

Malika Maskarinec

# The Bachelor

Gottfried Keller's "Der Landvogt von Greifensee" and Serial Erotics

When the ten fictional narrators of Giovanni Boccaccio's *Decameron* withdraw from Florence to the paradisiacal countryside in the interest of avoiding infection and the social demise accompanying the plague, they agree that storytelling will do more than pass the time: it will maintain the good form of their small gathering, for one, by keeping at bay the temptation to transgress sexual norms. Having warned that "things that lack order will not last long," Pampinea, the first queen of the proceedings, pleads for a well-ordered day intended to maintain the group's morals: "So that I may begin by setting you all a good example, through which, proceeding from good to better, our company will be enabled to live an ordered and agreeable existence for as long as we choose to remain together."<sup>1</sup> Rather than perform conventionally forbidden sexual acts, which they believe to be ubiquitous in plague-ridden Florence, sexual desire is instead redirected into the stories they share. The hundred stories are rightly famous for their pervasive focus on sex, typically of an adulterous nature and frequently initiated by the female characters. Of the hundred stories told, nearly ninety displace desire from its potential realization in sexual acts that would threaten the "definite form"<sup>2</sup> of the group onto the form-giving activity of storytelling. Within the state of exception staged in the *Decameron*, the possibility of speaking freely about sexual desire and transgressive acts sustains storytelling in the round to the point of its completion with the tenth story of the tenth day.

How untethered erotic energy has the force to protract the time of narration is modelled in the serial arrangement of Panfilo's story on the second day (2.7), a story that stands out for its unusual length relative to the typically brief narratives of the *Decameron*. Shipwrecked on her way to meet her intended groom, the extraordinarily beautiful and desirable Alatiel, the daughter of the Sultan, falls into the hands of a series of eight men over a period of four years. The story unfolds at a breathtaking pace of tragic mishaps and egregious crimes that propel the woman's movement among these men and eastward across the Mediterranean. At each turn, she makes the most of her misfortune and learns to enjoy and liberally partake in the sexual pleasure she is offered. The dense and highly erratic chain of events is held together only by means of the continuity of her desire. The series unfolds, in other words, thanks to her desire and availability. The

---

1 Giovanni Boccaccio, *The Decameron*, trans. G. H. McWilliam, 2nd ed. (London: Penguin, 1995), 21.

2 Boccaccio, 20.

story concludes when she returns home to her father, successfully feigns her virginity, and sets sail a second time to her groom: “And so, despite the fact that eight separate men had made love to her on thousands of different occasions, she entered his bed as a virgin and convinced him that it was really so. And for many years afterwards she lived a contented life as his queen.”<sup>3</sup> Her husband, who should have been her first and only lover, ultimately figures as the ninth man in a series, yet ensures, through matrimony, its conclusion. In this story, as in the *Decameron* itself, the series unfolds such that the story’s end returns to the point of its departure through a pattern of repetition and variation, thereby effecting its own closure.

In both the frame and this embedded narrative, care has been taken to achieve a good form. Panfilo’s story appropriately concludes with an image depicting the closure of the series in the form of a cycle. He cites the saying “A kissed mouth doesn’t lose its freshness: like the moon it turns up new again.”<sup>4</sup> Lips and moon do more than suggestively allude to Alatiel’s beauty. Their round shapes describe the complete and perfect form of the woman’s journey completed in matrimony. The unbridled erotic energy that carries her through the series of nine men, comes full circle and has, like her lips, lost nothing of its potency over the course of its journey. Rather than being depleted over the series, her desire is sustained by it. Because the lunar image likewise describes the full circle of the *Decameron*’s storytelling, the story of Alatiel’s nine lovers models the arrangement of the frame narrative as well. In each case, a series is premised on a self-sustaining erotic force that ultimately finds closure in a lunar, cyclical form.

## Serial erotics

I take the story just described to be illustrative of the way in which sexual desire can become the basic premise for the serial arrangement of a given narrative. The popular American television series *The Bachelor* and the global boom in spin-offs it has inspired over the past two decades – which all conclude only when the starring figure’s erotic availability is suspended in matrimony – indicate that such a serial arrangement has lost nothing of its cultural allure. In the following, I argue that Gottfried Keller’s novella “Der Landvogt von Greifensee” belongs to this tradition of erotic serials. Placing it in this tradition is, I claim, revealing about the fate of novella cycles in the nineteenth century. Situating any of Keller’s novellas within a tradition of erotic series may seem unfounded given the overwhelming

---

3 Boccaccio, 147.

4 Boccaccio, 147–148.

prudishness of his romantic tales. Indeed, Keller specifically conceived of the cycle *Züricher Novellen*, in which “Der Landvogt” is included, as a break with the erotic license he took in the first edition of “Romeo und Julia auf dem Dorfe” (1855/1856), for which he was unsparingly criticized. “I am planning,” he explained of the new project, “if God will, as the sanctimonious say, to write, piece by piece, a series of Zurich novellas, which should contain, in contrast to *Die Leute von Seldwyla*, more positive life” (Ich habe vor, wenn der Herr will, wie die Mucker sagen, nach u nach eine Reihe Zürchernovellen zu schreiben, welche im Gegensatz zu den Leuten von Seldwyla, mehr positives Leben enthalten sollen).<sup>5</sup> The phrase “positive life” should be understood as life conforming to norms regarding sexual behavior. But in spite of the relative chasteness of the ensuing stories, “Der Landvogt von Greifensee” shares with the *Decameron*, first, a focus on different forms of sensual pleasure – eating, drinking, and, to the modest degree permitted, displays of desire – and, second, a serial structure premised on the erotic desire and desirability of the unmarried protagonist.<sup>6</sup> To be sure, in this case the protagonist’s desirability derives less from his beauty and more from his political and economic status. In the novella, the eponymous character, the forty-two-year-old Landvogt von Greifensee, reflects on his past life and the five women he has courted, all five of whom turned him down. In the first half, he narrates the five courtships as a series of stories; in the second, he invites all five women to a flowery banquet at his estate where he will supposedly (but ultimately does not) select a wife. The novella concludes by recording his death as a bachelor at the age of seventy-seven many years after the banquet. As I will show, the series of five courtships in “Der Landvogt,” like the series of Alatiel’s lovers, models the form of the novella cycle in which it is framed, namely, Keller’s *Züricher Novellen*. Once again, the structures of frame and embedded narrative are made to reflect one another as a mutual enforcement of their formal closure.

---

5 Gottfried Keller to Berthold Auerbach, 25 June 1860, in *Historisch-Kritische Gottfried Keller-Ausgabe*, ed. Walter Morgenthaler, vol. 22, *Züricher Novellen: Apparat zu Band 6*, ed. Morgenthaler et al. (Basel: Stroemfeld; Zurich: Neue Zürcher Zeitung, 1999), 443. This edition is hereafter cited as *HKKA*. All translations of sources are mine unless otherwise noted.

6 Hans-Jürgen Schrader describes how the editor of the *Deutsche Rundschau*, Julius Rodenberg, eagerly censored published texts in the interest of the public’s morality. Hans-Jürgen Schrader, “Im Schraubstock moderner Marktmechanismen: Vom Druck Kellers und Meyers in Rodenbergs *Deutscher Rundschau*,” *Jahresbericht der Gottfried Keller-Gesellschaft* 62 (1993): 19.

## A story about nothing

Despite Keller's inherited and self-imposed prudishness, the *Decameron* provides a revealing foil for bringing key features of "Der Landvogt" into view. Two differences – regarding who narrates and what happens – are particularly revealing for the narrative structure of Keller's novella and the way in which it models a novella cycle. To begin with, from a novella cycle we expect a gathering of storytellers who speak in turns. Johann Wolfgang Goethe's *Unterhaltungen deutscher Ausgewanderten* (1795) or E. T. A. Hoffmann's *Serapionsbrüder* (1819) are two more historically proximate examples of such gatherings of storytellers. In Keller's novella, by contrast, the Landvogt retains an absolute monopoly on speech and storytelling. In the first half of the text, he recounts all five tales of his past courtships to his housekeeper, Marianne. Later, when the five women come to visit his castle, they are repeatedly admonished to stay silent. "Quiet" (Ruhig), he commands them.<sup>7</sup> So unlike the *Decameron's* female characters, who possess an impressive degree of narrative, political, and erotic agency, the women in "Der Landvogt" are unanimously relegated to the position of passive listeners. The setting echoes the famous frontispiece of *Die Gartenlaube*, in which the family patriarch is reading aloud to a passive audience of his descendants; the unmarried Landvogt occupies the position of the paterfamilias, and since he does not possess a family, the women compose his audience. By endowing the male protagonist with exclusive control over speech, the novella is a fictional counterexample to both the late nineteenth-century boom in female authorship and the collective nature of periodical publishing in which editors, critics, and lay readers had a say in the progression of serials. Keller's novella relegates women to the position of quiet recipients and so resists coding periodical literature as feminized writing.<sup>8</sup>

