The Body as "Versable" Type: Friedrich Spielhagen's *Zum Zeitvertreib* (1897)

Friedrich Spielhagen may not automatically spring to mind as one of the giants of German literature, but he is undoubtedly a prominent figure in the field of narrative theory, where many regard him as Friedrich von Blanckenburg's most notable successor in the 19th century (Blatter 1993: 132). Spielhagen was one of, if not the, most widely read German novelist of the 1860s and 1870s. He then lost his claim to fame as a fiction writer, only to be unexpectedly reinstated for his theoretical writings. As late as 1908, however, some people still heralded Spielhagen as the foremost novelist of his generation. "Enger als er war und ist wohl kein deutscher Dichter mit den Strömungen seiner Zeit verbunden, stärker als in seinen Romanen pulst wohl nirgends das äußere Leben der Nation," declared the author of a laudatory article published in the "Bayerische[r] Courier" and cited by Spielhagen's daughter on the occasion of her father's 80th birthday (Spielhagen 1909: 169). Today Spielhagen's oeuvre can no longer inspire such enthusiasm from the margins of German literature, to which it has been relegated along with many other Realist works. The debate over why this celebrated author fell into disrepute after a promising debut lies beyond the scope of the present study. Suffice it to say that literary canonization operates in myriad, sometimes mysterious, ways, and that irrespective of the initial reasons for Spielhagen's fall from grace, most critics even today hold fast to the idea that his literary and theoretical personas are incompatible.[1] As will become evident throughout this chapter, it is not only possible, but necessary to develop an integrated approach to Spielhagen's output,

1 Most critics of German literature are familiar with Spielhagen only for his contribution to the poetics of the novel. A rare connoisseur and defender of Spielhagen's literary activity is Jeffrey Sammons, but he, too, divorces the theoretician from the novelist and dismisses Spielhagen's "doctrine" of objective narration as a historical curiosity of no intrinsic value from the point of view of twentieth-century narratology: "My view is that his [Spielhagen's] theory of the novel and his practice of literary criticism constitute a disaster area; it is hard to believe that anyone committed to the principles insisted upon in the theoretical and critical writings ever could write a novel, and so it appears to me that the novels are created in spite of the theory and from a deeper place in the imagination" (Sammons 2004: xiii).

especially in the framework of efforts to rescue this author from oblivion. For it is in his combined status as novelist and theoretician that Spielhagen most resembles his equally prolific, though considerably more acclaimed, fellow Realist Theodor Fontane, with whom he counteracts the long-held belief by literary historians that bourgeois Realism in Germany was a movement without self-reflective potential.

Despite their diametrically opposed literary fortunes, Spielhagen and Fontane had much in common. The two knew and respected each other enough to exchange first editions of their publications and share impressions about them. Fontane affectionately called Spielhagen his "Romancierkonfrater"[2] (1909: 378), and their correspondence reveals a common interest in the poetics of the European (Realist) novel. The English idioms that Spielhagen used and the texts he analyzed in his theoretical writings prove that he was deeply versed in the language and literature of Britain. The same applies to Fontane, who, as a full-time journalist in the 1840s, specialized in British affairs and undertook numerous trips to England that kept him abreast of the latest developments — cultural and otherwise — in this part of the world. Most importantly, one short year after Fontane, Spielhagen wrote a novel inspired by the same real-life scandal in the Ardenne family that was the source of *Effi Briest*. Fontane's novel was first published in 1896, and Spielhagen's *Zum Zeitvertreib*, on which the present chapter focuses, followed in 1897.

The identity of the original Effi was revealed to the public in 1964, when Hans Werner Seiffert published a host of documents offered to him by the grandson of the woman from whose life Spielhagen and Fontane drew inspiration. Elisabeth von Ardenne, born von Plotho, initially rejected the advances of Armand Leon von Ardenne, who was five years her senior, but she changed her mind after he was wounded in the Franco-Prussian war. The couple married in 1873, when Elisabeth was 19 years old, and they subsequently had two children. Between 1881 and 1884, Armand's career brought him and his family to Düsseldorf, where they made the acquaintance of Emil Hartwich, an unhappily married district judge who had many things in common with Elisabeth, not least of which a passion for the theater. When the Ardennes returned to Berlin, Elisabeth and Emil stayed in touch. They regularly wrote to each other, met on occasion, and in 1886 divorced their respective spouses in order to be together. Before they could do so, however, Elisabeth's husband found the incriminating love letters and challenged Hartwich to a duel, mortally wounding him. One year after Emil's death in 1886, the Ardenne couple divorced.

2 *Konfrater* is an older word for *Mitbruder*. The 1994 edition of the Duden dictionary defines it as "Amtsbruder innerhalb der katholischen Geistlichkeit" (*Duden: Das große Wörterbuch der deutschen Sprache*, 1993-1995, vol. 4, s. v. "Konfrater"). It is derived from the Latin *confrater*, which is, in turn, based on the Latin word for 'brother' (*frater*). The combined familial and religious connotations in *Konfrater* make Fontane's word choice to describe Spielhagen particularly interesting.

Armand was awarded custody of the children and continued to advance seamlessly in the military hierarchy. Elisabeth, for her part, devoted the rest of her life to caring for the sick and needy. She was reunited with her children after two decades of separation and died in 1952 in Lindau at the advanced age of 98, having by then outlived the publication of Fontane's and Spielhagen's novels by more than half a century.

Zum Zeitvertreib is not "eine Ehebruchsgeschichte wie hundert andere mehr," as Fontane famously described *Effi Briest* in a letter to Spielhagen from February 21st, 1896 (1909: 378). What makes this novel unusual is that the extramarital affair on which it focuses is devoid of love and functions as a symptom, rather than a cause, of the failing marriage between Klotilde and Viktor von Sorbitz. The action takes place exclusively in Berlin and is set in motion by Klotilde's efforts to escape the monotony of her aristocratic life. She does so by seeking refuge from her already rocky matrimony in the arms of a man she does not really love. Like her, Albrecht Winter (the lover in question) is married with children. He teaches German, Greek, and Latin at a local high-school, but aspires to a career in the theater. Spielhagen provides considerably more insight than Fontane into the logistics of the affair, from Klotilde and Albrecht's first encounter on a horse-drawn streetcar to their first kiss, the secret exchange of letters, their three largely unsuccessful trysts, as well as the sudden and curious break-up toward the end of the novel. The short-lived liaison comes to light hours after ending, not seven years later, as in *Effi Briest*. And it is not through the accidental discovery of love letters that Viktor finds out about his wife's infidelity, as Innstetten does. Spurred by observations of Klotilde's interactions with Albrecht at a high-society gathering, Viktor hires a private detective who, in the span of a few days, witnesses and overhears enough compromising exchanges between the adulterous wife and her bourgeois lover to confirm Viktor's suspicions. Like the wronged husband in *Effi Briest*, Viktor von Sorbitz challenges his wife's lover to a duel. The outcome is predictable not by analogy with Innstetten and Crampas' confrontation in Fontane's novel, but because Viktor is an impeccable marksman, whereas Albrecht Winter has never fired a gun in his life.

The novel ends where it began: in the lodgings of Klotilde's cousin Adele and her husband Elimar. Shortly after the duel, Albrecht's widow Klara storms in on Klotilde and Adele, accusing the former of murdering her husband. The verbal dispute between the two women escalates into a physical altercation, until the distressed widow regains control of her emotions and is escorted out by Elimar. The three short paragraphs after Klara's exit inform about the consequences of her outburst and bring *Zum Zeitvertreib* to a rather abrupt close, especially by comparison with Fontane's novel.

