The Chain of Things

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Published by Cornell University Press

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The Chain of Things: Divinatory Magic and the Practice of Reading in German Literature and Thought, 1850–1940.

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Gottfried Keller’s *Green Henry* (*Der Grüne Heinrich*, 1854–55) is a *Bildungsroman* and, like Adalbert Stifter’s *Indian Summer* (*Der Nachsommer*, 1857), one representative of the realist period. As a *Bildungsroman*, the narrative focuses on the subject formation of the protagonist, Heinrich Lee, and his integration into social norms and expectations; and, as is typical of the genre, it does so in large part by following both his erotic and his aesthetic educations. As reflective of a particularly realist program, the latter education focuses especially on Heinrich’s engagement with an external object world, both social and natural; and with the problem of the representation of that world, in this case through painting—and especially, landscape painting.

The various elements of these two sets of concerns—*Bildung* and realism, subject formation and the relation to objects, Heinrich Lee as both lover and painter—are clearly deeply implicated with each other: and they are often especially considered as jointly implicated in the overarching project of *disenchantment*, of gradually
divesting both Heinrich’s inner world and the text’s external world of all traces of magical thinking and being, in ways that directly impact both his erotic and his aesthetic educations. It is this latter assumption that I wish to contest, and there is one particular if minor moment in the early part of this novel—in the so-called “Story of My Youth” (Jugendgeschichte)—that brings the play of these various elements and the way I want to address them into sharp focus.

Heinrich Lee has just left the city, where he has been pursuing his training as a painter, and returned to the country setting where he had previously met Anna, the first and primary object of his erotic attentions. He is surprised to learn that her father has sent Anna away to be educated (gebildet) for a year in a different city. In her absence, Heinrich is often invited to stay in her room, and one day, remembering a spot in the woods where he and Anna had once sat together, he tells us:

I couldn’t keep myself from drawing a neat square on the snow-white wall of the little room and painting the picture of the Heathen Chamber in it, as best I could. This was to be a silent greeting for her, to show her later how constantly I thought of her.

The “Heathen Chamber” that is the subject of this painting is in many ways a variant of the topos of the locus amoenus, a usually idealized natural setting removed from the social world and suggestive of erotic play; and Heinrich’s depiction of it here on the wall of Anna’s room is often taken as an endearingly naïve and innocent expression of both his struggling after a painterly ideal of realism (“as best I could”) and his still rather romantic erotic imagination (“how constantly I thought of her”). But while it is both these things, it is also something more—or rather, in being these also entails something more: this picture is painted on Anna’s wall as a kind of magical charm with the covert intent of binding and, eventually, killing her with it; and Heinrich will succeed in
realizing this intent, and by this means, and will do so concurrently with the realization of the work’s *Bildung* and realist programs.

This at least is my claim, and in what follows I will not so much be concerned with *why* Heinrich Lee should want his beloved Anna dead, although the analysis will inevitably touch on this. Rather, my primary interest will be in *how* he goes about making it happen, that is, realizing this intent, and what this tells us about the realism, and enchantment, at stake in the novel. I want to know, what are the conditions pertaining to both the narrated world and representation in that world that allow for such an *actio in distans* and, as part of that, to such a future force to things? What relations must obtain between the painter and his subject, that is, his landscape, between the landscape and his beloved victim, Anna, between his painting and both these things (the landscape and Anna) in order for these effects to come about and be realized—which is to say, for the *reader* to realize them, draw them out, and as it were activate them beneath the level of the overtly represented, since in fact these relations and their forces will remain essentially invisible? And even more, what do these invisible forces and their visible effects reveal to us about realism itself, about the nature of its things, its temporalities and causalities?

In pursuing these questions, I want to identify but also delimit two approaches that are often applied to related issues in *Bildung* and realism, both of which prove productive but also betray a kind of suspect temporal reasoning in their causal explanations.\(^2\) Short-hand for these approaches would be the Foucauldian and Freudian. The first is a sophisticated variant on the position that any magical properties in realism are residues of a romantic—or more extensively, an early modern—sensibility, and that one of the primary tasks of a realist program is to overcome and banish such discounted, antiquated beliefs from its operant world: from its understanding of things, of time, and of relations of cause and effect.\(^3\) This is more or less the approach elaborated by Nancy Armstrong in her important book, *How Novels Think*, which, moreover, extends this agenda to include the nineteenth-century novel genre as a whole and bourgeois *Bildung* with it.\(^4\) As we’ll see, the general assumptions of her argument can go a long way—though by no
means the whole way—toward accounting for the seeming surplus of forces, of the superrational and perhaps even supernatural forces, evident in Keller’s novel. But the drawbacks to this approach are easy to see: it assumes such “magic” to belong only to some prior extrinsic realm, and not as intrinsic to realism itself; and it assumes the continued presence of such forces in the realist world to be symptoms of a failure fully to achieve its agenda, rather than necessary, constituent elements both producing and produced by that realist world.

If a Foucauldian approach banishes the magical to a romantic or early modern past and sees only its afterlife in realism, the Freudian, while proving equally rich, exiles it to a modernist, psychological future and sees only its own adumbrations in the literature that immediately precedes it. In this approach, magical effects are recast as exclusively unconscious projections, functioning along lines laid out by various Freudian models, the most relevant of which are probably his theories of displacement and the omnipotence of thought. This approach, too, is seductive in its explanatory force, and has been productively applied to the realm of the seemingly fantastic in *Green Henry*, sometimes even in sophisticated conjunction with a Foucauldian approach. But the reservations to be registered are obvious on this front, too: it converts the magic in the realist world into a mere (and not fully understood) expression of a later modernist mind-set rather than, again, something already recognized and singularly appropriate to realism itself: whereas from the one approach the presence of magic represents the failure to let go of residual falsities, from the other it represents a failure fully to grasp an emergent truth—in other words, once again as somehow not quite proper to realism itself. In any case, an added pitfall to both this Freudian and the more Foucauldian approach is the shared, initial, unquestioned assumption that magic in realism is centered only in the (human) subject and not in the world itself or in its representations: in their own materiality, temporality, and causality. And yet perhaps it is just this assumption that needs first to be questioned—and not least when we include in our field of inquiry realism as, finally, a reading experience.
What I would therefore like to propose instead, or in addition, as theoretical background for this study is a discourse recently foregrounded in the work of David Wellbery, Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht, Thomas Pfau, and others that focuses on the properly German concept of *Stimmung*, a notion with notable affinities with the earlier traditions of sympathetic magic we traced from the ancient world through the early modern period. These affinities are not accidental: as Leo Spitzer shows, the idea set of *Stimmung* emerges out of a strain of Western thought stretching back to Greek antiquity. But as Wellbery shows, in the semantic field of *Stimmung* such affinities become central to German aesthetic discourse beginning in the early nineteenth century and, while originating in music, find particular application within both the literary sphere and that of landscape painting. Wellbery skips from the very beginning of the century to its end in his own historical account of *Stimmung*, but the idea itself is clearly relevant to works in the realist period in between—perhaps most readily applicable to the novellas of Theodor Storm, but also, I hope, to Keller’s *Green Henry*, with its own essential merging of literature and landscape painting.

**Stimmung**

There is no need to give a detailed, specific account of Wellbery’s exposition, especially since I do not intend, as he does, to focus only on uses of the word itself (although doing so would certainly reveal the relation of *Stimmung* in Keller’s novel to magic, music, art, eros, and death). Rather, I want only to sketch out the set of defining features encompassed by the idea as it unfolds in the areas of aesthetic experience, literature, and painting in this period. Focusing on *Stimmung* in this way, in this period, and in this novel will, I believe, accomplish two things. On the one hand, it will allow us to complicate the notably Foucauldian historical trajectory of Wellbery’s own analysis, which posits a fairly relentless move toward the radical interiorization of *Stimmung* over the course of the nineteenth century; our complication will come not least by showing how the literature of this period skipped by Wellbery
reengages some of the dimensions implicit in Stimmung’s classical history. On the other hand, it will allow us to show how the basic terms of Stimmung can encompass and extend the reach of both Freudian and Foucauldian approaches to Keller’s novel in more satisfactory and comprehensive ways that admit consideration of otherwise overlooked elements—elements that are intrinsic to realism and not at all reducible to a program of disenchantment.

The first characteristic of Stimmung, and the one that makes it as difficult to pin down as most aspects of magic thinking, is that it is basically preconceptual, or not quite present at an explicit level of representation. Stimmung is grounded in a sensible experience that suggests but does not fully attain cognitive articulation or clarity: in this way, it is an aesthetic experience par excellence.11 As such, Stimmung remains something “dark,” diffuse, and spectral, attached neither to a particular object nor to a particular thought. Still, key to its preconceptual nature is also the essential impulse to move from the merely sensed to the grasped: there is almost by definition something premonitory about Stimmung, something awaiting expression, understanding, and affective response. In this way, it parallels the parasitic, hidden quality we have ascribed to most magical experience, a hidden quality that needs to be overcome and brought into the world, by means of what Burkhard Meyer-Sickendiek calls Gespür: “the capacity to grasp affectively a hidden, not actually visible circumstance” (die Fähigkeit, einen verborgenen, nicht wirklich sichtbaren Sachverhalt gefühlsmäßig zu erfassen).12

The second characteristic of Stimmung is that it is relational, what Wellbery calls a “setting-into-relation of parts,” a “uniformly colored weave of relations (Beziehungsgeflecht),” an “interplay of echoing tone variations.” Crucially, this relationality pertains at once and in turn to an objective sphere, a subjective one, and to the micro-macro connections between them. It is in the first place a relation of objects and events in and of themselves, a property of the external world quite apart from the individual subject: what in earlier times (and in the popular literature of the day) would have been called the sympathetic relations of the natural world, and in more modern times the atmosphere, it is in any case decisively
nonpsychological, indeed nonhuman. But as part of this relational weave, *Stimmung* also posits a similarly sympathetic relation between those objective relations and the observing human (“aesthetic”) subject—even between those objective relations and the subjective relations of parts (memory, imagination, desire, understanding) of the observing subject. In Wellbery’s terms, the objective harmony requires a “subjective correlative” in the aesthetic subject in order to be perceived and expressed, even as, conversely, that subject must find in the natural order the objective correlative for his inner state. In more traditional terms, we would say that *Stimmung* implies an active back-and-forth movement and connection between the macro- and microcosmic orders. In any case, like ancient magic, *Stimmung* depends upon a porous boundary between the subject and object world: it is a matter of mutual projection, a “mystical participation” or open identification in which the world of things injects itself into the human every bit as much as the human projects itself onto things.

An additional aspect of the relational character of *Stimmung* is that it presents itself as a unity, a harmony (a *kosmos*). Three things can be said about this. First, while aiming at, even defined by, a unity, a oneness between things themselves—clouds, trees, rocks, water, light, and so on—and also between those things and the apprehending aesthetic subject, that unity cannot necessarily be said to reside in the particular things themselves, but only in diffuse form between or behind them (nor, as mentioned, can it be said simply to emanate from the human subject). In this sense, too, *Stimmung* represents something spectral, invisible, manifest without being present, a supplementary reality that is both there and not there, something both tied to the world of things and their perception but not of them. This is, as it were, the objective counterpart to the subjective ghostliness associated with its preconceptuality, but now clearly as part of the outside material world and not just its affective experience. We might say that *Stimmung* is present as a force that binds together the world of things (and notably in a noncausal but still determinative fashion); or as Johann Gottlieb Fichte has it, that Stimmung is a *movement*.
Second, as the earlier-cited phrase “of echoing tone variations” implies, what holds together and produces the sense of unity, what establishes the relations, is a complex web or chain of similarity, analogy, and resemblance between parts, with no necessary first term in either the external or the subject world.\textsuperscript{19} What this alerts us to is that, outside of the musical sphere proper, the often almost invisible operations of mimetic, analogical, and metonymical forces account for the effects of \textit{Stimmung} every bit as much as they do for those of sympathetic magic: \textit{Stimmung}, too, is a matter of the similar, imitative, and contiguous. But third, insofar as the likenesses hint at a unity that is not in the things themselves but only invisibly between or behind them, \textit{Stimmung} seems also to present an opening for the \textit{allegorical} to assert itself, a “something more” (and different) coursing beyond the given: every bit as much as with the symbolic logic of the Neoplatonists, the logic of \textit{Stimmung} pushes the orders or forces of likeness and similarity beyond the visible material and into the magic space of a supersensible realm—of allegory.\textsuperscript{20} However, it does so without ever presenting anything more than the material things of the visible world.\textsuperscript{21}

Wellbery also insists that, although both objectively and subjectively diffuse and difficult to pin down, \textit{Stimmung} must nonetheless be communicable or, as he also puts it, \textit{contagious}, operating suggestively at a level that might escape explicit formulation or even notice. Here, too, \textit{Stimmung} functions similarly to ancient magic, which (as Armstrong also stresses) is by nature contagious, which is to say, works by contagion, by contact and contiguity—by affective relation. To some extent, this point is already implicit in what was said above about the needed contact and susceptibility of the aesthetic subject, of the artist to the order of things, and of the order of things to him. But what Wellbery’s focus on the contagious communicability of \textit{Stimmung} is meant to foreground is a second order of contagion, that which needs to occur at the site of a third term: in visual art, the viewer, and in literature, the reader. This is where the magic must (also) happen.\textsuperscript{22} Almost by definition, \textit{Stimmung} requires the viewer or reader to be drawn into these invisible relations, to become participant, and in a way that is not
only receptive but active, even productive as well. In the end, *Stimmung*, like magic and like realism, is an effect, and one not only on but inevitably also by the engaged, targeted subject, who must be capable of (clairvoyantly) sensing, even of divining—this would be Schleiermacher’s term (Carus’s, too)—its presence behind or beyond the visible world or articulated words themselves.23

There are three final points about this theoretical model to raise before (re)turning to Keller’s text, none of crucial importance to Wellbery’s analysis, but all to mine. The first concerns temporality. The temporality of magic (and the magic of temporality) is of course one of my major concerns, but as perhaps befits the linkage with landscape painting, it seems decidedly secondary to Wellbery’s: at most, apparently, a matter of whether *Stimmung* is momentary or durative. And although the momentary (i.e., occasional) is certainly important for us, it is not really the kind of temporality my concern with narrative magic requires, which also calls for sequence and, even more, for futurity. Still, there are two moments in Wellbery’s discussion from which such a temporality may be teased out.24 The first comes in a rather Freudian citation from Nietzsche that Wellbery specifically cites as introducing a (new) “temporal depth” (*zeitliche Tiefe*) to the discourse. The passage describes how recent experience can awaken unconscious, prereflexive memories and affects that echo it, combine with it (*mitstimmen*), but are then experienced as a singularity, as one present emotion or experience: it is the temporal echo-effect or *Stimmung* that determines its present force.25 The second comes much earlier in the essay when, in keeping with one part of the original musical metaphor, *Stimmung* is described as a state of readiness: an anticipatory, even premonitory *Bereitschaft* (an already tuned-in-ness) to enter into relations with what is to come, but in such a fashion that the “readiness” also predetermines the shape or order of what has yet to unfold.26 A similar point is made by Jochen Hörisch, who speaks of a “presentiment” (*Vorahnung*) or “foreknowledge” (*Vorwissen*) as intrinsic to *Stimmung*, a disposition that “aims to predict” subsequent effects and permits one to choose or direct the *Stimmung* that will recursively and afterward determine one in turn.27 In any case, these two passages from Wellbery suggest
how the basic idea of *Stimmung* allows for relations that are linked temporally as well as spatially, and that aim at and even anticipate what is to come even as they reach back and echo what came before—both important factors for the retrospective medium of narrative.\(^\text{28}\)

The second final point to be raised is the specific relation of *Stimmung* to art, or more broadly, the relation between representation and world. At one point Wellbery notes that art or rather the artist is required to activate the communicable contagion that is intrinsic to *Stimmung*, to bring about its continuability (*Fortsetzbarkeit*). And at another, Alois Riegl is cited as noting that landscape painting is meant to gift us, as it were, with an intimation of the immanent formal connection (*Formzusammenhang*) behind the appearances of ordinary life, conveying a sense of connectedness (via echoing similarities) that is otherwise unapparent in our everyday experience. Both are important, but equally so is Wellbery’s apparent reluctance to distinguish between, say, the direct experience of a landscape and the mediated experience of a landscape painting—which is to say, the indifference to matters of mediated representation versus immediate experience or sensation. Far from an oversight, this seems an essential insight, and in two ways.\(^\text{29}\)

First, insofar as it reckons representations themselves to be part of and not separate from the world of things, and thereby potentially to participate in the force of their relations. From this perspective, part of the function of the realist principle of transparent mimesis would be not so much to efface the role of the artwork as to encourage this play of forces through the very porosity of its supposedly separate spheres—where the hidden-but-present (meta)level of representation can itself double up as the hidden-but-present allegorical order of *Stimmung*; or phrased differently, where the artwork qua artwork can become the portal for that allegorical order to enter the representation’s “real” world.\(^\text{30}\) And second (although clearly related), insofar as this indifference, this porosity, once again underscores the reading experience itself as an immersion, a “mystical participation” in the presented world. This would represent a negation of the post–eighteenth-century distinction between sign and world, including the twentieth-century distinction
between story and discourse, and in their place a reaffirmation of early models of magic reading in which textuality remains firmly part of the one world, and where reading, like representation, itself becomes a potentially powerful site for the contagion of Stimmung that oversteps the boundary between representation and the real.\textsuperscript{31}

The last point is in many ways the trickiest, but hopefully enough context has been established in what precedes to make it. Insofar as Stimmung implies a kind of force, a movement and communicability between spatially and temporally separate parts—a movement and communicability that takes place both between objects and events in and of themselves and between that objective world and individual subjects—Stimmung also implies a mode of action and activity, an energeia or Tatkräft, but of a particular kind.\textsuperscript{32} Certainly the previously mentioned impulse for Stimmung to appear, to make itself manifest and to move toward communicable articulation—or from a slightly different perspective, to move from an anticipatory state of readiness to a realized state of engagement and fulfillment—is part of this Tatkräft, and as such Stimmung shares key features with the related concept of presentiment or Ahnung, and with it the directional, self-unfolding action of aesthetic experience per se.\textsuperscript{33} But even more than this, the particular mode of action Stimmung implies in its intrinsic relationality is that of actio in distans.\textsuperscript{34} One of the most ancient examples of actio in distans is one with explicit connection to the idea sets of both Stimmung and sympathetic divinatory magic (Cicero cites it in De divinatione): how when one musical string is struck it can cause a remote other string (or even strings) to vibrate as well.\textsuperscript{35} In the absence of explicit, visible connection, a system of cause and effect is established that makes itself invisibly available for things to happen—a force field that grounds both Stimmung and divination, and, as I hope to show, the fictional realist world of Keller’s novel as well.\textsuperscript{36}

**Meretlein**

I’d like to start my discussion of the painting magic in Keller’s text with the painting and story of the “little witch,” Meretlein.\textsuperscript{37}
Introduced early in the novel and drawn from the early modern period, this inserted exemplum clearly engages the issues of Bildung and erotic desire that figure so prominently in both Freudian and Foucauldian approaches to the Bildungsroman genre. But it also presents a kind of surplus meaning that exceeds the parameters of these approaches, which is to say, a witchery that properly belongs both to its own early modern setting and to the realist text in which it is placed. As I hope to show, the form of witchery introduced in the Meretlein story is a kind of binding magic. Forms of binding are, of course, central to both psychological and socially oriented readings. And as just described, they are also central to the idea of Stimmung. As we’ll see, the discourse of witchery allows for an almost seamless transition between these three, in ways that push the operant field of binding beyond the narrow confines of the first two and into the more comprehensive field of the last, of Stimmung. But it extends our understanding of the binding forces at work in Stimmung as well: for witchery encompasses not just the affirming but also the threatening forces implicit in the relations of Stimmung, the sympathetic forces behind both it and traditional magic, and whether these are thought of as emanating from nature or from art.

