German Writing, American Reading

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When an American reviewer of *In the Schillingscourt* objected to a book in which a “divorce is obtained with less concern than a pair of gloves,” he made it clear that readers expected romance plots to be built around an unmarried heroine and hero who marry. As we observed in chapter 4, Regis also sees plotting toward marriage as a central feature of romance: romance is courtship of the unmarried. Likewise, when the Austrian feminist Rosa Mayreder criticized women’s popular reading, she asserted that these novels were all based in courtship and that marriage itself was left unexamined.

In point of fact, a subset of the domestic fiction by German women that reached American readers comprises what, borrowing loosely from Stanley Cavell, we might call novels of remarriage. These stories of remarriage, in which femininity matters deeply, allowed for the possibility of reconciliation and acknowledgment where life experience likely offered none. While in *Schillingscourt* marriages of convenience are shown to be immoral and unhealthy and are replaced by second marriages to new, desiring partners, in novels of remarriage men and women who are already bound to one another—either betrothed or married—discover or recover their love for one another. Despite troubled social conditions, all is well that ends well. Marriage is redeemed as an arrangement that tends to both emotional and economic needs, and in the process, these novels of remarriage map gendered subject positions. These works are comedies insofar as they conclude happily with the community restored. However, with the exception of Werner’s stock
comic subplots concerning marriage of eccentric secondary characters, they offered little for nineteenth-century readers to laugh about.

Upon the 1882 publication of Heimburg’s *Lottie of the Mill* (translation of *Lumpenmüllers Lieschen*), a reviewer identified the book as characterizing a specifically German deviation from the romance genre: “The minor German novelists are fond of taking for a theme the love which develops after betrothal or marriage, and Heimburg is no exception. Lottie is betrothed to the Baron before he loves her, which is certainly a new departure from the romance which always considers a *misalliance* to be a love match.” In other words, these German novels characteristically explore the possibility of mutual love when social arrangements are imposed, not when they are breached.

In 1882 a host of American translations substantiated the reviewer’s observation: Moritz von Reichenbach’s (Valeska von Bethusy-Huc’s) *The Eichhofs* (1881); E. Juncker’s (Else [Kobert] Schmieden’s) *Margarethe; or, Life-Problems* (1878); Werner’s *Good Luck!* (1874/75) and *Broken Chains* (1875); Golo Raimund’s (Bertha Heyn Frederich’s) *From Hand to Hand* (1882); and Marlitt’s *The Second Wife* (1874), a novel that had enjoyed significant and enduring sales in America since its publication and that reviewers sometimes used as a touchstone when reviewing German novels. Heimburg herself would thereafter write three additional novels of remarriage that appeared in American translation: the variously translated *Herzenskrisen*, discussed in chapter 4; *Gertrude’s Marriage* (1889); and *An Insignificant Woman* (1891; alternately titled *Misjudged*). In most but not all of these plots, an engagement or a marriage contracted in response to social economic pressure transforms into a union based in mutual desire and acknowledgment. What is officially imposed becomes emotionally confirmed in a form of remarriage that constitutes the text’s happy ending.

Before we scrutinize this subset of German novels, a look at the film genre that Cavell termed the “comedy of remarriage” will be useful for identifying powerful narrative patterns that occur in these popular German novels. In his examination of a set of Hollywood movies of the 1930s and early 1940s, Cavell distinguishes the “comedy of remarriage” from two types of comedy classified by Northrup Frye: Old Comedy and New Comedy. While Old Comedy involves a young man’s “efforts to overcome obstacles posed by an older man . . . to his winning the young woman of his choice,” New Comedy focuses on the heroine, “who may hold the key to the successful conclusion of the plot, who may be disguised as a boy, and who may undergo something like death and restoration.” The Hollywood “comedy of remarriage” exhibits
an affinity to New Comedy in its emphasis on the heroine, but it differs from both New and Old Comedy in making its heroine a married woman. It flirts with divorce and emplots the re-union of the central pair, getting them “back together, together again” (2).

These American film comedies, Cavell proposes, project an idea of marriage that deviates from popular fictions in which the married are “forever stuck in an orbit around the foci of desire and contempt” with no real past. The genre of remarriage is, by contrast, concerned with acknowledgment and genuine forgiveness, “a reconciliation so profound as to require the metamorphosis of death and revival” and a “new perspective on existence” (19). Cavell sees in these Hollywood films a response to struggles earlier in the twentieth century for a new social and political status for women and maintains that they imagine a new “consciousness of women” that seeks reciprocity, a “demand for acknowledgment” in a Utopian longing for “mutual freedom” (17–18). Over the course of his analysis of seven examples of the Hollywood comedy of remarriage, Cavell derives additional elements that characterize the genre, including a retreat to the green spaces of pastoral, the recovery of a shared history, and the founding of love in the innocence of childhood. Some of these elements figure in German novels of remarriage and, where pertinent, will be adduced in our examination of these works.

First a caveat: I do not mean to argue that these nineteenth-century German novels constitute antecedents of American films or to assert that they are comedies in the common usage of the word. Rather, I borrow here from Cavell to bring into focus features of a set of novels that likewise originated in a period in which the status of women began to be questioned and that also investigate marriage as the joining of the social economic with desire. While in their emphatic affirmation of marriage these works reserve particular roles for women within domesticity and are thus conservative, they also concern themselves with desire, acknowledgment, and an idea of women’s agency within marriage, even if only in a limited sense. Elise L. Lathrop’s translation of Heimburg’s Lumpenmüllers Lieschen highlights that agency with the title A Maiden’s Choice. In no sense resembling the original German, the American title voices a key element of the plot; it emphasizes an idea of free choice that results in the woman’s acknowledgment by her husband-to-be within an already contracted marriage. In their idea of a romantic marriage in which spouses are mutually attracted to one another within the framework of real social economic necessity, these novels offered Gilded Age American readers, to paraphrase Cavell, a vision that those readers knew at bottom could not be inhabited in the world in which they lived (18).
In 1878, four years after the publication of Wister’s translation of Marlitt’s *Die zweite Frau*, the *American Socialist* belatedly observed that with this novel Marlitt provided a welcome contrast to tales ending “with marriage and not enlightening us as to how the enamored pair, after having labored so assiduously to get together, have endured the close and unromantic contact of matrimony.” Seeing in *The Second Wife* the moral message that “love may be won by sterling integrity and simple honesty,” the reviewer went on to espouse a fierce eugenics of marriage. In this view of wedlock, children of superior intelligence and character emerge from couples who are not only healthy of body but “united by a chaste, continent and self-denying love,” as opposed to those who marry because they desire to possess one another. The novel had also been praised four years earlier by *Godey’s Lady’s Book* as advocating the “dignity of labor and the advancement of women.” Touting Marlitt’s novel as deserving to “rank with the best work of modern continental novelists—even with that of Turgeneff [sic] himself,” the *Literary World* saw the female protagonist as embodying the “highest ideal of womanhood and the most intelligent ideas as to feminine culture.” In this kind of feminine culture a woman could “cultivate her intellect without prejudice to her heart.” While it may be difficult in our day to recover the mindset that gave rise to these enthusiastic assessments, *The Second Wife* does provide an electric moment of female empowerment through science: the heroine Liana discovers the forgery on which the novel’s mystery turns by examining a document with her microscope!

Ruth-Ellen Boetcher Joeres outlines how this novel both sustains and transgresses ideas of class and gender that prevailed in 1870s Germany. Citing Tania Modleski’s response to Fredric Jameson’s “Reification and Utopia,” she makes a plea for popular literature as not mere repetition of the same but as exhibiting subtleties and nuances in its handling of class and gender. Joeres also points out that, although Marlitt’s characters are designated as aristocrats, the values and worldviews affirmed in these novels correspond to those of the German middle classes. Within that worldview, marriage reigns supreme as the guarantor of those values and the guardian of property. The highly successful *Second Wife* demands renewed scrutiny in our context, especially since it helped establish the novel of remarriage, a subgenre that became recognizable in late nineteenth-century America, as “made in Germany.”

*The Second Wife* does not fail to deliver what readers might expect of a novel thus titled. The Protestant Liana must occupy the blue salon that is still redolent with the ineradicable perfume of Raoul von Mainau’s Catholic first
wife, his own first cousin. Raoul’s uncle and former father-in-law, the Hofmarschall, advised by a Jesuit priest, rules the household, and Leo, the son, whom Liana as the second wife is to mother, promises to be an incorrigible brat. The marriage has been contracted under odd circumstances, engineered in part by Liana’s snobbish and impecunious aristocratic mother because of the material advantages it brings. The restless Raoul wants a mother for his son and a wife who knows her place and can also serve as a means of taking revenge on the duchess who long ago abandoned him for a marriage of convenience. The newly widowed duchess looms larger than the first wife as the embodiment of a past when a younger Raoul had loved passionately, as opposed to the oppressive present, when he maintains a fragile façade of aloof cynicism. A marriage could hardly begin less propitiously (or in a more contrived manner). Raoul plans to leave on a journey to the East as soon as his new wife establishes herself, and he is assured that she will run his household to his liking.

Raoul and Liana have no physical contact beyond playing the part of a harmonious couple in public for decorum’s sake, which requires that she rest her fingertips on his arm. Readers seeking romance may thrill to the light touch even of fingertips with hope for more. Liana otherwise does her duty, quickly taking charge of Leo, who magically responds to her combination of mothering and pedagogy. When the Hofmarschall taunts Liana with a letter from her mother asking for money and ridicules Liana’s botanizing and her art, which she has sold in the past, Liana begins to think of returning to her home.