Body Language and Dress as Markers of Social Ambivalence

In his influential study of the German novelist's work, Jeffrey Sammons notes that "the longest-lived theme in Spielhagen's oeuvre" is the class conflict between the aristocracy and the cultivated bourgeoisie (2004: 23). *Zum Zeitvertreib* affords an apt illustration of Spielhagen's commitment to social commentary, but it does so with a twist. My analysis in this and the following two sections will show that physical and sartorial details from the novel serve as class markers, but also that Spielhagen does not thereby reduce bodies and people to social types. Instead, he uses those same means of non-verbal communication to express the ambivalent attitude of the aristocracy and the bourgeoisie vis-à-vis each other. In this way, the German novelist restores some of the plurality and depth of meaning that the body had lost as an object of scientific (primarily medical) and philosophical study. The fact that these deeper messages of *Zum Zeitvertreib* are encrypted in the language of the body suggests that literature is profoundly enmeshed with corporeality, and that this entanglement need not involve losses for any of the two sides — neither a curtailment of literature's hermeneutic potential nor a reduction of the body's complexity and vitality. If done right, the process of tracing the ties between the literary and the corporeal can expose the illusory nature of claims to a fixed identity, thereby freeing literature and the body to pursue what they can and want to be.

In the case of *Effi Briest*, all three protagonists come from the ranks of the feudal aristocracy. This allowed Fontane to critique from inside the mores enforced by this segment of Prussian society. In his own adaptation of the Ardenne story, Spielhagen proceeded partly toward the same goal, but by an alternate route and with a different emphasis. Pitting the bourgeois lover against the aristocratic circle of the heroine, *Zum Zeitvertreib* cuts across a much wider section of nineteenth-century society than Fontane's novel. This reflects more closely than *Effi Briest* the social make-up of the people involved in the Ardenne affair.[3] But underlying the social configuration of characters in *Zum Zeitvertreib* is a degree of intentionality that extends beyond Spielhagen's truthfulness to his source of inspiration. Whether on account of his general interest in social issues or because he thought that setting the action in an exclusively aristocratic milieu would not have done justice to the complex interactions that took place in an urban space, Spielhagen diversified the social landscape of *Zum Zeitvertreib* to include representatives of the bourgeoisie as key actors in the plot. In order to ascertain how the novel depicts social stratification and class relations under these conditions, I turn now to comparing side by side the physical impressions made by characters who are on opposite sides of social and personal divides.

3 Elisabeth von Ardenne and her husband belonged to the aristocracy, whereas Elisabeth's lover, Emil Hartwich, was a civil district judge.

In Spielhagen's novel, the opposition between aristocracy and bourgeoisie has a strong physical component that provides important clues about characterological and class disparities. Take, for instance, the husband-lover dyad. Spielhagen is extremely terse when it comes to Viktor von Sorbitz's appearance, leaving readers to wonder about the reason(s) for this minimalist approach. The absence of specific information about Viktor's mien from a novel otherwise sensitive to physical details cannot be ascribed to accident or oversight. What we can infer with certainty from the few clues that Spielhagen makes available is that looks did not play a role in Klotilde's decision to marry Viktor. Neither did her parents, as in the case of Effi Briest. Rather, Spielhagen's heroine consented to the union out of spite for losing her previous suitor (Elimar) to her cousin Adele. Under these conditions, it is no wonder that, four years into the unhappy marriage of the Sorbitzes, Klotilde can still not think of a single characteristic, physical or otherwise, that might set her husband apart from other men. In a half-serious, half-sarcastic attempt to portray Viktor in a positive light and retrospectively justify her marital choice, the highest praise she can muster is a euphemism for average and banal: "Viktor war nicht schlechter und nicht besser, als die übrigen" (Spielhagen 1907: 84-85).

By contrast, ideas and words do not fail Klotilde when describing Albrecht's uniqueness vis-à-vis other men. All other men, it seems, except her husband. For Viktor is the only one whose physical appearance, intellectual abilities, and social manners she does not deem worthy of comparing — positively or negatively — with Albrecht:

> In solchen Momenten hatte sie […] Empfindung und Verständnis für seine [Albrechts] geistige Bedeutenheit, in der er die andern Männer ihres Kreises um Haupteslänge zu überragen schien. Mit einziger Ausnahme Elimars! […] Aber die Menge der Übrigen! dieser Herdentiere, die sich zum Verwechseln ähnlich sahen; alle dieselben Manieren hatten! Dieselben abgebrauchten Phrasen gedankenlos herunterplapperten! […] Selbst Fernau, den sie in letzter Zeit ziemlich stark bevorzugt hatte, weil er unter diesen Nullen noch der einzige Zähler schien, wie weit blieb er hinter Albrecht Winter zurück! (ibid: 83-84)

One could infer from this dearth of references to Viktor's appearance that Klotilde's husband is simply not good-looking. Another possible explanation is that a man's looks were not important in the aristocratic circles of the 19th century. In the passage quoted above, Klotilde decries the physical and behavioral sameness of the men in her social sphere. This ties in with the larger theme of ennui in *Zum Zeitvertreib*, but it also suggests that a man's looks did matter to some women of the upper class. However, women's opinion was inconsequential, as seen in the fact that the physical qualities of suitors never swayed decisions regarding who would wed whom. Once married, it was neither uncommon nor unacceptable for wives to find solace out of wedlock for their marital woes. Provided they stayed within

their rank, that is. Viktor and Klotilde's relationship is a good case in point here. Not only does he know about and even witness his wife's coquetries with other men, but he actively encourages her to flirt with high-ranking officials on whom the advancement of his career depends. The only fling for which he admonishes her is the one with Albrecht, which is all the more curious since the simultaneous advances that one of Viktor's coworkers makes on Klotilde do not bother the husband at all. He openly calls Fernau a friend and even turns to him for marital advice. The sole reason articulated by Viktor for his fears vis-à-vis Albrecht is that the *Schulmeister*[4] is "wirklich ein verdammt hübscher Kerl" (Spielhagen 1907: 165).

It is worth mentioning that Viktor is not the only one on whom the newcomer's allure makes an impression. In contrast with Klotilde's inconspicuous husband, Albrecht is openly admired by everyone for his proud posture and self-confident gaze, as well as for his eloquence and breadth of knowledge (ibid: 75-76). These observations are not without social import. In the aristocratic milieu in which a man's appearance would not normally elicit interest, the fact that Albrecht's charisma does not go unnoticed symbolizes the jarring intrusion of the bourgeoisie into a world previously controlled by the feudal aristocracy. Albrecht's noticeably good looks become an externalization of his bourgeois otherness, and the threat he poses to Viktor's marriage becomes synonymous with the assault of the bourgeoisie on the aristocracy's preeminence.

The physical antithesis between Albrecht and Viktor is real and connotes class conflict, but it does not exhaust the intricacies of the relationship between aristocracy and bourgeoisie. Useful in uncovering some of these hidden nuances are a few scenes in which Klotilde and Albrecht interpret each other's appearance. Let us first consider the reading that the heroine produces and amends during her first encounter with the *Schulmeister*. While riding the horse-drawn streetcar one day, Klotilde notices a handsome young man across from her. Intrigued, she starts examining her fellow passenger with a view to discerning his social status. Her first instinct is to read the stranger's class affiliation in his face, but the discrepancy between Albrecht's demeanor and his dress forces the lady to revisit her initial hypothesis:

> Man hätte ihn vielleicht sogar schön nennen können: mit seiner geraden Nase und dem offenbar sorgfältig gepflegten, rötlichen Vollbart. Ein Offizier in Civil? Möglich! Nur daß der Anzug dafür vielleicht zu elegant war und vor allem zu gut saß. (Spielhagen 1907: 12)

4 In addition to his name, this is the term most often used in the novel to refer to Albrecht. Spielhagen's word choice is anything but accidental, since *Schulmeister* also used to denote a pedantic person.