The Meretlein story is actually inserted into the text to explain a particular bind, Heinrich Lee’s peculiar tendency toward obduracy (Verstocktheit), a condition also variously described as his clamming up (Verstummtheit), his constraint (Befangenheit), and his rigidity (Halsstarrigkeit). This hinge immediately suggests that Meretlein serves as an analogue for Heinrich himself, and there are certainly significant resemblances between the story of this obstinate and unruly girl-child and Heinrich at this moment in his own story (not praying, going hungry, etc.) that link her figure to his. But there is also a great deal of material apparently dissimilar and superfluous to the immediate context and figure of Heinrich himself; and what emerges retrospectively is that Meretlein also serves as a proleptic projection or likeness for the figure of Anna and her binding, a shift in which Heinrich comes to occupy two other figure positions in the Meretlein story: that of the painter who produces a portrait or Bild of the witch-child; and that of the pastor
charged with her corrective “Education” or Bildung, who also serves as the writer whose first-person text Heinrich incorporates into his own—although in the complicated way such displaced doublings can work, the position of the pastor will also be taken by Anna’s father, who as mentioned is as occupied with Anna being educated (gebildet) via “Instruction” as Heinrich is with her being depicted (gebildet) via painting. Between them, the producers of Bild and Bildung represent the two media in which Heinrich’s relations to Anna will be mostly carried out, which are also the two media in which the realist poetics are most thematized—although as the focus on Stimmung anticipates, music will also play a significant role.

The particular way the relevant resemblances and (binding) connections of Meretlein shift from the present Heinrich Lee to the future Anna is itself significant. To begin, it proleptically reflects the way we’ll see Heinrich shift his own condition of constraint or Befangenheit directly onto Anna in a complected and ultimately fatal process of rebounding reversal: taking the arrest or Starrheit she causes him as lover and transforming it into the arrest he imposes on her as painter and writer. Second, the shift itself—the projection onto Anna of his own unruly desires and of the constraint they make him feel—will prove absolutely central to the Bildung project of Heinrich’s subject formation and socialization. But third, the shift is significant because, for these things actually to happen, for the reversals and reinvestments to occur, somehow more than “real” causalities will need to be operant in the textual world.

As we’ll see, a good part of this added causality will be active and present at a metatextual level: at that usually hidden level of activity and presence that is only accessible to—and activated by—the reader, remote from, but then summoned into, the more manifest workings of the narrated world. But the point of the text and painting of the Meretlein being inserted into the story is that the metalevel (with its own temporalities and causalities) is being inserted into it, too, where it will serve as a portal for certain magical effects to penetrate into the story world—effects marked as magical through their association with Meretlein. In this respect, it is worth noting how the Meretlein story will itself operate as
an omen, as a magic charm determining the later fate of Anna for
and via the reader, setting up a not necessarily causal but still de-
terminative force by which the text will bind her future, precisely
via the similarities and coincidences—the Stimmung—between the
two figures.43

The figure of the witch-child is first presented to the reader in
three forms: as a worn grave tablet Heinrich discovers in a church
wall, as a portrait he finds in his uncle’s house in the country, and
then as the text by the pastor he reads and incorporates into his
own. That Meretlein’s story is first introduced as a worn grave
tablet is immediately important, and not least in that it seems
to suggest something long past about her “early” witchery (*früh-
zeitige Hexerei*): that she herself was both a mere child and is
now dead further reinforces the temporal distance of her story,
set as it is in a similarly “early” pre-Enlightenment, pre-realist
period. That is, the grave tablet seems to suggest the death of this
whole earlier childlike era, together with its superstitious magic
and sorcery.44

But that Meretlein is first introduced as a grave tablet is also
crucial for our understanding of the following two forms of her
appearance, in ways that multiply the role that death plays in its
connection to her figure. This is especially true for how it figures
in painting. By signaling the child who will become the subject of
the portrait as lifeless, it brings into play the essentially life-less
dimension of painting itself. The topos is a not uncommon one in
nineteenth-century literature, and is doubly underscored here by
not only having the subject of the painting introduced as dead, but
also in the portrait having Meretlein holding a child’s skull—and
the specific relevance to painting is further signaled in the story by
having the painter claim not even to need a real skull in order to
include it in his portrait, since such belongs to “the very first ele-
ments of his art.” Painting—and the same holds for writing and
art in general—is recognized as a sphere intrinsically opposed to
the life it is meant to re-present, and the portrait of a dead subject
self-consciously includes painting as a potentially, even intrinsically
deadly force in the realist world—or rather, behind the world, in a
suggestively allegorical (and metatextual) space.
The painting of the dead child reflects, then, a basic paradox of realist representation, one that pushes it away from life and toward allegory. But part of the same topos and its paradox is how the painting also proves uncannily alive and its subject to live on in this other but still present realm. We find this to be the case here as well, as in the portrait “the living child” (das lebendige Kind) seems fully there to the present-day viewer: and part of what is there is not just the child but the magic, the witchery of her figure, as even the present-day viewer is involuntarily charmed and fascinated by her living portrait. The achievement of the very ideal of realist representation (life) has brought with it a doubly contradictory effect: not only does the supposedly superceded magic return, it returns imbued with an added deadly force. But as mentioned at the outset, this has perhaps always been part of magic, which almost always traffics with the dead as part of its other world, and no less so when that world is an artful one. Thus, it foregrounds an aspect to the traffic with the things of the natural and the aesthetic worlds overlooked by our earlier account of Stimmung, but still essentially part of it: its spectral nature and connective force are not just of hidden life, but, at least at times, hidden death as well.

The particular kind of witchery associated with Meretlein is first described by Heinrich in terms of erotic desire. Grown men, he tells us, had only to look at the child in order to become seduced and to fall fatally in love with her: these grown men include both the painter of her portrait, who was “completely charmed” (ganz charmiert), and the disciplining pastor, who, too, became “bewitched” (verhext) by her. Although the bewitching forces seem to originate in Meretlein and only to affect the men, Heinrich actually sketches out a more complex series of displacements that involve both causal and temporal reversals—the same series we will see again between Heinrich and Anna, and that, as mentioned, is also implicit in the shifting identification of Heinrich and Anna with Meretlein herself. Heinrich shows how the aroused fantasies and erotic forces are centrally and properly sited in the viewing males and only become projected on or bound to the viewed child, so that she rather than they becomes the site and source of their wild unruliness; and he shows how the potentially fatal effect of those
forces on the men becomes redirected at her as well, constraining her instead of them. In this respect, it is telling that one of the primary aspects of the disciplining of Meretlein in the story proper is a hunger cure, a starving of appetites, imposed by the pastor. But the “Correction” also extends to the painter, who needs her to hold still so he can practice his artistic control—and so, as the text says, his painting is the continuation, not disruption, of the pastor’s “Education” of her. That is, painting itself, in its own life-depriving way, participates in this same arresting or binding project, of removing the child—qua repository for unwanted erotic and fantastic forces—from the realm of the real: and it does so in part by joining silence to hunger as both means and end. In any case, Heinrich describes how the alleged initial stubborn rigidity (Halsstarrigkeit) of the child becomes replaced by the arrest (Starrheit) imposed by the men, itself a displacement of the arrest they experienced in themselves, a displacement and arrest completed by those of painting itself.

This attempt to bind the child fails, and in ways that double up on the paradox of realist painting just mentioned. We’re told that the painting of Meretlein “aroused in the viewer an involuntary longing to see the living child and to be allowed to fondle and kiss her,” even as—breaking the painting’s silence—it also generates “stories and legends,” “all sorts of fantastic and fabulous tales,” inspired by an equally “involuntary sympathy” in the community. The witchery doesn’t go away, not by abjecting it into the child, fatally “correcting,” starving, or silencing the child, nor fixing and removing her via painting. It continually reappears at the level of both desire and imagination and refuses to leave “this world”—and in this, Heinrich’s description of the painting and of Meretlein’s narrative afterlife is again reflective of events in the story, indeed of its central event. For when Meretlein was finally apparently killed off by the corrective efforts of the pastor, she fantastically resurrected herself from the grave and returned to life (on the Buchberg, no less). At the level of both representation and world, the magical bindings do not, indeed cannot, go away.

The complicated reversals and persistence of Meretlein’s witchery are also evident in Heinrich’s description of its magic workings
and bindings not so much in terms of individual erotic desire as in those of a more communally centered socialization process. We get a hint of this in Heinrich’s mention of how “old women would use this tale as a bogeyman for the children when they were not pious, and would add still other strange and fantastic details.” Again, the intent is to arrest, charm, or bind an ungovernable youth and produce a proper docility; and as the echo of the pastor’s own ideal of piety suggests, this subjection is to be done in the name of and by means of a kind of instruction, of Bildung. But the remarkable thing is how the means chosen and deployed to rein in and bind the unruly subjects are themselves explicitly “strange and fantastic,” or differently put, how the strange and fantastic are put in the service of achieving sober, normative bounds; in other words, enchantment in the service of disenchantment. This is the context in which the painting of Meretlein is properly introduced: it underscores how the magic of painting, every bit as much as magic stories, is meant to put an end to the witchery.

In fact, the scenario described by Heinrich shows remarkable similarities to the powerful description of Joshua Reynolds’s painting of the Bunbury boy that Nancy Armstrong uses to launch her analysis of how nineteenth-century novels work (or “think”). Armstrong relates the anecdote of how the painter used the telling of fantastic ghost stories to get his restless young subject to sit cooperatively still and fix his gaze back on the painter, who could then in turn fix him on his canvas: she argues that this use of a fantastic, supernatural fiction to control the subject is foundational for the emergence of the individual constructed by nineteenth-century novels and Bildung alike. We have much the same elements operant here, with the subjects bound by the fantastic stories and the painter who captures the controlled, spellbound subject—except that in this case, the subjects are split in two, with the latter-day children subject to the fantastic stories and the earlier Meretlein subject to (and of) the painting. On the one hand, this underscores the parallel between the way the children are bound or educated (gebildet) via the stories and Meretlein is bound and painted (gebildet) via the portrait. On the other hand, it opens up the space for a different fantastic means for subjecting Meretlein, means
associated with an earlier period: binding her not via fantastic sto-
ries, but via fantastic clothes, which is also to say, via things.

The use of clothes in the early modern era as a means of enforc-
ing social identity is well known: sumptuary laws have long been
recognized as one of the external coercive mechanisms for subject
formation that become displaced by more interiorized disciplinary
means—such as ghost stories—with the advent of the Enlighten-
ment.\textsuperscript{50} As befits its early modern setting, the story of Meretlein
retains this use, but the particular way her clothing coerces and
constrains her is still very much in keeping with the later use of
fantastic tales. The painting shows Meretlein as

a young girl of extraordinarily delicate build, in a pale green damask gown
whose hem was spread stiffly (\textit{starrte}) in a wide circle and concealed her
feet. Around the slender, fine body a gold chain was hung, ... On her head
she wore a headdress formed like a crown, made of small, shimmering
gold and silver leaves, braided with silken threads and pearls.

It is not so much signs of class or even gender that these clothes
embody as it is those of the marvelous; and her fantastic sarto-
rial accoutrements bind Meretlein to their own “strange and fan-
tastic details.” She becomes, as it were, magically trapped by her
trappings: from the border (\textit{Saum}) that locks her within its circle
and deprives her of feet, of any means of movement or escape, to
the chain bound about her body and the straps (\textit{Schnüren}) about
her head. The pale green of the damask cloth (itself a woven net)
seems to transform itself into the extraordinarily delicate build of
her body, the gold of the chain into its thin fineness. Every enchant-
ing aspect of her clothes, every fantastic prop of the painter’s art,
come to charm her and bind her, to discipline her into an appropri-
ate, contained, but also distressingly lifeless subject, doubling the
work of the painterly medium itself: every thing seems to reinforce
the metonymical regime of the child’s skull Meretlein holds in her hand. In short, bewitching magic is not just the end to be controlled. It is also the means of control.

Of course, the deployment of such sartorial enchantment to constrain the witch-child results in its own foreseeable failure. For one thing, and as befits the place of this story not only in the early modern but also in the nineteenth-century novel, this external constraint yields an inward turn, the production of a spirited (geistreich) interiority in Meretlein that bears all the marks of its imposed cruelty (in the form of sadness and melancholy) and aestheticization (in eyes beautiful and shining), that for that very reason comes to exert a new bewitching force all its own, more or less behind or beyond either the merely material trappings of the painting or the original physical corporeality of the girl. A new, invisible “spirit-ed” realm of unruly and now deadly binding forces comes to the fore, every bit as seductive as the external realm of visible things. (This interior “spirit” realm becomes, as it were, the subjective correlative to the metatextual allegorical space painting opens up behind its own objective representation: both spectral, both at once a source of other life and death.)

For another thing, even insofar as Meretlein’s external trappings impose their binding power on her and so produce in her a seemingly contained, interiorized subjectivity, they also cause that subjectivity to be bound to and dispersed among those (in)vestitures: the very metonymical means for forming a contained and disenchanted subject seem to prevent that from fully succeeding and, in the process, to reenchant the object world—and not least because the very means to create stilled subjects in this case relies on a continued active relation to an external world of things. This underscores a point somewhat downplayed in Armstrong’s account: the nineteenth century in general, and its novels in particular, are the setting for a world newly populated not only with “subjects” but also with “objects,” indeed with subjects bound to objects. The two proliferations are, if not causally, still consequentially linked, as is their mutual enchantment.

This last point tips the analysis in a new direction. Both the more Freudian and Foucauldian models for binding followed so far present complex pictures for how magical effects are turned
against themselves in an effort to eliminate the excess forces of magic from the world; and both also offer sophisticated explanations for why those efforts fail and these forces remain a part of the (realist) world. But even in their accounts of systematic failure, both models themselves work systematically to disenchant the picture, not least because both restrict the operant field of magic to its strictly human dimension. But there are additional elements to Keller’s story that, for this reason, these models can’t quite accommodate, but that I believe the model of Stimmung can.

Part of the sorcery exercised by Meretlein in her story is not only over men, nor only over the human community, but also, we’re told, over birds, snakes, plants, and fish. This can be connected to the little leaves (Blättchen) in her pictured crown, which she later mimics with one made completely out of beech leaves (Buchenlaub) on the Buch-berg, adding sashes similarly formed: all these signal, and celebrate, her intimate connection, her boundness to the natural world (itself signaled at another level as [also] a Buch-welt). This also helps explain her initial response to her fantastic outfit for the painting, which was one of great joy and wild dancing—the same response she has when naked outdoors, and one only transformed into its opposite by the addition of the child’s skull, which works to enforce a different, one-sided reading of the magical binding forces at work between her and her things (and behind them, the text). But that the skull is not the end of it can be seen in the weather on the day of her intended death and, instead, of her magical resurrection. In ways that exceed the merely human world altogether, the heavens prove strangely attuned to and echoing of that human world, with the sky at first completely dark and lowering and then, at the moment of her resurrection, “as the sun, strangely penetrating (selt-sam und stechend), pierced through the clouds, she looked, with her yellow brocade and her shimmering crown, like a fairy- or goblin-child”—an instant of human and cosmic Stimmung or sympathy in which even the pastor is forced to believe in the existence of a kind of magic (habe in diesem Moment steif an ein Hexenthum geglaubt).

All this points in a direction similar to that seen in the double bind between Meretlein and her trappings, where at the same time that they chained and constrained her she became joined up with and broadcast into them. But here Meretlein’s relation to objects
extends beyond a social human world—and thus, to bonds with objects whose meaning and power do not only arise out of such a human world. Instead, connections are being made to a natural world of things—or more precisely, to a world of natural but also invisible and allegorical forces that are only communicated via natural things—in a way that can only be weakly or “subjectively” accounted for by either a Freudian or Foucauldian model, but that is fully supported by the idea of Stimmung, which admits both a nonhuman external world and, crucially, a world behind that world: a world and set of relations that needn’t be dismissed as merely part of the story’s early modern setting, but might prove intrinsic to both the subjects and objects of Keller’s realist novel, and to their relations, in both their happy and threatening sympathies.

The sign of the necessary inclusion of this natural and other allegorical world in the text, indeed in the portrait, might be seen in the white rose the painter introduces into the painting. He does so without explanation, and the pastor accepts it as “a good symbol” (ein gutes Symbolum), although of exactly what he does not, and perhaps cannot, say. Meretlein holds it in one hand as she does the skull in the other, and like the skull, the painter’s rose clearly harnesses and re-presents allegorical forces lurking within and behind the painting. And as with the skull, the re-presented forces seem to some extent also metatextual, signaling an equally essential Element of the painter’s art to be taken in by the viewer (qua reader). But the rose pushes the allegorical and metatextual forces entering the painting in a rather different direction, away from deathful containment and toward some kind of undefined natural life—as crucial in its indeterminacy and lack of explicit referent as in its naturalness. The white rose hints at something else, something more—a something else that, along with the rose, will reappear in the figure of Anna.56

Landscape (Vorbilder)

The portrait of Meretlein is introduced out of chronological order: it makes its first actual appearance in the novel at the moment of
Heinrich’s own exposure to this natural world of interconnected things, an exposure that coincides with the beginning of his Bildung as a painter, soon before the introduction of Anna. Heinrich has left behind his formal schooling in the city and journeyed to his uncle’s house in the country, carrying with him his books and painting supplies. He wakes up after his first night in this new setting “on the breast of mighty Nature,” in the midst of a teeming tableau of men and animals—a marten, deer, dogs, cows, horses, goats—both inside and outside the house, with an expansive landscape glimpsed out the window: all things described in almost excessive realist detail, but also in language laced with metaphors of music and weaving and images of wild, communal joy. As Heinrich sits in the midst of this chorus and weave, the portrait of Meretlein reappears:

I sat at the window and breathed the balmy morning air; the shimmering waves of the swift stream flickered back again on the white ceiling, and their reflection lit up the countenance of that strange child, whose antiquated [altertümliches] image hung on the wall. It seemed, under the play of the changing silver light, to live, and increased the impression everything made on me.

As an omen anticipating Heinrich’s relation not only to the natural world but also to his painting of it—and beyond that, to his not-yet-begun relation to Anna—the Meretlein portrait here introduces a rather somber undertone to the animating harmony. The carefully constructed image of nature and man as a concert of sympathetically echoing elements finds its visual analogue in the web of reflections surrounding Heinrich: the morning light that blends into the air and water and then reflectively appears again on the ceiling, and from there reflects onto the portrait, infusing both the child and her portrait with their reflectively communicated life—even as then Meretlein and the altertümlich portrait communicate
themselves back into that life, that web (“the impression everything made on me”). \(^59\) It seems fitting that Heinrich’s description of this natural world culminates in the humming concert of insects weaving its web amid the abundant plant life in the nearby graveyard: Meretlein has already sounded this deadly note behind the *Stimmung* of the bounded world.

