

Abstract

The Angel in the Garden:

Recovering Elizabeth von Arnim's *The Pastor's Wife*

by

Ashley Oles

November 2012

Thesis Director: Helena Feder

Major Department: English (Literature)

This thesis aims to examine Elizabeth von Arnim's *The Pastor's Wife* for two major purposes: 1) to work toward recovering von Arnim's work, which I believe to be important and worthy of critical attention, and 2) to examine the ways in which von Arnim criticizes gender conventions in western culture. In order to do this, my thesis is broken down into three chapters. Because this novel, like most of her novels, is heavily based on events in her life, I spend the first chapter examining relevant events in her life and her first book *Elizabeth and her German Garden*. In the second, I survey the critical work that has been done on von Arnim. In the final chapter, I closely examine how von Arnim uses dualistic relationships between men and women and humans and nature, and the structure of a modified Bildungsroman in order to create a story that is wholly critical of patriarchal culture.



The Angel in the Garden:  
Recovering Elizabeth von Arnim's *The Pastor's Wife*

A Thesis

Presented to

the Faculty of the Department of English

East Carolina University

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Masters of Art in English

by

Ashley Oles

November 2012

© Ashley Oles, 2012

The Angel in the Garden:  
Recovering Elizabeth von Arnim's *The Pastor's Wife*

by  
Ashley Oles

APPROVED BY:

DIRECTOR OF THESIS: \_\_\_\_\_  
Helena Feder, PhD

COMMITTEE MEMBER: \_\_\_\_\_  
Richard Taylor, PhD

COMMITTEE MEMBER: \_\_\_\_\_  
Ronald Hoag, PhD

CHAIR OF THE DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH: \_\_\_\_\_  
Jeffrey Johnson, PhD

DEAN OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL: \_\_\_\_\_  
Paul J. Gemperline, PhD

*For my sister, Elizabeth.*

## Acknowledgements

This project was truly a collaborative effort, and without the help and encouragement of several different people, I would not be writing this section at all. First and foremost, thanks to my committee: Helena, for offering constant encouragement, helpful advice, and inspirational mentorship; Rick, for reading carefully, thoughtfully, and occasionally reminding me of London; and Ron, for his watchful eye on my grammar and ever-thoughtful feedback. Thanks to Austin Hart, for convincing me that I still have interesting things to say, and to Leah Knox for cheering on my progress and bringing home wine when necessary. A special thanks to my family, for always supporting me in my academic endeavors. And finally, thanks to my partner Chip Weatherly for being my rock and offering constant love and support.

## Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION.....	1
THE LIFE AND TIMES OF THE COUNTESS VON ARNIM.....	7
The Patriarch and the Sofa.....	8
The Life of a Little Junker Wife.....	10
Nassenheide and the German Garden.....	14
CRITICAL CONTEXTS.....	16
von Arnim and Aestheticism.....	17
von Arnim and Middlebrow.....	19
Criticism and <i>The Pastor's Wife</i> .....	21
READING <i>THE PASTOR'S WIFE</i> .....	23
Ingeborg is Born.....	24
The Bishop and the Pastor.....	26
Those Damning Dichotomies.....	31
The Novel of Awakening.....	41
The Failure of Ingeborg Bullivant.....	45
WORKS CITED.....	55

## The Angel in the Garden:

Recovering Elizabeth von Arnim's *The Pastor's Wife*.

### Introduction

Without the work of early feminist scholars and the recovery movement, many texts written by women that are now considered canonical might still be lost today. Though much of the main focus of feminism has shifted away from recovery, there is no doubt that recovery is still an important and necessary aspect of feminist criticism; that is, there is still much to be done in the way of uncovering and studying lost women writers. One such writer—known for some time only as the author of *Elizabeth and her German Garden*—though well respected and popular during her lengthy career, was forgotten soon after her death, slipping through the cracks of literary history.

In 1898, Mary Annette von Arnim anonymously published her first book, the autobiographical *Elizabeth and her German Garden (EGG)*, at the age of 31. Though a married and “happy” woman of the time was not thought to have a need to do anything besides raise her children—least of all writing—von Arnim released her first and most well known book only after the births of her first three children—referred to affectionately in the book as the April, May, and June babies. *Elizabeth and her German Garden* was well received by her British audience, and Mary, who eventually adopted the name Elizabeth, due in part to the pseudonym she used for *EGG* and most of her other books, went on to become an extremely successful novelist. She continued to write for several years, her literary career extending past the *fin de siècle* years and well into the twentieth century.

The years in which von Arnim lived and wrote fostered a host of talented and well-respected writers, many of whom she knew personally. The novelists E.M. Forester and Hugh

Walpole were both tutors to her children and her lifelong friends. Science fiction writer H.G. Wells, too, was a friend; he and von Arnim engaged in a less-than-secretive affair from 1910 to 1913. She was also close to the short story writer Katherine Mansfield, her younger cousin; the two women wrote to each other often and both women read and respected each other's work. Throughout her life and writing career, von Arnim earned the respect of several of her contemporaries. Though she had apparently made a bad first impression on Virginia Woolf at a party (Usborne 230), Woolf wrote of von Arnim in a letter to Ethel Smyth in 1930, saying that von Arnim made her "shout with laughter" and that "some of her sayings are absolutely top-hole: as good as Dickens" (qtd. in Romhild). Even Rebecca West, von Arnim's rival for H.G. Wells's affection, was forced to recognize her talent and wit, saying in a review of her novel *Vera* that "she has a clear and brilliant head that enables her to write a peculiar kind of witty, well constructed diction, a sort of sparkling Euclid which nobody can touch" (qtd. in Usborne 231). Her wit is also mentioned in Hugh Walpole's affectionate obituary for von Arnim in the *Daily Sketch*, where he insists that she was leaving behind "some of the wittiest novels in the English language" (qtd. in Usborne 311).

Given her talent, it is a wonder that von Arnim has not received the same amount of attention as her contemporaries. That she was held in high esteem by many of her peers should be enough to propel an interest in her writing. However, very little critical work has been done on any of von Arnim's twenty-two books<sup>1</sup>. This is troubling, not only because she was respected by her peers, but also because she was quite popular with the British reading public. Upon the release of *EGG*, newspapers were abuzz with shining reviews, including eager speculation about

---

<sup>1</sup> A preliminary search in Joyner Library's online catalogues for "Elizabeth von Arnim" yields 6,241 items total: 5,732 books (her own books come up repeatedly), 509 newspaper articles, 242 journal articles (some of which are not journal articles, but book reviews and play reviews), 71 book reviews, and 47 thesis/dissertation documents. A search of WorldCat using the search terms "Elizabeth von Arnim" yields only 18 articles, several of which are in German. Other databases yield similar results.

the identity of the mysterious *Elizabeth*. This speculation extended even as far as Los Angeles; “The Mystery Isn’t Solved,” an article in the *Los Angeles Times* in December of 1901, discusses an American fan’s quest to discover von Arnim’s identity. Moreover, von Arnim was not a passing fad. Though *EGG* was and still is her most well known book, her literary career continued far beyond the release of her first book.

In 1914, von Arnim published *The Pastor’s Wife*, a novel that draws directly from some of the experiences she depicts in *EGG*. Though the novel isn’t as well known as *EGG*, *The Pastor’s Wife* does more to expand on the themes she establishes—hardships in marriage, isolation, living in a foreign country—in her first book. In *The Pastor’s Wife* von Arnim allows her characters to speak frankly and, for the most part, ironically about life as a *little wife* in rural Germany. Here, her irony and wit deliver a much sharper commentary on married life, child rearing, and her isolation in Germany than in *EGG*. Moreover, evidence of an early manuscript suggests that von Arnim had initially planned to write a novel like *The Pastor’s Wife* before *EGG*. This manuscript—referred to in her diary as F.W.—is believed to be an early draft of *The Pastor’s Wife*, which she began writing in 1896, ten years before she published *EGG* (Usborne 55). Eventually, the manuscript was set aside and von Arnim began writing *EGG* shortly thereafter. It was not until 1914, well after her husband Henning’s death, that she published *The Pastor’s Wife*, and it seems likely, given Henning’s reaction to his depiction as The Man of Wrath in *EGG*, that she set aside this manuscript in order to avoid her husband’s anger and censorship.

For many reasons, it is hard to deny the power of what is now one of von Arnim’s most ignored novels. von Arnim’s biographer Karen Usborne writes that upon its release in 1914, *The Pastor’s Wife* was acclaimed as the most “serious and finished piece of work” she had produced

up until that point (183). Even a slightly mixed review published in *The Spectator*, which bemoans the novel's German setting and inclusion of the "nauseating physical details" of childbirth, ends on an overwhelmingly positive note:

At any rate, the novel, even if we must pronounce it in some ways faulty in design, is brilliantly faultless in literary detail and execution...One wonders where she acquired this clarity, this power of subtle suggestion which yet never makes for obscurity, this intellectual detachment which is never a non-conductor. ("A review")

It is significant that despite strong anti-German feeling within the UK at this time, *The Pastor's Wife* earned such reviews. Moreover, this review indicates how risky *The Pastor's Wife* was as a depiction of married life (and one written by a woman for a predominantly female readership). The review talks at length about von Arnim's frankness about childbirth and marriage; the reviewer's admission toward the end of the review that, "Whether it is suitable for the reading of the 'young person' may be very greatly doubted" ("A review"), in turn suggests that von Arnim was doing something noteworthy for the time. In fact, von Arnim ventures into this forbidden territory in *The Pastor's Wife* four years before Marie Stopes released her influential book *Married Love*<sup>2</sup>.

*The Pastor's Wife* gives readers a hard look at marriage and gender through the eyes of a naïve girl, and it does so in the context of a depiction of nature—specifically a fictional version of Nassenheide, the isolated Pomeranian estate situated in the middle of untamed, rambling gardens and fertile marshes—that was also the setting of her wildly popular *Elizabeth and her German Garden*. *The Pastor's Wife* is structured by parallels between women and nature, and

---

<sup>2</sup> First published in 1918, Dr. Marie Stopes's *Married Love* was among one of the first to frankly discuss sex in marriage, female sexual desire, and children, including information on abstinence and the disadvantages to having a child within the first year of marriage. Though the subject matter was considered obscene by some, the book was widely popular.

von Arnim presents her reader with a world of made up dichotomies—which is, at the same time, the real, historical world of the novel’s production—separating men and women, aligning women with “nature” and men with culture. For this reason, *The Pastor’s Wife* calls out for feminist and ecocritical analysis. However, despite the book’s popularity, von Arnim’s work fell into relative obscurity and has not yet received significant critical attention.

Thanks to the literary recovery movement propelled by early feminist critics and the work of Virago Press, much of von Arnim’s work has been recovered for print<sup>3</sup>. Despite this, there is little critical work available, and much of the work that does exist may be placed into one of two categories: British aestheticism or middlebrow culture. Moreover, none of this critical work focuses on *The Pastor’s Wife* directly. The critical attention von Arnim has received over the past decade is, if nothing else, a good start. It is, however, still lacking in many ways.

Perhaps the biggest problem is that critics and scholars have focused almost entirely on *Elizabeth and her German Garden*. To be sure, *EGG* is deserving of attention—both Talia Schaffer and Jennifer Shepherd touch on interesting themes within the piece in terms of aestheticism and the middlebrow respectively, showing that it is more than merely a witty little garden book.

However, few focus on anything else. Furthermore, those who talk about more than just *EGG* tend to focus on books such as *EGG*’s direct sequel, *The Solitary Summer*, or her travel book *Elizabeth in Rugen*. What is perhaps most noteworthy about these books is that none of them are novels. That is, scholars seem to have completely overlooked von Arnim’s fiction.

