due to old habits and inclinations rather than principles:

Sein Wirkungskreis dehnte sich wunderbar aus; und man war im Begriff, ihn nach der Residenz zu ziehen, um das von oben herein zu vollenden, was er von unten herauf begonnen hatte, als er einen ansehnlichen Lotteriegewinn tat, sich ein mäßiges Gut kaufte, es verpachtete und zum Mittelpunkt seiner Wirksamkeit machte, mit dem festen Vorsatz oder vielmehr nach alter Gewohnheit und Neigung, in keinem Hause zu verweilen, wo nichts zu schlichten und nichts zu helfen wäre. (255)

This is not a highly pejorative comment, but, as is always the case with Mittler, it adds up to an unfavourable impression being created.

All these examples of a personalised voice work together to establish moments of an individual presence. As with all of the narrative techniques, these glimpses are not regular or constant. They are used in conjunction with other narrative practices and serve a variety of purposes. Not only does a compassionate, register make itself heard in the narrator's account and thereby the reader is brought closer to the text and to the characters. The distance between the reader and the work is closed, he is encouraged to look at the text from within, not to presume to be superior or external to it. As with all of the features of the narrator's style, no one categorisation of them is possible, they work together with the other narrative elements to prevent any one reading, and to prevent any unitary standpoint being reached, thus constantly forcing the active involvement and thought of the reader.

SCHEINEN

The frequent use of the verb *scheinen* which I have hitherto noted intermittently throughout the text, creates ambiguity thus forcing the reader to become questioning and attentive. It allows the narrator to suggest his opinion on an event, to present the characters' motives and their subconscious, and also enables the narrator to avoid

giving any definite explanations or thoughts. It also is used to support the omniscience of the narrator at times, with the reader being informed that the situation is not as it seems and it is the knowing narrator who will subsequently inform us of the hidden reality. Given that all these readings of this verb are possible, and some are not entirely clear, even after close analysis, the employment of *scheinen* in all its forms is an integral part of any narrative analysis. Burgess provides us with a detailed table of the occurrences of the verb in the narrative, assigning each occasion to the character with which it occurs.⁷¹ He titles this part of his study ‘The equivocative narrator,’ and gives examples to demonstrate ‘something of the complexity that can lie behind apparently straightforward occurrences and the issues that have to be resolved’ (187). He correctly points out that the majority of the uses of the verb are in connection with Otilie. However, his method of attribution is at times questionable and he fails to mention, that as the novel progresses, so the narrative focus on Otilie increases in intensity.⁷² Thus, it follows that more of the words, actions and thoughts can be directly linked to the girl, as the other characters as well as the narrator become more involved in her and her existence. The use of ‘scheinen’ is manifold, as Burgess notes. He correctly draws our attention to one application of it as preparing ‘the ground for a later event’ (188) giving the example of the first occasion it is used in connection with Otilie: ‘it conveys Charlotte’s impression of the warmth of the Assistant’s account of

⁷¹ Burgess, pp.186-194, table on p.186. It does not list the occasions when the characters use it, or in any letters, or Otilie’s diary.

⁷² Burgess gives an example of how he attributes the use of the verb to the characters to whom there is some connection, rather than to whom the verb applies. For example, in Chapter 13, Part Two, Otto looks up at Eduard and Otilie, and the narrative states; ‘Der Knabe sah die Welt schon so verständig an; er schien die beiden zu kennen, die vor ihm standen.’ (455) Burgess assigns this use of ‘scheinen’ to Eduard and Otilie as ‘although the “schien” technically refers to the child’ he explains that ‘the context emphasises the connection between [Eduard and Otilie] as manifest in the child.’ (Burgess, p.188) He also attributes the use of the verb to Otilie as well as Charlotte in the following quotation, ‘So ging es auch in diesem Augenblick Charlotten, der eine Verbindung des Hauptmanns mit Ottilien nicht unmöglich schien...’ (427). His reason for this is that although ‘the ‘schein’ strictly speaking refers to Charlotte’s thoughts [...] it is Otilie who is foremost in her thoughts.’ (Burgess p.187). These justifications are, of course, possible; however, on occasion the issues are more complex than Burgess allows.

Ottolie in his "Beilage".⁷³ This evidently is a prefiguration of the Assistant's later actions, but it also appears to be an accurate and apparent summation on Charlotte's part, as the Assistant does not disguise his inclination towards his young pupil. A clearer example of prefiguration can be seen with regard to the painting in the chapel: 'Genug, eins der letzten Gesichtchen glückte vollkommen, so daß es schien, als wenn Ottolie selbst aus den himmlischen Räumen heruntersähe' (372). The question of Ottolie's 'canonisation' will be dealt with later, but this comment not only highlights the Architect's feelings for the girl, but also adds to the references to her holiness which become more frequent as the novel develops, culminating in the final paragraph of the text. Burgess does comment on this section, saying that it is used to illustrate the 'effect Ottolie has on her surroundings' (191) but fails to draw any conclusions other than that. The narrator also subtly indicates Ottolie's death and the reactions to it in the following quotation:

Diese Sonnenblumen wendeten noch immer ihr Angesicht gen Himmel, diese Asteren sahen noch immer still bescheiden vor sich hin, und was allenfalls davon zu Kränzen gebunden war, hatte zum Muster gedient, einen Ort auszuschnücken, der, wenn er nicht bloß eine Künstlergrille bleiben, wenn er zu irgend etwas genutzt werden sollte, nur zu einer gemeinsamen Grabstätte geeignet schien. (374)

Again, we have the association with the divine, and the flowers will indeed be seen again after Ottolie's demise, at her funeral procession. The sense that the flowers are intended for such a purpose is to be found in the 'geeignet schien'. There is no definite statement from the narrator indicating this, but in his non-committal fashion, it is left for us to interpret. Burgess finds a further example of 'similar prefiguration

⁷³ 'dabei konnte sie sich eines Lächelns nicht enthalten, indem der Anteil des Lehrers herzlicher zu sein schien, als ihn die Einsicht in die Tugenden eines Zöglings hervorzubringen pfllegt. Bei ihrer ruhigen, vorurteilsfreien Denkweise ließ sie auch ein solches Verhältnis, wie so viele andre, vor sich liegen'. (265-66) Burgess also expands on the use of the word 'Verhältnis' explaining that 'the term ... occurs, which, as we have seen, is commonly used in the novel to indicate a relationship that is intimate rather than remote.' Burgess, p.188. See also Burgess, pp.285-86.

of the result of Otilie's 'attractiveness' in Eduard's conversation about Otilie after their initial meeting:

Den andern Morgen sagte Eduard zu Charlotten: 'Es ist ein angenehmes, unterhaltendes Mädchen.'
 'Unterhaltend?' versetzte Charlotte mit Lächeln; 'sie hat ja den Mund noch nicht aufgetan.'
 'So?' erwiderte Eduard, indem er sich zu besinnen schien, 'das wäre doch wunderbar!'(281)

Burgess takes this example of 'schien' as calling 'into question Eduard's diffidence' which gives rise to 'various interpretational avenues as regards his subsequent behaviour towards Otilie'(189). Without stating which 'avenues' these might be, he questions whether Eduard's contemplation is true or false and comments that Otilie becomes indispensable to Eduard, who finds life without her to be 'peinlich' (289), due, 'not least', according to Burgess, to her seeming to become more talkative and more open.⁷⁴ There is, of course, no actual proof at this stage as to Eduard's emotions concerning Otilie,⁷⁵ however, to suggest that Eduard has feigned 'diffidence' seems to misjudge his character and his ensuing actions. By placing the conversation after a direct narratorial comment - Otilie, 'schien aufmerksam auf das Gespräch, ohne daß sie daran teil genommen hätte' - during which conversation the reader is told, for the second time in three sentences, that Otilie hardly spoke, it emphasises Eduard's 'attraction' to the girl, which was clearly not based on her entertaining conversation. As we are also told that 'Schönheit ist überall ein gar willkommener Gast', it leads the reader to assume that Eduard is drawn to Otilie particularly by her beauty. In the following chapter we are told that Eduard's feelings for Otilie grow, and Burgess asks whether 'the "schien" here [is] from the point of view of the narrator or of

⁷⁴ Eduard began 'ihre Abwesenheit schon peinlich zu empfinden. Hiezu kam noch, daß sie gesprächiger und offener schien, sobald sie sich allein trafen'. (289).

⁷⁵ We are told that Eduard felt 'eine stille freundliche Neigung' in relation to Otilie, and that she paid him particular attentions but the comment 'das wollte seiner Selbstliebe scheinen' (289) leads us not to doubt *his* affection for *her*, but vice versa. Burgess fails to comment on this overt narrative comment. On second reading, it is unclear as to whether this is the narrator passing judgment on a man whom he considers spoilt, and of whom, at this stage, he could be jealous.

Eduard, we might well ask, as well as who is deceiving whom?’ This is one of the main features of the employment of ‘scheinen’ by the narrator, namely in the context of reported speech or thoughts.

In these cases, it is unclear who the speaker is, the character or the narrator. In the above quotation which describes Ottilie as *seeming* more open and talkative, it could be a narrative description of events, or it could be Eduard’s thoughts, given his fascination with Ottilie. It is not a method of deception, rather it is indicative of the narrator’s uncertainty surrounding the characters’ thoughts and emotions, as he adds to our knowledge of them whilst not allowing us to form any wholly secure judgments. Burgess states that “‘schien” is used of all the main characters to indicate a divide between their real thoughts or feelings and the act they put on for appearances’ sake” (188). This is frequently the case although Burgess does not develop this line of argument and fails to examine the instances where the narrator uses it to show the inner emotions and thoughts, without which we, the readers, would have less of a sense of the characters. Ottilie’s opinion as to Eduard’s departure is not expressed in direct speech, rather the narrator gives a summary of the topics, as Ottilie might have thought them, whilst remaining in the third person:

Sie ward unruhig und immer nachdenklicher, als Charlotte sie auf einen weiten Spaziergang mit sich zog und von mancherlei Gegenständen sprach, aber des Gemahls, und wie es schien vorsätzlich, nicht erwähnte. Doppelt betroffen war sie daher, bei ihrer Zurückkunft den Tisch nur mit zwei Gedecken besetzt zu finden.
(345)

In this construction, the narrator indicates Ottilie’s belief that the failure to mention Eduard was intentional, without confirming that this was the case in an additional omniscient narrative comment. The narrative continues with Ottilie’s thoughts, but this time, presents them more distantly: ‘Es war eine Mundtasse des Herrn, ein paar

silberne Löffel und mancherlei, was Ottilien auf eine weitere Reise, auf ein längeres Außenbleiben zu deuten schien' (346). In this case, we know that Eduard is going away for some time, yet again the narrator offers no confirmation of Ottilie's fear, nor indeed any comment. After she sees the completed chapel ceiling, the narrative describes Ottilie's actions and emotions:

Sie stand, ging hin und wieder, sah und besah; endlich setzte sie sich auf einen der Stühle, und es schien ihr, indem sie auf- und umherblickte, als wenn sie wäre und nicht wäre, als wenn sie sich empfände und nicht empfände, als wenn dies alles vor ihr, sie vor sich selbst verschwinden sollte; und nur als die Sonne das bisher sehr lebhaft beschienene Fenster verließ, erwachte Ottilie vor sich selbst und eilte nach dem Schlosse. (374)

This instance of poetic description surrounding Ottilie and the chapel cannot come from Ottilie, considering her previous reactions, but this is not to suggest that it is narrative commentary with no connection to the character in question. Here, the narrator appears to be suggesting what Ottilie is thinking, in his words, using her anticipated thoughts and expanding upon them using his understanding of her character. Burgess writes that when 'schien' is used in conjunction with Ottilie, it 'indicate[s] her self-control, when she conceals her true feelings from Charlotte' (189). This is true. However, he fails to draw any conclusion regarding the narrator on this issue. After Eduard leaves, Charlotte is 'ruhig und heiter; Ottilie schien es nur' (348). Burgess does not expand upon this comment and fails to notice that this is an example of the narrator supplying the reader with his knowledge of further events, current emotions and expectations, as he proves by continuing: 'denn in allem beobachtete sie nichts als Symptome, ob Eduard wohl bald erwartet werde oder nicht' (348). Burgess tends to insist that the use of 'schien' indicates a divide between the characters' real thoughts and the act they put on – as in the case of Charlotte's earlier attempts at match-making between her husband and her niece: 'Charlotte, so aufrichtig sie zu sprechen schien, verhehlte doch etwas' (253). Again, this remark

indicates the presence of a knowing narrator, one who is aware of the history of the four characters and is informing us of it. The irony of this particular event is evident to the reader on second reading, but warning signs are seen on first reading, because mention is made of Charlotte's and the Hauptmann's endeavours to join the two, and of Eduard's stubbornness which prevented any possible union. From the outset, the unusual basis for their marriage is underlined by the inclusion of this event, heightened by the fact that Charlotte 'appears' sincere, but is guilty of concealment. The narrative voice is emphasised in the inclusion of 'nämlich'. The reader is aware that the narrator is in possession of more information than he admits, and these hints continue throughout the novel, providing a consistent and complex subtext.

One of the main problems in understanding the narrative technique derives from the fact that the narrative voice shifts between presence and absence in the text. We are provided with moments of clarity, and then, when we require further adumbration, the narrative voice is not to be heard. We are given numerous examples of the characters' thoughts being presented in such a way; when the Hauptmann takes Charlotte away in the boat we are told: 'Es schien ihr, der Freund führe sie weit weg, um sie auszusetzen, sie allein zu lassen.' (325) When Eduard reads the copies Ottilie has written for him, the description is narrative but the intimate tone suggests that these could be Eduard's thoughts:

Die ersten Blätter waren mit der größten Sorgfalt, mit einer zarten weiblichen Hand geschrieben, dann schienen sich die Züge zu verändern, leichter und freier zu werden; aber wie erstaunt war er, als er die letzten Seiten mit den Augen überlief! (323)

This is clearly the case when Charlotte mistakes Ottilie's handwriting for Eduard's:

Er war gewarnt, doppelt gewarnt; aber diese sonderbaren, zufälligen Zeichen, durch die ein höheres Wesen mit uns zu sprechen scheint, waren seiner Leidenschaft unverständlich; vielmehr, indem sie ihn immer weiter führte, empfand er die Beschränkung, in der man ihn zu halten schien, immer unangenehmer. (331)

The use of 'uns' and the almost colloquial, relaxed tone, the repetition and intensification of 'gewart,' contribute to one sense of this section as being Eduard's thoughts and emotions, however the inclusion of 'vielmehr' indicates the presence of a narrator who is aware of the necessity of interpretative involvement. By contrast, when Eduard gives a gold coin, although the third person is used, yet again, we hear the character's thoughts in the narrative style: 'Er hätte jeden gern glücklich gemacht, da sein Glück ohne Grenzen schien' (309). In the spiritual adultery scene, the omniscient narrator is in evidence telling us that: 'Der Hauptmann schien vor ihr zu stehen' (320), and then: 'Wie sehnlich wünschte sie [Charlotte] den Gatten weg; denn die Luftgestalt des Freundes schien ihr Vorwürfe zu machen' (321). In both of these cases, we are offered a privileged insight into Charlotte's mind, one which would only be conjecture on our part without the narrative voice. The narrator again shows his negative judgment of the characters' behaviour in his choice of words, 'ungeheures Recht,' 'schlich,' 'seltsam genug,' and the comment 'um desto freier waren [die Gespräche und Scherze], als das Herz leider keinen Teil daran nahm.' This clear indication of the narrator's opinion, is followed by a double use of 'scheinen' which shows Eduard's inner thoughts but which also echo the judgmental narrative tone:

Aber als Eduard des andern Morgens an dem Busen seiner Frau erwachte, schien ihm der Tag ahnungsvoll hereinzublicken, die Sonne schien ihm ein Verbrechen zu beleuchten; er schlich sich leise von ihrer Seite, und sie fand sich, seltsam genug, allein, als sie erwachte. (321)

Burgess chooses various examples of the use of 'scheinen' further to show Eduard's devious behaviour when it comes to keeping Ottilie. The first two show him lying to Charlotte: 'Eduard schien ihr Beifall zu geben, nur aber, um einigen Aufschub zu suchen', 'Er schien ihr die Sache ganz zu überlassen; allein schon war innerlich sein Entschluß gefaßt' (343). He repeats this deception to Mittler: 'Aus dem wenigen, was er sagte, schien hervorzugehen, daß er jenen alles überlasse; sein gegenwärtiger

Schmerz schien ihn gegen alles gleichgültig gemacht zu haben' (471). Burgess uses these instances to prove his theory that in all cases of 'schien', Otilie is 'the motivating factor'. This is the case in many instances, but Burgess's accusation of narrative manipulation through the use of 'schien' in connection with Otilie is contradicted by the above quotations. Burgess indicates his disbelief in Eduard's headache, citing the narrative words, 'Er schien sehr zu leiden' (470). However, this appears to be Mittler's impression; in any event the narrator later says that Eduard 'fühlte seinen Schmerz nicht mehr' (471). Although Eduard does deceive his 'friends', the narrator informs us of his duplicity, and moves, for this moment at least, into an omniscient mode. This shifting narrative ground is of greater significance to the narrative question than any association of the verb 'scheinen' with the act of deception might imply.

In his commentary on the force of 'scheinen' Burgess writes: 'On occasion, the narrator uses the term to suggest the effect that Otilie has on her surroundings. This is always positive, and invariably has something extraordinary, not to say magical about it' (191). Burgess uses the example of the chapel ceiling incident and also the procession to the laying of the foundation stone to demonstrate this hypothesis.⁷⁶ At one point we read:

Charlotte zögerte mit Otilien und machte dadurch die Sache nicht besser; denn weil Otilie wirklich die letzte war, die herantrat, so schien es, als wenn Trompeten und Pauken nur auf sie gewartet hätten, als wenn die Feierlichkeit bei ihrer Ankunft nun gleich beginnen müßte. (335)

However, I believe this shows more than Otilie's effect on her surroundings. It brings fate and chance into the discussion, and also could reflect Eduard's view of the situation, and his wish for this triumphant entry to be the case.

⁷⁶ See p.111, p.121, p.124 for further discussion of the chapel ceiling.

One aspect of the usage of this verb which Burgess does not consider is that of prefiguration. Before the double adultery scene, the previous chapter ends with the cryptic comment that the day appeared to be over, insinuating that it is not. ‘Die Frauen zogen sich zurück auf ihren Flügel, die Männer auf den andern, und so schien dieser Tag abgeschlossen’ (317). At this juncture, we discover in the next scenes what precisely the narrator was hinting at. But this is not always the case. The narrator frequently disguises his knowledge of events, and contents himself with unspecified intimations of foreboding:

So setzen alle zusammen, jeder auf seine Weise, das tägliche Leben fort, mit und ohne Nachdenken: alles scheint seinen gewöhnlichen Gang zu gehen, wie man auch in ungeheuren Fällen, wo alles auf dem Spiele steht, noch immer so fortlebt, als wenn von nichts die Rede wäre. (332)

As I have previously indicated, the narrator informs us that this is indeed one of those ‘ungeheure Fälle’ without explaining why it is such. The use of ‘scheint’ and ‘auch in’ demonstrates the narrator’s superior knowledge of events to come. Intimations of the darkness to come are evident throughout. In the following extract, the narrator explores the subconscious of the Captain and Charlotte and highlights the theme of time:

Da zeigte sich denn, daß der Hauptmann vergessen hatte, seine chronometrische Sekundenuhr aufzuziehen, das erstemal seit vielen Jahren; und sie schienen, wo nicht zu empfinden, doch zu ahnen, daß die Zeit anfangs, ihnen gleichgültig zu werden. (290)

The narrator provides the reader with a hint that the birth of Otto will have tragic consequences, despite Charlotte’s hopes: ‘Diese wunderbaren Ereignisse schienen ihr eine bedeutende Zukunft, aber keine unglückliche zu weissagen’ (339). The use of ‘schienen’ here indicates the narrator’s superior knowledge, again not by clearly stating facts, but by intimating future events.

This non-committal stance adopted at times by the narrator allows him to suggest the passing of judgment without openly castigating the characters. This is most clearly and frequently to be heard in relation to Luciane and Otilie. Burgess states that in this section ‘the term “schein” is used exclusively negatively,’⁷⁷ together with ‘und zwar’ against Luciane. In accusing her of manipulation of those around her, the narrator uses ‘schien’ to express disapproval and astonishment, and in his account of her treatment of all those around her it ‘implies incredulity’ (194).