The second dramatic difference concerns what happens. The novella, as I mentioned, recalls five courtships, each of which failed to end in the anticipated happy end of marriage. Keller's contemporary Wilhelm Petersen spoke for many when he complained about the lack of a happy ending: "The great crowd in northern Germany demands a happy end, and though I'm principally opposed to marriage, I cannot help but share, to a certain degree, this vulgar sentiment" (Der große Haufe in Norddeutschland verlangt daß sie am Schlusse 'sich kriegen' und, obwohl ein grundsätzlicher Gegner der Ehe, kann ich doch nicht umhin, diesen

7 Gottfried Keller, "Der Landvogt von Greifensee," in *Züricher Novellen*, HKKA, 6:240.

8 On the alleged femininity and thus triviality of periodical literature in contrast to the male-authored book, see Manuela Günter, "Ermanne dich, oder vielmehr erweibe dich einmal!: Gender Trouble in der Literatur nach der Kunstperiode," *Internationales Archiv für Sozialgeschichte der deutschen Literatur* 30.2 (2006): 38–61.

vulgären Geschmack bis zu einem gewissen Grade zu theilen).<sup>9</sup> The suspense and main narrative event we would expect from a tale of courtship are not simply missing; they are missing five times over and from the very beginning. What's more, the entire novella is constructed as an act of remembrance such that readers know from the very beginning that each of the courtships will fail and that the Landvogt will end the story as he begins it, namely, as a bachelor. The Landvogt's erotic availability – the central premise of the series of five stories – is instead only put to rest when he dies.

Another look back to the *Decameron*, in which storytelling is motivated by the gruesome menace of the plague, or to Goethe's *Unterhaltungen deutscher Ausgewanderten*, which is set in motion by the peril of the nearby French Revolutionary Army, makes the matter of eventfulness all the more striking. In each case, storytelling serves to reconstitute a social order under threat. It responds to what Andreas Gailus describes, in his brilliant reading of Goethe's novella cycle, as "systematic traumas" that threaten to undermine a social system from within.<sup>10</sup> As Gailus explains, for Goethe "the novella becomes a traumatic narrative concerned with the catastrophic force of newness."<sup>11</sup> What is missing from Keller's "Der Landvogt" – as, for that matter, from his novellas and novella cycles in general – is any such force of newness. They relay no challenge to the status quo, no necessity to adapt, no demand to restore the physical or political health of a community. "Der Landvogt" is rather a story of an elderly man looking back at what has, in matter of fact, *not* happened. If the story does contain an event – the Landvogt's *not* marrying – it too has been dispersed over a series of episodes so as to ensure that there is no climatic moment of disappointment. This is a story about the noneventfulness of the past and consequently hardly seems to satisfy the expectations of newness we associate with the genre novella.

Among early readers of "Der Landvogt," Theodor Fontane was particularly sensitive to the absence of eventfulness. His remarks provide a telling, if scathing, summary as well as a warning about the pitfalls of serial story arrangements for authors and readers alike. While scholarship today continues to thematize serial publications with regard to their supposedly action-packed (if simplistic) stories that rely on suspenseful cliffhangers to draw readers from one installment to the next, Fontane's reading is a valuable reminder that the repetitions of a series or serial could also just as well inspire little more than a headache. Fontane, one should note, read the original serialized publication of "Der Landvogt" in the *Deutsche Rundschau* and wrote

---

9 Wilhelm Petersen to Gottfried Keller, 17 June 1877, in *HKKA*, 22:521.

10 Andreas Gailus, "The Poetics of Containment: Goethe's *Conversations of German Refugees* and the Crisis of Representation," *Modern Philology*, 100.3 (2003): 438.

11 Gailus, 442.

from the cultural metropole of Berlin, where he was, by all accounts, happily married. From this position, the review imagines the unhappily unmarried Keller living with his sister in the cultural backwaters of provincial Zurich.

Der Landvogt, eine reizende Figur (aber doch ein wenig schattenhaft), war fünfmal auf Frei-ers Füßen, auch schon fünfmal verlobt, und kam doch zu keiner Frau. Die Novelle erzählt nun erst seine fünf Liebesgeschichten und dann, wie er schließlich als Mann mittlerer Jahre seine fünf Liebsten, die nun meist längst verheiratet sind, zu sich aufs Schloß lädt. Jede der Frauengestalten wird vorzüglich charakterisiert und jede einzelne Liebesgeschichte ist allerliebste, dennoch ermüdet man zuletzt und fühlt das bekannte Mühlrad im Kopf. So gut die Gestalten auseinandergehalten sind, quirlen sie einem zuletzt doch wirr durcheinander, und man ist schließlich froh, daß das grausame Spiel ein Ende hat. [. . .] Im ganzen hab' ich doch den Eindruck, als sei er in jene "zweite Epoche" getreten, wo die "Kunst" für das aufkommen muß, was an eigentlichem "Borax" bereits verlorengegangen ist. In kleinen Städten, wo die geistige Zufuhr geringer ist, tritt dieser Zustand des Erschöpftseins eher ein als dort, wo die Schriftsteller viel sehen und erleben.

The governor, a charming figure (but still a bit shady), was five times a suitor, also five times engaged, and still did not acquire a wife. The novella first tells his five love stories and then how as a middle-aged man he invites his five sweethearts, most of whom are long since married, to his castle. Each of the female figures is exquisitely characterized, and each love story is delightful, yet one tires in the end and feels a familiar churning in one's head. As well as the figures are differentiated, they still ultimately swirl chaotically together, and one is then happy that the cruel game comes to an end. [. . .] But all in all, I have the impression as if he [Keller] has entered that "second epoch" when "art" must compensate for what has already been lost in actual "borax." This state of exhaustion is more likely to occur in small towns, where intellectual stimulus is lower, than in places where authors see and experience a lot.<sup>12</sup>

While Keller had originally imagined a story of six or seven women, the ultimate five was already too much for Fontane, for whom the basic structure of "Der Landvogt" is one of wearying repetition.<sup>13</sup> In attempting to entertain too much, it entertains too little – a failure Fontane attributes to the cultural paucity of the Swiss author's experience and the ensuing decline of his creative talents. The fictional characters of "Der Landvogt" nearly share Fontane's assessment. The

<sup>12</sup> Theodor Fontane, "Züricher Novellen," in *Aufsätze, Kritiken, Erinnerungen*, vol. 1, *Aufsätze und Aufzeichnungen*, ed. Jürgen Kolbe, unnumbered vol. of *Sämtliche Werke*, ed. Walter Keitel (Munich: Carl Hanser, 1969), 497.

<sup>13</sup> "He lives in Greifensee Castle beyond the Zürichberg and invites on a Sunday six or seven pretty women to entertain himself and also for the fun of remembering, after all the bygone love affairs" (Der haus't auf dem Schloß Greifensee jenseits des Zürichberges u ladet auf einen Sonntag, um sich einen Hauptspaß zu machen u auch ein Erinnerungsvergnügen, nach all' den vorübergegangenen Liebestürmen 6 oder 7 hübsche Weibsbilder ein). Gottfried Keller to Adolf Exner, 27 August 1875, in *HKKA*, 22:471.

Landvogt's housekeeper, Marianne, who first listens to the series of five stories and then watches the banquet's festivities, expresses relief when it comes to an end: "I would never have thought that such a ridiculous story as this rooster in a henhouse of five could have had such an edifying and delicate ending!" (Ich hätte nie gedacht, daß eine so lächerliche Geschichte, wie fünf Körbe sind, ein so erbauliches und zierliches Ende nehmen könnte!).<sup>14</sup> Like Fontane, the intradiegetic recipient of this seemingly silly plot is happiest when it concludes.