We see here that the particular magic of Meretlein is from the outset of Heinrich’s country stay inserted into the weave of forces connecting both the world of natural things to itself and Heinrich to that world. We see, too, that the avenues of insertion for that magic are those of conjoining re-presentation, in the form of both the “natural” reflections of the nonhuman world and the ancient or antiquated (*altertümlich*) aesthetic representation of the human one. And there is a third site in this relation, one placed between the reflections of the natural world and the representation of the witch-child, namely, the reflection of the room’s white ceiling—a site that adumbrates the white wall on which Heinrich will paint his landscape of the Heathen Chamber in Anna’s room, that in different but closely related ways will again activate the relations between nature, painting, and a “little witch,” with death foreboded again as their joining force.

That blank reflecting space between the outside world and the painted girl seems, then, already to mark the medial and mediating space about to be occupied by Heinrich’s landscape painting; for his first response to the reciprocating activity (*Tätigkeit*) of nature and man he experiences upon waking is to want to become actively part of it himself by means of his paper and brush. \(^60\) This impulse inspires Heinrich to attempt his first nature painting en plein air, as he ventures into the nearby woods to sketch a beech tree (*Buchenbaum*) and a young ash (*junge Esche*). This is a crucial step in his *Bildung* as a realist artist, his first contact as an artist with the “real,” and so we’ll want to look closely at it for what it shows landscape painting to entail: to see what relations obtain between Heinrich as painter and his subject (his landscape), how these relations reflect those found already in the Meretlein painting, and what these might reveal about the magic behind the world—and behind realism—even here. But first we need some background.
While the painting of the trees is Heinrich’s first real exposure to nature as a subject of landscape painting, it is not his first exposure to landscape painting itself, which actually happens in the absence of nature. This occurs at several different junctures. The first comes when, after his own unruly behavior in the social world, Heinrich is confined to his mother’s house and made to suffer the further constraint (Be-fangenheit) of her punishing silence. While in this house arrest and profoundly still (gründlich still), Heinrich undertakes to copy an old landscape painted in oils that hangs on a wall. Although apparently (i.e., empirically, in itself) mediocre in quality, it is nonetheless a “wondrous” work (ein bewundernswerotes Werk) that inspires Heinrich’s wonderment (Verwunderung): and “the peace that breathed in the well-intentioned picture arose in my soul, too, and might have shone from my face over to my mother.”

The “incomprehensible,” melding connectedness of seemingly opposing elements (der unbegreifliche Übergang des Roten ins Blaue) and the pervasive unity (Gleichmässigkeit) that Heinrich discovers in the painting spill out of it and, via reflection, draw into its charmed circle, its happy or glückliche Stimmung, the warring/loving human players outside of it, in the “real world.” This leads Heinrich to “forget himself” and actually begin singing while painting—both symptoms of Stimmung—and by the time the painting is completed the silence and arrest are over and he has become reconciled and reconnected with his mother. That the reconciliation is at least in part the result of natural (musical) forces working through the painting is suggested by Heinrich’s description of the mother’s words breaking her silence as “like snow-bells in early spring.”

The second instance of Heinrich’s exposure to landscape painting remains closely linked to the first, not least in the continued absence of nature—but now not only of nature. It occurs after he has been expelled from a school linked to his dead father and has again been confined to his mother’s house. He again occupies himself with painting landscapes; but “since I didn’t possess any more models (Vorbilder), I had to call them [i.e., landscapes] into being all on my own.” Or as he also puts it, “I invented my own landscapes” (Ich erfand eigene Landschaften). That this is not quite
the case is underscored when Heinrich explains how he draws on a store of miniature landscape motifs that he gleans from an old album (Stammbuch) of his mother, from a small library of out-of-date ladies’ almanacs from her youth, as well as from the painted oven in their shared room.  

Two closely related points emerge from this. First, the evident exclusion of examples derived from his mother’s world as Vorbilder suggests that, at some not quite articulated level and by a hidden associational logic, their absence for his painting is linked by Heinrich with other missing Vorbilder as well: most notably that of the dead father, but with him all the other, older male models of the patriarchal order outside the maternal home, including those from his father’s school. Second, when Heinrich speaks of lacking a Vorbild and inventing his own landscapes, he shows that what he means by Landschaft is not so much the individual things or motifs visible therein—the mountains, bridges, columns, or lakes he finds in his mother’s books—as the invisible force that connects them and makes them whole. The missing Vorbild is, as it were, the missing Vor-bild, the space before or behind the picture. Without it, instead of a unity he produces only a pile of motifs heaped together (zusammengehäuft); instead of a tone-setting Stimmung coming to him from some outside and connecting him to that outside, he has only his own isolated mood and person to project into the picture (which he quite literally does)—a person ultimately as disunified and disconnected as the painting he produces. Landscape painting emerges here as the place for “magical thinking” in the narrowest, most restricted sense: unbound by any connection to the outside world, projecting onto it the fantasies or moods of a self-regarding subject, and so finally reflecting more of the “reality” of that subject than anything of the world itself—indeed (and in this, very different from the first example) having no real connection with or effect upon the world at all.

The third early exposure comes only after Heinrich has left his mother’s home and arrived at his uncle’s, in the narrow time-space between his morning awakening in the country and his encounter in the woods with the trees. It moves the focus from the isolated individual to the social: and it does so by providing contact with
precisely the kind of *Vorbilder* that were missing when Heinrich was alone with his mother. In his uncle’s house, Heinrich comes across texts and images from the long tradition of landscape painting. Significantly, almost all of these come from an earlier, Enlightenment period, thus evoking both an ideal of *Bildung* and, inevitably, an aura of the antiquated past, even of the dead—evoking in both respects the world of the father. These texts and images (this traffic with the dead) stand at the outset of the *Bildung* proper that the novel will trace out, wherein Heinrich will join his solitary magical thinking to the unifying order and binding norms of this *vor-bild-lich* realm: they will serve as the source for the conventions (the magic formulae) that will bind Heinrich’s “fantastic nature” not only to a properly socialized realm but also, through them, to the natural world of landscape itself.

It is against this background that we now approach Heinrich’s own approach as a painter to nature—an approach that, in the first instance, proves a complete disaster. Equally inspired by his early solitary fantasies in his mother’s house, his recent book-learning in his uncle’s, and his morning awakening to the weave of nature and man, Heinrich goes into the woods to draw. At first he is unable to separate out a single object as subject for his sketch, but eventually a mighty beech-tree (*ein gewaltiger Buchbaum*) seems to stand out from the closely conjoined ranks of trees, and Heinrich imagines himself able to subjugate its form (*seine Gestalt bezwingen zu können*). But rather than mastering or arresting it (*ihn festzuhalten*), it masters him, and he falls into his own state of constraint (*Befangenheit*). He does draw, but produces a sketch lifeless and meaningless (*leben- und bedeutungslos*); composing his picture one piece at a time, he proves incapable of bringing the fragments into relation to the whole (*in ein Verhältnis zum Ganzen*). The figure on his paper grows monstrous: “When I looked up and finally ran my eye over the whole, there grinned back at me a ridiculously distorted picture, like a dwarf in a concave mirror; but the living beech (*Buche*) radiated in even greater majesty than before.”

How to understand the failure of Heinrich’s first attempt at painting nature, or, as we could also say, at realism? An answer is perhaps best approached by noting the most remarkable aspect
of this first contact with the “real,” and that is how it is primarily presented in allegorical terms. We need to consider both sides of this remarkable aspect: both the specific allegorical terms in which the scene is presented, and the bare fact that it is presented as an allegory.69

The terms of the allegory are suggested in the mention of “majesty” with which Heinrich concludes his account, but they are present throughout in the image of this mighty tree, “with noble trunk and magnificent cloak and crown,” challenging Heinrich, “like a king from olden days who summons his foe to single combat,” stepping forth from the joined ranks of the forest’s “sons” (her trees). The image confirms what our earlier examples portended: that landscape painting is deeply implicated for Heinrich in a relation—both psychological and social—to a patriarchal order, a notably ancient, even antiquated order of male figures that represents a unity all its own that stands between Heinrich, nature, and his drawing; and that Heinrich’s failure is in part due to his not being properly connected to that order, the order that alone is capable of binding nature and bestowing life and meaning on his painting, but only once it has bound and bestowed life and meaning on him.70 Without that Stimmung (that connection), the final product of his painting—the ridiculously distorted image that grins back at him, like a dwarf in a concave mirror—remains more a reflection of his own interior subjectivity than of any external, objective world.

There is another explanation embedded in this scene for why the attempt fails, one that engages more directly with the novel’s natural world—an explanation that gives a rather different and perhaps more integral reason for the allegory itself. This explanation notes that what Heinrich attempts to represent, to copy, as the natural world is in important ways never really there in the material things themselves, but only in an immaterial realm beyond them—which is to say, in a necessarily allegorical space: that the reality he seeks to capture isn’t there, but only behind or between what is there.71 This is evident from the outset. The forest presents itself to Heinrich not as isolated things, but as a unity and web of relations: as the great whole (das große Ganze), intertwined, nested, and folded together (verschlungen, sich schmiegen, verschränkt) and
everywhere bound to itself (*sich überall verbunden*). And the *Buchbaum* itself proves to be not a thing, either, at least not a thing that can be arrested or represented, but rather some well-nigh immaterial being behind a constantly changing and moving, appearing and disappearing, set of relations and effects:

Sunbeams through the foliage played upon the trunk, lighting up sap lines and then letting them disappear again; now a gray silvery spot, now a lush bit of moss would smile out from the half-darkness, now a small branch sprouting out from the roots swayed in the light, a reflection revealed a new line of lichen on the side deepest in shadow, until everything disappeared again and made room for new appearances.

Die Sonnenstrahlen spielten durch das Laub auf dem Stamme, beleuchteten die markigen Züge und ließen sie wieder verschwinden, bald lächelte ein grauer Silberfleck, bald eine saftige Moosstelle aus dem Helldunkel, bald schwankte ein aus den Wurzeln sperssendes Zweiglein im Lichte, ein Reflex ließ auf der dunkelsten Schattenseite eine neue mit Flechten bezogene Linie entdecken, bis Alles wieder verschwand und neuen Erscheinungen Raum gab.72

Through all the shuttling in external appearance, the *Buchbaum* itself maintains a removed wholeness, an interior and decidedly spectral harmony: as Heinrich says, “The tree stood there as calm as ever in its greatness, and from deep within let a ghostly whispering be heard” (Der Baum in seiner Größe [stand] immer gleich ruhig da . . . und [ließ] in seinem Innern ein geisterhaftes Flüstern vernehmen).

We needn’t listen too hard to hear inside this description a whispered allusion to the “great” notion of stillness in motion (*Ruhe in Bewegung*), a principle that in the novel is closely allied with *Stimmung*, and not least because both are allied not only with nature but, behind it, with “the great shade” of Johann Wolfgang Goethe—who, I suggest, is also spectrally behind or within the figure of this *Buchbaum* (the main reason it is a *Buch-baum*).73 As we discover later on, the demonic-divine (*dämonisch-göttlich*) shade of this Goethe exists in a uniquely present-tense temporality in this novel, one that stands outside of simple narrative time and, although introduced late, exerts its presence even here.74 The stillness or *Ruhe* into which the *Buchbaum* retreats itself bespeaks
this other removed dimension, and the Goethe who stands within and behind it unites all three aspects of Heinrich’s relation to the *Buchbaum*.

He reflects key elements of Heinrich’s psychological relation to the world of his father, especially in his identification with both a program of *Bildung* and death. Similarly—and via the same double identification—he embodies key elements of Heinrich’s relation to aesthetics, as the primus inter pares in the order of mentors, models, and *Vorbilder* that determines Heinrich’s relation to art and, through art, to the world. But beyond these, Goethe also represents for Heinrich (as narrator) the life force or *Lebensgrund* behind the natural world, a force or ground that Heinrich defines as the very principle of connection that animates and empowers all the things and events of the narrative world. He is, as it were, a figure for *Stimmung*, for the magisterial spectral force and movement of relational unity that, while remaining largely hidden and untouched behind the world, binds together subjects, and subjects and objects, and mimetic representations and their objects, in webs at once psychological, social, aesthetic, and natural.

It is a blending of the metatexual, patriarchal, and natural every bit as evident and decisive as we saw in the case of Meretlein and her portrait. This spectral nature that is at once the *Buchbaum*, Goethe, and *Stimmung* is a force, and a potentially threatening one. But that it appears here in the form of *Ruhe in Bewegung* is important for two reasons: it shows how the potential violence of this force can operate even in its most gentle, affirmative form; and it hints at a potential way out from under its threat for Heinrich—both of great significance for understanding what happens next, and for what will be Heinrich’s relation to Anna, or rather, the relation of his painting to Anna. In elaborating on this principle once it is formally introduced into the text—after he has read Goethe—Heinrich writes in the present tense, which gives everything identified with Goethe its unique power and reality:

It is only stillness in motion that upholds the world and makes the man; the world is calm and still within, and so must a man be as well, if he wants to understand the world and, as an effective part of it, reflect it back. Stillness draws on life [Ruhe zieht das Leben an].

Nur die Ruhe in der Bewegung hält die Welt und macht den Mann; die Welt ist innerlich ruhig und still, und so muß es auch der Mann sein, der
sie verstehen und als wirkender Teil von ihr widerspiegeln will. Ruhe zieht das Leben an.\textsuperscript{78}

For all its apparent calm, the \textit{Ruhe} at the heart of the world is a form of stillness and arrest; and as something that makes “the man,” it threatens him with a kind of arrest and stillness as well— with precisely the kind of constraint or \textit{Be-fangenheit} to which Heinrich succumbs when faced with the \textit{Buchbaum}. The (magical) trick, as Heinrich describes it, is for the artist to learn how to redirect the threat of \textit{Ruhe} by turning it (\textit{dies anzuwenden}) back upon the world; to join with the hidden order behind the world, to share in both its distance and unseen action, and from there reflect its endangering force back on and into the world.\textsuperscript{79} And in its own indirect way, Heinrich’s language also makes plain where the \textit{Ruhe} is to be redirected: from “the man” and onto “the feminine” that \textit{Ruhe} here replaces (as the subject of \textit{zieht an}).\textsuperscript{80}

This at least is what we see in Heinrich’s next attempt. Defeated in his direct power struggle against the (male) beech-tree, Heinrich takes refuge in praying to God—which is to say, in invoking the invisible male order he failed to master—and turns to a new subject, a different tree: a young ash (\textit{eine junge Esche}). The turn clearly correlates to the turn we see him make in two other instances: first, in the shift of his identification in the Meretlein episode from one with the rebellious child to one with the disciplining male adults, the painter and pastor; and second, in response to his own losing struggles with the male social world (i.e., his father’s school), in his coming to identify himself as painter with Anna’s father as educator over and against his beloved Anna. These other instances are not mere parallels to the present scene: rather, the young ash is deliberately described in ways that recall Meretlein and predict Anna, beginning with its gender.\textsuperscript{81} The task—the opportunity—here is to see even more clearly how Heinrich’s landscape painting is implicated in his relation to his female subjects.

The young ash—also called “the little tree” (\textit{das Bäumchen})—“had a slender trunk only two inches thick and above a delicate crown of foliage whose leaves, in regular rows, could be counted,” recalling the figure of Meretlein in both its marked, even starved thinness and its delicate, ornamented, leafed crown; the identification
is furthered when Heinrich speaks of “the childlike little trunk,” “its beautiful figure,” its “fineness,” and so on—all features that turn the tree into an echo of Meretlein, and all features that will connect both Meretlein and the tree to Anna. Moreover, the tree first presents itself to Heinrich sketched (gezeichnet) against “the clear gold of the evening sky” in such a way as to make it a shadow image (Schatzenbild) of itself, which is to say, like the portrait of Meretlein, already aestheticized, already a Bild, removed from the (material) real and in spectral form—a state that will also be passed on to Anna, about whom Heinrich will say at the end of the first day he sees her: “Doused in the glow of the setting sun, the feather-light, transfigured form (verklärte Gestalt) of the young girl floated before me.”

When Heinrich sits down to sketch the childlike little trunk—or as he puts it, to “steal” it onto his paper—he does so by first drawing two parallel lines. The verb choice and the parallel lines reveal what is at stake in the painting: a magical attempt to bind the subject via its mimesis (literally, to draw it into his page). Tellingly, the tree does not easily submit or succumb to the attempt and displays an unruly, energetic movement that threatens to frustrate Heinrich’s drawing—repeating the struggle with the beech tree, but more importantly, also that with Meretlein (which was also, we remember, a displaced struggle with disruptive forces originating in the male sphere). But Heinrich persists and clamps onto “every movement of my model” (jede Bewegung meines Vorbildes), until he has captured it as his picture or Gebild:

Once under way, I reverently added the grasses and small roots growing in the ground nearest it, and now I saw on my paper one of those pious, little long-stemmed Nazarene trees that cut across the horizon with such charm and simplicity in the pictures of the church-painters of old and their epigonal followers of today.

When the drawing is complete, Heinrich feels as if he has done something wondrous (als ob ich Wunder was verrichtet hätte). And
it truly is a “wondrous” thing he has performed. To see this we need also see that, for all the apparent absence of the “real” tree itself from Heinrich’s final, thoroughly conventional, and antiquated sketch, it is somehow still present as its subject—every bit as much as Meretlein is present in her painting. In fact, the conventions must be understood as working in strictly analogous fashion on the tree to the way Meretlein’s clothes do on her eroticism (or for that matter, the way the same conventions work on Heinrich’s fantasy): they work to capture or bind its unruly reality, and do so by drawing on, but turning back against the “real” the magical forces that emanate out of it (drawing as at once a drawing on and mirroring back). That the binding magic is once again a death-filled one is marked both in the overt, lifeless aestheticization and in the antiquated, epigonal character of the evoked conventions (as we’ve seen with both Meretlein’s portrait and Heinrich’s own relation to conventions); that somehow the surrounding natural world of objects is to contribute to the binding effect is brought home by the inclusion of the grasses and small roots in the ground nearest it—the very same sense of a surrounding world that, in the case of the beech tree, marked its boundedness to the natural world and frustrated Heinrich’s attempt at binding here becomes utilized by him to accomplish that binding of the ash: again, the double nature or power of sympathetic relations. All told, then, Heinrich’s landscape painting really does aim to perform a Wunder, to practice a magical art of drawing on forces of binding and, inevitably, of death; and that magic can really happen precisely because the real world of the novel itself is grounded in forces of binding and death that art can draw on: on nature, the demon-god Goethe, and Stimmung. And this brings us to Anna.

Anna (Narcissus and Echo)

Anna enters the novel immediately following Heinrich’s painting of the two trees, and she is just as immediately linked with all three dimensions of his relation to landscape painting: the psychological, the social, and the natural. All three figure prominently in the erotic bonds that from the outset bind Heinrich to Anna, and by
which she will soon be bound by him, and as we’ll see, they do so in a process that echoes the binding of both the original witch-child, Meretlein, and the young ash-tree—and that not just echoes, but actively engages the witching forces of the one and the drawing powers of the other.