Following an incident in which he accidentally strikes Liana, Raoul enters her boudoir for the first time. He not only pronounces her luxuriant hair magnificent—as Joeres notes, Liana’s red-gold hair signifies a sexuality that is otherwise masked (245)—he remarks on the improvements that she has wrought in a room that he could not abide when his first wife inhabited it. But in precisely the scene in which Raoul begins to betray signs of his attraction to his unloved second wife, her resolve to separate from him becomes firm—and so begins Marlitt’s signature choreography of fencing but mutually attracted protagonists. At roughly the midpoint of the novel, Raoul reads a letter from Liana to her sister in which she analyzes his faults as one would “an unfortunate butterfly on a pin beneath a magnifying glass” (167). Upon this unpleasant and embarrassing enumeration of the husband’s flaws, the marriage might seem to be over, but the pages that remain to be read signal that it is not.

Liana’s intellect, her ability both to mother and detect and thus to unravel the mysteries haunting Schönwerth castle, which the irresponsible male protagonist has chosen not to probe, plays a critical role. When Raoul finally
confesses his love to Liana, he castigates himself for his blindness. And despite the concluding lines of the novel, in which he insists that he has arranged everything to suit his future happiness, readers should be able to see that Liana’s wisdom and insight prevail in the marriage, that is, Raoul’s idea of happiness has come to conform with hers and not vice versa. Indeed, Marlitt has over many pages carefully delivered the protagonist up to Liana. When Liana cries out affirmatively to his plea for her to stay and thus is in effect betrothed for the second time, the assent can occur only because she knows that Raoul has at last acknowledged her and that desire and virtue are finally in harmony. She will no longer play the part of the submissive and unloved wife, mother, and glorified governess but will instead shape the contours and modes of being of this restored marriage. Within the trajectory of the novel, the profound reconciliation that Cavell sees as the signature of the “comedy of remarriage” has thus taken place. Its profundity is revealed in the terms of popular literature by the solving of the mystery that has made the house the site and shelter of multiple crimes.

Marlitt’s text extravagantly figures the rampant male sexuality of the Mainau family in the “valley of Cashmere,” a garden on their estate filled with exotic plants and animals, where, in a bamboo hut, lies paralyzed the Hindu woman who is said to have been a bayadere and the mistress of Gisbert, one of the three Mainau brothers from the previous generation. While, upon its construction, the zoolike compound had been a testimony to a man’s consuming love for an exotic woman, it has become a festering sore on the estate. Once known for his wildness, Gisbert, who created the valley, had doted on the Indian woman. In his declining months, however, he, under the noxious influence of his brother (the Hofmarschall) and the priest, disavowed her as faithless. Thirteen years later, her son, Gabriel, who is presumed to be neither Gisbert’s legitimate son nor even his natural son, is systematically brutalized while being prepared to become a monk against his inclination. As Joeres remarks, the woman lying mute and paralyzed in the bamboo hut vaguely recalls the mad Bertha Mason of Jane Eyre. The affinity lies, among other things, in her marginalized status as a colonial Other, her suffering, and her containment in a stigmatized space. While Bertha screams insanely, Joeres notes, this woman is entirely mute (241–42). In the end Liana must speak for her. As in The Old Mamselle’s Secret and Gold Elsie, Marlitt derived inspiration from Brontë’s novel when she created a woman-centered tale in which men’s misdeeds are unmasked and the sexual-social order is rearranged to favor women who are motherly and intellectual—and sexual.

As Liana’s detection eventually reveals, the Indian woman was legally
married to Gisbert; she never practiced a dishonorable profession and never betrayed her husband. Gabriel is the legitimate heir to a third of the Schönwerth estate. Behind the cruel treatment of the once beloved woman is the Hofmarschall, the second brother, who, because he coveted this woman and was spurned, tormented her while preserving his pious courtier’s exterior. Furthermore, when he in a rage of sexual frustration attempted to strangle her, he paralyzed her. Her subsequent muteness worked to his advantage. Meanwhile, his coconspirator, the Jesuit priest, who can justify his mistreatment of the woman and her son by the fact that she is not a Christian, also proves to be ruled by sensuality. The priest repeatedly attempts to force his attentions on Liana, and in his frustration at being rebuffed, he ultimately tries to drown her, thus nearly reenacting the crime of the Hofmarschall.

Raoul, the son of the third brother, whom Marlitt portrays as, like Brontë’s Mr. Rochester, darkly appealing, himself has a profligate past, one that is, among other things, memorialized in a woman’s blue slipper that he keeps under glass. It marks the triumph of sentimental love over libertinism when he empties his room of the trophies of his past conquests and hangs a picture of his son on the wall. With Liana’s help, he finally takes responsible charge of his estate, expiates the crimes committed within its confines, and properly husbands its resources.

As in *Gold Elsie*, male sexuality both repels and attracts, is destructive and productive. When his sexuality is finally channeled and expressed in a sentimental marriage to an intellectually and morally superior woman, the male hero reaches his full maturity as the master of an estate and as a father, in this case, a father to a biological son and an adopted son who is also his own cousin. The now uxorious hero believes he has arranged everything according to his lights, but, as mentioned above, readers must recognize that this marriage conforms to his wife’s ideals, ideals that in turn coincide with ideals of marriage treasured on both sides of the Atlantic.

And what of Liana’s sexuality? When the priest warns Liana that she cannot expect her freshly reaffirmed marriage to last more than a year, she retorts, “One single year! But a year of delight!” thus speaking in the register of the passion of the short-lived marriage of the Indian woman and Gisbert (283). Joeres sees the final chapter as eclipsing the sexuality otherwise signaled by Liana’s red-gold hair and reads the final line in which Raoul claims that he has manipulated everything to suit himself as favoring and reconfirming Liana’s “representational function as wife and mother” (Joeres 246). Yet even if we accept Raoul’s words at face value, we ought not to underestimate readers’ ability to recall Liana’s attraction to Raoul and her passionate affirmation of marriage as “delight.” Readers need not forget that Liana is the
agent of her own happy ending, a marriage in which she will not enjoy merely a year of bliss but can expect an entire lifetime of it.

Die zweite Frau ran serially, nos. 1–21, in Die Gartenlaube from January until May 1874; in early July, not long after its conclusion in Germany, the Christian Union announced Wister’s translation of The Second Wife as among “the latest novels in our hands.” As she had done repeatedly, Wister translated Marlitt right off the pages of Die Gartenlaube. Annie Wood’s translation appeared in London in the following year, and by 1880 Munro had published Wood’s translation in his Seaside Library and again in 1887 in the Seaside Library pocket edition. From the mid-1880s onward, editions proliferated, including those by William L. Allison; F. M. Lupton; E. A. Weeks; the Federal Book Company; Donohue, Henneberry and Company; A. L. Burt; Mershon; George M. Hill; and Hurst and Company. Meanwhile, in London, Ward and Lock published a new translation of the book titled The Second Wife. A Romance of Castle Schönwerth (1881) while Lippincott reprinted The Second Wife at least through 1902. Its enduring success prompted a fourth translation of it in 1891 as A Brave Woman with Worthington. The new title suggests the reason for the long-term appeal of Marlitt’s novel. When the teacher Miss Florence J. Pepin presented A Brave Woman to her pupil Paulina S. Schwarz for Christmas in 1896, she must have thought the book still had something to say to budding womanhood.

Americans liked this book. Praising it as absorbing reading with a moral tone, Godey’s Lady’s Book declared, “We are pleased to see the better class of foreign literature introduced to American readers.” The magazine found it “exceedingly entertaining as a story, and most unexceptionable in point of morals.” The Literary World enthusiastically named the book “one of the very best novels of the year,” opening its review of The Second Wife with a declaration of joy in reading it: “We rarely encounter a novel that we can read with so much pleasure.”

The favorable judgment of the first reviews was born out two years later in 1876. According to Publishers’ Weekly, when publishers were asked the “Prize Question in Fiction” as to the most salable novel in the trade, The Second Wife ranked twenty-seventh with nineteen votes, four steps below The Old Mamselle’s Secret and tied with Charlotte Yonge’s beloved Heir of Redclyffe. Jane Eyre occupied second place on this same list.

