

SPEAKING NAMES AND EMPTY DOMAINS

Effi Briest and the ‘Awful Being’

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This essay traces the depiction of the ideal bridegroom in fairy tales, eighteenth- and nineteenth-century novels and memoirs, and its effect on Effi's sense of identity and marriage to Innstetten. There follows a brief analysis of Innstetten's own identity crisis. The conclusion considers the function of empty domains in the portrayal of social roles and constraints, and their effect on text and reader.

Der Aufsatz zeichnet die Darstellung des idealen Bräutigams in Märchen, Memoiren und Romanen des 18. und 19. Jahrhunderts nach und erörtert deren Auswirkung auf Effi Briests Identitätsgefühl und Ehe mit Innstetten. Darüber hinaus untersucht er Innstettens Identitätskrise und – im Zusammenhang damit – die Funktion von Leerstellen bei der Darstellung sozialer Rollenzuweisungen sowie deren Auswirkung auf Text und Leser.

Speaking names and empty domains bring contrasting qualities to the construction of fictional worlds. The speaking name enters fiction trailing the meanings and associations of its origins and history, modelling expectations about the new fictional entity that will bear it. Speaking names are predictive, indicative of character traits, and more obliquely of genre, anticipating actions or destinies, or, when used ironically or negatively, of raising and dismissing them. Empty domains, as logicians call them, are blanks whose content is unknown, because, logically, there is nothing to know. They may be seen as extreme forms of indeterminacy, beyond ambiguity, vagueness or those gaps that may be filled from the surrounding context.¹⁾ Readers of fiction, however, rush to fill the emptiness, to create meaning, consistency and coherence, because reading fiction is intrinsically and instinctively a gap-filling, world-modelling exercise.

¹⁾ On forms of indeterminacy see: SOFIA KÄLLSTRÖM, ›Das Eigentliche bleibt zurück‹. Zum Problem der semantischen Unbestimmtheit am Beispiel von Theodor Fontanes ›Effi Briest‹, (= Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis, Studia Germanistica Upsaliensia 41), Uppsala 2002.

The term 'Awful Being', which also occurs in pronominal form as 'lui' or 'that other him', is a literary construct, an element of world-modelling that designates the figure of the ideal bridegroom, and predominantly a product of female reading and story-telling. The following essay considers how both speaking names and the history of the Awful Being, beginning in myth and fairy tale and recurring in novels and tales, are present in the personalities, memories and fates of characters in ›Effi Briest‹. This is followed by a brief examination of the masculine self-image as it occurs in ›Effi Briest‹ and in Maupassant's short story ›Lui‹.

In ›The Doctor's Wife‹ (1864), Mary Elizabeth Braddon describes every young woman's fantasy bridegroom as "that 'Awful Being', the mysterious 'Lui' of a thousand romances", meaning French romances.²⁾ In the nineteenth century the accepted meaning of the word 'awful' combined elements of fear and wonder. The Oxford English Dictionary of 1888 offers: "awe-inspiring, causing dread, worthy of respect or reverential fear, solemnly impressive, sublimely majestic."³⁾ The emphatic pronoun 'Lui' has an appropriately distancing effect, echoed in Trollope's ›The Duke's Children‹ (1880) where the Duke of Omnium imagines his daughter's unknown suitor as "that other 'him' [...] the person she loves best in the world".⁴⁾ The 'lui' of a thousand romances acquired his pronominal celebrity with George Sand's novel ›Elle et Lui‹ (1859), probably based on her relationship with Alfred de Musset.⁵⁾ The novel provoked a riposte by Musset's brother entitled ›Lui et Elle‹, Louise Colet's novel ›Lui‹, also recording her romance with Musset, or possibly with Flaubert, and a one-act farce called ›Eux‹, followed by a pamphlet entitled ›Eux et Elles. Histoire d'un scandale.‹⁶⁾ In ›L'Adultera‹ and ›Frau Jenny Treibel‹ Fontane refers to the romance as reflected in Sand's novel ›Leone Leoni.‹⁷⁾ By the 1880s 'Lui', is a stock figure, the bridegroom of girlish fantasy, derived from stories and projected on to her own world. The heroine of Maupassant's ›Une Vie‹ (1883), nurtured at school by romantic tales, muses: "Comment serait-il? Elle ne le savait pas au juste et ne

²⁾ MARY ELIZABETH BRADDON, *The Doctor's Wife* (1964), Oxford 2008, here: p. 160. "Mr. Lansdell was that awful being, the mysterious 'Lui' of a thousand romances." Braddon's novel was inspired by Flaubert's *Madame Bovary*.

³⁾ *A New English Dictionary on Historical Principles*, Oxford 1888, vol.1, p. 595.

⁴⁾ ANTHONY TROLLOPE, *The Duke's Children* (1880), Oxford 2011, vol. 1, ch. 8, p. 58.

⁵⁾ GEORGE SAND, *Elle et Lui*, (1859), ed. by THIERRY BODIN, Paris 2008.

⁶⁾ *Ibid.*, pp. 292–327, Réception critique et polémique.

⁷⁾ References to Fontane's works, unless otherwise indicated, are to: THEODOR FONTANE, *Werke, Schriften und Briefe*, ed. by WALTER KEITEL und HELMUTH NÜRNBERGER, München 1962–1997, I, 1–7: *Sämtliche Romane, Erzählungen Gedichte und Nachgelassenes*; III: 1–5 *Erinnerungen, Ausgewählte Schriften und Kritiken*; IV: 1–5 *Briefe*, and given in the text in the form: title, section, volume, page. Here: *L'Adultera*, I, 2, 98, *Frau Jenny Treibel*, I, 4, 359.

se le demandait même pas. *Il serait lui, voilà tout!* Elle savait seulement qu'elle l'adorerait de toute son âme et qu'il la chérirait de toute sa force ..." ⁸⁾ She adds that all she has to do is to meet him.