Schien es bei ihr Plan zu sein. Männer, die etwas vorstellten, Rang, Ansehen, Ruhm oder sonst etwas Bedeutendes für sich hatten, für sich zu gewinnen, Weisheit und Besonnenheit zuschanden zu machen und ihrem wilden, wunderlichen Wesen selbst bei der Bedächtlichkeit Gunst zu erwerben, so kam die Jugend doch dabei nicht zu kurz; jeder hatte sein Teil, seinen Tag, seine Stunde, in der sie ihn zu entzücken und zu fesseln wußte. (379)

Burgess comments on the fact that even her fiancé is affected by her behaviour: he “‘strangely” believes (or does he really? – “schien” appears here again!) that the whole world “must” like her: “schien er auf eine wunderbare Weise von dem Vorzuge geschmeichelt, ein Frauenzimmer zu besitzen, das der ganzen Welt gefallen *mußte*” (395).⁷⁸ The ambiguity in this comment could be seen as the fiancé’s; however, it is more likely that it is the narrator’s comment regarding the actions of Luciane, especially when the narrator further adds that Otilie notices apparent discomfort of her fiancé; Otilie ‘gönnte dem Bräutigam eine vergnügte Stunde nach seinem Sinne, der bei seiner unendlichen Liebe für Lucianen doch von ihrem Betragen zu leiden schien’ (383). The episode surrounding Luciane is dealt with in more detail later on, but these examples show how, by the use of ‘scheinen’ the narrator intimates his opinion without expressing it in an obviously judgmental fashion.

⁷⁷ Burgess, p.193.

⁷⁸ Burgess’s italics.

In keeping with Burgess' view that 'scheinen' is used almost exclusively in connection with Otilie, it is hardly surprising that he offers commentary on the closing chapters and the frequency of 'scheinen'. He finds that, as Otilie 'seems to pull the figures with whom she becomes associated in the course of the narrative into her own stylistic field' the frequency of the verb increases 'just before and at the time of her death' (192). He states that the association with Nanny uses 'scheinen' from 'the very inception of their relationship, and is of course repeatedly to be found in the account of Nanny's apparent death and subsequent revitalisation' (193).⁷⁹ However, the explanation of why this is the case appears to be simply the strength of the bond between the two girls, and the narrator choosing to portray the events in this manner 'is surely a further example of the narrator deliberately clouding the issue rather than giving an unequivocal account' (193). I do not find that there is any deliberate attempt to mislead the reader, or to confuse his understanding of events; rather, that as the novel progresses, we enter further into the realm of conjecture, and the narrative style reflects that. Far from manipulating the reader, the narrator does not offer any 'unequivocal account' as he himself is unable to reach such an opinion, and in so doing, urges the reader to form for himself a judgment as to what happened

The narrator's complex shifting of ground is nowhere more urgently and more compactly apparent than in respect of two minor characters – Luciane and Nanny. And I wish, therefore, to bring this chapter to a close by examining the narrative relationship to these characters as two 'test cases' that summarize the overall narrative performance of the novel

⁷⁹ For a detailed analysis of Nanny and Otilie's death, see pp. 147-50.

NARRATOR AND CHARACTER I: LUCIANE

In the passages concerning the description of life with Luciane, we are witness to heavily assertive narrative presence. Before Charlotte's daughter appears, we have heard praise from her head teacher, and criticism from the Assistant, but no narrative comments on any aspects of this young woman's life and behaviour. In chapter four of the second part, Luciane enters the scene. In the corresponding chapter in the first part, the narrator's voice is noticeably absent during the lengthy discussion of 'Wahlverwandschaften'. Here, by contrast, it is to be found in plenty. The chapter opens with the narrator reminding us of Ottilie's hardships, which is not entirely necessary, as we have just been told about them. However, as Luciane is about to enter, the comparison between the two is accentuated by that reminder. The narrator's opinion is to be heard in 'seltsam', 'solchen Ereignissen' and 'leider' in particular:

Wie seltsam mußte nach solchen Ereignissen, nach diesem aufgedrungenen Gefühl von Vergänglichkeit und Hinschwinden Ottilie durch die Nachricht getroffen werden, die ihr nicht länger verborgen bleiben konnte, daß Eduard sich dem wechselnden Kriegsglück überliefert habe. Es entging ihr leider keine von den Betrachtungen, die sie dabei zu machen Ursache hatte. (376)

The narrator remains with Ottilie's situation, and links it to the arrival of Luciane. However, he initially presents it as a positive occurrence: 'Es war daher, als wenn ein guter Geist für Ottilien gesorgt hätte' (376) and provided 'ein wildes Heer' to take her out of the solitude into which she had retreated and in which she appeared to be foundering: 'zu versinken schien'. However, the first impression of Luciane is in direct contrast to Ottilie, and cannot be seen as wholly positive:

Charlottens Tochter, Luciane, war kaum aus der Pension in die große Welt getreten, hatte kaum in dem Hause ihrer Tante sich von

zahlreicher Gesellschaft umgeben gesehen, als ihr Gefallenwollen wirklich Gefallen erregte und ein junger, sehr reicher Mann gar bald eine heftige Neigung empfand, sie zu besitzen. (376)

The repetition of the adverb ‘kaum’ gives the initial impression of speed, impetuosity, rush and excess, and continues throughout all the Luciane scenes. Thus we are presented with a negative view from the outset, namely that of an intemperate character, who is to be married to a man about whom the first description is that he is rich and will be adding Luciane to his possessions. This notion of ownership and the implied superficiality of their union is highlighted by the use of ‘besitzen’, ‘beneiden’, ‘das Beste jeder Art sein eigen zu nennen’, and the emphasis on his money. Although the narrator began by saying that this could be good for Ottilie, that she could awaken ‘das Gefühl eigener Kraft’ (376), the arrival of the guests is described as being ‘der Sturm [der] auf einmal über das Schloß und Ottilien hereinbrach’ (377). However, the immense amount of work involved, which Ottilie undertakes, is seen as a positive factor, as the narrator explains:

Diesem ungestümen Treiben begegnete Ottilie mit gleichmütiger Tätigkeit, ja ihr heiteres Geschick erschien im schönsten Glanze; denn sie hatte in kurzer Zeit alles untergebracht und angeordnet. (377)

A personal view is expressed in the above quotation, the interpolation of ‘ja’ and the specific praise of Ottilie’s cheerful disposition add to the impression of narrative feeling. This continues in an unobtrusive manner, albeit more pronounced than usual. The futility of Luciane’s existence is repeatedly insinuated through the description of her actions:

Wetter und Wind, Regen und Sturm kamen nicht in Anschlag; es war, als wenn man nur lebte, um naß zu werden und sich wieder zu trocknen. Fiel es ihr ein, zu Fuße auszugehen, so fragte sie nicht, was für Kleider sie anhatte und wie sie beschuht war: sie mußte die Anlagen besichtigen, von denen sie vieles gehört hatte. (377-78)

The choice of 'mußte' as opposed to 'wollte' implies the demanding nature of the girl, and the use of 'man' and 'als wenn' show the viewpoint of the narrator, and this is specific to Luciane, as she is the one who, we are informed, will not let the guests enjoy 'einige Ruhe', and she herself 'konnte nicht rasten' (377). The inclusion of 'fragte sie nicht' implies that the narrator believes that a 'normal' person would consider this situation and act accordingly. This is not affirmed, the prolonged understatement working to produce a negative opinion not openly declared, but subtly insinuated. The narrative continues to emphasize, by repetition, the frantic pace of life during Luciane's stay, and we hear for the first time the amount of work created for the servants:

Bei der Schnelligkeit ihres Wesens war ihr nicht leicht zu widersprechen. Die Gesellschaft hatte manches zu leiden, am meisten aber die Kammermädchen, die mit Waschen und Bügeln, Auftrennen und Annähen nicht fertig werden konnten. (378)

The reader rarely hears about the servants, and so the inclusion of this comment would appear to draw attention to the thoughtlessness of Luciane in comparison to Ottilie. The language used throughout this episode is violent and rapid, 'kaum', 'erschöpft', 'überschwemmt', 'schnell' and Luciane 'immer' as 'ein brennender Kometenkern, der einen langen Schweif nach sich zieht' (378). We are then told that in spite of all this, Luciane finds life there 'ganz unschmackhaft' (378) and so begins to create her own enjoyment. The inclusion of verbs such as 'gönnen', the use of the negative, the comment that people cannot be left in peace, the stress on her particular appeal to the men – 'besonders kein Mann' – and the direct interpolation of a rhetorical question, and of the particle 'ja' relativizes any notion that Luciane conduces to the well-being of the guests. Indeed, we learn that it is a weakness to succumb to her charms, and the repetition of 'zu gewinnen' indicates her manipulative traits:

Kaum daß sie den ältesten Personen eine Ruhe am Spieltisch gönnte: wer noch einigermaßen beweglich war - und wer ließ sich nicht durch ihre reizenden Zudringlichkeiten in Bewegung setzen? -, mußte herbei, wo nicht zum Tanze, doch zum lebhaften Pfand-, Straf- und Vexierspiel. Und obgleich das alles, so wie hernach die Pfänderlösung, auf sie selbst berechnet war, so ging doch von der andern Seite niemand, besonders kein Mann, er mochte von einer Art sein, von welcher er wollte, ganz leer aus; ja es glückte ihr, einige ältere Personen von Bedeutung ganz für sich zu gewinnen, indem sie ihre eben einfallenden Geburts- und Namenstage ausgeforscht hatte und besonders feierte. (378)

The narrator finds it hard to praise any natural charm or positive qualities she might have, and he draws our attention to her need to be always at the centre of things, 'jeder hatte sein Teil, seinen Tag, seine Stunde, in der sie ihn zu entzücken und zu fesseln wußte' (379).

As is always the case, the narrator offers no strong, overt criticism of Luciane, indeed he praises her, but there is always a negative comment to go with the affirmative one. For example, it is related that Luciane gave an expensive shawl to a poorly dressed girl, but the narrator prefaces this with his own interpretation of her actions and the reasons behind them.

So zauderte sie nicht einen Augenblick, einen kostbaren Schal abzunehmen und ihn einem Frauenzimmer umzuhängen, das ihr gegen die übrigen zu ärmlich gekleidet schien, und sie tat das auf eine so neckische, geschickte Weise, daß niemand eine solche Gabe ablehnen konnte. (385-86)

This incident involving Luciane, despite being a generous deed, is negated by the comment that, although she is charitable, it stems from the fact that she has had so much given to her, heaped upon her – 'um sie gehäuft' - that she has nothing of her own, nor does she understand the value of money. Prefaced by these remarks, this 'solche Gabe' is negated by the narrator's previous comments. Her allure is shown not to work on all men present, and her scheming ways are intended to trap everybody, or so it appears from the narrative perspective:

So hatte sie den Architekten schon bald ins Auge gefaßt, der jedoch aus seinem schwarzen, langlockigen Haar so unbefangen heraussah, so gerad und ruhig in der Entfernung stand, auf alle

Fragen kurz und verständig antwortete, sich aber auf nichts weiter einzulassen geneigt schien, daß sie sich endlich einmal, halb unwillig halb listig, entschloß, ihn zum Helden des Tages zu machen und dadurch auch für ihren Hof zu gewinnen. (379)

The Architect does not yield to her attempts, which have worked on the other men in the group, and so her plan to 'win' him for herself is put into action. Again, a direct interjection is to be heard when we are told that the 'so vieles Gepäck' that she brought with her was not all, and the narrator uses the emphatic personal interjection to tell us that 'ja noch manches' (379) arrived later. We have already heard the criticism of the amount of baggage initially delivered, and this 'ja noch' is another indication of her excessive nature and the narrator's view of it. Her dressing up to pander to her vanity and need for attention is emphasised in the use of 'scheinen' in the following quotation:

Eines Tages, als man sie bei der Pause eines lebhaften Balls auf ihren eigenen heimlichen Antriebe gleichsam aus dem Stegereife zu einer solchen Darstellung aufgefordert hatte, schien sie verlegen und überrascht und ließ sich wider ihre Gewohnheit lange bitten. (379-80)

When asked to perform, she initially gives the impression of surprise and confusion, but this is all part of her plan. She instigates the situation and indeed acts convincingly to all but the narrator, who informs us of her duplicity. It is all a front and as always seen in comparison to Ottilie who is notable by her absence. The Architect is invited to join the performance and is shown as an unwilling pawn in Luciane's plan. The narrator informs the reader that, 'Wie verlegen der Architekt auch äußerlich erschien [...] so faßte er sich doch gleich innerlich, allein um so wunderlicher war es anzusehen' (380), comparing his appearance 'mit jenen Flören, Kreppen, Fransen, Schmelzen, Quasten und Kronen' and using the emphatic pronoun to highlight the disparity between their frivolity and the Architect's solemnity. Luciane sends one of her admirers to the Architect who instructs him to be 'keineswegs einen Statisten, sondern einen ernstlich Mitspielenden...' (380). However

he frustrates Luciane, who has no intention – again the use of ‘keineswegs’ indicating the narrator’s voice through the emphatic – of employing him in this activity for his superior art work, but is intent rather to form ‘eine Art von Verhältnis’ (381) with him.

‘Was Lucianen betraf, so war sie endlich von ihrer Ungeduld erlöst; denn ihre Absicht war keineswegs, eine gewissenhafte Zeichnung von ihm zu haben’ (381). The narrator’s opinion is to be heard in the final part of the sentence without seeming to offer a judgment. This patronizing tone continues in the narrator’s description of his drawing of a tomb:

das zwar eher einem longobardischen als einem karischen König wäre gemäß gewesen, aber doch in so schönen Verhältnissen, so ernst in seinen Teilen, so geistreich in seinen Zieraten, daß man es mit Vergnügen entstehen sah und, als es fertig war, bewunderte. (380)

We hear the narrator’s knowledge of such things, and he expresses this in his superior tone which emerges especially in ‘zwar eher’ and the use of the impersonal ‘man’. Luciane’s endeavours continue and the criticism of the two characters is sustained. She is criticized for her fickle nature, as she did not intend him to spend so much time on the sketch, rather her ‘Endzweck und [...] Wünsche’ (381) were for him to attend to her, even making the pianist ‘der sonst Geduld genug hatte’ unsure as to what he should do. The Architect is criticized, albeit indirectly for only finding the anachronism unpleasant and not the actions of Luciane: ‘Er tat es, obgleich ungern, weil sie zu dem Charakter seines übrigen Entwurfs nicht passen wollte’ (380-81). The narrator proves his insight into the characters’ inner motives and thoughts, and offers his own personal opinion as to the final product. Again using a disparaging generalisation, he refers to the inevitability of self-dramatisation to which ‘sich doch

dergleichen Situationen immer steigern' (381). Ironically Luciane ends up looking like the widow of Ephesus rather than the intended queen of Caria!

Otilie's presence is then finally heard in direct relation to Luciane. The latter's attempts at persuading the Architect to produce his collection have failed, despite caressing his hands, ordering him, and then teasing him; and it is Otilie's remark 'Seien Sie nicht eigensinnig!' uttered 'halb leise' (382) which finally moves him. However, the ambiguity of his actions remains, as we are told that the parting bow was neither one of acquiescence nor refusal, the narrator choosing to delay his description and explanation of the Architect's reasons. Rather, we learn that he returns without the collection, and the narrator chooses to expand upon Otilie, her reaction and to explain her selfless reasons. The use of 'scheinen' again allows the narrator to present his opinion in a tentative manner through a character's thoughts. He informs us that Otilie wanted the Architect to talk with the Baron as Luciane's actions seemed to embarrass him: 'sie gönnte dem Bräutigam eine vergnügte Stunde nach seinem Sinne, der bei seiner unendlichen Liebe für Lucianen doch von ihrem Betragen zu leiden schien' (383). It is not made clear whether this is indeed the case, or whether this is the narrator's personal opinion.

The use of the impersonal pronoun is frequent throughout the Luciane scenes, and in general refers to her group, but some personal pronouns do contain narrative judgment on her. One thinks, for example, of: 'Man war so gewohnt, ihrer Anmut vieles zu erlauben, daß man zuletzt ihrer Unart alles erlaubte' (383). The reader has been faced with numerous examples of her 'Unart', and has seen how this statement is indeed true, through the narrative presentation of her and her actions. Or one could think of the following remark: 'Dadurch entstand ihr in der ganzen Gegend ein Name

von Vortrefflichkeit, der ihr doch auch manchmal unbequem ward, weil er allzuviel lästige Notleidende an sie heranzog' (386). This reinforces the expressed opinion that Luciane is not truly generous; she has no understanding of money, and her charity is simply a show – as seen in the comment that she makes one of her entourage give money to the old and the sick to relieve them of their pains 'wenigstens für den Augenblick.' (386) The inclusion of 'wenigstens' expresses narratorial criticism. The narrator does praise her endeavours with the young man who lost his hand, but we are told that he was 'übrigens schön und wohlgebildet', and the episode ends with the clear indication from the narrator that this action should have been displeasing to the future groom – 'Vielleicht sollte man denken, ein solches Betragen wäre dem Bräutigam mißfällig gewesen; allein es fand sich das Gegenteil' (386-87). The first three words are a sign of narrative presence and judgment. He appears to be criticizing Luciane for behaving in a way which would displease her future husband, and the fiancé for not curtailing her actions. Yet again, it remains ambiguous at this stage what the narrator thinks, what his final judgment is. However, although he tells of the good that she has done for the young man with one hand, he then goes on to criticize her actions regarding impropriety, again using 'scheinen' to avoid direct disparagement. Her fiancé trusts her because of her 'fast übertriebenen Eigenheiten [...] wodurch sie alles, was im mindesten verfänglich schien, von sich abzulehnen wußte' (387). But her actions towards others are clearly not viewed in this manner by her or the narrator; she is guilty of double standards; she cajoles, teases and bullies, and whilst 'appearing' to overstep the boundaries herself, insists on others acting 'correctly'; 'und so hielt sie die andern in den strengsten Grenzen der Sittlichkeit gegen sich, die sie gegen andere jeden Augenblick zu übertreten schien' (387). The narrator carries on in the subjunctive – 'Überhaupt hätte man glauben können, es sei

bei ihr Maxime gewesen, sich dem Lobe und dem Tadel, der Neigung und der Abneigung gleichmäßig auszusetzen' (387) – combined with the non-committal 'man' implying judgment and what a right-minded person would think. This judgmental tone persists; every time a seemingly positive comment is made, it is negated in the next sentence.

The most serious offence, in the narrator's eyes, would appear to be against Otilie, and he suggests this in a subtle, understated but effective way. 'Eigentliche Bosheit war vielleicht nicht in diesem verneinenden Bestreben' (388), the 'perhaps' leaping out after all the descriptions he has given us:

Ein selbstischer Mutwille mochte [Luciane] gewöhnlich anreizen; aber eine wahrhafte Bitterkeit hatte sich in ihrem Verhältnis zu Otilien erzeugt. Auf die ruhige, ununterbrochene Tätigkeit des lieben Kindes, die von jedermann bemerkt und gepriesen wurde, sah sie mit Verachtung herab. (388)

The narrator merely states this, offers no judgment, but his bias is felt in the repetition of 'Kind' and his flattering presentation of Otilie, and especially on the attraction of the men in the group towards her. We learn that although 'das zarte Kind' suffered through Luciane's actions (forcing her away from her 'Tätigkeit' to go on frivolous rides and outings) Luciane did not benefit: 'denn obgleich Otilie sehr einfach gekleidet ging, so war sie doch, oder so schien sie wenigstens immer den Männern die Schönste' (388). We have been told that everyone notices and praises Otilie's activity, but we are also informed that nobody sees this as she carries it all out subtly and not in front of others, so why choose to use the verb 'scheinen' in this context? The inclusion of 'wenigstens' signifies narratorial presence, and this continues with the statement that '[e]in sanftes Anziehen' from Otilie attracts the men. The narrator's bias has been registered, both towards Otilie and against Luciane, and as we hear of no other male in that group in connection with Otilie, it becomes more

likely that these remarks, derive not from the group as a whole, but rather from the narrator's own 'Neigung'. The narrative then offers an indirect comparison of the two young women, Otilie is seen as being close to Nature through her 'ruhige ununterbrochene Tätigkeit' in the house and gardens, whereas Luciane is seen as the destroyer of Nature:

Sie ließ auch von nun an so viel Grünes, so viel Zweige und was nur irgend keimte, herbeiholen und zur täglichen Zierde der Zimmer und des Tisches verschwenden, daß Otilie und der Gärtner nicht wenig gekränkt waren, ihre Hoffnungen für das nächste Jahr und vielleicht auf längere Zeit zerstört zu sehen. (388)

The two girls are contrasted, and Otilie appears to come out the better. Again, no overt judgment is to be heard, but the repetition of 'child' and the positive adjectives attributed to her character are placed in relation to the actions of Luciane, which 'vielleicht' will have repercussions for a long time to come, the narrator suggesting the effects of Luciane's actions in relation to Nature. Luciane's bullying of Otilie continues with the suggestion that she was so keen for her future husband to employ the Architect because it would hurt Otilie

[Luciane] lobte ihn darum und war höchlich mit dem Vorschlag zufrieden, doch vielleicht mehr, um diesen jungen Mann Ottilien zu entziehen - denn sie glaubte so etwas von Neigung bei ihm zu bemerken -, als daß sie gedacht hätte, sein Talent zu ihren Absichten zu benutzen. (389)

The narrative voice is present in the 'doch vielleicht mehr' which is his conjecture, and although the reader would be inclined to believe this report, this is based on what we have been told by the narrator. We cannot be assured of its reliability, his presence is constantly felt throughout these chapters, more so than in others, and so we must question why this is the case. Otilie is not the centre of attention in these chapters, and although her diary is included, she herself is infrequently seen or heard. Does he feel the need to protect Otilie from Luciane? His aversion to the latter is so

strong that this could indeed be the case. This argument could perhaps be strengthened by the narrator's stressing the sheer intensity of Otilie's inner life:

Das persönliche Verhältnis Otiliens zum Architekten war ganz rein und unbefangen. Seine angenehme und tätige Gegenwart hatte sie wie die Nähe eines ältern Bruders unterhalten und erfreut. Ihre Empfindungen für ihn blieben auf der ruhigen, leidenschaftslosen Oberfläche der Blutsverwandtschaft; denn in ihrem Herzen war kein Raum mehr; es war von der Liebe zu Eduard ganz gedrängt ausgefüllt, und nur die Gottheit, die alles durchdringt, konnte dieses Herz zugleich mit ihm besitzen. (389-90)

This description sets Otilie as a pure, holy creature, and there is a tenderness in the description. In view of the narrator's inclination towards the young girl, it would appear that he is here expressing his ideas of her emotions – and in very impassioned terms.