Klotilde's indirect interior monologue makes clear that the role of physiognomy had changed drastically in the stratified urban society of the 19th century. Facial traits and expressions were no longer called upon to divulge character and temperament, but rather social position. Additionally, even within this new framework of interpretation, more and more people were becoming aware of physiognomy's limitations as a revelatory or predictive tool. Lavater's deterministic science had lost momentum, and facial traits alone were no longer sufficient for readings that would be commensurate with the complex social reality of modern life. As Klotilde's musings show, dress and behavior had to be taken into account as well and could, in some cases, be at variance with body language indicators, making it difficult to settle on any one physiognomic reading without questioning its validity. The fact that Albrecht is reading a book, for instance, points toward a representative of the *Bildungsbürgertum*, rather than an aristocratic member of the military, and gives Klotilde even more reason to change her initial estimation of the young man's social rank: "Auch pflegen Offiziere unterwegs nicht in einem Buche zu lesen" (ibid: 12).

Despite all evidence to the contrary, the stranger's appearance encourages Klotilde to hope that he might be of noble birth. This wish is shattered irrevocably by what Albrecht's body language conveys after he puts the book away:

> Klotilde war empört. Sie hatte […] seine Augen sehr deutlich gesehen: ganz ungewöhnlich große, ausdrucksvolle, blaue Augen; und förmlich körperlich gefühlt, daß diese Augen, im Vorüberstreifen des Blicks, ein paar Sekunden auf ihr geruht hatten. Und konnten jetzt durch das Fenster nach der wimmelnden Menge auf dem Trottoir starren, als ob es hier im Wagen schlechterdings nichts zu sehen gäbe! Ich habe mich geirrt, sagte sie bei sich; er gehört nicht zur Gesellschaft. (Spielhagen 1907: 12-13)

By Klotilde's reasoning, the fact that Albrecht's gaze brushes past an aristocratic woman, preferring instead to settle on the undifferentiated mass of proletarians roaming the streets of Berlin, proves beyond doubt that the handsome stranger is a commoner. From the point of view of a lady "aus uralt freiherrlichem Geschlecht" (ibid: 24), Albrecht's disinterest in Klotilde can be attributed only to a lack of familiarity with the social protocols of a class from which he is excluded. According to the rules of aristocratic etiquette, blue-blooded gentlemen had to give their undivided attention to noblewomen when in their presence. Legation Councilor von Fernau models this conduct in exemplary fashion. His reaction upon seeing Klotilde is starkly different from Albrecht's and exacerbates even more the opposition between aristocracy and bourgeoisie. Whereas the *Schulmeister* overlooks Klotilde "mit der Miene eines, der sich tödlich langweilt" (ibid: 12), Fernau jumps on the moving streetcar and takes his hat off to the lady "mit freudig erregter Miene" and a bowing motion (Spielhagen 1907: 13).

As already intimated, however, opposition describes only one aspect of the multidimensional relationship between these two social classes. Another equally important facet is revealed in one of Klotilde's monologues immediately after her first encounter with Albrecht. On this and other subsequent occasions, the heroine revises her initial opinion of the debonair young man by downplaying the singularity of his physical appearance: "Er war nicht einmal so schön wie Fernau; und […] trotz seiner Eleganz sah er doch eigentlich wie ein Spießbürger aus. Dennoch — wunderlich! Ich glaube wahrhaftig, das Herz hat mir ordentlich geschlagen. Es ist nur die Langeweile. Es ist nur, weil —" (Spielhagen 1907: 16). It remains unclear if Fernau is indeed better-looking than Albrecht and, therefore, if Klotilde is genuinely puzzled by her attraction to the *Schulmeister*. The other possibility, opened up by the dash at the end of the excerpt, is that, believing Albrecht to be of non-noble blood, the heroine tries to suppress her attraction to the teacher. For all their differences, these two interpretations show that Klotilde's view of the dashing stranger is heavily laden with social significance — in the former case, because the heroine may be leaning toward the less attractive suitor precisely due to his non-aristocratic pedigree; and in the latter scenario, because she may, for the same reason, be forcing herself to stay away from him. In the increasingly diversified class structure of the 19th century, perceptions of physical appearance were never socially innocent.

Mindful of this all-important connotative dimension, Klotilde revisits and revises her initial impression of Albrecht's physique and dress, but her quest for an ultimate meaning eludes resolution. In a nod to the mechanics of literary interpretation, Spielhagen shows that the more one tries to settle on a single label, the farther one strays from the truth. As Klotilde loses her train of thought at the end of the streetcar scene, likely unconvinced by her own explanations, it becomes evident that she entertains an intricate relationship of attraction and rejection with the bourgeoisie. And an even deeper ambivalence flourishes in this state of suspension. When Klotilde's "Selbstgespräch" (Spielhagen 1907: 16) breaks off, marking the failure of her attempts to reconcile personal experience with sanctioned frames of meaning, the body is released from confinement in the narrow grid of social signification and regains its polysemantic valences.

If some of the details pertaining to the *Schulmeister*'s appearance yield valuable insights into the aristocracy's ambivalent view of the bourgeoisie, others intimate that the bourgeoisie relates to the upper class in a similarly equivocal manner. Albrecht's manner of dressing is especially relevant in this respect. *Zum Zeitvertreib* teems with references to his elegant, almost foppish persona — many of them stemming from Klotilde. Even though, at the end of the streetcar scene, the heroine dismisses Albrecht's outfit as typically bourgeois ("[er] sah […] wie ein Spießbürger aus," ibid: 16), she subsequently describes his impeccable appearance in admiring terms, noting how perfectly it makes him blend in with the upper class:

> Im übrigen war, was er vorbrachte […] doch nur eine Plauderei, die ihr […] geistreicher schien als die, an welche sie in ihrer Gesellschaft gewöhnt war. Zu der er, wollte sie ihn nur nach seinen Manieren und seinem Äußeren beurteilen, am Ende auch gehörte. Einer eleganteren Toilette konnte sich keiner der Herren in Civil rühmen; Frack und Weste waren nach dem neuesten Schnitt, das feine Vorhemd von blendender Weiße, die Krawatte saß tadellos. War ihr doch schon heute nachmittag in dem Pferdebahnwagen die Sorgfalt, mit der er sich kleidete, aufgefallen! (Spielhagen 1907: 24)

Albrecht's excessively neat manner of dressing, which Klotilde describes here in minute detail, is neither a one-time occurrence nor a reflection of subjective sartorial taste, but rather a strategic choice related to his class affiliation and views on social justice. Albrecht himself suggests as much in a narrated monologue in which he evaluates the necessity of maintaining a debonair appearance. On the one hand, the *Schulmeister* wants to turn over a new leaf, which would specifically involve giving up "de[n] Kleiderluxus" (ibid: 40). On the other hand, he stresses that a carefully groomed exterior is a must when dealing with the aristocracy, since "diesen Aristokraten gegenüber muß man in der Beobachtung der Form lieber ein wenig zu viel thun als zu wenig" (ibid: 40). In order to further elucidate how Albrecht's sartorial extravagance contributes to an understanding of class relations in *Zum Zeitvertreib*, a brief detour is warranted here through this character's background and intricate relationship with members of the aristocracy.

