"Über die Liebe": Love and Sex According to Eduard Von Keyserling

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“ÜBER DIE LIEBE”: LOVE AND SEX ACCORDING TO EDUARD VON KEYSERLING

by

CAROLINE URVATER

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Center Faculty in Comparative Literature in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy,

The City University of New York

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This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in Comparative Literature in satisfaction of the dissertation requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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Abstract

“Über die Liebe”: Love and Sex According to Eduard von Keyserling

by

Caroline Urvater

Advisor: Distinguished Professor André Aciman

My dissertation is built around an annotated translation of Eduard von Keyserling’s 1907 essay, “Über die Liebe.” The author’s citations are often made from memory and consequently, are not always entirely accurate. This fact is discussed and inaccuracies are corrected.

Chapter One begins with an overview of the historical background of the Keyserling family. It includes biographical material that describes the author’s life and experiences, and introduces his illustrious forbears. It also points to the writers and philosophers who influenced the author’s thinking.

Chapter Two, a review of the literature, discusses some of the dissertations, articles and books that were published about Eduard von Keyserling during his lifetime and in the years succeeding his death. In some cases, certain conclusions are challenged.

Chapter Three consists of the annotated translation of “Über die Liebe.”

Chapter Four is a commentary on the essay, discussing how it relates it to Keyserling’s fiction as well as his reviews and several other of his essays.
Chapter Five deals with the themes found in Keyserling’s fiction. These themes are discussed and analyzed, including the particular works in which these themes appear, namely the novels, short stories and essays.

The Conclusion expresses the dissertation’s main argument, namely, that to understand Keyserling’s point of view and the reasons why unhappy love figures in almost all his stories, the essay “Über die Liebe,” must be read because it, along with the earlier 1905 essay “Zur Psychologie des Komforts,” contain Keyserling’s ideas about love and thus clarify how those ideas have influenced his fiction.

Finally, the dissertation suggests that more of Keyserling’s reviews and essays, as well as his fiction, ought to be translated so as to introduce him to the non-German speaking world and to ensure that he is recognized as the important fin du siècle writer that he is.
Acknowledgments

I owe thanks to several people who helped me write this dissertation. Professors Bill Kelly and Frances Horowitz encouraged me to undertake this project. Bill Kelly, the most brilliant of polymaths, always found time to advise me. Studying with him was one of the most exciting and fulfilling times of my academic life. Professor André Aciman, my advisor, encouraged me to pursue my ambitions, and always had a word of encouragement for me.

My dear friend Rhoda Schnur, in Switzerland, found me many of the German books that I needed. She accompanied me to Latvia to visit Keyserling’s birthplace. Her support and affection helped me to continue my work.

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The CUNY Graduate Center, that bastion of intellectual excellence, was my home away from home. Its atmosphere has always been collegial and welcoming.

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Finally, last but not least, I thank Julie Vanegas for her typing and general support she gave me.
Preface: A Personal Note

A doctoral dissertation is a challenging prospect. One must choose a meaningful topic and try to cast a new light on it, as well as research it as thoroughly as possible. One dedicates much energy and a good deal of time to it.

When I was deciding what to write on, I remembered a book that I had been given years ago. I had found it to be so beautifully written, and so truly evocative of sultry summer days, that I got into the habit of reading it every year, during winter’s darkest days. I had never heard of the author before. My journey to discover who he was and what he had written has been my preoccupation for the last four years.

What I found was a nineteenth century author who lived a short and pain-filled life, dying at the age of sixty-three of syphilis, a killer analogous to today’s AIDS. In his last few years, blind and crippled, Eduard von Keyserling lost the source of his income when the Soviets expropriated the Baltic Germans’ holdings. As a result, the author began to create stories and articles at a furious rate in order to maintain his small household consisting of two sisters and a man who helped him dress and take care of his personal needs.