In ›Effi Briest‹ Fontane combines the apparently contradictory elements of speaking name and empty domain by creating a name that simultaneously speaks and remains empty. It is, of course, Innstetten – interpreted to mean 'instead', but instead of what? Critical literature offers both extra- and intra-textual interpretations. The name, unknown in Brandenburg, has nonetheless been ascribed links to its noble families and, by problematic analogy, to names in Fouqué's ›Undine‹ – to the name of the knight, Ringstetten, which translates the 'de la Motte' of the author's name, while Undine may represent his unhappy wife, Caroline Briest.⁹⁾ Peter von Matt interprets Innstetten's name as that of "die Anstatt-Figur",¹⁰⁾ because he marries Effi instead of Luise. Renate Böschstein suggests that the name also defines Innstetten's "erstorbenes Leben": "Effi statt ihrer Mutter, Karriere statt innerlich erfüllender Tätigkeit. Hier erfasst der Name eine Person, deren Wesentliches in ihrer Virtualität besteht, die anstelle dessen steht, was sie sein könnte."¹¹⁾ These two interpretations meet in the 'Awful Being', a literary construct and predominantly a product of female reading that sheds light both on Effi's idea of what Innstetten might be 'instead of' and of his own assessment of his 'erstorbenes Leben'.

Did Effi, too, have an imaginary 'Lui'? If so, Innstetten, presented to her as 'Der Richtige', may be a substitute, whom she must accommodate to her image of 'Lui', that other him. At the beginning of the novel Innstetten is suddenly 'in place', allegedly visiting distant relatives, and, metaphorically, in the imagination and memory of Luise Briest, his erstwhile beloved, who, conveniently, has a daughter of marriageable age who resembles her. Luise describes him as "ein Mann von Charakter, von Stellung und guten Sitten" (›Effi Briest‹ I, 4, 8); he is "schlank, brünett und von militärischer Haltung" (›Effi Briest‹ I, 4, 18) apparently fulfilling the criteria for 'der Richtige', as Effi has inherited and will rehearse them to her friends. She tells Hertha, "Jeder ist der Richtige. Natürlich muß er von Adel sein und eine Stellung haben und gut aussehen"

⁸⁾ GUY DE MAUPASSANT, *Une Vie*, in: *Romans*, édition établie par LOUIS FORESTIER, Paris 1987, pp. 1–149, here: p. 13.

⁹⁾ See: <<https://web.archive.org/web/20110920112609/http://www.hum.uit.no/nordlit/3/schmidt.html>> [17.07.2019]

¹⁰⁾ PETER VON MATT, *Verkommene Söhne, mißratene Töchter. Familiendesaster in der Literatur*, München 1999, here: p. 240.

¹¹⁾ RENATE BÖSCHSTEIN, Caecilia Hexel und Adam Krippenstapel. Beobachtungen zu Fontanes Namengebung, in: *Verborgene Facetten, Studien zu Fontane*, ed. by HANNA DELF VON WOLZOGEN und HUBERTUS FISCHER. Bearbeitet von HANNA DELF VON WOLZOGEN, CHRISTINE HEHLE, und INGOLF SCHWAN, Würzburg 2006, pp. 329–360, here: p. 351.

(*Effi Briest*, I, 4, 20). While much critical emphasis has been put on this naïve, evasive pronouncement, Hertha's comment "Gott, Effi, wie du nur sprichst. Sonst sprachst du doch anders" seems to pass unnoticed (*Effi Briest*, I, 4, 20). Yet Effi's response "Ja, sonst" implies a significant gap. Effi's naïve parroting of her mother's formula for matrimonial happiness deflects attention from the empty domain implied by "Ja, sonst", which might be inhabited by Effi's image of 'Lui', the 'Awful Being'. The question therefore remains: how did Effi view love, marriage or 'der Richtige' before the realities of the nineteenth-century marriage market overtook her?

The history of the 'Awful Being', together with Effi's reading, and her responses to the men she encounters allow the reader, if not to fill the empty domain in the text occupied by Effi's imaginary bridegroom, at least to delineate a shape. The phases of Effi's life mirror this history successively from myth, fairy tale and chivalrous romance, through the Gothic novel to Romanticism and Realism, contrasting girlish fantasy with the demands and expectations of society. The figure originates in myth and fairy tale and reaches his apotheosis in the chivalrous romance, where his two-fold appeal divides the sexes: he mirrors the instincts and ambitions of men who see him as a model, a potential self, while for women his nobility, good looks and romantic ardour make him the irresistible bridegroom, the agent of untold happiness and enhanced status. Thus, in *Don Quixote* a man says that, when he hears tales of "those furious, terrible blows the knights deal one another, I get the fancy to strike a few myself", while a young woman prefers "the parts when some lady or another is lying in her knight's embraces under some orange-trees, and there's a damsel keeping watch for them, dying of envy and frightened to death".¹²⁾ As the "damsel keeping watch" implies, the morality of chivalrous romance is closer to myth than to fairy tale, but all three genres inform the chapters that precede Effi's marriage through the shared motif of the quest.

Innstetten's quest for a bride most obviously resembles that of the fairy tale hero. Fairy tales express emotion as action: the hero may recognise the object of his desire instantaneously, gazing unobserved, he may stand stock still, fall on his knees or be struck dumb.¹³⁾ He proposes without reflection. For example, in Grimm's *Brüderchen und Schwesterchen*¹⁴⁾ a king, hunting in a wood, spies

¹²⁾ MIGUEL CERVANTES, *Don Quixote*, translated by J. M. COHEN, Harmondsworth 1959, p. 278.

¹³⁾ MAX LÜTHI, *The Fairytale as Art Form and Portrait of Man*, translated by JON ERICKSON, Bloomington 1984, p. 37.