During his first tête-à-tête with Klotilde, Albrecht tells her about his humble beginnings as an orphan of "blutarme Bergleute" (ibid: 25) and about his ascent up the social ladder owing to the generosity of a pastor who adopted him, paid for his education, and bequeathed all possessions to him. Nothing about this serendipitous life trajectory identifies Albrecht as a social climber. He clearly does not want a title or more money. But he is not indifferent to the aristocrats either. On the one hand, he deeply resents how the nobility (ab)uses and discards those of lesser social standing: "Was war man denn diesen Aristokraten anderes als ein Werkzeug! Hatte es seinen Dienst gethan, warf man es zu dem alten Eisen" (ibid: 32). Albrecht sees in this entitled behavior the continuation of age-old practices of oppression directed against the poor and the powerless. Feeling personally touched by the historical injustices done to his ancestors, the *Schulmeister* even articulates a revolutionary call to action under the leadership of a political Luther that is yet to come:

> Den Fuß muß man ihnen [den Aristokraten] auf den steifen Nacken setzen. […] Ah, ein Luther! ein Luther […], der die eisernen Fessel [*sic*] sprengt, mit denen die Junker und ihre Spießgesellen ein mündig gewordenes Volk noch immer einzwängen! die schandbaren Fessel [*sic*], an welchen sie in den Bauernkriegen

> schon gerüttelt haben, die Armen und Elenden — meine Ahnen! (Spielhagen 1907: 32)

On the other hand, however, Albrecht also seeks the nobility's approval. We see this in his sartorial choices as well as in the fact that, as a young man, he had socialized with actors in order to polish "die rauhen Manieren des Bergmannssohnes" (ibid: 78-79) and to internalize the gestural conventions of the aristocracy. Why else, if not out of an obsession with emulating the upper class, would he go to such lengths to look and behave like the aristocrats outwardly despite purporting to surpass them inwardly through his unique personality? And why else would he later long to make himself useful to them, if not out of a masochistic desire to please the same self-interested, abusive people against whom he fulminates in the afore-quoted passage?

Albrecht's affair with Klotilde must also be seen as part of his quest for validation by the elite. The *Schulmeister* is convinced that, if he can make a noblewoman fall in love with him not for his money, title, or erudition, but for his personality, he will have proved that he is equal in every way to the aristocrats — hence, that nobility is not something inborn, but something that needs to be developed and maintained through actions:

> …geliebt zu werden von einer Frau, wie die […] wäre sein Adelsdiplom gewesen! Die Bürgschaft dafür, daß er, der arme Bergmannssohn, ebenbürtig war den Hoch- und Höchstgeborenen! Daß nicht, was er mit andern teilte: sein bißchen Wissen und Können, ihm zum Siege verholfen bei des Lebens olympischen Spielen, sondern das Beste, was der Mensch ist und hat und das er mit niemand teilen kann […]: seine Persönlichkeit. (ibid: 33)

Albrecht's longing for a symbolic certificate of nobility has all the trappings of an inferiority complex fueled by social and psychological factors. Paradoxically, it also reveals two similarities that unite him with the heroine across gender and class lines. Like Klotilde, the *Schulmeister* has a different motivation for pursuing an extramarital liaison than one would expect. Neither for the male bourgeois teacher nor for the aristocratic lady can an affair revolve solely, or primarily, around love. Secondly, in much the same way as Klotilde's suspended train of thought at the end of the streetcar scene, Albrecht's ambivalent attitude toward the nobility suggests that class relations during the 19th century were not a matter of black and white, but of shades of grey.

Further corporeal evidence of the complicated, equivocal rapport between aristocrats and their bourgeois challengers can be gleaned from the way in which Albrecht perceives Klotilde's appearance. His first description of the lady combines physical details with mystical ruminations in a way that calls to mind Lavater's religious approach to physiognomics:

> … die hohe, schlanke Gestalt, die feinen, aristokratischen Züge, die großen, stolzen Augen, das reiche, weiche, dunkle Haar, der königliche Anstand, die lässige Anmut jeder, auch der kleinsten Bewegung, die etwas tiefe, metallische Stimme selbst – er hatte sich in jener seligen Stunde immer wieder gefragt: ist es denn möglich? […] hat denn wirklich endlich der Himmel Barmherzigkeit geübt und will den brennenden Durst löschen des Verschmachtenden in der Wüste? (Spielhagen 1907: 33-34)

Albrecht's word choice in the first half of this passage carries much significance. Nearly all the nouns that describe Klotilde are accompanied by adjectives that either allude to or explicitly denote a privileged social position (*hoch, aristokratisch, groß, reich, königlich*). This abundance of class markers intimates that the *Schulmeister*'s perception of the heroine is filtered through a social lens. He, too, invests facial traits, bodily comportment, and dressing habits with social meaning. *Zum Zeitvertreib* thus suggests that for both the bourgeoisie and the aristocracy of the late 19th century, physical traits were profoundly entwined with social status.

Spielhagen is careful, however, to stress that this connection is neither monolithic nor static. While Albrecht's readings of Klotilde's appearance are socially encoded every time, the sense in which he uses certain terms to refer to her can vary depending on his state of mind. For example, the positive connotations of the adjective *aristokratisch* from the previous passage give way to the derogatory appellation "hochmütige Aristokratin," which Albrecht uses to vent his anger upon remembering an episode in which Klotilde had demeaned his wife in public:

> …an dem Empfang, den die hochmütige Aristokratin seiner Gattin zu bereiten gewagt hatte, war er zur Besinnung gekommen. Ah! dies verächtliche Zucken der Nasenflügel! Dies hohnvolle Lächeln! Diese demütigende Herablassung, mit der sie der Ärmsten dann schließlich doch die Hand gereicht – oder waren es nur ein paar Finger? (ibid: 34)

Klotilde is no longer the socially and physically noble creature from before, who could deliver Albrecht from his social frustrations and tedious bourgeois existence. This time, her body becomes a projection screen for the *Schulmeister*'s class-related insecurities. His complete change of heart vis-à-vis Klotilde emphasizes the fact that body language does not have universal meaning. Its decoding depends on many variables, not least of which the eye and mind of the beholder. Albrecht's fluctuating opinion of the heroine also echoes and reciprocates her own ambivalent attitude toward the *Schulmeister*. In this way, Spielhagen suggests that the aristocracy and the bourgeoisie are locked in a love-hate relationship, albeit for different reasons. Whereas Klotilde's about-face regarding the bourgeois teacher epitomizes the eagerness of the upper class to delimit itself from those laying claim to its socio-political privileges, Albrecht's conflicting thoughts about the

heroine's appearance hark back to his love-hate relationship with the aristocracy in general, which, in turn, draws on aspects of Spielhagen's biography and of Germany's history that I will address in the following section.

Why Ambivalence?