When I began to research Keyserling’s life and work, I found that while he had been rather well known in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, he was quickly forgotten. There were periodic revivals of interest in him, but they never lasted long. His rich and colorful imagery, his subtle evocation of rebelliousness, loneliness and a long dead aristocracy, captivated me as I began to read about him. To my chagrin, I discovered that there was very little information concerning him because of his instructions to his survivors to destroy his personal papers. I was able to find a few reminiscences about him written by some of his
contemporaries. Through them, I got the picture of a man who though charming and a fine conversationalist, rarely spoke about himself.

I went to his ancestral home in Latvia. It had not been well maintained. There was a very small plaque on one wall of his erstwhile Schloss, now a school, noting his name and the dates of his birth and death, and that he had been a writer. There was a basketball court where once there had been a gravel pathway among flowerbeds and vegetable gardens. Most of the trees he described so vividly in his stories had been cut down.

I studied Keyserling’s portrait by Lovis Corinth as I stood in the Neue Pinakothek museum in Munich. I could see that the painter had made no attempt to conceal the evidence of Keyserling’s ill health, nor his homeliness. In Munich, I also searched for Keyserling’s apartment at number 19 Ainmüller Strasse. It must have been bombed, because when I went to that street there was no number 19. I stood where it ought to have been and looked, as he might have looked, at the buildings across the street. I walked in the little park around the corner where he might have walked, and where his sisters gave candy to the children of family friends. There was no mention of him anywhere. Even when I went to the Bayrische Staatsbibliothek, the Bavarian State Library, to look for his works, only one librarian seemed to have heard of him, but had little to offer about him. Finally, following a lead from a footnote, I asked for the archive of his friends the Bruckmanns. There I found a couple of brief notes Keyserling had written, one declining a dinner invitation because he was not well, the other wishing the Bruckmanns a happy Christmas. I saw a picture of his visiting card with his signature on it. I looked at the flowing script and asked the archivist if I might have a copy of his letter and his visiting card, and was told that it would cost thirty-eight euros to receive such copies. Eight weeks later, a very small
thumb drive arrived in New York; on it, I found the copies I had requested. The actual sight of his signature thrilled me. It was so personal; it seemed to bring me closer to him.

During the years in which I did my research, I developed a deep affection for Eduard von Keyserling. I admired his beautifully written work, and the courage he displayed throughout his later life. Uncomplaining about his health, his blindness and lameness, and about the financial straits in which he found himself after the expropriation of all his family’s holdings, he worked until he died. He maintained his dignity until the end of his days. He was everything that an aristocrat is supposed to be. Were I to meet him I think I would not notice his so-called ugliness; I would rejoice in his beautiful soul.

As I followed clues to the references that he quoted, often from memory, often inaccurately, I became a detective. When he quoted the Bible, I assumed that he had been a Lutheran so I went looking for a Lutheran Bible in German. My first stop was the imposing New York Public Library. Its very size reduces its users to ant-like proportions; its long, marble corridors are exhausting to navigate. When I finally reached the main reading room, I asked a librarian where I could find a Lutheran Bible in German. He pointed to a distant bookcase saying that he didn’t know if there were such a book in the library, but if there were, it would be on the bottom shelf. I explained to him that I was old and arthritic and couldn’t bend. I asked if there were someone who could help me. The librarian said that they were shorthanded so that was not a possibility. Then he turned away, dismissively.

“The hell with you, NYPL,” I said under my breath, and went home angry, but also determined to find my German Lutheran Bible. As I sat at my desk thinking, I remembered that during the Second World War there had been a number of Germans in Yorkville, on the Upper East Side of Manhattan. I went online to look for Lutheran churches in upper Manhattan and
found one in the high eighties. I walked over to see it. The church was closed and there was no sign of a clerical residence next to it. I realized that I would have to return on Sunday.

On Sunday, I went back to the church and sure enough, the doors were open. Inside the large interior there were only ten or twelve elderly people. I sat down. A plump man climbed onto the pulpit and delivered a brief sermon in American-accented German. The gist of it was that German Christians ought to apologize to the Jews for what happened during the Hitler regime.