¹⁴⁾ *Brüderchen und Schwesterchen*, in: *Kinder- und Hausmärchen. Gesammelt durch die BRÜDER GRIMM, Mit einem Nachwort von KURT WASELOWSKY*, München 1996, pp. 65–71, here: p. 67.

Schwesterchen, who has taken refuge in a hut from a wicked stepmother. After watching her for some days the king, instantly identifiable by his golden crown, knocks on the door and asks her to marry him. She immediately accepts. In fairy tales "jeder ist der Richtige, nur muß er von Adel sein, gut aussehen und eine Stellung haben" (›Effi Briest‹, I, 4, 20). The quest, the instantaneous proposal, the conquering male gaze recur in Innstetten's courtship of Effi. Luise tells Effi "Du hast ihn vorgestern gesehen, und ich glaube, er hat dir auch gut gefallen" (›Effi Briest‹, I, 4, 18), but, while he has knowingly observed a prospective bride, Effi was unaware that she was looking at her future husband.¹⁵) Steeped in the warped romance of her mother's history, Effi's ready acceptance of 'der Richtige' reflects the fairy tale's aspirational view of marriage. Luise encourages Effi's dreams of social success knowing that "sie lebt in ihren Vorstellungen und Träumen". (›Effi Briest‹, I, 4, 23). She tells Effi: "Es kommt dir vor wie ein Märchen und Du möchtest eine Prinzessin sein", and Effi replies „Ja, Mama, so bin ich“ (›Effi Briest‹, I, 4, 30). Yet this aspirational marriage also recalls the motif of the hunt. When Luise reprimands Briest for his dubious comments at the wedding, "Wir haben eben eine Hochzeit und nicht eine Jagdpartie", he replies that „er sähe darin keinen so großen Unterschied“. (›Effi Briest‹, I, 4, 36).

As Briest's remark and his disapproval of the scene from ›Das Käthchen von Heilbronn‹ performed at Effi's *Polterabend* both imply, legend and fairy tale as a means of disguising the socio-political function of marriage are subverted from the beginning. Even Luise sets fantasy aside when propriety is at stake, as when she refuses Effi a fur coat, the garment in which the princess in the tale ›Allerleirauh‹ disguises herself in order to escape marrying her widowed father and so replacing her mother. Pressed to re-marry and having promised his dying wife that he would only marry someone as beautiful as herself, the king chooses his daughter, "denn sie ist das Ebenbild meiner verstorbenen Frau", or as Rumschüttel says of Effi "ganz die Mama" (›Effi Briest‹, I, 4, 199).¹⁶) By the end of Effi's engagement the fairy tale and its hero are fading. She persuades herself that Innstetten is "so lieb und gut gegen mich und so nachsichtig" because she feels too readily the reverential fear that also belongs to the 'Awful Being': "aber ... ich fürchte mich vor ihm" (›Effi Briest‹, I, 4, 35).

Fontane's critical treatment of romantic fantasies as a female legacy, and Effi's marriage may be seen as a legacy, reflects the disapproval that accom-

¹⁵) The art critic JOHN RUSKIN drew attention to the similarity between the painting ›The Babylonian Marriage Market‹, by EDWIN LONG, 1875, in which young women are lined up with their backs to potential buyers, and European marriage practices, which he regarded as mercenary and immoral. See: JOHN RUSKIN, Notes on Some of the Principal Pictures Exhibited in the Rooms of the Royal Academy: 1875, Orpington and London 1875, p. 22.

¹⁶) Allerleirauh, in: GRIMM, Kinder- und Hausmärchen (cit. fn. 14), pp. 300–305, here: p. 300.

panies the 'Awful Being' throughout his broader history. Myth, fairy tale and romance seduce by presenting a message of happiness and fulfilment through a familiar repertoire of bold figures and exciting events that jeopardise a sense of both the spiritual and the real. The 'Awful Being' becomes the enemy of piety and practicality. In her autobiography of 1565 Saint Teresa of Ávila records how she became addicted to reading romances: "and this little fault, which I had observed in my mother, began to [...] lead me astray in other respects as well".¹⁷⁾ In ›Don Quixote‹ (1606–1615), reading romances is perceived as the enemy of piety and as a sickness. The otherwise sane and ordinary hero re-invents himself as a version of the 'Awful Being', casts himself as the champion of a noble lady, – who is really a farm girl –, and embarks on chivalrous quests, returning bruised and battered. A priest and Don Quixote's cook, representing the pious and the practical, perceiving his library of books of chivalry to be the cause of his delusion, destroy all but those written in a realistic style. Restored to sanity, Don Quixote bequeaths his possessions to his niece, provided that she marries "a man who does not even know what books of chivalry are".¹⁸⁾

The danger posed by the 'Awful Being' to the female psyche nonetheless continues with the growing popularity of reading in Europe between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries, for the novel's claim to represent the 'real' world and the capacity of private reading to transport the reader "to a secret place"¹⁹⁾ are thought to pose a threat to the female mind and to woman's spiritual and domestic duties. Hence reading finds approval only when associated with piety, charity or practicality, and when supervised by mothers, clerics or tutors. Novels, however, increasingly emphasise the absence of a mother figure or her failure to fulfil her duty "to facilitate the transition from girlhood to the conventionalised world of maturity".²⁰⁾ Charlotte Lennox's satirical novel, ›The Female Quixote‹ (1752) parodies both these attitudes and the motif of sickness found in ›Don Quixote‹. Like Teresa of Ávila the heroine inherits her addiction to reading romances from her dead mother. Mediating her own life through her reading, she models herself on the imperious heroines of French romance, imagines predatory suitors and helpless victims, but fails to recognise either real danger or her genuine admirer.²¹⁾ Here, as in other eighteenth- and nineteenth-century examples,

¹⁷⁾ The Life of Saint Teresa of Ávila by Herself (1565), translated with an introduction by J. M. COHEN, Harmondsworth 1957, p. 26.