Due to the established critical interest in *Elizabeth and her German Garden*, *The Pastor’s Wife* is, in a way, the most fitting choice for a first look into von Arnim’s fiction. Not only is the setting of *The Pastor’s Wife* based heavily on the estate described in *EGG*, but von Arnim takes

---

<sup>3</sup> Seventeen of von Arnim’s twenty-two novels are currently available on Amazon, several of which have been republished as recently as 2012.

the most interesting elements of her first book—woman’s companionship with nature, the “internalized aesthetic discourse,” the instances of middlebrow feminism—and presents them in the medium of fiction, allowing her more room for artistic license. *The Pastor’s Wife* draws on *EGG*’s setting of the isolated garden in rural Germany and uses this and other natural elements—such as the crop field, the surrounding “wilderness,”—to show the dualistic relationship between man and nature and the companionship between the suffering of both women and nature. This is further situated within the framework of a Bildungsroman, which, rather than follow the journey of a young man from naïve boy to enlightened man, follows the story of a woman from naïve, docile girl to a desperate and lonely married woman who remains hopelessly trapped. The nature of Ingeborg’s suffering, her journey, and its criticism of Western culture compel scholarly attention.

Given all this, my goal for this project is multi-faceted. First, the project is an act of recovery, and it is my hope that, ultimately, more attention will be paid to von Arnim—particularly von Arnim’s fiction. Second, I would like to highlight von Arnim’s feminism—an ecologically conscious feminism—as it manifests in what I consider to be one of her best novels. In order to do both of these things, I have broken my project down into three important sections. In the first two chapters, I will explain the important contexts—autobiographical and critical, respectively—surrounding von Arnim’s life and work. This will provide both a framework within which I can closely examine *The Pastor’s Wife*, as well as background information essential to an adequate recovery of von Arnim’s work. From there, I will transition into my close textual analysis of the book, wherein I will examine the role of nature and environment, the complicated relationships between gender and nature, how the novel acts as a type of Bildungsroman, and how all of these come together to quietly criticize western culture and a

society that harms both women and nature alike. Ultimately, I will argue that *The Pastor's Wife* is a feminist narrative that speaks out against a patriarchal society by showing how it turns women into shells, lost heroines fading from their own stories, who have nowhere to turn but inward.

### **The Life and Times of the Countess von Arnim**

The lengthy period within which von Arnim was writing (she published *EGG* in 1898 and her last book, *Mr. Skeffington*, in 1939) was one of chaos and constant change regardless of where she lived. She was alive through the entirety of the First World War, and lived to witness the beginning of the second. Though certainly she was not the only person who lived to see both wars, she found herself in the interesting and conflicting position of having lived on both sides of the conflict: her childhood and adult homes in England, her apartment with Henning in Berlin, and her beloved garden estate in Pomerania<sup>4</sup>. As one might guess, her dual citizenship in Germany and England had a noticeable effect on her writing. For that reason, it is important to take a look at von Arnim's life in detail—most importantly, the years she spent with Henning, as these years provided Elizabeth with the basis for both *Elizabeth and her German Garden* and *The Pastor's Wife*. Therefore, the next several sections will examine her family and her life leading up to her marriage with Henning, and after Henning's death.

---

<sup>4</sup> The history of Pomerania is long and overly complicated in terms of its allegiance, and in the interest of brevity I won't delve *too* deeply into it. Pomerania, located on the southern side of the Baltic Sea, was part of the Kingdom of Prussia from the Napoleonic Wars through World War I. As a result of the Franco-Prussian War (1870-1871) the Kingdom of Prussia, and with it Pomerania, became unified under the German Empire. Pomerania remained under German control until the end of WWI and the Treaty of Versailles (1919), when Pomerania was divided between Germany and Poland, though by this time, the von Arnim's had long since left Nassenheide for England. Today, Nassenheide is now the Polish village of Rzedzing, and as of 1986 when Kate Usborne published *Elizabeth*, the estate house is still standing.

## **The Patriarch and the Sofa**

On August 31, 1866, Mary Annette Beauchamp (referred to by her family as May) was born in New Zealand to Henry and Elizabeth Beauchamp, becoming the youngest of the Beauchamp's six children. May entered her family in the middle of crisis:

May's father, a hitherto wealthy shipping merchant, lost most of his money. He had speculated in shares which crashed in the panic of that year, and the news coincided with the information that two of his cargo ships had sunk in the Indian Ocean, and reached him when his daughter was only a few hours old. The joy of her safe arrival was somewhat blighted by these events. (Usborne 5)

May's birth also coincided with a solar eclipse in Rome and earthquakes along the Mediterranean, and Usborne further muses, "If nature and unnatural events on the day that a child is born are in any way portentous, then May's life was certainly to reflect the omens around her birth" (5). Regardless of the significance of these omens, her birth highlights the beginning of a pattern of disharmony and struggle in her family life, particularly between her mother and father. While the events of von Arnim's early childhood are more or less irrelevant to this project, the relationship between her parents, Henry and Elizabeth (known as Louey to family and friends), had an immense impact on her view on relationships and marriage and later, on her writing, which is made clear through her depiction of her parents in *The Pastor's Wife*.

The Beauchamp's financial issues were not the least of their problems, nor were they the ones that appear to have directly affected their marriage. Given Usborne's account of Henry and Louey's engagement and marriage—Henry's quick and overbearing persistence for Louey's hand (6), Louey's temper and apparent annoyance at having to allow "every little thing" (7) through their engagement—it is a wonder that the two were married at all. However, one of the

biggest blows to their relationship was Louey's decision to end her child-bearing days after the birth of May. Since information on birth control would not be widely available for several decades, this meant the end of Louey and Henry's sexual relationship, and Usborne notes that this led to an estrangement between the two (8). Moreover, this event further appears to be a turning point in Louey and Henry's marriage, marking the beginning of Henry's prolonged affair with his former love interest Annie Powell.

Three years after Louey's decision to stop having children, the Beauchamps left their home in Sydney, Australia, and moved to their new family home in London. Once the family settled down into their new home, Henry became increasingly cavalier about his affair, openly setting Annie (who had followed them from Australia) up in a house in the Beauchamp's neighborhood (Usborne 14). He also became a dominating patriarchal figure in the household, and von Arnim later remarks in her biography how relaxed the rest of the house became during his absences (*All the Dogs* 10). Though it was not by any means uncommon for families in nineteenth-century England to have a strong patriarchal structure, her father's influence in the household is noteworthy given the emphasis von Arnim places on this structure in the lives of the Bullivants and the domineering figure of Ingeborg's father, the Bishop.

While Henry became more involved in the church and his activities outside of the house, Louey began an on-again, off-again relationship with the sofa, and was often "afflicted with a series of mysterious infirmities" (Usborne 14), that rendered her unable to leave the house. Her mother's constant appearance on the sofa had a profound effect on young May, who, according to Usborne, approached her one morning, asking her to "turn over a new leaf and get better" (15). Though Louey often went through periods of recovery, she continued to return time and time again to the sofa. This left a lasting impression on young May, who went on to recreate this

relationship years later in *The Pastor's Wife* with the character of Marion Bullivant: "Ingeborg's mother had found the sofa as other people find salvation. She was not ill. She had simply discovered in it a refuge and a very present help in all the troubles and turmoil of life, and in especial a shield and buckler when it came to dealing with the Bishop" (*Pastor's Wife* 49).

Given that *The Pastor's Wife* is heavily based on von Arnim's life with Henning, it comes as no surprise that Henry and Louey provided the models for Ingeborg's parents in the novel. There are, of course, some notable differences between the Beauchamps and their counterparts in *The Pastor's Wife*. For example, Henry Beauchamp was not a bishop like Ingeborg's father, though he did become increasingly religious throughout the course of his life, and one could speculate that Henry's relationship with Annie is, in some ways, parallel to the Bishop's relationship with Christianity. Regardless, the impact of their relationship on von Arnim is made clear through its depiction in Mr. and Mrs. Bullivant. The Bullivants are one of only two major marital relationships we see outside of Ingeborg's own in the novel (the other being the Glambecks), and the emphasis on the dysfunction of their relationship so early in the story both foreshadows the failure of Ingeborg's marriage to Herr Dremmel (and von Arnim's marriage to Henning) and highlights von Arnim's own jaded opinion of her parent's marriage.

### **The Life of a Little Junker Wife**

Beyond her parents' noticeable issues, May's childhood was relatively uneventful until meeting Count Henning von Arnim while on holiday with her parents in Rome—a vacation that Henry and Louey planned in order to help their youngest daughter find an eligible suitor (Usborne 32). When she left for Rome 1889, she was twenty-four years old, still single, and rapidly approaching spinster status. While May's situation affected her disposition—"She

invented excuses for missing most of the functions to which she was invited and ‘began to affect a simplicity of dress and hair arrangement that was severe’” (Usborne 32)—it appeared to affect Louey even more. As per the rules of proper and polite conduct in English society, Louey was concerned with keeping up appearances, and May’s unwed status and distasteful views on marriage and independence troubled Louey deeply: “It was bad enough for Louey to have a spinster daughter in the house but the spinster was turning into a feminist, and feminists, as everybody knew, were dangerous and unstable creatures inclined to write novels” (Usborne 32). It was therefore a relief to Louey when Henning showed such enthusiastic interest in May.

Henning was fifteen years May’s senior, and was an awkward sort of man who became enamored with May almost immediately after meeting her. His interest in May troubled Henry who, despite understanding the reason for their holiday in the first place, was averse to the idea of May marrying anyone, much less a man who, in Henry’s opinion, was eager to make a fool out of himself over a girl of no real significance (Usborne 35). His noble status, too, troubled Henry, who felt that May could not seriously be eligible for courtship by a count (Usborne 35). However, Henning was determined to make May his “little wife,” and proposed to her at the top of the Duomo in Florence thusly: “‘All girls like love. It is very agreeable. You will like it too. You shall marry me and see.’ And having arrived at the top [of the cathedral] he immediately and voluminously embraced me” (*All the Dogs* 20). This scene too is recreated in *The Pastor’s Wife*, though May was immediately more open to the idea of marrying Henning than Ingeborg was to the idea of marrying Herr Dremmel. Nonetheless, Henning’s curious opinions on love and marriage—“That is the difference between a man and a woman. He loves before marriage, and she does not love til after” (*Pastor’s Wife* 27)—are preserved and further emphasized in Herr Dremmel.

After a lengthy engagement, Henning and May were married in 1891 and the Countess von Arnim was forced to adjust to her new life as a member of the *Junker*<sup>5</sup> class, in an altogether foreign country. Though von Arnim had begun to realize shortly before her wedding that she would have to adjust to a new life away from England, she was completely unprepared for her new duties, and seemed more or less unwilling to assimilate into her expected role as *Hausfrau*. Usborne notes that, rather than attend to her responsibilities in the house in the mornings, she would escape the house on her bicycle, “pedaling away from her responsibilities” (44). Her cultural difference—that is, her overt Englishness—did not warrant her any sympathy. von Arnim, in turn, didn’t feel particularly connected to the German people, and would later describe them in her epistolary novel *Christine* as “the oddest mixture of what really is brutal hardness, the kind of hardness that springs from real fundamental differences from ours and their attitude toward life, and a squashiness that leaves one with one’s mouth open” (qtd. in Usborne 43).

Her most difficult interaction with German culture came when she became pregnant with her first child and suffered through a painful (and painfully German) childbirth—an experience that could only be described as utterly horrifying. von Arnim pleaded with Henning to allow her to return to England to have her first child, and this was seen as an impossible request: “It was considered unpatriotic for a young Gräfin to want to have a child anywhere but on German soil” (Usborne 44). von Arnim was therefore stuck in Germany for the birth of, not just her first, but her second child. Even worse was the German opinion that pain was a necessary part of childbirth, which meant no anesthetic during the entire two days she was in labor. The German attitude toward childbirth, pain, and motherly duty is perhaps best summed up in Herr

---

<sup>5</sup> *Junker* is a German term that simply means a member of Prussian landed nobility.