When the service ended, after the few parishioners had lined up to speak to the minister, I approached him and said that on behalf of the Jews, I wanted to accept his apology. This made him laugh, just as I had intended. Then I told him that I wanted a copy of a German Lutheran Bible because I needed to quote from it in my dissertation. The minister smiled and told me that this was not his church. The small congregation could no longer support a minister of its own, he explained, and so he was hired only for Sundays. As it happened, he added, he preached in three churches on Sundays so he would have to leave to go to his next church. “However,” he said, and pointed to a small room, “that used to be the pastor’s study, why don’t you look in there and see if you can find what you need?” I thanked him and sure enough I found a battered old Bible in Gothic print. It was exactly what I needed. I copied out the reference and went home feeling a great kinship with Sherlock Holmes.

Apart from the letter and visiting card that I found in the Bavarian State Library, I failed to uncover any evidence of Keyserling’s personal papers. As I have noted, he asked that they be destroyed after his death. However, all of a sudden, in a footnote to an article about him, I found a reference to eight letters in the archive of his nephew, Hermann von Keyserling, the philosopher. Finally, I was able to see something private and personal that he had never intended
to publish. The Keyserling who emerged from the letters was in many ways the same gently ironic, erudite man I knew from his published work. However, there was also evidence of an aristocratic contempt for the peasants who were rebelling against the Czarist regime, and whose actions would ultimately deprive him of his home and his source of income. I was experiencing a rare look into a few unguarded moments of a man for whom “tenue” was the watchword.

There is so much more to be done to restore Eduard von Keyserling to a justly merited place in the panoply of German writers. He straddled the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, connecting the past with his present. And while his work was not comparable to that of a genius like Goethe’s, it was, in its own way, unique. His fiction, his essays, and especially his reviews, embodied the changing attitudes of his time, particularly those concerning art. His respect for what he saw as the German character was all too soon to be contradicted by the rise of the Nazis. Nonetheless, his confidence in the essential goodness of his people was meaningful. Just as today, some ugliness underlying the American character is becoming apparent, it too must be countered by the confidence that there is inherent decency in the American people that one hopes will trump the present negativity.

March 16th, 2016
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Introduction: Remembering Eduard von Keyserling

My introduction to Eduard von Keyserling came many years ago, when I was given the book *Schwüle Tage* (“Sultry Days”). I was struck by its powerful, graphic evocation of summer and sultriness, as well as its skillfully drawn characters. Much later in my life, when I elected to pursue my doctoral studies, I became curious about the author. During my research about Keyserling, I saw that he lived in a period of enormous change and I recognized how his thinking was deeply influenced by late nineteenth and the early twentieth century ideas about psychology, the mechanics of perception, and the understanding of sexuality.

Among the last of Baltic German landed aristocrats, he chronicles intergenerational conflicts in his fiction; he notes the incongruity of certain time worn practices such as duels, and exposes the confined lives of aristocratic women. However, his writings went far beyond the events in his homeland. His fiction, subtle, ironic, deceptively simple, portrayed the collision between the end of the old and the beginning of a new century.

These changes were practical, but also philosophical. The author's views on love were certainly influenced by the zeitgeist; many thinkers were concerning themselves with human psychology. Keyserling's personal experiences must also have had an impact on his thinking, but because of the absence of his personal papers, we can only surmise about the influences on him.

He grew up in a large family of eleven or twelve siblings, among whom were several sisters who doted on him. Whatever the cause of his attitude about women and sexuality, and despite his obvious sympathies for women, his writings, both fictional and philosophical, reveals that he was unable to view women as complete sexual beings. His analysis of the child-mother relationship was accurate and perceptive when it dealt with the child's feelings, but his
description of the mother’s feelings were romantic and unrealistic, belonging more to a Victorian
mindset than a modern one. At the same time, he saw men with a clear, even jaundiced eye.

In this dissertation, I show that to fully understand Eduard von Keyserling's stories and
novels, one must have read “Über die Liebe.” Most critics have ignored that essay and its
predecessor, “Zur Psychologie des Komforts.” In focusing on Keyserling’s fiction they did not
cite “Über die Liebe” as a key to understanding the characters presented by the author. I also
argue that the critics were often so beguiled by the beauty and evocativeness of the scenery in
Keyserling's work, that they paid too little attention to the behavior of the characters, thus the
designation “impressionism” resulted from too great a preoccupation with the settings of the
novels and, in general, too little discussion about the protagonists.