Referring to Spielhagen's other works of fiction, Jeffrey Sammons has noted a pattern of dealing with the aristocracy "in a critical, sometimes satirical or lampooning way, but also sometimes with a degree of envy, perhaps an undercurrent of accommodation" (2004: 73). One explanation for this ambivalence can be found in Spielhagen's autobiography of 1890, where the author admits to being as conflicted about the upper class as I have argued of Albrecht Winter:

> Während ich im Roman Pfeile [...] gegen den Adel schoß, hatte ich in Wirklichkeit auf den Exerzier- und Paradeplätzen, im Kasino, Gesellschaftssalon oder Ballsaal mit Kameraden zu verkehren, die fast sämtlich von Adel waren. [...] Die einfache Erklärung des scheinbar unlösbaren Widerspruches ist, daß ich [...] nicht die Person, sondern die Sache meinte: die Institution, die ich haßte, während ich möglicherweise die Person liebte. (1890, 2: 374-75)

Spielhagen highlights here the difference between person and institution, but also, by extension, between individuals and any larger group, entity, or phenomenon they may represent or be associated with. His plea for the irreducibility of individuality was pertinent and pressing in those days because of the widespread obsession with types, metrics, and universal standards. In the last section of this chapter, I will discuss some of the narrative means by which the German novelist resisted the leveling of singularity practiced in other fields of inquiry at that time. For now, let it be noted that the distinction between person and system to which the novelist adhered in real life ties in with the corporeal and social ambiguity showcased in *Zum Zeitvertreib*. Although in the examples discussed previously, Klotilde and Albrecht have conflicting feelings and thoughts vis-à-vis one and the same person, it is reasonable to argue that the bind in which they are caught comes from recognizing the dual role that this other person plays, as unique individual and as representative of a social class.

In addition to this autobiographical connection, Klotilde's and Albrecht's conflicting views of each other reflect the state of class relations in late nineteenth-century Prussian society. As argued before, 'ambivalent' is a fitting way to describe the attitude of Spielhagen's characters toward members of the other class. This same adjective encapsulates the dynamic between the two leading social strata during the birth of the liberal German bourgeoisie, which, according to Leo Löwenthal, came about in two main stages, with a transitional period in between.

In the decade immediately after the failed revolution of 1848, the German bourgeoisie was so marked by its inability to make liberal principles prevail that it withdrew almost completely from politics and focused instead on consolidating its economic power. During this first phase, the bourgeoisie perceived its main class enemy to be "die Feudalklasse […], die Junker, Großgrundbesitzer und Offiziere" (Löwenthal 1971: 123), meaning the elite officer caste that was deeply loyal to the absolute monarchy for safeguarding their economic, bureaucratic and social privileges. The proletariat, Löwenthal argues further, did not emerge as a self-conscious class with anti-bourgeois values until the transitional stage of 1859 – 1866/70, which coincided with the golden age of railroad expansion. Even then, however, the bourgeoisie continued to define itself primarily in contradistinction to the conservative forces led by Germany's Iron Chancellor. This state of facts changed dramatically in the 1870s, when the bourgeoisie made a sharp about-face and entered an uneasy alliance with Bismarck and the Junker landowning aristocracy. The reasons for this surprising development were varied and many, but only two shall be mentioned here. One was the growing interdependence of bourgeois capitalists and Prussian Junkers in the Rhineland, which was becoming Germany's industrial powerhouse and had been assigned to Prussian control in 1815. The other reason was political. With the consolidation of capitalism, it became clear that the new social classes were there to stay and could not be accommodated inside a divided Germany ruled exclusively by feudal potentates. The compromise reached en route to the eventual unification from above involved a rapprochement between former adversaries and offered advantages to almost all the major players in this historical drama: Bismarck stabilized his power, the aristocracy did not need to fear a complete loss of privileges anymore, and the bourgeoisie finally found some consolation after the debacle of 1848. But trouble persisted. The hasty coalition of old rivals showed how volatile the situation was. It also created, as many now believe, a propitious breeding ground for the authoritarian impulses that culminated in the rise of National Socialism.

Historians argue that the bourgeoisie was ill-served by its alliance with the entrenched elite, which in effect weakened its political potential, allowed Bismarck to solidify his autocratic rule, and disenfranchised the working class. With respect to the last point, it bears mentioning, as a side note, that *Zum Zeitvertreib* does not pay attention to the proletariat either. Critics such as Viktor Klemperer, who authored the first dissertation entirely on Spielhagen, have attributed this oversight to the novelist's supposed fixation on the past—i.e., to an archaic or insufficient understanding of socio-political developments in his own time. It is equally reasonable, I argue, to posit that Spielhagen's focus on the bourgeoisie's relationship with the aristocracy, rather than on its conflict with the proletariat, derived from the particularities of late nineteenth-century German society. The failed revolution of 1848, which was the most decisive political event of Spielhagen's

youth, created a sense that the German bourgeoisie had unfinished business to settle in the latter half of the 19th century. And when it failed to live up to this expectation, forming instead a prejudicial alliance with its archenemy, a renewed disappointment set in that overshadowed the interest garnered by the proletariat in other parts of Europe.

But, to return to what *Zum Zeitvertreib* does depict, Albrecht's and Klotilde's vacillating opinions of each other evoke the real-life dissonance between the attempted liberal revolution of 1848 and the political compromise made by the bourgeoisie when the German states unified under Prussian leadership. Spielhagen, then, mobilizes bodily imagery to reflect through narrative means on the socio-political constellation of his age. Importantly, he does so without coming down on any one side of the spectrum. Neither does he condemn the bourgeoisie for striking an alliance with the establishment, nor does he extol its virtues, as one might expect of an author who, on occasion, did espouse anti-aristocratic sentiments and whom many consider "der Romancier der zweiten Generation [des liberalen Bürgertums]" (Löwenthal 1971: 137). The equally unflattering images that Spielhagen paints of the aristocratic lady and of the bourgeois high-school teacher shore up the novel against accusations of favoring one segment of society over another. They suggest that literature does not take sides or serve a specific political agenda. Instead, it strives to equip readers with the tools necessary to develop their own understanding of people and situations. And if the goal is to empower readers, i.e., unleash their interpretive and creative potential, rather than sway them in one direction or another, then it is paramount for writers to commit to ambiguity over monosemy. In the remainder of this chapter, I will show that one of the ways in which Spielhagen's novel fosters a critical mode of reading through ambivalence and ambiguity is by unsettling the fixity of types.

The Making and Unmaking of Types

In his theoretical essay "Das Gebiet des Romans" (1873), Spielhagen argues that the novel outweighs in importance all other forms of art and literature because it alone can satisfy the spiritual needs of modernity (1967: 38). This leads him to describe as follows what those needs are and what he deems typical of modern civilization:

> Ich glaube, daß man im großen und ganzen zustimmen werde, wenn ich [...] als das eigentlich charakteristische in der Physiognomie der jetzt lebenden Menschen den Drang und den Entschluß bezeichne: [...] es sich heimlich zu machen auf dieser unserer Erde, [...] die nicht eine Vorstufe des Himmels und der Hölle ist, sondern der Grund und Urgrund, aus dem unsere Leiden und Freuden quillen [*sic*]. (Spielhagen 1967: 38-39)

In this symbolic physiognomic reading of his contemporaries, Spielhagen stresses the groundedness of modern existence in reality qua reality, not in reality as a way station en route to the afterlife. Anyone familiar with the eighteenth-century history of ideas will recognize in this a repudiation of Lavater, who legitimated the practice of physiognomy by connecting it with eschatological visions of life after death. To be sure, Spielhagen was not the first to offer a secular take on physiognomics. Attempts to wrest Lavater's more compelling ideas from the grip of zealotry had begun already in the late 18th century. Spielhagen's bone of contention with the Swiss pastor, then, could not claim novelty, nor was it meant to. The author of "Das Gebiet des Romans" did not intend to revolutionize the discourse on physical legibility. The reason why the allusion to Lavater and the use of the word *Physiognomie* in the passage above are important is that they evince a connection between the body, the novel, and reality that is facilitated by typicality, or what Spielhagen calls "das eigentlich charakteristische."