The narrator continues to insinuate his opinion of Luciane, and subtly draws the contrast with Otilie. He describes her performance as follows; 'Das Instrument spielte sie [Luciane] nicht ungeschickt, ihre Stimme war angenehm; was aber die Worte betraf, so verstand man sie so wenig, als wenn sonst eine deutsche Schöne zur Gitarre singt' (390). Again, there is no overt criticism; the comments are polite, but in comparison with the description of previous musical events, such as Eduard's and Otilie's duet, the reader notices the lack of positive comment. Not content with this, the narrator goes on to describe how the author of the poems she was singing did not recognize the words, and was offended. We hear the narrator's voice clearly in the description of this event: 'Nur ein wunderliches Unglück begegnete bei dieser Gelegenheit' (390) and the comment 'Wenn es nicht allzu unfreundlich gewesen wäre, so hätte er ihr das Alphabet überreichen können' (391). He views this slight to Luciane as 'ein wunderliches Unglück' and his use of the subjunctive in the second comment is a clear indication of his personal opinion. The comparison occurs in the final comment of the paragraph after the reader is told of Luciane's wish for the

Architect to write a poem for her. The reader is then told that he had taken one of Otilie's favourite poems and set it to music: 'er habe noch selbigen Abend einer von Otiliens Lieblingsmelodien ein allerliebstes Gedicht untergelegt, das noch mehr als verbindlich sei' (391). The use of the superlatives in this sentence strengthens the implied positive emotion on the narrator's part.

Luciane is clearly categorized by the narrator, and her actions are placed in a generalisation – 'ihrer Art' – which indicates her inclination to attention seeking: 'Luciane, wie alle Menschen ihrer Art, die immer durcheinander mischen, was ihnen vorteilhaft und was ihnen nachteilig ist, wollte nun ihr Glück im Rezitieren versuchen' (391).

The use of the word 'luck' and the possibility of the act being disadvantageous, prepares us for the criticism to follow. The example of 'man' conveys the narrator's opinion on her performance and shows that the reception of her reading is polite, but deceptive. We will be told the truth by the narrator, who presents it in a seemingly innocuous manner, with 'unglücklich', which together with the negative generality 'auf eine unangenehme Weise', all heightens the negative impression of Luciane:

Ihr Gedächtnis war gut, aber, wenn man aufrichtig reden sollte, ihr Vortrag geistlos und heftig, ohne leidenschaftlich zu sein. Sie rezitierte Balladen, Erzählungen und was sonst in Deklamatorien vorzukommen pflegt. Dabei hatte sie die unglückliche Gewohnheit angenommen, das, was sie vortrug, mit Gesten zu begleiten, wodurch man das, was eigentlich episch und lyrisch ist, auf eine unangenehme Weise mit dem Dramatischen mehr verwirrt als verbindet. (391)

Another generalisation is offered concerning her type of character, in the suggestion of producing the *Tableaux Vivants*, and again we hear the possibility of a negative outcome in the phrase 'glücklicher- oder unglücklicherweise auf eine neue Art von Darstellung, die ihrer Persönlichkeit sehr gemäß war' (392).

The entirety of the *Tableaux vivants* is expressed in such a manner that it highlights Luciane's manipulative behaviour. We are told that she is indeed beautiful: 'Ihr schöner Wuchs, ihre volle Gestalt, ihr regelmäßiges und doch bedeutendes Gesicht, ihre lichtbraunen Haarflechten, ihr schlanker Hals, alles war aufs Gemälde berechnet' (392). The interpolated 'doch' drastically relativizes the overall effect. However, it is further challenged by the narrator's voice interjecting with the use of the subjunctive 'hätte sie nun gar gewußt, daß sie schöner aussah, wenn sie still stand' in comparison to when she moved – 'als wenn sie sich bewegte' – and the observation that she had a tendency to be 'etwas störendes Ungraziöses' (392). Thus the narrator always qualifies any potential personal praise by a critical remark or insinuation.

She arranges the staging of the second performance in a 'kluge Weise' so as to highlight her role in it: 'Diesmal hatte sich Luciane besser bedacht' (393). However, the narrator subtly undermines Luciane and the praise of her by comparing her to Ottilie. Again this is done in such a manner that the reader subconsciously hears his praise of Ottilie's beauty. When the narrator does praise her attractiveness, he places it with the statement that she 'cleverly' chooses who is to be around her in the *Tableaux vivants* so as to accentuate herself, the 'jedoch' showing the narrator's obvious distaste for her actions:

Sie entwickelte in der ohnmächtig hingesunkenen Königin alle ihre Reize und hatte sich klugerweise zu den umgebenden, unterstützenden Mädchen lauter hübsche, wohlgebildete Figuren ausgesucht, worunter sich jedoch keine mit ihr auch nur im mindesten messen konnte. (393)

And the narrator in the next sentence suddenly informs us: 'Ottilie blieb von diesem Bilde wie von den übrigen ausgeschlossen.' He does not state that Ottilie is more attractive, but rather leaves the suggestion in the text for the reader to notice and to make the connection himself.

The third performance is introduced from a personal point of view by the narrator. He interrupts the narrative by exclaiming ‘und wer kennt nicht den herrlichen Kupferstich unseres Wille von diesem Gemälde!’ (393). He continues this individual perspective with the remark: ‘Was sollen wir noch viel von kleinen Nachstücken sagen, wozu man niederländische Wirtshaus- und Jahrmarktsszenen gewählt hatte!’ (394). These interjections seem somewhat incongruous as they move the tone to a colloquial level, and give the impression that he is relating them, but has no real desire to do so. However, we know that they must have some import to the whole work, and must reflect on Ottilie, but we will have to wait, as no hints are given.

The relation of the departure is also attended by the narrative criticism. ‘Nun sollte man scheiden, aber das konnte nicht auf eine gewöhnliche Weise geschehen’ (395). One can almost hear the sarcasm of the ‘of course’ in the final part. Everything must be done according to Luciane’s extroverted nature, and the repetition of ‘man’ allows the narrator not to be seen as judgmental, yet he provides the reader with what is believed to be the final criticism of Luciane and her entourage: ‘Man scherzte einmal ziemlich laut, daß Charlottens Wintervorräte nun bald aufgezehrt seien’ (395).

This is not the last we hear of Luciane, however. The effect of her presence lingers long after she has left the estate. The narrator delays in telling us of the event, interpolating the two chapters of Ottilie’s diary. This enables the reader to see what effect Luciane’s visit has had on Ottilie, and then he continues to place criticisms of Luciane in the text, although on this occasion they seem to derive from her mother:

Und doch hatte sie aus der Erfahrung, daß solche Personen, durchs Leben, durch mancherlei Ereignisse, durch elterliche Verhältnisse gebildet, eine sehr angenehme und lebenswürdige Reife erlangen können, indem die Selbstigkeit gemildert wird und die schwärmende Tätigkeit eine entschiedene Richtung erhält. (398-99)

The narrator follows this with a statement that mothers will tolerate ‘eine vielleicht für andere unangenehme Erscheinung’ as they look to the future when the selfishness and assertiveness has matured, thus indicating his opinion that Luciane is guilty of such an ‘unangenehme Erscheinung’. He compounds the effect of this by informing the reader that Charlotte had to deal with Luciane’s after-effects long after her daughter herself had left the area. By including ‘jedoch’ the misfortune is emphasised, and the narrator subtly presents the description of events in a negative manner from the outset, using the subjunctive to express doubt and narratorial judgment:

Auf eine eigne und unerwartete Weise jedoch sollte Charlotte nach ihrer Tochter Abreise getroffen werden, indem diese nicht sowohl durch das Tadelnswerte in ihrem Betragen als durch das, was man daran lobenswertig hätte finden können, eine üble Nachrede hinter sich gelassen hatte. (399)

The narrator has previously indicated how older people might view Luciane: ‘Wie es wegen seiner guten Eigenschaften besonders von älteren Personen oft geschah, eine nähere Verbindung suchte, ohne sich sonderlich um sie zu kümmern.’ (395) This comment is a judgment about the effect Luciane has on those around her, namely that superficial people flock to her, whilst the more mature tend to avoid the childish, attention-seeking socialite, all of which implies that she herself is immature and somewhat irritating. However, this becomes a more serious issue in the retelling of her disastrous attempt to help a young grieving girl. The narrator ironically comments that ‘Luciane schien sich’s zum Gesetz gemacht zu haben’ (399) not only to laugh with those that were happy, but to be unhappy with those who were miserable. As we have seen, the use of ‘scheinen’ often disguises the narrator’s personal opinion, and here this is indeed the case, reinforced by his sarcastic manner. However, the tone alters to one of seriousness when we are told that her ‘Art von Wohltätigkeit war [...]

ganz grausam und [sie] ließ sich gar nicht einreden, weil sie fest überzeugt war, daß sie vortrefflich handle' (399):

...so brachte sie das schöne, blasse Kind, das sie genug vorbereitet wähnte, eines Abends plötzlich in die bunte, glänzende Gesellschaft; und vielleicht wäre auch das noch gelungen, wenn nicht die Sozietät selbst aus Neugierde und Apprehension sich ungeschickt benommen, sich um die Kranke versammelt, sie wieder gemieden, sie durch Flüstern, Köpfezusammenstecken irregemacht und aufgereggt hätte. (400)

The narrator allows for the possibility that Luciane's plan for the girl who caused her brother's death could work, using both 'vielleicht' and the subjunctive to involve the possibility of a positive outcome. But it does not happen. 'Nur zuletzt versah sie es' (400), and the subjunctive together with the 'perhaps' reinforce the narrator's knowledge of the eventual disastrous outcome. This event is later used as one of Otilie's reasons not to go back into society, and as such is prefigurative of the death of Otto. The narrator appears to be particularly critical of Luciane's lack of responsibility and the failure to realize her faults. His attribution of blame to Luciane is to be seen in the description of how she told her social group off for their behaviour in her typical manner, 'nach ihrer Weise...ohne im mindesten daran zu denken, daß sie allein alle Schuld habe, und ohne sich durch dieses und andres Mißlingen von ihrem Tun und Treiben abhalten zu lassen' (400).

Throughout all of the scenes involving Luciane, the narrator uses all the narrative techniques available to pass judgment. Yet even here where the narrator is most clearly present, he moves in and out of focus. His account ranges from the tentative, the conjectural, to openly stating personal judgment. The narrator never provides the reader with unequivocal statements – not even in respect of Luciane.

NARRATOR AND CHARACTER II: NANNY

When the reader looks at specific events, some are accompanied by overt narratorial guidance, whereas others are left largely unexplained. As has been seen with regard to Luciane, the narrator does not shy away from expressing opinions at various points, and with various degrees of subtlety. In the entire passage surrounding Nanny's fall and recovery, the narrator remains non-committal regarding the validity of the claimed miracle. He repeatedly uses 'scheinen' instead of stating clearly what happened, but neither scepticism nor belief is unambiguously stated. Nanny 'schien an allen Gliedern zerschmettert' (486), but he does not state that this is fact; she was placed on the coffin 'zufällig oder aus besonderer Fügung' and she 'ja [...] schien selbst noch mit dem letzten Lebensrest seine geliebte Herrin erreichen zu wollen' (486). The presentation of this is neutral – no exorbitant claims are made, no sceptical scientific answers are offered. It is up to the reader to believe what he will. Blessin argues that it is this episode which offers us the clearest presentation of the 'zwiespältige Rolle des Erzählers' as: 'Einerseits ist er ins Werk gesetzt, diesen Glaubensakt auch vor dem Leser gleichsam zu autorisieren, andererseits läßt die Art der Darstellung die Manipulation der Erzählfigur erkennen und gibt den aufklärischen Gegenargumenten Raum'.⁸⁰

When Ottilie collapses we are told 'Nanny sieht ihre Herrin erblassen, erstarren; sie läuft zu Charlotten; man kommt' (483). This use of short, sharp sentences in the present tense creates the mood of shock and disarray. Again, no one person is named, the use of 'man' adds to the urgency and solemnity of the occasion. We are informed that Nanny disappeared after receiving a rebuke from the doctor. When she was found

⁸⁰ Blessin, p.93.

she 'schien außer sich zu sein' (485). The narrator does not tell us that she had lost her mind, rather that it appeared so to those around her; we are not sure to what extent this is true, whether the condition is temporary or permanent. After a description of Otilie in her open coffin, the narrator begins to relate the event concerning Otilie's closest servant. It begins in a dramatic way, with the short unadorned statement: 'Nanny fehlte' (485). The narrator then continues with '[m]an hatte sie zurückgehalten' correcting this with clear narrative intervention explaining: 'oder vielmehr man hatte ihr den Tag und die Stunde des Begräbnisses verheimlicht' (485). The description of the cortège is another example of the narrator expressing an opinion without clarifying whether it is his or the characters'. We are told that Nanny saw her mistress below her 'deutlicher, vollständiger, schöner als alle, die dem Zuge folgten' (486). Is this the voice of the narrator or the girl? There is no use of 'scheinen' or any suggestion that this is not what actually happened. He proceeds with: 'Überirdisch, wie auf Wolken oder Wogen getragen, schien sie ihrer Dienerin zu winken, und diese, verworren, schwankend, taumelnd, stürzte hinab.' (486) Here again, the reader hears the gap, as the narration remains non-committal as to whether Nanny did see this or whether she imagined it, by using the verb 'scheinen'. We are told that she is confused, but again no clarification is offered as to the actual happenings of that incident. She falls and is lifted up, and either by chance or through some other design is placed on the coffin.

The combination of chance and fate prevents – as I have already noted – any definite opinion from emerging. The interpolation of 'ja' used in conjunction with 'schien' allows the narrator's voice to be heard, but in a manifestly conjectural mode. The speed with which events unfold is felt through the repetition of 'kaum' and the religious aspect is indicated through Nanny's lifting her eyes to heaven, and the

narrator's description of her exclamation is 'mit heiliger Freude' (486). Yet we are not sure whether this is a miracle, despite being told that her fingers were 'kraftlos' and it was on touching 'Otiliens gefaltete Hände' (486) that she regained control of her body and mind. The reaction of the crowd is astonishment, and no indication is given as to the correct response.

The body is taken to the chapel, and we are told that the walls 'bei so mildem Schimmer altertümlicher und ahnungsvoller, als [der Architekt] je hätte glauben können, ihm entgendrungen' (487). And the Architect finds comfort in Nanny's words which result in the narration stating 'seine schöne Freundin ihm in einer höhern Region lebend und wirkend vorschwebte' (488). Again, the reader is unsure whose sentiments these are. The atmosphere of piety and saintliness is further enhanced by the following lengthy sentence:

Auch hier war etwas unschätzbar Würdiges von seiner Höhe herabgestürzt; und wenn dort Tapferkeit, Klugheit, Macht, Rang und Vermögen in einem Manne als unwiederbringlich verloren bedauert wurden, wenn Eigenschaften, die der Nation, dem Fürsten in entscheidenden Momenten unentbehrlich sind, nicht geschätzt, vielmehr verworfen und ausgestoßen worden, so waren hier soviel andere stille Tugenden, von der Natur erst kurz aus ihren gehaltreichen Tiefen hervorgerufen, durch ihre gleichgültige Hand schnell wieder ausgetilgt, seltene, schöne, liebenswürdige Tugenden, deren friedliche Einwirkung die bedürftige Welt zu jeder Zeit mit wonnevollem Genügen umfängt und mit sehnsüchtiger Trauer vermißt. (487-88)

The depth of emotion concerning Ottilie's loss to the world as a whole, and this eulogy to her, although prefaced by the Architect's presence, seems to be too eloquent to belong to the young man; rather it seems to be the voice of the narrator, speaking in a grand elegiac manner. He introduces this prose by reminding us of the *Tableaux vivants* and emphasises the comparison between falsity and honesty: 'Schon einmal hatte er so vor Belisar gestanden. Unwillkürlich geriet er jetzt in die gleiche Stellung; und wie natürlich war sie auch diesmal!' (487).

Reference is made to Ottilie's 'schöner, mehr schlaf- als todähnlicher Zustand' which introduces a fairy-tale aspect to this saintly presentation of her. We have been told that Nanny has spoken with eloquence, truth and power (488), so that her sanity seems not to be in question, and this is reinforced by the doctor's presence. 'Er war auf mancherlei Verirrungen gefaßt; er dachte schon, sie werde ihm von nächtlichen Unterredungen mit Ottilien und von andern solchen Erscheinungen sprechen, aber sie war natürlich, ruhig und sich völlig selbstbewußt' (488). The doctor is concerned in case Nanny has any more visions, but this 'solchen' is not judgmental or generalising, rather noncommittal and matter-of-fact. The narrator writes that the doctor found her of perfectly sound mind apart from 'nur die Begebenheit beim Leichbegängnis' (488). People come to Ottilie's coffin as a pilgrimage to hear 'das Unglaubliche', but the presentation of their thoughts cannot be separated from the narrator's voice as he explains 'Die vor den Augen aller Welt zerschmetterte Nanny war durch Berührung des frommen Körpers wieder gesund geworden; warum sollte nicht auch ein ähnliches Glück hier andern bereitet sein?' (488). Again, the reference to luck in the same sentence as a religious word 'fromm', prevents any statement of narratorial belief being read into the account. Indeed, the narrator tells us of those who talk to Nanny: 'manche [kamen] um darüber zu spotten, die meisten um daran zu zweifeln und wenige um sich glaubend dagegen zu verhalten' (488), but offers the truism, without explanation, that 'Jedes Bedürfnis, dessen wirkliche Befriedigung versagt ist, nötigt zum Glauben' (488).

CONCLUSION

The narrator of *Die Wahlverwandtschaften* is a complex entity. We have seen the shifting ground of the account which he produces, the many narrative devices he uses, and the assertion and withdrawal of his presence in the novel. The novel is rich in symbolic implications, and the narrative performance matches and contributes to this richness; but richness entails elusiveness. Part of the appeal of a 'traditional' omniscient narrator is that the reader will know not just as in life, but better than in life. However, Goethe's narrator sometimes operates in this way, and then does not. He is aware of the patterning but then fails to notice other patternings, he is sceptical and yet has phases of credulity. Sometimes the disincarnate voice is in charge with its authoritative register, but then it is replaced by the personal voice, which in turn is then taken over by the emergence of the conjectural voice. However, as has been seen, the narrator moves in and out of the text, and the reader can never be assured of when he will assert his presence, and what form his voice will take. This does not undermine the narrator, as Burgess suggests; rather, by not allowing the reader to grow accustomed to a fixed narrative style and understanding, the narrator creates ambiguity and thus forces the reader to debate with the text. The shifting of the narrator from generalising, to commenting, to judging and to reflecting never allows the reader any time to form secure assumptions. The narrative equivocation sets up the reader's equivocation, and compels the reader sometimes to move closer to the text, sometimes to stand back. The generalisations draw the reader into the text and the interpretation of it, the conjectural voice presents the reader with possibilities, and, as these are neither confirmed nor denied, the reader must evaluate and decide what he thinks or feels. The variability of the narrative perspective constantly draws the

reader into the tissue of uncertainty from which the novel derives its complexities and fascination.

CHAPTER IV

ABSENT NARRATOR

INTRODUCTION:

INCARNATION AND DISINCARNATION

In this chapter I wish to explore instances of narrative absence in Goethe's *Die Wahlverwandtschaften*. In one particular and obvious sense, that might seem to be a hugely quixotic undertaking. To analyse what is not there is to find oneself in a territory that is, by definition, bereft of evidence. What kind of analytical purchase can one find on a gap, a void? Two answers suggest themselves; and both have to do with the contextualizing framework that houses the absence. The first answer derives from the preceding chapter. In it I endeavoured to show that *Die Wahlverwandtschaften* has frequent examples of narrative presence (of whatever kind). Precisely because the text constantly seems to have a (sometimes impersonal sometimes personal) voice, we register the lack of that voice, as intriguing, provocative, in a word, eloquent. The second answer is more theoretical. Wolfgang Iser, together with a number of critics who have been concerned with reader response theory, has drawn our attention to the importance of gaps, 'Leerstellen', hiccoughs in the rhetorical continuity of the literary text. These gaps, far from being mere emptiness, far from being interludes spent away from processes and modes of signification, are precisely the junctures at which the reader, as it were, works overtime. This is particularly true in respect of *Die Wahlverwandtschaften*, not only

because (to repeat the point made above) we are used to having a narrative voice whispering interpretatively in our ear, but also because the novel is so highly patterned. There are so many prefigurations, echoes, similarities, repetitions that we have the sense of being claustrophobically surrounded by potentialities for meaning. Hence when a gap occurs, we move heaven and earth to fill it.