All three dimensions are summoned up as Heinrich goes to visit Anna for the first time. The psychological appears in a manner that combines the clothing motif of the Meretlein episode and the (absent) *Vorbild* motif of Heinrich’s landscape painting in his mother’s house. Heinrich dresses himself for the visit in a fantastic and (for him) painterly (*malerisch*) fashion, drawing on items borrowed from his mother’s wardrobe. But rather than as with Meretlein enforcing a fixed identity, his outfit as with his painting betrays a sense of disunity and in particular a lack of gender definition, all evidence, he says, of the lack of a fatherly *Vorbild*. He becomes in his clothing, as it were, an embodied reproduction of the magical thinking in his earlier landscape painting.

The social is evoked more directly, in the brief sketch of Anna’s father, who, much as the masters of painting encountered in the uncle’s house, will become a (fatherly) *Vorbild* for Heinrich, but here in relation not to landscape but directly to Anna. He is introduced as a former village schoolmaster deeply invested in matters of Bildung, which he pursues both in his own person and, reflectively, through the figure of his daughter. And the natural is evoked most directly, in the detailed description of the walk through the woods that Heinrich takes to reach Anna in her father’s house, a description that deliberately echoes that of the first morning’s awakening in his uncle’s house described above.

This is the background against which Anna first appears, and the passage needs to be quoted at length. Heinrich stands in the woods and looks down at a “still and calm” (*still und ruhig*) lake that suddenly comes into view:

A narrow strip of cultivated land surrounded the lake, and behind it the forest continued upward in every direction. . . . On the sunny side lay a vineyard of considerable extent, and at its foot the schoolmaster’s house, close by the lake; but immediately above the highest rows of wine-grapes hung the pure deep heaven, and this mirrored itself in
the smooth water, up to where it was bounded by the yellow rows of corn, the emerald fields of clover and the woods behind them, all of which re-presented itself, unaltered but inverted, in the lake. The house was whitewashed, the woodwork painted red and the window-shutters painted with large shells and flowers; white curtains fluttered out of the windows and out of the door and down a dainty set of stairs stepped the young cousin, slender and delicate as a narcissus, in a white dress belted with a sky-blue band, with golden-brown hair, blue eyes, a somewhat willful brow and a small smiling mouth. One blush after another welled up on her narrow cheeks, her fine bell-like voice rang out almost inaudibly, and died away again at every moment.


The theme of binding—even of binding magic—runs throughout this passage, engaging the natural and human worlds in ever-tightening concentric circles, first around the lake and then around Anna. The initial antiphonic tension, as it were, between the natural and human is set in the contrast between the narrow “cultivated” band of earth that draws itself around the lake and the still wild woods that remain outside and around it.87 The same contrast reappears in the more circumscribed (and humanized) form of the vineyard paired with the schoolmaster’s house, the one hinting at wild bacchanal unruliness, the other (hugging the lake) countering with protective Bildung (with both acquiring a further circum-
in the form of the wine and the other of schooling). In both cases, the bind between the two realms seems a double one, suggesting the equal force and pull of both worlds: but the balance is then immediately (unmittelbar) tipped in the direction of containment or arrest by the addition of a new set of binding forces operating both without and within this first pair: the “pure” heaven that encompasses everything (including the woods and vineyard, but also the house and cultivated strip) from the extreme outside; and the lake’s reflection that similarly encompasses everything (including the heaven) from the very center. Both sky and lake are, significantly, still part of the natural world, and so partake of its forces; but both also begin to exceed this world and introduce in allegorical form an “other” dimension into the landscape, at once (quasi-) divine and metatextual. The peculiar binding or begrenzend force of the heavenly is conveyed by its purity, countering the wildness of the woods and the riot of grapes; the peculiar force of the reflection is conveyed by the suddenly markedly painterly, color-oriented character of the language of the narrator, who works in collusive connection with his intradiegetic painter-character (which is to say, from the very center of the text).

In this way, the lake’s reflection positions representation itself with the (natural) divine as a force encompassing the entire setting: indeed, in its reflection, the lake binds together as one the divine (heaven), nature (cultivated earth), Bildung (schoolmaster), painting, and narration as one unified force working from both outside and inside the natural human world. Not incidentally, that final frame of the divine sky and the metatextual lake also introduces into the scene the haunting intimation not only of other, supranatural forces, but also of another temporality, that of the suddenly assertive, self-manifesting narrator: one in which the future is already reflected in the present, and in which the present is—spectrally, preconceptually—already contained by its own future.

Even as the lake is set at the center of these encompassing circles, so too Anna seems both metaphorically to double the lake and to be set metonymically within an even tighter circle beside it. She first appears framed by the house of her schoolmaster father, suggesting the binding force of his Bildung program on her. But the
framing house is also described in terms of painting, and again mostly through colors: it is “whitewashed” and “painted red,” “painted with large shells and flowers”—and those shells augur forth a frame Heinrich will place around one of his pictures of Anna later on, again drawing attention to the spectral presence and futural power of the narrator. But already, even without that augury, we see the same collusion of Bildung and Bild, of schoolmaster and painter, that we saw with Meretlein, here directed at Anna by her father and Heinrich in ways that fulfill that earlier omen (i.e., Meretlein), or are haunted in turn by its premonition—not causally, but still determinatively. Even as Meretlein’s clothes (magically) transformed themselves into her body to control her, so here does this painterly schoolhouse mimetically/metonymically reproduce itself on Anna, and both outside and in. Her “somewhat willful brow” and “small smiling mouth”—recalling the unruliness of not only Meretlein but also the ash tree (and within the description, the wild woods and wine-grapes)—are countered by the white of her dress, which draws on and in the white of the house and of the curtains inside (the latter suggesting interiorization); and similarly, the “blush” that appears on her cheeks draws on the red against white of its woodwork. Even the “dainty set of stairs” (Treppchen) on which she stands reappears as both Anna’s “delicateness” (Zärtlichkeit) and the diminunizing -chen of her dress, eyes, mouth, and voice.

All of this binds her, constrains her, in ways that practically force the slenderness of her figure (think of Meretlein’s starving, but also of the ash’s trunk): and that it does so by means of this mimetic, re-presenting relation gives the peculiar force to what is the very center of this description, the moment when it dissolves into pure symbol or allegory (like the white rose or beech tree) and presents Anna as like a narcissus. The image draws together crucial strands. Most obviously, it sets Anna up as the site for Heinrich’s self-regarding, subjective projection, for the kind of magical thinking we saw already in his landscape painting: his erotic relations will prove equally narcissistic, equally a matter of displaced self-projection, and equally denying of the subject’s own reality. And as part of that, the symbol foretells the death that always inhabits
the narcissistic gaze and from the start haunts this erotic relation as well. But the image of Narcissus (which is to say, of mirroring) also marks Anna as the site for just the kind of reflecting relations that we see here actively at work between her and the house, an image that metonymically links her to the lake and is inscribed in the reflectivity of her very name (An-nA): and that along with the lake (and house) is deeply implicated in the matter of painting.

It is not, however, only the house, with its double binding force of \textit{Bildung} and \textit{Bild}, that seems reflectively reproduced at the site of Anna; the surrounding natural world also reappears here in micro-cosmic form. This is true of the encompassing sky, which finds its echo in the “sky-blue band” that girds Anna as surely as the heaven itself does the entire scene; but the yellow of the cornrows is also echoed in the golden brown of her (presumably braided) hair and the dark blue of the lake in and as Anna’s own blue eyes.\textsuperscript{90} The chain is, of course, also mediated in the form of the flowers (and shells) that appear painted on the house’s shutters, as it will be again in the hat and shawl Anna soon dons for her woods walk with Heinrich, the former bound with cornflowers and poppies, the latter “a grand white shawl, used long ago on state occasions, strewn with asters and roses” (\textit{ein prachtvoller weißer Staatsshawl aus alter Zeit mit Astern und Rosen besäet}).\textsuperscript{91} In all these various ways, Anna is uniquely, forcefully, reflectively bound in sympathetic relation to the natural world, or rather, to both the social world (in the form of the house and, in the case of the shawl, the state) and the natural world, or even more fully: to the present world of both human and natural things, mediated by a more invisible but no less present world of divine forces (that blue sky), \textit{Bildung} (that house), and, within and behind it all, the metatext of painting and narration.

All told, the entire passage seems a deliberately composed illustration of \textit{Stimmung}, in its “coordinate colored relational weave” (\textit{einheitlich gefärbtes Beziehungsgeflecht}), an “interplay of echoing tone variations”: in the way the relationality plays itself out contagiously both in and among things themselves, and then between Anna’s subjectivity and those objective things; in the unity between the elements brought about by the work of similitude, analogy, and
metonymy, but also at its very center, allegory; and in the almost excessive visibility of the scene coupled with the haunting presence of the invisible forces that connect things. These invisible forces seem at once natural, social, supernatural, and metatextual; and as we’ve seen (particularly in the shells), the last implicitly brings an added element to the description and its play of *Stimmung*: temporality. The final line of the passage cited brings this added element more explicitly into play, by subtly shifting the metaphorical field pervading the description from painting to music. The shift keeps the metaphorics of *Stimmung*, but—especially through the focus on echoes—also extends them to include additional matters of time and action, making these aspects of *Stimmung* integral to the workings of the text world as well.

Music and echoes are as inseparable from Anna as painting and reflections, and equally integral to her connection with the natural and social/human worlds. Here at the end of this passage we have just the single line “her fine bell-like voice rang out almost inaudibly, and died away (*verhallte*) again at every moment” and, immediately following, mention of “the house re-echoing with cleanliness and order” (*das vor Reinlichkeit und Aufgeräumtheit widerhallende Haus*). But a second scene during this same first visit develops the motif in detail, and in ways that go well beyond Anna and the house. After a shared meal (of fish raised and caught by Anna, echoing Meretlein) the schoolmaster opens up his organ, “so that the inside of both folding doors displayed a painted Paradise, with Adam and Eve, flowers and beasts”—making the link not only between music and painting, but also, in the reference to Eden, to the harmonious union of man and nature (and the divine) broached in the first day’s awakening (and implicit in the opening description of Anna)—all three (painting, music, natural harmony) integral to *Stimmung* (and Anna’s relation to it). The unifying effect is furthered as Heinrich, Anna, and all the visitors are made to stand in a circle around the schoolmaster and, “after he had charmingly played a bit as a prelude,” sing in unison, and in such a way that, Heinrich tells us, “I myself let my inner happiness stream forth unconstrained and freely into the singing” (Ich selbst ließ mein inneres Glück unbefangen und frei in den Gesang
strömen)—with both the joined circle and the self-dispersal into that circle again representative of Stimmung. Then comes this:

Whenever we came to the end of a verse, an echo sounded from across the lake, given back by a rock wall in the woods, dying away harmoniously, fusing the organ notes and the human voices in a new wondrous tone, and trembling into silence just as we ourselves raised the song again. Joyous human voices were roused at different places in the heights and depths, which sang and shouted their delight into the still, weaving air, so that the canon with which we closed spread itself, so to speak, over the whole valley.

Wenn wir einen Vers geendigt hatten, erklang über den See her, von einer Wand im Walde, ein harmonisch verhallendes Echo, die Orgeltöne und Menschenstimmen verschmelzend zu einem neuen wunderbaren Tone, und zitterte eben aus, indem wir selbst den Gesang wieder anhoben. An verschiedenen Stellen, in der Höhe und Tiefe, wurden freudige Menschenstimmen wach, welche ihre Lust in die still webenden Lüfte sangen und jauchzten, so daß unser Kanon, mit welchem wir schlossen, sozusagen sich über das ganze Tal verbreitete.93

Four aspects of this passage interest me most. First, how as with the previous, painterly description of Anna, the effect—a “wondrous” one—is to create a web (weben) to bind the group with the entire natural world, or rather with the world of both nature and men (and the strangely indefinite origin of those “joyous human voices” augments the fusion). But whereas in the previous case this web was one of enclosing containment (contracting, vortexual), in this case it is in the first place one of dispersive broadcast (expanding, centrifugal). Second, how unlike with the painterly description, the binding effect is here presented as something that happens: as action, as a kind of contagious movement—and one with a built-in system of recursivity, of displacement, redirection, and return, in such a way that the broadcasting, centrifugal force is also transformed into a back-turning, centripetal one. Third, and as part of its emanation and reversion, how this movement introduces a complex temporal schema into the binding web, one not generally associated with painting (or painterly reflections) but intrinsic to echo, creating the conditions that not only transform its action into an actio in distans, but also allow for a projected
futurity—or if you will, a belatedness—to become part of the force field established by Stimmung. 94

The fourth point of interest only emerges later, when, so to speak, that belatedness is realized, that future comes home (and the extended infectiousness of its Stimmung beyond just this moment is evident, for instance, in the continued singing of the group throughout the day, long after they’ve left the schoolmaster’s house): and that is how this web, here so seemingly benign, eventually returns as the means for Anna’s (enchanted) entrapment—and it does so in good part by once again displacing its center from the male figure (here, her father) onto the female—turning its echo effect onto her. As mentioned, the schoolmaster will soon send her away to a city to further embody his program of Bildung. When she returns as “the fulfillment of his ideal, beautiful, delicate, and cultured (gebildet),” she takes his place at the organ while he stands, watching, behind her: as Heinrich says, “She really looked like a Saint Cecilia” (and for Saint Cecilia, compare the “church-painterly image” [kirchenmalerische Bild] of the young ash-tree). 95 The same system of radiating broadcast and echoing return as earlier is evident, except that, with Anna at its center, the forces have all, in their return (their reflection, their echo), become both art-ful (künstlich) and deadly. On the one hand, Anna has become an active force and the world around her transformed through her into art, into a (quasi-painterly) echo of her music. Her father now appears clothed in garments she embroiders, the house outfitted with pillows and a flowered (großblumig) carpet she devises, and outside “the little garden was no longer a disorderly rose and alpine-violet garden, but rather, more suited to Anna’s present appearance, fitted out with foreign plants (fremden Gewächsen):” the schoolmaster, the house, and even the natural world have been transformed into an echo of Anna, and resonate with her new appearance, in an outward movement of broadcast, communicative contagion. 96 But on the other hand, Anna has herself become transformed and ever more tightly bound by that world: “She had become a completely different figure, . . . her golden hair lay smooth and genteelly bound (gebunden). . . . Her facial features kept themselves much stiller
now (*viel ruhiger*), and her eyes had lost their freedom and were under the constraints (*in den Banden*) of conscious propriety . . . so that I was terrified.”

**Magic Realism**

A complex shift in agency is at work here: while both Anna and the natural world about her seem empowered, seem the site of active force, it is her father at one step removed (in both place and time) who has become the all but invisible agent (merely watching, no longer doing), working on the one hand through Anna and on the other through art and nature (the garden) to bind her in the deadly, echoing web: working through the time-delayed echo-effect of sympathetic relations. There is as much a realist as a magical effect to this mix of hidden (authorial) agency and apparent subject autonomy. And the question becomes, how does Heinrich also become such a removed invisible agent, working through similar sympathetic relations, similar echo-effects—and what has this to do with both the magic and realism at issue in his relation to painting and to Anna?

There are two parts to answering this question. First, we need to note how Heinrich himself—as lover—engages in a similar echoing system of broadcasting Anna into nature and then having it (or her) recursively turn back on him. We see this in a dream he records shortly after this first visit: “As I went to sleep, it spooked (*spukte*) and rustled . . . I never dreamed of Anna, but I kissed tree-leaves, flowers, and the air itself and was everywhere kissed in return.” Anna becomes spectrally dispersed into nature, and nature becomes a charged, macrocosmic version of her person. In his waking life, this becomes a particular invisible force invested in—but also with—the landscape that is at once sympathetic and erotic, and in both cases capable of exercising its attractive force from a distance, as Heinrich reports when he returns to the city: “Anna’s dwelling, invisible to me, acted magnetically over all the land between (*wirkte magnetisch über alles dazwischen liegende Land her*).” Something similar is also at stake when Heinrich takes on
Anna’s flower-covered shawl after their walk through the woods: “Anna handed me the shawl . . . and I threw the soft, flowered wrap around my head and shoulders. . . . The stillness had now become, near and far, so deep that it seemed to turn into a ghostly roar (ein geisterhaftes Getöse). . . . As I stood for a moment as if spellbound (wie festgebannt), the whole horizon round seemed to tremble with a blissful shudder, [moving] from the mountain in ever narrowing circles right in to my heart.”

In each case, an echo effect is achieved that binds Anna and the landscape, and that then turns back on Heinrich with its invisible, ghostly, magnetic forces—in the last case in ways that leave him, however joyfully, “spellbound” within their ever-tightening circles.

Second, we need to note how Heinrich manages to change the direction of these forces so that they target not him but Anna—and how in doing so he transforms their magic into realism, but without losing their magic. As anticipated by what we saw with Heinrich’s tree painting, both these aspects are managed by the same double move: by introducing painting (and not so much as a reflected image of the visible as a de-flected echo of the invisible) into his relation to Anna and nature; and by himself retreating to the position of invisible agent, much like Anna’s father while she plays (letting her and her world operate seemingly autonomously, untouched). It is hardly coincidental that it is in between the first singing session centered on the father and the second centered on Anna that Heinrich will paint his picture of the Heathen Chamber, charged as it will be with its magic echoing forces—nor that the “rock wall in the woods” that initiates those first echoes turns out to be the Heathen Chamber. And similarly, it is hardly coincidental that in Heinrich’s first meeting with Anna, in between the first description of her and the group singing, comes one of the novel’s most sustained theoretical discussions of landscape painting and realism—nor that that discussion focuses primarily on the significance of the invisible powers behind the visible world.

Almost as soon as Heinrich meets Anna, he begins a conversation with her father—forging a bond that, like that between the pastor and painter in regard to Meretlein, will secure the chain of Bildung and painting that encloses “the little witch.” The
conversation that focuses first on matters of Bildung moves seamlessly on to landscape painting; the thread that joins the two is the tenet that invisibly behind both efforts stands the divine as their guiding and supporting force—joining together not just Bildung and painting, but also the schoolmaster and Heinrich with God as a united (male) group with shared interests and powers (a group to which, of course, Goethe also belongs). While gazing steadfastly at the surrounding landscape and directly inspired by it, Heinrich explains to Anna’s father that the art of landscape painting entails, on the one hand, a faithful and exact reproduction of the natural world “according to the laws of the Creator” (nach den Gesetzen des Schöpfers) and, on the other hand, a self-creation of the natural world “as if they [i.e., the trees, etc.] must grow and be seen somewhere” (als ob sie irgendwo gewachsen und sichtbar sein müßten), which is to say, an imitation not of God’s creation but of his creating power.¹⁰¹ The seeming contradiction between these two modes of imitation is deeply embedded in realist poetics, often uncomfortably so; it is also central to landscape theory, where the model of Stimmung that requires both an objective world and its productive subjective correlative makes it seem less jarring.¹⁰² But more immediately important is the schoolmaster’s reply to this claim and Heinrich’s response. Anna’s father asks whether this means that the landscape they are now looking at is an adequate object for art “simply because of the gentleness and power of God that are manifest here as well,” to which Heinrich replies, “Yes, certainly... nothing more is needed here to make it meaningful (bedeutend).”¹⁰³ What one paints and seeks to reproduce is not the visible world itself (although that is also all one paints), but the divine power that, invisibly behind it, makes it signify: one approaches the seen world only as an echo of the unseen—an unseen, moreover, that is also a form of pro-vidence (Vor-sehung), even foresight (Voraussehen).¹⁰⁴

In order to ally himself with this removed immaterial realm and draw on its powers, Heinrich becomes constrained, as it were, to adopt a position of removal from the merely material condition of his relation to the world—and in particular, from a merely material, direct relation to the figure of Anna. The strange, determinative
distance (he calls it the enchantment [die Verzauberung])\textsuperscript{105} that comes almost immediately to characterize Heinrich’s relation to Anna—wherein he hesitates to touch her or address her directly, and deals more easily with her image or Bild in her absence than with her bodily presence when they are together—can be accounted for in psychological terms: as an extension of his ever-apparent constraint (Be-fangenheit), of his inability to deal with the real, and so basically of his Ohnmacht, his powerlessness. But while it is this, it is also the condition for his exercise of power, the indispensable condition for his magical relation to the real—which is also, I’ll say, his realist relation to the real and, as we’ll see, his “objective” relation to Anna. It is no coincidence that this distance (this love) begins immediately after Heinrich’s talk with Anna’s father about the poetics of landscape painting, nor that he concludes his visit by claiming to have acquired two things at once: an alliance with the invisible power behind the natural world and an erotic relation with Anna. The invisibility of the one dictates the immateriality of the other; both equally the foundations for realism and magic.