Twenty-four years after the publication of "Das Gebiet des Romans," this nexus found literary rendition in *Zum Zeitvertreib,* where the expressive potential of physical appearance is harnessed for studying class dynamics, rather than just individual psychological processes. Patterns of gestural and sartorial communication emerge in this novel that encourage readers to view characters as social types rather than as distinct individuals. Numerous examples suggest, for instance, that, in the aristocratic world of "Gebärdenspäher und Geschichtenträger" (Spielhagen 1907: 98), being of noble blood requires a set of skills that have to do with how physical bodies relate to one another as they inhabit and negotiate social identities. Skills such as an exquisite taste in dress, an acute spirit of observation, firm control over bodily signals, and an adeptness at dissimulating. Out of all these factors, knowing when, how, and how much to censor one's gestures and facial expressions is most decisive in distinguishing between typical aristocrats and their bourgeois counterparts. We see this contrast play out in a scene that showcases the different ways in which Klotilde and Albrecht handle their love affair in public. Whereas the heroine does not allow herself to display any signs of interest in the *Schulmeister* so as to not feed the gossip mill, he nonchalantly embraces and kisses Klotilde at an art exhibition a few brief moments before they run into some of her acquaintances. Despite Albrecht's pedantic efforts to look and behave like a nobleman, there is a truthfulness to his bodily comportment that cannot be concealed or erased. The ample references to his wife Klara's simple, unsophisticated appearance — from physiognomy to dress and manner of speaking — reinforce the existence, alongside typical aristocrats like Klotilde, of a 'bourgeois exemplar' that is characterized first and foremost by an indelible righteousness.

Throughout the 18th and 19th centuries, social types became common currency in *historische, Zeit-* and *Gesellschaftsromane*. Georg Lukács has argued that the

mark of any great historical novel is its ability to typify the contradictions and class-specific worldviews prevalent in the respective era. In Lukács' own words, the exemplary novels of Walter Scott "portray the struggles and antagonisms of history by means of characters who, in their psychology and destiny, always represent social trends and historical forces" (1962: 34). Extending this idea to the late 19th century, René Wellek has posited that the choice of typical subjects was the most important tenet of realist literature. According to him, the concept of 'type' was crucial for the theory and practice of realism because it "constitutes the bridge between the present and the future, the real and the social ideal" (Wellek 1963: 242), but also because it "formulates the problem of universality and particularity, […] and it states the problem of the hero, of his representativeness and hence of the social challenge implied in a work of fiction" (ibid: 245). During the 19th century, Friedrich Engels expressed a similar sentiment when he defined realism as "the truthful reproduction of typical characters under typical circumstances" (2001: 167).

For his part, the author of *Zum Zeitvertreib* did not single out the notion of 'type' in his theoretical writings, but he insisted time and again that protagonists of novels should epitomize something larger and more meaningful than their isolated individual destinies,[5] and that they should always be portrayed in relation to their social milieu.[6] It stands to reason, therefore, that (social) types would not have been far from Spielhagen's mind as he developed his thoughts on fiction-writing and authored his own novels. His collection of essays *Beiträge zur Theorie und Technik des Romans* provides additional clues about why this narrative device appealed to Realist authors. One reason was that the use of types in novels had the potential to resolve a serious disparity between the ends and means of this literary genre. Spielhagen believed that parallel changes in the physical world and in human existence had made the novel singularly suited to capture the totality of modern experience (1967: 54). On the one hand, this was a positive development, because it gave the novel an important credential in its bid for legitimacy. On the other hand, novelists now faced a new and serious dilemma: how could they

5 "Ich habe […] nachzuweisen gesucht, daß es sich überall, wo die epische Phantasie waltet, schließlich gar nicht um den Menschen handelt, wie er sich als Individuum darstellt, in dieser oder in jener besonderen Situation, erfüllt von diesem oder jenem Gefühl, oder in Konflikt mit einem andern Individuum als handelndes Wesen unter dem Druck dieser oder jener Leidenschaft, sondern vielmehr um die Menschheit, um den weitesten Überblick über die menschlichen Verhältnisse, um den tiefsten Einblick in die Gesetze, welche das Menschenleben regieren, welche das Menschentreiben zu einem Kosmos machen" (Spielhagen 1967: 67).

6 According to Spielhagen, "die ungeheure Aufgabe" of modern fiction writers is "die Betrachtung des Menschen in stetigem Bezug auf die socialen und natürlichen Bedingungen seiner Existenz" (Spielhagen 1967: 39-40).

reconcile the drive toward totality inherent in modern fiction with the limiting effect of the only tool at their disposal, that of concrete representation? Spielhagen himself addresses this problem in the essay "Der Held im Roman" (1874), where he underscores the discrepancy between the novel's impulse toward universality and its groundedness in particularity:

> ...da der einzelne Fall doch niemals die Regel konstituieren kann; ein Menschenleben aber, noch so trefflich herausgearbeitet, [...] doch immer nur ein Einzelnes bleibt, an welchem immer nur ein aliquoter Teil des allgemeinen Menschenloses illustriert werden kann, so kann auch [...] die Rechnung nicht ohne Rest aufgehen, der Beweis nicht ganz erbracht werden, das Abbild das Urbild nicht völlig decken. (Spielhagen 1967: 74)

Types offered a convenient solution to this methodological conundrum. Their ability to condense meaning promised to overcome "[den] Widerspruch zwischen dem epischen Mittel der konkreten Darstellung und dem unausrottbaren Zuge der epischen Phantasie in das (künstlerisch) Grenzenlose" (ibid: 77). In effect, types made it possible for fiction writers to cope with the total history of the human heart and give a panoramic image of the world (*Weltbild*). On the other side of the literary fence, they helped readers navigate the all-encompassing, sometimes over-populated social tableaux of realist fiction. As the many references to science in the passage above suggest,[7] Spielhagen understood that scientific concepts and methodologies — including, but not limited to, types and typification — came with Procrustean propensities that threatened literature's fundamental ambiguity. How exactly he avoided these pitfalls, will be detailed later in this chapter.

Another benefit of using types in Realist novels can be gleaned from Spielhagen's views on the author's visibility in the narrative. As one of the most vocal proponents of objectivity in modern fiction, the author of *Zum Zeitvertreib* decried as early as 1874 the habit of some novelists to intervene in the text when the situation did not call for it. In a letter to Spielhagen from February 1896, Theodor Fontane declared himself in full accord with this criticism, but warned that a clear line of demarcation between useful interventions and gratuitous meddling does not always exist.[8] And even when it does, it is not absolutely fixed, varying

7 In addition to scientific terms (*Fall*, *Regel*, *aliquot*, *Rechnung*, *Rest*, *Beweis*), the passage is suffused with references to the modus operandi of scientists (deriving general rules from specific sample cases, using empirical evidence to test hypotheses) and to mathematical operations (division without remainders).