And in that effort to fill the gap, we invoke (as was the case when we were reading instances of narrative presence) both the disincarnate and the incarnate narrative agent. That is to say: sometimes we hear the vacant space as deriving from and sited within the impersonally authoritative ‘Geist der Erzählung’, whereas at others, we hear a personalized narrator who has fallen silent. In the analyses that follow, I shall seek to illustrate both kinds of gap. Initially I shall content myself simply with demonstrating that there is an abstention from narrative communication where and when we would expect one. Later, I shall come on to the matter of interpretation. My argument will be – and will remain – conjectural. That is to say: I shall offer hints as to how we might want to read the silence, but I shall not claim to explicate it. I want, then, to indicate an aura of possible signification and not a set of established meanings. This is because I view *Die Wahlverwandtschaften* as a radically open text. At the end of the chapter, I shall acknowledge – and disagree with – Gordon Burgess in his recent study of *Die Wahlverwandtschaften*. He notices much of the narrative ‘now-you-see-me-now-you-don’t’ that is central to my reading. But, in the last analysis, he plumps for a stabilizing interpretation, one which believes in the presence of a sovereignly manipulative narrator. By contrast, I see a radically equivocal narrative performance. This might at first sight seem to be merely a quibble, a slight difference of opinion between two critics who perceive similar processes at work in a text but choose to reach slightly different conclusions. But the issues are weightier

than that. Put most emphatically: Burgess and I end up by (as it were) reading two very different novels.

THE VOICE WITHDRAWN

The lack of certainty engendered in the reader by the narration in this novel as a whole is created by means of many devices. In the previous chapter we saw numerous examples of the narrative voice and how the reader feels his presence. We hear his judgments, his speculations, his personal voice and yet, due to the inconsistency of such examples, the reader is prevented from forming definite assumptions as to his attitudes and values. Given that the narrator does offer comments, the reader could justifiably expect to hear his, or at the very least, a voice in seemingly important situations within the narrative; however, this is not the case. As with the narrative presence, there is no stable pattern in the cases of the absent narrator. He withholds details which are related at a later date, either by himself or by the characters, he does not highlight subtle interconnections which would elucidate aspects of our understanding, he offers little, if any explanation of or commentary on the interpolated texts. Moreover, those interpolated texts are curiously unspecified in narrative terms. That is to say: we do not have the impression that a new voice enters the narrative universe of the novel. Nor, conversely, can we be sure that the narrator has retained control of these 'foreign' texts. In summary then: we find ourselves being constantly unsettled by the overall narrative performance. The narrator is simply not there at times when we expect (and need) him most. Yet, when he withdraws and another voice is allowed to take over, that other voice is scarcely other; rather, we continue to feel the ghostly presence of the main narrator.

Critics have advanced many explanations for the narrative instability of Goethe's text. We have already referred to some of these arguments but they will bear repeating here. Staiger believes that Goethe's reservations regarding the inadequacies of language forced him to make the reader aware of how language is being used in the novel,¹ and by so doing he allows the reader's fantasy to remain alive, for, as Goethe himself said: 'Doch wo nichts Unbekanntes übrig bleibt, darbt unsere Phantasie und findet sich das Herz verwaist.'² Reiss also agrees with Staiger's impression that it is linguistic insufficiency which has created this absence and which is corrected by the use of the symbolic. Reiss believes the narrative absence to be highly beneficial to the novel. He finds the 'detached, sceptical ironic mode of narration [which] leaves much unclear and unsaid' causes uncertainty in the reader which in turn encourages an, albeit futile, attempt at complete interpretation, and it is this fact which makes the novel so intriguing: 'The very strength of the novel resides in its obscurity of deeper meaning.' The narrator does not use a 'superfluous word' and suggests rather than categorically asserts his meaning.³ Although this is true in various examples, as we have seen in the previous chapter, Reiss overlooks the episodes where there is no intimation and no presence at all to be found, where the symbolic is insufficient for total comprehension, for, as Blessin states, the symbols do not always explain what is not explicit in the text.⁴ Barnes offers the opinion that 'the fiction is that the narrator is telling a true story', so it is obvious that there will be gaps in the text as 'he is not able to elucidate the mystery as might for instance the conventionally

¹ 'Goethe scheut sich, dem Leben mit endgültigen Sätzen Gewalt zu tun. Sein Zweifel an der Sprache nötigt ihn, die herrlichsten Sentenzen durch den Vortrag zu entwerten, die Würde des Unsäglichen gegen alles grobe Betasten zu schützen.' Staiger, p.477.

² Staiger, p.480.

³ Reiss, pp.153 and 158.

⁴ 'Es ist in den *Wahlverwandtschaften* nicht so, das dem Handlungsverlauf bestimmte Zeichen und Bilder zugeordnet sind, die den Leser jeweils mittelbar darauf hinweisen, was im Text nicht explizit gesagt ist. Die Berechtigung mittelbarer Sinngebung wird im Werk selber problematisiert. Die Art und Weise, wie an sich wertindifferente Dinge zu Symbolen gemacht werden, manifestiert sich nachdrücklich im Bedeutungswandel der Platanen.' Blessin, p.50.

omniscient author'⁵ and Blackall suggests that 'he is trying to describe something that is really beyond him'⁶ and 'his powers fail at the crucial moments and this very failure points up the unnarratability of what he is narrating.'⁷ Lange finds the narrator knowledgeable and reliable; he is 'wholly discreet, measured, and judicious' in his speech 'by which he hides and circumscribes a barely tolerable knowledge of fearful and unspeakable tensions.'⁸ Von Wiese sees the narrator's absence at critical moments as being central to the author's intent of drawing the reader into the text, and into searching for meaning.⁹ Swales however, warns us against placing our own judgment over that of the narrator, advising that 'we should not allow ourselves to rush in where the narrator is both cautious and scrupulous.'¹⁰ If the narrator has withdrawn, we should examine those situations closely and endeavour to elucidate the possible implications that flow from that absence.

Burgess comments on some of these situations; but he does not scrutinize the 'absent' narrator with any real thoroughness. He examines the different 'authors' within *Die Wahlverwandtschaften* and looks at the 'modes of interaction between the central characters: direct and indirect speech' (viii) but never really applies his concordance to moments of narrative absence.¹¹ Burgess has certain narrative expectations, namely to show that no 'single or "central" theme' exists 'because the very presentation of the material, whether it be though [*sic*] narratorial intrusion or narratorial absence, is designed to obfuscate rather than clarify, interlink and intralink

⁵ Barnes, 'Ambiguity', p.11.

⁶ Eric Blackall, *Goethe and the Novel* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1976), pp. 163-189 (p.172).

⁷ Blackall, p.186.

⁸ Victor Lange, 'Goethe's Craft of Fiction', *PEGS*, 22 (1953), 31-63 (p.57).

⁹ Wiese, p.672. See p.10.

¹⁰ Martin Swales, 'Consciousness and Sexuality. Reflections on *Die Wahlverwandtschaften*', *PEGS*, 50 (1979-80), 80-116 (p.114).

¹¹ Chapter 6 (167) is concerned with the manipulative narrator, Chapter 7 (205) Interpolated texts, and Chapter 5 (121) with Direct and Indirect Speech.

rather than isolate' (18). His belief in the omnipresent manipulateness of the narrator does not allow much room for absences. Although he offers a detailed analysis of the interpolated texts, which we will discuss later in this chapter, there is little comment regarding moments where the reader is left alone. Even when the narrator withdraws during episodes of direct speech, Burgess claims that he (the narrator) remains in control.¹² Burgess offers a highly detailed numerical index of words which frame the direct speech, but no other literary analysis is offered. He tells us that indirect speech is not used as much as direct which, for such an 'interventionist narrator' (145) is surprising.¹³ Even so, he insists that the narrator is a controlling force throughout. On frequent occasions, in the analysis which follows, I shall need to quote Burgess's discoveries against him.

There are two general categories of narratorial absence within the main narrative text; lack of comment on the action, and withholding of information. The first example of the narrator providing the reader with no comment in an important episode is in the conversation between Mittler, Eduard and his wife regarding the Hauptmann's invitation. Although the narrator offers his judgment on Mittler as a person, he does not stress the importance this occasion has for the entire plot, there is no sense of prefiguration. This is also the case regarding the merging of the lakes; no prefigurative remark is made by the narrator. He also makes no direct comment on

¹² Burgess, p.129, footnote 1.

¹³ '... the word used to introduce the reported speech may be selected by the narrator for one or – simultaneously – more of any number of reasons: to help elucidate what has been or is about to be said, to relativise, contextualise, ironise or even call into question the content of the original speech act.[...] We think we know precisely what to expect, for example, when one of Eduard's remarks is introduced by "tadelte": "er tadelte bitter gegen Charlotte und den Haputmann, daß sie bei dem Geschäft gegen die erste Abrede handelten, und doch hatte er in die zweite Abrede gewilligt, ja er hatte sie selbst veranlaßt und nothwendig gemacht" (329) but as we read on through this sentence we realise that the narrator's choice of verb is actually a reflection on Eduard's own behaviour and his conveniently short memory in respect of his own actions... Sometimes, the choice of introductory term is capable of several, perhaps conflicting, interpretations.' Burgess, p.147. These points are correct, and Burgess does examine indirect speech, which obviously suggests the control of the narrator, as he places what has happened and been said in his own words. Burgess finds this to be further proof of the manipulative nature of the narrator, and his 'oblique narrative technique' (p.151).

Mittler's absence following Eduard's and Ottilie's return to the estate in the penultimate chapter of the novel.¹⁴ In these situations, the narrator has already provided the reader with a negative impression of Mittler – as an inveterate meddler – so he leaves it up to the reader to form all necessary judgments. Eduard's comment on Ottilie – 'es ist ein angenehmes, unterhaltendes Mädchen' (281) – equally lacks narratorial comment. Charlotte explains that the girl had not uttered a word, and Eduard's response alerts the reader to his (Eduard's) growing infatuation. There is narrative presence in this section, as I have already stated, but this important conversation is not highlighted or made portentous by the narrative voice. The narrator does not need to be explicit: his presentation of the episode, and his prefacing Eduard's comment by his own thoughts on beauty, highlights the possible reasons behind the married man's response, thus making any further comment redundant for the attentive reader. However, the narrator does provide us with a reminder of the letters which establish Ottilie's character, as Charlotte rereads them, thus establishing the authenticity of the correspondence in our minds and reinforcing the narrator's presentation of it. The narrative provides the reader with numerous examples of the attraction between Eduard and Ottilie without offering any further comment on them:

'Das erste ist eigentlich die Sache des Bauherrn; denn wie in der Stadt nur der Fürst und die Gemeinde bestimmen können, wohin gebaut werden soll, so ist es auf dem Lande das Vorrecht des Grundherrn, daß er sage: hier soll meine Wohnung stehen und nirgends anders.'

Eduard und Ottilie wagten nicht, bei diesen Worten einander anzusehen, ob sie gleich nahe gegen einander über standen. (299-300)

No reason is given as to why they could not look at each other; no explanation is offered. Hence the reader is left with work to do; the narrator offers no secure guidance.

¹⁴ p.475.

When the Gehülfe makes two prophecies regarding the birth of Charlotte's child (that it will be a son and that he may well decide to leave the estate) the narrator does not comment:

‘Glauben Sie mir: es ist möglich, daß Ihr Sohn die sämtlichen Parkanlagen vernachlässigt und sich wieder hinter die ersten Mauern und unter die hohen Linden seines Großvaters zurückzieht.’

Charlotte war im stillen erfreut, sich einen Sohn verkündigt zu hören, und verzieh dem Gehülfen deshalb die etwas unfreundliche Prophezeiung, wie es dereinst ihrem lieben, schönen Park ergehen könne. (418-19)

We are told that Charlotte believes and listens to the first: the narrator interjects to clarify Charlotte's feelings about the gender of the child, and we register his presence. But it is noteworthy that, in respect of the second prophecy – which of course, will not come about because of the catastrophe of the child's death by drowning – he gives no hint of what is in store. Indeed, he does not overtly invoke the wisdom of hindsight at any point in the text. Whenever divorce is discussed, no comment about what is to come is made.¹⁵ The narrator also downplays the gravity of Nanny's illness although that is the reason why her mistress is alone when Eduard goes to meet her.

The above are small examples of the narrator offering no recollection of previous events not hinting at those to come. Added to which, his absence is most keenly felt at crucial moments and at highly emotional times, ‘hurrying us coolly past the moments of poignant feeling.’¹⁶ The first prolonged episode of narratorial absence is during the chemical discussion between Charlotte, her husband and the Hauptmann. The episode consists of dialogue for the most part with very little intervention by the narrator. His presence is felt before this conversation in his criticism of Eduard's

¹⁵ p.305. See p.76 above for a further discussion of divorce.

¹⁶ Irvin Stock, ‘Goethe's Tragedy: A View of Elective Affinities’, *Mosaic*, 7, Spring (1973-74), 17-27 (p.19).

impatience and his praise of Charlotte's ability to avoid arguments,¹⁷ but it is left up to the reader to assign value to the viewpoints raised by the characters themselves. It is a dispassionate representation, as each character speaks and offers his or her opinion. In leaving this episode with very little narrative direction, the narrator does not point up the significance it has to the novel as a whole. Its importance is evident from the start. Which other European novel devotes a chapter to the discussion of its own title? As Burgess states, 'the mere entitling of the novel by the chemical process which is here discussed endows a prestige upon the discussion itself and its relevance for the rest of the novel.' (59/60) Apart from three brief descriptions of direction of speech and action, the narrator leaves the text with 'Und so begann der Hauptmann' (271) and his absence lasts until the last sentence of the chapter where Charlotte gives Eduard the letter. So why is there no narrative input for so long? By remaining absent the narrator maintains his distance and impartiality and allows the reader to see the interaction of the three main characters especially in regard to the process of signification.¹⁸ It is the characters themselves who look for symbols, put themselves into the equation and see a connection between themselves and chemical substances. As it is Eduard who really sees signs and symbols around him and turns events and objects into portents, it is indeed vital to hear his views; but we also need to hear his wife's and his friend's – the Hauptmann's cool detachment and Charlotte's more

¹⁷ 'Seine alte Ungeduld erwachte, und er verwies es ihr, gewissermaßen unfreundlich: "Wollte man sich doch solche Unarten, wie so manches andre, was der Gesellschaft lästig ist, ein für allemal abgewöhnen!"' (269).

'Charlotte, deren Gewandtheit sich in größeren und kleineren Zirkeln besonders dadurch bewies, daß sie jede unangenehme, jede heftige, ja selbst nur lebhaft Äußerung zu beseitigen, ein sich verlängerndes Gespräch zu unterbrechen, ein stockendes anzuregen wußte, war auch diesmal von ihrer guten Gabe nicht verlassen.' (269-70).

¹⁸ 'In an ironic way the narrator makes the distracted and superficial members of this society talk about the principal theme', Gerwin Maraherns, 'Narrator and the Narrative in Goethe's *Die Wahlverwandtschaften*' in *Essays on German Literature in honour of G. Joyce Hallamore*, ed. by Michael S Batts and Marketa Goetz Stankiewicz (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1968), pp. 94-127 (p.95).

emotional response, and any narrative intervention would negate the effect of the discussion.

To intervene at this juncture would undermine the novel's debate with signification and the human propensity to assign meanings. Yet we must not assume that the narrator's inscrutability betokens infallibility. Presumably he does not see himself as misreading signs or being a 'wahrer Narziß' (270) and for him to add his view would make him party to the process that his text is seeking to understand. Yet the attentive reader knows that the narrator does indeed partake of man's propensity to create signification and that he can be as guilty of misreading signs as his characters. He believes, as does Eduard, that he is above such fallacies, and it is this self-deception which must be recognized by the reader. Much of the power of the novel derives from the presence of this part-sovereign, part-fallible narrator.

Burgess believes that as the discussion 'is hedged about with *caveats* [...] It is almost as though the reader is being warned that this principle is an unreliable guide to human relationships, and that as such it should be ignored' (63). One knows what Burgess means: but it is impossible not to pursue the implications of this discussion because it embodies issues that are utterly central to the behaviour of the characters. That the process of equating human and chemical spheres is problematic and an 'unreliable guide', is obvious; but nevertheless it is the one that is played out in this novel, and it is the one that Eduard believes in, and the one which the reader must scrutinize, especially when the process of signification is of such importance to the characters and the narrator. We hear the theme on several occasions throughout the novel, and each time there is no narrative comment drawing our attention to it.¹⁹

¹⁹ Burgess points out that the 'principle of elective affinities, and the discussion between the three characters, is never alluded to again by any of them, or by anyone else, in the novel' (p.63). He does go

When Eduard and Ottilie embrace, the language is reminiscent of the chemical discussion: 'Wer das andere zuerst ergriffen, wäre nicht zu unterscheiden gewesen' (324), as is the description of the arrival of the Graf and the Baroness during the decision whether Ottilie should return to the Pension.²⁰

In part one of the novel, the word 'verwandt' only appears in this discussion²¹ however, in the second part we hear it eleven times.²² Obviously some of these usages are not strictly relevant to the title, but the reader must look at each one, weighing up the implications of the word each time it occurs. Sometimes it is harmless – as when it denotes family relations²³ – but other examples do lend themselves to being connected with the elective affinity discussion. Eduard appeals to the Hauptmann to visit him after their disagreement, stating:

Jugendfreundschaften wie Blutsverwandtschaften haben den bedeutenden Vorteil, daß ihnen Irrungen und Mißverständnisse, von welcher Art sie auch seien, niemals von Grund aus schaden und die alten Verhältnisse sich nach einiger Zeit wiederherstellen. (446)

This reminds the reader of their past and the discussion we were witness to. Relationships are highlighted during this passage, and it cannot but force the reader to remember the theory of choice and affinity, thus raising the notion in specific relation to Eduard. The narrator justifies and clarifies Ottilie's connection to the Architect as being familial and pure, again using 'verwandt': 'Ihre Empfindungen für ihn blieben

on to examine the occasions when an element of the word is used, but does so in relation to Ottilie, and does not include the narrator's intention or design in this, merely stating that the reader is left 'as so often, to draw his/her own inferences' (p.66).

²⁰ See p.69-70 above. Another element is introduced to the compound, forcing a realignment of affinities: 'Doch wäre man zu keinem Entschluß gekommen, kein Schritt wäre geschehen, hätte nicht ein unvermuteter Besuch auch hier eine besondere Anregung gegeben, wie denn die Erscheinung von bedeutenden Menschen in irgendeinem Kreise niemals ohne Folge bleiben kann.' (412).

²¹ It appears 12 times, 'Wahlverwandtschaft' appears a further 4 times, and 'Wahl' appears 5 times. 'Wahl' is only used twice further in Part 2, once in relation to Luciane and her performance as Artemisia, - 'Sie zeigte sich unentschlossen, ließ die Wahl, bat wie ein Improvisator um einen Gegenstand,' (380) – and once with the Gehülfe - 'Wahlspruch' (408). Neither of these last two episodes should be viewed as having a connection with the title.

²² Plus once in Ottilie's Diary (397) and once in *Die Wunderlichen Nachbarskinder* (438).

²³ pp.463 and 470. It is also used in speech, the Gehülfe's talk with Charlotte about Ottilie (413) and in a description of Luciane as being related to a water sprite 'Saalnixe verwandt' (379).

auf der ruhigen, leidenschaftslosen Oberfläche der Blutsverwandtschaft; denn in ihrem Herzen war kein Raum mehr' (390). We are twice informed that the interpolated Novelle is 'verwandt' to its listeners.²⁴ We are told this by the narrator, which reminds the reader of the previous incident involving the Captain. The narrator also mentions 'Verwandschaft' in connection with the two Englishmen and their science so we only hear it in its scientific context once after the prolonged discussion of chapter four. (444) The final use of the word is in the final paragraph; 'verwandte Engelsbilder' (490). The Architect was in love with Otilie and hence painted her face in the angels in the chapel. She is, then, physically present in the church's interior; but are we not also invited to acknowledge the saintly quality of the dead girl which has been suggested by the villagers' worship of her? This ending invokes the whole thematic complexity of the novel, without offering any resolution to the question of spiritual and metaphysical affinity. The Hauptmann also begins to feel 'eine unwiderstehliche Gewohnheit' (298) that draws him to Charlotte, which could be seen as aligning itself with the chemical theory, but, true to their argument, they choose to follow the morality of the marriage vows, and repudiate their emotional affinity. Burgess asks whether the narrator is 'reserving uses of the term with leitmotif-like allusory significance for himself' (240) and this indeed could be the case, although whether he is conscious of the fact is uncertain. The narrator has shown the reader that he knows of the chemical discussion but we have seen that he plays no active part in it, and certainly offers no personal opinions concerning the issue to the reader. By repeating the words of the discussion he could subtly be placing the theme in the forefront of the reader's mind without resorting to directions as to how the novel should be read.

²⁴ The Lord 'ahnete nicht, wie nahe diese seinen Zuhörern verwandt war' before telling the story (434) and afterwards: 'nun kam der Lord an die Reihe zu bemerken, daß vielleicht abermals ein Fehler begangen, etwas dem Hause Bekanntes oder gar Verwandtes erzählt worden.' (442).