Dremmel's response to Ingeborg's requesting chloroform for their first child's birth in *The Pastor's Wife*:

“No healthy, normally-built woman needs it,” said Herr Dremmel, greatly irritated by this persistence. “No doctor would give it. Besides, there will not be a doctor, and the midwife may not administer it. Why I do not recognize my little wife, my little intelligent wife who must know that nothing is being required of her but that which is done by other women every day” (162).

Because von Arnim was only doing *that which is done by other women every day*, she received no sympathy for her condition from Henning, the doctor, or any of her female acquaintances, who could not understand why she felt anything but “blessed to have the honor of carrying a German child” (Usborne 44). After the birth of their third child, von Arnim was quite fed up with pregnancy and childbirth. Much like Louey had done several years earlier, she put her foot down and refused to continue having children, despite not having given Henning a male heir. And much like Henry when faced with the same situation, Henning responded by taking a mistress (Usborne 54). In keeping with the English tradition of keeping up appearances, von Arnim persevered, continuing on in her duties as Countess, unencumbered by the burden of pregnancy. However, the effect of this event on their marriage and family life is apparent in von Arnim's dramatic recreation of the event in *The Pastor's Wife* between Ingeborg and her husband. Though Dremmel does not, as Henning does, take a mistress, he refuses to continue looking at Ingeborg as his wife, and coldly remarks that “Evidently you do not and never have loved me” (205). Though von Arnim eventually did have more children—von Arnim apparently used to remark that “if Henning so much as blew his nose while in the same room as herself” (Usborne 54) she'd get pregnant—their marriage continued on in turbulence until Henning's death.

## **Nassenheide and the German Garden**

In the spring of 1896, von Arnim came to Nassenheide for the first time; she was perfectly enchanted with the isolated Pomeranian estate and began making plans to turn Nassenheide into their summer home. After traveling back and forth between Berlin and Nassenheide for several weeks, organizing and planning the renovations, von Arnim decided to remain there for a short time by herself, reveling in the freedom, the solitude, and “everywhere the breathless silence” (*German Garden* 3). Eventually, and after some struggle with Henning who always seemed to have important business to attend to away from his family, the von Arnims moved into Nassenheide permanently. It was here that she began writing her first book *Elizabeth and her German Garden*, which suffered through several false starts—the first manuscript, called *The Tea Rose*, was about “possessiveness and rage and ends with the wholesale destruction of a treasured rose garden” (Usborne 67)—and the wrath of Henning who, in an egregious act of censorship, forced her to both remove the parts he found unsavory (Usborne 67) and publish the book anonymously, “for the Prussian *Junker* class thought it disgraceful to write books for money” (Usborne 74). Eventually Henning became used to von Arnim’s writing—particularly since they used the money she made from *EGG* to pay off Henning’s debts (Usborne 75)—but her quarrels with *The Man of Wrath* were ceaseless.

The von Arnims lived at Nassenheide from 1897 until 1909, when von Arnim left with her children for England while Henning stayed behind to negotiate the sale of the estate, which they could no longer afford due to Henning’s crushing legal debt. Though she did love Nassenheide and its perfect garden, she never fell in love with Germany in quite the same way.

Moreover, she felt war was brewing and the thought of being stuck in Germany for its duration was a dreadful one:

Henning's main idea was for the family to move to Schlagenthin which housed the family mausoleum and was itself as dismal as one. Elizabeth was entirely opposed to such an arrangement. This would mean that in the event of a war she would be caught in Germany, as well as no doubt being expected to pay for the upkeep and repairs of such an unwieldy estate. No, she would come to England, find a cottage and keep a cow, rather than that. (Usborne 133)

She therefore packed up the children and left for England after eighteen long years of living in Germany. Her dislike of Germany and the German people made it into many of her books, but is perhaps most evident in *The Pastor's Wife*, not just with Herr Dremmel, but with every German character in the whole novel.

### ***Elizabeth and her German Garden***

Though she wrote several books during her years at Nassenheide<sup>6</sup>, *EGG* was the most popular, and is the most relevant to this project. In many ways, *The Pastor's Wife* is a fictional revisioning of *Elizabeth and her German Garden*. In *EGG*, she does more than just write about her love of her garden. If it were no more than a witty little garden book, it would not have compelled the scholarly attention that it did despite von Arnim's otherwise complete disappearance from the literary world. Like *The Pastor's Wife*, *EGG* focuses on a woman who is stuck in an unfortunate marriage and, like Ingeborg, Elizabeth's methods of dealing with her

---

<sup>6</sup> von Arnim wrote a total of eight books during her twelve years at Nassenheide: *Elizabeth and her German Garden*, *The Solitary Summer*, *The April Baby's Book of Tunes*, *The Benefactress*, *The Adventure of Elizabeth in Rügen*, *Princess Priscilla's Fortnight*, *Fäulein Schmidt and Mr Anstruther*, and *The Caravaners*.

husband, German culture, and unwanted interruptions to her solitude, is to immerse herself and her children into her garden. However, *EGG* does not possess the same heaviness that *The Pastor's Wife* contains. Rather, it is a light, witty book and Elizabeth is an intelligent and capable heroine. Throughout the book, she is sarcastically critical of the conventions gender—"A woman's tongue is a deadly weapon and the most difficult thing in the world to keep in order, and things slip off it with a facility nothing short of appalling at the very moment when it ought to be most quiet" (43-44)—and is deftly able to brush off her wrathful husband—"What a comfort it is to have such wells of wisdom constantly at my disposal! Anybody can have a husband, but few is it given to have a sage, and the combination of both is as rare as it is useful" (95). On the whole, the book seems to be a von Arnim's first step at criticizing gender roles, and she does so lightly, making sure to use wit and sarcasm rather than heavy handedness and a suffering heroine. In *EGG* she is able to test out the themes she expands on and thoroughly criticizes in *The Pastor's Wife*. In this way, it makes sense that *EGG* would receive some scholarly attention despite the fact that almost all of her other books were ignored.

### **Critical Contexts**

von Arnim's work started to fall out of favor shortly after her death in 1941. By the 1950s, she was rarely read or mentioned and hardly a soul noticed. In 1956, teacher and scholar of literature George Lyttelton mentioned her in a letter to his literary pen pal and former student Sir Rupert Hart-Davis: "Does anyone read [von Arnim's] books now, and if not why not? How odd is fame" (qtd. in Usborne 314). Beyond this, and her daughter Liebet's biography published in 1958, not much else was available on von Arnim until the mid 1980s.

Thanks to Virago Press, much of von Arnim's work has been recovered for print. However, this in itself has not prompted much critical interest in von Arnim's work. That von Arnim's name is now hardly recognized may be a result of how quickly her work disappeared after her death. Usborne posits that the reason for this swift disappearance has more to do with the change in literary taste during WWII, saying that "Her light, pre-war banter...reminded people of the carefree past which it was useless to contemplate in the time of inflation, cold war and hardship suffered by most of her public in the decades that followed her death" (Usborne 314). The time period following her death gave rise to the popularity of writers like her better-known cousin Katherine Mansfield with her "doubtful and introspective ethos" (Usborne 314), which was more reflective of those years following the war. Thus, von Arnim's "thin flute," as Usborne puts it, faded out and was ultimately forgotten until Virago press began reprinting her books in the late 1980s.

Since then, only a handful of scholars have written on Elizabeth von Arnim, and the few who have typically focus on *EGG* or, occasionally, *The Solitary Summer*. Further, the criticism available on von Arnim tends to fall in either one of two categories: British aestheticism or middlebrow culture. For this reason, the following sections give brief overviews of the critical work available on von Arnim in both of these contexts.

### **von Arnim and Aestheticism**

Though she was not a typical aesthete, von Arnim's writing was influenced by aestheticism and has therefore been included in some discussions about women's aestheticism. The interest in women's contribution to aestheticism and *fin de siècle* literature has begun to bring writers like von Arnim back into circulation, with books like Talia Schaffer's *The*

*Forgotten Female Aesthetes*, which looks at women ignored by the normally male dominated conversations on aestheticism. In her short section on von Arnim and the Findlater sisters, Schaffer sets the three authors apart from other women aesthetes of the period, positing that they “require separate consideration” (64) due to the unique ways in which they use aestheticism in their books. She goes on to say that von Arnim (and the Findlaters), “internalized aesthetic discourse” rather than expressing it through lengthy, descriptive passages (Schaffer 64). This, according to Schaffer is noteworthy insofar as it marked a new kind of aestheticism:

This may seem a minor distinction, but in fact it encapsulates the shift from seeing aestheticism as a fashion in gowns, flowers, and homes to seeing it as a fruitful source for new literary techniques... These women produced a different trajectory of aesthetic influence, one rooted in stylistic play rather than descriptions of aesthetic objects. (65)

This growth in aestheticism produced a type of writing that lasted through the *fin de siècle* years; as Schaffer points out—von Arnim continued to produce novels until 1939, a mere two years before her death and well past the end of the aesthetic movement.

Schaffer categorizes von Arnim’s writing as an extension of the aesthetic, thus putting her in the interesting and unique position of a writer who used aesthetic elements in realist works. Admittedly, von Arnim does not exactly fit in with her aesthetic contemporaries given the subtle ways aestheticism is used in her work. Though there are aesthetic qualities to *EGG*, von Arnim’s garden book does not often lend itself to long, descriptive passages of the flowers in her garden or the interior of her house. Rather, *EGG* is a book that uses aesthetic objects and flowery language in order to, as Schaffer puts it, “convey and compensate for the tragedy of a mistaken marriage” (68). In this way, the aesthetic qualities of *EGG* are active rather than mere passive

descriptions of nature and Elizabeth's garden, and it is this use of aestheticism that sets von Arnim apart from other aesthetic writers of the period.

### **von Arnim and Middlebrow**

More recently, von Arnim has been included in discussions of *fin de siècle* literature—particularly middlebrow and New Woman literary trends. The topic of middlebrow writing is interesting in and of itself given its often derogatory connotation. According to Erica Brown, the term first appears in a 1925 issue of *Punch*, in their column “Charivaria.” This first mention was somewhat less than flattering, remarking that middlebrow “consists of people who are hoping that some day they will get used to the stuff they ought to like” (qtd. in Brown). However, this definition of middlebrow is significantly less damning than Virginia Woolf's definition in her essay on the subject. In “Middlebrow,” she defines highbrow—“the man or woman of thoroughbred intelligence who rides his mind at a gallop across country in pursuit of an idea” (177)—and lowbrow—“a man or woman of thoroughbred vitality who rides his body in pursuit of a living at a gallop across life” (178)—to set up her definition of middlebrow as *the go-between*:

[T]hey are the busybodies who run from one to the other with their tittle tattle and make all the mischief—the middlebrows, I repeat. But what, you may ask, is a middlebrow? And that, to tell the truth, is no easy question to answer. They are neither one thing nor the other. They are not highbrows, whose brows are high; nor lowbrows, whose brows are low. (Woolf 179)

Woolf has a hard time actually defining middlebrow, but no trouble at all denouncing it, aligning middlebrow writers with those of “middlebred intelligence” (180), and ultimately threatening to

stab any who might dare call her middlebrow (186). Though Woolf's definition is vague at best, it does indicate middlebrow's connection to the rising middle class and its awkward position in British society.

von Arnim's place in middlebrow writing, much like her place in aestheticism, is an interesting one. According to Juliane Römhild, von Arnim's style in *EGG* embodies Woolf's description of middlebrow as being *betwixt and between*:

Reminiscent of Woolf's famous castigation of the middlebrow reader, Elizabeth seems to "amble and saunter" now on this side, now on the other side of the hedges in her garden. She constantly criss-crosses the imaginary boundaries between the high- and the middlebrow "in pursuit of no single object, neither art itself nor life itself," mixing both in a rather pleasurable and, what is more, for her author financially profitable manner.