As we have seen, there is no doubt of Brontë’s long-lasting influence on Marlitt’s writing. A closer look at Jane Eyre and The Second Wife reveals commonalities beyond mere sensationalism that must have appealed to Americans and helped secure a place for both novels on this list. These include the strong heroine who acquires everything she desires on her own terms
and the protagonist whose masculinity is both created and tamed by the heroine.\textsuperscript{15}

In 1881 Agnes Hamilton told her cousin Alice that \textit{The Second Wife} was splendid. The Hamilton girls associated reading “with freedom and possibility” and enjoyed “plots of adventure and social responsibility,” Barbara Sichermann maintains.\textsuperscript{16} The novels they preferred, “—even those that end with an impending marriage—provided models of socially conscious and independent womanhood.”\textsuperscript{17} For all its sensational elements, elements that now seem painfully contrived, Marlitt’s novel of remarriage could fit this bill for nineteenth-century readers. In any case, in 1899, twenty-five years after it first appeared in the United States, Buck and Annie must have believed that \textit{The Second Wife} would make a fine present for their mother. On the flyleaf of an edition of the novel published by Donohue, Henneberry and Company, they wrote, “A Happy birthday to Mamma / from Buck + Annie / Nov 21–99.”\textsuperscript{18}

**Producing the Right Kind of Masculinity:**

\textit{Good Luck!}

Werner’s \textit{Glück auf!} appeared in 1873 (\textit{Die Gartenlaube}, nos. 1–23), one year before \textit{Die zweite Frau}. In May 1874, one year after the completion of its serialization, it was available for purchase in the United States from Osgood in Frances A. Shaw’s translation, \textit{Good Luck}!\textsuperscript{19} It remained in print until at least 1912, when A. L. Burt reprinted a translation of the novel for its Cornell Series. Available for borrowing in lending libraries and for purchase in various formats in prices ranging from ten cents to $1.25, the novel was read over nearly forty years in at least four different English renderings and at least twenty editions and reprint editions. In the American context, advertisements encouraged readers to associate Werner with this early work by touting her later novels as “by the author of \textit{Good Luck!”} The novel offered Americans the good and wholesome read they sought, publishers claimed; in 1877, for example, Estes and Lauriat advertised it as “Healthy Light Literature. Which should be in every Library.”\textsuperscript{20}

Together with \textit{The Second Wife}, \textit{Good Luck!} led a German invasion of novels of remarriage in which coerced economic unions transform into love matches and end with what amounts to a renewal of marriage vows. \textit{Good Luck!} opens with a wedding of an indifferent bride and the groom. A bourgeois captain of industry has engineered this marriage by bankrupting the aristocratic Baron Windeg. Marriage to Windeg’s daughter, he hopes, will
gain his son entrance into the aristocracy and seal his own success. The bride, Baroness Eugenia Maria Ana von Windeg, is given to aristocratic arrogance, despite her family’s poverty and her degraded status as bartered object. The groom, Arthur Berkow, for his part, appears to be merely the compliant tool of his father’s machinations. The marriage seems doomed from the start. Once Arthur learns that it was coerced and not merely a business arrangement between equals, he refuses to remain his father’s dupe and promises Eugenia her freedom as soon as decorum allows, that is, after one year. Thus begins the breakup.

Yet even as the unhappy couple lives estranged, their marriage unconsummated, they are drawn to one another. In a scene that occurs in variations in most of Werner’s novels, Eugenia and Arthur have an intimate conversation in the forest after their carriage breaks down. Nature serves as the green space where the evils of social convention and a misguided education fall away and a possibility of reinventing themselves as a couple emerges. Brightening, Arthur tells his wife that he knows “his” woods and it becomes clear that his salvation lies in finding his way back to his “early, sunny boyhood years,” which were “the only ones worth living” (119). Eugenia’s happiness, too, had ended with her childhood, for her entrance into society had been accompanied by humiliation and despair. As they stand beneath a fir tree in a downpour, Eugenie notices her husband’s “very handsome eyes” (122) and recognizes that his languor results from the terrible education imposed on him by his father. In temporarily recovering the innocence of childhood in the pastoral space of the forest, they discover their mutual attraction.

Even if the reader has not suspected it previously, it becomes hard to miss at this juncture that this couple will ultimately be reunited with Arthur confirming the power of two words that “have helped [him] to victory: my wife and my child!” (418). More than 250 pages will, however, be required to bring about the insight needed to accomplish the thaw between husband and wife. As a favorable review in the Literary World observed, the charm of the story (and the pleasure of reading it) resides “in the gradual approximation of husband and wife, the slow crumbling of the barrier which separates them, under the influence of the noble qualities in each.”21

Even so, readers doubtlessly fastened onto differing aspects of the book. The three variations in the titles of the English translations themselves suggest alternate readings: Good Luck! (1874); Good Luck, or, Success and How He Won it (1876); and She Fell in Love with Her Husband (1892). If nineteenth-century Americans understood “good luck” as the special greeting of German miners (Glück auf!), which they could have known had they read Heinrich Heine’s Harzreise as it was translated by C. G. Leland in 1855, then the title
highlighted for them the social economic setting of the novel.\textsuperscript{22} If they did not—and despite Leland's Heine translation, most American readers probably did not—the title told them little about the book's content. Shaw, however, provided a footnote on the first page of her translation explaining the title's significance. The second version of the title, \textit{Good Luck, or, Success and How He Won It}, by contrast, promised readers a male-centered story of achievement. The third rendering suggested a different plot altogether: instead of a tale of male success, \textit{She Fell in Love with Her Husband} implied a female-focused account of emotion and inner struggle. The novel offers both but privileges the achievement of masculinity as it is linked to the exploitation of science and technology. Conjugal love and femininity are in turn critical to realizing this masculine ideal and indeed to imagining it to begin with.

Eugenia's eventual recognition and acknowledgment of her husband's true worth and her subsequent emotional and erotic attachment to him model for readers an appropriate response to the male protagonist. The narrator makes clear that, in falling passionately in love with the man foisted upon her in a marriage of convenience, Eugenia has acquired good health. The newfound manly vigor of her once languorous husband has revived her, too: “The old pallor and marble-like coldness had vanished from [her rosy face], which was now beaming with happiness” (417). In these concluding pages, Eugenia and Arthur are living a “real romance which is not yet ended” (413). The book frames this romance with a paean to nature and science befitting the industrial age that had been newly invigorated in the German territories by the founding of the empire. The final lines describing the conquest of nature by means of the technology of mining are distinctly erotic and at the same time give voice to a fantasy of sexual fulfillment: “Science had forced those barriers and had wrested from the clefts and abysses of the earth those treasures so long imprisoned in deepest night,” the narrator effuses. “And now they had been borne upward to the light of day, unfettered by that ancient magic word of the mountains, \textit{Glück auf}!” (419).

While the erotic connotations of this particular passage may not be visible to every reader's eye, Werner's text overtly links the plot of remarriage to the male protagonist's role as heir to a mining industry to cement the connection of the erotic and the industrial. When his tyrannical father is killed in a mining accident—slaughtered by the industry he built on the backs of his suffering workmen—Arthur, who has previously shown no talent for or interest in heading the company, takes charge. He must contend with a formidable opponent, the demagogic Ulrich Hartmann, an experienced miner of gigantic physical proportions. Werner portrays this worker in 1873, in the decade after the founding of Ferdinand Lassalle's General Union of German
Workers (1863) and the Social Democratic Workers’ Party of August Bebel (1869), as all muscle and passion with little ability to reason. In addition to his uncompromising views on labor, Ulrich has conceived a hopeless and overweening passion for Eugenia. Despite his transgressive acts and passions, the text redeems him but also conveniently eliminates him, when he nobly sacrifices himself for Arthur when they try to avert an even greater mining disaster.

The portrait of labor embodied by Ulrich versus management incorporated by Arthur in the miners’ strike that takes place in the novel is largely one-sided. Unreasonable in their ambitions, the striking workers refuse to listen to the cool-headed and well-meaning Arthur, and they verge on losing everything since Arthur plans to close down the mines rather than give in to their excessive demands. Arthur, in turn, expects the workers to wait for him to make their lives better on his terms as he tries to implement better business and industrial practices. The novel features dramatic scenes in which Arthur must face an angry mob alone. In the end, a mining disaster leads management and labor to forget their differences and join forces—“Ulrich Hartmann with his iron body and Arthur Berkow with his iron will” (391).

This joint effort prefigures the harmonious conclusion of the industrial plot in which the pragmatic and well-intentioned Arthur has established practices that benefit the workers and also increase profits. But as it turns out, the brawny and violent Ulrich represented only a minority of the workers to begin with. The text praises the majority of the miners: except for Ulrich and a few of his followers, the good workers remain calm in the moment of crisis. By waiting and granting Arthur “time and permission to proceed in the way he thought best” (405), they ultimately enable him to do for them even more than he originally promised.

Werner’s Arthur is diminutive compared with the worker Ulrich, yet he represents a new superior male type of the industrial age: the man of iron will armed with reason, the man who for all his outward sangfroid is nevertheless susceptible to the heroine’s charms. Even as she creates this paragon of a new masculinity, Werner keeps him securely contained by the feminine. We recall the presence of this type in Banned and Blessed as well, a novel that, given its story of the reconciliation of once-betrothed lovers, itself offers a variation of the plot of remarriage. In both Good Luck! and Banned and Blessed, the new man that Werner creates for family reading in imperial Germany requires education and instruction to realize his potential, and that education and instruction tend to reside in Werner’s feminine imaginary. In the summary statement in the final chapter of Good Luck! the narrator speaks of Arthur’s learning to have “confidence in himself” with “his wife at his side.” He gains
courage from his new understanding that “he had a whole future, a life's happiness for her and himself to win” (402). It appears, moreover, that the happiness of his workers derives from his own, a happiness that originates and resides in his achieving reunion with his lawful wife.

In 1893 Die Gartenlaube began advertising a new illustrated series of Werner's collected novels, characterizing her works so as to appeal to a new generation of German buyers and readers. The advertisements asserted that in contrast to Marlitt, who read female hearts, Werner's exciting and suspenseful novels entered the noisy world of struggling and achieving. Werner, the advertisements claimed, captured the roaring winds of the times yet also portrayed the struggle in women's hearts. The advertisements thus alluded to the tendency of Werner's novels to focus on male protagonists' accession to their manly place in the social and political order. Yet this attention to male characters rendered the novels no less appealing to a nineteenth-century female readership. They addressed women readers by attaching the struggles of the protagonist to his love for a heroine who was typically painted in vivid colors.