The noneventfulness of the novella, epitomized by the unsatisfying conclusion of bachelorhood, is by no means unusual for Keller. In each of his four novella cycles, Keller consistently struggles with precisely the form of closure envisioned in the *Decameron's* image of rounded lips and the lunar cycle. Although Keller and his critics often invoke the *Decameron* and the fictional practice of telling stories in the round, the comparison invites disappointment since Keller's novella cycles fail as cycles:<sup>15</sup> only *Das Sinngedicht* rounds off with a kiss and the promise of matrimony. The fact that the frame narrative of the *Züricher Novellen* peters out after the third of the five novellas so consistently frustrated critics that the text has received relatively little attention to this day. Rather than being contained within a frame or possessing a happy end or exhibiting another type of closure, the novellas collected in *Die Leute von Seldwyla I* and *II* and in the *Züricher Novellen* are related primarily by means of geography: the collected stories are set in the fictional Seldwyla or in the canton of Zurich. In 1939, György Lukács suggested that Keller's partiality for the form of the novella cycle derives from his Swiss political affinities: his novella cycles are akin to a federation, a loose union of largely autonomous entities.<sup>16</sup> One could extend Lukács's political analogy and also note that, like the Swiss Confederation, the lack of closure in Keller's novella cycles means that the author could, and in matter of fact did, progressively add stories to the cycles over time. Freed from an encompassing frame or any logic of crisis and resolution, the novella cycles could be expanded according to Keller's fitful and unreliable writing habits or according to the demands of his publishers. Viewed in this way, the novella cycle opens up, abandons its circular form, and stretches into an open-ended linear series so as to accommodate the contingencies of modern authorship and the demands of the publishing market. Such a cycle might then appear to be a mere aggregation of political or economic expedience

---

14 Keller, "Der Landvogt," 6:246.

15 For an overview of Keller's relationship to the *Decameron*, see Ursula Amrein, "Gottfried Kellers 'artiger kleiner Dekameron': Poetik und Schreibweise des Sinngedichts in der Nachfolge Boccaccios," in *Boccaccio und die Folgen: Fontane, Storm, Keller, Ebner-Eschenbach und die Novellenkunst des 19. Jahrhunderts*, ed. Hugo Aust and Hubertus Fischer (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2006), 119–134.

16 Georg Lukacs, *Gottfried Keller* (Berlin: Aufbau, 1946), 76–77.

rather than an example of the good and definite form that Pampinea advocates in the *Decameron*. The series, on this reading, represents a repudiation of cyclical form, if not of the coherency and closure we associate with form more generally.

However, in my close reading, I would like to resist this conclusion and demonstrate that “Der Landvogt” ultimately models a novella cycle endowed with a closed form. Keller’s novella, in other words, demonstrates how a work of literature can achieve the form of closure Panfilo’s story attributes to the *Decameron* with the image of lips and the moon within the conditions of periodical publishing. Furthermore, rather than regard serialized publishing in the periodical press as a mere hindrance to literary form, a selling-out to the commercialization of literature, as it were, the novella imagines a form specifically reliant on those practices. In short, I propose reading the story’s plot as an allegorical enactment of how a serially organized and serialized novella cycle achieves formal closure. To begin, I first discuss the context of the novella’s serial publication and outline what I describe as its recursive structure. These recursions set the stage for reading “Der Landvogt” as modelling the possibility of formal closure.

## A picture of everything

As I have noted, Keller’s *Züricher Novellen* was first published in the *Deutsche Rundschau*. Understanding the periodical’s ambitions provides a critical background for my reading of how “Der Landvogt” engages with the form of the novella cycle and with the publishing practices of serialization. The unillustrated *Deutsche Rundschau* was printed monthly at the Verlag Gebrüder Paetel in Berlin. At its height, it boasted a circulation of ten thousand, which, while modest compared to the most popular periodicals of the era, was impressive for an elite publication of its kind. Julius Rodenberg, who became the editor of the *Deutsche Rundschau* at its founding in 1874, had already met Keller in Berlin while the latter was drafting *Der grüne Heinrich* and began to recruit him as an author in 1874 after enthusiastically reading *Die Leute von Seldwyla*. Their correspondence gives the impression that Keller’s very idea to write a new novella cycle was prompted by Rodenberg’s ample hyperbolic flattery and incessant urging to write for the periodical: “My esteemed Shakespeare of the novella!” (Mein verehrter Shakespeare der Novelle!) begins one letter.<sup>17</sup> Rodenberg’s continued appeals for Keller’s fidelity to the *Deutsche Rundschau* were successful, as Keller would publish most of his remaining works, including *Das Sinngedicht* (1881) and *Martin Salander* (1886), in its pages.

---

<sup>17</sup> Julius Rodenberg to Gottfried Keller, 16 February 1877, in *HKKA*, 22:506.



As a recent boom in scholarship on German-language periodical culture has amply demonstrated, family periodicals (*Familienzeitschriften*) like *Die Gartenlaube* or *Daheim*, which aimed at the broadest possible readership, but also *Kulturzeitschriften* like the *Deutsche Rundschau*, regarded themselves as providing a *Bildungsprogramm* for the general public. They aimed at nothing less than the cultural and political education of good citizens. Carrying the torch of the Enlightenment in the era of mass media, periodicals operated in parallel to and more widely than the better-established institutions of schools and universities.<sup>18</sup> To realize this ambitious program, it was essential that periodicals provided, for one, an overview of contemporary developments in science and culture. As Gerhart von Graevenitz emphasizes, periodicals sought “to provide an overall *picture* of knowledge, to make possible an *overview*.”<sup>19</sup> By outlining such a universal grasp of concepts such as nature or life, family and high-culture periodicals alike intended to withstand the growing specialization and fractioning of knowledge.<sup>20</sup>

---

**18** In contrast to an early tendency in the scholarship to regard the format and printing pace of periodicals along with their economic dependency on the market of readers as impeding the creative genius of late nineteenth-century authors, scholars have recently proposed regarding periodicals as a field for literary experimentation. For a summary and example of this transition in views, see Daniela Gretz, “Ein literarischer ‘Versuch’ im Experimentierfeld Zeitschrift: Medieneffekte der *Deutschen Rundschau* auf Gottfried Kellers *Sinngedicht*,” *Zeitschrift für deutsche Philologie* 134.2 (2015): 191–215.

**19** “‘Überblick’ [Overview] and ‘Rundschau’ [review] equally designated the method and epistemic goal of the cultured press: the coherence of knowledge was to be made visible through pictures and forms of visualization analogous to pictures. This was also true when, as in the case of the *Deutsche Rundschau*, the individual periodical did not present any pictures but still fit with the program of ‘Rundschau’ [review] into the visualization context of the whole differentiated medium.” Gerhart von Graevenitz, “Wissen und Sehen: Anthropologie und Perspektivismus in der Zeitschriftenpresse des 19. Jahrhunderts und in realistischen Texten; Zu Stiftern *Bunten Steinen* und Kellers *Sinngedicht*,” in *Wissen in Literatur im 19. Jahrhundert*, ed. Lutz Danneberg and Friederich Vollhardt (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 2002), 152.

**20** Cultural periodicals aimed to provide “a maximally universal overview of all the fields of knowledge [. . .]. At least in the beginning, they were still clearly oriented in this by the semantics of *Bildung* (also of the emerging humanities) and increasingly integrated literature, which operates across discourses. This function explicitly determined the programmatic positions in which one repeatedly finds, up through the present, formulations that come down to espousing the avoidance of specialist discourses, of partisan points of view, or of a merely fashionable direction. In the German Empire and in the Weimar Republic, these orientations tended to be tied to universalist concepts like *life, being, mind, nature, culture, totality, the whole, or also the modern*.” Gustav Frank, Madleen Podewski, and Stefan Scherer, “Kultur – Zeit – Schrift: Literatur- und Kulturzeitschriften als ‘kleine Archive,’” *Internationales Archiv für Sozialgeschichte der deutschen Literatur* 34.2 (2010): 19.

Offering an overview of developments in culture, politics, history, and science was of essence to the *Deutsche Rundschau*. The breadth of perspectives is already advertised in the title *Rundschau*, and it dictated the layout of content. Serialized works of literature preceded articles in science and politics and literary reviews. A reader of the first installment of the “Der Landvogt,” for example, could turn to articles on the slave trade, Shakespeare, the American Civil War, Frédéric Chopin, and Paul Anselm von Feuerbach. The issue concluded with a “Berliner Chronik” and “Literarische Rundschau.”<sup>21</sup> In an editorial statement anticipating the periodical’s founding, Rodenberg positions the publication as providing an overview not only of the fractious individual arts (literature, music, and the visual arts) but also of “those manifold elements of education today” (jene mannigfachen Elemente der heutigen Bildung), which were otherwise dispersed among the dense market of periodicals.

Der deutsche Leser hat zur Ausfüllung seiner Mußestunden illustrierte und andere Blätter; der hat zahlreiche Fachjournale, wenn er sich belehren will, und zu seiner Orientierung auf den verschiedenen Gebieten der Literatur, des Theaters, der Musik und bildenden Künste ebenso viele kritische Führer. Allein ihm fehlt eine Zeitschrift, welche dadurch, daß sie jene mannigfachen Elemente der heutigen Bildung zusammen in sich begreift, einen Überblick über den ganzen Umfang derselben ermöglicht und einem Bedürfnisse der hochgebildeten Kreise unserer Nation entgegenkommt, welches bisher noch nicht vollständig befriedigt worden ist. In diese Lücke einzutreten ist die Deutsche R[undschau] bestimmt. Sie wird Unterhaltung in der edelsten Form bieten und zugleich den wissenschaftlichen Fragen, den politischen, literarischen und künstlerischen Vorgängen mit der größten Aufmerksamkeit folgen.