(Römhild; Woolf 180)

Moreover, middlebrow themes appear with Elizabeth's reading habits in *EGG*. According to Römhild, "Ingesting the classics in translation and scientific and philosophical works in popularised form was one of the criteria commonly assumed to separate the ambitious middlebrow reader from the classically educated elite," and Elizabeth's impeccably "highbrow" literary tastes—most notably Thoreau—put her in the interesting position of being "the paradoxical figure of a middlebrow reader of highbrow literature."

Perhaps equally as complicated is von Arnim's brand of feminism, an idea which Jennifer Shepherd discusses at length in her article "Marketing Middlebrow Feminism." Shepherd presents von Arnim as part of the "New Woman debate," positing that von Arnim is an example of "that relatively unexplored figure in the New Woman debate, the middlebrow feminist" (107). Shepherd points out that, unlike most New Woman work, von Arnim's *EGG* is devoid of the

“polemic feminist soliloquies, or melodramatic marriage plots” (107) that comprise New Woman fiction. On the other hand, Römhild remarks that the New Woman figure does appear in her books: “Her early books are populated by stereotypical New Woman characters, who are regularly ridiculed for their lack of subtlety and humour, even though Elizabeth agrees with the feminist cause in principle.” Shepherd identifies this as von Arnim “attesting to the cultural pervasiveness of the New Woman debate in the late 1890s” (107) and maintains that Minora’s character in *EGG* is ultimately a negative critique (109). However, von Arnim does not side with the anti-feminists and, as Shepherd points out, brings the New Woman debate into *EGG* in the form of a debate between the characters in the book: “Thus Minora stands as a New Woman feminist, the Man of Wrath as an advocate of male chauvinism, and Irais and Elizabeth, as good-humored witnesses, appear to fall somewhere between these two poles” (114). According to Shepherd, von Arnim’s mockery of both New Woman feminism and anti-feminism indicates an implicit argument for “a moderate feminism that was neither duped by patriarchy nor taken in by feminist fanaticism and faddishness” (113)—a feminism for the middlebrow consumer.

### **Criticism and *The Pastor’s Wife***

Despite the many gaps in criticism on von Arnim’s work, the little that exists does provide a good starting point for looking at *The Pastor’s Wife*. First, the *internalized aesthetic discourse* Schaffer identifies in *EGG* also present in *The Pastor’s Wife*. In *EGG*, the garden is, as Schaffer posits, a representation of Elizabeth’s life: “Von Arnim’s novel is literally written in the language of the flowers—a charming, feminine language, but it masks a political point. Taylor uses flowers to represent pregnancy, and von Arnim uses them to describe the state of mind of a woman whose marriage is profoundly unhappy” (68). While the relationship between Ingeborg

and her garden in *The Pastor's Wife* is, as I will argue, slightly more complicated than Schaffer's reading of the garden in *EGG*, the natural spaces in *The Pastor's Wife*, too, are signify more than their mere aesthetic value. Just as in *EGG*, von Arnim refrains from lengthy descriptions of her garden or the surrounding wilderness in *The Pastor's Wife*. Rather than simply celebrating nature, von Arnim uses it actively, and given that *The Pastor's Wife*, in some ways, extends from the experiences she documents in *EGG*, it stands to reason that her use and depictions of nature would be similar between the two books.

Though my close reading of the novel does not focus on middlebrow literature or culture, these subjects provide an interesting basis for looking at the text. Romhild looks at von Arnim's place in middlebrow literary culture through her reading habits in *EGG* and *The Solitary Summer*, and a similar exercise can be applied to *The Pastor's Wife*. Herr Dremmel, for instance, is depicted as a simplistic man with a one-track mindset and his propensity to spend his days pouring over his fertilizers, and in this way he fits Virginia Woolf's image of lowbrow. However, Dremmel's tireless work with fertilizers appears to require finesse, scientific knowledge, and intelligence; he approaches his fertilizers with the "thoroughbred intelligence" typically marked by highbrow. In fact, one could look at Dremmel as somewhat of a mad scientist, spending day after day in his lab, calculating how best to keep his fields fertile and productive. Ingram, too, is a complicated character. As a young artist who is shown to be knowledgeable and involved in high society, Ingram fits Woolf's depiction of highbrow. However, his advice to Ingeborg upon meeting her for the first time—"Read, read, read—everything you can lay your hands on" (*Pastor's Wife* 191)—is encouraging the sort of aimlessness associated with middlebrow. Ingeborg is somewhat less complicated; she seems to "amble and saunter" (Woolf 180) throughout her entire life. She ambles through her garden, acclimating to isolated life in

Germany, saunters, sometimes stumbling, through her reading of highbrow literature—"It had been a fine confused reading, in which Ruskin jostled Mr Roger Fry and Shelley lingered, as it were, in the lap of Mr Masefield" (*Pastor's Wife* 236). Her confusion about her place in society is most apparent in the second half of the book, when she finds herself caught between two men, her husband and her would-be-lover, and thus caught between two completely different cultures. Whereas Elizabeth in *Egg* and *The Solitary Summer* is witty, with informed opinions on the highbrow literature she reads for pleasure, Ingeborg finds herself merely doing what she must according to what she's been told, and is therefore *betwixt and between* the wishes of two different men, and two different cultures. This unique depiction of middlebrow is missing from articles like Shepherd's and Romhild's, and therefore *The Pastor's Wife* could provide further insight into von Arnim as a middlebrow literary figure. Further, Ingeborg's confused place in society as a whole and how she defines herself in relation to the men she associates with does have an impact on my reading of the text.

### **Reading *The Pastor's Wife***

*The Pastor's Wife* is the story of a woman who, not unlike other women of the time, wishes to escape. Ingeborg Bullivant lives in a home under the patriarchal dictatorship of her father and, upon being allowed to go to London on her own for the first time, runs off toward her perceived freedom—in this case, a secret, weeklong trip to Lucerne, Switzerland. On the trip, she finds herself accidentally betrothed to a strange man and resolves to fulfill her duty to marry him while simultaneously hoping that he can be her permanent escape. The book follows Ingeborg through the trials of performing the roles of dutiful daughter, wife, and mother, and watches as she struggles to find happiness and value in a world that cannot see her as more than her ability

to play her part. In her attempts to compromise between her *duty* and her own needs, she finds herself trapped in a perpetual cycle that reduces her to her “true nature” and prevents her from developing into an autonomous being. She is aligned with and aligns herself with nature, searching for meaning in her garden and the outlying “wilds.” While she finds comfort in these natural spaces, which, like her, are maintained and controlled, she cannot find her escape. She is therefore forced to ride out the cyclical events of her life, struggling and compromising her inner feelings and agency until her eventual and complete erasure from the text.

### **Ingeborg is Born**

At the opening of the novel, we are introduced to a radiant and lively Ingeborg Bullivant in the middle of London on an afternoon in April. It is no coincidence that von Arnim begins the book in spring. Ingeborg finds herself, for the first time in her life, alive, and the uniqueness of this position is emphasized from the very first sentence: “On that April afternoon all the wallflowers of the world seemed to her released body to have been piled up at the top of Regent Street so that she should walk in fragrance” (*Pastor’s Wife* 3). She is not simply another person walking the streets of London, but a *released body*, experiencing life for the first time. Her actions are impulsive and childish, flitting from one fanciful idea to the next of how she might spend her day in London; even her reason for leaving home—to see a dentist for a toothache—has an air of immaturity to it. Moreover, the narrator’s reflection on the events leading up to Ingeborg’s release suggest that she is not a whole person but a role to be filled:

The Bishop wanted things in vain. Three times he had to see himself off alone at the station and not be met when he came back. Buttons, because they were not tightened on in time, burst from his gaiters, and did it in remote places like railway carriages. Letters

were unanswered, important ones. Engagements, vital ones, through lack of reminders went unkept. At last it became plain, when she seemed not even to wish to answer when spoken to or move when called, that this apathy and creeping away to hide could not further be endured. Against all tradition, against every home principle, they let a young unmarried daughter loose. (4)

Moreover, she is described as The Bishop's (her father) "Right Hand," which further solidifies the idea that Ingeborg is little more than an appendage of her father, forced to carry out the perpetuation of his patriarchal beliefs. Therefore, we are introduced to a girl who is for the first time in her life experiencing the opportunity to live her own life; she is born on the first pages of the text, amidst the compelling fragrances of spring.

Free for the first time and highly suggestible, Ingeborg finds herself entranced by an advertisement for a seven-day trip to Lucerne. As she stares, she forgets her place and duties at home and impulsively decides to take the trip, satisfying her "violent longing for freedom and adventure" (8). However, von Arnim makes it clear that this is not a show of agency on Ingeborg's part. As Ingeborg deliberates, the narrator turns to a description of Ingeborg's grandmother, a Scandinavian woman who "lived in the middle of big beautiful things" (6). She is described as being "a creature of toughness" (6) who allows herself to be married; she radiates with agency and autonomy, and it is her spirit that takes over Ingeborg: "Ingeborg, who had never been out of England and had spent years in the soft and soppy west, seeing the picture of the great lake and the great sky in the window in Regent Street, felt a quick grip on her heart. It was the fingers of her grandmother" (7). At this, all of her duties are pushed away from her mind and her grandmother takes over: "Now...this tough but impulsive lady rose within her in all her

might. Her granddaughter was in exactly the right state for being influenced. She was standing there staring, longing, seething with Scandinavia” (7).

In this way, von Arnim establishes the limits of Ingeborg’s agency, preparing readers for a pattern of behavior that prevails throughout the book. Ingeborg, though optimistic and eager to learn, does not begin the book as a whole person. Throughout her childhood with the Bishop, she is trained (rather than raised) to be obedient (13), pliable (17, 21), acquiescent (17), and submissive (22). Furthermore, because she has been trained to define herself through her ability to perform her role as the right hand of her father, the mere act of being free for the first time cannot magically grant her agency. Therefore, we are faced with a protagonist who, from the very beginning of the novel, struggles with this desire for freedom, caught between pure impulse and her rigid training.

### **The Bishop and The Pastor**

Ingeborg is not the only character whose thoughts we are able to see. Rather than a personal, first person narrative about the inner struggles of a girl who becomes a woman, wife, and mother, *The Pastor’s Wife* is written in third person and through the voice of a faceless, omniscient, sometimes-sarcastic narrator. While this method of narration distances the reader from the struggles of the protagonist, it also allows readers to see clearly the motivations of characters other than Ingeborg—notably her father, the Bishop, and Herr Dremmel, her husband.

The Bishop remains a mysterious totalitarian figure until Chapter 7 when readers are finally able to view him in a scene that isn’t a flashback or a vague reference to the effects of his training on Ingeborg. He enters at the end of the chapter but, before he does, readers are able to see the effects of his dominance on his family, particularly on Ingeborg’s mother. As one might

expect, the wife of a man who rigorously trains his daughters in sunny submissiveness and pliancy is not a strong presence in her own household. In fact, Mrs. Bullivant seems to be rather more like an extension of the sofa than a real human being: “Ingeborg’s mother had found the sofa as other people find salvation. She was not ill. She had simply discovered in it a refuge and a very present help in all the troubles and turmoil of life, and in especial a shield and buckler when it came to dealing with the Bishop” (49). Like Ingeborg, Mrs. Bullivant craves escape, and has therefore fled to the sofa in order to avoid dealing with her husband. In this way, the Bishop has reduced his wife to a helpless creature, cowering on the couch, stripped of all autonomy and agency. She is, effectively, no more than a fixture in the background of her own life, and this does not bode well for Ingeborg’s own future as a wife and mother.