The narrator recounts many incidents without offering any comment or reminding the reader of past events or discussions. He relies on the attentive reader to notice the recurrences, and to reflect the patterning and symbolism. As has already been mentioned, the characters create symbols for themselves – the Mooshütte, the plane trees, the glass – but we never hear the narrator discussing the implications of this tendency.

The reader is drawn into the text and into a form of self-consciousness about what he is doing, namely reading the signs given within the text. The reader finds himself re-enacting the theme of the novel. He hears and sees things which are not commented upon by the narrator; given that absence, the reader finds himself wondering whether he should not be interpretatively active. There are, for example, three occurrences of reading over the shoulder in *Die Wahlverwandtschaften*.²⁵ As we have seen, there is a narrative voice in evidence during these episodes, but it does not comment on them, neither does it refer the reader to the previous incident(s). On the second occasion the narrator provides the reader with reasons as to why certain events occurred: the facts are stated, the position of all four characters described, Eduard moving for the light, Ottilie moving closer to see the book, Ottilie's justification of trusting her own eyes rather than a stranger's lips, Eduard moving closer to Ottilie to make it more comfortable for her. Moreover, we are given the additional information that Eduard paused longer than was necessary, so that Ottilie could catch up. Charlotte and the Hauptmann notice, smile at each other, and then the narrator tells us that they are 'doch' surprised by another sign which openly shows Ottilie's and Eduard's affinity, namely her accompaniment of the flute sonatas. The characters themselves are not surprised at the reading and no reference is made to the narrator's previous

²⁵ pp.269, 296-97, 479. See also pp.37, 60-1, 103, 106, 116 above. These show the narrative voice through such interpolated phrases as 'ja' and 'auf alle Weise'.

explanation of Eduard's anger or to Charlotte's response. No characters make any explicit reference to the former episode and all the narrator offers the reader is the indication that this is *another* sign, which obviously indicates that this response is further evidence of their growing attraction.²⁶ We know that Charlotte and the Hauptmann smile on this manifestation of the tenderness between the other two characters, but are surprised by the later music episode. By not making any reference to chapter four, by dealing with the reading incident briefly, indeed by passing over it, and overshadowing it with the duet, the narrator would appear to be implying that it is less important. However this can scarcely be the case. Why does the narrator not comment on it? This is one of the most noticeable 'absences' in the text. Although the narrative voice is present, no comment is made on the importance of the events. In the various appearances of the beggar, we also have repeated events but with virtually no interpretative comment from the narrator. The beggar first appears to Eduard and the Hauptmann on their walk, then later to Eduard after the firework display and finally in the inn after Eduard leaves the estate. Begging is also mentioned when describing the Hauptmann's organisational skills regarding the celebration of the laying of the foundation stone. As has already been suggested, 'jener' in reference to the beggar on the second meeting, reminds us that we have already met the man, as has Eduard, and so the comparison in his mind is echoed in our understanding of the situation. On the third meeting, Eduard makes the comparison to his happiness of the previous day with the sorrow he is currently experiencing. In this mode, we hear the traditional reliable narrator, speaking through the represented thoughts of Eduard. Although mention is made of the former

²⁶ See Swales, 'Consciousness', p. 99. In this he discusses the narrative absence, explaining that 'We have to make the link, to perceive the parallelism and the vital point of contact. And yet, only a few paragraphs later, the narrator gives a particularly probing commentary on the emotional tangle that is developing between the four.'

meeting, no comment is forthcoming from the narrator regarding Eduard's hypocrisy or egoism concerning his fellow man:

Als er beim Wirtshause vorbeitritt, sah er den Bettler in der Laube sitzen, den er gestern nacht so reichlich beschenkt hatte. Dieser saß behaglich an seinem Mittagsmahle, stand auf und neigte sich ehrerbietig, ja anbetend vor Eduarden. (345)

Another situation where the reader has been informed of previous knowledge concerns Ottilie and her tendency to hold her hands together, palms facing each other, slightly leaning forwards.

Sie drückt die flachen Hände, die sie in die Höhe hebt, zusammen und führt sie gegen die Brust, indem sie sich nur wenig vorwärts neigt und den dringend Fordernden mit einem solchen Blick ansieht, daß er gern von allem absteht, was er verlangen oder wünschen möchte. (280)

This information is conveyed to the reader by means of the quoted letter from the Gehülfe and, as we shall see later in this chapter, the narrator never offers any comments on interpolated texts, and this case is no exception. We are never witness to this gesture of entreaty until the penultimate chapter, in which she performs it directly after reading Eduard's letter. There is no expressed association between this gesture and the Blessed Virgin Mary, yet it is patently clear, especially considering Ottilie's only appearance in a *Tableau Vivant*. Why does the narrator fail to highlight this similarity? One of the difficulties critics have with *Die Wahlverwandtschaften* is its apparent canonization of Ottilie, and this issue is surely one which needs closer examination in any reflection on the novel's religious theme, as the iconography of the hands coming together is highly suggestive of prayer – whether it be self-stylisation, genuine holiness or simply a gesture of supplication, the self-protection of a young, frightened girl – in any event, there is no proof of the narrator's attitude towards her saintliness.. The narrator cannot, it seems, be sure why Ottilie so often has recourse to this gesture. We have been informed by an outside character as to previous incidents of this kind, and we have to believe the authenticity of the

Gehülfe's observations. In not referring the reader back to the letter, but rather leaving him to recall this, the narrator acts as a detached reporter of events. However, we can hear that he is not truly detached as his emotion is audible: 'Jammervoller brachten kaum jemals in solcher Nähe Liebende eine Nacht zu' (474). It is he who chooses to withdraw, and thereby to confront the reader with both narrative absence and presence, and narrative passion and dispassion at one and the same time.

When Otto is drowned, the reader would reasonably expect the occurrence to be fraught with emotion; however, this is hardly the case. The narrative moves into the present tense and short sentences, which, as Blessin states, heightens the dramatic quality.²⁷ The presentation of the accident is indeed vivid, although there is an almost comical aspect in the description. Blessin believes that this does not distance the reader, yet I believe it cannot but interrupt the flow of the novel as a whole as we have not heard this register before.²⁸ Later in the novel 'three of the main characters respond to the loss of Charlotte's child [...] by deploying a discourse of sacrifice,'²⁹ and there is little sympathy for the dead child.³⁰ The narrator moves swiftly on from the death of the baby to Ottilie's response and her innocence. His presence after the death is great, and the depth of his emotive response is evident. So why does he step away from the text in describing the accident itself? In the description of it, the tense and the brevity superbly convey the speed and the inevitability of the accident. The narrator seems to be as overwhelmed as the characters. This tragedy is viewed as

²⁷ Blessin writes that this episode has 'deutlich einen dramatischen Akzent, teils weil es im historischen Präsens vorgetragen ist und teils wegen der raschen Folge kurzer und gleichförmig gebauter Satzglieder. Im entscheidenden Augenblick zeigt die Sperrung des Satzes an, wie Ottilie das Gleichgewicht zu verlieren droht.' (p.74).

²⁸ 'Der Stil [hat] darüber hinaus die Funktion, die sich ihrer Bedeutung nach gegenseitig ausschließenden Momente zunächst zu verbinden und dem Vergleich zu machen.' Blessin, p.77.

²⁹ Paul, Bishop, *The World of Stoical Discourse in Goethe's Novel 'Die Wahlverwandtschaften'*, Bristol German Publications, 1, Studies in German Language and Literature, 25 (Lewiston: E. Mellen Press, 1999) pp.1-83 (p.45).

³⁰ The Major cannot mourn it, and it is stated that 'Ein solches Opfer schien ihm nötig zu ihrem allseitigen Glück' (461), See p.58. Eduard sees it as 'eine 'Fügung' (461).

Ottlie's, not Otto's. The sympathy is directed more at Ottlie, than at the child or the parents. The narrator's absence in this brief passage enables a distance to be kept from empathising with the child, as the important character in this is the other 'child'. That is not to say that Otto's death is unimportant, but in the narrator's presentation of this story it is an episode which sheds light on the life and death of Ottlie.

Another highly emotive episode where the narrator offers no comment is in the spiritual adultery scene. We have seen how his presence is felt in his partly omniscient descriptions and in offering generalisations and some judgment, however, when we consider the enormity of the event and its repercussions, we feel how telling the lack of comment really is. Swales argues that through the 'deceptively low-key and restrained language the narrator begins to probe the complexity of human sexuality.'³¹ The language is mainly from the characters, in indirect speech and their presented thoughts. Pascal cites the comment, given when Charlotte awakes: 'sie fand sich, seltsam genug, allein, als sie erwachte' (321). He asks: 'Whose is this "seltsam genug"? It cannot be the narrator's or reader's thought, because we have already been informed that Eduard has left Charlotte. It must be Charlotte's thought, embedded in the narratorial account.'³² The majority of the explanations or opinions offered come from either spouse, and the reader is left to wonder whether there is any narratorial judgment to be seen or felt. We are invited into some form of complicity in the generalisation concerning attraction and power and the insight into both partners' inner thoughts and emotions urges the reader to understand what is happening. However, the lack of condemnation or moral outcry – the one use of

³¹ Swales, 'Consciousness', p102.

³² Pascal, pp.154-5.

‘leider’³³ – is not sufficient to qualify as clearly expressed opinion. The descriptions applied to Eduard’s persuasion – ‘liebenswertig’, ‘freundlich’, ‘dringend’, ‘er dachte nicht daran daß er Rechte habe...’ – all indicate that he is acting as the lover rather than the husband, and the reader is aware that, as he is thinking of Ottilie, this, in his mind, is part of his sexual excitement. When the lights are extinguished, imagination supplants reality and we hear the difference in the couple; the husband’s imagining is presented as being more physical – ‘Eduard hielt nur Ottilie in seinen Armen’ – whereas the wife’s appears to be more spiritual – ‘Charlotte schwebte der Hauptmann näher oder ferner vor der Seele’ (321) – and the past and the present join. The narrative is tantalizingly silent. Burgess examines this episode in terms of sentence length, and states that ‘it is as if the narrator is refusing to be moved, excited or disturbed.’ He describes the style in this episode as ‘seemingly objective’ and ‘uninvolved’ and believes that it ‘stands in contrast, of course, to the manipulative nature of the narrator’s attitude’ and correctly continues to say that this ‘adds a further layer of complexity to the overall narrative stance’(235/6). However, as we have previously seen, Burgess does not expand upon this ‘complexity’ as it is not in the remit of his study, and, I would suggest, would not support his theory of the manipulative narrator.

It is in these ‘Leerstellen’ that the reader gets drawn into the text and into a form of self-consciousness about how he is responding. The absences constantly disturb the reader; the text is shot through with narrative uncertainty. I will develop and explain this argument later in this chapter after I have considered other examples of narrative absence in the novel.

³³ ‘um desto freier waren [die Gespräche und Scherzen], als das Herz leider keinen Teil daran nahm.’(321).

FOREKNOWLEDGE DENIED

The narrator often includes moments of prefiguration without highlighting them to the reader. This complements the argument in the novel's fourth chapter to the effect that man has a tendency to see symbols in his life, however incorrect these may be. Man ascribes import to what he considers symbolic, but either misreads those signs or fails to notice other important hints. It is only with hindsight that we can dispassionately define these occurrences as being prefigurative, and the narrator obstinately refuses to invoke hindsight. The numerous examples of drowning throughout the novel are such situations. When the narrator relates the story of the young girl who caused the death of a relative, this is evidently prefigurative of Ottilie's later accident and the ensuing concern she feels.³⁴ The incident of the neighbouring girl is told to us with great distance. It is related after Luciane has left, and continues the narrator's criticism of her in showing the effect of her actions long after her absence. Ottilie herself later tells us that she felt that this was to be her own fate and, as such, this episode is an important insight into her fears.

As already mentioned there are many striking symbols within the text, generated by the characters themselves, but there are also many that the characters do not see, and neither does the narrator comment on them. Ottilie's necklace and the miniature of her father is one such symbol devoid of narrative commentary. Barnes writes: 'At the mill Eduard begs Ottilie to remove the miniature of her father, for reasons which the narrator ambiguously impugns. So that when Eduard continues [...entfernen Sie das

³⁴ Ottilie explains to her aunt that she does not want to re-enter society giving her reason as follows: 'Verzeihen Sie mir, daß ich so rede; aber ich habe unglaublich mit jenem armen Mädchen gelitten, als es Luciane aus den verborgenen Zimmern des Hauses hervorzog, sich freundlich mit ihm beschäftigte, es in der besten Absicht zu Spiel und Tanz nötigen wollte. Als das arme Kind bange und immer bänger zuletzt floh und in Ohnmacht sank, ich es in meine Arme faßte, die Gesellschaft erschreckt, aufgeregt und jeder erst recht neugierig auf die Unglücksleige ward, da dachte ich nicht, daß mir ein gleiches Schicksal bevorstehe; aber mein Mitgefühl, so wahr und lebhaft, ist noch lebendig.' (465-66).

Bild [...] nicht aus Ihrem Zimmer; ja geben Sie ihm den schönsten, den heiligsten Ort Ihrer Wohnung' (292)] the reader dismisses it as an example of Eduard's rhetorical style, for which his recitals had made him, as the narrator ironically explains, "angenehm und berühmt" (269).³⁵ This necklace is mentioned in the novel on two further occasions. Otilie places the chain in the foundation stone³⁶ and then the portrait is put with Eduard's love letters into her 'Koffer'³⁷ 'which has long been the symbol of her profane love.'³⁸ Barnes feels that the import of these two actions is often overlooked due to the narrator's irony. Barnes explains that, as the box becomes the symbol of holy love, the initial interpretation of it as irreligious love is deliberately misleading and the narrator endorses this in an attempt to disguise the ending of the novel. Swales observes that in the majority of the episodes detailing the growing emotions of the couples, the narrator 'oscillates between explicit commentary on the one hand and complete withdrawal of his voice on the other,' specifically including the above situations where 'the narrator makes no comment and simply leaves a density of implication with which we the readers must grapple.'³⁹ The previous episodes involving the necklace are, as is typical, not directly referred to, but left to the reader to recall. The reader can register the growing affection between Otilie and Eduard and the removal of her father's portrait is of great significance, and any amplification on the part of the narrator would be superfluous. Barnes maintains that this episode is 'usually disregarded, with most unfortunate results for the interpretation of the novel,'⁴⁰ but I disagree. It is another instance of

³⁵ Barnes, *Literary Interpretation*, p.205.

³⁶ 'Sie löste darauf die goldne Kette vom Halse, an der das Bild ihres Vaters gehangen hatte, und legte sie mit leiser Hand über die anderen Kleinode hin, worauf Eduard mit einiger Hast veranstaltete, daß der wohlgefügte Deckel sogleich aufgestürzt und eingekittet wurde.' (302).

³⁷ 'Noch eins fügte sie hinzu - es war das Porträt ihres Vaters - und verschloß das Ganze, worauf sie den zarten Schlüssel an dem goldnen Kettchen wieder um den Hals an ihre Brust hing.' (480).

³⁸ Barnes, *Literary Interpretation*, p.205.

³⁹ Swales, 'Consciousness', p 99.

⁴⁰ Barnes, *Literary Interpretation*, p.205.

the narrative leaving the reader to draw the connection and to create his own interpretation of events. If the ending is designed to show the existence of 'holy love' then this prefigurative occurrence does not affect our reading of this, and as Otilie potentially reaches this state due to her relationship with Eduard, these episodes are prefigurative of *this* love and not of divine love as such. The ending itself is full of ambiguity, and to state that sacred love is a given in this case is to undermine the complexities of the novel and its narrator.

One further major instance of a symbol is the glass. The narrator informs us that the glass is supposed to break for good luck and happiness, but that in this case it did not. He continues that this was not caused by any miracle but by a man catching it, and interpreting it as a positive sign. There is no stated intimation that this is not to be the case, but it is left to the reader to draw the conclusion. It is mentioned again in the concluding chapter, where we are reminded of the earlier episode, and the narrator thematizes the danger of signification. We are told that the glass was not a true portent, and then Eduard discovers that it is not even the same glass; the grieving man is twice disappointed. However, he still cannot desist from ascribing symbols and fate to inanimate objects, as he looks for signs everywhere. As Muenzer states, this glass is a 'vehicle of signification'⁴¹ for Eduard, who wilfully disregards the actual names signified by the letters. He ignores the superstitious belief that it is a bad omen, seeing it as a token of the permanence and rightness of his relationship with Otilie. The fact that the glass itself holds more than one symbolic purpose is again of significance to the novel's import. It was made and inscribed with the initials of his two names, and is a reminder of Eduard's youth. He continues to use this glass when he and Otilie are parted to remind him of her, failing at that point to notice its

⁴¹ Clark S. Muenzer, *Figures of Identity: Goethe's Novels and the Enigmatic Self* (Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania University Press, 1984), pp.73-100 (p.94).

substitution after the accident. But the fact that the glass is broken and can be replaced highlights the nature of symbols and what they represent, as well as man's deep-seated need for and reliance on them. Eduard wilfully reads the glass as the union of desire and gratification in relation to Ottilie. This relationship could not last in this world, and neither could the glass. Not only does Eduard fail to see the impossibility of his union with Ottilie, but he also does not see the replacement of the glass. He keeps this symbol with him for the entirety of the novel, symbolically demonstrating his inability to live in the present or to accept the temporality of moments of happiness, 'die Vergänglichkeit der menschlichen Dinge' (302). He prefers to found his life on memories.⁴² He is not alone in this attachment to the past, as Nygaard explains: 'each symbol dwelt on by these characters tends to carry with it an evocation of the past and a promise of future recurrence'.⁴³ The narrator offers no explicit analysis of this discovery, again forcing the reader to contemplate its significance, emphasising the importance of the symbolic desire in man by allowing the discovery to be made so close to the end of the text. The non-committal narrator continues to the very last, drawing the reader in to the very thematic of his novel and offering him no answers to the question that Eduard's thoughts and actions raise.

INFORMATION WITHHELD

As we have also seen, the narrator fails to explain the 'traurige Erinnerung' (268) and the Hauptmann's mysterious involvement in the drowning incident of some years previously. Although he has not been consistently present, the inscrutable narrator is manifestly in evidence. We feel that he is almost taunting us with his superior

⁴² This is most clearly seen in his marriage to Charlotte. They base their union on recollections, and have very little to discuss as regards the future. Theirs is a world which exists in reminiscences, and fears the future.

⁴³ Nygaard, p.62.

knowledge. What we register is not an absence of a voice or comment but rather a withholding of information. This shifting of narrative character sets up disturbances in the reader's relationship to the text. However, it succeeds in drawing the reader further into the text and provides the Hauptmann with an intriguing past, allowing him to become a more interesting character than the somewhat neutral figure he has been hitherto. The fact that the narrator withholds details from us could, admittedly, be seen as proof of Burgess's definition of him as manipulative. He also misleads the reader by implying that someone lost his or her life through drowning, rather than clarifying the outcome (which has to do with the discovery of love). This assumption on the part of the reader is not corrected by the narrator: hence, when we read *Die Wunderlichen Nachbarskinder*, we expect it to be a story of drowning. We *hear* of the Hauptmann loosing someone through drowning; but we then *see* the Hauptmann save somebody's life. This episode could show that the narrator is unreliable. Jacobs, by contrast, believes it is the narrator's discretion which prevents his from being explicit.⁴⁴ In any event, because the narrative voice does not enter the text to assure the reader that all will be explained at a later date, the reader's curiosity is heightened. It is only on a second reading, when the reader is aware of the ensuing action, that this brief episode achieves its proper significance.

Another instance of 'withholding information' concerns Charlotte and the Hauptmann's kiss. Barnes describes the scene where they 'renounce their passion' as being so structured as to disguise 'later developments [which will...] nullify this

⁴⁴ Jürgen Jacobs, 'Glück und Entsagung: Zur Bedeutung der Novelle von den *Wunderlichen Nachbarskindern* in Goethe's *Die Wahlverwandtschaften*', *JdFdH*, 42 (1979), 153-69 (p.161). 'Die allenthalben zu beobachtende Diskretion des Erzählers im Umgang mit seinen Figuren geht so weit, daß er das Ausweichen des Hauptmanns vor der schmerzlichen Erinnerung respektiert und den Vorgang auch vor dem Leser nicht ausbreitet.'

scene.⁴⁵ So why does the narrator postpone telling the reader of this encounter? He relates it to us after the night of spiritual adultery, and after Eduard's emotional outburst to Ottilie: 'Du liebst mich!' and the linguistic reminder of elective affinities: 'Wer das andere zuerst ergriffen, wäre nicht zu unterscheiden gewesen' (324). The simultaneous kissing appears to confirm the scientific parallel, but this is refuted in the light of the differing reactions of the characters which invoke issues of free will, duty and morality. The description of the kiss of Charlotte and the Hauptmann is couched in highly poetic language, more so than we have seen before, and they are initially presented in their relationships to Eduard - 'Gattin und Freund' (324). Their being left alone is shown as a direct consequence of Eduard's desire to see Ottilie. Charlotte's response to the Hauptmann is described in a sympathetic manner; she has suffered and is sad, whereas Eduard is childishly excited and has manipulated the situation, giving no thought to his wife and friend. All of this leads to a deeper understanding of Charlotte. The narrator informs us that she cannot cry and there is no real need to expand upon this sorrow, he underlines her struggle and her understanding of the situation and its consequences and the scene progresses, showing their responses to the circumstances. Their kiss and the ensuing conversation is described in language which attempts to present their decision as positive, but the narrator's own emotional character emerges, showing that he cannot understand how Charlotte can bear to do this. She later goes on to repeat her marriage vows, with no mention of love, and although this is not criticized, her fidelity is not praised, and the presentation of rationality and facts as opposed to emotion makes the episode cold and distant. And nothing offsets this; there is no attempt by the narrator to offer

⁴⁵ Barnes, *Literary Interpretation*, p.203.

sympathetic views. He attempts to comprehend Charlotte's predicament and reaction, but remains, despite apparent kindness towards her, utterly bemused.