To fill his leisure time, the German reader has magazines and other papers; he has numerous professional journals if he wants to educate himself and just as many critical guides for his orientation in the different fields of literature, theater, music, and the visual arts. He only lacks a periodical that by considering all those myriad elements of education today together, enables an overview of its entire scope and addresses a need of the highly educated circles of our nation that has not yet been fully satisfied. The *Deutsche Rundschau* is meant to step into this gap. It will offer entertainment in the noblest form and concurrently follow scientific questions and political, literary, and artistic affairs with the greatest attention.<sup>22</sup>

Also evident in this programmatic statement, as in the red, black, gold coloring of its annual book covers, is the *Deutsche Rundschau*’s commitment to the recently founded Prussian-led German Empire, a commitment that would be realized by cultivating a national consciousness among its citizen-readers. At the same time, the title page listed alphabetically the far-flung urban booksellers around the

<sup>21</sup> *Deutsche Rundschau*, 6 March 1877.

<sup>22</sup> Julius Rodenberg, *Die Begründung der “Deutschen Rundschau”: Ein Rückblick* (Berlin: Gebrüder Paetel, 1899), 29.

globe, from Alexandria to Zurich, where its pages could be purchased. It thereby emphasized its ambition to create a community of readers beyond the borders of the German Empire, among a transnational German-speaking diaspora. The inclusion of select Austrian and Swiss authors was integral to balancing this simultaneously nationalist and transnational mission. While their inclusion underwrote Rodenberg's vision of a pan-German ("großdeutsch") literary cannon, examples of Swiss literature by Keller or Conrad Ferdinand Meyer were thought to provide the newly extant German citizen with an education in federalist political values that was needed to balance the German overemphasis on a classical cultural education.<sup>23</sup> The all-encompassing vision of the *Deutsche Rundschau* is evident in Rodenberg's early appeal to Keller, where he asks Keller to provide nothing less than an overview of the sum of his poetic achievements: "to sum up your poetic manifestation in one overall picture" (Ihre dichterische Erscheinung einmal in einem Gesamtbilde zusammenzufassen).<sup>24</sup> The *Züricher Novellen*, in turn, as I will discuss in conclusion, takes the periodical's political purpose to heart and places the question of the good citizen's education at the heart of its frame narrative.

Along with providing an overview of a unified field of knowledge, the *Deutsche Rundschau*, like other periodicals of the era, aspired to serve as an archive of the knowledge gathered in its pages. Graevenitz is again to the point when he writes that their pages were cast as "*memoria* houses" or "memory books for culture and education."<sup>25</sup> While each issue acted as a small-scale repository, the periodical's archival ambitions were only fully satisfied when the single issues were bound together at the year's end in book form and equipped with a table of contents providing an overview of its pages. After all, issues of the *Deutsche Rundschau* were not merely meant to be read and discarded but instead collected in the format of a book. As a book volume, the periodical transcended its initial ephemerality and became an encyclopedic archive of knowledge. The periodical's projection of

---

<sup>23</sup> See Günter Butzer, Manuela Günter, and Renate von Heydebrand, "Strategien zur Kanonisierung des 'Realismus' am Beispiel der *Deutschen Rundschau*," *Internationales Archiv für Sozialgeschichte der deutschen Literatur* 24.1 (1999): 55–81.

<sup>24</sup> Julius Rodenberg to Gottfried Keller, 22 October 1875, in *Gehrter Herr – lieber Freund: Schweizer Autoren und ihre deutschen Verleger; Mit einer Umkehrung und drei Exkursionen*, ed. Rätus Luck (Basel: Stroemfeld, 1998), 130.

<sup>25</sup> Gerhart von Graevenitz, "Memoria und Realismus: Erzählende Literatur in der deutschen 'Bildungspresse' des 19. Jahrhunderts," in *Memoria: Vergessen und Erinnern*, ed. Anselm Haverkamp and Renate Lachmann (Munich: Wilhelm Fink, 1993), 288, 283. As Frank, Podewski, and Scherer point out, this archival function differentiated the monthly periodical from more frequently published newspapers: "Instead of with daily news, it was concerned with selecting and presenting what was true and valuable with a proclivity to a national, patriotic point of view." Frank, Podewski, and Scherer, "Literatur- und Kulturzeitschriften," 19.

itself as a book in the making, Gowan Dawson explains, also helped ensure a market of readers among wealthier subscribers that did not wish to associate themselves with trivial and inexpensive periodicals.<sup>26</sup> Especially attuned to its function as an archive, the *Deutsche Rundschau* entirely abstained, unlike *Die Gartenlaube* or *Über Land und Meer*, from publishing news and instead placed what it hoped to be the continuation of the German literary canon as its lead. Claudia Stockinger emphasizes the affinity of the *Deutsche Rundschau* to the book format particularly forcefully in her recent history of *Die Gartenlaube* when she writes, “The *Deutsche Rundschau* [. . .] produced such a unity *in opposition to* or *in spite of* its periodicity. [. . .] The *Gartenlaube* was conceived as a periodical and could in the process become a book; the *Deutsche Rundschau* was conceived as a book, yet remained in the process a periodical.”<sup>27</sup>

That the ephemeral character of the periodical was but a mere transitory moment on the way to its final book format is perhaps best demonstrated by Keller’s own handling of his copy of the *Züricher Novellen* in the *Deutsche Rundschau*. For when preparing the second printing of the *Züricher Novellen* as a book edition with Weibert Verlag, Keller created his own manuscript by cutting apart the relevant issues of the *Deutsche Rundschau* and rebinding them into a continuous text onto which he could enter his own revisions.<sup>28</sup> Realizing the single-author book necessitated dismantling the holistic vision of the *Deutsche Rundschau*, for which the juxtaposition of dissimilar texts was essential, in the interests of this alternative form and format. With the help of scissors and thread, Keller could transform the periodical into the template for a single-author book.

## **Züricher Novellen**

The five novellas we now refer to as the *Züricher Novellen* stem from three different production and publishing histories, meaning that the making of that novella cycle necessitated an act of compilation. While “Das Fähnlein der sieben Aufrechten” first appeared in *Berthold Auerbach’s deutscher Volks-Kalender* in 1860, “Hadlaub,” “Der Narr von Manegg,” “Der Landvogt von Greifensee,” and the frame narrative that encompasses these three novellas first appeared serialized

<sup>26</sup> Gowan Dawson, “Paleontology in Parts: Richard Owen, William John Broderip, and the Serialization of Science in Early Victorian Britain,” *Isis* 103.4 (December 2012): 657.

<sup>27</sup> Claudia Stockinger, *An den Ursprüngen populärer Serialität: Das Familienblatt “Die Gartenlaube”* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2018), 78.

<sup>28</sup> Keller reports on this process in a letter to Adolf Exner from 12 August 1877, in *HKKA*, 22:532.

in the *Deutsche Rundschau*. The fifth novella, “Ursula,” on the other hand, was written in the summer and fall of 1877 in response to Ferdinand Weibert’s proposal that the first book edition of the *Züricher Novellen* include a previously unpublished text. That book edition of the *Züricher Novellen* was thus intended as a reprint, yet also as a more complete rendering, of the original; as a reproduction and as the better original. Consequently, the five novellas we now refer to as the *Züricher Novellen* were first published together and in their currently familiar order in two volumes in 1877 by the Stuttgart Weibert Verlag (see the first column in Figure 8.1). There they were scheduled and appeared, surprisingly given Keller’s proclivity for missing deadlines, in time for the Christmas market – which Keller described to Theodor Storm as “the Christmas publishing market that breathes down my neck” (der buchhändlerische Weihnachtstrafic, der mir auf dem Nacken saß).<sup>29</sup> The first volume encompassed the three novellas and the frame story: the second comprised “Das Fähnlein der sieben Aufrechten” and “Ursula.” Only in the first *Gesamtausgabe* of Keller’s oeuvre, available for purchase beginning in 1889, were the five novellas of the *Züricher Novellen* contained in a single volume.