The Anna Paintings

Three paintings made by Heinrich are directly linked to his relation to Anna: one of a bouquet of flowers, another of the Heathen Chamber, and a third of Anna herself. Each exhibits magic binding forces that—in increasingly explicit ways—aim at harming Anna; each engages a complex relation between Anna and the natural world that draws on sympathetic powers to do so; and each contributes not only to Anna’s death, but also to Heinrich’s Bildung and the work’s realism. We need to look carefully at each in turn.

Flowers for Anna

The ancient Greeks and Romans used two basic types of binding magic to do something to someone else. Generally, this someone had wronged them or it was someone whose love they wished to keep. One type of binding magic is the binding spell or curse, written and sometimes pierced, and
the other is the figurine, erotic or otherwise, that may also be pierced or twisted or bound. The names of the victims are written in the subject (nominative) or object case (accusative) probably to show the person is being acted upon by the binding. There may be a verb of binding, like katabein, in the first person, so the curse tablet reads, “[So and so] I bind her . . .”106

The first painting is in some ways the least obviously charged with magic force and intent, and also the least directly involved with Heinrich’s landscape painting and Bildung. But it is also the one most clearly linked to the Meretlein episode, with Anna explicitly referred to in this episode as a witch (Hexe); and it is also the one that follows Heinrich’s discussion with the schoolmaster about landscape painting and is positioned as its realization or fulfillment. The reason for both its seeming marginality and its centrality is basically the same: the episode and its painting are heavily invested in a principle of metonymy, of contiguity, a principle that underwrites their particular forms of both sympathetic magic and literary realism.

Heinrich returns to Anna’s father’s house shortly after their conversation to fulfill his promise to paint a picture illustrating the divine, supernatural power behind the natural world. To some extent, this signals the continued collusion of the father’s Bildung program and Heinrich’s painting, the way Heinrich will paint within the framework of the schoolmaster’s plan for Anna—and as we’ll see, this does in fact prove to be the case (much as the painter and pastor with Meretlein). But a difference is also marked in the way each—the father and Heinrich, Bildung and painting—will work to realize that plan. Here, when Heinrich arrives, the father organizes his household to work together in the vineyards; Heinrich, however, stays behind and works apart; Anna meanwhile is shuttled between the two, starting with Heinrich, then leaving to join the others before returning to him, with them, later on. Although Heinrich will purport that his mode of work is more or less the same as the others, equally a form of mundane social activity (he refers to himself as “like a worker who is worth his wage”), this is but one of several screens (Vorgeben) he maintains about
his painting. For the real work his painting is to do hardly belongs to the mundane, commonly shared world at all, but rather to one apart from it, drawing on quite different forces to achieve its ends.

The painting itself is to be not of the landscape per se, but rather, “for a change, [of] flowers from nature,” already a symptom of the metonymic nature of this painting and its scene. Still, as a nature painting, it is also supposed to be a painting of Anna, and one that affects Anna (is “for” Anna)—however not directly, but through the binding powers of the same metonymy and contiguity at work between the flowers and landscape and already at work between Anna and nature in general. In this respect, it is important that the reason for painting the flowers given by Heinrich is “so that I could stay in Anna’s proximity”: this is both because the painting is from the start connected to her, and because “nearness” (proximity) or “next-to-ness” (contiguity) is the condition through which that connection is made.

The need for some means to bind Anna is also evident in this scene—although again, indirectly, through metonymy and, especially, metonymic evocations of the Meretlein episode. Even before Heinrich decides on the “object of his activity,” we’re told “Anna had a mighty tub full of green beans to rid of their little tails and strings and to arrange in rows on long threads” (Anna hatte eine mächtige Wanne voll grüner Bohnen der Schwänzchen und Fäden zu entledigen und an lange Fäden zu reihen). This seemingly simple task set beside Heinrich’s own is disarming in its mundane nature and mode of action; but it also becomes charged with allegorical force via textual echoes and premonitions in ways that pose an implicit, immediate threat to Heinrich. The beans resonate with the bean field (Bohnenplatz) in which Meretlein ensconced herself, communicating indirectly—contiguously, contagiously—some of her witchery to Anna: this will become fully realized later on that same night, in the famous “bean-night” (Bohnenabend) scene wherein Anna breaks free from her customary restraints, grows wild, unruly, and erotic, and earns the appellation “you witch!” The very same superreal, nonpresent pathways that the reader activates to link the beans and Anna to these “other” scenes, and particularly to Meretlein’s witchery, remain spectrally active in the
scene, in Anna and the beans as their witching power: the power to link, to bind superreally—and thereby, too, to carry an “other” meaning, another force spectrally behind the scene, into the scene itself.

It is this in turn that charges the twice-repeated threads or Fäden with their particular force, signaling the kinds of threads or strings at issue to be not just the visible ones of the real material world but also the invisible ones of the magical allegorical one—and again, that the latter is magical is signaled by how those threads connect to Meretlein. As with the erotic ties between Meretlein and her male counterparts (including both the pastor and the painter), the existence of those threads represents a power struggle, as indicated here in how Anna’s task is “to rid the beans of their little tails and strings and to arrange them in rows on long threads” (der Schwänzchen und Fäden zu entledigen und an lange Fäden zu reihen). The Schwänzchen . . . zu entledigen, especially coupled with the little pocketknife with which Anna does her cutting, might well suggest a form of castration, especially to a Freudian reader, with castration itself engaging the same metonymic logic at work between the flowers and landscape, the beans and Meretlein, and both and Anna. But equally important, the two different threads or Fäden with which the “little tails” are serially paired suggest the displacement of power, of super-powers, at issue, the threatened loss of the binding threads of the “little tails” themselves and their (serial) displacement onto Anna’s own—very much the same displacement we saw originally with Meretlein, who “bewitched” the men into losing control of themselves and becoming bound by and to her in ways that then needed remedy by Bildung and painting.

It is in implicit response to this that Heinrich decides to paint a bouquet of flowers, or more precisely engages Anna herself in making such a Strauß (with overtones of Strauß as altercation—for that is what his bouquet becomes to her beans). That for this purpose the flowers, too, need to be broken off or cut is perhaps also in response to Anna’s knife work on the beans. Moreover, although the cut and gathered flowers are not explicitly bound, they are put into an old-fashioned ornamental glass vase (altmodisches Prunkglas), a bundle of deathful binding motifs—the deadening antiquation of
“old-fashioned,” the conventionalization of “ornamental,” and the reflectivity of “glass” that all evoke the nonlife of art—we will see again shortly in the painting’s own container, its outside frame: certainly the reclaimed and reversed binding that is implicit here will become far more explicit in the closely connected “bean-night” scene itself, when Heinrich captures the wild Anna and sings, “The little mouse was already caught / and tied by its foot / and around its tiny fore-paw, / a red band was put,” after which the mouse is killed. But the main points here would be these: that behind its realist trappings and gentle, almost idyllic setting, the scene of Heinrich’s first Anna painting is a highly charged one full of power plays and dangerous unseen forces, working through its natural visible objects and mundane activities; that what charges the scene with those powers is not only a more or less present erotics but also a literally evoked set of binding echoes and adumbrations that is not present and not (simply) real, but is nonetheless only present and only works through the real objects and activities in the scene; that while both erotic and literary, these forces nonetheless work as one in and behind the scene itself, entering into the scene through metonymic links; that the way they work is considered magical, as the evocation of Meretlein assures; and that, once again, the kind of magic they work is a binding one, activating the same metonymic chains that allow them to enter the scene in the first place. Just as Heinrich’s activity or Tätigkeit operates alongside but completely otherly than the mundane social work in the natural world (the vineyards), so do these allegorical forces work alongside but completely otherly than the material objects (the beans, flowers, etc.) and real events of that world.

The spectral presence, then, of these magical forces and, because of them, the need for some (magical/unseen) means to bind Anna is conveyed almost exclusively in the displaced context of the material things next to Anna and Heinrich and their side-by-side but seemingly unconnected activities. The question then becomes how painting becomes that magical means of binding, or in language we’ve used before, the portal for those magic forces to enter the text world; and how it avails itself of both the presence and the distance of contiguity or metonymy to do so. For we need to stress
again that this picture that is to bind Anna is not directly a representation of Anna, as was the case with Meretlein’s portrait and will be later with Anna’s, but of a bouquet: the powers of painting at stake are not strictly speaking mimetic but rather, as I’ve said, metonymic, syntagmatic—which, as Frazer reminds us, are still intrinsic to sympathetic magic and, as Jakobson reminds us, equally so to realist fiction. But we need to ask how.

The answer has first and again to do with the ability of painting to draw on and produce conditions of Stimmung. Once he begins painting—and in ways that clearly recall his first attempt at painting in his mother’s house—the gathering (Zusammenstellung) of the bouquet spills out and extends itself contagiously into the human world, into a togetherness (Zusammensein) of Heinrich and Anna, filled with movements and interplays (Bewegungen und Zwischenspiele), a sense of communion in which they communicate freely about their interrelated life stories (gegenseitigen Lebensläufen), a sense that also spills back into the painting of the “brought-together” flowers, and later proves capable of expanding out again to include other viewers, including Anna’s father and all the others who return from the vineyards. For all the sense of unity and sociability it produces, this Stimmung still involves a certain asymmetry of relation and private advantage: it empowers Heinrich as its producer with a singular sense of superiority (Überlegenheit), while it positions Anna as its viewer as a-stonished, erstaunt (and thus, “of my mind [meines Sinnes]”). That this power might also be harnessed for the binding purposes of Bildung is conveyed by the lessons (Belehrungen) Heinrich would, however fatuously, impress upon her as he paints. In this way, the painting again produces conditions of Stimmung joining together the human world—both the loving/warring pair and, later, the broader social group—and, albeit more weakly, the natural world, for, as Heinrich admits, at first his painting pays minimal attention to the flowers themselves and relies on mere convention, as befits the dominant sociability of the Stimmung that at this point pours into and out of the picture.

The force field of sympathetic relations activated by the painting is put to darker, less common, and even more personal ends a moment later, when the painting momentarily sheds its alliance with
the social binding forces of *Stimmung* and draws more directly on its alliance with nature and the asocial desires of Heinrich’s interior life, which is to say, when it links the hidden or “dark” forces behind both nature and Heinrich. The larger group that had gathered to view the painting departs, taking Anna with it and leaving Heinrich alone, aggrieved and annoyed: and he chooses to direct his anger and aggrievement into a renewed focus on his painting, in a way that is to restore the sense of connection with and power over Anna that he has just (actually) lost—no longer openly and benignly but now, rather, covertly and malevolently. Tellingly, this renewed focus expresses itself as an increased effort “really to make use of the natural flowers before me and to learn from them” (*die natürlichen Blumen vor mir wirklich zu benutzen und an ihnen zu lernen*).¹¹⁴ That the learning and use to which he “really” intends to put the natural flowers does not reach its end in the mere improvement of his representative craft through more exact observation of his visible subject is made clear by his channeling of psychic violence; rather, he seems again to be learning to use painting to draw the invisible binding forces of nature—and especially their binding relation with Anna—to harmonize with and answer to his subjective ends; the emphasis on mimetic exactitude and replication is simply one of the means most required to connect to those invisible forces.¹¹⁵

That the painting is thus meant to “charm” Anna in the most traditional, primitive way is signaled when Heinrich inscribes the finished work with her name, in “beautiful” script, and adds as well (as nowhere previously) “Heinrich Lee fecit,” all with an eye on its future (*künftig*) recipient: in this way, he directly links Anna to the flowers and painting, and the flowers and painting to Anna, in ways he designs and invests with future force. But the truly remarkable and significant factor is how, once he has done so, the natural world seems to respond and infuse his picture with its summoned force, in ways that subtly echo the moment of Meretlein’s bewitched resurrection, albeit with reversed effect. We’re told, “The sun went down and left behind a deep, rosy radiance, which cast a dying afterglow on everything and wondrously reddened the sketch on my knees, together with my hands, and made it look like
something right” (Die Sonne ging hinab und ließ eine hohe Rosen- glut zurück, welche auf Alles einen sterbenden Nachglanz warf und die Zeichnung auf meinen Knieen samt meinen Händen wunderbar rötete und etwas Rechtem gleichsehen ließ). The light—at once flowery, evoking the nature in the painting, and a dying Nachglanz, evoking the reflection that is painting—touches and so binds together Heinrich’s work (his hands), his painting, and the natural realm with “wondrous” unifying force, establishing that the psychological/subjective binding force with which Heinrich would imbue the painting will be aided and abetted, even taken over, by the natural/objective force of the world itself, and thus made “something right” (etwas Rechtes).

It is a testament to both the presence of this power and Anna’s intuitive recognition of its threat that when she is presented with the picture, her first impulse is not to dare touch it herself and only even to look at it when hidden protectively behind others, and that her second impulse is, as soon as she has the chance, to bury it (begraben) “in the most inaccessible reaches of her room,” exactly as Meretlein tried to do with the skull. Both the threatening force of the painting and the parallel with the Meretlein episode are reinforced by the father’s addition of a frame the following morning, after the interceding witchery of the “bean night.” He compels Anna against her will to retrieve the painting and places it within a frame and behind a glass that up to this moment held a commemorative tablet (Gedächtnistafel) of the famine of 1817. Although ostensibly a process of replacing “the melancholy memorial” with “this blossoming picture of life,” the principle of contiguity (and temporal echo) that has dominated the entire scene is at work here as well, and infects the present Bild with the earlier one, or rather, brings out their hidden resemblance—and transfers that contagion to the subject whose name is inscribed beneath the “picture of life.” Even as the frame resonates with the framing constraints of both the father’s Bildung and Heinrich’s Bild within which “Anna” is placed, and even as the glass reflects the lifeless realm of aesthetic representation behind which “Anna” is placed (paralleling the ornamental glass vase within which the flowers in the picture are placed, making for yet another bracketing outside/inside frame
very much like the heaven/lake earlier), so does the reference to the famine resonate with the starvation regimen to which Meretlein was subjected as part of her Bildung, the starvation that itself reflected the constriction of Bildung and painting alike, and that we also saw in the thinness of the young ash-tree drawn between its parallel lines and have seen, too (and will again), in Anna herself. All this indirectly—by the same indirection that turns the bouquet into a figure for Anna, and painting into a form of actio in distans: that works through sympathetic relations and simple contiguity to imbue things with symbolic, allegorical force, invisibly, magically and yet for all that still realistically—all this transforms the picture into an unspoken spell leveled against Anna by her father and Heinrich, the educator and painter, just as the portrait became against Meretlein at the hands of her educator and painter.

It is, then, no wonder that when the father does speak, in his incantatory dedication of the framed picture, he closes by referring to it and the flowers in it as “these works of God,” recalling the discussion of realism that this painting was to actualize, for in its final form it does illustrate the hidden (patriarchal) powers—his own, Heinrich’s, the pastor’s and painter’s, even God’s and Goethe’s—working through and behind the natural and represented world that are so central to the realist agenda.119 And it is no wonder that he also refers to it as Anna’s memorial plaque (Denktafel), proleptically figuring her as dead (indeed killed by this very picture and frame) and analeptically figuring it as parallel to Meretlein’s grave Tafel (indeed turned into a grave by the very parallel). What does seem a wonder, but what these both help explain, is how in this context he also declares the painting a model or Vorbild, in a manner that seems completely different from how this term has been used before. Previously, it always indicated precisely the hidden male order behind or before the picture that invisibly joins it together and that Heinrich seeks to imitate and draw into his painting—something usually imagined as situated in the past (even among the dead) and behind the painting. Here, however, it suggests an admonition, even a command for how Anna is to live in the future and before the picture, “with a soul adorned and innocent as these delicate and honorable works of God!”120 A second
look, however, reveals the connection: it is the Vorbild qua (male) hidden order that through the picture would determine how Anna is not so much to live as, in living, to die. But most significant for us is how, as a Vorbild, the painting here is charged with an active, future force, which is to say, the forces—both subjective and objective, erotic and natural—that Heinrich has magically and realistically/metonymically harnessed or bound into his picture become imbued with a literally ominous, futural thrust. And this brings us to the picture of the Heathen Chamber.

The Heathen Chamber

The Heathen Chamber (Heidenstube) that becomes the subject of Heinrich’s painting on Anna’s wall (in her absence, awaiting her return) is formally introduced just after her father’s framing of the flower-bouquet painting, when Heinrich and Anna enter the woods alone. As mentioned, both the place and painting represent a kind of lovers’ paradise, a variant on the topos of the locus amoenus, with all its traditional echoes of eros, nature, and aesthetics—but here given a characteristically deadly turn. We need to describe exactly what the Heidenstube means to Heinrich and Anna (and to the reader) to understand the peculiar significance and force with which the painting becomes charged.

As might be expected—given the setting in nature, always the site for sympathetic relations, and the figure of Anna, always a magnet attracting those relations—the scene is spectrally haunted by echoes of earlier textual moments; and rather than just remaining invisibly active in the background, this metatextual play (again) enters into the scene as a central determinative force. The flower-bouquet painting is drawn in as Anna collects yet another bouquet of flowers as they approach the site; both it and she are then linked to Meretlein as Anna “wove a delicate crown out of the small, genteel forest flowers and put it on.” The resultant literalization, aestheticization, and, in the case of Meretlein, magicification that these links impose on Anna become activated the moment they reach the Heathen Chamber, “a place where the water gathered
itself and stood still,” and Anna says, “Here one rests” (Hier ruht man aus):

Now she looked exactly like a lovely fairy-tale, her image looked up smiling out of the deep, dark-green water, the white and red face fabulously shadowed over as if through a dark glass.