In my first chapter, I trace the history of the Keyserling family and show how his writings
contain echoes of his own life as the troubled scion of the last generation of Baltic aristocrats. I
trace his journey from his status as a member of his class, both in academia and in society, to that
of an ostracized college dropout who made a living by his pen, and whose negative view of
romantic love, as analyzed in “Über die Liebe,” infused all of his works of fiction.

In my second chapter, I review the reactions of Keyserling's critics. I begin with what
was written about him during his lifetime; then continue with an examination of what critics
wrote about his work in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. I argue that many critics
misunderstood his writings. They were beguiled by the beauty and evocativeness of the
backgrounds depicted in his various novels, novellas and stories. Many saw him as an
impressionist; in doing so, they often missed the subtle, ironic commentary implicit in his
descriptions of the lives and entanglements of his characters. Moreover, I note that while there
has been recurrent interest in his fiction, his essays and reviews have been largely neglected, and
remain untranslated into English.
Once I translated 1907’s “Über die Liebe,” it became apparent to me that to really understand Keyserling's fiction it is necessary to read his non-fiction pieces. Although it has been treated as a minor essay, “Über die Liebe” is of far greater significance than previous scholars have admitted, or recognized. Not only does it contain a summing up of ideas that he had already expressed in his 1905 essay, “Zur Psychologie des Komforts,” it also discusses, in depth, Keyserling's views on the difficulties inherent in human relationships, and so provides a basis for better understanding of his fiction.

The centerpiece of my dissertation, chapter three, is a translation of “Über die Liebe,” which has never before been published in English. The translation has also been annotated and explicated to clarify the sometimes inaccurate references Keyserling made in his writing.

My fourth chapter, the commentary on “Über die Liebe,” is devoted to establishing the connections between it and Keyserling's fiction, demonstrating how Keyserling's ideas about love in its many manifestations are carried out in his stories, novels and novellas.

In my fifth and final chapter, I examine the themes to which he returned again and again in his novels and stories, all of which can be traced back to “Über die Liebe.” Each story embodies his views about eroticism, about the conflict between the old and the young, and the meaning of friendship, all seen through Keyserling's subtle, often ironic lens.

Interest in Eduard von Keyserling has waxed and waned, but has never quite disappeared. Today his worth has been recognized sporadically. I hope that my work on “Über die Liebe,” a minor essay that I argue is actually not minor at all, will have added a modicum to the mounting evidence that he was an important fin de siècle writer and commentator.
Chapter 1

Eduard von Keyserling: Clarum et Venerabile

The Keyserling family roots went back several centuries before their arrival in the Baltic region. Originally, they had come to the area from the Hanseatic city Herford in Westphalia. In 1492, the knight Hermann Keyserlingk [sic] moved to the Baltic region of Kurland (in present-day Latvia) where he was inducted into nobility (Ungern-Sternberg 202). The family were important landowners in Kurland, with large estates composed of fields and forests of many hectares. In Kurland, the ruble was the prevailing currency. The local aristocrats were more involved with the Russian tsar and his colleagues than with the German government in Berlin. Their strong ties to the Russian nobility allowed them many privileges: they largely governed themselves, controlled their own educational institutions, and were the local dispensers of justice. These rights, according to David Kirby’s The Baltic World, 1772-1993: Europe’s Northern Periphery in an Age of Change, “had been solemnly guaranteed by successive Russian rulers since 1561” (78-9).

The Keyserlings were not only wealthy landowners, but they had also become part of the cultured class of the eighteenth century, whose interest in the arts and the life of the mind reflected Enlightenment values. In 1741, Eduard von Keyserling's ancestor, the insomniac Hermann Karl von Keyserling, commissioned J. S. Bach to write a set of variations, to be played by his harpsichordist, Johann Gottlieb Goldberg, in the hope that the music would help him fall asleep. This music is known today as the Goldberg Variations (Kolneder 134).