When the Bishop himself enters, he is greeted lovingly by his daughter, who mistakenly believes that he is already aware and approves of her betrothal to Herr Dremmel. He is confused at her greeting—“Oh father...how *good* you’ve been!” (53)—and readers are allowed into his head for his reaction: “The Bishop was nettled. Was he then at any time not good” (53)? Clearly, the Bishop is arrogant, but his thoughts throughout the chapters in Part One do more to establish him as a man who is highly logical, unwavering, and unemotional than as a flat character whose only personality trait is tyrannical arrogance. A clear example of this comes in the next chapter during Ingeborg’s confession: “Positively she had succeeded, he said to himself, bitterly enraged that he should be forced to be bitterly enraged, in making him feel less like a bishop should feel than he had done since he was a boy” (61). To the Bishop—a man who is in charge of interpreting (and in some ways, manipulating) and delivering *reason* through the word of God—it is imperative that he be in charge of his emotions at all times. Moreover, he associates his emotional reactions as descending into *naturalness*: “He shuddered, and hastily drew his

thoughts back from his abyss. To what dread depths of naturalness was she not by her conduct dragging him” (63). Here, naturalness is associated with Ingeborg’s emotional behavior—i.e. crying, being frightened of him—and is therefore coded as distinctly feminine, while rationality is coded as masculine. This combined with his position as a Bishop establishes Ingeborg’s father as being, not simply a tyrant but a man in charge of rationality and in control of “natural” behavior.

Of course, the Bishop is not the only domineering male figure in Ingeborg’s life. Though radically different from the Bishop in both his beliefs and culture, Herr Dremmel has a similar effect on Ingeborg. Our first glance of Dremmel is on the train to Lucerne in Chapter Two, and immediately we are allowed into his head:

The square German gentleman opposite her, knowing nobody in London and therefore being, but for a different and honourable reason, in her position of not having any one to see him off, filled up the time by staring... With the utmost singleness of mind he wished to see the rest of her, when he would be able to determine whether she were pretty or not... for a moment, her polite intelligent eyes returned his stare. He decided that she had missed being pretty, and with a faint regret wondered what God was about. (10-11)

Already, his voice is given priority, and his gaze feels dominating to the readers. His final thought here on Ingeborg’s appearance is simply “Fattened up—yes, possibly” (11), which feels particularly controlling. The phrase “fatten up” conjures up the image of a farmer overlooking the livestock he’s raising to feed his family and, in this way, Dremmel appears to be watching Ingeborg hungrily, prepared to shape her to his needs.

After this, we are returned to Ingeborg’s inner thoughts for their first conversation, wherein Dremmel’s personality is further established. They begin talking when Ingeborg closes

the window on the train, and she remarks that windows are made to be opened (13). He promptly disagrees with her, and a conversation ensues that feels more like forced education than polite discourse:

‘The aperture was there first,’ said the German gentleman.

‘Of course,’ said Ingeborg, seeing he waited for her to admit it.

‘And in the fulness [sic] of the ages came man, and mechanically shut it.’

‘Yes,’ said Ingeborg. ‘But—’

‘Consequently, the function of windows is to shut apertures.’

‘Yes. But—’

‘And not to open that which, without them, was open already.’

‘Yes. But—’

‘It would be illogical,’ said the German gentleman patiently, ‘to contend that their function is to open that which, without them, was open already.’ (14)

This conversation, though obviously ridiculous, establishes Dremmel as a character who sees himself as logical—a voice of reason—and can therefore assert his dominance over Ingeborg, much like her father asserts dominance over her. Moreover, Dremmel is established as a man who regularly serves as master over nature. He tells Ingeborg that, though he is a pastor, his passion in life is agriculture and that he teaches the members of his congregation how to farm their land through example. In response to her asking what he fills his life up with, he responds simply with, “manure” (16), explaining that he “preach[es] manure” (17) to his parish.

Amusingly, readers come to understand that Dremmel is literally full of shit. However, his position as a farmer, as someone who regularly controls and manipulates nature, is noteworthy insofar as it further establishes the dominance of his character. He is able to both control his

interactions with people through his perceived ability to use logic as well as control his interactions with the natural world through his work in agriculture. In this way, Dremmel is a looming figure before we are even told his name.

While von Arnim takes pains to establish the differences between these two men, it is clear that the ways in which they hold power over Ingeborg are nearly identical. First, both men are preachers, and are expected to interpret and distribute the words of the Bible. Given the importance of religion during this time period, their positions give both men the authority of being the voice of reason. Moreover, both men have their own ideas on what it is to be a “natural” or “true” woman. Herr Dremmel has rigid ideas about how a woman should act both before marriage—“‘The woman,’ continued Herr Dremmel, ‘feels affection and esteem before marriage, and the man feels affection and esteem after’” (27)—and after marriage—“‘Foolish little one, is not throughout all nature every mother solely preoccupied by interest in her young?’” (90). For the Bishop, the essential nature of women is situated in a larger conversation about the naturalness of both men and women. To him, nature is associated with (feminine) emotions, and is to be rejected in men, though his views on the essential natures of men and women are at times muddled and contradictory. Even though he regrets and prays for forgiveness over his “descent into naturalness” (68), he maintains that man, too, is natural: “That the Master should blandish was natural, because a man is natural; but they knew that a woman, if she is to approach any ideal of true womanhood, cannot be too carefully unnatural, and should she be persuaded or betrayed into some expression of affection for her lover, some answering caress, at least she must not like it” (87). These views, though clearly ridiculous, are held by men who, from the beginning of the novel are shown to have access to logic and reasoning, trumping Ingeborg’s emotions and attempts at using logic for herself. Therefore, when Ingeborg attempts to use logic

for herself, she is utterly shut down. A notable example of this comes in Chapter 10 when Ingeborg seeks forgiveness from her father, and chooses to bring up the sermon he preached the day before on forgiveness: ““But your sermon—you said in your sermon father—why, how can free forgiveness have conditions? They didn’t do it that way in the bible”” (73). Though her logic makes sense—he does preach unconditional forgiveness—he is obstinate, and refuses to even humor her. Dremmel, too, refuses to allow Ingeborg access to reason and logic, often becoming “patient” with her and taking on the task of “educating” her rather than conversing with her. Moreover, when she attempts to learn about his work with fertilizers—“she spent the rest of the evening and the two following days laying the foundations of intellectual companionship by getting up the article *Manure* in the *Encyclopædia Britannica* and paraphrasing it into conversational observations that sounded to her so clever when she tried them on Herr Dremmel three days later at tea-time that she was astonished herself” (235)—Dremmel simply tells her that her facts are wrong and eliminates the opportunity for intelligent discourse on the matter. In this way, von Arnim establishes that the novel is built upon dichotomies between men and women and masculine encoded reason and feminine encoded emotion.

### **Those Damning Dichotomies**

The concept of dualism is important to understanding the structure of oppression in western culture. In her book, *Feminism and the Mastery of Nature*, Val Plumwood defines dualism as “the process by which contrasting concepts (for example, masculine and feminine gender identities) are formed by domination and subordination and constructed as oppositional and exclusive” (31). That is, a dualism is not merely two diametrically opposed concepts, but rather a method by which hierarchy and oppression are formed. Plumwood explains further: “In

dualism, the more highly valued side (males, humans) is construed as alien to and of a different nature or order of being from the ‘lower’, inferiorised side (women, nature) and each is treated as lacking in qualities which make possible overlap, kinship, or continuity” (32). Moreover, a dualistic relationship is one of dominant versus subordinate: the dominant concept is the primary model, and valued for its distance from the subordinate concept, while the subordinate concept is defined only in relation to the dominant. Given this, it is clear that relationships between Ingeborg and the men in her life are based on dualisms between the concepts of masculine versus feminine and reason—which is shown to be accessible to the Bishop and Dremmel, but inaccessible to Ingeborg—versus emotion.

However, these are not the only dualisms that shape *The Pastor’s Wife*. Feminists have largely focused on dualisms as they exist concerning the essential nature of human beings, and while these dichotomies are at play in *The Pastor’s Wife*, the dynamic between *man* and nature presents itself in a way that is inextricably linked to the other dualisms in the novel. For Plumwood and other ecofeminists, the idea that the oppression of women and nature are linked is obvious:

The concept of the human has a masculine bias (among others) because the male/female and human/nature dualisms are so closely intertwined, so much so that neither can be fully understood in isolation from the other. The dualistic distortion of culture and the historical inferiority of women and nature in the west have been based, as we have seen, on a network of assumptions involving a range of closely related dualistic contrasts, especially the dualism of reason and nature, or (in a virtually equivalent formulation), of humanity and culture on the one side and nature on the other. (33)

The parallels between the oppression of women and nature appear to be obvious to von Arnim too. In Part One, she hints at the connection between Ingeborg and nature in many ways, including the Bishop's equating naturalness with the feminine, Dremmel's pet names for her—i.e. little lamb, small snail—and even a not-so-subtle scene in which the Bishop compares Ingeborg to a walkway in his garden: “the Bishop had been as much horrified as if his own garden path on which he had trodden pleasantly for years had rent itself asunder at his feet and gaped at him” (*Pastor's Wife* 67). In Part Two, these dualisms become even more obvious.

Part Two opens with the end of Ingeborg's honeymoon and her journey into the village where she will spend the rest of her life. She begins this journey excited, prepared to serve Dremmel as a loyal wife, and her surroundings reflect the optimism in her attitude:

Ingeborg drank it in eagerly. She was zealous to learn; resolute to be a helpmeet. Had he not delivered her from the immense suffocation of Redchester? She was obsequious with gratitude. It was a country of exhilarating spaciousness; no hedges, no shutting off, indeed, of the sky itself or of the blue delicious distance by little interfering hills like those they had round Redchester. (93)

Everything appears to be open, welcoming, and deceptively free; her attitude is encoded into her surroundings. Even the trees in front of her new home—linden trees, which have soft, pliable wood—are entirely reflective of Ingeborg's sunny submissiveness from the moment she is transported from the Bishop's garden—Dremmel literally snatches Ingeborg out of the Bishop's garden when he comes to Redchester to marry her (84-85)—Dremmel's garden. However, her day-to-day landscape isn't as open as it appears in the first pages of Part Two. In Ingeborg's new home in Kökensee, she is utterly surrounded by nature, and there are three major natural spaces that make up her immediate environment: the garden of her house, the crop fields, and the

outlying Prussian wilderness. First, the garden; by definition, the garden is not a “natural” space, so much as it is nature mediated by man. Though it holds the appearance of being wild—“she would run out to the lime-trees, and pacing up and down that leafy place with the gooseberry bushes and vegetables and straggling accidental flowers of the garden lying hotly in the sun between her and the back of the house” (103)—it is a space that is overseen by and ultimately controlled by man. Similarly, the crop field is not a natural space, but an example of nature being made to work for man. Throughout the book, we see Dremmel absorbed in his work, either in his laboratory working with his fertilizers or out in the fields, toiling away, physically manipulating the land, expressing his mastery over nature. The last natural space, the woods surrounding her house, is the only space Ingeborg interacts with that is unmediated by man. This space, though Ingeborg refers to the forest as being “mighty” (138) and “lonely” (138) is not a sublime wilderness; rather, it is an oddly calm and peaceful environment. Ingeborg is confined to these three spaces throughout the rest of the novel with two exceptions—her trip to Zoppot and her trip to Italy—and it is in these spaces that von Arnim shows both the dichotomies between man and nature, and Ingeborg’s alignment with the natural world.

The most obvious example of the dualisms between man and nature in this novel come with Herr Dremmel’s interactions with the crop fields and his time spent in his laboratory work with fertilizer. Dremmel’s relationship with his fertilizers borders on ridiculous, and von Arnim makes it clear that his work is more important to him than his wife: “She held the honourable position he had always, even at his most enamoured moments, known she would ultimately fill, the position next best in his life after the fertilizers” (108). However, this is not to say that Dremmel prides nature above his wife. Rather, it is Ingeborg who is enamored with nature, and von Arnim emphasizes this difference between Ingeborg and Dremmel early on in their marriage.