¹⁸⁾ CERVANTES, Don Quixote (cit. fn.12), p. 938.

¹⁹⁾ STEFAN BOLLMANN, WOMEN Who READ Are DANGEROUS [sic], translated by Christine Shuttleworth, foreword by KAREN JOY FOWLER, London and New York 2008, p. 13.

²⁰⁾ SUSAN PECK MACDONALD, Jane Austen and the Tradition of the Absent Mother, in: The Lost Tradition. Mothers and Daughters in Literature, edited by CATHY N. DAVIDSON and E. M. BRONER, New York 1980, pp. 58–69, here: p. 59.

²¹⁾ CHARLOTTE LENNOX, The Female Quixote (1752), edited and with notes by AMANDA GILROY and WIL VERHOEVEN, with an introduction by AMANDA GILROY, Harmondsworth 2006.

cures, like causes, are rooted partly in female experience. Lennox's heroine is cured by the example of an older woman, who has outgrown romantic delusions, and by the arguments of a clergyman, influences that have a faint echo in Frau von Padden's attempt to warn Effi and persuade her to read Luther's ›Tischreden‹.

By the nineteenth century "the craze for reading" is seen as "a vice apt to lead a girl astray from her womanly virtues and one that would certainly reduce her value on the marriage market".²² In ›Northanger Abbey‹ (1803, published 1818), Jane Austen subverts her readers' devotion to the 'Awful Being', the charming young man who is "instantly before the imagination of us all"²³, by assigning him a marginal place in Catherine Morland's drama. Catherine's addiction to reading leads her to invest Northanger Abbey with the trappings of Gothic romance: an alarming owner, mysterious disappearances, and secret rooms. She creates a hero whose proposal of marriage is based on his superior understanding of Gothic romances, which he claims to have read while his future bride was still a child sewing her first sampler. Yet domesticity and sewing as solutions to the female legacy of reading romances may be "disavowed through parody",²⁴ for, if the problem is parodied, the solution too is undermined. Moreover, despite the view that girls' education should be based on religion and practicality, sewing neither counteracts romantic tales nor guarantees virtue.²⁵ Indeed, there is often a "conjunction between sewing and communication".²⁶ Emma Bovary's "appetite for romance is whetted by a seamstress who lent novels to the *pensionnaires* in secret and sang eighteenth century love songs to them 'tout en poussant son aiguille'."²⁷ Zola's ›La Conquête de Plassans‹ (1874), which, like ›Effi Briest‹, opens with a mother and daughter sewing in a garden, ends in disaster after the mother falls in love with a priest who asks her to start a sewing-circle. And Effi, first seen sewing an altar cloth, desecrates the needlework table by hiding her letters from Crampas in it.

Concealing the letters with their shameful secrets is Effi's response to life in the 'Spukhaus' with its echoes of the Gothic novel (›Effi Briest‹, I, 4, 183,

²²) RENATE MÖHRMANN, The Reading Habits of Women in the Vormärz, in: JOHN C. FOUT (ed.), *German Women in the Nineteenth Century*, New York, London 1984, pp. 104–117, here: p. 110.

²³) JANE AUSTEN, *Northanger Abbey* (1817), in: *Complete Works*, ed. by R. W. Chatman, Oxford 1982, vol. 5, here: p. 251.

²⁴) GILROY, Introduction (cit. fn. 21) p. xix, describes Arabella's reading as a legacy from her mother, hence she "identifies with a female tradition, but one which is apparently disavowed through parody".

²⁵) See: JAMES C. ALBISETTI, *Schooling German Girls and Women. Secondary and Higher Education in the Nineteenth Century*, Princeton, NJ 1988, p. 21.

²⁶) See: MARY DONALDSON-EVANS, *Pricking the Male Ego: Pins and Needles in Flaubert, Maupassant, and Zola*, in: *Nineteenth-Century French Studies* 30 (2002), pp. 254–265, here: p. 258.

²⁷) *Ibid.*

241). Fontane translates satirical elements of Gothic romance such as the exotic mysteries of Innstetten's house into a means of control, an "Angstapparat aus Kalkül".²⁸⁾ When Effi tries to comfort herself by reading, only to come across the 'weiße Frau', she admits that "ich muß es aufgeben, mich durch Lektüre beruhigen zu wollen" (›Effi Briest‹, I, 4, 71f.). By closing the book on the 'weiße Frau' and retreating into recollections of her *Polterabend*, a last vestige of fairy tale, Effi does not, however, escape being haunted by the figure of the young Chinese man.

In contrast to Gothic horror, Crampas brings vestiges of chivalry in late Romantic mode. Ironically both Effi and Innstetten see the new arrival in Kessin "wie ein Trost- und Rettungsbringer" (›Effi Briest‹, I, 4, 104), but beside consoling he disrupts with an account of Innstetten's past that subverts Luise's sentimental reminiscence and confirms Effi's fears. Analysing Crampas's use of literature as seduction, Peter Pütz shows how the patchiness of Effi's reading makes her vulnerable. While her knowledge of Brentano's ›Die Gottesmauer‹ silences Crampas, she is not equipped to detect the omissions from Heine's poems and so fails to recognise a passionate declaration of love.²⁹⁾ It may also be argued that she hears only an echo of her own girlish fantasies. Heine's capacity for creating and puncturing romantic illusion conveys the deception and self-deception that draws Effi into Crampas's own illusions and delusions. Pütz suggests that Crampas's description of Heine as "sehr für das Romantische, was freilich gleich nach der Liebe kommt und nach Meinung einiger sogar damit zusammenfällt" (›Effi Briest‹, I, 4, 137) articulates a pose: "Seine höchst literarische Werbung verrät, daß sein Begehren weniger der Geliebten als dem gilt, was er 'das Romantische' nennt, und daß ihm die Romanze wichtiger ist als die Liebe."³⁰⁾ This priority anticipates the decadent hero, the man in love with the idea of love, as in Schnitzler's ›Anatol‹ (1889–1890). With Crampas's production of Wiechert's play ›Ein Schritt vom Wege‹ (1872), a rescue drama in which Effi plays the heroine, romantic illusion and delusion make a dramatic entrance into the world. The hollow romance is exposed, literally, when Innstetten reads Crampas's notes by a lamp inset with photographs of Effi's performance in the play. Innstetten, however, has effectively already discounted the romance of rescue and reconciliation in favour of his own, arguably deluded, idea of justice, for he has already sent for Wüllersdorf.