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1 Phrase from Marcus Annaeus Lucanus, which means an “illustrious and venerable” name.
Immanuel Kant served as tutor in the Keyserling home in the 1750s; he was also a friend of the family and a frequent visitor to their estate. His ideas had a profound influence on Eduard's great uncle, the well-known naturalist, geologist, philosopher and educator, Alexander von Keyserling (Schwidtal and Undusk 10). During the reign of Czar Nicholas I (1825-1855), Alexander collaborated with Roderick I. Murchison and Edouard De Verneuil to publish *The Geology of Russia in Europe and The Ural Mountains: A Brief Account of Its Compilation and Impact*² (Schwidtal and Undusk 74-77). He is considered, along with Alexander von Humboldt, to be one of the founders of Russian geological studies. The Keyserling family were well-acquainted with members of the Russian court and served the Romanovs in many capacities until 1869, when Alexander von Keyserling found that he was no longer ethically and philosophically in agreement with the czar, and withdrew from contact with him.³ The family continued to enjoy the rights afforded the landed gentry for another generation, but this break was an early sign of the eventual dissolution of the Baltic aristocracy.

During the nineteenth century, members of the intellectually rich Keyserling family pursued their lives in much the same manner as they had done for most of the eighteenth century, and it was into this world that in mid-May of 1855, on a large estate called Tels-Paddern, Eduard Heinrich Nikolas von Keyserling was born, the seventh of eleven children. The exact day of his birth is uncertain; the “Neue Deutsche Biographie” lists him as having been born on 14 May, but it does not indicate his position among his brothers and sisters. It refers to his nephew Otto von Taube as a source of information (Martini 563).⁴ Keyserling attended Gymnasium, and in 1875

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³ “So lange sich der Dienst mit seinen Auffassungen von Gemeinwohl, Ethik und Rechtmäßigkeit deckte, würde er fortfahren, tatkräftig und opferbereit dem Haus Romanov zu dienen. So bald er aber mit der Staatspolitik nicht mehr einverstanden war, und insbesondere in Bereichen, die ihn persönlich tangierten musste er sich von diesem Dienst entfernen. Nach 1869 hatte er dem Zaren auf der reichrussischen Ebene kaum mehr etwas zu bieten.” (Bartlett 38)
⁴ Accounts vary. Homscheid writes he was the youngest of twelve children (14).
passed his Abitur, an examination given after thirteen years of school. He went on to university at das Kaiserliche Universität in Dorpat. For most young men of Keyserling's class, college was the means to forge connections with one's peers and prepare one to manage the family estate or engage in gentlemanly intellectual pursuits. And indeed, he registered for Roman Legal History, Theory of Constitutional Law, Theory of Legal Administration, Russian Legal History, Russian Constitutional Law, History of Recent Philosophy, and the History of Modern Russian Literature. However, Keyserling left the university without a degree, having spent only the periods from 16 August 1875 until 30 May 1876, 21 September until 26 November in 1876, and from March until May, 1877. Because of his absences, which may have been due to his ill health, he received credit for only one semester of attendance.

Although he may not have spent much time in class, records do show that he was active—if not always lawfully so—in a fraternity to which his two older brothers also belonged. A university caretaker accused him, along with four classmates, of threats and assault. The caretaker had been called to a brothel when a prostitute complained that one of Keyserling's friends had thrown a bottle at her and then kicked her. The students left the brothel, but only after multiple orders to leave the premises. Three students were expelled; Keyserling and a classmate were suspended for eight days for not obeying the orders given in the name of the law, by the university caretaker. This incident in the brothel may well have been the source of Keyserling's syphilis, which in turn led to the blindness and spinal cord damage that ultimately caused his death (Schwitztal and Wistinghausen 161–68).

Keyserling also got into trouble because of his personal debts. While acting as the administrator of his fraternity's funds, he was accused of borrowing money from the fraternity’s coffers. The fact that he returned the money did not alleviate the problem; someone noticed that
the banknotes were not the same as those with which he had been entrusted. He was deemed to have violated the student honor code, ejected from his fraternity, expelled from the university, and ostracized by his fellow students (Schwïdtal and Wistinghausen 165).