The first three novellas published in the *Deutsche Rundschau* between November 1876 and April 1877 also possess a five-part structure insofar as they were published across five issues of the periodical. Each installment was titled *Züricher Novellen* followed by an installment number (1 through 5), the title of the

The five <i>Züricher Novellen</i> in the Weibert Verlag’s first book edition (1877)	The five installments of the <i>Züricher Novellen</i> in the <i>Deutsche Rundschau</i>	The five parts of “Der Landvogt von Greifensee” in both the periodical and book editions
<b>Volume 1</b>	1) November 1876	1) Distelfink
1) “Hadlaub”	“Hadlaub (Anfang)”	2) Hanswurstel
2) “Der Narr auf Manegg”	2) December 1876	3) Kapitän
3) “Der Landvogt von Greifensee”	“Hadlaub (Schluss)”	4) Grasmücke
	3) February 1877	5) Amsel
<b>Volume 2</b>	“Der Narr auf Manegg”	
4) “Das Fähnlein der sieben Aufrechten”	4) March 1877	
5) “Ursula	“Der Landvogt von Greifensee (Anfang)”	
	5) April 1877	
	Der Landvogt von Greifensee (Schluss)”	

**Figure 8.1:** Five-part structures of the *Züricher Novellen* and “Der Landvogt von Greifensee.”

29 Gottfried Keller to Theodor Storm, 25 June 1878, in *HKKA*, 22:557.

specific novella, and when a novella was split over two issues, the part number of that specific novella (see the second column of Figure 8.1). As the publishing dates and missing installment for January 1877 make clear, Keller struggled to abide by the periodical's publishing deadlines; the missing installment of the *Züricher Novellen* in the January 1877 issue of the *Deutsche Rundschau* was replaced by Paul Heyse's "Die Frau Marchesa." It would be a mistake to simply blame this gap, or for that matter the unfinished quality of the novellas, on a rigorous publishing rhythm. Throughout his writing career, Keller was notoriously quick to sign publishing contracts before having put pen to paper and consequently incapable of abiding by agreed-upon timelines.

As I have mentioned, "Der Landvogt von Greifensee" itself comprises five miniature novellas that recount the courtships of the five women and are situated within a frame narrative. In both the *Deutsche Rundschau* and in the later book editions, these five mini novellas are set off from the frame narrative by means of individual titles and line breaks such that they are typographically stylized as individual novellas contained in the greater frame. The five mini novellas bear the titles of the Landvogt's infantilizing pet names for the five women he has courted. The majority of them are given generic names of birds. They are Distelfink (1), Hanswurstel (2), Kapitän (3), Amsel and Grasmücke (4 and 5). The second installment of "Der Landvogt" in the *Deutsche Rundschau* begins with the story of Kapitän, whose name is the third title of the text: *Züricher Novellen (Schluss), Der Landvogt (II), Kapitän*. The arrangement of the plot as a series of five and the breaks in the body of the text make it particularly well suited to being serialized. Indeed, the five mini novellas could have also been adapted to a periodical layout with a less generous allotment of space to works of literature than what the *Deutsche Rundschau* offered.

These five mini novellas are framed by the story of the Landvogt's inviting the five women to the castle and, seen more broadly, by the frame narrative of the *Züricher Novellen*. The structure of "Der Landvogt von Greifensee" can thus be pictured as follows, where F stands for frame:

F<sub>ZN</sub> F<sub>LG</sub> 1 2 3 4 5 F<sub>LG</sub> F<sub>ZN</sub>

As scholars at least since Gerhard Kaiser have noticed, the five novellas framed in "Der Landvogt" anticipate the five novellas of the *Züricher Novellen*,<sup>30</sup> to which I would add that there is also a parallel in the five issues of the *Deutsche Rundschau* in which the original three *Züricher Novellen* appeared. Figure 8.1 visualizes these

30 Gerhard Kaiser, *Gottfried Keller: Das gedichtete Leben* (Frankfurt am Main: Insel, 1981), 458.

multiple and, to an extent, recursive five-part structures. To these initial three structures of five, one can add that when the women first arrive at the Landvogt's estate, they are silent witnesses to his court of marital affairs, in which the Landvogt presides over five marital disputes and sentences the guilty parties to some form of absurd punishment. If these five micronarratives are included, the recursive structure of "Der Landvogt" becomes all the more poignant:

F<sub>ZN</sub> F<sub>LG</sub> 1 2 3 4 5 F<sub>LG</sub> 1 2 3 4 5 F<sub>ZN</sub>

In total, the structuring of "Der Landvogt" displays at least a fourfold series of five elements, each series being recursively embedded within a large sequence of the same. Although each individual series is finite, the recursions suggest that the number of sequences nested within one another might be unending. Like the mirroring between the frame and embedded narratives I attributed to the *Decameron* and the "Der Landvogt" at the beginning of the essay, these recursive structures should also be understood as securing a form. While I cannot definitively say that these recursions are a product of Keller's wit or planning, these recursions and the series of five they rely on nonetheless sets the stage for reading "Der Landvogt" as an interpolation into the form of the series in an age of serialization.

It also bears noting that four of the Landvogt's five courtships are initiated in similar acts of ordering, if not in a serial form then at least as acts of *Reihenbildung*. For example, in the first episode, he and "Distelfink" plant an orchard of fifty cherry trees. The fifty cherry trees (and I take the factor of five to be significant), which are described as "young, slender little trees" (junge[] schlanke[] Bäumchen), are planted in rows of alternating species of red and white cherries. Those rows can be visualized as R W R W R (where R stands for red and W for white). The fruit promised by the cherry trees does not, as one might expect, anticipate the fecundity of the Landvogt and Distelfink's sexual union, which never takes place. Instead, it anticipates the five women the Landvogt will erotically pursue. The resulting series of R W R W R in effect stands for the alternating lost or retained virginal status of the five women when they arrive many years later at the Landvogt's castle. Three of them are married and thus tainted (red), and two are unmarried and in possession of their virginal status (white). In effect, the women too can be summarized with the series: R W R W R.

The novella begins when the unmarried protagonist happens to meet the first of these five women he had previously unsuccessfully courted. He then decides, for little reason other than his own amusement, to invite all five to his estate. The whimsical decision is described as follows:

[Es] befahl ihm plötzlich der Wunsch, nicht nur diese [Distelfink], sondern auch noch drei oder vier weitere Stück schöne Wesen bei sich zu versammeln, zu denen er einst in ähnlichen Beziehungen gestanden; genug, es erwachte, je weiter er ritt, eine eigentliche Sehnsucht in ihm, alle die guten Liebesswerten, die er einst gern gehabt, auf einmal bei einander zu sehen und einen Tag mit ihnen zu verleben. [. . .] Da gab es auf seinem Register der Kosenamen noch eine, die hieß der Hanswurstel, eine andere, die hieß die Grasmücke, eine der Kapitän, und eine vierte die Amsel, was mit dem Distelfink zusammen fünf ausmachte.

He was suddenly seized by the desire to gather at his house not just this one [Goldfinch] but also three or four other specimens of pretty beings with whom he had once been in similar relationships; enough, the further he rode, an actual longing arose in him to see all the good, attractive women he had once been fond of all together at once and to spend a day with them. [. . .] On his list of pet names, there was another one named Harlequin, another who was named Warbler, one the Captain, and a fourth Blackbird, who together with Goldfinch made five.<sup>31</sup>

What begins as a vague desire to gather three or four “pretty beings” takes shape as the longing to gather all the women he has courted. The ensuing story is thus set in motion by the Landvogt’s longing for beauty and the drive to collect or aggregate five objects from his past; it is a drive to accumulate and to chronicle. The course of the story thereby also reinforces the recursive form of the novella: first the Landvogt recalls the five women, then he conjures their presence by narrating the stories of the five courtships to the housekeeper, and then invites the five to the estate. These three acts of recall reiterate and reestablish the series of five three times.

What both motivates and makes possible this aggregation of women is quite obviously the fact that he has married none of them. Not only would marriage to any of the five have stopped the series short in its tracks, it would also have ostensibly robbed the Landvogt of any later desire to invite the five women to his castle or the social license to do so. What sets the narrative in motion is, in other words, an erotic potentiality that has escaped being made actual in being tethered to any single object. Unbound, that potential not only propels each further iteration of the series; it is also the condition, at the end of the Landvogt’s life, for reiterating the series in its entirety in storytelling and the reason for his desire to gather five beautiful objects in his bachelor’s home. The Landvogt himself says as much when he reflects that it was precisely the failure of each of the individual courtships that made the series of five possible.

Denn hätte mich die erste von Euch genommen, so wäre ich nicht an die zweite geraten; hätte die zweite mir die Hand gereicht, so wäre die dritte mir ewig verborgen geblieben,

---

31 Keller, “Der Landvogt,” 6:149.



und so weiter, und ich genösse nicht des Glückes, einen fünffachen Spiegel der Erinnerung zu besitzen, von keinem Hauche der rauhen Wirklichkeit getrübt.

For if I had taken the first of you, I wouldn't have met the second; had the second given me her hand, the third would have remained concealed from me forever, and so on, and I would not have enjoyed the fortune of possessing a fivefold mirror of memory, not clouded by a single whiff of harsh reality.<sup>32</sup>

The last clause bears emphasis. Because he married none of them, they have become mere objects of his memory, objects, one might say, of his erotic fantasy, untouched by the vicissitudes of reality. It is for this reason that the women are primarily referred to by the Landvogt's pet names rather than by their given names. The fact that the women belong to the domain of fantasy and not that of reality is nicely underscored by how, as the Landvogt remarks upon their arrival, none of the women seem to have aged since he last saw them. They are just as beautiful as ten or twenty years ago, even though he himself has grown older. Although he stands in linear, historical time, their serial order is the timeless one of a fictional sphere that emerges from an untethered erotic fantasy. The erotic freedom of the bachelor's narcissistic fantasy is the enabling condition of serial fiction.