Often, Dremmel's aversion to nature and the outside world is shown through the use of windows. As noted earlier, the first conversation Dremmel and Ingeborg have on the train is about windows, and Dremmel stubbornly insists that the point of windows is to shut apertures rather than to open them. After their marriage, Dremmel is shown closing windows a few times in the text in order to shut out the outside world. This passage from early on in Part Two is particularly telling:

Nearly always, Herr Dremmel went back to his laboratory about ten and worked till after midnight; and she would life awake...as long as she could so as not to miss too much of life by being asleep, smelling with the delight delicate sweet smells gave her the various fragrances of the resting garden. And the stars blinked in through the open window and she could see the faint whiteness of a bush of guilder roses against the curtain of the brooding night. When Herr Dremmel came in he shut the window. (104)

Moreover, Dremmel rarely seems concerned with the actual crops in his fields. Rather, he concerns himself with manure and the ways in which he can manipulate the soil to be fertile. He spends more time throughout the book in his lab than his fields, and his thoughts are often with potash instead of potatoes. In this way, when Dremmel places Ingeborg second to his fertilizers, he is not placing her below nature, but below the method of manipulating nature—that is, he is aligning Ingeborg with nature. Through his work in agriculture, Dremmel is both linked to and separated from nature, and rather than value environment, he values man's ability to control nature—specifically the methods of production.

Though Ingeborg does not interact directly with the crop fields, her experiences with marriage and pregnancy seem to be reflected in the state of the fields. Before her first pregnancy, Ingeborg gives Dremmel many false alarms and intrudes into his laboratory “defying its

sacredness” (137) to bring him the “good news.” These false alarms persist throughout the entire summer, and her womb’s disappointingly empty state coincides with an equally disappointing drought in East Prussia (138), which does not bode well for Dremmel’s fields. Moreover, Dremmel is not faced with drought again until after Ingeborg refuses to continue having children (233). Her experiences with motherhood is encoded directly into the fields and the weather that governs their success. In this way, Dremmel is a master manipulator; he attempts to control the fertility of the soil in his fields through the use fertilizer just as he attempts to control the fertility of his wife. Moreover, he seems to conflate the two:

‘You told me,’ said Ingeborg, who had a trick which good men sometimes found irritating of remembering everything they had ever said, ‘the foundation of the State was manure.’

Herr Dremmel said so it was. And so was family life. He would not, he informed her, quibble over terms. (182)

To him, the foundation of everything is reproduction, both in nature and in people, and Dremmel attempts to control the means of production in both his fields and his wife.

Ingeborg’s experiences are also encoded in the other two natural spaces in the text—the empty, unmediated forest and the domestic garden—and these two spaces reflect Ingeborg’s want of freedom and Ingeborg’s compliance with her role as a mother and a wife respectively. During the summer and before becoming pregnant with her first child, Ingeborg spends a significant amount of time in the forest. Readers are introduced to her excursions into the woods thusly:

The summer that year in East Prussia had been a long drought, a long bath or sunshine, and Ingeborg lived out in it in an ecstasy of freedom. Her body, light and perfectly

balanced, did wonders of exploration in the mighty forests...She would walk for miles along the endless forest tracks, just as much suited to her environment, just as harmonious and as much a creature of air and sunshine as the white butterflies that fluttered among the enormous pines. (138)

Here, in the empty, untouched woods, she feels free and in control of her body; she almost seems to blend into her surroundings and become an extension of the forest. Moreover, she is not compelled to run like she was at the beginning of the novel, pushed forward gently by the spirit of her grandmother; instead she is peaceful and content, and her surroundings, too, are peaceful and content: "Every now and then, for sheer delight in these things, she would throw herself down on the springy delicious carpet of whortleberries and lie still watching the blue-green tops of the pine-trees delicately swaying backwards and forwards far over her head against the serene northern sky" (138). It is in this space that we see Ingeborg alone, temporarily free from the constraints of duty, and at peace with her environment. The forest, though holding the appearance of freedom and wilderness is unsettlingly tame. It appears to hold the same lightness, the same sunny submissiveness that makes Ingeborg so agreeable. It is devoid of any wildlife beyond "the occasional cry of a woodpecker or the cry, immensely distant, of a hawk" (138), and the solitary bittern, "solemnly booming" (132) from the swamp. It is almost unnaturally empty and peaceful. Though the trees are giant, they "sway delicately" and quiver (139). Perhaps most telling, though, is the narrator's use of the verb *use*: "Nobody but herself seemed to use the forests" (138). Because the forest is supposed to be a place that is untouched by man, it seems strange that man should need to *use* the forest. That is, the forest seems available for man's *use*, and therefore the space seems less like untamed wilderness than a natural space that man allows to be mostly unmediated. In this way, the forest is still, to some extent, under the domain of man,

and Ingeborg's immersion in the forest during the early days of her marriage reflect that she is not truly free while married to Dremmel.

When Ingeborg becomes pregnant for the first time, she does not pass her time in the forest. Ingeborg finds she is no longer light and *free*, and, more importantly, she discovers that she is no longer in control of her body: "She who had never thought of her body, who had found in it the perfect instrument for carrying out her will, was forced to think of it almost continuously. It mastered her. She had endlessly to humour it before she could use it even a little" (147). Her body is no longer "light and perfectly balanced" but heavy and fighting against her. Instead of seeking solace in the forest, she instead goes to her garden—a more controlled "natural" space—for comfort. In her garden, she walks up and down admiring the abundance of lilac bushes that have been planted in a long, neat line along either side of the path. She notes that these lilacs are unlike the "spare and frugal lilacs in the gardens at home" (157), but though they are abundant, they are not wild or out of control—they border the path obediently and without straying. From the paths in her garden, she can also see both the prolific rye fields—"[she] spent hours in the budding garden up and down on one of the two available paths, the one at the end on the edge of the rye fields which were no the vividest green" (156)—and Dremmel's laboratory—"Above their swaying scented loveliness of light and colour and shape she could see Robert's tow-coloured head inside the window bending over his table" (157)—and these images provide her with reminders of her natural duty to be fruitful. In this way, her garden acts as a domestic space and a reflection of Ingeborg's ability to appropriately play the roles expected of her.

Eventually, Ingeborg returns to the forest, though she does not do so until after the birth of her first child, Robertlet. Her return to the forest is starkly different from her summertime visits that were so full of light and serenity. When she visits again, she is between her first and

second child, and this *in-betweenness* is reflected in her visit: “You couldn't see K kensee and K kensee couldn't see you, and you clasped your hands round your knees and thought. Behind you were the rye-fields. Opposite you was the forest” (179). Clearly, Ingeborg is stuck in-between duty (the rye fields) and her perceived freedom (the forest), but the narrative shift from third to second person causes the reader to feel stuck too. She is trapped by her duty and traps herself with her alignment with the natural spaces of the novel. She willingly immerses herself in the woods and in her garden, but because man is shown to be dominate over both woman and nature, Ingeborg cannot find her escape through nature.

Ingeborg's interactions with the novel's natural spaces are not the only ways von Arnim actively aligns her protagonist with nature. Throughout the entire book, Ingeborg is subtly associated with nature in many ways. Dremmel's pet names for Ingeborg are notable examples; his favorite pet name for her before their marriage is “little lamb.” After they're married, however, she loses the innocence of being a lamb and is thereafter referred to as “little sheep,” instead. von Arnim uses metaphor often to compare Ingeborg to animals. During the birth of her first child, she becomes “nothing but a writhing animal, nothing but a squirming thing without a soul” (165). In the forest, she is “hardly distinguishable from one of the white butterflies” (139). During a conversation about childbirth, Ingeborg reminds the Baroness Glambeck of “a sheep going tranquilly to the slaughter, quite pleased with the promenade, quite without a thought of what lay at the end of it” (159). Perhaps the most disheartening example comes directly from Dremmel who, after hearing that Ingeborg wishes to stop having children, exclaims “To be hit by one's sheep” (208). At every turn, Ingeborg is aligned with the natural world, and its place below that of man. Given this, her rejection of her duty to her husband to be fruitful and exist in

a state of perpetual pregnancy is not a mere marital fight, but a rejection of her nature and her position below that of the fertilizers.

After suffering through several difficult pregnancies and two stillborn children—a depressing signal that she cannot adequately fulfill her duty to her husband—Ingeborg is sent off to Zoppot (a seaside resort near Danzig) in order to recover. When she returns, she confesses to Dremmel that she cannot continue in her “wild career of...unbridled motherhood” (204). In response to this, Dremmel becomes furious and his very position as a man and the dominant figure in their relationship is challenged—“She had pierced his armour at the one vulnerable spot. His manhood was outraged” (205). It is only after several days of uncomfortable exchanges between the two and a consult with the local doctor that Dremmel resolves to accept his wife’s rejection of her role as his wife. However, his acceptance is tantamount erasure: “Being a wise man, Herr Dremmel lost no time in fidgeting or lamenting over the inevitable, but having heard the doctor’s summing up...he ruled Ingeborg out of his thoughts as a wife and proceeded to train himself to contemplate her as a sister” (217). From the very beginning of the novel, Ingeborg’s worth to Dremmel is defined through her ability to do what was expected of her. Once he becomes resolute in his idea of marriage to Ingeborg, he expects her to comply with his proposal without question. After they are married, her worth as a woman is determined through her ability to be a “good little wife.” To Dremmel (and to the other men in her life) Ingeborg is not a whole person, but a role to be filled. Therefore, when Ingeborg is unable to fulfill her duty to Dremmel, he doesn’t just strip Ingeborg of her title of wife; he also invalidates her identity as that of a *true* woman, showing that, in a world built on dualism, women are reduced merely to the sum of their parts.

## The Novel of Awakening

How von Arnim presents Ingeborg's story is also relevant to her inability to escape the dichotomies she has been forced into. Therefore, I would like to make the case for *The Pastor's Wife* as a type of Bildungsroman. One of the major complications in identifying examples of female Bildungsroman lies in the exclusionary nature of the definition itself. Though early definitions of the genre aren't necessarily explicit in barring female-centric narratives, their language seems to exclude the possibility of a female Bildungsroman altogether. Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship*<sup>7</sup> is typically accepted as the first example of the Bildungsroman, and early definitions—particularly those outlined by philosopher Wilhelm Dilthey<sup>8</sup>—appear to be based on a Goethean model of development (Fraiman 3; Abel, Hirsch, and Langland 5). This model describes a novel that follows a protagonist through hardships and within “a social context that will facilitate the unfolding of inner capacities, leading the young person from ignorance and innocence to wisdom and maturity” (Abel, Hirsch, and Langland 6).

Furthermore, Fraiman examines the common depiction of the Bildungsroman as an apprenticeship novel as per Susan Howe's 1930 definition<sup>9</sup>, which also appears to focus heavily on *Wilhelm Meister*. This apprentice novel depiction of the Bildungsroman suggests two important things: first, that the protagonist of a Bildungsroman should progress from youthful

---

<sup>7</sup> The novel was published *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* in Germany in 1795, and translated into English in 1824 by Thomas Carlyle.

<sup>8</sup> Fraiman notes that earlier mentions of the Bildungsroman exist in Friedrich von Blanckeburg's “Essay on the Novel” in 1774 where he talks about the Bildungsroman without actually using the term, but that Karl von Morgenstern actually coined the term Bildungsroman in his lectures on “Essence” and “History” in 1820. However, she points out that Wilhelm Dilthey was the one who popularized the term, first in 1870 with his biography of Friedrich Schleiermacher and further elaborated on it in 1906.