²⁸⁾ CLAUDIA LIEBRAND, *Das Ich und die andern. Fontanes Figuren und ihre Selbstbilder*, Freiburg 1990, p. 237: "Die Lektüre ruft die Geister herbei, die verscheucht werden sollen. [...] Entzieht sie sich auch 'dem Satanischen' in seiner sublimierten, literarischen Form, in der Gestalt des Chinesen, als Spuk holt es sie wieder ein."

²⁹⁾ PETER PÜTZ, Wenn Effi läse, was Crampas empfiehlt... Offene und verdeckte Zitate im Roman, in: Theodor Fontane, ed. by HEINZ LUDWIG ARNOLD (= Text + Kritik, Sonderband) Munich 1989, pp. 174–184.

³⁰⁾ *Ibid.*, pp. 180f.

The changing shape of the 'Awful Being' shows how, while popular fiction perpetuates fantasy figures and improbable situations, serious novelists revise romantic sentiment that has deteriorated into sentimentality or is a disguise for materialism. Behind Effi's sudden revision of whatever "ja, sonst" conceals and "Natürlich muß er von Adel sein" lies an inability to distinguish art from life shared with other heroines of Realist novels. As Flaubert prepares ›Madame Bovary‹ (1856), he complains that "je navigue pour cela dans les océans laiteux de la littérature à castels, troubadours à toques de velours à plumes blanches".³¹⁾ In the novel he demonstrates the capacity of cheap romances to deceive the reader by harmonizing romantic desire and social demands. His heroine's desire for "les mots de félicité, de passion et d'ivresse, qui lui avaient paru si beaux dans les livres" distorts her understanding of reality, as it did Don Quixote's.³²⁾ The confusion of life and art does not, however, originate simply in popular romance. Goethe's ›Die Wahlverwandschaften‹, George Sand's novels and, foremost, those of Scott, the most popular novelist in Europe, are common sources of seductive illusion. Emma Bovary is deceived by Rodolphe's explanation of elective affinities.³³⁾ When she watches the opera ›Lucia di Lammermoor‹ "Elle se retrouvait dans les lectures de sa jeunesse, en plein Walter Scott".³⁴⁾ Fontane resists comparisons between ›Effi Briest‹ and ›Die Wahlverwandschaften‹, and while he offers mocking echoes of Scott (›Frau Jenny Treibel‹, I, 4, 77), Effi's choice of reading reflects a taste for romance that includes Scott.

Like Emma Bovary – and many German women – Effi may have fallen under the spell of Scott and sentiment while still at school.³⁵⁾ The nostalgia of Scott's romances for trials overcome and daring acts of rescue by heroes who meet the criteria for 'Awful Beings', offers reminders of what she may have imagined for herself. In her feigned illness she apparently disregards

³¹⁾ GUSTAVE FLAUBERT, *Correspondences II*, 1851–1858, Édition présentée, établie et annotée par JEAN BRUNEAU, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, Paris 1980, p. 56.

³²⁾ GUSTAVE FLAUBERT, ›Madame Bovary‹, introduction, notes et relevé de variantes par EDOUARD MAYNIAL, Classiques Garnier, Paris 1961, p. 414, p. 32. THOMAS DEGERING, Exkurs: Don Quijote und Madame Bovary, in: *Das Verhältnis von Individuum und Gesellschaft in Fontanes ›Effi Briest‹ und Flauberts ›Madame Bovary‹*, Bonn 1978, pp. 103–130, here: p. 130.

³³⁾ See: JOHN T. BOOKER, Indiana and ›Madame Bovary‹: Intertextual Echoes, in: *Nineteenth-Century French Studies* 31 (2003), pp. 3f., 226–236; in relation to Emma's reading in the convent, MAYNIAL (cit. fn. 32, p. 414) refers to L. DEGOUAIS, *Flaubert à l'école de Goethe*, Geneva 1925, p. 51, where "L'auteur note l'analogie de cette éducation romanesque avec celle d'Otilie dans les ›Affinités électives‹ de Goethe".

³⁴⁾ FLAUBERT, *Madame Bovary* (cit. fn. 32), p. 206.

³⁵⁾ RICHARD HUMPHREY, *The Historical Novel as Philosophy of History. Three German Contributions: Alexis, Fontane, Döblin* (= Bithell Series of Dissertations 10), London 1986, p. 75.