Nun sah sie ganz aus wie ein holdseliges Märchen, aus der tiefen, dunkelgrünen Flut schaute ihr Bild lächelnd herauf, das weiß und rote Gesicht wie durch ein dunkles Glas fabelhaft überschattet. ¹²³

This is not only about the transformation of Anna into an unreal, aestheticized object, making visible the literalization already allusively begun—although it certainly is that. The reflection in the water—which captures Anna’s Bild and becomes at once the object of attention and the medium that enchants and transports her into a fairy-tale world—bespeaks her transposition into both the world of art and the world of nature, and if we put slight pressure on the “dark-green,” into the (specular) world of the “green” Heinrich.¹²⁴ That the connection to Heinrich is a dark one is conveyed by the dunkel; that the connection to art is, too, is conveyed by the dunkles Glas; that the connection to nature is similarly dark, even deadly, is conveyed by the stillness of the water and its replication in Anna’s “Here one rests (ruht)” In all cases, Anna is “shadowed over” (überschattet), in ways that suggest not only the lurking presence of death and stasis, but also the almost visible presence of the shadow world of diffused, linked, shaping forces of the psyche, the landscape, and the text—by the “light-darkness” (Helldunkel) that envelops the entire scene.¹²⁵

The threatening darkness to the setting is amplified by the rock wall on the other side of the water, itself reflected in the water. This wall contains the Heathen Chamber proper, and it has already implicitly been implicated in the reflecting relations and connections affecting Anna and Heinrich as the unnamed origin of the echoes in their earlier song.¹²⁶ Now they are, as it were, at the site of that origin (paradoxically, an origin of projection and reflection, but also of connection). And by the same connecting pathways activated by the echoes and reflections of the physical natural setting, the story
of the Heathen Chamber that is attached to the wall becomes part of the place, or rather of the power of the place working on Anna and Heinrich, reflectively—even as, by a similar kind of metonymy, the entire site becomes the Heathen Chamber. We can even say that as the reflection in the water is at once of this rock wall and Anna, it comes to resemble the flower-bouquet painting inscribed with Anna’s name: the backstory that Anna tells becomes like the frame her father places around the painting, with its backstory of the famine, and so like the earlier painting, Heinrich’s subsequent painting of the Heathen Chamber will be more a metonymic representation of all these elements than just a mimetic one of the place itself. Like the bouquet of flowers, it too will be a painting of Anna; and it, too, will be charged with the ominous force of its backstory; and this is secured by the combined metatextual and natural (metonymic) forces active in the place.

There are a number of key elements to the story of the Heathen Chamber—a hollow or depression (Vertiefung) in the rock wall that echoes the Vertiefung of the reflecting pool—that are of significance. For example, that it bespeaks a place where, with the advent of Christianity and implicitly modern society, the heathen was forced to hide itself—and that would include not only currently taboo erotic drives but also the magic beliefs of earlier times: a spatial counterpart to the figure of Meretlein. Or that it is a place with no apparent entrance from this world, but once entered, with no way out other than death. Or that death comes to its occupants by starvation, a motif placed so closely next to that of the famine as to almost touch it, but that again evokes (more remotely) Meretlein as well; or even that the bones of the victims fall into the water below, turning the dark-green still reflecting water into a grave, or rather into yet another variation on the grave it already is and already reflects back communicatively in the Bild of Anna. But one aspect is of particular importance: that yet another layer is added to the story when Heinrich and Anna actually see a strange-looking (fremdartige) family in the Heathen Chamber that matches the story Anna has just told, and Anna “firmly believed she was seeing their ghosts” (glaubte fest, die Geister derselben zu sehen)
and offers up a sacrifice (Opfer) to propitiate them. Specters—and apparently dangerous ones—enter directly from the background text into the natural landscape and realist world, summoned up, as it were, out of its own past and present setting. Although later Heinrich and Anna are offered a realistic explanation for the appa-\[\text{r}t\text{ation, this seemingly magical and unreal world still persists side by side with the factual realist one and retains its own reality. Indeed, it is the former, not the latter, that will be evoked as the subject of Heinrich’s “realist” sketch: whose image is meant to bind Anna when she sees it, to haunt her with its spectral forces, and to portend the fate that will become her own—and to which she will be the sacrifice.}

As mentioned, this Heathen Chamber painting will eventually succeed in killing Anna: she will die in the bed adjacent to it, with Heinrich at her (and its) side—which is to say, via a kind of metonymy, a communicative contagion. But in a crucial scene shortly before this, Anna comes close to being killed off by Heinrich in the Heathen Chamber itself, and it is worth considering both how this scene functions as a precedent and why it necessitates the later death by picture and metonymy instead. Doing so will allow us to reemphasize one of the key conditions for the kind of sympathetic magic associated with realism and, not incidently, with Stimmung—namely, distance, or more fully, actio in distans.

The scene is the real climax of Heinrich and Anna’s romantic relationship, the moment they come most directly into physical contact, and it forcefully combines the dominant motifs of landscape, erotics, and metatextual entrapment. The latter is especially evident in the scene’s placement as the sequel (Nachspiel) to a communal performance of Schiller’s *Wilhelm Tell*, in which Heinrich has set the trap of casting the unsuspecting Anna in the role of Berta to his Rudenz, and has had her costumed accordingly. This literary entrapment is a textual variant on the pictoral entrapment Heinrich has mostly practiced, with the same engaged issues of death by aestheticization, convention, and so on: the sartorial equivalent to painting is also something we already encountered with both Meretlein and Heinrich himself. In any case, by seeming accident
Anna recognizes the trap, leaves the communal drama, and takes off on her horse for the woods with Heinrich close behind. It is here that the landscape reasserts itself.

The landscape description that frames Heinrich’s and Anna’s ride to the Heathen Chamber is the most expansive in the novel, and it features some of the key conditions for Stimmung in landscape painting. The view extends to the distant mountains on the horizon that surround the scene, “infinitely still and remote”:

Above them lay a wonderfully beautiful, mighty mountain range of clouds in the same radiance, light, and shadow of just the same color as the mountains. . . . The whole was . . . a wondrous wilderness, drawing powerfully and close to the heart and yet so soundless, unmoving, and remote. We saw everything at once, without taking a particular look at it; the wide world seemed to revolve around us like an unending crown, until it narrowed in as we gradually rushed downhill.

Über ihnen lagerte ein wunderschönes mächtiges Wolkengebirge im gleichen Glanze, Licht und Schatten ganz von gleicher Farbe, wie die Berge. . . . Das Ganze war eine . . . wunderbare Wildnis, gewaltig und nah an das Gemüt rückend und doch so lautlos, unbeweglich und fern. Wir sahen Alles zugleich, ohne das wir besonders hinhblickten; wie ein unendlicher Kranz schien sich die weite Welt um uns zu drehen, bis sie sich verengte, als wir allmählig bergab jagten.

We note the “wondrous” and powerful echoing harmony of the mountain and cloud formations; the sense of a dominant unity (“the whole,” “everything at once”) not lodged in any particular thing; and the way this echoing harmony and unity that originate in the object world forcefully but imperceptibly impose themselves on the subjectivity of the viewers, who are themselves drawn into its echoing, sympathetic relations in a macro-/microcosmic exchange. This last is especially caught in the play of the “unending crown” of the encircling world, which narrows down to focus on Heinrich and Anna, the latter of whom is riding “with the sparkling little crown” (dem funkelnden Krönchen) of her costume on her head: the encircling natural world comes almost literally to encircle and bind Anna herself. We note, too, how the play of imaginary and real, immaterial and concrete, that might seem to mark the two sides of
the human-natural link first appears within and between the things of the natural world in the links between the clouds and mountains—by implication setting this link, too, in the object world, and so effacing this boundary between the human and natural world as well. But most importantly, we note what Alois Riegl stresses most about landscapes: the need for distance and seeming inactivity for the Stimmung effect to emerge and assert itself—no matter how “powerfully and close” it presses on “the heart” (das Gemüt).133

The effect of the landscape and its Stimmung—spun out at great length—is to create a dream setting, highly aestheticized and eroticized, the former a continuation of the literary echoes of the Schiller play and the Meretlein episode Anna attracts, the latter an extension of the play of natural attractions in the landscape and between it and the human figures. But the key moment comes when Heinrich would break free from his sense of dreaming and embrace reality directly: “As I saw the charming, almost fairy-tale-like figure walking thus through the fir trees, I believed again that I was dreaming, and it took the greatest effort not to let the horses go, in order to convince myself of the reality (der Wirklichkeit) by rushing after her and clasping her in my arms.” When he does actually embrace and kiss her—and so venture out of the dream into the empirical—the result is predictably deadly: Anna “became deathly pale (totenbleich),” and Heinrich says, “I felt as if I held some utterly strange, insubstantial object in my arms” (Es war mir, als ob ich einen urfremden, wesenlosen Gegenstand im Arme hielte).134

They move apart, and the misstep is only overcome and the Stimmung partly restored when Heinrich goes back to looking at and contemplating Anna via the reflection in the water, at the remove of representation.135

What is striking in this shuttling between the dream world and the real is Anna’s shifting status as object or wesenloser Gegenstand. For at one level, when she’s ensconced in the aestheticized realm of Heinrich’s fantasy—whether via the trap of the Schiller text, the Stimmung of the landscape, the echoes of the Meretlein, or the reflection of the water—she is no less an object than when all these are stripped away and she becomes real, actually touched and held by Heinrich. But in the latter case she seems to become a
different kind of object, to transition from what Bill Brown might call an object to a mere thing: to lose the connections invested in her not only by Heinrich’s subjectivity but also by the surrounding world and to become almost too real—or more precisely, to become at once both more and less real, less participant in the complected whole. \(^{136}\) Certainly the restoration that follows involves regaining the distance Riegl claims is inseparable from landscape, which requires “far-sight” (Fernsicht) to overlook the real that disturbs its Bild; that Wellbery sees as inseparable from Stimmung, that cannot result in actual action without ceasing to be itself; that Freud sees as inseparable from narcissism, and Horkheimer and Adorno from the magic circle required for mimesis—all claims, we’ve seen, that seem seconded by Keller’s Goethe and his vision of both art and the world. \(^{137}\)

The point is, then, that in this scene, Heinrich’s connection to Anna is too real, too direct: it lacks the distance everyone claims is necessary for landscape, Stimmung, subjectivity, and art—a distance I claim is also necessary to realism, which, we’ve seen, works not directly on its subject matter but only indirectly, through metonymy, mediation, and echoing correspondence, and whose objects are thus never just themselves, but always also metonymies, allegories—socialized, textualized, invisibly chained objects. \(^{138}\) This distance that separates realism from the real (and not only realism, but landscape, Stimmung, subjects and objects) is what allows its magic—its reality—to work, in ways that are impossible in the real world alone; and this is why Heinrich must paint his magic realist pictures to get to Anna.

Anna’s Portrait

The last of the Anna paintings is a portrait of Anna. But even as the paintings of the flower bouquet and Heathen Chamber turn out to be not of their mimetic subjects but rather of Anna, or rather, of metonymies of Anna, her own portrait turns out not to be of her either, but rather of the metonymic relations in which she is held: the nexus of “dark” imaginings that bind Heinrich to her and with which he would bind her in turn; the aesthetic conventions
that bind his imaginings and also have come to bind her; and both
the natural elements and the metatextual connections that are so
inextricably entwined with both of these and with her figure. In an
almost uncanny fashion, it is a portrait or Bild in which Anna is at
once captured and disappears, fading into a kind of invisibility in
response to (in tune with) the forces visibly forcing her appearance.
It is, as it were, the means by which Anna is finally forced out of the
real world and into the next; and by which the forces of that other
world enter fully into her place in this one.

The implicit relation of this portrait to Heinrich’s nature paint-
ings is made evident in the setting for Heinrich’s drawing. We’re
told, “I spent the days deep in the forest. . . ; however, I drew very
little from nature, but when I had found a completely secret spot
where I was sure no one could surprise me, I pulled out a beauti-
ful piece of parchment, on which I painted Anna’s likeness from
memory, in water-colors.” This seems at first to echo Heinrich’s
earlier practice (during a period we skipped), when he first entered
into a formal apprenticeship in the city with a man named Haber-
saat, and would disappear into the woods for hours at a time and
return with impossibly romantic drawings of twisted trees, jutting
rock formations, rushing waterfalls, even deformed humans, and
claim they were all drawn “from nature,” when clearly they were
mere products of his uncontrolled even if still conventional imagi-
nation, with no relation to anything actually seen. Here the admis-
sion that he draws “very little from nature” and instead “from
memory” seems to suggest much the same, especially when the ac-
tual painting turns out to be every bit as fantastic (phantasievoll) as
those earlier landscapes. As Heinrich says, “I couldn’t draw [well],
and so the whole came out rather Byzantine. . . . It was a full-length
figure and stood in a rich bed of flowers, whose tall stems and
crowns rose with Anna’s head into the deep sky; the upper part of
the drawing was rounded off in an arch and framed with interlaced
tendrils [or scrolls], in which sat shining birds and butterflies.” One
can hardly imagine a painting more distanced from the real, from
both the natural world in which it was made and from Anna her-
self. Nor is it easy to imagine a less effective portrait with a less
promising future.
But there are also indications that something different and more is at stake here, something that aligns this painting not with the ineffectual romantic paintings for Habersaat but rather, again, with the magically effective paintings of the flower bouquet and Heathen Chamber. To begin, although his work was painted from a distance, from memory, and crowded with aesthetic convention, Heinrich also assures us, “Every day I observed Anna secretly (verstohlen) and openly and improved the picture accordingly, until at last it became completely like (ganz ähnlich).” That is, despite the indeterminacy as to exactly what the painting comes to be “like,” there is still a forceful assertion of realist mimesis and relation to its ostensible subject, Anna—although, on the other hand, that the mimesis again involves “stealing” (verstohlen), as it did in the case of the young ash-tree, suggests that something more than just realism is at stake in the mimesis as well (more anon). Second, although Heinrich may not be painting “from nature” (nach der Natur), in this case that he is painting in nature is of paramount importance. This is brought home by a textual echo that makes it seem that, if not at the Heathen Chamber, Heinrich is painting this portrait at a place significantly like it: “The greatest happiness for me was when I set myself up comfortably beside a clear reflecting pool beneath a thick roof of leaves, the picture on my knees.” The representation that is his art is closely linked to the representation (the reflection) that is nature, such that—even as with the earlier image of Anna in the water-mirror (Wasserspiegel) of the Heathen Chamber—the portrait of Anna is to draw equally on the reflecting forces of art and nature (in all their likeness), to become a site for both, and so like the picture of the Heathen Chamber something that binds Anna not only to the aesthetic but also to the natural world. As unreal and even primitive as the conventions of Heinrich’s blossoms, birds, and butterflies so obviously are, they are still intended, as the Habersaat conventions are not, to summon nature into the drawing and have its powers join with those of convention to bind their subject, much as we saw with the added grasses and flowers in the drawing of the ash tree and as we see here in the subtly constraining features of the arch, framed with interlaced tendrils (or scrolls [Rankenwerk]), and the flowers’ crowns close
beside Anna’s head, which has so often been encircled by a crown of its own. That the natural riches (the rich [reich] flower bed) in which Heinrich sets his image of Anna are matched by the fantasy riches (phantasievoll bereichert) of her clothing transposes both the artful and natural forces of the painting onto her body in ways we’ve also seen before with both Heinrich himself and Anna—and of course with Meretlein as well.

Finally, the particular intent, or intended effect, of this portrait is conveyed by the art Heinrich practices next to or alongside it. As he says, “I only interrupted this work to play on my flute.” Ever since the introduction of Anna, we’ve marked the equivalence of landscape painting and music as artful means for engaging nature’s sympathetic powers (its Stimmung) and creating the macro-micro connections of the natural and human world (Stimmung again), with the important distinction that music broadcasts these binding relations outward rather than just drawing them in, and that it converts them into something that happens, into an activity with displaced, recursive force, and so, too, into a kind of temporal force working over distance. In our previous example of the organ playing, these powers were evoked by a larger human group and recursed back to that group; here, Heinrich summons them up alone and directs them at Anna alone, who is of course the intended object of the accompanying portrait as well. We’re told that while making this painting, Heinrich would approach Anna’s house at night without leaving the woods, where he would let his flute music “ring out through the night and moonlight”:

No one seemed to notice this or at least not to react; for I would have stopped immediately if anyone had been affected by it, and yet this is exactly what I sought and I blew my flute like someone who wanted to be heard.

Hierauf schien kein Mensch zu achten oder sich wenigstens so zu stellen; denn ich hätte sogleich aufgehört, wenn irgend jemand sich darum bekümmert hätte, und doch suchte ich gerade dies und blies meine Flöte wie einer, der gehört sein will.\textsuperscript{140}

The flute transposes both the aesthetic and the natural forces of the painting into a more active, temporal form, in a way that makes
clear how Heinrich’s art, for all its hiddenness and restriction to the natural world, and for all its isolated origin in his secret fantasy, is still made with the intention of having its effect elsewhere (and at another time), on the real and human world: on Anna.

That the intended effect of the portrait is a dark or deadly one is already evident in the fact that Heinrich has by this point openly been declared a “women-hater,” committed to “perpetual misogyny.” But it is made more specific to the painting when the portrait is accidently discovered by his girl cousins and Heinrich is subjected to a trial of sorts to expose its purpose. His inquisitors ask, “What do you have against Anna that you behave in this way towards her?”; and more particularly, “By what right and to what purpose are innocent young girls copied (abconterfeit) without their knowledge? . . . It could not be a matter of indifference to them that their portraits were being prepared secretly and to unknown ends (heimlich und zu unbekanntem Zwecke).” Although Heinrich is forced to divulge his secret, he does so in a manner that preserves the portrait’s hidden purpose: he claims that he has made it for the schoolmaster, Anna’s father, thus proleptically handing it over to the figure whose Bildung designs on Anna so powerfully complement those of his own picture or Bild. But more basic than this is simply the expressed recognition in this scene that the painting has a hidden purpose (Zweck); that this purpose is directed against Anna in potentially harmful ways; and that mimesis here, far from an innocent or neutral practice, is one that draws or steals its subject into its representation and can then subsequently (recursively, futurally) be used against it—which is to say that painting embodies real magic binding properties.

Once the painting has been exposed and destined for transfer to Anna’s father, it acquires an added dimension in the form of a frame that becomes as much a part of the portrait as did that for the painting of the flower bouquet that the schoolmaster himself supplied. In fact, we are given a far more detailed description of the frame than of the portrait itself, in good part because the portrait is, as we’ve seen, itself a kind of frame, a means of enclosing and arresting Anna (and so, too, in a sense, of pushing her out of the
picture). On the day of the transfer, Heinrich’s cousins show him the portrait:

Only now did I get to see my picture again, which had been quite finely framed. On a deteriorated copper engraving the girls had found a narrow wooden frame, most delicately carved, which might well have been seventy years old and, on a slender moulding, depicted a row of little shells, one half-covering the next. Around the inner border ran a fine chain of square links, almost completely free-standing; the outer border was drawn round with a string of pearls. The village glazier, who practiced all kinds of arts and was particularly strong in the obsolete kind of lacquer-work done on old-fashioned boxes, had given the shells a reddened shine, gilded the chain and silvered the pearls and added a new, clear piece of glass.