In focusing on men and the achievement of proper masculinity, what the Literary World formulated in its review of Good Luck! as “the highest qualities of manhood,” not as mere accessories to the happiness of female characters but as the principal task of the narrative and its female protagonist, Werner's novels highlight what is implicit in all of these German examples of domestic fiction. Within an economy that privileges heterosexual marriage, women's happiness is critically tied to producing the right kind of masculinity in their husbands. Werner's appeal in Good Luck! consisted, then, in offering nineteenth-century readers the pleasant fantasy that it mattered whether “she fell in love with her husband.”

Family Matters Frozen in Time: 
Lumpenmüllers Lieschen

Four years later Die Gartenlaube published yet another variation of a novel of remarriage in which the plotting of reconciliation returned to the husband's need to acknowledge his wife as a precondition to his achieving manhood and becoming the master of his inherited estate. Wilhelmine Heimburg's Lumpenmüllers Lieschen, which first appeared in Die Gartenlaube in 1878, nos. 40–52, was published in at least three different North American translations: Mary Stuart Smith's serialized Lieschen, A Tale of an Old Castle (1881–82), which in 1889 appeared as a book in Munro's Seaside Library as A Tale
of an Old Castle;²⁹ Katharine S. Dickey’s Lottie of the Mill (1882) with Lippincott; and Elise L. Lathrop’s A Maiden’s Choice with Worthington (1891).³⁰ It was also translated in Great Britain in 1880 as Lizzie of the Mill by the prolific Christina Tyrrell. R. F. Fenno must have thought Heimburg’s novel worth a double risk. In 1896 the publisher advertised Smith’s A Tale of an Old Castle in its Lenox and Summer Series; in 1899 it brought out a new edition of Lathrop’s A Maiden’s Choice.³¹ The illustrations accompanying Worthington’s and Fenno’s editions of A Maiden’s Choice are poor reproductions of the illustrations provided in 1891 by R. Wehle for volume two of Heimburg’s ten-volume illustrated Romane und Novellen.³² The poor quality of the illustrations in the American editions suggests unauthorized printing.³³

Mary Stuart Smith thought Lieschen “perhaps the very prettiest story” she had ever translated.³⁴ The Critic likewise pronounced the novel a “very pretty German story” and a “pleasant little German story” in two different articles in 1882.³⁵ As one of a “number of novels and romances . . . admirably adapted for whiling away the slumberous days of summer,” American translations of Lieschen register in contemporary reviews as both profoundly feminine and German. Godey’s Lady’s Book waxed enthusiastic, describing this “clean, natural story of German life” as “a delicate mingling of pathos and humor, stamping it, all in all, as a work of exceeding power.”³⁶ Peterson’s Magazine remarked that this “remarkably good story” was available in a Worthington series characterized by a “dainty and attractive fashion.”³⁷

An exemplar of Fenno’s illustrated edition of A Maiden’s Choice (1899) bears witness to the “dainty” appeal of an illustrated edition at reasonable prices within a female gift economy, dedicated as it is to “Ada B. Parker from Mrs. Bartholomew.”³⁸ The spine and the front cover boast a crudely rendered design of hearts and flowers, stamped white, red, and green on blue (see Figure 5.1). While this book may now appear childish, Publishers’ Weekly remarked in 1891 that this title numbered among a half dozen books that Worthington was publishing for “older readers” (as opposed to its stock of juvenile literature).³⁹

When in 1882 a more critical reviewer for The Critic spoke condescendingly of the last page of Dickey’s Lottie of the Mill as “appropriately full of quivering moonbeams, roses, white dresses, and all the melody of spring,” he showed himself impervious to the very power that Godey’s Lady’s Book praised in the story.⁴⁰ In short, the insistence of the novel that even a marriage contracted for economic reasons could result in passionate love between spouses made a strong appeal to those readers who needed to believe in the institution. A review of Defiant Hearts, another Heimburg novel from sixteen years later, underlined the divergence of taste and enjoyment between
Figure 5.1 W. Heimb burg, *A Maiden’s Choice* (New York: R. F. Fenno & Company, 1899). Author’s copy.
the readers of such novels and the reviewer’s own. Acknowledging that this “typical German novel of the sentimental order” was better than “most of its class,” the reviewer characterized Defiant Hearts as presenting a “state of society familiar to Americans chiefly through novels, in which the necessity of a definite amount of money as a primary consideration in marriage is frankly acknowledged, in which the narrow interests of women lower the general tone, and where differences in rank lead to arrogance on the one side and undue humility on the other.” The reviewer, however, thought the novel “well fitted for popularity in circulating libraries” and thus condescended to readers who wanted precisely those novels that addressed their “narrow interests.” Whatever the opinion of critics, American readers, publishers, translators, and libraries kept versions of Heimburg’s Lumpenmüllers Lieschen in circulation into the new century.

Set in an unspecified rural Germany, Lieschen explores relations between an impoverished aristocratic family, the von Derenbergs, in the decaying castle on the hill and the wealthy family that owns the paper mill in the village. Social conditions in the countryside appear suspended in time. Although a factory might herald modernity, the narrator points out that the mill has operated there for generations. Even the visit of the shallow, aristocratic Blanche to the castle fails to provide opportunity to specify the novel to a historical period. Her beautiful clothes are noted on several occasions, but in terms too vague to connect them to a specific fashion trend.

It suited one American reviewer of A Maiden’s Choice, the fourth English translation of Lieschen, to identify this peculiar combination of frozen time and loosening social barriers as German. The Critic pointed in 1892 to the “social conditions so different from ours” that test the hero and heroine “by the amount of social sacrifice they are willing to make for each other.” Insisting that the English novel no longer concerned itself with such matters and that the American novel—presumably by virtue of its origins in a democratic society—never had “any legitimate right to found a plot on such a point of view,” the reviewer asserted that “the feeling of rank and class and fortune is still a very vital consideration in Germany.” A decade earlier The Critic had in the review quoted above labeled the handling of misalliance in this novel peculiarly German.

While class resonated differently in America, the reviewer’s point seems disingenuous. Americans were well aware of class and by 1892 could have read, for example, The Rise of Silas Lapham (1885) for a treatment (albeit benign) of class difference. Of course they had yet to read Edith Wharton’s more harrowing, best-selling House of Mirth (1905) and The Custom of
the Country (1913) or Booth Tarkington’s Alice Adams (1921), novels that explore the excruciating and finely drawn lines of social class in precisely the country that “never had any legitimate right to found a plot on such a point of view.” But in fact Lieschen is not predicated on an idea of Germany as a land fissured by class, but rather as one in which sentiment and family affinity suspend social difference.

The story opens with an account of the childhood trio, consisting of a sibling pair, Nelly and Army, and Lieschen as they play in the decaying Derenberg castle. Nelly and Army are children of the castle on the hill; Lieschen is the rich paper mill owner’s daughter from the village below. Army is ready to depart for military school where, as befits his noble rank, he will become an officer. Later, upon obtaining his officer’s epaulettes, he must confront the harshness of his family’s impoverishment, and his grandmother urges him to court his cousin Blanche, who is expected to inherit the family fortune. His growing concern with rank and wealth, under his grandmother’s noxious tutelage, leads to estrangement from Lieschen, who adores him and to whom he was once emotionally attached. As he departs for military school, however, Army notices that Lieschen is now charmingly grown up, and responding to his appreciative gaze, she blushes. Thereafter, for nearly two hundred pages, he is blind to his childhood friend whom he believes beneath him, even as he is dazzled by red-haired Blanche.

Although Lieschen concludes by suspending class prejudice and removing barriers to marriage between an aristocrat and a bourgeois woman, the text, from the start, configures these obstacles as largely arbitrary and imagined since the three children once happily played together on an equal footing that prefigured the marriage of Lieschen and Army. Class prejudice is harbored and fostered by the Derenbergs’ grandmother and not in the end by the grandchildren. While the grandmother’s age signals that such impediments belong to the past, her Italian nationality makes clear their cultural inappropriateness. As the narrator stresses, this Italian woman has no sympathy for the German sentimentality that bridges class divisions. The text figures this lack of sympathy in, among other things, her dislike of the German Christmas tree, the emblem of the most sacred emotional and intimate of German holidays, one that in nationalist literature of the time embodied German culture. It turns out, moreover, that even in the backstory—a love story from two generations past—this same outsider was at fault: had it not been for the scheming of the bigoted Italian, a marriage between the mill and the castle would have been solemnized decades earlier. In the end, the novel expels the grandmother from the affective community reaffirmed by
the marriage of childhood playmates. She becomes the traveling companion of the newly rich Blanche, thus commencing an unstable and suspect life of wandering through the watering holes of Europe.

When Army’s cousin and fiancée, Blanche, inherits the money on which the Derenbergs’ future seems to depend, she terminates their engagement. A desperate Army suddenly recalls Lieschen and his own childhood, “when the little girl had so often charmingly consoled the wild boy, when, in child-ish play, he lost patience, and in his defiant, boyish rage had shed hot tears” (226). On Christmas Eve the impoverished Army asks the wealthy Lieschen to marry him. Eventually forced to recognize that Army does not love her, the enamored Lieschen nevertheless consents to a companionate marriage. Army must pretend to love her for the sake of her family, yet he comes to love her on account of her “pure heart,” her “lovely womanliness,” and the possibility that she will restore his peace of mind (328).