The full extent of that narcissism only comes into view by tracking the diegetic time of the narratives. Careful attention to the details of the five mini novels reveals that the first courtship took place when the Landvogt was twenty-five, the second when he was twenty-six, the third when he was thirty-three, and the fourth and fifth at thirty-four. The Landvogt narrates the stories of the courtships and invites the women to his home at the age of forty-two, and he dies at the age of seventy-seven. In effect, each woman marks a different station, one might say a topos, of the Landvogt's biography. Because these five sleeping-beauty-like women are timeless and because the erotic fantasy of the bachelor is free to recall them, their five stories together reconstruct the totality of the Landvogt's life. What might have been a romantic novella is instead a biography, or better, a necrology.<sup>33</sup> Conversely, the continuity of the Landvogt's life underwrites and naturalizes what otherwise might appear to be an arbitrary series of five. While the initial nebulous desire to collect four or five beautiful women might have prompted a disordered accumulation of unrelated women, the fact that each marks a topos of

---

<sup>32</sup> Keller, 6:239.

<sup>33</sup> On the significance of necrologies and their narrative patterns in the nineteenth century, see Gerhart von Graevenitz, "Geschichte aus dem Geist des Nekrologs: Zur Begründung der Biographie im 19. Jahrhundert," *Deutsche Vierteljahresschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Geistesgeschichte* 54 (1980): 105–170.

his life ensures that they are of one kind and that their order is a serial one mimetically reflected in a series of narratives. What the narrative exemplifies, in other words, is not an arbitrary grouping, but the form of a series organized by discernible principles.

The serial form of the Landvogt's life is wonderfully underscored by the contrasting figure of the housekeeper, Marianne. Although Marianne primarily serves as an oral and visual spectator of the novella's events, the reader learns in passing that she joined the estate only after having lost all of her nine children: "One by one, she had nine children, whom she loved above everything else and with all the passion she possessed; but all of them died, which almost broke her heart each time" (Sie bekamen nach und nach neun Kinder, die sie über alles liebte und mit der ganzen Leidenschaftlichkeit, die ihr eigen war; aber alle starben hinweg, was ihr jedesmal fast das Herz brach).<sup>34</sup> The mention of these nine children suggests that if she were the protagonist, Marianne's life might too be narrated as a series of prematurely interrupted libidinal attachments. While the early deaths of the nine children mean that they cannot be gathered in this world, Marianne anticipates her happy reunion with her series of nine in the next world, a banquet perhaps not entirely unlike the one organized by the Landvogt. In the meantime, her necrology waits to be narrated, its serial form already having been prefigured in these nine tragic losses.

As I have noted, the chief plot driving "Der Landvogt von Greifensee" is the desire to collect these five objects, these five women, in a simultaneous presence, "all together." The Landvogt achieves this aggregation when he and all five women are seated together at a table in an arrangement described in great detail. The Landvogt sits at the head of the table, Distelfink across from him, Hanswurstel to his right, and Amsel to his left. Kapitän and Grasmücke, in a curious moment of ambiguity, occupy the two remaining seats. The five women, whose courtships with the Landvogt have just been narrated in serial form, are now seated together in one place at one time. Seated in the round, they might seem to undo the linear, forward-directed historical trajectory in which they were serially introduced. Sitting at the head of the table, the Landvogt further undoes that serial order when he gazes back and forth between the five different women, opening up different possible orderings and combinations. His gaze, in other words, unbinds the women from their original serial order and creates, it first seems, the possibility of endless variation determined only by his visual pleasure:

Mit einem warmen Glücksgeföhle sah er sie so an einem Tische versammelt und unterhielt das Gespräch nach allen Seiten mit großer Beflissenheit, damit er ohne Verletzung des

---

34 Keller, "Der Landvogt," 6:151.

guten Tones alle der Reihe nach ansehen konnte, vor- und rückwärts gezählt und überspringend, wie es ihn gelüstete.

With a warm feeling of happiness, he looked at them thus assembled at one table and eagerly kept the conversation going on all sides so that he could, without undermining the good tone, look at them all in sequence, counting forward and backward and skipping as he desired.<sup>35</sup>

However, this playful back-and-forth of his gaze gives way to a different structure, that of the pentagram, a highly symbolic star that perhaps inadvertently suggests the Landvogt's membership in a society of free masons. The Landvogt himself points out their star-like seating arrangement:

Ich habe Euch, Verehrte, heute mit dem Sprichworte: Zeit bringt Rosen! begrüßt, und sicherlich war es wohl angebracht, da sie mir ein magisches Pentagramma von fünf so schönen Häuptionern vor das Auge gezeichnet hat, in welchem die zauberkräftige Linie geheimnisvoll von einem Haupte zum anderen zieht, sich kreuzt und auf jedem Punkt in sich selbst zurückkehrt, alles Unheil von mir abwendend!

I welcomed you today, adored guests, with the saying "time brings roses," and it was certainly fitting since you have drawn before my eyes a magic pentagram of five so beautiful heads, in which the magical line mysteriously runs from one head to another, crosses itself, and returns to every point in it, protecting me from all harm.<sup>36</sup>

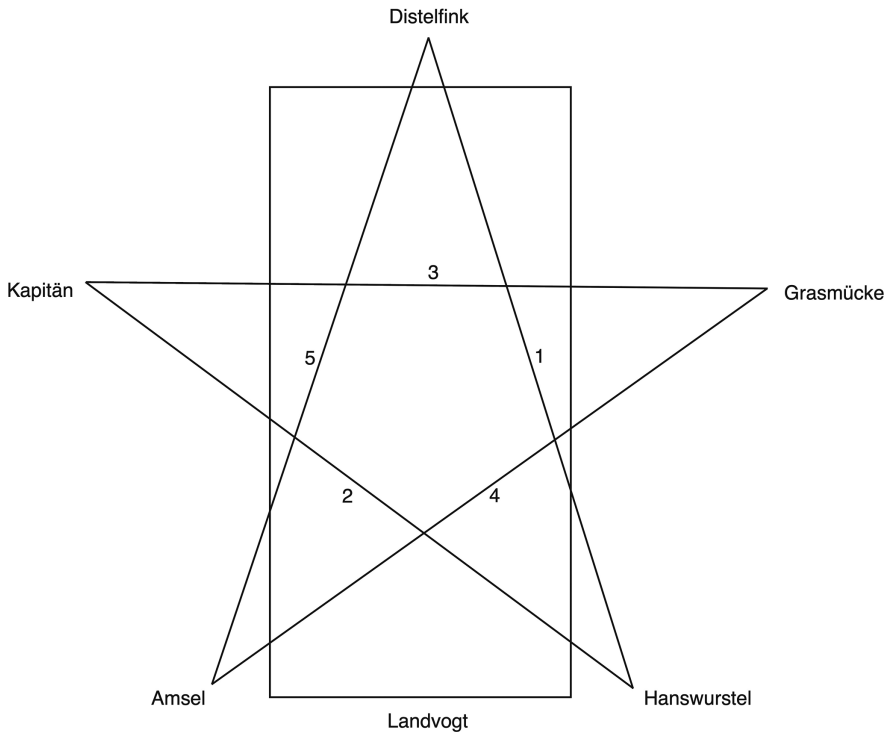
If the five lines of the pentagram are drawn in the order of the series of courtships stories (Distelfink → Hanswurstel → Kapitän → Amsel → Grasmücke → Distelfink), it becomes clear where Grasmücke and Kapitän must be seated: Grasmücke sits to the right, Kapitän to the left of the Landvogt (see Figure 8.2). Alternatively, if instead of redrawing the lines in the order given by the series, the pentagram is viewed as a closed, finished form, then none of the individual lines can be isolated or given temporal priority. As a closed shape, the pentagram both contains but also suspends the order of the series; it endows the series with a celestial form.

In order for the seated women to serve as a "fivefold mirror," as the Landvogt describes it, he must project himself from his side of the table into its center, as only from there could he see himself reflected in each of the five points. In other words, the Landvogt must imaginatively draw the star and then occupy its center. The Landvogt's placement of himself in the center to see his five reflections, along with the iconographic use of the pentagram at least since Da Vinci's popular *Virtruvian Man*, suggests that the pentagram is a form by means of

---

35 Keller, 6:236.

36 Keller, 6:239.



**Figure 8.2:** The seating arrangement at the Landvogt's banquet.

which he comes to recognize his own perfection. Just as the five women serve as narrative topoi for telling the Landvogt's life story, so too does their composition at the banquet table, the archive of his erotic exploits, create a complete image of his selfhood. It is an image whose form retains but also transcends the previous serial order.