Ottolie's comment that men drink too much also shows that the narrator withholds information:

'Da Sie von Mäßigung sprechen, liebe Tante', versetzte Ottolie, 'so kann ich nicht bergen, daß mir dabei die Unmäßigkeit der Männer, besonders was den Wein betrifft, einfällt. Wie oft hat es mich betrübt und geängstigt, wenn ich bemerken mußte, daß reiner Verstand, Klugheit, Schonung anderer, Anmut und Liebenswürdigkeit selbst für mehrere Stunden verloren gingen und oft statt alles des Guten, was ein trefflicher Mann hervorzubringen und zu gewähren vermag, Unheil und Verwirrung hereinzubrechen drohte! Wie oft mögen dadurch gewaltsame Entschließungen veranlaßt werden!'

Charlotte gab ihr recht, doch setzte sie das Gespräch nicht fort; denn sie fühlte nur zu wohl, daß auch hier Ottolie bloß Eduarden wieder im Sinne hatte, der zwar nicht gewöhnlich, aber doch öfter, als es wünschenswert war, sein Vergnügen, seine Gesprächigkeit, seine Tätigkeit durch einen gelegentlichen Weingenuß zu steigern pflegte. (347)

The reader has heard no hint of this, and it really bears little relevance to the novel, so the reader cannot but wonder why it is included. The narrator has not shirked from mentioning other faults of Eduard's, so it is puzzling that he allows a character to impart this criticism in his place. Perhaps we sense here an attempt on his part to be even-handed and non-judgmental. He simply allows two characters to imply the volatility of Eduard's character and temperament. In any event the narrative offers no information that would corroborate or refute Ottolie's and Charlotte's suspicions.

INTERPOLATION AND THE NARRATIVE STANCE

As we have already seen, ‘the narrator tells us very little of what goes on outside this limited sphere whether it affects major or minor characters’, as his world is that of Eduard’s estate, and the characters directly involved in it.⁴⁶ He concerns himself with that and allows other voices to report external events, which, as Reiss maintains, presents a novel which ‘gains in intensity and avoids the dispersion of attention which would result from a plethora of irrelevant information.’⁴⁷ Burgess regards the interpolated texts in a different manner. He states that ‘the narrator explicitly “disowns” parts of the text, disclaiming responsibility, as it were, for specific passages’(205). He does admit that he is ‘on tricky ground here’, as, if one assumes that the entire text is ‘the supposed product of the one fictional narrator, and that passages presented by him as having been authored by various figments of his imagination should be regarded on a fictional par with the remaining narrative text’ then this ‘fails to appreciate the various levels of fictiveness’ which he believes the novel clearly enshrines, citing the uses of direct and indirect speech as further proof of this ‘fiction’.⁴⁸ He continues that such examples are part of the ‘textual tapestry which it is the narrator’s own to weave as he thinks fit’ and so he finds that these must be distinguished from the instances of interpolated texts. He works on the assumption that there is an ‘expressly fictional narrative’ (208) and that within this, the manipulative narrator is ‘still pulling the linguistic strings of his characters’ fictional inventions’(244). He proceeds to examine the letters, the Novelle and the diary entries mainly by word length. His lengthy examination of these texts suggests that there are

⁴⁶ Reiss, p.150.

⁴⁷ Reiss, p.150.

⁴⁸ He states that ‘the events of the central narrative are presented *as* fiction from the opening [...] to the closing fairy-tale-like word’. (p.207).

insufficient data to yield a clear result. He stresses that there is no real difference in style between the main narrative and the interpolated texts. Where he does register a tiny discrepancy – he notes, for example, that the letters contain fewer longer words than the main text – he comments ‘it may well be that it is natural for people to express themselves more simply in letters than in novels,’ arguing that ‘what is of interest is that the narrator (or Goethe?) may be attempting to emulate this’(232). Burgess’s analysis demonstrates the similarity in style throughout the entire novel. He uses his concordance to show that the ‘sameness’ of the novel is proof of the ‘dominance of the manipulative narrator’(244). Burgess does admit, in his titling of the final part ‘Conclusions (or lack of them)’⁴⁹ that his research in this aspect of the novel has not yielded the results he would have wished for, mainly due to the lack of evidence in the text. However, where Burgess views his study as unsuccessful is where I view it as proving the existence of a complex and multi-faceted narrative performance. The reader is presented with a novelistic universe where he is caught between the presence of a narrative personality and then its evaporation, specifically in the interpolated texts. We are given a volatility of story-telling which cannot be viewed as belonging to the manipulative style. Burgess wants constantly to see a master puppeteer at work; but what his study shows (in spite of itself) is the presence of a kind of narrative half-light.

There are seven letters in *Die Wahlverwandtschaften*, two of which come from a character the reader never meets.⁵⁰ Each is marked off from the main text of the novel by sub-titles and as Burgess writes ‘the mere way in which they are presented on the

⁴⁹ Burgess, p.242.

⁵⁰ There are two from the Vorsteherin: Nachschrift der Vorsteherin, (263-64) and Brief der Vorsteherin (277-78). The others consist of two from the Gehülfe (264-65, 278-80), one from Eduard to his wife (344-45), one from Eduard to Ottilie (472) and one from Ottilie to her friends (476-77).

page announces them to the reader as having been written ‘outside’ the narrative.’⁵¹ Burgess also admits ‘they do add a veneer of authenticity’ (211). However, he treats this with scepticism by placing ‘authenticity’ and ‘independent’ in speech marks in his discussion. Bolz explains that the letters allow a particular form of communication which blurs the matters at issue.⁵² Such details as are given remain within the letters, we hear of Ottilie’s temperament, the explanation of her supplication gesture, details of Luciane. The narrator never comments on these episodes. There is always a strong narrative presence immediately preceding the inclusion of a letter but he never comments on them after their entry. He adds to the authenticity of the first two letters by Charlotte’s re-reading of them:

Charlotte nahm indes die älteren Papiere wieder vor, die sich auf Ottilien bezogen, um sich in Erinnerung zu bringen, was die Vorsteherin, was der Gehülfe über das gute Kind geurteilt, um es mit ihrer Persönlichkeit selbst zu vergleichen. Denn Charlotte war der Meinung, man könne nicht geschwind genug mit dem Charakter der Menschen bekannt werden, mit denen man zu leben hat, um zu wissen, was sich von ihnen erwarten, was sich an ihnen bilden läßt, oder was man ihnen ein für allemal zugestehen und verzeihen muß. Sie fand zwar bei dieser Untersuchung nichts Neues, aber manches Bekannte ward ihr bedeutender und auffallender. So konnte ihr zum Beispiel Ottiliens Mäßigkeit im Essen und Trinken wirklich Sorge machen. (282-83)

We hear of Ottilie’s moderation regarding food, which is another moment of prefigurative import: not only is a character aware of this but it has been reinforced by an external observer. Interestingly, Charlotte overlooks most of the headmistress’s letter, presumably as she (and the narrator) would not view it as objective criticism of Ottilie. The narrator rarely includes criticism of Ottilie, so why does he include this letter? It introduces her into the text and provides certain insights into her character and is immediately overshadowed by the letter of her Assistant. The letters also allow the reader to hear aspects of both women’s characters: Charlotte’s fondness for her

⁵¹ Burgess, p.211. This comment applies to all of the interpolated texts, not just the correspondence.

⁵² Bolz, p.168 ‘Sodann erweist sich der Brief als Medium der Realitätsvermeidung: Man kommuniziert ohne etwas zu sagen’.

niece, her forethought, her rationality; Otilie's habits are again mentioned directly as soon as the reader meets her. This adds authenticity to the letters. The narrator's voice does not interrupt the letters. He maintains his distance, and by not commenting on them, he allows the reader to form his own opinion. The initial letters provide some understanding of the characters who wrote them, as well as the characters to whom they refer. On occasion they have a certain formality – as in the letter of the headmistress. By stating that she cannot chide Otilie, but also cannot be pleased with her, she indicates that there is a difficulty with the young girl – Otilie's reticence, her humility, her headaches, her eating habits, her dress – that cannot easily be defined. None of the points raised by the Headmistress truly indicates worry, but rather a distant criticism of the girl's behaviour. The reader detects that this woman is somewhat aloof, highly fond of breeding and good manners, and has problems with Otilie as she does not live up to her image of a young girl. However, everything that we are told of Otilie in this first letter is borne out by her actions on the estate; even down to her not using the cloth that she is given. The additional note from the Gehülfe is again very formal and shows respect for his employer as well as for Charlotte. His fondness for Otilie is overwhelming, and his bias is clearly to be seen – he criticizes the teachers rather than Otilie – and concludes with his belief that Otilie should become a teacher herself! The contrast between the two letters is not one of style, but content. They are both formal and well-structured, the language does not differ greatly from that of the main text. The reader gains access to certain details. The only comments that do eventually follow these letters are those of Charlotte (as have been noted above). No narrative comment is required, we can hear the Gehülfe's emotion, but the points raised by the Headmistress tend to be marginalized

by the Assistant's letter and it is only on second reading that we can link her comments with Otilie's later actions.

The second letter from the Headmistress is also very formal and consists of only a few sentences. She names not Luciane, but Otilie and again refers to the Gehülfe's letter to expand upon her case. The tone is rushed, official and contains little if any emotion – the praise it contains of Luciane is distant – and the explanation of its brevity and bustle is somewhat reminiscent of Mittler. The Gehülfe's letter is lengthy, and again shows his fondness for Otilie. This is accentuated by his recounting other teachers' responses to Otilie which show more critical views of her as a pupil; his tenderness towards her is undiminished, in spite of the consensus against her academic and social abilities. His response reminds us of the narrator's tendency to favour Otilie in his descriptions and to present himself as the only one who truly understands her. We learn more of Luciane, but only in connection with Otilie and not at all favourably,⁵³ and still she is not named.⁵⁴

Eduard's letter to Charlotte is commented on by the narrator: 'Diese letzte Wendung floß ihm aus der Feder, nicht aus dem Herzen. Ja, wie er sie auf dem Papier sah, fing er bitterlich an zu weinen' (344). Although the letter itself contains no real shift in register, in this case we know the character writing it and we can see that the thoughts and emotions are his; it is exaggerated, egocentric and dramatic. The letter does not interrupt the narrative, it continues the flow and the following paragraph is an extension of it, being his thoughts presented by the narrator. His second letter, this

⁵³ 'Ihre Fräulein Tochter, gnädige Frau, sonst lebhaft und freimütig, war im Gefühl ihres heutigen Triumphs ausgelassen und übermütig. Sie sprang mit ihren Preisen und Zeugnissen in den Zimmern herum und schüttelte sie auch Ottilien vor dem Gesicht. "Du bist heute schlecht gefahren!" rief sie aus. Ganz gelassen antwortete Ottilie: "es ist noch nicht der letzte Prüfungstag". – "Und doch wirst du immer die Letzte bleiben!" rief das Fräulein und sprang hinweg.' (279).

⁵⁴ Luciane's name occurs once in Chapter 2 in Charlotte's speech but then is only named once more in the First part, in Chapter 13.

time to Ottilie, is a love letter, whose register, again, does not differ from his speech; but this time he is more coherent. It stands out again, overtly, from the text as it is titled; but there are no stylistic differences. We have heard Eduard speak to Ottilie before in this register; the letter allows Eduard's own expression to be heard in his own words.

Ottilie's letter has a different role in the text. It is essential for the reader to see the text of this letter, as it is for the characters themselves. Given that Ottilie has now withdrawn into silence, and her diary is full of confusion and uncertainty, this letter allows the reader to understand – to a certain extent – her motives. It fully explains her actions at the inn – thus rendering any previous explanation redundant – and sheds some light on her ensuing actions. Again, the style is not individuated. We have heard her diary, we have heard her speak and we have been privy to some of her thoughts, so this letter does not seem incongruous in the text. The narrator does not comment on the letter, and neither do the characters. At this crucial moment where Ottilie offers some explanation of her actions, not the tenuously relevant, elusive aphorisms in her diary, the narrator abandons the reader. He merely provides items of information: namely events which have been witnessed, letters from people who know her.

There are six diary entries from Ottilie in the second part of the novel and these have elicited a greater response from critics than the letters. Graham's reaction to the frequently voiced criticism that the remarks cannot have come from such a character is one shared by many modern critics. She states that the 'author' has 'safeguarded himself doubly [...] by having the narrator tell us, twice, that some, or even most, of these reflections are excerpts copied from unnamed sources, a device on his part

which cleverly exonerates him from any charge that her thoughts fly higher than her intellect permits.⁵⁵ She claims that Otilie's utterances 'seem to be lifted straight from the diary of a practising artist'⁵⁶ and although they may appear 'somewhat random' they all 'have to do with her personal development' and the narrator is 'treat[ing] ... Otilie's spiritual creativity in terms of her artistic creativity.'⁵⁷ Nevinson, as we have seen, does not treat the entries with such reverence, maintaining that Goethe used his own sayings in the diary to 'fill up space and allow the due time to pass'.⁵⁸ Feuerlicht, however, finds that the uncertainty of the narrator when he tells the reader that the maxims in the diary probably are not hers, raises the authenticity of the tale, but stands in too stark a contrast to his 'gewohnte Allwissenheit'.⁵⁹ He dismisses the claim that art is the theme, as the number of maxims devoted to that subject is too small,⁶⁰ and explains that the diary has such a vague connection with the novel that the narrator has to unite them by mean of an introduction in three cases.⁶¹ He finds the diary to be 'eine Perle' which decorates the text, but does not clarify Otilie's

⁵⁵ Ilse Graham, "'Verwandte Engelsbilder': Apotheosis of an Artist (*Die Wahlverwandtschaften*)", in *Goethe: Portrait of the Artist* (Berlin; New York: W. de Gruyter, 1977) pp. 229-252 (pp.230-31).

⁵⁶ Graham, p.233. See also William J. Lillyman, 'Monasticism, Tableau Vivant and Romanticism: Otilie in Goethe's *Die Wahlverwandtschaften*', *JEGP*, 81 (1982), 347-366.

⁵⁷ Graham, p.239.

⁵⁸ Nevinson, pp. 197-8.

⁵⁹ 'Die Unsicherheit des Erzählers in dieser einfachen Angelegenheit [...] erhöht zwar das Gefühl, daß es sich um eine "wahre" Geschichte handelt, aber sie steht in allzu scharfem Gegensatz zu seiner gewohnten Allwissenheit.' Ignace Feuerlicht, 'Der "Erzähler" und das "Tagebuch" in Goethes *Wahlverwandtschaften*, *Goethe Jahrbuch*, 103 (1986), 316-343 (p.334).

⁶⁰ Feuerlicht explains that there are 86 reflections in her diary entries. At most 10 of them could be considered to be connected to her private life, 5 others are doubtful, and the rest are very general and allow -- with some effort and imagination -- connection with her and her life. (p.337).

Reiss finds that the diary entries 'fall into two groups, as the narrator himself indicates [...] entries which explicitly or implicitly concern Eduard or other characters [...] and] maxims which she had heard from others, as the narrator himself maintains.' (p.177). 'On the one hand, they are general reflections and resemble the maxims of the narrator, but on the other hand, they say something about the nature and direction of Otilie's inner development.' (p.178).

⁶¹ Feuerlicht, 'Daß das Tagebuch nur sehr vage mit Otilie und der inneren und äußeren Handlung des Romans zusammenhängt, zeigt sich auch äußerlich. Die einzelnen Auszüge stehen ohne richtige Verbindung mit dem übrigen Text. Im 2. 4. und 7. Kapitel gibt der Erzähler eine Art Übergang von dem Roman zum Tagebuch, aber keinen vom Tagebuch zum Roman. Im 3., 5. und 9. Kapitel fehlt jeder Übergang, obwohl sich der Erzähler der *Schicklichkeit* eines solchen *Übergangs* bewußt ist.' pp.342-3.

character in the way that commentary from the narrator would.⁶² Hankamer views the entries as being similar to a monologue or a Greek Chorus, which reflect and emphasize the importance of events.⁶³ Stahl disagrees with critics who find that Goethe wanted to use his aphorisms, and so used them in Otilie's diary. He justifies their place in the diary as enabling the reader to see her 'moral and intellectual growth [...] and the results of her spiritual conflicts.' He also finds it 'significant' that the diary had not been spoken of before its introduction in the second part and 'that excerpts cease after Eduard's return to the castle'. However, as we have already seen with other critics, Stahl speaks of Goethe and never the narrator as we understand him.⁶⁴ The narrator informs us that we will see a red thread woven throughout all of her diary entries, which will enable the reader to understand Otilie. Feuerlicht states that 'wie schon Spielhagen feststellte, ist dieser rote Faden oft unauffindbar.'⁶⁵ Critics disagree on the theme of the red thread, saying that although the extracts 'permit us further insight into her thought' and are 'not bound by time [allowing] us to get to know her personality in greater depth [...] we are able to understand her experience only indirectly.'⁶⁶ Regarding the thread, Reiss believes it is undervalued by the narrator because although he thereby 'enhances the value of what he has to say', he 'also diminished the immediacy of these sayings.'⁶⁷ Barnes finds that the 'journal adumbrates and elucidates the end'⁶⁸ but Blessin believes that 'der Sinn der Tagebuchstelle läßt sich auch keineswegs eindeutig fixieren.'⁶⁹ Burgess has very little to say on the diary, other than the word-length results already mentioned. He

⁶² Feuerlicht p.343: 'Das Tagebuch ist eben ein Fremdkörper im Roman, allerdings eine Perle. Sie schmückt ihn, aber erhellt nicht sein Dunkel, ebensowenig wie die Hypothese von einem persönlichen Erzähler.'

⁶³ Hankamer, pp.250-1.

⁶⁴ E. L. Stahl, 'Die Wahlverwandtschaften', *PEGS*, 15, (1946), 71-95 (pp.92-93).

⁶⁵ Feuerlicht, p.334.

⁶⁶ Reiss, pp.154-56.

⁶⁷ Reiss, p.158.

⁶⁸ Barnes, 'Ambiguity', p.13.

⁶⁹ Blessin, p. 65.

states that the extracts add to the ‘veneer of authenticity’ but ‘also serve to underpin the narrator’s own account and interpretation of her inner development and maturation’(211). He surprisingly states that the narrator never questions the authenticity of the extracts, explaining ‘the assumption is that the diary extracts are her own entries, even if some may have been copied from other sources. [...] In other words, they are her words, not the narrator’s’ (232-3). Even so, he views the entirety of *Die Wahlverwandtschaften* as being a fictional manipulation and hence he cannot see the interpolated texts as anything other than another tool of his dominant narrator.

If we briefly look at some of the diary entries, we can see that they do have a measure of interconnection. The first entry has the theme of love and death running through it. (369) It is personalized by Ottilie’s recent experiences and her mention of the Architect and his weapons. The comments are not incongruous, but seem logical and typical thoughts for a love-struck, sensitive young girl. The third entry consists of a long list of generalisations, which again are all connected and relate to recent events, in this case, Luciane’s visit. (384) The style could be seen as elevated, but all the thoughts can be directly related to her experiences and thoughts of love, so it is not too unbelievable to assume that Ottilie has written this. We are told by the narrator before this extract that ‘[es] ist wahrscheinlich, daß man ihr irgendeinen Heft mitgeteilt, aus dem sie sich, was ihr gemütlich war, ausgeschrieben’ (383). Again, this is plausible, as a young girl, in love, feeling alone would obviously seek inspiration from elsewhere. The tone is still similar to the main text and it too contains maxims. Ottilie writes guardedly, but she gives evidence of her attentive character, observing, retaining and contemplating events and emotions past and present. The fourth entry is much longer than the previous ones, and the style has altered slightly; it contains short entries, short passages and there appears to be no common link between the sentences.

(396-8) The stylistic change alerts the reader to the change in thought and emotion of the young girl. This is an echo of the main text which alters its style in emotional moments (Otto's death, Eduard's decision to divorce) and shows Otilie's distress at the situation. What we hear above all is her anguish. The final extract is a shorter more cohesive one. (426-7) The entries are longer and more closely linked with nature, although Otilie states that she is gleaning comments and thoughts from her friends. In the previous extract she was more removed from nature (possibly due to the influence of the Architect) whereas now she appears to value nature more (which could be due to the Gehülfe's presence, or it could be that, after renouncing Eduard, she has turned to another set of 'laws'). She is not as lost as once she was, and is calmer.