Rummschüttel's recommendation of travelogues, – according to Wilkie Collins the reading material of “the ‘dull people’ who want to suppress novels as immoral”.³⁶) Effi's choice of novels, Scott's ›Ivanhoe, a Romance‹ (1820), ›Quentin Durward‹ (1824), Cooper's ›Der Spion‹ (1821), and the mid-century novels, Alexis's ›Die Hosen des Herrn von Bredow‹ (1846) and Dickens's ›David Copperfield‹ (1849–1850), may distract her, as Pütz suggests, because they are historical. But her choices may also console. Cooper's ›Der Spion‹, influenced by Scott, elevates “den Spion als Helden. Mit andern Worten, ein Niedrigstes als Höchstes” (›Der Stechlin‹, I, 5, 342), perhaps reflecting Effi's wish for redemption; ›David Copperfield‹ elevates the lowly, depicts both human follies and disappointments, and second chances. Yet, while they suggest a desire for romance, rescue and a new beginning, their historicity indicates that the past is irretrievable. Ironically ›Die Hosen des Herrn von Bredow‹, the novel censored by Roswitha because of its unseemly title, might with its struggle between an old-fashioned aristocratic hero and ‘das freisinnige Weibervolk’, have provided Effi with a humorously critical view of Brandenburg and its aristocracy, and a thought-provoking contrast to the passive heroine awaiting rescue.³⁷)

Although the phases of Effi's inner life reflect the history of the ‘Awful Being’, she says towards the end “[...] ich habe nicht viel gelesen, und Innstetten wunderte sich oft darüber, und es war ihm nicht recht” (›Effi Briest‹, I, 4, 293). She responds to imaginative fiction, to poems and stories that mirror her emotions and aspirations, but is indifferent to Innstetten's letters during their engagement, which seem to her so impersonal that she could pin them on the public notice board, – an ironic counterpart to Crampas's secret notes, which become the stuff of gossip and newspaper reports. The reader never knows whether she receives or reads ›Luthers Tischreden‹, nor whether this would have had the intended effect. After her traumatic encounter with Annie she picks up the Bible and a hymn book, but on her return to Hohen-Cremmen she reads little and prefers nature, “Lesen [...] und [...] die Beschäftigung mit den Künsten hatte sie ganz aufgegeben. [...] Sie bildete stattdessen die Kunst aus, still und entzückt auf die Natur zu blicken [...]”. (›Effi Briest‹, I, 4, 279)

Effi may finally reject reading because words, both spoken and written, have first deceived and then betrayed her. The optimistic fantasies of fairy tale, chivalry and romantic fiction that she has read and heard, including her mother's romance, Crampas's carefully censored interpretation of Heine's poem and her role in

³⁶) WILKIE COLLINS, A Petition to the Novel Writers, in: Household Words, December 6 1856, XIV, pp. 481–485. <<http://www.web40571.clarahost.co.uk/wilkie/etext/PetitionNovelWriters.htm>> [17.07.2019]

³⁷) WOLFGANG BEUTIN, Königtum und Adel in den historischen Romanen von Willibald Alexis, Berlin 1966, p. 61.

Wiechert's play, held out false promises. The words of those around her chart and shape the course of her life: Crampas's notes, Luise's letter of rejection, and the newspaper report of the duel. The compassionate requests of Rumschüttel and Roswitha soften their harshness until, finally, Briest's simple instruction, "Effi, komm", returns Effi to her home, the reader to the beginning of her story and to the words that alarmed Innstetten. Only the inscription on Effi's gravestone remains. Despite her explanation that reclaiming her family name reflects the harm done to Innstetten's name, it may also be read as a rejection, a sign that the 'Awful Being' has been an unrealized dream, a temptation and a fleeting consolation, whose promise of happiness was overshadowed by his power to inspire fear.

Does he, however, exist unrecognized or unacknowledged elsewhere in her life? Her comments on other men imply a desperate need to convince herself that Innstetten is not just "ein schöner Mann [...] mit dem ich staat machen kann und aus dem was wird" (Effi Briest, I, 4, 34) but truly 'der Richtige'. Yet other male characters are inadequate alternatives to Innstetten. Cousin Dagobert excels as chaperone, dancer or mediator, but he is "ein großer Kadett in Leutnantsuniform" (Effi Briest, I, 4, 39), "ein halber Junge", (Effi Briest, I, 4, 39). Alonzo Gieshübler and Crampas belong to the past³⁸: Gieshübler is "der einzig nette Mensch hier" (Effi Briest, I, 4, 101), but he is an anachronism, whose first name, old-world courtesy and library recall Cervantes, and identify Gieshübler as "ein Revenant romantischer Romanzen und galanter Ritter".³⁹ Crampas, "vollkommener Kavalier, ungewöhnlich gewandt" (Effi Briest, I, 4, 105), becomes an incriminating spectre, haunting both Effi who, visiting Rügen, avoids the place that shares his name, and ultimately Innstetten.

While complementarity and contrast afford the reader a glimpse of the 'Awful Being', Effi's ideal remains mysterious and is never embodied in a single person. The empty domain of "Ja sonst" initiates the self-censorship that marks her precipitous transition from child to bride, to wife and mother and comes to characterise her relationship with Innstetten. Her inherent tendency to be, in Luise's words, "mitteilsam und verschlossen zugleich, beinahe versteckt" (Effi Briest, I, 4, 38) becomes, according to Ingrid Mittenzwei, conscious self-censorship. She hides her emotions as she hides her letters, exercising caution as she learns where "das Individuum zu empfinden beginnt, wo es sich nicht mehr, nachsprechend, ans Genormte halten kann".⁴⁰ The discovery of

³⁸ EDITH KRAUSE, *Desire and Denial: Fontane's ›Effi Briest‹*, *Germanic Review* 74 (1999), pp. 117–129, here: pp. 124f.

³⁹ CHRISTINE RENZ, *Geglückte Rede. Zu Erzählstrukturen in Theodor Fontanes Effi Briest, ›Frau Jenny Treibel‹ und ›Der Stechlin‹*, München 1999, p. 12.

⁴⁰ INGRID MITTENZWEI, *Die Sprache als Thema. Untersuchungen zu Fontanes Gesellschaftsromanen*, hrsg. von HEINZ OTTO BURGER und KLAUS VON SEE, Bad Homburg, Berlin, Zürich 1970, p. 137.

the letters, despite the ensuing misery and degradation, begins a process of release that culminates in hysterical recriminations after her reunion with her daughter, until finally, if problematically, this appears to resolve into acceptance and forgiveness.