8 "Das Hineinreden des Schriftstellers ist fast immer vom Űbel, mindestens überflüssig. Und was überflüssig ist, ist falsch. Allerdings wird es mitunter schwer festzustellen sein, wo das Hineinreden beginnt. Der Schriftsteller muß doch auch, als *er*, eine Menge tun und sagen. [...] Nur des Urteilens, des Predigens, des klug und weise Seins muss er sich enthalten" (Fontane 1909: 373).

instead from author to author. In Fontane's view, for example, intrusive authors are those who pontificate and pretend to know better. Spielhagen, on the other hand, condemns interventions that explain what the reader could have inferred from the subsequent development of plot and characters. Among the examples that he mentions of "diskrete und indiskrete Mitteilungen des Autors hinter dem Rücken seiner Personen in das Ohr des Publikums" (Spielhagen 1967: 94) are details of physical appearance rendered tautological by the fact that "[sie] alle ein paar Seiten später ihre […] Erklärung finden" (ibid: 94). Writers who engage in such disambiguating practices and the readers who indulge them are doing themselves a disfavor, Spielhagen believed — the former because they (re)produce "eine Gattung von Poesie, die keine ist, […] ein so bequemes und billiges Surrogat der eigentlichen poetischen Arbeit" (ibid: 95); and the latter because they willingly renounce the cognitive and affective benefits that would otherwise accrue from predicting and interpreting what they read. Admittedly, typified characters do not foster ambiguity; but they can, on account of their semiotic transparency, reduce the likelihood of unwarranted authorial intrusions. In theory at least, the meaning of types is straightforward and reduces to a minimum the time and effort that normally go into encoding and decoding literary symbols. This lessens the temptation for writers to abuse their powers. And with fewer opportunities to monopolize the narrative space, they are more likely to deliver the kind of objectivity that Spielhagen expected of his fellow Realists. As I will argue shortly, the author of *Zum Zeitvertreib* understood very well the loss of depth that comes with using types and with adhering too strictly to the doctrine of objectivity, and he tried to counter it through instances of corporeal ambiguity. By replenishing the body's reservoir of meanings, he actively sought a middle ground between science and literature, factual objectivity and interpretive multiplicity.

Literary types were neither new nor exclusive to the 18th and 19th centuries. But the expansion of the novel at this time did effect changes in their incidence and meaning. Particularly notable was the transition during the golden age of Realism between two meanings of the word *type*, from "a person or thing that exemplifies the ideal qualities or characteristics of a kind or order; a perfect example […] of something" to "a person or thing that exhibits the characteristic qualities of a class; a representative specimen."[9] In other words, the primary meaning of *type* shifted from a model worthy of imitation to a representative figure — representative not in the sense of an ideal construct founded on a set of moral beliefs and values, but in the socio-political sense of an average member of a group held together by class interests. Gone were the days of Homer's epics, Spielhagen ruminates nostalgically at one point, when larger-than-life mythical or national figures would dominate

9 *Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd ed., s.v. "type," accessed March 13, 2019, https://www-oed-com.libproxy.clemson.edu/view/Entry/208330?rskey=RIx5rq&result=2#eid.

the narrative (1967: 144). The age of what Hegel characterized as "totale Individuen, welche glänzend das in sich zusammenfassen, was sonst im Nationalcharakter zerstreut auseinanderliegt" had dawned (Spielhagen 1970: 361). With the rise of the novel and the ever more pronounced stratification of society, heroes embodying the moral ethos of an entire nation gave way to social specimens.

As argued previously, some gestural and sartorial details from *Zum Zeitvertreib* afford a pertinent illustration of this phenomenon, which may be termed the social typification of novel protagonists. Others, however, reveal a more complex picture of Spielhagen's stance on types, one that evinces as much skepticism as it does enthusiasm. The German novelist recognized that typical characters were insufficiently equipped to capture the complexity of human beings and human experience, because they traded depth for breadth. In response, he counteracted the leveling effect of types by drawing on the body's rich expressivity. In doing so, Spielhagen's goal was to give novel characters "[eine] versabile[10] Physiognomie," by which he understood "die leichteste Beweglichkeit, die größtmögliche Eindrucksfähigkeit und Empfänglichkeit" (1967: 185-86). The emphasis here on malleability, openness, and adaptability could not be farther from the fixity of social types or from Lavater's definition of physiognomy. Furthermore, Spielhagen's conjoining of the word *Physiognomie* with the adjective *versabil*, which is related etymologically to the literary term *verse*, gives rhetorical expression to the idea that novels can develop a corporeal poetics that resists the homogenizing, flattening forces of modernity.

Earlier in this chapter, I argued that the ambivalent interpretations which Klara and Albrecht develop of each other's physique gesture toward a dialectical relationship between the aristocracy and the bourgeoisie. In what follows, I will identify two more kinds of ambiguity in Spielhagen's novel that help offset the shortcomings of stock characters and are conveyed through physical appearance. One of them derives from the corporeal and sartorial differences between Albrecht and his wife, indicating divergent social attitudes and undermining the idea of a uniform bourgeois type. As we have seen, the *Schulmeister* grooms his appearance for polite society with utmost care, signaling an unconscious desire to gain their approval. The outer image that Klara projects could not be more contrasting. Everything in her appearance connotes simplicity, from physiognomy and body type to hairstyle and outfit. The narrator describes Albrecht's wife as "eine kleine untersetzte Frau in wenig modischer Kleidung" (Spielhagen 1907: 209). A more detailed, albeit sarcastic, portrait is provided by Klotilde: "Sie sah den Professor

10 In German, as in English, this adjective is now obsolete. It derived etymologically from the Latin verb *versare* and used to describe something that could be turned (*Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd ed., s.v. "versable," accessed March 13, 2019, https://www-oed-com.libproxy.clemson.edu/view/Entry/222671?redirectedFrom=versable#eid).

auf sich zukommen mit einer Dame am Arm, die sie nicht kannte — einer kleinen untersetzten Frau, deren unmodische Frisur und einfache dunkle Toilette so gar nicht in diesen Kreis paßten" (ibid: 28). The aristocrats in the novel interpret Klara's plain exterior derogatively, as a sign that she is not truly noble and does not belong in their circle. Contemporaneous readers, on the other hand, would have taken this lack of pretentiousness as a mark of authenticity. Albrecht chooses the former interpretation, making clear how different his and Klara's attitudes are vis-à-vis their social personas. While introducing his wife at an aristocratic ball, the *Schulmeister* becomes visibly frustrated with her inadequate appearance and conversational maladroitness. Expecting appreciation from the aristocrats "daß Du [d.h. Albrecht selbst], der Du zu ganz andern Ansprüchen berechtigt bist, treu zu der kleinen, unscheinbaren Frau hältst" and receiving pity instead, the teacher cannot conceal his disappointment and embarrassment (Spielhagen 1907: 35). His frustration with Klara's social blunders and lack of sartorial sophistication comes through even as he attempts to praise her. In the same breath as he denies having any regrets about marrying his wife, Albrecht characterizes her, yet again, as simple and unassuming: "Wie einfach und unscheinbar sie sein mochte — das war für ihn Axiom: es gab keine bravere Frau, keine sorgsamere Mutter" (ibid: 35). Spielhagen leaves no room for doubt about what exactly these unflattering qualifiers refer to: "[es gab] keine, die ihn inniger liebte, es so treu und ehrlich mit ihm meinte, wenn auch manchmal ihre Formen zu wünschen ließen und ihre Rede hätte gewählter sein können" (ibid: 35). Whereas Klara excels at her private duties as wife, mother, and homemaker, her public performance at the Sudenburgs' ball, represented metonymically by her simple appearance and unpolished manners, is found wanting by a husband who strives compulsively to ingratiate himself with the aristocracy. The look of embarrassment on Albrecht's face when he sees people's reactions to Klara indicates that the *Schulmeister* is deeply invested in how members of the upper class perceive him and his wife. Albrecht effectively wants Klara to help him win the aristocracy over. In treating his wife like a pawn, he resembles to a marked degree his aristocratic counterpart, Viktor von Sorbitz, who similarly tries to exploit his wife's appeal for professional gain. Once more, the aristocracy and the bourgeoisie are revealed to share common ground despite their many differences in the race for social supremacy.