Although these extracts do alter in content and occasionally style, they are not so removed from the main text as to constitute a conspicuous break. Their style remains that of the novel, with the obvious understanding that the reader knows they are journal extracts. If the reader believes in the text, then he has no reason to doubt the authenticity of the diary. The narrator is absent throughout all the extracts, there is no interpolated commentary, but he begins the ensuing chapter with an urgent narrative presence. He aligns himself with the role of the traditional, reliable narrator, one who has provided the reader with proof, authentic documents, and now is moving ahead with the story. He does not comment on the extracts and leaves the reader to form his or her own assessment of the material.

Burgess believes that the narrator 'is able to shift the blame [...] for the effect the story' *Die Wunderlichen Nachbarskinder* had on Charlotte by introducing the character of the English Lord. Again, he examines the word length of the contents of

the Novelle, and draws the following conclusion: '[W]e might expect a stylistic analysis to reveal measurable differences between the two non-narrative elements. However, the pattern of word lengths in the Novelle very closely imitates that of Otilie's diary extracts' (234) which, as we have seen, are not dissimilar to the style throughout the novel. Burgess finds that as, 'it is being narrated (within the fiction) orally rather than written down; it is for immediate public consumption [...] rather than private consumption later; and it is being told by someone who we must presume to be a foreign, non-native German speaker' (234), then there should be more of a distinction.⁷⁰ The style of the Novelle is, as is the case with all of the interpolated texts, not differentiated from but is, rather, in keeping with the rest of the novel.

The narrator modifies any conclusion the reader may draw from the story by explaining that it is connected to its listeners. This comment also makes the reader pay closer attention to the tale to see how it is related to the characters and to which one or ones in particular. The reader therefore approaches the 'tale' with this in mind; in this respect, at any rate, narrator could be seen to be steering our reading of it. However, he does not shape our attitude to the story or offer any explanation of it. The reader would see the association to parts of the novel, and by allowing us to know before and after its connection to the characters, he ensures that the reader will not dismiss it as pure fantasy. By not offering any detailed narratorial comment, the narrator invites the reader to draw his own conclusions. During the telling of the Novelle he withdraws totally and the reader hears another narrator, a named one about whom certain facts are known – his interests, social position, relationship to the main characters, and gender. The reader is given all this information by the narrator of the

⁷⁰ Burgess does admit that the difference 'might be accounted for to some extent is we recall that Goethe himself dictated the text of *Die Wahlverwandtschaften*; however, the assumption underlying a published novel must surely be that it is a text to be read rather than listened to as just one of a number of anecdotes to while away an evening.' (p.234).

main text, and the principal function of the English Lord appears to be to tell this story, and all his comments and actions lead up to this and affect our reading and understanding of it. Again, it is physically separated from the text by a title, and it deals with experiences that have occurred outside the estate. The narrator is obviously aware of the event because he has made reference to it before, as we have already seen, and allows an external, somewhat dispassionate voice, to present it to us at this juncture. Placed in the text at this point, its poignancy works to greater effect, as the state of the relationships within the novel has developed and the possible interpretation of it by the characters is important to the development of the novel. Its import seems to be that true love will win out although it will take time to become apparent, and to choose the wrong man could be fatal for more than the two who decide to enter into a loveless union. The story purports to come from an external voice; as our narrator has stated, people often say things without realising the effect they will have on those around them. We are informed that the English Lord is the narrator, but there is no shift in register. It is not presented as a spoken monologue, but rather as a piece of prose that could easily (we feel) have come from our narrator. We find ourselves in uncertain territory then; the *Novelle* both belongs to and stands outside the framework of the novel we are reading.

As with all aspects of *Die Wahlverwandtschaften*, no consensus has been reached concerning the importance and relevance of its *Novelle*. Suhrkamp maintains that it 'etwas von der Endgültigkeit eines Märchens [bekommt]', where the reader is a passive onlooker, not required to search for reason or motive. It is a simple tale which mirrors the events in the novel without appearing abstract: 'Diese *Novelle* allein würde schon die Bedeutung der Romanpartie, in der sie steht, innerhalb der

Komposition hervorheben.⁷¹ Jacobs pre-empts any criticism of narrative reticence regarding the Hauptmann's role in *Die Wunderlichen Nachbarskinder* by praising the narrator's discretion. He draws our attention to the parallels in the novel⁷² and speaks of the daemonic and the power of elective affinities and states that the novel and the Novelle present different 'Lebenszusammenhänge gegeneinander' with the Novelle presenting a different solution with a harmonious union which is sanctioned by society.⁷³ He believes: 'Diese verhängnisvolle Wirkung der wahlverwandschaftlichen Bestimmung ist das eigentliche Thema des Romans.'⁷⁴ Miller finds the inclusion of *Die Wunderlichen Nachbarskinder*, in contrast to Benjamin, to be disturbing, and he further takes issue with Benjamin's reading of the Novelle, saying it 'reinforces their sense of grief and anxiety in relation to Eduard and the Captain' and as such is not 'reassuring'.⁷⁵ He disagrees with the premise that *Die Wunderlichen Nachbarskinder* is an 'ideal never-never-land', maintaining it is an 'incursion of material history as the return of something repressed that reveals the hard conditions of the present.'⁷⁶ He goes further, and likens the connection between the novel and the Novelle to 'the actual relation between Eduard and Ottilie. It is a narcissistic mirror-imaging with right and left reversed, in which the meaning and

⁷¹ Suhrkamp, p.201.

⁷² Jacobs sees the parallel with the Hauptmann carrying Charlotte from the boat to the shore and rescuing the drowning boy: 'An beiden Stellen tritt – unter dem Eindrucke einer überwundenen Gefahr – ein wahlverwandschaftliche erotische Neigung spontan hervor.' p. 163. 'Wie sich hat zeigen lassen, stellen die Novelle und die Romanerzählung verschiedene Lebenszusammenhänge gegeneinander, in die das Dämonische durch die Kraft wahlverwandschaftlicher Bestimmung hineinwirkt.' p.168.

In a letter to Zelter (24.08.1824) Goethe spoke of 'Parallelismus im Gegensatz' in *Die Wunderlichen Nachbarskinder* and *Die Wahlverwandschaften*. Goethe (Artemis: Zurich, 1948) IX, p.603.

⁷³ 'Die Wunderlichen Nachbarskinder erzählt von einem plötzlichen Umschlag der Existenz, von dem überraschenden Ausbruch "unmäßiger Leidenschaft", der zu einer harmonischen, von der Gesellschaft sanktionierten Verbindung führt. Dieser Vorgang ist als Gegenbild zur Geschichte des Romans entworfen.' p.169.

⁷⁴ *ibid.*

⁷⁵ For a closer examination of Benjamin's essay on *Die Wahlverwandschaften*, see Tantillo, Ch. 3 where she explains that 'He further gave new prominence to the Novelle as the key to understanding the whole' (p.99). I am not examining Benjamin's essay here as it deals predominantly with the mythic elements not the narrative technique.

⁷⁶ J. Hillis Miller, 'Interlude as Anastomosis in *Die Wahlverwandschaften*', *Goethe Yearbook*, 6 (1992), pp. 115-122 (p.121).

solidarity given to the other is posited or projected.’⁷⁷ Milfull also disagrees with Benjamin, in particular, with his interpretation of ‘wunderlich’ as being ironic with regard to the ‘Utopia of the Novelle and the grim reality of the novel.’⁷⁸ He notices that up to the moment where the girl jumps ‘there is no essential difference between the narrative tone of the Novelle and that of the more realistic sections of the novel.’⁷⁹ After this point, there is a ‘transition from the “real” to the “ideal”’. The action is now [...] clearly symbolic’. He finds the ‘fairy-tale quality’ of the Novelle suggests a ‘possibility of a solution to a situation which, in the novel, admits of none’⁸⁰ Milfull refers to the narrator and his intent, but he means the narrator of the Novelle, not the narrator of the main novel text.⁸¹ Beckurts mentions the presence of another narrator for the *Die Wunderlichen Nachbarskinder*,⁸² whereas Stöcklein believes the narrator of the novel to be the English Lord himself and that the reader has no need to look for a meaning as it is a fairy-tale!⁸³ Stock believes that the ‘writer’ of the novel is ‘too conscious of the whole to abandon himself, or us, to the perspectives and responses of the past,’⁸⁴ whereas Milfull states that ‘*Die Wahlverwandtschaften* is not in any normal sense a ‘realistic novel’ so any speculations about the ‘past’ of any of the

⁷⁷ Miller, p.121.

⁷⁸ John Milfull, ‘The Function of the Novelle *Die Wunderlichen Nachbarskinder*, in Goethe’s *Die Wahlverwandtschaften*’, *GLL*, 25 (1971-1972), 1-5, (p.1).

⁷⁹ Milfull, p.1.

⁸⁰ Milfull, p.4.

⁸¹ Milfull, p.2. ‘This fairy-tale quality is further emphasized by the apparently rhetorical question with which the Novelle ends. On closer inspection, it proves not to be a rhetorical question at all, but an ironic device on the part of the narrator designed to indicate that, in fact, the ideal marriage does not take place, that the solution is ideal and not real. The story is perhaps “finished” on the idea level, but the narrator’s uncertainty (“Der Erzählende machte einer Pause, oder hatte vielmehr schon geendigt”) results, above all, from the consciousness that, on the real level, there is more to be said.’

⁸² Margarethe Beckurts, ‘Zur Bedeutung der Novelle in Goethes *Wahlverwandtschaften*’, *ZfdPH*, 103 (1984) Sonderheft, 64-78. ‘Der Erzähler des Romans überläßt hier gewissermaßen das Feld einem fiktiven Unterhalter, welcher, für die Weiterführung der eigentlichen Handlung bedeutungslos, mit den Verhältnissen auf dem Landgut nicht vertraut ist. Die Erzählung von den Nachbarskindern selbst wird damit aus der Welt des Romans deutlich herausgehoben. Sie ist als unterhaltendes Produkt der ‘Phantasie eines geist- und geschmackreichen Erzählers’ gemeint, d.h. als Erdichtetes. Damit rückt ihre Aussage in einen Bereich der Wahrheit gemein hat und von dieser aus nicht zu erschließen ist.’ pp.65-66.

⁸³ Stöcklein, p.15, ‘Mit humour hat er seine Eigenart hier gesteigert und karikiert: sein geradezu närrisches, taktloses Interesses für Psychologie.’

⁸⁴ Stock, p.19.

characters is clearly on very shaky ground' and finds that the Novelle 'represents an idealized past meeting between the Hauptmann and Charlotte, the possibility of an ideal union between them which did not come to pass.'⁸⁵

In looking at the interpolated texts, we sense that there is an intention to include other materials within the novel. Yet Dye writes '*Die Wahlverwandtschaften* exposes in advance the artifice in every narrative...the fictionality of every narrative is at least part of what he intends to exhibit.'⁸⁶ Yet somehow this assertion that all is fiction does not tally with our experience of reading *Die Wahlverwandtschaften*. We find ourselves constantly hearing and not-hearing narrative voices; we are frequently engaged, called upon to respond now one way, now another to the text. Yet on other occasions we are left to our own devices. In the last analysis, we end up unsure of our ground.

THE SENSE OF AN ENDING

As with the whole of *Die Wahlverwandtschaften* the closing chapter is full of ambiguities, and the narrator's refusal to play the role of the omniscient mediator of events past, present and future can be frustrating, and, as with other aspects of the novel, no consensus has been reached either to its meaning, or its ultimate coherence. We have explored aspects of narratorial presence in the previous chapter, and also of narratorial equivocation. In any event, the ending is indeed a striking one, and draws on all aspects of this narrator's craft to produce an eloquent cadence to a powerful novel. Some critics speak of the narrator's pain as being reason for the uncertainty of the ending: Staiger believes that in the description of Otilie's death and the ensuing

⁸⁵ Milfull, p.3.

⁸⁶ Ellis Dye, 'Goethe's *Die Wahlverwandtschaften*. Romantic Metafiction', *Goethe Yearbook*, 8 (1996), 66-92 (p. 84).

events, the narrator is playing with the possibility of heavenly hope due to his own sorrow. He leaves the ending open after trying to find a solution; ‘Er prüft die Möglichkeit; er verwirft sie; er schließt sie wenigstens nicht ganz aus. Dann aber bleibt er in der Schweben: Er läßt das Unbekannte offen und hält an der Würde des Menschen fest.’⁸⁷

Blackall feels that it is the narrator’s inability to explain this situation which leads him to resort to religious language.⁸⁸ Wellbery, however, believes that the ending is not a tragic one and it serves to highlight Goethe’s tentative belief in man’s immortality, but Ottilie’s fate, although painful, is presented in a positive light, although the apotheosis is ‘wohl problematisch’.⁸⁹ Beddow finds the ending to be ‘blithe’ and ‘a mere formal flourish with little hold upon narrative substance.’ His harsh criticism continues, with the accusation that the narrator’s ‘half-sympathetic, half-patronizing explanation’ of the villagers’ belief in the miracles is ‘an indirect verdict on the way he brings his own narrative to a close. There, too, is an unfulfilled need [...] to find meaning in the events depicted’ and the narrator’s offering is ‘a semblance of faith that bears no more scrutiny than the miracles allegedly worked at Ottilie’s “shrine”’. He believes that Goethe lacked ‘the power of art to shape [the novel] into a concluded story.’ And the ‘consoling phrases of the final paragraph look like an empty gesture.’⁹⁰ Constantine thinks that this ending ‘is Goethe at his shiftiest’ and by

⁸⁷ Staiger, pp. 508 and 514.

⁸⁸ ‘The narrator feels himself called upon to narrate something that extends beyond the confines of normal experience. He can only use religious terminology to describe it. And this is what he is doing in the last sentences of the novel.’ Blackall, p.183.

⁸⁹ David Wellbery, ‘Huysmans *À Rebours* als Hintergrund für eine untragische Lektüre der *Wahlverwandtschaften*’ in *Goethe 2000 Intercultural Readings of his work*, ed. by Paul Bishop and R.H.Stephenson (Leeds: Northern University Press, 2000), pp.21-31 pp.30-1.

⁹⁰ Michael Beddow, ‘Da wird hinter immer fortgespielt’. Un-ended plots in Goethe’s *Die Wahlverwandtschaften*, *PEGS*, 53, (1982-3) 1-19. (pp.17-19).

suggesting an after-life, 'Goethe offers us nothing we can believe in.'⁹¹ Barnes blames the lack of understanding on the narrator's failure adequately to describe Otilie's conflict which 'upsets the delicate balance of the narrative'⁹² and Stephenson goes further, saying that 'the narrator's failure to grasp the true significance of Otilie's life and death' is reflected in the text as a whole and 'the blame for her death is clearly laid on a society that [...] could not support [...] such a complex, beautiful, and life-enhancing creature.'⁹³

The description of the canonization of Otilie is highly problematic, and again critics have differing opinions concerning this particular episode. Barnes holds that the ambiguity of the ending is created 'by the use of a narrator who adopts a worldly sceptical attitude towards the miraculous phenomena that he has to describe' but that he does this out of 'politeness since his listeners are neither bludgeoned into believing nor bullied into disbelieving'.⁹⁴ But he also says that the 'narrator seems to justify our failure to accept the heroine as a thaumaturgical saint' as 'Nanny's evidence is so blatantly inadequate' and because of this, 'we are bound to sympathize with the disbelief of the many.' Barnes goes on to say that 'many readers may wonder whether it is not rather the final description of Otilie as "die Heilige" which should be taken ironically'⁹⁵ and the narrator makes a concession to his readers by the frequent use of 'scheinen' when speaking of the 'Wunder'.⁹⁶ Lillyman agrees with the narratorial doubt, explaining that 'her sainthood is purely her own creation. [...] The narrator does not contribute to the image she is creating for herself at the end; he rather rejects

⁹¹ David Constantine, 'Rights and Wrongs in Goethe's *Die Wahlverwandtschaften*', *GLL*, 47 (1992), 387-399 (p.389).

⁹² Barnes, 'Ambiguity', p.60.

⁹³ Roger Stephenson, "'Man nimmt in der Welt jenen, wofür er sich gibt': The Presentation of Self in Goethe's *Die Wahlverwandtschaften*", *GLL*, 47 (1992), 400-406 (p.406). Suhrkamp also agrees, arguing that the ending is pessimistic in its judgment of society. See Suhrkamp, p.212.

⁹⁴ Barnes, 'Ambiguity', p.61.

⁹⁵ Barnes, *Literary Interpretation*, p.205.

⁹⁶ H.G.Barnes, 'Bildhafte Darstellung in den *Wahlverwandtschaften*', *DVjs* 30, (1956), 41-70 (p.54).

it' seeing her as 'a tragic figure, not a saint'.⁹⁷ The narrator moves into reported speech to describe the events and beliefs of the people, and in so doing, distances himself from any clear position. Blessin finds that the majority of people in the text share the 'Skepsis des Erzählers' but then the narrator himself moves away from this sceptical attitude by including a generalization.⁹⁸ He finds that the 'zwiespältige Rolle des Erzählers nirgends so sichtbar [ist]' as in the last chapter because he presents the happenings with authority but then allows the reader to see the doubt in his and the other characters' minds.⁹⁹ However, he feels that the reader is invited to accept the narrator's own interpretation of events due to his 'Prognose über die künftige Auferstehung der Liebenden.'¹⁰⁰ Marahrens believes that the 'narrator distances himself nobly, calmly, considerately, and yet unmistakably from the saint's legend' and finds that if the language is closely examined then 'the sceptical and critical withdrawal of the narrator from association [...] is quite unmistakable.'¹⁰¹ However, he offers further explanation of the 'miracle' and the narrator's approach to it by stating that 'the truth of the words is no longer guaranteed by the narrator, only by faith alone.'¹⁰² Kahn suggests that as we hear what appears to be, not what is, then the final sentence might not be the narrator's but the onlookers'.¹⁰³ He maintains that

⁹⁷ Lillyman, p.359.

⁹⁸ '...indem er sich unter entgegengesetztem Aspekt ebenfalls auf die Allgemeinheit beruft und in einer generalisierenden Bemerkung die Gegenposition formuliert, "Jedes Bedürfnis, dessen wirkliche Befriedigung versagt ist, nötigt zum Glauben", he also offers the opinion that this sentence, which 'die Religionskritik der Psychologie vorwegnimmt, könnte die Heiligenverklärung Ottilies von Grund auf entlarven,' but the context 'weist ihm einen ganz anderen Stellenwert zu.' Blessin, p.88.

⁹⁹ 'Einerseits ist er ins Werk gesetzt, diesen Glaubensakt auch vor dem Leser gleichsam zu autorisieren, andererseits läßt die Art der Darstellung die Manipulation der Erzählfigur erkennen und gibt den aufklärerischen Gegenargumenten Raum.' Blessin, p.93.

¹⁰⁰ Blessin, p.95.

¹⁰¹ Marahrens, pp.100-01.

¹⁰² Marahrens, p.114.

¹⁰³ 'Allein, warum ist er dann so vorsichtig-unsicher, daß er es nur zu einem "vielleicht" bringt?' ... Sollten vielleicht die Sätze nur die latenten Gedanken, die unformulierten Eindrücke, die erlebte Rede der Beschauenden sein? Dafür sprächen das "wohl" und die Verben "schienen" und "schien": wir hören nicht, was *ist*, sondern was den Beschauenden *schien*. Und vielleicht spricht hier nicht Goethe oder der Erzähler in eigener Meinung, sondern *den Beschauenden* kommt der Gedanke, daß Ottilie

the novel is full of ‘unauslösbare Widersprüche’ and the themes of the novel – ‘das Unerforschliche, Hintergründige und Geheimnisvolle der Welt’ – are presented to the reader by means of a plausible narrator but in this passage, his voice is replaced ‘durch ein Gewirr von Stimmen’.¹⁰⁴

Burgess discusses the final paragraph, looking closely at the exact wording of the phrases. He draws our attention to the fact that ‘welch ein’ has only been used on two previous occasions and each of those appeared within ‘the context of story-telling: narrative within narrative’ and that they both ‘concerned love-affairs.’ (203)¹⁰⁵ Each time the phrase has been used in a positive context, and so Burgess goes on to state that ‘the recurrence of the phrase [...] at the end of the novel thus reinforces its message of hope for these two lovers after their own trials and tribulations’(204). But he continues to dismiss the authenticity of the narrator by explaining that because the previous usages have been within a fiction, then this ‘undermines the pretended reality of the tale and serves to remind us that even the story of these two loves is, after all, only a fiction.’ (204)

The use of speech, both direct and indirect, allows narrative distance, which, in such a situation, engenders conjecture and doubt. The narrator does not understand it all himself; there is no true personal input, no ‘Ach!’ as we heard in Otilie’s despair, and although we can hear the narrative voice, we cannot hear his meaning. The theme of the inability to read signs and attribute signification to events and objects comes to the

“vielleicht” dem Heiligen verwandt sei.’ Ludwig W Kahn, ‘Erlebte Rede in Goethes *Wahlverwandtschaften*’, *PMLA*, 89 (1974), 268-277 (p.275).

¹⁰⁴ Kahn, p.275.