While Effi's dreams and disappointments dominate the first half of the novel, Innstetten's inner life is largely closed to the reader.⁴¹ 'Lui', however, is not only a phantom bridegroom haunting young women, but also a phantom identity haunting men, with a literary provenance of his own. In 1883 Maupassant, whose works are permeated by a sense of alternative identities and lives unlived, published a story entitled simply ›Lui‹, in which a phantom 'lui' haunts a man's home.⁴² It is a monologue in which the man, obsessed by his own anxiety, tells a friend that he intends to marry in order not to be alone. The mere presence of his bride, whom he has seen only four or five times, will create the domestic normality that can dispel the ghostly figure he has seen sitting by his fireside. Although, so he tells his friend, the figure disappeared when he touched it, the image still haunts him. He is not afraid of a real intruder – he would shoot him; he is a man of *sangfroid*, rational, who knows he is hallucinating and can explain it as a malfunction of the optic nerve, but despite the logical explanation he cannot conquer his fear: "Il me hante, c'est fou, mais c'est ainsi. Qui, Il. Je sais bien qu'il n'existe pas, que c'est rien! Il n'existe que dans mon appréhension, que dans ma crainte, que dans mon angoisse!" (›Lui‹, p. 875) He asks "Pourquoi cette persistance?" But he knows why: "Elle me gêne cependant parce que j'y pense sans cesse" (›Lui‹, p. 875). The figure is 'il', not an object like 'lui' but a subject, a projection of the self, the only person from whom one cannot escape.⁴³ Maupassant's hero is haunted by his unlived life; 'lui' is a *revenant* goading him to change, either to recover the past or to forget the present. Marriage is his intended response.

This story sheds light on Innstetten's "Angstapparat aus Kalkül" as an instrument developed from his own fears, but designed to intimidate and control others. As Maria Trippelli says – and Maupassant's story underlines – it is the ghost who walks through one's own room that inspires dread (›Effi Briest‹, I, 4, 94), and Innstetten, who both chides Effi for her fears and plays

⁴¹) JEONG, HANG-KYUN, *Dialogische Offenheit. Eine Studie zum Erzählwerk Theodor Fontanes, Würzburg 2001*, pp. 115–146; p. 129 describes Innstetten's inner life as largely closed to the reader in the earlier part of the novel.

⁴²) GUY DE MAUPASSANT, *Lui*, in: *Contes et nouvelles, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade*. Préface d'ARMAND LANOUX, Introduction et notes de LOUIS FORESTIER (= *Bibliothèque de la Pléiade*), Paris 1974, vol. 1, pp. 869–875. Further references are given by page number in the text. In a letter to Erich Heilborn, Fontane describes Maupassant as "ganz Genie, ganz Nummer eins" among short story writers. IV, 1, 609–610, 15.11.1896.

⁴³) PIERRE COGNY, *Maupassant, l'homme sans dieu*, Brussels 1968, pp. 136–138, on "autoscopie" in ›Lui‹.

upon them, is himself haunted from the beginning: when Effi's friends call out "Effi, komm", Innstetten's reaction appears uncharacteristically irrational: "Er glaubte nicht an Zeichen und Ähnliches, im Gegenteil wies alles Abergläubische zurück. Aber er konnte trotzdem von den zwei Worten nicht los [...]" (Effi Briest, I, 4, 21), echoing Maupassant's haunted man who thinks of the figure constantly. For Innstetten, the Chinese man is a reminder that he has had two brides stolen from him, first Luise, then Effi. Like Maupassant's narrator he could and does shoot the man who intrudes on his marriage. The ghost stories which, as Crampas reveals, the young Innstetten told his comrades, may have been meant to scare them, to express pride in a family ghost, or to externalize his own sense of being haunted. This sense is revived on his return to Kessin by a glimpse of the "Spukhaus" and by the expression on the face of the dying Crampas.

While Innstetten, like Maupassant's character, is haunted by the man he might have been, his story goes beyond Maupassant's sketch. He fails to suppress either his anxieties or his deepest instincts by marrying, ultimately regrets his ambition and believes he should have used his "Schulmeistertum, was ja wohl mein Eigentlichstes ist, als ein höherer Sittendirektor" (Effi Briest, I, 4, 287). His pedagogic attitude to Effi and emphasis on his status in Kessin may be an unconscious product of this belief. His haunting originates not in an external threat but in himself, hence, as Renate Böschstein argues, Innstetten's name is that of the man who is instead of himself. Effi's role may have been to banish his ghostly *alter ego*, which, ironically, the need to dominate, to educate and eventually to punish her, only recalls, so that, following the duel, he no longer feels "intakt" (Effi Briest, I, 4, 287).

Both the 'Awful Being' of imaginative fiction and the letters and reports that record and determine the final part of Effi's life and Innstetten's history belong to the double discourse that regulates society while sweetening the compelling reality of the socially acceptable marriage. Briest and Luise conceal their awareness of this discourse from their daughter, only allowing themselves to consider the potential hazards of the marriage after the wedding, and again after Effi's death, but always as a personal not as a socio-political issue. Only Briest's "Effi komm" re-asserts the precedence of personal over social values. The mismatch between Effi and Innstetten offers a complex examination of these values, in which the 'Awful Being', the imaginary 'lui' demonstrates the different concepts of personal identity attributed to men and to women. Effi acknowledges but cannot conform to an out-dated view of woman's identity as conferred or at least confirmed by her husband, her designated role derived from his. Her imaginary 'lui' combines social success and prominence, which Innstetten achieves, with nebulous 'romantic' qualities, of imagination, atten-

tive affection and sensitivity, as modelled in the fairy prince, the chivalrous knight, the dashing courtier and the gallant heroes of bygone ages and literary romances. While Innstetten fulfils the social role of the 'Awful Being', he lacks the emotional attributes. Neither he nor any other man she knows supplies both aspects of the imaginary bridegroom. Reinforced by mythology, Effi's favourite subject, by fairy stories, romances and novels, the 'Awful Being', 'lui' only returns the heroine to herself, increasing her sense of being confined to a haunted house and to a closed society.