The image the Landvogt attains of himself as reflected in the seating arrangement acquires even greater perfection if one regards the series of five not only as a pentagram, but also, recalling the Landvogt's exclamation "time brings roses," as a string of roses or rosary beads. Regarded in this way, each of the five women marks one decade of the fifty stations (as anticipated by the fifty cherry trees) and stands in for one of the five "wounds" inflicted upon him in his life as a bachelor. And as is fitting for the rosary, the five are joined by the housekeeper, Maria(nne), who stands to the side of the banquet table. In the forms of the pentagram and the rosary, the women come to represent the topoi of the Landvogt's life and become an image of the nearly Christ-like perfection he has attained through the trials of his courtships. It is also worth noting that as a "fivefold

mirror,” they also signal, as do mirrors throughout Keller’s work, a programmatic reflection on Keller’s realist poetics. While the realism of the Landvogt’s life story is ostensibly premised on its mirroring an anterior history (in this case, his courting of the five women), closer inspection reveals the story’s reality to be an artfully constructed projection onto that supposed history. The Landvogt’s life story is not given and retold but instead created out of the arrangement of these women according to the desires of the bachelor’s fantasy.

Finally, if one recalls the context of the text’s first publication in the *Deutsche Rundschau*, then the unfolding of the “Der Landvogt” from a series to the form of the pentagram suggests that this story is about more than the perfected form of the Landvogt’s self or the artifice of poetic realism. The central transition of the novella, from a potential open-ended series to a closed form is, I claim, an imaginative reenactment of the transition from the periodical, serialized issues of the journal to the bound form the book, in which the single issues achieve a spatial and temporal simultaneity. To summarize, in “Der Landvogt,” the five stories of the five courtships are first narrated as a series, but when the five women later arrive at the castle and are placed as a pentagram around the banquet table, they achieve spatial and temporal unity. If each of the five women is taken to embody one of the five mini novellas in “Der Landvogt,” which themselves stand for the five issues of the *Deutsche Rundschau* and the five novellas in the book edition of the *Züricher Novellen*, then the gathering of the five women enacts the gathering of the five novellas in one volume. The banquet, like the book format, fulfills the ambitions integral to the *Deutsche Rundschau*: to provide an overview and to archive unity within a single volume. The gathering of five women provides a comprehensive and intelligible overview of the Landvogt’s erotic exploits, indeed, an overview of his life and self. Finally, just as the book, as archive, performs the task of storage and memorialization, and thus relieves its readers of that task, so too does the presence of the five women render unnecessary the Landvogt’s own act of remembering and with it also serial narration. What was in the past has been made present, and in that present, it achieves a formal and symbolic closure, a form that it could otherwise never have possessed. While the star may lack the rounded forms of lips and the moon with which the *Decameron* reflects on the perfection of its own cyclical form, it nonetheless provides a celestial and thus timeless symbol. When gathered together and given an immutable form that supersedes the original linear, serial order, the series of the novella cycle aims for closure not despite but within the conditions of serialized publishing. To conclude the point: the narrative enacts the possibility of a form emergent from the order of a series.

## Serial reproduction

To conclude, I want to consider very briefly one further way the novella “Der Landvogt” engages an aspect of nineteenth-century periodical literature, namely, the status of originals in the age of serial reproduction. To take the so-called pre-prints of Keller’s novellas in periodicals seriously means to call into question the longstanding status of the final edition in the *Gesamtausgabe* as the authoritative text most reflective of an author’s originality.<sup>37</sup> Instead, tracking the genealogy of print editions and reading the structure of the novella as reflecting on the very structure of periodical publishing undermines that status of the book publication as the authoritative text. Printing histories thereby bring to light yet a further dimension of what Eric Downing has observed as the propensity of German realist authors for twice-told tales. While Downing focuses on stories like Keller’s *Sieben Legenden* that are borrowed from elsewhere or are at least fictionally cast as being borrowed, the multitude of editions of individual works constitutes a further case of realist repetition. Downing’s observation that Keller attributes the status of original (*Urfabel*) not to the source but to the retold or recovered tale is also applicable to publication histories.<sup>38</sup> We have come to accept that not the first publication but the “last” represents the truest form of a work of literature, the textual original.

The question as to which text in a chain of reproductions constitutes an original is absolutely central to the *Züricher Novellen* and “Der Landvogt.” For one, in the different frame narratives, “Der Landvogt” is cast as the product of four relays. First, within the novella, the Landvogt narrates the five stories to his housekeeper, Marianne. Second, a third-person narrator relays the Landvogt’s speech. He claims to have done so faithfully, having only edited out Marianne’s interruptions so as to make the narrative more intelligible. He thereby adopts a function comparable to that of an editor responsible for the coherence rather than the content. The narrator explains:

Nachdem das Eis einmal gebrochen war, machte er [der Landvogt] sie [Marianne] nach und nach, wie es sich schickte, mit den fünf Gegenständen bekannt und stellte ihr dar, wie es

---

<sup>37</sup> On the origin of relying on collections rather than periodical prints in scholarship in Wilhelm Dilthey’s vision of the literary archive, see Vance Byrd and Sean Franzel, “Introduction: Periodical Literature in the Nineteenth Century,” in *Periodical Literature in the Nineteenth Century*, ed. Byrd and Franzel, thematic issue, *Colloquia Germanica* 49.2–3 (2016): 105.

<sup>38</sup> “Thus, [Keller’s] tale derives its realist quality from its retelling both of the ‘actual event’ and of the reality that constantly reveals itself as a repetition of an *Urfabel*. [. . .] Even as an original it seems only to manifest itself in its re-presentation.” Eric Downing, *Double Exposures: Repetition and Realism in Nineteenth-Century German Fiction* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000), 93.

sich damit begeben habe, wobei der Vortragende und die Zuhörerin sich in mannigfacher Laune verwirrten und kreuzten. Wir wollen die Geschichten nacherzählen, jedoch alles ordentlich einteilen, abrunden und für unser Verständnis einrichten.

After the ice had been broken, he acquainted her, at suitable moments, with the five objects, one by one, and described to her what had taken place; in doing so, the speaker and the listener became tangled and intersected in myriad moods. We want to retell the stories but to organize everything in an orderly fashion, to round them off, and to arrange them for our understanding.<sup>39</sup>

The narrator provides, we are to believe, a well-formatted reproduction of the Landvogt's speech, an editing job that divides the five objects or five stories in a perspicuous and intelligible order, namely, that of a series.

To these two relays are added two more staged in the frame narrative of the *Züricher Novellen*, which is set in 1820s Zurich. The story begins with a portrait of the young and gloomy Herr Jacques, who is profoundly worried that he has been born into an era where it is no longer possible to be original, in which personality has become a matter of mass production. He worries "that there are nowadays no original people, no more originals, rather only people by the dozen and uniformly manufactured people by the thousand" (daß es heutzutage keine ursprünglichen Menschen, keine Originale mehr gebe, sondern nur noch Dutzendleute und gleichmäßig abgedrehte Tausendspersonen).<sup>40</sup> His fears seem realized when he attempts to write a new version of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* but gets no further than the title. Unhappy, Herr Jacques goes for a walk and happens to meet his godfather, who offers to cure him of this misguided notion of originality by providing him with the historical characters of the *Züricher Novellen*. The frame narrative thus motivates the historical material employed in the *Züricher Novellen*<sup>41</sup> and announces an explicitly pedagogical project. For that reason, it easily complies, as I have suggested, with the interests of the *Deutsche Rundschau*.

---

<sup>39</sup> Keller, "Der Landvogt," 6:155.

<sup>40</sup> Keller, *Züricher Novellen*, 6:7.

<sup>41</sup> While Keller borrowed the historical Landvogt von Greifensee as his protagonist, the novella imagines the events that are missing from the bachelor's biographies, namely, the erotic exploits overlooked in accounts of his political and military exploits. For background on Salomon Landolt (1741–1818), Keller primarily relied on the biography by David Hess (1820). While multiple male characters, including Johann Jakob Bodmer and Salomon Geßner, have historical male counterparts, such precedents are interestingly absent for the novella's female characters. On the historical content of the novella, see Ursula Amrein, "Geschichte als Spiegelkabinett: Gottfried Kellers 'Der Landvogt von Greifensee' und das Zürich im 18. Jahrhundert," in *Alte Löcher – neue Blicke: Zürich im 18. Jahrhundert*, ed. Helmut Holzhey and Simon Zurbuchen (Zurich: Chronos, 1997), 167–177.