Erst jetzt bekam ich mein Bild wieder zu sehen, welches ganz fein eingerahmt war. An einem verdorbenen Kupferstiche hatten die Mädchen einen schmalen, in Holz auf das Zierlichste geschnittenen Rahmen gefunden, welcher wohl siebenzig Jahr alt sein mochte und eine auf einen schmalen Stab gelegte Reihe von Müsselchen vorstellte, von denen eins das andere halb bedeckte. An der inneren Kante lief eine feine Kette mit viereckigen Gelenken herum, fast ganz frei stehend, die äußere Kante war mit einer Perlenschnur umzogen. Der Dorfglasier, welcher allerlei Künste trieb und besonders in verjährten Lackiarbeiten auf altmodischem Schachtelwerk stark war, hatte den Muscheln einen rötlichen Glanz gegeben, die Kette vergoldet und die Perlen versilbert und ein neues klares Glas genommen.144

One of the main ways this frame affects Anna with well-nigh annihilatory force is through the many (meta)textual overtones that engage in their own Schachtelwerk, boxing Anna into their own earlier frameworks. Most obviously, there are echoes of the frame for the flower-bouquet painting Anna’s father supplied: we hear these in the way this frame, too, is taken from an old, “deteriorated” print from years past, and the emphasis on its archaic quality—itself echoed in the “obsolete” and “old-fashioned” arts of the glazier—again has the effect of assimilating Anna to a world already past and infecting her with that pastness. There are echoes, too, in those seashells of the schoolmaster’s painted house, the house in or before which Anna first appeared framed in Heinrich’s first (painterly) description of her, anticipating how
she would be jointly bound by the father’s Bildung and Heinrich’s Bilder: their appearance here transforms their earlier one into an omen that now finds fulfillment. But most tellingly, in the fine golden chain with square links—the chain that captures the binding motif in all these echoes, and the links that, in their squareness, present in miniature how chains are also frames—as well as in the “string of pearls” that frames the chain itself, there are echoes of that other portrait of that other “little witch,” Meretlein. So many key terms here—“narrow” (schmal), “delicate” (zierlich), “fine” (fein), “old-fashioned” (altmodisch)—that originated in the portrait of Meretlein and became fractally dispersed throughout the text, including in the earlier Anna pictures, each time loaded with the witching overtones their back-pointing echo of Meretlein entailed, are here brought home, summoned to their fulfillment and unloading their belated, futural force on the portrait of Anna, in ways that all but efface the appearance of Anna herself. Heinrich ends his description of the frame by briefly returning to that of the portrait instead, but foregrounds only those elements that most resemble the frame and themselves recall the binding of Meretlein—the “flowers and birds, as well as the golden clasps and gem-stones with which I had ornamented Anna”—and finishes by mentioning, “The face was not modelled at all and very light” (Das Gesicht war fast gar nicht modelliert und ganz licht): she herself all but fades out of the painting under the pressure of the encompassing forces mobilized to hold her.445

While it is the older arts of the village glazier (“who practiced all kinds of arts”) that seem most to bind Anna (and so, too, most to assist Heinrich), he also places her beneath a new glass cover—and this, too, has its effacing or fading effect, drawing on the reflecting forces of nature and art at once. This is already implicit in its echo of the clear reflecting pool (klarem Spiegelwässerchen) beside which the portrait was drawn, itself reflecting both Anna’s Bild in the Heathen Chamber pool and the glass behind which the picture of the flower bouquet was placed. But it becomes all the more so when Heinrich takes the framed portrait outside, into nature, to transport it to the schoolmaster’s house. We’re told, “When the sun was reflected on the gleaming glass, it proved true that no thread is
so finely spun that it doesn’t finally come to light” (Wenn die Sonne sich in dem glänzenden Glase spiegelte, so erwies es sich recht eigentlich, daß kein Fädelein so fein gesponnen, das nicht endlich an die Sonne käme). Most obviously, this turns the portrait into a mirror reflecting back to Heinrich not Anna’s image but his own, in keeping with her earlier description as like a narcissus and the painting itself as more a portrait of Heinrich’s imagination than of Anna’s image. But it also matters that the portrait here is touched by nature’s light, much as Meretlein’s tiara was touched by the shaft of heaven’s light or the painting of the flower bouquet by heaven’s “dying afterglow,” setting up a fine web of woven threads between natural and subjective forces connected to the portrait. Both have the effect of seeming to make the picture itself—Anna herself—disappear from within the frame: and both seem underscored when the Bild finds its destined place “over the sofa in the room where it looked (sich ausnahm) like the portrait of a fairy-tale saint,” which is another way of saying, not of Anna, but of the aesthetic and echoing forces that take her out (ausnahm).

**Abnungen, Art, and Eros**

Even as Anna seems forced out of her portrait by these various invisible powers, so, too, does she begin to be forced out of the textual world itself. This occurs shortly after Heinrich has completed his reading of Goethe and begun the final stage of his Bildung in landscape painting under the mentorship of Römer. Heinrich returns one day to find Anna’s black coat (“the light-weight pleasant thing”) on the same rest bed (Ruh- or Lotterbettchen) on which he had read his Goethe, and this is the first sign that Anna is soon to be consigned to a deathbed of her own. The question becomes, what does Anna’s actual death tell us about the Bildung and realism at stake in the novel, or rather, about the magic at stake in the Bildung and realism of the novel? Certainly the easiest answer would be that Anna’s death, her disappearance, represents a crucial abjection of the magical (and romantic) from both the world and Heinrich’s subject. Realism
demands a disenchantment of its textual realm, including its nat-
ural realm (so long the stronghold of romantic convention and
thought), and an exclusive focus on the sensible and empirical; Bild-
zung requires the abjection of the unruly desires and fantasies of the
male subject, their projected conscription onto a female other, and
then a final detachment of the male subject from that female other,
whose death would signify his devotion to a properly restricted,
sensible, and empirical existence—indeed, the suitably abjected
subject of Bildung would be the condition for the disenchanted
objects of realism. The two decisive figures for Heinrich’s acquired
realism and Bildung in this reading would be Römer and Judith,
whose marked prominence at this point coincides with Anna’s fad-
ing, signaling Heinrich’s turn away from the enchanted world of
Anna and toward a sensible world of real things.

There is textual support for such a reading. When Heinrich re-
turns to the village after Anna has become ill, the schoolmaster
tries to engage him in religious, otherworldly debate, “but during
the last summer I had almost completely lost my pleasure in such
discussions, my sight was directed toward material phenomena
and form (sinnliche Erscheinungen und Gestalt),” and it is primar-
ily his apprenticeship with Römer that has, he says, redirected him
in this way.\textsuperscript{148} Still, this orientation is immediately challenged by
the other new Erscheinung that appears on the scene just as Anna
begins to fade from it, namely, the reports of her “premonitions
and dreams” (Ahnungen und Träume). These would obviously ex-
ceed any simple materialist or realist explanation, and it is not at
all clear that the newly advanced aesthetic sensibility succeeds in
dismissing them from the world.

The issue of Anna’s premonitions and dreams is appropriately
introduced by Katherine, the old hag who presided over the earlier
“bean-night,” who now, with “many a dark and occult allusion,”
first reports on Anna’s new condition.\textsuperscript{149} But it is left to Judith to
clarify the changes that have followed Anna’s illness:

It’s said that the poor girl has had strange dreams and premonitions for
some time past, that she has already prophesied a few things that really
happened, that often in dreaming as well as awake she suddenly gets
a kind of vision and presentiment of what persons at a distance, who are dear to her, are doing or not doing at the moment, or how they are.

Man sagt, daß das arme Mädchen seit einiger Zeit merkwürdige Träume und Ahnungen habe, daß sie schon ein paar Dinge vorausgesagt, die wirklich eingetroffen, daß manchmal im Traume, wie im Wachen sie plötzlich eine Art Vorstellung und Ahnung von dem bekomme, was entfernte Personen, die ihr lieb sind, jetzt tun oder lassen oder wie sie sich befinden.\textsuperscript{150}

As the supposed embodiment of the materialist or \textit{sinnlich} in matters of love—every bit as much as Römer in matters of art—it is not surprising that Judith adds, “I don’t believe that kind of thing,” nor that this dismissal is repeated in Heinrich’s uncle’s house, long the bastion of a plump empiricism.\textsuperscript{151} But even with this widespread support for a disenchanted world (such as Römer, too, promotes), Heinrich is not completely convinced; and at some level, I believe, neither are we—not least because, as readers, we, too, have experienced such dream states and premonitions in the novel. Heinrich says, “As I shook my head in disbelief, a light chill still went through me” and “Even so a mixed feeling (\textit{gemischte Empfindung}) stayed with me.” He returns to see Anna, and “as she herself now, in the presence of her father, began softly to speak of a dream she dreamt a few days before, and I saw from this that she was willing to draw me into the supposed secret, I straightaway believed in the thing,” adding:

I thought about it further and remembered having read reports of such things, where without assuming anything wondrous or supernatural, certain still unexplored spheres and potentialities of Nature were hinted at, just in the same way as, by more mature consideration, I had to hold many a hidden bond and law as possible.

\textit{Ich} dachte mehr darüber nach und erinnerte mich, von solchen Berichten gelesen zu haben, wo, ohne etwas Wunderbares und Übernatürliches anzunehmen, auf noch unerforschte Gebiete und Fähigkeiten der Natur selbst hingewiesen wurde, so wie ich überhaupt bei reiflicher Betrachtung noch manches verborgene Band und Gesetz möglich halten mußte.\textsuperscript{152}

All this is couched in suitably tentative terms, and the sense of dubious reliability is maintained in Heinrich’s almost comical response,
first to Judith’s report—“Almost in the same moment, I had the feeling that she [Anna] must be seeing me now . . . ; I was terrified and looked around me”—and then that night when he goes to bed “and assumed an extremely choice and ideal position, so as to come off with honor, if Anna’s spiritual eye (Geisterauge) should fall upon me unawares,” and continues upon waking to try “to control my thoughts and be clear and pure at every moment,” as if watched and seen through by Anna. But the fact remains that, as comical and even naïve as it seems, this imagined connection with and power of Anna are very much the same Band and occult force Heinrich as narrator has been employing toward himself as character and, as painter and narrator, has been (deflectively) employing toward Anna, now reversed, broadcast out by her and back at him. And they have the same policing Bildung effect, including the penetration into or, rather, production of an interiority, or more fully, a spirituality. For at some level, much as with Meretlein, the Bildung (and painterly) constraints on Heinrich’s subject and Anna’s person have not eliminated the abjected, unruly forces from the world, but merely forced their appearance—along with those of the policing itself—elsewhere, in a newly spiritual or ghostly (geistiggeistlich/geisterhaft) realm, whether conceived as now interior or exterior to the sensible world. Realism has clearly not succeeded in disenchanting its world, but only in displacing its sorcery into a parasitic space, which is neither “wondrous” nor “supernatural” only because, on the one hand, it is recognizably metatextual and, on the other, because that metatextuality has consistently entered the text through the natural world. The appearance here of Anna’s “strange dreams and premonitions” merely makes explicit—concrete, visible—the magical forces that have been there all along for the reader as part of the “spheres and potentialities of Nature,” and so, too, as not separate from the novel’s program of Bildung and realism; that they are Anna’s simply reinforces how she has been the site of the reflection, the echo effect of these forces all along. As with the double bind we first described with Meretlein, so too here with Anna: the very natural bonds that were mobilized to constrain her become the threads by which she extends out into
nature’s world; she doesn’t so much leave the text world as join the invisible forces behind it.\footnote{155}

The same survival or persistence of the magical that we witness in such broad strokes with Anna’s clairvoyance and premonitions we also see in more subtle but no less telling form with Römer and Heinrich’s aesthetic education and with Judith and his erotic education. As mentioned, Römer represents an aesthetic devoted to a simple empiricism: he continually champions a mode of landscape painting that focuses on what he calls “the truths of nature” (die Naturwahrheiten), “the immediate truth” (die unmittelbare Wahrheit), and “the simple truth of nature” (die gemeine Naturwahrheit).\footnote{156} When Heinrich’s own painting exceeds this focus and attempts to introduce spirit-ed relations and meanings (geistreiche Beziehungen und Bedeutungen), Römer calls him a sorcerer (Hexenmeister) and accuses him of a “presumptuous spiritualism” (unmaßenden Spiritualismus) that thwarts the “immediate truth” and “natural truth” when it seeks to represent the “complete truth” (Gesamtwahrheit) of nature.\footnote{157} Römer claims that the kind of landscape painting Heinrich pursues is “a dangerous thing,” a mode that requires more basis in the study of the human than of trees and bushes—which is to say, a mode of landscape painting based on projection and echo, on seeking out sympathetic relations between micro- and macrocosms—a procedure Römer rejects as inadequately objective and true.

Römer refers to this style as based in “invention,” and given both Heinrich’s earlier propensity toward self-projecting fantasy obscuring or missing the real and a realist aesthetic and Bildung program that require the elimination of such magical thinking to attain the real, the reader might expect Römer’s position to be authoritative and Heinrich’s achieved Bildung and realism to consist in accepting it.\footnote{158} But Heinrich does not yield to Römer’s definition of the true and truly natural, and notes instead Römer’s own inability to recognize and reproduce the significant (bedeutsam) and “speaking” in nature. He describes how “already more than once in correcting my groupings, he had completely failed to see beloved spots in the mountains or woods I believed fully significant, as he
mercilessly hatched over them with his thick pencil and levelled it all out to a forceful but insignificant [or unspeaking] ground” (schon mehr als einmal hatte er, meine Anordnungen korrigierend, Lieblingsstellen in Bergzügen oder Waldgründen, die ich recht bedeutsam glaubte, gar nicht einmal gesehen, indem er sie mit dem markigen Bleistifte schonungslos überschraffierte und zu einem kräftigen aber nichtssagenden Grunde ausglich).¹⁵⁹ That is, the realism of Römer that would reject Heinrich’s “sorcery” and “spiritualism,” his “spirit-ed relations and meanings,” and participatory merging of the artist and his subject is recognized by Heinrich as far from representing the “complete truth” of nature, and in fact as conspicuously reductionist and exclusionary, even as untrue. And so Heinrich’s own Bildung and realism will consist not in accepting but in moving beyond Römer’s model and seeking a mode of representation that can accommodate into its real, natural world this added dimension.¹⁶⁰

Admittedly, Heinrich is not yet at this point, and so the desired harmony of subject and object, of the spiritual and real, still more closely resembles the earlier dissonance of subjective fantasy and objective world. But there are two intimations of what this harmonic mode will look like and how it will differ from Römer’s “truth of nature.” Significantly, both come in more or less immediate proximity to the issue of Anna’s premonitions and dreams (as does the just mentioned exchange between Heinrich and Römer). The first appears in Heinrich’s narratorial description of the morning landscape to which he awakes when he arrives back at Anna’s house, and of the fog in which he then becomes entangled on his way (unknowingly) to see Judith.¹⁶¹ These extremely accomplished nature descriptions are notably distinct from the aesthetics of Römer to which they are juxtaposed, and while firmly bound to the visible objects of the external world clearly open up to an allegorical dimension that sees the human/spiritual world (reflecting first Heinrich’s relation to Anna, then to Judith) in the natural, imbuing the scene with “spirit-ed” relations and meanings and presenting a world in which Anna’s dreams and premonitions would be fully natural.¹⁶²

The second intimation comes in Römer’s studio, shortly after Heinrich returns to the city after his visit with Anna, and it comes
in Heinrich’s own intimations of his painterly ideal, momentarily glimpsed in his own activity:

When I succeeded in hitting upon the verisimilar tone that would have been diffused over Nature in similar conditions—as one saw immediately, since a true tone always exercises an absolutely peculiar magic—then there stole over me a pantheistically proud feeling, in which my experience and the weave of nature appeared to be one.

Gelang es mir, den wahrscheinlichen Ton zu treffen, der unter ähnlichen Verhältnissen über der Natur selbst geschwebt hätte—was man gleich sah, indem ein wahrer Ton immer einen ganz eigentümlichen Zauber übt—so beschlich mich ein pantheistisch stolzes Gefühl, in welchem mir meine Erfahrung und das Weben der Natur Eins zu sein schienen.¹⁶³

This is a notably more complex representation of the immediate and “true” at stake in landscape painting than we get from Römer, and as the way “tone” here evokes at once painting and music suggests, this representation brings us much closer to a poetics of Stimmung—indeed, the very model of Stimmung that Wellbery ascribes to Goethe, that seems implicit in Heinrich’s reading of Goethe, and that seems notably absent from Römer’s poetics. That we are still dealing with realism is evident in the equation of the like (wahrscheinlich) and the similar (ähnlich) with the immediate (gleich) and true (wahr). But rather than a reductive empiricism, realism here is a mode of magic (Zauber), a magic explicitly based in and productive of the sense of sympathetic connection and unity between the self, the mimesis, and the weave of nature (das Weben der Natur)—which is to say, in an experience of Stimmung that includes the natural world, the human artist, and the painting connecting them. Far from disenchanted, landscape painting for Heinrich is pantheistically charged—an embrace, as it were, of the magic within and not apart from the human or natural.

We see much the same persistence of the enchanted world in Heinrich’s relation to Judith, even with—or perhaps, especially with—the fading of Anna from the scene. Judith has consistently been cast by Heinrich as representing the sensible, sensual world and the object of his sensual erotic desires, with his connection or attraction to her contrasted with his “spiritual” (geistig) and “platonic” connection and bond (Band) with Anna.¹⁶⁴ Thus, Heinrich’s
turn to her at the moment of Anna’s fading could be read as the parallel in his erotic education to his turn to Römer’s material phenomena (sinnliche Erscheinungen) in his aesthetic education—both as a turn to the “real” on the far side of a flirtation with Spiritualismus. That the relation with Judith also turns out to be the telos, as it were, of the entire Bildungsroman in its final version would seem to give added weight to this reading.

But the same reservations that hold in the case of Römer hold in that of Judith as well: the only difference is that it is Judith who represents the winning argument against Heinrich, rather than Heinrich against Römer. It goes something like this. Even as Heinrich’s incessant aestheticization of Anna—the magic he has worked on her via his painting and writing—had the effect of constraining her, binding her within a constricting frame and eventually forcing her out of the picture altogether; just so does Heinrich’s incessant sensualization or materialization of Judith. Judith as a representation of a sinnlich realm or principle—of a reality principle, as it were—is as reductive of her reality as Römer’s poetics are of nature’s reality, and no one is more aware of this than Judith herself, who from the start fights for a recognition of a more encompassing sense of herself, one that includes the spiritual and aesthetic dimensions of the world that Heinrich would otherwise associate only with Anna. Just as Anna’s premonitions and dreams need to be acknowledged as part of the natural world, and just as Heinrich’s “spirit-ed” relations and meanings need to be acknowledged as part of landscape painting, so, too, does the magical need to be included as part of Judith’s character and Heinrich’s attraction to her. Indeed, if there is a realism to be glimpsed in Heinrich’s turn to Judith, both here and, especially, at the end of the novel, it is to be found in the rejection of Judith as the embodiment of a disenchanted, despiritualized realism: this at any rate would seem the peculiar symbolic force of the emblem beneath which Heinrich and Judith are finally joined, the glass painting from 1650 in the Golden Star tavern featuring “Emerentia Juditha” and her man—with Heinrich there as both lover and glass painter (Glasmaler), and with Meretlein and Judith joined in a single, encompassing figure and Bild.
This added enchanted dimension to Judith’s character is conveyed most powerfully at the moment of Anna’s physical fading and premonitions appearing, and of Heinrich’s break with Römer and his Spiritualismus intact, in the novel’s final Heathen Chamber scene—which belongs not to a costumed or dying Anna but to the naked and very much alive Judith. Heinrich has expressed the wish to see the female figure revealed, unveiled (entblößt), and Judith, with an explicitly realist impulse—she will “magic away” (wegzaubern) Heinrich’s illusions—decides to oblige him, but at the Heathen Chamber and from a distance. And at the Heathen Chamber, she attracts to her unadorned, natural body all the magical forces of both nature and textuality that otherwise seemed reserved for Anna but instead persist in the world without her. The textual magic is there in spectral allusions to Ariosto and, more immediately, to the Witches’ Kitchen scene in Goethe’s Faust; but more importantly, the natural magic is everywhere, in the setting as well as both participants, and between the setting and both participants. Heinrich says, “It seemed to me as if Judith had dissolved herself and soundlessly disappeared into the nature that teasingly rustled its ghostly elements around me. . . . It truly became uncanny to me, as the still of the night seemed completely saturated with daemonic intent” (Es wurde mir zu Mute, wie wenn Judith sich aufgelöst hätte und still in die Natur verschwunden wäre, in welcher mich ihre Elemente geisterhaft neckend umrauschten. . . . Es wurde mir wirklich unheimlich zu Mute, da die Stille der Nacht von einer dämonischen Absicht ganz getränkt erschien). Judith has shed her clothes, “like a lifeless, earthly hull,” and in her naked truth—as the very embodiment of the real, the natural, the erotic—she appears ghostly (gespentisch) before Heinrich, singing magically (zauberhaft) and drawing him magnetically (magnetisch) to her appearance. And so on. But the point of Judith at the Heathen Chamber as “the nocturnal phantom” (der nächtliche Spuk) is this: even with the death of Anna, the magical does not leave the novel’s world, does not yield a disenchanted erotic subject, a disenchanted natural realm, or a disenchanted aesthetic ideal. At its most basic level, the world of the novel remains an enchanted one.
Anna and Objectivity

The last word belongs not to Judith but Anna: it is with her, or rather her death, that the “Story of My Youth” comes closest to realizing its properly magic realism—its Stimmung, its seamless unity of the real and allegorical, the human and natural, the live and dead. It is one of the most powerful tour de force moments in German realist literature.