The novel provides multiple explanations for Army’s change of heart. While Lieschen’s feminine virtues are critical, the story founds mutual attraction in the innocence of childhood and in family history with deep roots in the local. In their childhood, before the confusions of sexuality that attracted Army to Blanche and before social barriers imposed by the grandmother separated them, Army and Lieschen were fast friends. In the opening depiction of childish play Army is shown as not only attached to Lieschen and his sister, Nelly, but also to the portrait of Agnes Mechthilde, Freifrau von Derenberg, a long-dead ancestor whom his grandmother facetiously calls his “first love” (27). While Agnes’s portrait figures Army’s primal attachment to Lieschen, Army is slow to recognize it. Indeed, since his cousin Blanche has Agnes’s hair, he sees her as the embodiment of his “first love,” while failing to notice another more powerful family resemblance, namely, that Lieschen has Agnes’s eyes (328).

Once he is able to see past Agnes’s red hair, he recognizes the resemblance between her eyes and Lieschen’s: “the red luxuriant hair disappeared in the dull light—only the two dark, sad eyes looked unchangeably out of the pale face at the young man, so steeped in misery, so timidly, as if they sought a lost happiness” (338). Once this recognition occurs, the remaining pages can be devoted to recovering the happiness and unity that Lieschen and Army knew as children as the basis of an adult marriage founded in mutual desire. The final chapter burgeons with the coyly erotic imagery of spring as the two are reunited in the moonlight of a May evening to the song of nightingales.

The rediscovery of Lieschen in the eyes of his ancestor also carries a political meaning implied more than explained in this novel of remarriage. In not merely imagining a marriage between a bourgeois woman and an aris-
tocratic man in the present, but also suggesting through family resemblance a long-standing affiliation between the mill and the castle in this rural setting, *Lieschen* shares in the national liberal ethos of *Die Ahnen* (The Ancestors; 1872–80), the ambitious six-volume novel by the German best-selling author Gustav Freytag. Here Freytag seeks to demonstrate with a thousand years of history that the modern-day, middle-class Königs—the telos of German national history—are descended from real kings (Germanic chieftains) via centuries of intermarriage among petty nobility, free peasants, and townspeople. In Freytag’s telling, in the German regions class barriers were repeatedly breached to produce a middle class synonymous with the nation.

Less clearly supporting bourgeois ascendency per se than *Die Ahnen*, *Lieschen* concludes with the prospect of restoring the aristocratic Derenberg's to something of their former splendor. Army learns how to manage his estate, but, more importantly, the Derenberg's are to be reinvigorated with bourgeois money and bourgeois cheerfulness and good health, and—of course—a woman's love. Heimbürg's novel thus offered the American reader a “very pretty” and “pleasant story” in an alien landscape dominated by an old castle with solid roots in middle-class family values.

**The Reconciliation of Art and Life:**

*Broken Chains* and *Misjudged*

If Lieschen receives acknowledgment from Army as a result of her self-sacrifice and his recovered knowledge of the love that he felt for her as a boy, the heroine of Werner’s *Gesprengte Fesseln* must gain her spouse's recognition more actively by transforming herself. Werner’s *Gesprengte Fesseln* was serialized in *Die Gartenlaube* in 1874, nos. 23–40, and appeared a year later in the United States as *Broken Chains* in Frances A. Shaw’s translation for Osgood. A second translation by Bertha Ness, *Riven Bonds*, was published in England in 1877.

Reinhold Almbach, the nephew of a stern merchant, has been coerced by his uncle into marrying his cousin Ella in the expectation that he will become a partner in the Almbach firm in the northern port city of H (Hamburg). Although Ella and Reinhold have a child, Reinhold does not even know the color of Ella’s eyes. As the narrator remarks, Ella is so meek and nondescript that people frequently overlook her presence altogether. She wears unbecoming clothes and scarcely opens her mouth or raises her eyes. Everyone accepts the family line that Ella is limited. Only the narrator’s mention of her blue eyes and her luxurious blonde braids, which are covered by a
cap—hair functioning here as in *The Second Wife* as a signifier of energy and sexuality—offers hope that there is an interesting woman behind her insipid exterior. The fact of the child—itself a signifier of sexuality despite the sentimental discourses surrounding children—makes a distinctly unpleasant impression: one must imagine sexual intercourse without desire (or in our day, marital rape), given Ella’s listlessness. Nevertheless, the child conceived without love will help restore the marriage. A musical genius, Reinhold appears to be modeled on an idealized Richard Wagner. As the composer of operas, he chafes at the confines of his marriage and the merchant world. The Italian diva Beatrice and the Bohemian life she promises him prove irresistible, and Reinhold abandons his wife and his work as a merchant to follow Beatrice to Italy, where he becomes a famous composer. Before leaving he fulminates against marriage as an institution and against Ella as its embodiment. Ella, he believes, “cannot rise above the kitchen and the domestic sphere.” He disingenuously chastises her for not granting him a year of freedom to pursue his art. It should have been enough for her, he rants, to devote herself during his absence to their child and the “insipid prose of domestic life” (41). Ella will not agree to this preposterous proposal of separation, yet even when he leaves for Italy with Beatrice, Reinhold does not officially divorce his wife, since he hopes to retain access to his child.

Years later Reinhold, now famous and called Rinaldo, is living in Italy; Beatrice, his mistress, still fascinates him but also makes him miserable. Celebrity exhausts him, and in composing the Italianate music that has brought him fame, he has lost his national mooring. At some level he misses his homeland. Reinhold has tried to make contact with his son, but Ella has rebuffed his every attempt. When an unidentified German beauty turns up in Italy, readers can easily guess that this woman is Ella. Stylishly dressed, charming, and educated as the result of a transformation she has wrought for the sake of her son, she is now able not only to understand Reinhold’s music but also to recognize the burden her ignorance once placed on her gifted husband.

The ever-nationalistic Werner sets up a confrontational scene between German Ella dressed in white lace and Italian Beatrice dressed in black velvet, from which Ella, as the champion of home, marriage, family, and Germany, emerges morally triumphant. When Beatrice kidnaps Ella and Reinhold’s child, husband and wife join forces to stop her. Beatrice commits suicide, trying in vain to murder the child as well. In love and reconciled, Ella and Reinhold return to northern Germany.

His wild oats sown in Italy and home again in the German north, Reinhold acquires, with Ella’s help, “calm, reliant self-possession that was an
advantage to the man as well as to the artist” (131) and learns the important lesson of self-conquest. His music, which was previously limited by the fetters of foreign influence, attains a new “freedom and clearness of artistic composition” (129). In a pattern shared by many of Werner’s novels, proper femininity enables the achievement of proper masculinity. In the end Reinhold gladly submits to the bonds of endogamous marriage and parenthood, realizing that his happiness consists therein. Thus Werner asserts that a man’s artistic genius can be fully realized within marriage and family once both partners have fully matured.

Fifteen years after Werner’s Broken Chains first appeared, Heimburg also constructed a plot around a marriage troubled by the mismatch of art and life in Eine unbedeutende Frau (1891). Serialized in Die Gartenlaube (nos. 1–21), this novel hit the American market in 1891 in three North American translations: Smith’s An Insignificant Woman: A Story of Artist Life with Bonner; Mary E. Almy’s Misjudged with Rand, McNally; and Mrs. J. W. Davis’s Misjudged with Worthington. Minnie Klamm’s copy of Davis’s translation, dated December 25, 1911, testifies to at least twenty subsequent years of American reading.50

Reviews of the novel were mixed. A slightly condescending Literary World saw it as typical of the “German sentimental novel” so enjoyed in America: we “leave the hero and heroine in a perfect bower of German bliss.”51 The Critic claimed it gave a bad name to the “Teutonic races” that should be punished as a “national libel.”52 Yet The Congregationalist, barring all irony, pronounced the author, whom it thought to be a man, “a skillful and entertaining delineator of German Life.”53 The publisher Bonner, in turn, had a good sense of the audience for An Insignificant Woman and advertised it as a “vindication of woman”: “every woman who lives for her children, her husband, and her home will find her heart mirrored in the pages of this fascinating story,” declared an advertisement in the New York Times.54 The Chicago publisher M. A. Donohue and Company must have thought the story good for summer reading and made it available as Misjudged in the Snug Corner Series. On the cover a young lady with long braids perches on a rocky shore, a parasol in one hand, a book in the other, and gazes at the sea (see Figure 5.2). At Christmas 1903, “Fanny” presented “Irma” a copy of this edition, presumably believing that it promised Irma a good read.55

In Misjudged the artist Leo Jussnitz is married to Antje, the beautiful and rich but shy and modest daughter of the owner of a foundry located in the Harz Mountains. Jussnitz has used Antje’s fortune to live lavishly and to pursue his painting, but he has shown little gratitude or consideration for her, viewing her money as his to spend as he likes—and the besotted Antje has
Figure 5.2 W. Heimburg, Misjudged (Chicago: M. A. Donohue & Co., n.d.). Author's copy.
encouraged him to think just that. Leo has never recognized his good fortune in having a wife who loves him deeply, and the naïve Antje has in turn never grasped that Leo married her for her money. After a year of marriage he is bored with a wife whom he considers intellectually inferior. He flirts with other women and pays no attention to his namesake, his daughter, Leonie. Painfully aware of her husband’s disregard, Antje wonders why he values her so little and how she can gain his attention and affection for herself and Leonie. Leo’s chance meeting with the naïve and aspiring painter Hildegard nearly leads to adultery.