¹⁰⁵ Reiss and Nisbet in their footnotes to the novel also point this out stating; ‘the construction and sense of [the concluding words of the novel] are similar. Goethe’s technique of adumbration extends even to phraseology. The notion of resurrection is introduced more than once before the end of the novel, usually in metaphorical senses [...] so that the reader is uncertain whether, in the final sentence of the novel, it is to be interpreted literally.’ J.W. Goethe, *Die Wahlverwandtschaften*, ed. by H.B Nisbet and H. Reiss (Oxford: Blackwell, 1958), p.275.

fore here. He brings to a close all religious terms without stating whether the couple are sainted or irreligious, brings to an end the life of two of the protagonists without explaining how they truly died, brings to a finish the artistic theme without elucidating the meaning or emotion behind the art, and brings to a finale the analysis of the human craving for signification without offering the patient reader a conclusion. Everything is there, yet no answers are to be found.

CONCLUSION

So what conclusions can be drawn from the detailed readings of the 'absent narrator'? The novel has two categories of present narration: the disincarnate third person voice that has access to the inner lives of the characters, to the past and to the future (yet even there instability prevails because sometimes the characters' inner lives are not delved into, neither is the future course of events always explored), and the personified narrator, heard in judgments and personal comments. In the same way, the absent narrator can be viewed under two headings: that of the disincarnate narrator who generates a type of rhetorical half-light, allowing the story, at crucial junctures, to tell itself, whereby powerful intimations of patterns are not spelt out and no foresight is offered; and the personified narrator about whom we start to psychologize, asking ourselves why he does not come clean. We find ourselves caught between the view that the story is too obvious to require comment on the one hand, or that it is too complex and inscrutable to allow commentary on the other.

The narrative decision not to offer judgment draws the reader into the text, into knowing and understanding more than the characters appear to. We see significance in the text, and as the narrator does not intrude or clarify, he gives us the information and leaves us to make the connection and also form our opinion of it. To repeat two

obvious examples. In the final episode of reading over the shoulder, which occurs during Otilie's decline and shows the exact opposite of Eduard's response to his wife's reading over his shoulder, we are again provided with no comment, but the reader cannot fail to hear the echo of previous incidents, and by so doing, registers the escalation of emotion.¹⁰⁶ In the case of the chemical discussion, we arguably feel that we know better than the narrator and feel ourselves able to be sceptical about the human delight in perceiving analogies and patterns everywhere. Yet, do we as readers hear the fragility of our own judgment? Just as the narrator does not realize he is guilty of creating and misreading signs and believes himself to be better than Eduard, does the reader become aware of his own complicity in this omnipresent human tendency? Do we realize that our own search for signs, portents and meaning in life is cognate with the narrator's performance? If the reader feels betrayed by the narrator, by his withholding of the necessary information, it does not prevent the reader from wondering and making suppositions. We are never provided with the full details, we will never know (for example) what truly happened between the Captain and the characters of the Novelle; but that does not prevent us from attempting to spell out the possibilities, rather than acknowledging our limitations and the impossibility of omniscience. The narrative constantly invites us to examine the text, the characters and the narrator, but it also challenges our own reading of both the text, and of ourselves.

In any fiction, the narrator's role is to structure and to guide the reading of the work, through inclusion and exclusion of various incidents. But why should there be slippage? Why should the reader be kept in the dark? In postponing the description of the Hauptmann's and Charlotte's kiss, the narrator may be hinting at the intended

¹⁰⁶ 'ja er ward unruhig, zerstreut, wenn sie nicht hineinsah, wenn er nicht gewiß war, daß sie seinen Worten mit ihren Augen folgte'. (479).

reading of the story. But we could also find, more significantly, that it could highlight the fact that the narrator is partial; that he displays elective affinities and aversions to the differing characters. He does not withdraw from the text, but frequently fails to offer guiding remarks when they are most wanted. Why is he not explicit about the growth of the relationship between Charlotte and the Captain? This could be because he is unintrusive and unopinionated. Or rather it could be that this growing attraction should be obvious to the reader. In the final analysis, we are left in no doubt as to the attraction that brings Charlotte and the Hauptmann together, but it is presented in such a way that it appears of secondary importance to what befalls Otilie and Eduard. The narrator speaks of this after giving proof of Eduard's reciprocal feelings towards Otilie.¹⁰⁷ The paragraph following the emotive description of the music-making, contains much narrative presence – 'oft', 'ja', 'vielleicht', 'jene', 'man' – and spells out the affection between Charlotte and the Hauptmann. However, although the narrator suggests this relationship could perhaps be more dangerous than the other because of their more serious natures, no prefigurative remark is made as to the danger or to the self-control, nor is there any reference to the chemical discussion and the ability of men and women to act in accordance with their own free will.

The above example, like many throughout the text, is a moment of an absence inflected by a personal response, and if so, then a conjectural response could be made by the reader – to the effect that the narrator appears to want to present a subjective account of the episode, but checks himself at the last minute. We think this, because we hear it filtered through a narrative personality. We hear a voice, and we are affected by it, even when it is not there. It is instructive to return for a moment to the

¹⁰⁷ 'Denn eigentlich war die Neigung dieser beiden ebensogut im Wachsen als jene, und vielleicht nur noch gefährlicher dadurch, daß beide ernster, sicherer von sich selbst, sich zu halten fähiger waren.' (298).

spiritual adultery scene. The scene shows the power of the imagination as centrally implicated in human desires. The narrator offers little comment. By moving into direct speech, by enabling the characters themselves to make reference to a previous incident, the narrator allows the episode to be endowed with greater significance than the reader might initially have thought. By virtue of the 'abstract language,' 'the importance of fate is concisely stated and yet concealed.'¹⁰⁸ The narrator presents the reader with no fixed answers, but he offers hints and allows his characters to express their opinions, fears and doubts. But he does not force the reader to share any of these; rather he invites him to contemplate the rights and wrongs.

The inclusion of the interpolated texts requires the narrator's absence, as we have seen, but the question of why the narrator offers no comment has not thereby been answered. Nor can it easily be. We have seen that the texts allow the outside world to be spoken of without the narrator having to leave the enclosed realm of the estate. However, the narrator singularly fails to guide our reading of these interpolations. He (it seems) cannot extrapolate as he knows no more than is written. He does not know better than we do, or than the characters do. What is important is the effect these texts have on the characters themselves, in the case of the letters and the *Novelle*. The diary entries are at times prefaced by the narrator, but these attempts at highlighting the thread or justifying their inclusion seem strangely inconclusive. To intrude on the entries would be to marginalize the thoughts of Otilie. Yet, the narrative presence is always strong immediately following these enforced absences, with a personalized voice coming out of the text, establishing the narrator's presence. Yet, that reasserted presence seems unable to comment on what has just been offered.

¹⁰⁸ Barnes, *Literary Interpretation*, pp.12-3.

I am not arguing that the narrator is a sovereign being who chooses to be inconsistent, but rather that we read the novel with an elusive, but also omnipresent, sense of a narrative entity that is there and not there. In consequence, the novel expresses a sense of the volatility of human affairs, volatility of emotion, experience and judgment. The human drama is not a simple one which allows itself to be stabilized, and it is this very insight which the overall narrative performance offers us.

The narrator is, as we have seen, sometimes present, sometimes absent, but his importance can never be overlooked, and it is in this most problematic of endings that his power can truly be seen and felt. Does the narrator's own pain contribute to his lack of comprehension, does he not wish the reader to be provided with a satisfactory ending to his tale, does he know and choose to withhold this information? In the final chapter the narrator is as constant as he has been throughout the text; constant in his inconsistent presence. This is the very strength of Goethe's novel and the reader must strive to find its meaning. Burgess believes that the final sentence of the novel is expressed 'categorically and straightforwardly'(203), but how can this be so? Burgess essentially only sees the text as an 'expressly fictional narrative' (208) created by a kind of *deus absconditus*, a withdrawn puppeteer, a type of narrative presence.¹⁰⁹ By examining the text in this way, Burgess provides the reader with superb insights into the language of the text, but he distances the narrator and the text from the reader. In the interpolated texts Burgess maintains that the narrator is still being manipulative through his presentation of them. I disagree and, as I have sought to explain, believe that they add to the ambiguity of the novel. We can see that they

¹⁰⁹ Burgess, p.146. In his discussion of the letters Burgess writes 'it may well be that it is natural for people to express themselves more simply in letters than in novels, but what is of interest is that the narrator (or Goethe?) may be attempting to emulate this'. By referring to Goethe trying to imitate letter writing, Burgess blurs the discussion of the narrator and reverts back to earlier scholars, who spoke of the author and not the narrator.

are not vastly different stylistically or linguistically from the main text, but we are made uncertain by them. Burgess is not. Ultimately he only ever hears one voice, and it is a manipulative one. This claim of manipulation of his readers, I believe, cannot be justified, as the intricate texture of the novel and the constant variations of narrative style do not allow the reader the luxury of being beholden to one knowable narrative persona.

Because the narrator is withdrawn from parts of the novel, the reader is forced to work overtime. The narrative is multifaceted, and the narrator is as complex when he is present as when he removes his persona from the text. The novel does not produce any one reading, as can be easily seen by the plethora of views offered by critics over the last two hundred years. The delight of *Die Wahlverwandtschaften* lies in its ability to provoke contradictory responses from its readers. If the reader cannot calmly and assuredly read the novel, then he will always endeavour to examine and re-examine the text, and in so doing, partake of the very thematic of Goethe's work, namely man's propensity constantly to set up forms and modes of signification.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

I have come to the end of two chapters of very detailed commentary. I can only hope that that very detail has not proved tedious or enervating. But, to repeat a point that I made earlier: there is, in my view, no other way to demonstrate the currents and counter-currents of the narrative performance that sustains *Die Wahlverwandtschaften*. Often the presence of the narrator expresses itself through tiny phrases, particles, single words. All such instances of language are in themselves unremarkable – not least because they are for the most part still familiar components of everyday German vernacular. But their effect is cumulative; the tiny, unemphatic details add up to something of profound importance to a narrative movement back and forth between personality and impersonality.

A similar shift in narrative perspective informs a recent Irish novel, John Banville's *The Newton Letter* which, as we shall see, debates most urgently with *Die Wahlverwandtschaften*. Burgess sees Banville's text as 'an anti-*Wahlverwandtschaften* novel' which is 'both anti-Newton and anti-Goethe' as it shows 'a way of looking at the world that is out of sympathy with the Newtonian adherence to known absolutes'.¹ The debate with absolutes is indeed against Newton;

¹ Gordon Burgess, 'An Irish *Die Wahlverwandtschaften*', *German Life and Letters*, 45 (1992), pp.140-48, p.146. 'Goethe, too, depended for his interpretation of reality primarily on what he was able to see, and with his naked eye at that: [...] he allowed himself to be deceived by what he believed he saw: his anti-Newtonian theory of colours is ample proof of his delusion in this respect. It is, of course, questionable whether such parallels were intended by Banville; but there is compelling evidence for his knowledge of Goethe's scientific approach.' (p.147). As I have said, I do not wish to enter into a debate concerning Goethe's scientific works, however, to speak of Goethe's delusions does seem to overlook the scientific endeavour and methodological advances he has been credited with – see Jeremy Adler: 'Eine fast magische

but to call this novel anti-Goethe overlooks the fact that the narrative volatility of the intertextual acknowledgements of *Die Wahlverwandtschaften* with which *The Newton Letter* is replete, generates a climate of cognitive uncertainty in respect of both texts.

Banville's narrator is an academic historian who moves to a big house, 'The Ferns' in County Wexford far from Dublin to finish his book on Newton. The characters on the estate consist of a married couple, Edward and Charlotte, her niece, Otilie, and a young boy, Michael. They are visited by other characters – the Mittler family, consisting of Edward's sister, Diana, her husband Tom, and their twin daughters Dolores and Alice – by Mr Prunty a gombeen man, and the doctor.² Banville clearly invokes *Die Wahlverwandtschaften* as intertext, but provides a twist in the novel by making the narrator into one of the four adult characters, one of Eduard's four elements in the chemical experiment. He becomes actively involved in the 'experiment', not able to remain the supposedly objective onlooker he would have us believe he is to begin with; he becomes Otilie's lover and at the end of the novel we learn that she is carrying his child. He is a highly self-conscious narrator, who initially seeks to align the reader with his own, intuitively self-confident understanding of the people around him, but ultimately he fails, as do we, to construct a coherent, comprehensible report. He creates patterns in order to understand, and, too late, realizes that everything is a misreading generated by his own imagination. He looks to another man as a source of clarity and comfort – Newton – but he fails to live up to the demands of a rational debate. His faith in perception and language collapses, ironically reflecting his scientific subject's own breakdown in his search for scientific truths.

Anziehungskraft': Goethes 'Wahlverwandtschaften' und die Chemie seiner Zeit (Munich: C.H. Beck, 1987).

² p.64. A gombeen man is a moneylender who charges exorbitant interest, from the Irish "gaimbin" meaning usury.

Banville's novel invokes Goethe's as intertext through its pellucid and subtle treatment of a similar subject matter and through stylistic parallels. The essential situation of an enclosed world, into which an outsider enters, disturbing the fragile balance, is to be seen in both texts, and it is this disruption to the established way of life which instigates the ensuing occurrences. The social situation of the characters, that of a declining aristocracy on a small estate, is not only intrinsic to the plot of the novels, but also to the significance of the two works in their wider social contexts. The names of the main characters offer a powerful intertext, and this is heightened by the similarities with the minor characters' nomenclature, such as Mittler. There is also a distinct parallel in the choice of the titles of both texts, with the thematic and scientific elements presented from the outset. The issue of science and its explanatory power is a key theme for the narrators, the characters and the readers alike, and each novel 'reflect[s] the scientific paradigm of their time.'³

Goethe's *Die Wahlverwandtschaften*, is a work that engages with (amongst other things) issues in contemporary science. The title names a concept from scientific discussion that was current at the time. And Goethe himself was, as is well-known, fascinated by science – and acutely aware that science would form an all-important component in the growth and evolution of modern culture (hence his fervent polemic against Newton whom he saw as representing dangerous tendencies within modern science.) Many critics have pursued the issues, then, of science in *Die Wahlverwandtschaften*, most weightily Jeremy Adler and Peter D. Smith.⁴ This thesis makes no claims to offer any contribution to this debate; for it is concerned to explore

³ Gundala Sharman, *Twentieth-Century Reworkings of German Literature* (London: Camden House, 2002), p.161.

⁴ See Jeremy Adler, 'Eine fast magische Anziehungskraft': Goethes 'Wahlverwandtschaften' und die Chemie seiner Zeit (Munich: C.H. Beck, 1987).

Peter D Smith, *Metaphor and Materiality: German Literature and the World-View of Science 1780-1955*, Studies in Comparative Literature, 4 (Oxford: University of Oxford, 2000).

the narrative mode of Goethe's remarkable text. But in one small particular, my project does overlap with an issue in Goethe's science – and that is the following.

At the heart of Goethe's objection to Newton was his (Goethe's) sense that the English scientist saw himself as standing apart from the natural world which he could explore by fracturing it into its component entities. Goethe was, by contrast, of a more holistic temperament, concerned to understand the evolving shapes and forms of the natural world (without doing violence to them by breaking them down). Moreover – and this is the particular point that is of importance to me – he insisted that no experimenter could fully stand back from, and could divorce himself from the phenomena that he was seeking to understand. This insight was already present in the essay 'Der Versuch als Vermittler von Objekt und Subjekt'. (1792)⁵ Put most simply: for Goethe, the experimenter was implicated in the experiment, was sensuously involved in the processes he was trying to understand. The fact that the narrator in *Die Wahlverwandtschaften* moves back and forth between detachment and involvement is, I venture to suggest, an expression of this insight

It is worth dwelling for a moment on the issue of science that conjoins Goethe's and Banville's novels. The characters in both novels endeavour to discover purpose and elucidation through an alignment of themselves with science, either with the phenomenon of Elective Affinities or with the '*greatest genius that science has produced*' (21) Sir Isaac Newton.⁶ Both titles, however, whilst offering a point of reference, also mislead the reader as to its importance. They are not the key to the works, but part of its all-pervasive and discursive textuality. Goethe's title links the notion of choice and affinities, usually considered dialectical opposites, and in doing

⁵ HA, 13, pp.10-20.

⁶ The narrator's italics. This is taken from Popov's disclaimer. All external writings in *The Newton Letter* are printed in italics in the novel.

so proffers a somewhat ironic comment on the impossibility of complete comprehension of man and his actions. The rationality of science is played off against the incalculability of human imaginings and suppositions. This is also the case in *The Newton Letter*, and again the failure to reach understanding is predominant throughout the text. The title immediately indicates the presence of a strongly scientific, and by implication rational, component, but as with Goethe's text, this approach offers only a partial reading, not least because the novel expresses a critique of the human mind which seeks to import the certainties of science into life. That the narrator is writing a book on Newton indicates the appeal of the rationality of the scientific, but the 'letter' of the title deals with the fallibility of science, the disillusionment with absolutes, and the unreliability of expectations, and it is a fiction in itself. Banville seems to be suggesting that man's life is based on texts; his behaviour is implicated in society's texts and its accepted thought. The capacity to explain, inherent in science, invites the notion of control, the pursuit of which is pivotal in the downfall of those characters who attempt to incorporate scientific clarity into their lives and to extend it to embrace the experience of those around them.

The attempt to explain and control the world is not only to be found in the narrator of *The Newton Letter* but in the character of Newton himself. The scientist suffered a breakdown, and it is at this juncture in writing about his life that his biographer suffers a similar breakdown. He cannot finish his book on Newton at the very moment of the scientist's stage of doubt, as the need for truth and absolutes is shown to be futile and misplaced. It is not just the inhabitants of Fern House whom the narrator fails to understand, 'the elusive Newton himself, stubbornly [defies] the historian's code of decipherment just as the truths of the universe defied Newton's

scientific blueprints'.⁷ The narrator is attempting to discover meaning in the world around him, just as Newton was, and the double failure – the narrator failing to understand Newton's failure – demonstrates that both the aspiration and the failure are endemic to human nature.

The key to any understanding of the narrator in *The Newton Letter* is the search for knowledge. He is in search of 'what knowledge dawned on [Newton]' (5) and caused his breakdown. His confusion at Ferns is based on his presumptions – his incorrect knowledge – of those around him. We have seen how the narrator wants to know others, but 'had not contracted to be known as she [Otilie] was trying to know' him (29). He is not the sovereign narrator he would like to be, just as he is not the sovereign experimenter or sovereign historian. We see how his search for knowledge leads him to misread and misunderstand, and we see that it is his obsession with the phase in Newton's life that no-one truly knows about which is the key to his self-questioning. Goethe's narrator is, of course, in many respects, utterly different from Banville's. He is not sharply individuated, he is not an agent in the story he tells; and he is not a failure. Yet common to both narrators (and central, perhaps, to Banville's intertextual tribute to Goethe) is the sense that both narrators, in the account they give of the inroads of passion, move back and forth between dispassion and detachment on the one hand and personal judgement and involvement on the other.

The outcome of both novels is anything but comforting. Banville's novel clearly portrays an unravelling world. One hesitates to claim anything of this order for Goethe – not just because of that 'avoidance of tragedy' that is so often imputed to him, but also because, for him, science, properly understood, was benign and

⁷ Richard Kearney, *Transitions: Narratives in Modern Irish Culture* (Manchester: MUP 1988), pp. 91-100 (p.97).

revelatory. It represented processes by which the human subject could acknowledge and regulate the dynamic interplay between human consciousness and the material world. Yet in *Die Wahlverwandtschaften* he explores the possibility that sophisticated people could be led astray by what they take to be an analogy between science and human relationships. In any event, the outcome is dark. *Die Wahlverwandtschaften* as a text is, as David Constantine and David Wellbery suggest, deeply acquainted with death.⁸ It is a remarkable statement from an author who is often seen as conciliatory. In the understanding of human affairs implied by *Die Wahlverwandtschaften* it seems that men and women frequently aspire to clarity and dispassion. Yet that attempt is all too often subverted by the force of their own temperament, by the promptings of their desires. In *Die Wahlverwandtschaften* this is true not only of the characters but also, less spectacularly, of course, but perhaps for that reason more unsettlingly, of the narrator.

⁸ David Constantine, 'Rights and Wrongs in Goethe's *Die Wahlverwandtschaften*', *GLL*, 47 (1992), 387-399 and David E Wellbery, 'Die Wahlverwandtschaften' in *Goethes Erzählwerk*, ed. by Paul Michael Lützeler und James E. McLeod. (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1985) David Constantine, 'Rights and Wrongs in Goethe's *Die Wahlverwandtschaften*', *GLL*, 47 (1992), 387-399.

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ABBREVIATIONS

CUP: Cambridge University Press

DVjs: Deutsche Vierteljahrschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Geistesgeschichte

FMLS: Forum for Modern Language Studies

GLL: German Life and Letters

GQ: German Quarterly

GR: The Germanic Review

JbdfH: Jahrbuch des freien deutschen Hochstifts

JEGP: Journal of English and German Philology

MLN: Modern Language Notes

MLR: Modern Language Review

OUP: Oxford University Press

PEGS: Publications of the English Goethe Society

PMLA: Publications of the Modern Language Association of America

ZfdPH: Zeitschrift für deutsche Philologie

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