<sup>9</sup> Fraiman is citing Susan Howe's book *Wilhelm Meister and his English Kinsmen: Apprentices to Life*, which provided the first definition of the English Bildungsroman.

inexperience to mastery through the help of mentors, and second, that apprenticeship within the context of the Bildungsroman is based on choice (Fraiman 5). This idea of mentorship and mastery immediately suggests against the possibility of a female Bildungsroman given that opportunity for education and thus the opportunity for mentorship was primarily given to men over women. Fraiman explains it thusly: “The typical girl also has trouble with mentors...it is too often true that her one mentor is the man who schools her in order to wed her. And finally, consequently, when the mentor is a husband and when apprenticeship reduces to a process of martial binding, it never leads the heroine to master but only to a lifetime as perennial novice” (6). The implication of choice, too, excludes women’s narratives from the possibility of being classified as Bildungsroman. Based on the Goethean model provided by *Wilhelm Meister*, the apprentice is not forced into the trade of his father, but is rather allowed to discover his unique talents and pursue developing them as he wishes (Fraiman 5). Clearly, this same choice was not afforded to women, who were expected to fulfill a different kind of forced apprenticeship in the way of wifely and motherly duties.

Of course, the Bildungsroman as apprenticeship novel is not the only definition available. However, Howe’s definition was one of the more salient definitions of its time<sup>10</sup>. Even as the definition of the Bildungsroman developed and broadened, its focus remained decidedly male. At its core the Bildungsroman, according to definitions influenced by Howe, Tennyson, and Buckley, focuses primarily on how men interact and achieve in society:

With few exceptions, the relationship between the individual and society, as it is represented in the novel, is marked by clashes of unique human possibility with the

---

<sup>10</sup> Howe’s definition notably influenced both G. B. Tennyson’s 1968 essay “The Bildungsroman in Nineteenth-Century English Literature” and Jerome Buckley’s influential book *Season of Youth*, both of which uphold Howe’s notion of a male-centric Bildungsroman (Fraiman 6).

restraints of social convention. But critics have assumed that society constrains men and women equally. In fact, while male protagonists struggle to find a hospitable context in which to realize their aspirations, female protagonists must frequently struggle to voice any aspirations at all. (Abel, Hirsch, and Langland 6-7).

Whereas stories of male development fit this image of actively learning in, participating in, and succeeding in society, stories of female development do not; their stories are ones of passivity, recognition of limitations, and inner struggle. It was therefore necessary for an expansion of the genre of the Bildungsroman to accommodate both men and women's stories of development.

Susan Rosowski was among one of the first to bring stories of female development into the Bildungsroman discussion with her 1979 article on the theme of awakening in novels of female development. According to Rosowski, the novel of awakening shares some similarities with the apprenticeship novel, but the difference in the gender of the protagonist results in radical differences in the subject and the obstacles the protagonist faces:

The subject and action of the novel of awakening characteristically consist of a protagonist who attempts to find value in a world defined by love and marriage. The direct of awakening follows what is becoming a pattern in literature by and about women: movement is inward, toward greater self-knowledge that leads in turn to a revelation of the disparity between that self-knowledge and the nature of the world. (49)

Similar to the apprenticeship novel, the protagonist of a novel of awakening faces challenges leading up to her epiphany about the way of the world. However, unlike her male counterpart she does not awaken to a world of possibility, but a world rife with restrictions and limitations. Moreover, the protagonist of a novel of awakening cannot be active like the protagonist of an apprenticeship novel. While Howe's protagonists are expected to travel, pursue goals, and work

through their struggles externally, protagonists of a novel of awakening must internalize their struggle. Rosowski explains that this is because the struggle of a female protagonist is one that is typically between two selves: “an inner, imaginative self of private value is at odds with an outer, conventional self of social value” (49-50). That is, the struggle in the novel of awakening is one between the inner goals and wishes of a female protagonist and the limitations society places on those goals and wishes, making them impossible not only to achieve, but to even convey to the outside world. The awakening is then, according to Rosowski, an awakening to the impossibility of reconciliation between the private self, and the socially acceptable, public self.

In her study of the novel of awakening, Rosowski looks at several different novels—*Madam Bovary*, *The Awakening*, *My Mortal Enemy*, *Daughter of Earth*, and *Middlemarch*—all of which follow the stories of women who come to understand their dreams and the impossibility of their realization. Each novel differs dramatically in plot, but the similarities between them form a pattern for the novel of awakening. First, each of the five novels Rosowski examines focuses on, in some way, the notion of romantic love. The extent of the focus on and the attitude toward the idea of romantic love differs between the novels. On one end of the spectrum, Emma Bovary’s idealistic perception of love leads to her realization of the impossibility of her happiness while trapped in a loveless marriage. On the other end, *Daughter of Earth*’s Marie Rogers begins the story with what Rosowski calls an “emotional blindness” (62) and a rejection of the idea of love, which leads to the struggle of attempting to suppress her developing emotional self. Differences aside, the protagonists of these novels are all forced to grapple with the conventions of love and marriage in a world that, as Rosowski puts it, “expects a woman to define herself by love, marriage, and motherhood” (68). Second, all five novels contain an explicit realization of or confrontation with the differences between a protagonist’s personal and

public self, and this realization comes at a cost. For the female protagonist, there can be no reconciliation between the inner self and the outer self, and this realization requires sacrifice of some kind, a denial of a part of herself. Finally, each novel focuses on the story of a woman whose needs are largely ignored by a society that sees her as, not a whole person, but as a role to be filled (wife, mother, etc.) or as merely the extension of another person. While these similarities do not necessarily function for concrete rules for a definitive female Bildungsroman, they do form a pattern for identifying a novel of awakening, and it is against this pattern that I plan on examining *The Pastor's Wife*.

### **The Failure of Ingeborg Bullivant**

In many ways, the plot of *The Pastor's Wife*—naïve girl leaves home for the first time and finds herself accidentally engaged to a foreigner she meets during her travels—is the perfect setting for a novel of awakening. Ingeborg discovers that she yearns for freedom from the restrictions and disappointment of her patriarchal father and hopes that marriage and a fresh start in a new country will serve as her escape. Once married, Ingeborg is thrown into a life that she is unprepared for and is forced to learn what it means to be a *proper* wife without the guidance of mentors. Her story is one that is rife with controversy and trials that provide her several opportunities for awakening. However, Ingeborg Bullivant does not quite fit the picture of the protagonist of a novel of awakening. Presented to us through the voice of a faceless, all knowing narrator, she is at times a distant and troubling heroine who presents new challenges to the burgeoning genre of the female Bildungsroman.

Like other novels of awakening Ingeborg's story focuses on the complexities of romantic love and marriage. Unlike Emma Bovary and Edna Pontellier, Ingeborg is never caught up in

idealistic romantic fantasies; nor does she, like Marie Rogers, entirely reject the notion of romantic love as being detrimental to an active and happy life. Rather, Ingeborg begins the story childlike, with no preconceived notions about love or marriage. When reflecting on Dremmel's proposal to her, she realizes that her father, who had taught her the *natural* qualities of being a woman—i.e. submissiveness, pliability, acquiescence—had not prepared her for the idea of marriage: “What was marriage? Why did they never talk about it at home? In the Bishop's Palace it might, for all the mentioning it go, be one of the seven deadly sins” (*Pastor's Wife* 36). Moreover, Ingeborg's lack of information on the subject causes her to look on the idea of marriage with little more than apathy: “It would not be nice, she had felt, unconsciously adopting the opinion of her environment, for a girl who was not going to marry to get thinking of it. And it really had not interested her. She had quiet naturally turned her eyes away” (*Pastor's Wife* 36). The interjection of the narrator here is particularly important in establishing Ingeborg as character who begins with no real opinions of her own. She has no interest in marriage because her environment does not permit her to, and she is therefore tricked into presenting this imposed idea as something that she has come to naturally. Ingeborg begins the novel with similar feelings about love. Though she is not altogether unaware about the concept of love, Ingeborg's experiences with it are ones outshined by her beautiful sister Judith. To Ingeborg, this was the natural way of things, and she “accepted the situation with complete philosophy, for nothing was so evident as Judith's beauty” (*Pastor's Wife* 25). She is forced to grapple with these ideas of love and marriage when she casts off the shackles of her home environment and begins married life with her new husband.

More than merely focusing on love, *The Pastor's Wife* is also a story about a woman who searches for value and happiness in a society that does not see her as a whole human being. As in

other novels of awakening, Ingeborg is consistently diminished, seen only as role to be filled or the extension of another person. As established earlier, she begins the novel as merely an extension of her father—i.e. the right hand of the Bishop. Furthermore, her needs as a human being are constantly overlooked, and this is clear from the very first scene in which the narrator describes the situation surrounding Ingeborg's journey to see a dentist in London: "For the collapse of Ingeborg, daunted into just a silent feverish thing of pain, had convulsed the ordered life at home. Her family bore it for a week with perfect manners and hardly a look of reproach" (*Pastor's Wife* 4). This scene, although hilarious in its presentation through the sarcastic voice of the narrator, establishes a depressing pattern for how other characters perceive and treat Ingeborg. Rather than being motivated by Ingeborg's obvious pain, the Bullivants tolerate Ingeborg's behavior only until it becomes apparent that she cannot fulfill her duties as the right hand of the Bishop.

This pattern of behavior does not stop with the Bishop, nor does it end after she is married to Dremmel and effectively emancipated from the Bishop's right wrist. Once in Kökensee, Ingeborg is expected to fulfill an entirely different role: that of a wife to a German pastor, a *hausfrau*. To the members of the village she is judged by her ability to fulfill this role. This is particularly apparent in her interactions with the Baroness Glambeck, whose friendliness toward Ingeborg is dependent on her ability to perform her role as a pastor's wife and a *true woman*. During their first meeting, the Baroness discusses children with Ingeborg, remarking that a true woman is naturally equipped with a love of children. When Ingeborg pushes against this, responding to the Baroness's question about her fondness for children with only an admission of her inexperience, the Baroness coldly responds "A true woman is all love" (*Pastor's Wife* 127). Further, when Ingeborg fails to become pregnant a mere two months after

her marriage to Dremmel, she is treated with further hostility. It is not until she becomes pregnant, announcing it to her husband and the entire congregation through fainting in the middle of the Christmas Eve church service, that the village responds positively to her: “The village was deeply gratified to see an unconscious Frau Pastor carried through its midst, and her limp body had all the prestige of a corpse” (*Pastor’s Wife* 143). Throughout the story, it’s made clear that the village would rather see a limp, unmoving, passive Frau Pastor than a lively, involved, childless Ingeborg, and despite the fact that she is no longer controlled and defined by her father, she is still stuck in an environment where she is not a whole person, but a measure of her ability to play her proper role.

Even to her husband, Ingeborg’s importance as a person extends only as far as her ability to be a “good little wife.” From the moment her proposes to her, he begins to set expectations for Ingeborg’s behavior as a woman and as his wife—“And I do not ask you...to love me, or whether or not you do love me. It would be presumption on my part, and not, if you did, very modest on yours. That is the difference between a man and a woman. He loves before marriage, and she does not love till after” (*Pastor’s Wife* 27)—and his attitude toward her depends on the performance of her duties. Perhaps the best example of Dremmel’s view of Ingeborg comes during her trip to Zoppot:

It was not until July was drawing to a close and a long drought forced leisure upon him that Ingeborg’s image began to obtrude itself through the chinks of his work. At first, he thought of her as a mother, as somebody heavy, continually recovering from or preparing for illness; but presently he began to think of her as a wife, as his wife, as his proper complement and relaxation from all this toil shut up in a dull laboratory. (*Pastor’s Wife* 199)

To him, she is not really a person, but either a mother or a wife, and when she rejects her duties by requesting to end her child-rearing days, she invalidates her own existence. Rather than see her as a dynamic person with needs and desires—for instance, the desire to avoid the crushing depression that accompanies delivering stillborn children—Dremmel creates a new role for her to fill: “He ruled Ingeborg out of his thoughts as a wife and proceeded to train himself to contemplate her as a sister” (*Pastor’s Wife* 217). The reality of Ingeborg’s story is that no one, not even Ingram, a man she supposes to be her only friend, views Ingeborg as a whole person, and it is a reality that is shared throughout many stories of awakening.