Unaware that Leo is married, the ambitious Hildegard agrees to sit for a painting in an atelier that he has rented in Dresden to escape his domestic life in the suburbs. Obliviously flirting with disaster, Leo justifies his physical and emotional estrangement from Antje with his art. To add to Antje’s suffering, when Leo’s circle brings the slippery relationship between Leo and Hildegard into the public eye, Leo insists that his wife take Hildegard under her wing to quell gossip. Ever the obedient wife, Antje assents. If readers cringe at Antje’s readiness to suffer in her wifely role, they are rewarded for reading on, for in the end Antje triumphs.

Leo, who as it turns out is a mediocre painter, continues his solipsistic downward spiral. His disastrous speculation with what little remains of Antje’s fortune and the reading of his mother-in-law’s will, which denies him access to the remaining family assets, prove a tipping point. Antje now emerges from the shadows and takes charge of the family foundry, as no one could have predicted she would or could. Believing that Leo still loves Hildegard, she plans to divorce him. Her talent for managing a household proves transferable to running a business, and she quickly proves herself in her new role. Leo meanwhile despairs and for the second time tries to kill himself. He once again proves a bad shot (and the text thereby casts still more doubt on his shredded masculinity). Antje nurses him back to health, but the text does not deliver a sickbed reconciliation: a male character whose masculinity has been so undermined can hardly be a worthy partner for the virtuous Antje.

Instead, Heimburg engineers a rehabilitation of her hapless hero that exceeds expectation. Recognizing his mediocrity as a painter, Leo returns to his true métier and medium. As readers now learn, Leo had early excelled as a sculptor, and his medium was bronze. His abandonment of his true artistic calling lies at the root of his moral and artistic failings. The restoration of his masculinity through three-dimensional work with metal cannot be missed; painting seems a soft and feminine calling by comparison. But while the text labors on behalf of Leo’s masculinity, this masculinity is circumscribed by Antje’s domesticity. Antje’s old Dutch nursemaid sums up the trajectory
of the narrative when she enumerates the undesirable characteristics that Leonie shares with her father, declaring that the child must be tamed: “we won’t give in to her; she has to mind” (317).

Readers, who by now must be entirely of the opinion that the irresponsible Leo must learn to mind, discover that he is ready to be managed by his wife when a heavy package arrives. The bronze sculpture therein conveys an unmistakable message:

Wonderful alike in composition and modeling was this ideal figure of a man bending forward: he was standing on the summit of a great rock which he seemed to have just reached; his foot was already hanging over the precipice, and the next moment he would plunge over into the abyss, which his eyes, looking upward, did not perceive. There was a chain about his waist, and the other end of the chain was wound round a beautiful woman’s figure; she in chaste garments of antique fashion was leaning against the rock, her hand holding a spindle, the symbol of womanliness and domesticity, the slender foot firmly placed against a stone on the ground, but her eyes were fixed on the man. There was a wonderful expression of love and anxiety in the features of this young woman.

Below on the pedestal were engraved these words: “Well for the husband bound by such a chain! From Misery and death it draws him home again.” (352–53)

The artistic object crystallizes a reconciliation based in recognition and appreciation of Antje’s old-fashioned domesticity and devotion. An attentive reader might notice, however, that gratifying though the sculpture may be, the spindle in the woman’s hand evokes the dutiful housewife Antje once was rather than the businesswoman she has become.

Upon receipt of the sculpture, Antje, who now wants Leo to come home, summons her business connections and industrial resources in order to create, alongside the family iron foundry, a bronze foundry that will support Leo’s sculpting. If Adolph Menzel’s famous painting Iron Rolling Mill (1872–75) had celebrated the new industrial age in Germany, this novel seeks to aestheticize industry, revamping the iron works with the bronze foundry for art’s sake. In the final chapter Antje is running the business to everyone’s satisfaction and Leo is finally inhabiting a real “work-room” (358), unlike the sexually charged Dresden atelier. Strangers from far and wide journey to the obscure location in the Harz to visit the bronze foundry with its celebrated artistic products. In this pastoral setting where art is linked to the industry, commerce, and consumerism of modern times while the family is safe from
the dangers of those times, a now content and fully domesticated Leo con-
cludes the novel, entirely to Antje’s liking, by thanking God for the “chains”
of marriage (302).

The closing reconciliation of art on the one hand and life, family, and
industry on the other, within heterosexual remarriage in Broken Chains and
Misjudged, bears little resemblance to the problematic as German Nobel
Prize winner Thomas Mann articulated it in the following decade in Bud-
denbrooks (1901), “Tristan” (1902), and “Tonio Kröger” (1903). Mann by
contrast posited the opposition of bourgeois life and its attendant concerns
of marriage, family, business, and industry to the homoerotically coded prac-
tice and connoisseurship of art as nearly irreconcilable, bridgeable only with
irony. Mann’s Germany was, however, one that American readers had yet to
experience, indeed, one that nineteenth-century American Heimburg read-
ers probably never knew. Buddenbrooks was first published in English in the
United States in 1924, “Tristan” in book form in 1924, and “Tonio Kröger” in
volume 19 of Kuno Francke’s unwieldy The German Classics of the Nineteenth
and Twentieth Centuries (1913–14) and thereafter not until 1929 in the more
accessible, affordable, and long-enduring Knopf anthology, that is, two read-
generations after Eine unbedeutende Frau put in its first appearance in
America.57

The Recovery of Desire and Trust:
Gertrude’s Marriage and Margarethe

Both Heimburg’s Gertrude’s Marriage (1885, trans. 1889) and E. Juncker’s
Margarethe; or Life-Problems (1878) examine marriages freely entered into
by unequal partners who love one another and thus constitute variations
on the novel of remarriage. These variations come closer to the custom-
ary understanding of misalliance, but they differ from many popular nov-
els of the age in examining the situation of the couples after they marry. In
both works, only after husband and wife have committed to one another
across social and economic barriers do they discover “life problems.” Over
the course of each novel, the spouses recover their mutual desire and thus a
basis for conjugal bliss, a bliss that cannot be merely companionate.

In Gertrude’s Marriage Frank Linden, whose family name bespeaks the
beloved sweet-smelling tree that figures so sentimentally in German culture,
must prove himself to his wealthy wife, who suspects after the fact that he
has married her for her money. Although the couple seems destined to be
together by their chance meeting at a baptismal font, Gertrude remains blind
to his true nature until he plays the hero when his property catches fire. On the final page, Frank can aver in the language of resurrection that although his crops were destroyed by the fire, “in place of that a new life has risen out of the ashes.” The book concludes with a toast to the “peace and prosperity of [their] household.”

Given two American translations and the existence of reprint editions, *Gertrude's Marriage* must have found an American audience. The *Literary World* pronounced the novel tedious, but it also identified elements that must have appealed to some readers when it noted that the “story itself is sentimental and has a strong flavor of the ‘fatherland.’” The *Catholic World* also saw *Gertrude's Marriage* as incorporating a quintessentially German quality: it was written “in the homely manner which our German brethren chiefly favor.”

The novel does contain details that mark its German setting—from the description of the North German town with its Renaissance-style town hall and its Roland statue on the town square (a place not unlike Bremen) to furnishings, reading habits, and the meals consumed in Gertrude’s parental household, but its American appeal inhered in its perceived universality and adherence to generic convention. Worthington advertised the novel in the *Christian Union*, the *Independent*, and the *Art Amateur* as one in a boxed set of novels by Heimburg. The set made a “handsome Christmas present,” the advertisement claimed. Heimburg’s novels “are spirited, representing real people, their loves and sorrows, pure in tone, thoroughly elevating, told with grace and cleverness.”

In July 1878 an advertisement in the *Christian Union* announced *Margarethe; or Life-Problems* by E. Juncker as a “most charming story.” The review included a quotation from the *New York Tribune* praising Wister, its translator, as showing “admirable taste and unusual knowledge of current German literature in the novels which she selects for translation.” The German original, *Lebensrätsel* (Life’s Mysteries), had been serialized in the *Deutsche Roman-Zeitung* earlier in that same year. In *Margarethe* Wister found yet another popular German novel treating a hastily contracted marriage that soon becomes troubled.

*Margarethe* bears markers of the literary culture of its origin. It prominently signals a debt to the German classical tradition on its title page with a quotation from Goethe. Wister’s renaming of *Lebensrätsel* as *Margarethe* after the novel’s female protagonist underscored the character’s vague affinities to Gretchen in part I of Goethe’s *Faust*. The novel also resembles *The Second Wife* and other novels by Marlitt, as well as Hillern’s *Only a Girl*, in its inclusion of conversations about the right kind of religion for modern times,
materialism, and Darwinism. At the same time, Juncker’s treatment of marriage, education, religion and hypocrisy, and political reform in this rural community also recalls George Eliot’s *Middlemarch*, which had appeared four years earlier, a novel that in turn exhibits some influence of the German *Only a Girl.*

The *New York Times* ridiculed the ambition and grave tone of Juncker’s novel, suggesting that “we should strip to wrestle with it,” and then summarized the plot so as to make it sound silly. As a romance, the reviewer maintained, *Margarethe* is “crude, lumpish and impossible.” The *Atlantic Monthly* likewise scoffed—with an allusion to Goethe’s *Elective Affinities*—at “the tread of the German elephant” that “is in all the pages of Margarethe, where the high-souled *dramatis personae* talk skeptical philosophy, and experiment, timidly, in elective affinities.” Yet the *Saturday Evening Post* pronounced the story “very ingenious in plot and passionate and dramatic in situation,” and the *Literary World* maintained that Wister had again made an admirable selection and described the plot as one “to gratify the reader.”