With the goal of curing him of his desire to be an original, his godfather gives Herr Jacques the manuscript (presumably including the story of the Landvogt) and tells him to make a faithful handwritten copy.<sup>42</sup> This represents the third further fictional relay of the text. Finally, the anonymous third-person narrator of the frame narrative, whose own role in the history of the text is unclear, explains that the print edition of the novella is an exact reproduction of Herr Jacques's copy: the fourth relay. "Herr Jacques took his godfather's manuscript with him and, as a matter of fact, carefully and neatly made a copy of it, just as it appears not less faithfully in the following in print" (Herr Jacques nahm das Manuscript seines Herrn Paten mit und fertigte in der That mit großer Sorgfalt und Reinlichkeit eine Kopie davon an, wie sie im Nachstehenden nicht minder getreu im Druck erscheint).<sup>43</sup> So between the novellas of courtship and the frame, the text owes its genesis to four relays – from the Landvogt to Marianne, from Marianne to the narrator of the novella, from Herr Jacques's godfather to Herr Jacques, and from Herr Jacques to print. Each ostensibly claims to be a faithful reproduction rather than an original. This process, let me repeat, is all for the purpose of teaching Herr Jacques that "only someone who deserves to be imitated is a good original!" (ein gutes Original ist nur, wer Nachahmung verdient!). An original, the fictional genealogy then suggests, is one worth reproducing, or better put, an original only achieves its status as such retrospectively, through the machinations of reproduction. We are thereby confronted with an ideal of storytelling that is not only compatible with publishing practices that entail multiple editions of the same work but even embraces reproduction as a condition of originality.

The idea of artworks as contingent on practices of reproduction is confirmed by the beginning of "Der Landvogt." It is mid-May in the year 1783, and the Landvogt is celebrating the local holiday, Kaiser Heinrichs Tag, which is dedicated to the memory of the medieval emperor. In honor of the day, the Landvogt is reviewing a military troop of volunteers he has assembled in case the French should one day invade. He is perched on his horse, on an elevated hill, observing the troops' orderly formation. Of the troops, we are told that they are all dressed in green, that most of them, according to local custom and preferences, are called Heinrich, and that all of them regard the Landvogt as a father figure. In other words, from the very beginning, the bachelor, the Landvogt von Greifensee, is the symbolic father of a literal army of young green Henrys – *grüne Heinrichs* – standing in line, ready to defend their father's estate should it come under attack. The Landvogt is the father figure, I want to emphasize, not just of one original and authoritative *grüner*

---

<sup>42</sup> Keller, *Züricher Novellen*, 6:22.

<sup>43</sup> Keller, 6:144.



*Heinrich* but of a well-ordered multitude of them, just as Keller, who remains best known to this day for *Der grüne Heinrich*, is the author of not just one but of the four revised and reprinted editions of the novel issued in his lifetime. This, I would like to suggest, is Keller's vision of the work of art in the age of serial production: *Der grüne Heinrich* is a product of serial mass production, the offspring of its bachelor father, and now stands at attention in a series of *Heinrichs* to defend the nation. Procreation has been replaced with industrial-scale mechanical reproduction, which engenders an otherwise impossible multitude of green Heinrichs. And only as such, as a product of serial reproduction, does *Der grüne Heinrich* first become an original. "Der Landvogt" thus envisions how serial repetitions become the very condition for the achievement of the modern literary work. So while the story of "Der Landvogt" fails to provide a happy end, it does provide closure to the potentially open-ended form of the series or serial in the form of a star and a book.

## Bibliography

- Amrein, Ursula. "Geschichte als Spiegelkabinett: Gottfried Kellers 'Der Landvogt von Greifensee' und das Zürich im 18. Jahrhundert." In *Alte Löcher – neue Blicke: Zürich im 18. Jahrhundert*. Ed. Helmut Holzhey and Simon Zurbuchen. Zurich: Chronos, 1997. 167–177.
- Amrein, Ursula. "Gottfried Kellers 'artiger kleiner Dekameron': Poetik und Schreibweise des *Singgedichts* in der Nachfolge Boccaccios." In *Boccaccio und die Folgen: Fontane, Storm, Keller, Ebner-Eschenbach und die Novellenkunst des 19. Jahrhunderts*. Ed. Hugo Aust and Hubertus Fischer. Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2006. 119–134.
- Boccaccio, Giovanni. *The Decameron*. Trans. G. H McWilliam. 2nd ed. London: Penguin, 1995.
- Butzer, Günter, Manuela Günter, and Renate von Heydebrand. "Strategien zur Kanonisierung des 'Realismus' am Beispiel der *Deutschen Rundschau*." *Internationales Archiv für Sozialgeschichte der deutschen Literatur* 24 (1999): 55–81.
- Byrd, Vance, and Sean Franzel. "Introduction: Periodical Literature in the Nineteenth Century." In *Periodical Literature in the Nineteenth Century*. Ed. Vance Byrd and Sean Franzel. Thematic issue, *Colloquia Germanica* 49.2–3 (2016): 105–118.
- Dawson, Gowan. "Paleontology in Parts: Richard Owen, William John Broderip, and the Serialization of Science in Early Victorian Britain." *Isis* 103.4 (December 2012): 637–667.
- Downing, Eric. *Double Exposures: Repetition and Realism in Nineteenth-Century German Fiction*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000.
- Frank, Gustav, Madleen Podewski, and Stefan Scherer. "Kultur – Zeit – Schrift: Literatur- Und Kulturzeitschriften als 'kleine Archive.'" *Internationales Archiv für Sozialgeschichte der deutschen Literatur* 34.2 (2010): 1–45.
- Fontane, Theodor. "Züricher Novellen." In *Aufsätze, Kritiken, Erinnerungen*. Vol. 1, *Aufsätze und Aufzeichnungen*. Ed. Jürgen Kolbe. Unnumbered vol. of *Sämtliche Werke*. Ed. Walter Keitel. Munich: Carl Hanser, 1969. 496–497.
- Gailus, Andreas. "The Poetics of Containment: Goethe's Conversations of German Refugees and the Crisis of Representation." *Modern Philology* 100.3 (2003): 436–474.

- Graevenitz, Gerhart von. "Geschichte aus dem Geist des Nekrologs: Zur Begründung der Biographie im 19. Jahrhundert." *Deutsche Vierteljahresschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Geistesgeschichte* 54 (1980): 105–170.
- Graevenitz, Gerhart von. "Memoria und Realismus: Erzählende Literatur in der deutschen 'Bildungspresse' des 19. Jahrhunderts." In *Memoria: Vergessen und Erinnern*. Ed. Anselm Haverkamp and Renate Lachmann. Munich: Wilhelm Fink, 1993. 283–304.
- Graevenitz, Gerhart von. "Wissen und Sehen: Anthropologie und Perspektivismus in der Zeitschriftenpresse des 19. Jahrhunderts und in realistischen Texten; Zu Stifters *Bunten Steinen* und Kellers *Sinngedicht*." In *Wissen in Literatur im 19. Jahrhundert*. Ed. Lutz Danneberg and Friederich Vollhardt. Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 2002. 147–189.
- Gretz, Daniela. "Ein Literarischer 'Versuch' im Experimentierfeld Zeitschrift: Medieneffekte der *Deutschen Rundschau* auf Gottfried Kellers *Sinngedicht*." *Zeitschrift für deutsche Philologie* 134.2 (2015): 191–215.
- Günter, Manuela. "'Ermanne dich, oder vielmehr erweibe dich einmal!': Gender Trouble in der Literatur nach der Kunstperiode." *Internationales Archiv für Sozialgeschichte der deutschen Literatur* 30.2 (2006): 38–61.
- Kaiser, Gerhard. *Gottfried Keller: Das gedichtete Leben*. Frankfurt am Main: Insel, 1981.
- Keller, Gottfried. *Historisch-Kritische Gottfried Keller-Ausgabe*. Ed. Walter Morgenthaler et al. Basel: Stroemfeld; Zurich: Neue Zürcher Zeitung, 1996–2013.
- Luck, Rätus, ed. *Geehrter Herr – lieber Freund: Schweizer Autoren und ihre deutschen Verleger; Mit einer Umkehrung und drei Exkursionen*. Basel: Stroemfeld, 1998.
- Lukacs, Georg. *Gottfried Keller*. Berlin: Aufbau, 1946.
- Rodenberg, Julius. *Die Begründung der "Deutschen Rundschau": Ein Rückblick*. Berlin: Gebrüder Patet, 1899.
- Schrader, Hans-Jürgen. "Im Schraubstock moderner Marktmechanismen: Vom Druck Kellers und Meyers in Rodenbergs *Deutscher Rundschau*." *Jahresbericht der Gottfried Keller-Gesellschaft* 62 (1993): 3–38.
- Stockinger, Claudia. *An den Ursprüngen populärer Serialität: Das Familienblatt "Die Gartenlaube"*. Göttingen: Wallstein, 2018.