This, however, is where *The Pastor’s Wife* breaks away from the pattern. Clearly, the most important aspect of a novel of awakening is the awakening itself. Without a conflict between the protagonist’s private and public selves resulting in the realization that she must “deny one element of herself” (Rosowski 68), there is no real awakening. This element, the actual awakening of Ingeborg, is what *The Pastor’s Wife* is missing. Ingeborg’s story is one of confusion between her inner desires and her outer self, and realizations that *nearly* lead her to an awakening. She consistently fails to awaken, fails to understand, and fails to develop; she is stuck in a perpetual cycle of missed chances for development until her utter disappearance by the end of the novel.

In this way, it could be easy to write off *The Pastor’s Wife* as a near miss and simply move on. However, Ingeborg’s story, one of an inability to develop, is important insofar as the dualistic relationships that create the structure of her world prevent her from developing. Moreover, Ingeborg isn’t merely living a life parallel to nature, but is trapped in a cycle of parallel incidents. These three incidents—her initial trip to Lucerne before her marriage, her trip to Zoppot after seven years of unrelenting motherhood, and her trip to Italy with Ingram—all

follow a strikingly similar pattern. In each event Ingeborg takes a trip that results in some sort of conflict with her male guardian. Through Ingeborg's actions, the man is betrayed, and Ingeborg attempts to seek forgiveness despite and is unable to voice her true feelings on the incident. Throughout these incidents, Ingeborg is faced with the possibility of disapproval and the opportunity to realize the limitations placed on her, and each incident ends with Ingeborg's failure to acknowledge the difference between her desires and what is desired of her.

The first event in the cycle, Ingeborg's trip to Lucerne, is a trip she takes out of a want of freedom. However, instead of finding freedom, she finds Herr Dremmel and returns to Redchester betrothed. Before her confrontation with her father, von Arnim gives readers a look into Ingeborg's confused head, and in her rambling thoughts she admits that she is in love, not with Dremmel, but with the idea of escaping Redchester:

While all these people were nodding and whispering in their stuffy stale world she would be safe in East Prussia, a place Herr Dremmel had described to her as full of forests and water and immense stretches of rye...it was God-forsaken places that her body and spirit cried out for. Space, freedom, quiet; the wind ruffling the rye; the water splashing softly against the side of the punt. (34)

She yearns for freedom rather than marriage, and further admits that she wishes she were in love to make her inevitable confession to the Bishop easier (36). When she does confront the Bishop, she is terrified and unable to explain without fainting from fright. In reaction to Ingeborg's confession, the Bishop is so furious that he "descends into naturalness," shaking the foundation of all that makes him superior—"Self-control gone, and with it self-respect. He ached, he positively ached during those first four black days in which his natural man was uppermost, a creature he had forgotten so long was it since he had heard of him, thoroughly to shake his

daughter. And the terribleness of that in a bishop” (65). She seeks forgiveness from her father unsuccessfully, and is only saved when Dremmel comes to Redchester to marry her and take her away. This event effectively erases Ingeborg from the Bishop’s life—his last words to her are simply “You will miss Wilson” (90). However, she moves on and because Dremmel is her escape from the Bishop, she resolves to accept her marriage to him despite her previous misgivings: “What did it matter if she herself was not in love? It was the dream of a schoolgirl to want to be in love. Life was not like that. Life was a thing full of friendliness and happy affection; and love, anyhow on the woman’s side, was not a bit necessary” (89). This admission is markedly different from her initial reaction to the idea that women do not love until after marriage: “‘Oh,’ said Ingeborg, reflecting. She began to tar up tufts of grass. ‘It seems—chilly,’ she said” (27). But because she assumes Dremmel is taking her away from an environment of constraint and disapproval, she cheerily adopts his views, conflating his beliefs with her desires.

The second event begins, not with Ingeborg running away, but being forced to take a trip to a resort for her health. Interestingly, the readers do not follow her on her trip, but remain in Kökensee with Dremmel and watch as he slowly remembers the fact that he has a wife. This time, Ingeborg is gone for much longer than 10 days—she stays at Zoppot from June to mid-August—and she returns resolved to tell Dremmel that she cannot continue having children. Her confession to Dremmel—her shakiness and childish fear—is very similar to her confession to the Bishop in Part One: “Immediately she began to deliver what sounded like a speech. He gazed at her in astonishment. She appeared to be in a condition of extreme excitement; she was addressing him rapidly in a trembling voice; she was much flushed, and was holding on to the edge of the table” (203). As established earlier, Dremmel’s reaction is one that, much like the Bishop’s reaction, shakes his foundation and enrages his manhood. He is betrayed by Ingeborg,

and his inconsolable rage causes her to rethink her own beliefs: “She was no longer sure she was right. Perhaps it was indeed her duty to go on, perhaps she was indeed being wicked and cruel. The clearness of the vision that had been hers at Zoppot was blurred” (206). She, too, is shaken, and she attempts, unsuccessfully, to seek forgiveness from Dremmel, much like how she sought forgiveness from the Bishop. Because Ingeborg cannot be removed to the authority of another man, the resolution of this event differs slightly from the first. Like the exchange with her father, this betrayal results in an erasure—her existence as a wife is invalidated, and she is forced to continue living with a man who will not recognize her as a whole person.

In both of these events, Ingeborg is given the opportunity to realize her limitations and the differences between what is expected of her and what she truly wants in life. It is clear that Ingeborg yearns for freedom, but when marriage to Dremmel is imminent, she resolves to look at the marriage as a way out. It is not until after Dremmel comes to fetch her that Ingeborg claims that she wants to marry Dremmel, and rather than realizing the difficulty of her situation, approaches it with the same sunny submissiveness she’d been trained in. In the second event, the opportunity for realization comes after the event’s “resolution.” Though Dremmel does not tell Ingeborg that she is no longer a wife to him, Ingeborg senses that there is something wrong. Slowly, she approaches the realization that Dremmel does not really love her—that he cannot love her and that she cannot both be free from her crushing duty to remain perpetually pregnant and remain harmoniously married:

‘But he does l—’ she began; and stopped.

Did he? What was the good of saying he did if he didn’t? Was everything with him, and perhaps with other husbands – bound up with parenthood? Was it true, what he said to her the day she begged him to be friends, that a husband and wife could never be

friends?...She felt she did not rightly understand; and suspected, walking up and down the damp October garden that being a bishop's daughter was an inefficient preparation for being anybody's wife. (221)

Though she approaches this idea, she reels back, deciding that Robert loves her, but that his work often causes him to forget. Later, she muses that her and Robert have "perfect love": "Perfect love cast out a lot of things besides fear. It cast out, for instance, conversation. And interest, which one couldn't very well have without conversation. Interest of course was an altogether second-rate feeling compared to love, and because it was second-rate it was noisier, expressing itself with a copiousness unnecessary when one got to the higher stages of feeling" (260). Rather than awakening to the limitations in her marriage and in her life, she convinces herself that her relationship with her husband is perfect and normal.

The third and last event is Ingeborg's trip with Ingram to Italy. This event is very close to her trip to Lucerne in several different ways. First, the trip is taken in secret—Ingeborg tells Dremmel she needs to go to Berlin for ten days to shop and buy boots (280). Ingeborg feels guilty and, unable to lie to him, leaves an overly vague letter on his desk: "*It wasn't true about the boots...I'm going to Italy with Mr Ingram—to Venice—it's his picture—and of course other things too on the way—if you think it over you won't really mind—I must run or I'll miss the train*" (283). Moreover, Ingeborg is, like the first event, forced to acknowledge the unwanted advances of a manipulative man. In this case, Ingram lures Ingeborg to Italy under the false pretense that they would only be away for ten days. After they arrive in Italy and Ingeborg realizes Ingram's true intentions—to make an adulterer out of her—and he giddily remarks that she, with the letter she left for her husband, has already effectively cut ties with all she had in Kökensee. After this, she runs away in the dead of night and back home to her husband. On the

way, she prepares herself for the inevitable confrontation with her husband. However, due to Dremmel's single-track mind, he did not notice the letter Ingeborg left for him and therefore cannot suspect her of any sort of betrayal.

This event is where the cycle ends. Because Ingeborg does not change hands for a second time—from the Bishop to Dremmel and from Dremmel to Ingram—she cannot continue in this cycle. At its core, this cycle is one where an expression of will leads to downfall—her wish for freedom leads to an erasure from her family, her wish for relief from childbirth leads to an invalidation of her identity as Dremmel's wife, and her wish for friendship leads to her erasure from the text entirely. In the last lines of the book, Ingeborg is literally removed: “But Herr Dremmel went on writing. He had forgotten Ingeborg” (338). And throughout all of these events she does not, indeed she cannot, develop into a whole person.

Throughout the novel, she is shown to be, not a fully developed person, but a set of expectations to be fulfilled. Without a father to be daughter to, a husband to be wife to, or a lover to run off with, she essentially fades into the background of the environment she is already consistently aligned with. She is not just seen as a role to be filled, but she also sees herself as a role to be filled—a helpmeet, a pliant and good little wife. Therefore, Ingeborg's story is not just one of a failure to develop, but of a systemic inability to develop based on the dualistic relationships that govern interactions between men and women and man and nature. In this way, Ingeborg was doomed from the start, forced to live out the perpetual cycle of confronting her desires while attempting to play the roles that define her.

## Works Cited

### Primary Text

von Arnim, Elizabeth. *The Pastor's Wife*. Ed. Deborah Singmaster. London: Everyman, 1993. Print.

### Secondary Texts

"A review of 'The Pastor's Wife.'" *The Spectator* 113.4504 (24 Oct. 1914): 566-567. Rpt. in *Twentieth-Century Literary Criticism* 41 (1991): n. pag. Web. 16 Mar. 2012.

Abel, Elizabeth, Marianne Hirsch, and Elizabeth Langland. Introduction *The Voyage In: Fictions of Female Development*. By Abel, Hirsch, and Langland, eds. Hanover: University Press of New England, 1983. Print.

von Arnim, Elizabeth. *All the Dogs of my Life*. London: Virago Press, 1995. Print.

von Arnim, Elizabeth. *Elizabeth and her German Garden*. London: Virago Press, 1985. Print.

Brown, Erica. "Investigating the Middlebrow: Introduction." *Working Papers on the Web* 11 (July 2008): n. pag. Web. 11 Mar. 2012.

Fraiman, Susan. *Unbecoming Women: British Women Writers and The Novel Development*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1993. Print.

Plumwood, Val. *Feminism and the Master of Nature*. London: Routledge, 1993. Print.

Römhild, Juliane. "'Betwixt and Between': Reading von Arnim Writing Elizabeth." *Working Papers on the Web* 11 (July 2008): n. pag. Web. 11 Mar. 2012.

Rosowski, Susan J. "The Novel of Awakening." *The Voyage In: Fictions of Female Development*. Ed. Elizabeth Abel, Marianne Hirsch, and Elizabeth Langland. Hanover: University Press of New England, 1983. Print.

Schaffer, Talia. *The Forgotten Female Aesthetes: Literary Culture in Late-Victorian England*.

Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 2000. Print.

Shepherd, Jennifer. "Marketing Middlebrow Feminism: Elizabeth von Arnim, the New Woman and the Fin-de-Siècle Book Market." *Philological Quarterly* 84.1 (Winter 2005): 105-31.

*Literature Online*. Web. 9 Mar. 2012.

Usborne, Karen. *'Elizabeth' the Author of Elizabeth and Her German Garden*. London: The Bodley Head Ltd., 1986. Print.

Woolf, Virginia. "Middlebrow." *The Death of the Moth and other Essays*. Ed. Leonard Woolf.

New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1942. 176-186. Print.