Novel readers apparently were not put off by the “tread of the German elephant.” Lippincott reprinted the book at least four times up to and including 1900, Wister renewed the copyright in 1906, and *Margarethe* appeared one final time in 1911, thirty-two years after its initial appearance in America.

*Margarethe* tells a story of near adultery and remarriage. The much older aristocrat, Günther, Count of Randau, has unaccountably married the young and naïve Margarethe Treutler, a wealthy merchant’s daughter. Despite the social misalliance, the family accepts the marriage, for they are modern and democratic in spirit. The count’s sister nevertheless worries about the prospects of this marriage since, as she observes, husband and wife are mismatched in character and experience. Meanwhile, Günther’s quoting of Catullus makes clear that this is a passionate marriage, and Margarethe herself avers that she does not understand marriage based in mere friendship. The marriage prospers for a time, but Günther becomes bored with his naïve young wife and begins spending time with the more mature and worldly widow Edith. Günther nearly succumbs to her blandishments and considers following her to Italy. For her part, the pious and childish Margarethe is disturbed by the intellectual and skeptical atmosphere of the Randaus’ circle and feels a certain estrangement from her husband.

In a bizarre scene Margarethe, who is pregnant, is singing Mignon’s song from Goethe’s *Wilhelm Meister*. As she does so, she looks into a mirror, watches as Edith lays her head on Günther’s shoulder, and realizes that her husband’s affections have been alienated. As a result of the collapse of her naïve worldview, Margarethe miscarries at the very moment her child
quicken. She is saved from death only by a transfusion with her husband’s blood. The transfusion does not, however, bring about reconciliation, even if it signifies intimacy. Many pages remain to be turned before the couple can be reunited.

As in other German novels of remarriage, reconciliation ensues only after the husband becomes better suited to domesticity. Günther must acquire self-discipline and shoulder his responsibilities. Aside from repenting his faithlessness, he serves in the German Reichstag, where he becomes known for his eloquent speeches in support of the liberal cause, and he begins to husband his estate as he had not previously. His ascent to responsible manhood is further affirmed when he rescues a shepherd in a flood in full view of his wife. Margarethe now allows herself to act on her enduring attraction to him, and the couple is at long last reconciled.

While Günther was learning how to be a man, the bourgeois Margarethe was becoming more sophisticated and discerning. Although she initially excoriates those from her husband’s social rank as “without religion, without fidelity, without truth,” she eventually repudiates the narrow, pietistic religious views that have heretofore guided her and thus recognizes the limitations of her upbringing. At the same time, she takes charge of herself as she had not when, first married, she was still her husband’s “little one.” Having literally grown taller, she appears at the conclusion of the novel better able to fulfill the social role of a countess and capable of acknowledging her transformed husband.

Having supplied a happy ending for the estranged couple, the novel ends on a melancholy note with the burial at sea of the son of the idealist reformer Pastor Dossow. It closes with Dossow’s contemplation of the eternal, thus attempting to place the “life riddle” of conjugal love in a broader context of an idea of transcendence freed of biblical literalism and appropriate to the nineteenth century.

**Growing Pains:**

*The Eichhofs*

All of these German novels of remarriage pay close attention to masculinity as both menacing and necessary to female happiness. *The Eichhofs* (1881), however, puts men squarely in the center of an inquiry into domestic felicity and remarriage. Whereas the prolific Valeska von Bethusy-Huc, writing under the male pseudonym Moritz von Reichenbach, was widely read in imperial Germany, only *The Eichhofs* reached the English-speaking public in
the United States. In 1881 Wister translated the novel, and Lippincott kept it in print into the new century, for sale individually and as one of a set of Wister’s translations from the German.69

Wister’s imprimatur coupled with Lippincott’s marketing appears to have been critical to the reception of The Eichhofs in America.70 Even upon its first appearance, a reviewer suggested that, although no one had previously heard of Reichenbach, the “novel-reading public seem to have implicit faith in Mrs. Wister’s ability to cater to their tastes.”71 The Literary World similarly asserted confidence in Wister’s taste and skill: “Mrs Wister always puts enough of herself into her adaptations to make them charming, whoever may be the original author,” the reviewer wrote, implying that Wister’s intervention was necessary to make the book palatable.72 Nevertheless, The Independent, which identified the flaws of The Eichhofs as typical of German novels, also admitted that it was “neither better nor worse than the rest” and in fact “executed with much literary skill and finish.” One of the faults of the “average German novel,” this review asserted, consisted in the fact that such stories “prepare for tragedy and wind up in a comedy,” that is, they end up with precisely the happy ending that played a critical role in their appeal to nineteenth-century American readers.73 A more appreciative review of Bethusy-Huc’s novel liked the book’s conclusion and quoted liberally from the couple’s reconciliation, characterizing the work as a “modest and moderate novel . . . in which a true and worthy husband and wife run against each other in the dark, as it were, and are led out into the light and reconciliation.”74 Certainly, The Eichhofs flirts with tragedy yet ends in conjugal harmony. And like the other popular German novels of remarriage, it projects models of masculinity and femininity whose achievement is hard fought but necessary to a happy marriage.75

Bethusy-Huc situates her remarriage plot within an exploration of multiple models of masculinity in imperial Germany. Set in the German countryside on the estates of the landed gentry, The Eichhofs traces in a quasi-realistic vein, within a vaguely fairy-tale structure, the fates of three aristocratic brothers whose existence is endangered for a multiplicity of reasons, one of them being the economic pressures of modern times. Bernhard, the eldest and best fixed of the three, marries Thea, a beloved young neighbor from his own social class. The couple then struggles to find a firm basis for their marriage amid social and economic trials and family conflict. A seductive and light-minded Polish aristocrat from Bernhard’s past poses an additional threat, as does Bernhard’s own ne'er-do-well brother, Lothar, who has fallen in love with his sister-in-law. The readiness of Bernhard and Thea to believe the worst of each other leads to estrangement, and the couple is only reconciled at the deathbed of their child, at which point acknowledg-
ment and forgiveness occur. The narrator provides a florid apotheosis of marital love, rebirth, and reconciliation as the couple stands hand in hand before their son’s coffin in a country chapel. As they quit the chapel, “forest and field [lie] before them bathed in the gold of sunset,” and the couple leaves the graveyard “towards a new life in the old home.”

Meanwhile, plot strands involving the two younger brothers offer a complement of imagined masculinities in modern times. The second aristocratic brother, the hapless Lothar, has followed the traditional profession of the second son and is a military officer. Unlike Heimburg’s Lore von Tollen and others, The Eichhofs does not feature defenseless sisters who suffer from their brothers’ egotism, yet Lothar’s gambling debts and his passion for his sister-in-law do wreak havoc. Lothar thus offers a variation of the bad-brother plot. His weak character makes him vulnerable to the worst faults of the military officer. In portraying the economic hardships of aristocratic men, the text also reproduces the casual (and sometimes rampant) anti-Semitism of the period. Lothar thinks of turning to Jewish moneylenders, but when a comrade marries a Jewish heiress to save himself from financial ruin, Lothar avers that he would rather blow his brains out than marry a Jew. While his friend Werner points out that he could put an end to his financial woes by simply learning to live within his income, Lothar is not man enough to discipline himself. Suicide becomes the solution for this imperfect “man of honor.”

The third son, Walter, is studying law at the university, a traditional course for third sons. He actually wants to practice medicine, but his aristocratic family views medicine as déclassé. Walter, however, finds a source of encouragement in his friend Dr. Nordstedt, who overcame his humble origins to become a physician and, later, a university professor. Walter’s plot follows his successful struggle to pursue his medical calling against his father’s wishes. As a physician, Walter, who as an impecunious youngest son was not initially good marriage material, is transformed and rewarded with the hand of his childhood friend, the aristocratic Adela.

In narrating the lives of the three brothers, the novel rewards self-discipline, hard work, and righteousness. Along the way, it poses the question as to what makes us happy. The beautiful Julutta almost succeeds in seducing Bernhard when she muses, “Happiness can hardly ever stand the test of critical reason, but depends upon imagination, which is often folly. And what is happiness, after all? A moment, an intoxication, a dream,—and yet we all long for it” (284). Significantly, Julutta has been reading Eichendorff’s Taugenichts, a whimsical romantic tale in which the passive hero’s happiness is left to good luck alone. Bethusy-Huc, however, has no intention of reward-
ing passive men or those who are governed by overactive imaginations or the spell of the moment. Years later the righteous, steady, and self-sacrificing family friend Werner pronounces the moral of this fairy tale of German masculinity and remarriage: “What a wonder life is . . . But it all amounts to the fact that if you would be happy—and who would not?—you must do what is right” (322). The Literary World heartily approved of this conclusion, pronouncing it “a good lesson for a novel to teach, and The Eichhofs reaches it well.”