Once Anna dies, a process begins that extends what we just saw with her premonitions: even as with her physical fading her spirituality doesn’t disappear but rather disperses, broadcast into the invisible and immaterial forces behind the natural world, so with her death her life doesn’t disappear but rather disperses, broadcast into the visible and material things in the natural world—into the very things whose bonds to her were the means for constricting her, and which now become the means through which she flows out to inhabit those things and imbue them with their “spirit-ed” meanings and relations without ever being anything more than their concrete selves. The result is an amazingly freed and complete signification, freed of needed external (or transcendent) referent and complete in the things themselves; and a sense of all-embracing relation and unity that, for both Heinrich and the reader, produces an almost ecstatic sense of aesthetic bliss: an objective state and a subjective sense that Heinrich will call Stimmung and equate with the achieved end of his Bildung.

When Anna dies, her corpse is laid out “beautifully adorned” by old Katherine and Heinrich’s mother in Anna’s room:

There she lay, according to the schoolmaster’s wish, on the beautiful flowered throw that she had once embroidered for her father. . . . Above her on the wall Katherine . . . had hung the picture that I had once made of Anna, and opposite one still saw the landscape with the Hea-then Chamber that I painted years before on the white wall. Both folding doors of Anna’s cupboard stood open and her innocent possessions came to light and lent the still death-chamber a helpful appearance of life. [The schoolmaster helped the two women] take out and look over the most delicate and memory-rich little things that the blessed girl had collected from early childhood on. . . . Some of these were even laid beside her on the throw, such that, unconsciously and against the usual
practice of these simple people, a custom of ancient tribes was practiced here. The whole time they did this, they spoke with one another as if the dead girl could still hear them.


Among the objects that are brought forth and placed around and next to Anna are her father’s letters, her books, her artworks, and the crown she wore on her last visit to the Heathen Chamber; also her own embroidery of Heinrich’s flower-bouquet painting. It is an enchanting moment: all the object-devices that were deployed to bind Anna and ultimately deprive her of life and movement are on display, beginning with Heinrich’s Bilder, but also extending to her father’s instruments of Bildung; with nature there, too, in the mediated form of the flowered throw and Heathen Chamber landscape; and, too, those echo effects of her gebildet status, the letters she writes back to her father, the blanket she embroiders for him, and the flower-bouquet embroidery she makes for Heinrich. As if in unconscious (unbewußt) acknowledgment of the ancient heathenish way these objects have worked their sympathetic magic through metonymic connection, proximity, and contagion, they are placed next to the corpse, giving concrete expression to the powerful and ultimately deadly relation that has obtained between Anna and these things.

The end effect of these objects is, however, not only the deadly one on her: if the inanimate objects have communicated their binding force to Anna, she has communicated back her animate life to them. This is especially evident in the case of her “echo-effect”
artworks, such as the flower-bouquet embroidery, which are at once signs of Anna’s complete, even interior and active, subjection to her father’s and Heinrich’s designs, and of her own recursive, back-turned, dispersive agency. But it is the case with all the things in the room, including those produced by Heinrich and the father. It is the objects placed next to and around her that communicate the sense of life, Anna’s life; it is the objects that, bound to Anna, communicate in turn to those in the room the sense that she can still hear (is still part of the Mit-stimmung). The sense that the bonds have not dissolved but remain in the things that originally drew them is reinforced when Heinrich takes into his own hands the flower-bouquet embroidery and says, “I felt myself bound to Anna by an unbreakable bond” ([Ich] fühlte mich durch ein unauflösliches Band mit Anna verbunden). Things stay enchanted, metonymically charged forces, and no less so—even more so—with the loss of their explicit human referent. (Marx and Freud would say things thus become fetishes, Brown that they become objects, Benjamin that they become auratic and look back; I will say they become realist.)

The same contagious communion that we see between Anna and the objects in her room we see again between Anna, the things in her room, and the natural world outside her window—at least in the experience of Heinrich. He has been keeping the nighttime death-watch over Anna’s corpse:

The dead white girl continued to lie unmoving, but the colored flowers of the carpet seemed to grow in the pale light. Now the morning star rose and was reflected in the lake. . . . With the morning graying . . . it seemed to live and weave around the still figure . . . as at the same moment I timidly touched her hand, I drew back my own in horror . . . : for the hand was cold, like a lump of chilly clay.

The same set of connecting, sympathetic forces that we saw active while Anna was alive we see still active once she has died: first between the natural world and Anna’s artwork that imitates it, as the embroidered flowers appear to grow; and then, via the mimesis in the mirroring lake, more directly between nature and Anna herself, as the stilled corpse seems to live in the weave of light, reflection, art, and Heinrich’s (attracted) imagination. In some ways, we seem at a moment much like when Heinrich first encountered the Meretlein portrait on the wall in his uncle’s house; but even more we seem poised before a moment that will repeat the actual resurrection of Meretlein—both in her person and in her portrait—and not least because we seem poised again before the same paradox of realism, the same double-bind of that which stills life also preserves it.

The results, however, prove far different from the case of Meretlein, or rather, the same paradox is played out in a rather different fashion, one that appears more “realistic,” more disenchanted, and yet still manages to keep faith with witchery. There is no resurrection: Anna remains undeniably dead, and the cold factuality of her inert corpse acts as a forceful rebuke of what now appears as Heinrich’s magical thinking. But the disruptive force of this all-too-material touch is immediately countered by the “harmonic force” (harmonischer Kraft), the “powerful tones” (kräftigen Tönen) of organ music Heinrich hears coming from the next room over; the music that, as always in this novel, speaks of a larger reality: of Stimmung, of the invisible, occult connections between the human and natural, their shared “spirit-world” (Geisterwelt) that keeps even the dead Anna implicated and present.

As I said, the nighttime communication between Anna, the natural world, and Heinrich that makes her seem alive in its weave can be read as only Heinrich’s magical thinking, rudely but properly dispelled by the subsequent material contact. And the almost immediate restoration—even resurrection—of the sense of sustained spiritual contact brought about by the music can be read as a defensive retreat to that magical, reality-denying thinking: for music is also a medium for aestheticization, and is in this case tellingly played by the schoolmaster, and so perhaps Anna is only
successfully recuperated, aesthetically and psychologically, as object after her momentary recognition as thing—much as happened in the last meeting between Heinrich and Anna at the Heathen Chamber. Such a reading would comfortably assign the “spirit-world” to the subjective and aesthetic alone, and would leave the natural, nonhuman world safely untouched, or only represented in the physical touch that denies spirit(s). But as I also said, music seems always to exceed just the aesthetic, to convey the sense of (micro/macro) cosmic connection that is Stimmung; and this suggests that the same extension of sympathetic forces into the nonhuman that we witnessed with Meretlein and throughout with Anna persists here as well. As indeed proves the case.

The sense of Stimmung, of a harmonious blending of the human and the natural, the subjective and the objective, the significant and the concrete—the sense that is first conveyed “magically” during the night in Heinrich’s fantasy in Anna’s room is achieved far more “realistically” in the clear light of the next day, outdoors and in the woods: as Heinrich says, he goes “into the living green” (ins lebendige Grüne), himself of course dressed in matching green (“like a heathen”).171 The effect comes about through a mode of description that manages only to describe what is there, without any obvious projecting subjectivity on Heinrich’s part, and yet still to resonate with attendant, not-quite-represented significance and connection.

At the center of this description is the coffin that is being built for Anna’s corpse. It is made from the boards of a “slender little fir-tree” (schlankes Tännlein) that had been intended for the schoolmaster’s own coffin, boards that had served for many years as a “resting bench” (Ruhebank) on which he would read and Anna play, and whose ends are now cut off for Anna’s coffin.172 With no explicit elaboration or needed symbolic loading, the “little fir-tree” speaks of Anna, the “resting bench” of arresting stillness, the father’s reading of the Bildung that will be the arrest of the playing “slender” child, the cut-off boards of both Anna as an extension of her father and his now lost connection to her. But most speaking of all is the relation between the boards themselves and the tree from which they come, which conveys in simple, concrete fashion a
unity between the human aesthetic and the nonhuman natural that becomes the coffin, which is at once a fashioned artwork and still, always, also the tree itself.\textsuperscript{173}

The merged unity between the human aesthetic and natural material worlds is furthered by the decision to build the coffin in the woods, on the far side of the reflecting lake. Heinrich and the carpenter (who does the actual physical work) set up a workplace by clamping cut boards to living trees; Heinrich helps build a fire out of combined wood-shavings and twigs; the carpenter planes, and the rolls of shavings, “like delicate, shining satin bands,” drop to the ground and mix with falling leaves. The sense of \textit{Stimmung} is especially captured when Heinrich describes how the planed shavings loose themselves “with a bright singing tone, which was a seldom-heard song beneath the trees,” and adds the echoing hammer-blows and cries of startled birds to the chorus—all at once nothing but themselves and still indices of a harmony between man and landscape, art and nature in the external world. The high note comes in the completed coffin itself:

Soon the finished coffin stood before us in its simplicity, slender and symmetrical, the lid beautifully vaulted. . . . I saw with wonder . . . ; I had to laugh. . . . As [the carpenter] polished the coffin all over with the [pumice-]stone, it became as white as snow, and only the faintest reddish breath of the fir-tree still shone through, like with an apple-blossom. It looked far more beautiful and dignified than if it had been painted, gilded, or even studded with bronze.

The coffin is art, but also wood; the more polished art it becomes, the more it brings out the wood, in colors like snow and as with an apple blossom; and the more it becomes at once art and nature, the more it becomes like Anna—even metonymically to be Anna: slender, beautiful, and white with the faintest breath of red
shining through. It is, I’d say, this truly magically charged moment of micro-macro relation, where the aesthetic and natural merge and the coffin becomes Anna without ceasing to be itself, and Anna present in the coffin without even being there, that forces from Heinrich (and the reader) both wonder and almost involuntary laughter—both effects of Stimmung perceived, a Stimmung that originates in the things of the external world and only then communicates itself to the internal one of his (and our) subjectivity. And it is as much this sense of the objectivity of the effect as it is the complete integration of the artful and natural, the apparent absence of a projected, superimposed aesthetic dimension (painted, gilded, or even studded with bronze), that makes this moment also seem a realist one.

This is not to say that the mediation of the aesthetic—of both a perceiving aesthetic subjectivity and intervening aesthetic conventions—is absent from the scene; but rather that this, too, is brought into Stimmung (porous accord) with the rest in ways that bind them tightly, sympathetically together (and keep them natural, real). We see this in the glass pane Heinrich himself adds to the coffin, the pane that will cover and frame Anna’s face and that repeats and varies in significant ways the glass panes that covered both the flower-bouquet painting and Anna’s portrait and echoes, too, the several reflecting waters in which she appears. Heinrich leaves the woods and returns to the house to fetch the “forgotten” glass from an old picture frame whose original Bild had long since disappeared. When he gets back to the coffin he dips the glass in the lake’s water to rid it of its darkening dust:

Then I lifted it up . . . and when I held the shining glass up high against the sun and looked through it, I beheld the most lovely wonder I have ever seen. I saw three charming angels making music; the middle one sang, the two others played . . . but the apparition was so aerially and delicately transparent that I didn’t know whether it was hovering in the rays of the sun, in the glass, or only in my fantasy. When I moved the pane, the angels immediately disappeared, until suddenly, with a different movement, they appeared again. Since then I’ve been told that copper engravings or drawings, which have lain undisturbed for long, long years behind a glass, during the dark nights of these years impart
themselves to the glass, and leave behind upon it, as it were, their lasting mirror-image.

Dann hob ich sie empor . . . und indem ich das glänzende Glas hoch gegen die Sonne hielt und durch dasselbe schaute, erblickte ich das lieblichste Wunder, das ich je gesehen. Ich sah nämlich drei reizende, musizierende Engelknaben; der mittlere sang, die beiden anderen spielten . . . aber die Erscheinung war so luftig und zart durchsichtig, daß ich nicht wußte, ob sie auf den Sonnenstrahlen, im Glase, oder nur in meiner Phantasie schwebte. Wenn ich die Scheibe bewegte, so verschwanden die Engel auf Augenblicke, bis ich sie plötzlich mit einer anderen Wendung wieder entdeckte. Ich habe seither erfahren, daß Kupferstiche oder Zeichnungen, welche lange, lange Jahre hinter einem Glase ungestört liegen, während der dunklen Nächte dieser Jahre sich dem Glase mitteilen und gleichsam ihr dauerndes Spiegelbild in demselben zurücklassen.175

As with the glass panes covering both the flower-bouquet painting and Anna’s portrait, this one, too, speaks of aesthetic mediation, and especially, as with the flower-bouquet painting, brings with it the contagion of its earlier image. And as with those earlier panes, it brings with it as well the suggestion of a back-reflecting mirror, a Spiegelbild that reproduces more the artist and his representing conventions (or medium) than the matter behind it. But something new is happening here, suggested by the way the image’s contagion is materially and not just metaphorically (or metonymically) evident; by the way the glass does not simply mirror Heinrich’s image back to himself but stays transparent; and by the way the lake’s water proves not so much a reflecting medium as a clarifying one. The aesthetic here is at once material and porous, its interceding conventions (and medium) at once evident and invisible, everywhere and nowhere; and as a result, its image seems at once and without distinction to exist in the glass, Heinrich’s fantasy, and the natural light. And while it seems equally important that the image is of angels and of music—the one hinting at the divine, the other the harmony at stake—it seems even more important that the image, the Bild, is produced or transferred by nature itself, without a human agent, or a transcendent one. The process of imparting (mitteilen) and leaving behind (zurücklassen) is exactly the kind of contagious, contiguous exchange between proximate realms that
the novel has long been working toward (an *actio in distans* that seems the visual equivalent to one musical string communicating its vibrating tone to a remote other): here nature itself is responsible for the transfer, the representation, that joins both the human and the divine together in itself and in the aesthetic. And it is no less a “wonder” for being a form of natural magic—and for being real.

All this comes to one final representational crescendo with the actual burial of Anna, a moment when the concept of *Stimmung*, the aesthetics of realism, the end(s) of *Bildung*, and the fate of magic become, as it were, the very objects to be brought into accord. The magic comes both first and last, and it does so in the form of echoes, especially of Meretlein. Anna’s coffin is bedecked with flowers, including many a bouquet, but also, and chiefly, a wreath or crown of white roses. The coffin is carried over the mountain, where “radiant white clouds drifted high in the blue sky, and they seemed to stand still for a moment over the flowery coffin and peep curiously through the little window that almost roguishly sparkled forth between the roses, reflecting the clouds,” recalling the portrait being similarly carried over the mountain, but even more—and especially in that “roguishly”—that witching moment when the sun burst through at Meretlein’s funeral and touched her crown. The *Stimmung* that is implicit here in both the temporal echoing of these earlier moments (Meretlein, the flower bouquet, the portrait) and the present accord of the several realms (the personal, the aesthetic, the earthly flowers, the heavenly light and clouds) is also here in the chorale and “figural-song” (*Figuralgesänge*) sung at the graveside “with bright and pure voice” (*mit heller und reiner Stimme*), and helps instill what Heinrich calls his “elevated and solemn *Stimmung*” as he stands there, observing, experiencing, and *enjoying* the moment—because it is a moment not only of death but also of *Stimmung*, with all the enchantment that brings with it, even when death is also what it brings.

This key doubleness to the moment (as both death and *Stimmung*) is also intrinsic to its *Bildung* and realist thematics. The ends of *Bildung* are expressed when Heinrich looks through the coffin’s glass pane and declares, “In elevated and solemn *Stimmung*, but in
complete calm (Ruhe), I saw that which it enclosed being buried, like a part of my experience, my life, held in glass and framed.”

This seems to enact the reductive scenario we described earlier: the abjection of the unruly desires and fantasies of the male subject and their projected conscription onto a female other, whose death marks his detachment from those same forces. And at first glance, this model of Bildung seems to find its expected counterpart in a similarly disenchanted, culminating aesthetic perception or experience:

The singing continued. . . . The last ray of sunlight now shone through the glass pane onto the pale face that lay beneath it; the feeling that I now had was so odd that I can designate it in no other way than with the strange, grand, and cold word “objective” that German aesthetics has discovered.

Der Gesang dauerte fort. . . . Der letzte Sonnenstrahl leuchtete nun durch die Glasscheibe in das bleiche Gesicht, das darunter lag; das Gefühl, das ich jetzt empfand, war so seltsam, daß ich es nicht anders, als mit dem fremden hochtrabenden und kalten Worte “objektiv” benennen kann, welches die deutsche Ästhetik erfunden hat.

It is indeed an odd or seltsam response to Anna’s death; and its oddness is only increased when we note that Heinrich reaches for the word “objective” in the exactly functionally equivalent moment wherein the pastor reached for “witchery” (Hexentum) at Meretlein’s death. Thus, it invites a double reading. On the one hand, objectivity has successfully displaced and replaced “witchery,” which goes into the grave along with both “the little witch” Anna and, with her, Heinrich’s immature, desire- and fantasy-filled subjectivity, leaving only a disenchanted world and subject—and whether this objectivity represents a strength or weakness (Stärke oder Schwäche) is not decided. But on the other hand, and as we’ve seen, “witchery” has also, as it were, become “objective.” The object world, quite apart from either Anna or Heinrich’s subjective fantasy, has come to resonate with both, has become charged with unseen, unrepresented connecting forces that Heinrich, and the reader, have been trained to respond to and connect with themselves—and that is why this is a moment not only of negation
but also of fulfillment, not of abjection but of completion, not of lost but of sustained connection—a moment that calls forth Heinrich’s and our aesthetic bliss. “The singing continued,” Heinrich remains “in elevated and solemn Stimmung,” and for all its seeming dissonance, the moment is still one resonant with the cosmic harmonies of the novel’s realist magic.