In a move that exacerbates the symbolic distance between the two spouses, Spielhagen makes clear that Klara is not oblivious or indifferent to the effect of her appearance on the nobility. Nor is she downplaying its seriousness. On the contrary, she anticipates and embraces the consequences of her presence at the Sudenburgs' ball, even warning her husband about the negative impact it will have on his efforts to blend in with the upper class: "Ich passe nicht dahin. Wenn Du eine Frau wolltest, mit der Du Staat machen konntest, dann hättest Du eine andere heiraten müssen. […] Unter all den feinen und geputzten Leuten werde ich eine

traurige Rolle spielen und Dir nur im Wege stehen" (Spielhagen 1907: 35). Given how well Klara understands the social encoding of faces, bodies, and clothing, her modest outfit comes to symbolize an active refusal to dissimulate in order to gain something for herself or to indulge Albrecht in his aristocratic charade. Klara remains true to herself inside and out. She thereby serves as a foil not just to the superficial, duplicitous aristocrats, but to her husband as well. The meticulousness with which Albrecht tends to his appearance so as to gain the approval of the aristocracy could not contrast more starkly with his wife's modesty of dress and overall physical inconspicuousness, which stand for a positively connoted social and domestic self-sufficiency. It follows that physical descriptions of Klara and Albrecht paint a dichotomous picture of their social class, thereby challenging, or at least complicating, the idea of a fixed bourgeois type and of the bourgeoisie as a static, monolithic construct.

Yet another way in which Spielhagen harnesses the expressive potential of the body as a means to reinject ambiguity into the narrative and mitigate the leveling effect of social specimens is by individualizing types through actions that are not in character for them. The mismatch between what a stock figure is supposed to do and what it actually does, i.e., between expectations and reality, gives that character depth, brings vitality to the text, and opens up new interpretive possibilities for the reader. We find a perfect illustration of this in the concluding paragraphs of *Zum Zeitvertreib*. As the novel draws to a close after a tense confrontation between Klotilde and Klara, Spielhagen parts company again with Fontane by not following either the marital crisis in the Sorbitz family or the heroine's life to their respective ends. Instead, in the thick silence that succeeds Klara's departure, the teary-eyed Adele recoils at a curious, half-sobbing, half-laughing sound that, to her and readers' surprise, turns out to be Klotilde crying:

> Plötzlich schreckte sie [Adele] auf bei einem seltsamen Schrei, der hinter ihr erscholl und halb wie lautes Schluchzen, halb wie gellendes Lachen klang. Klotilde lag vor dem Sofa auf den Knieen [*sic*]; das Gesicht in die flachen Hände pressend, während der schlanke Leib in krampfhaftem Weinen zuckte. (Spielhagen 1907: 212)

The intense emotion that Klotilde's body betrays in this scene represents a drastic departure from her usual self. For most of the novel, she plays a typical aristocrat: deceptive, selfish, in full control of her bodily and emotional reactions. Spielhagen's heroine seems to be the epitome of composure and pretense, diametrically opposed to Albrecht's wife. At the very end, however, a new side of her character comes to the fore that undoes the rigid logic of types. As the curtain falls on this domestic and social drama of the late 19th century, we are given a first glimpse behind the façade of Klotilde's carefully constructed public image. Collapsed on the floor and

crying convulsively, the heroine of *Zum Zeitvertreib* outgrows the status of typified character that she inhabited earlier in the novel.

Augmenting this newly-uncovered complexity is the uncertainty over whether Klotilde has been harboring intense feelings all along, away from the prying eyes of readers, or whether this is new to her as well, marking the endpoint of a journey of development that unfolds throughout the text. Several factors favor the latter alternative. One is that at least since the late 18th century, the genre of the novel had understood and presented itself in theory and practice as uniquely apt to show people and events in the process of becoming. The crescendo-like arrangement of events in the final scene of *Zum Zeitvertreib* also casts Klotilde's fit of crying as a climactic moment, as does the cliffhanger ending immediately after we see the heroine kneeling on the floor, her whole body shaking with sobs. But even if we assume that Klotilde had more depth of character from the very beginning, the revelation at the end has the same destabilizing effect on her typicality as the scenario of a transformation. Following Albrecht's death and Klara's tempestuous visit, Klotilde is no longer the monolithic, insensitive character from before. We no longer perceive her as a clichéd figure steeped in social stereotypes. In the single moment of vulnerability and emotional transparency with which *Zum Zeitvertreib* closes, the heroine resists the trappings of typification. Spielhagen thus expands the middle ground between recognizing the narrative benefits of typified characters and ensuring that they do not neutralize the ambiguity on which literature depends. The reader is denied both narrative and character closure, and it is not gratuitous that these two elements come together so clearly in the final scene. As the female protagonist unravels under the weight of her emotions, so, too, does the promise of a traditional denouement, making clear the symbiosis between stories and human beings, narratives and bodies. Definitive answers are permanently deferred, ambiguity takes over, and questions proliferate. Not only questions related to the plot — for instance, about what exactly triggered Klotilde's reaction or what might happen next — but also more general questions about representation and representativeness, heroes and types, as well as corporeal semantics.

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In conclusion, in his novel *Zum Zeitvertreib*, Friedrich Spielhagen channels the body's intrinsic multivalence toward developing a new type of hero/ine, who is neither a moral paragon anymore, as in Homer's time, nor simply a flat social specimen. A middling, rather, but in another sense than the mediocre hero that takes center stage in Walter Scott's novels. As Georg Lukács has theorized, drawing on the ideas of the first major Russian literary critic, Vissarion Grigorievich Belinsky (1811-1848), the Scottian hero stands firmly against the individualism inherent in Romanticism. His importance derives not from extraordinary features

or feats, but from banality, from the fact that the depicted events overshadow his personality. It is precisely because Scott's hero is *not* an individual that he can serve as an "external central hub round [*sic*] which the events unfold" (Belinsky, qtd. in Lukács 1962: 35). Spielhagen also recognized the compositional importance of novel protagonists. In an essay suggestively titled "Der Held im Roman" (1874), he argues, for instance, that if a novelist is to fulfill his task, "so muß er […] aus diesen vielen Menschen einen aussondern, der gleichsam als der Repräsentant der ganzen Menschheit dasteht, und mit dessen Leben und Schicksalen er das Leben und die Schicksale anderer Menschen in eine Verbindung bringt" (Spielhagen 1967: 73-74). For him, however, unlike for Walter Scott, this does not necessitate emptying the main character of selfhood. As I have shown, Spielhagen individuates his protagonists even while granting that they correspond to certain social types. Different from his Scottish predecessor, the German novelist wanted to develop a "versable" hero/ine: socially typical, but also uniquely complex and receptive to change; the kind of hero/ine that would foster ambiguity and polysemy, not stymie them. The rationale for this new protagonist was that its in-betweenness would give human embodiment to the dialectical tension at the novel's core between the particular and the universal, individuation and exemplariness, the physical and the social, subjectivity and objectivity. In this context, the body was singularly suited to emphasize that gaps would always exist between such dichotomous binaries, and that human life — in both a biological and a narrative sense — cannot be treated according to strict scientific principles, or as Spielhagen puts it, like a division without remainders ("die Rechnung [kann] nicht ohne Rest aufgehen," 1967: 74). The body's resilience in the face of increasing attempts to control it served Spielhagen's purpose of conveying to readers that gaps, tensions, and "remainders" are real, irrepressible, necessary parts of life. Reducing bodies and texts solely to what can be accounted for means dehumanizing them. Instead, as *Zum Zeitvertreib* illustrates, one would do better to embrace corporeal and narrative insufficiencies, contradictions, and ambiguities; for they are the ones that fuel our imagination, creativity, and emotions.