In the final chapter, the novel offers one last glimpse of the Eichhofs. If readers thought that Thea and Bernhard would simply remain frozen in their glorious sunset, Werner’s brief stop at the train station on his way to conduct urgent business in Berlin recalls that even the German countryside is subject to the rapid changes of modern times and that it is connected to the historical events taking place on the rim of the bucolic horizon. Among other things, this German province—probably a reflection of Bethusy-Huc’s own Silesia—is now directly connected by train to Warsaw. Werner, the good German officer and model of discipline and sacrifice, alludes to troubles with Russians and Turks and thus to the conflict that had reached a temporary resolution with the Treaty of Berlin in July 1878, shortly before Bethusy-Huc wrote her novel. The soldier-officer, who has nobly served his country by leading a “vagabond life” that has made him a stranger at home, reflects on the full life unfolding in the countryside, modeling for readers an affirmation of this world from a perspective outside it. Despite modernization, home—the true heart of Germany—can blissfully go about its business while great things happen in a far-off somewhere.

French Courage/German Romance and Fidelity: From Hand to Hand

_Von Hand zu Hand_ by Golo Raimund (Bertha Heyn Frederich) combines the remarriage plot with interest in ethnicity tied to the historic events of the Franco-Prussian War. Like Margarethe, it was first serialized in the _Deutsche Roman-Zeitung_ and translated by Wister. The Critic announced its publication on March 11, 1882, just months after the German serialization ended, and it gained attention immediately as one “in the Wister series,” remaining in print for at least twenty years. In marketing _From Hand to Hand_ as a Wister translation over these years, Lippincott quoted the judgment of the _Boston Saturday Evening Gazette_ that the novel “may be ranked among the best of the many very admirable stories Mrs. Wister has translated.”
A reviewer for the *Literary World* summarized its appeal as genre fiction from Germany: “[It] has no small interest of the sort that relates to European aristocracy, steady-going love, wicked conspiracies and persecutions and a happy union of hearts and hands at the end.”80 The reviewer, who found the original story “a rather mixed and muddy work,” nevertheless thought that the heroine’s loveliness would win reader’s sympathy and also acknowledged the appeal of a story in which virtue is rewarded.81 Worried that the title *From Hand to Hand* might have an immoral ring to it, *The Critic* assured American readers that the vicissitudes of the heroine’s life in no way “imply a lack either of strength or sweetness.”82 Thus both Wister’s signature and the generic combination of romance and virtue rewarded guaranteed the novel a hearing in America.

The remarriage plot of *From Hand to Hand* centers on Erwin von Tromberg and Clemence von Herberg, whose marriage is contracted at the insistence of Clemence’s father, when she is only sixteen. Marriage to Erwin is to protect her from her mother’s French family, who, Herberg fears, will corrupt her should they get their hands on her. To give Clemence the time to grow up and be educated, the marriage is to be kept secret for two years and she is to be hidden from her relatives.

Little schooled in the ways of the world and reared in the absence of her French mother, the pure and simple Clemence repeatedly violates gender norms; she loves riding and shooting her revolver. While these skills later serve her well, they and her other unorthodox behaviors offend those who harbor strict ideas of gender. She herself is easily duped and too ready to listen to untruths about her husband’s relationship to Nora, his former fiancée and sister-in-law. The arrival of a French cousin prompts her to flee to her husband’s estate six months before the arranged date of their reunion. To her dismay, she discovers that the widowed Nora has taken up residence there, as she has every right to do as Erwin’s sister-in-law.

Reunited with her husband, who regards their marriage as his second chance in life and who loves her deeply, she obtusely misconstrues his every effort to please her. Madly in love with Erwin yet misled both by her own French grandmother and the scheming Nora, she comes to believe that Erwin has betrayed her with Nora and therefore abandons him to flee to Paris. The middle section of the novel devotes many pages to the couple’s misreading of one another, misreading fostered by the odd circumstances of the marriage, Clemence’s youth, and the scheming of the French family aided by Nora.

The novel reaches closure two years after Clemence has left for France, where she has not only become more socially presentable but also surprisingly learned, unconsciously hoping through her efforts at self-improvement
to please her estranged husband. Erwin, meanwhile, patiently tries to win her back, but he finally gives up and consents to a divorce at the very moment when France declares war on Germany. War prevents him from signing the divorce papers, and he is called to arms as the head of a regiment of Uhlans. As a uniformed Prussian soldier, the handsome Erwin embodies German masculine duty. When he is wounded on French soil, he and Clemence meet again.

An older and wiser Clemence has meanwhile recognized her folly in succumbing to the scheming of others that blinded her to Erwin’s sterling character. When her wounded husband is brought to the country estate where she is staying, she determines to nurse him back to health, cost what it may. Disguised as a sister of mercy, she tends to him at night until she is turned out of the house as a traitor to France. Erwin, too, is to be shipped out, since French patriotism dictates that he become a prisoner of war. Clemence, disguised as a boy, secrets him out of the house and transports him by cover of night not to a French prison but to the German camp. Arriving there safely—after displaying masterful abilities as a driver and firing her pistol several times at Frenchmen—she commends him to the embrace of a Prussian general, who enters the narrative as a surrogate father.

Having allowed her heroine and her readers some gender-bending excitement, Raimund reinscribes Clemence in the feminine. While Erwin remains ignorant of the identity of the sister of mercy and the brave boy who saved his life, Clemence returns to the Tromberg estate, where she assumes her rightful place as Erwin’s wife and begins cleaning house, as it were, securely attached to feminine spaces and attitudes. On the penultimate page, the couple in effect remarries when Clemence confesses her error and declares her wish “only to be yours,—yours forever,—try me once more, Erwin!” For all the sensational aspects of the plot and the aristocratic, international setting, From Hand to Hand at bottom tells a simple story of mistrust in marriage encouraged by those who do not wish the couple well; the couple relearns trust, recognizes one another’s virtues, and forgives one another in the signature turn of the novel of remarriage.

In the aftermath of near divorce and war, the rural Tromberg estate, however, is “still unchanged, but a different life has developed there” (372). While continuing to mature in her proper feminine role as Erwin’s wife, Clemence remains a hybrid character, uniting “womanly grace with masculine force of character” (372). The French grandmother, commenting on Clemence’s bravery under fire (and not her housewifely role), observes as well that her unusual character arises from “the mingling of nationalities. . . . The fidelity and the romance were German, but the courage was French” (372).
In conceding Frenchness some virtue in the final line of *From Hand to Hand*, Raimund deviates from much German popular literature of the era, for example, from Marlitt’s work, which tends to locate villainy in French characters as in *Schillingscourt* and *Countess Gisela*. The fidelity and romance of Clemence’s German side correspond, on the other hand, to the generic conventions in which this novel operates, that is, romance coupled with fidelity in remarriage, generic conventions that Americans learned to associate with enjoyable popular literature from Germany.

**These German novels** of remarriage affirm marriage as both an economic unit and a deeply experienced and significantly formative affective bond. They depict the mistakes made by both husbands and wives and, in the particular case of wives, assert the possibility of acknowledgment, choice, and agency within marriage. Wives can choose to love their husbands or not, and husbands must become worthy of their wives by means of self-discipline (including the disciplining of their sexuality), work, management of resources and, most of all, through acknowledgment of their wives’ virtues. In other words, the worthy husbands model a desirable masculinity that purports to respond to the demands of modern times and yet affirms the enduring values of marriage and life in the German villages, home towns, and country estates.

Four decades of publishing and reading in America indicate that this particular plot and this particular resolution attracted Americans to German novels. The question arises anew as to whether their perceived Germanness added to their appeal. Perceived Germanness certainly did provide the occasion for condescension on the part of some reviewers. In many of the brief notices that these books received, disdainful American reviewers relied on ill-founded stereotypes to characterize what they identified as German in them, often merely attributing what appeared to them as improbabilities or clumsy writing as deriving from some unarticulated quality held to be German. Yet the reviewers who did not care for the novels did not speak for the many readers who liked them or for the publishers who thought they could sell these books. Reviewers’ ideas of Germanness, moreover, also did not necessarily correspond to what readers and publishers perceived as German about these novels.

Griswold includes all of these novels of remarriage in his *Descriptive List of Novels and Tales Dealing with Life in Germany*, as if there were something to be learned about Germany in them. Yet Germanness as a “dynamic set of circumstances” that determine the values, actions, and fates of the charac-
ters is, for the most part, visible in these novels of remarriage in translation only to the knowledgeable and discerning eye. For casual nineteenth-century American readers Germanness was probably more legible in paratextual formulations such as “after the German of” formulations that branded the novels, promising a reading experience rooted in domestic values shared by both cultures. Nevertheless, the translated novels did provide enough information for nineteenth-century American readers to perceive these settings as an “insistently acknowledged background” (if not fully realized) of the remarriages that took place in them. In other words, even if these stories in the end did not obviously supply information about modern-day Germany as a complex social system, the stories clearly did not take place on American soil. American readers could thus experience the “life problems” of marriage at a stage of removal. Since the stories were foreign, readers did not necessarily expect them or their solutions to be precisely true of life as they knew it and thus did not need to demand verisimilitude of them for the sake of enjoyment and edification. Thrilling to the profound joy of acknowledgment, forgiveness, and renewal within marriage, the institution supported so ardently in the American social imaginary, they could happily inhabit alien yet familiar idealized marriages of free choice, reciprocal desire, and mutual recognition for the time it took to read a German novel.