Innstetten's 'Lui', like that of Maupassant's hero and the Duke of Omnium's unknown rival, "that other him", is the alternative to the artificial self he has become. 'Lui' represents his un-lived life, the life in accordance with his deepest, suppressed psychological needs. His belated self-examination after the duel reveals a man who has hitherto denied his own true character, subordinating it to the demands of society, for his other 'Lui' would not have fulfilled either his own, Effi's or her mother's social aspirations.⁴⁴) Ironically his discovery that Effi has been unfaithful and his decision, made in conscious opposition to his personal affections, to challenge Crampas because of the 'Gesellschaftsetwas', occur when he and Effi have begun to achieve their ambitions. Before the discovery the novel offers only glimpses of Innstetten's deepest anxieties, the disturbing "Effi komm" of the second chapter, his belief in ghosts and the stories he tells, all of which are rationalized, denied or disowned. After his discovery he becomes haunted by his own inauthenticity, by the self he has suppressed and the distorted identity he has assumed in response to social expectations. In his reflections, as in Effi's scattered verdicts on other men, lie unexplored but possible identities and narratives. Ultimately both Effi and Innstetten prove to be 'Anstattfiguren', not what they might have been or were meant to be to each other or to the world. There are no substitutes or second chances, but, while Effi retreats to her family home and name, the reader does not know how Innstetten's story will end, only that there appears to be no point of origin to which he can return.

Effi's "Ja, sonst" may be read as a first example of the self-censorship that both practise. In the light of her engagement to the alarming stranger who is the subject of her mother's romantic tale, Effi can no longer say whatever she used to say about her imagined future. The second-hand fantasy of Luise's romance almost, but not quite, silences her. It generates the self-censorship that combines with poor communication, not confined to individuals but as a generalized social practice, in such a way that moments of authentic self-expression become

⁴⁴) ROLAND KÖHNE, 'Effi Briest' und die Duellfrage. Zu einem Brief Fontanes an Maximilian Harden, in: Fontane Blätter 64 (1997), pp. 110–115; here: p. 111.

intense, dramatic, even drastic.⁴⁵⁾ Conversation is no longer “verbindliches Ausdrucksmedium und [...] Mittel zur Aufklärung des Menschen über sich selbst und sein Verhältnis zum Mitmenschen”.⁴⁶⁾ Gaps, silences and denials disguise complex motives and irreconcilable differences between decorum, convention and propriety on the one hand, and hopes and imaginings on the other. Fictional models, with their fantasies, hauntings and illusions confirm that, in this novel, being ‘instead’ signals inauthenticity rather than simple substitution. Effi’s ‘Awful Being’ and Innstetten’s ‘Lui’ remain phantoms of what imagination supplies but life denies. The empty domain of Effi’s “Ja, sonst” becomes an awful warning, perhaps a chance for a change of consciousness, but not an unequivocal protest against the gap between inauthentic, imposed identities, social roles or projected models, and individual sensibilities.

The text, like Effi, is “mitteilsam und verschlossen zugleich”. Her “Ja, sonst” both signals the part played by imagination in her perception of marriage and inaugurates a series of textual gaps in which her social role is paramount: her engagement, wedding, divorce and death are merely reported or must be inferred from the surrounding text. These gaps have both aesthetic and social functions: they testify to Fontane’s fastidious avoidance of clichés, but also erase the eponymous heroine from the major events of her life and exemplify a society that refuses to acknowledge its own deficiencies or doubts.⁴⁷⁾ The spiral form of the novel, the return to the garden in Hohen-Cremmen and to Effi’s old name offer the reader a formal, but illusory sense of completion, for, in the ‘Awful Being’, ‘Lui’, the fantasy bridegroom and the unlived life, language and literature conjure up possibilities that the world of Effi and Innstetten denies or destroys. They belong, rather, to other possible worlds, to the “subjunctive worlds” that “the fictive, counter-factual, anti-determinist means of language” can create.⁴⁸⁾ They prompt the reader’s urge to fill gaps, to create coherence and so to complete, a process that occurs:

so casually, so naturally, that we hardly notice what we are doing. We select from our fantasy a world that is close, in some internal, mental sense, to the real world. We compare what is real with what we perceive as *almost* real ... Think how immeasurably poorer our mental lives would be if we didn’t have this creative capacity for slipping out of the midst of reality into soft ‘what ifs’.⁴⁹⁾

⁴⁵⁾ JEONG, Dialogische Offenheit (cit. fn. 41), ›Effi Briest‹, I, 4, 111.

⁴⁶⁾ MITTENZWEI, Die Sprache als Thema (cit. fn. 40), p. 18.

⁴⁷⁾ Cf. Fontane’s letter to Theophil Zolling, 25. Februar 1882, “Lücken und Unbestimmtheiten sind immer noch besser als Plattheiten und Alltäglichkeiten.” IV, 3, 183.

⁴⁸⁾ GEORGE STEINER, After Babel. Aspects of Language and Translation, London, Oxford 1975, p. 227; quoted in DOUGLAS R. HOFSTADTER, Gödel, Escher, Bach: an Eternal Golden Braid, Harmondsworth 1980, p. 643.

⁴⁹⁾ HOFSTADTER, *ibid.*, p. 643.

Although Effi's return to Hohen-Cremmen and death offer formal closure to her story, the final conversation between her parents invites the reader to consider other, undefined possibilities. While social criteria inform Luise's explanation of events, Briest's final "Ach, Luise, laß... das ist ein zu weites Feld" (Effi Briest I, 4, 296) acknowledges the complexity of existing conditions and influences, and invokes, in an appropriately spatial metaphor, the wider domain of 'what-ifs' and perhaps of the alternatives implicit in Effi's "Ja, sonst".