Keyserling, seeking a milder, more beneficial climate for his already uncertain health, and since he could not return to Kurland, went to Vienna and Graz, entering a world where the philosophers, poets and intellectuals he met would introduce him to the ideas that helped make him the writer he became. He studied History of Art and Philosophy, and was part of the well-known Austrian playwright Ludwig Anzengruber's circle. Keyserling, when not traveling to “cure” places, Kurorten, lived off and on in Austria until the 1890s. After the death of his father in 1892, he returned to Kurland to administer the family estate. He found many changes. There was unrest among the peasants that would ultimately lead to the revolution of 1905.

In the late 1880s, the rights of the Baltic aristocrats, held for centuries, had been transferred to the central Russian government, causing the comfortable relationship between them and the court at St. Petersburg to fray. Moreover, the introduction of the railways had changed Kurland from an isolated agrarian backwater dominated by Baltic Germans to a place where the local peasants, now fully 75% of the population, were demanding rights as Latvian citizens (Kirby 166).

When his mother died in 1894, he moved with his sisters, Henrietta and Elise, to Munich where he lived for the rest of his life (Taube 322–23). During 1899–1900, the siblings traveled widely, spending three months in Venice, one in Florence, two in Siena, and they also visited Rome, Naples and Paestum. After their Italian trip they returned to Munich, where they lived together at 19 Ainmüller Street.

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Keyserling's sisters adored him and did everything to take care of him. Thomas Homscheid, in *Eduard von Keyserling: Leben und Werk*, cites Korfiz Holm, a neighbor and friend of the Keyserlings, who wrote about the sisters: “They looked very much like [their brother Eduard] and therefore, in no way could they have been described as pretty…yet, in their deliberately unfashionable clothes they were thoroughly aristocratic. They were just as likeable as their delightful brother” (47-48). Holm wrote that his children would often play in a nearby park where the Keyserling sisters would go. The warm relationship was fostered by the sisters' custom of feeding the children Baltic-style chocolate cookies.  

While he lived in Vienna, Keyserling published a short story, “Fräulein Rosa Herz” in 1887, and a play, *Die dritte Steig* (“The Third Level”), in 1892. After he moved to Munich in 1896, he published a story called “Grüss Gott, Sonne!” (“Hello, Sun!”) followed in 1897 by *Grüne Chartreuse* (“Green Chartreuse”), both published in the magazine *Jugend*. In 1900, he published *Ein Frühlingsopfer* (“A Spring Sacrifice”) a three-act play, followed by *Der dumme Hans* (“Stupid Hans”), a tragedy in four acts. All his other works, plays, many reviews of books and art exhibitions were written later, in Munich.

His many publications indicate that he was an integral part of Munich’s intellectual life, including the fact that he was a well-known member of a circle that included writers and other creative artists. Among these were the brothers Frank and Donald Wedekind and Max Halbe. They all met daily in Café Stephanie, where they had their own table. In the evenings, they would come together again in several restaurants including Torgelstube (which still exists today).

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6 “Sie glichen ihm im Äußeren sehr und waren keineswegs das, was man hübsch nennt, wirkten aber in ihrer beabsichtig unmodischen Gewandung aristokratisch durch und durch. Dass sie auch ihres Bruders große Liebenswürdigkeit besaßen, weiß ich von meinen…Kindern mit denen die Komtessen Keyserling…die freundliche Verbindung pflegten, und die sie oft mit Schokoladenplätzchen, einer typisch baltischen Delikatesse fütterten.” (Homscheid 47–48)
Keyserling and his friends often went to the theater, after which they could be found in the Hoftheater restaurant, among other favored dining places. A known wit, Keyserling often dominated the conversation.

Homscheid quotes a telling story by Oskar Maria Graf about Keyserling at this period of his life. One of the restaurants favored by the author and his friends was Simpl, a favorite restaurant of poor young artists, as well as of famous and established ones. On one or more occasions, the owner could be heard cursing while she hit some of the young men with a spoon because they could not pay the check. On learning the cause of the commotion, Keyserling would say in his North German accented speech, “Oh, the youngsters. Leave them be. The bill will be paid.” Then the young group would toast their deliverer, the “old man,” the nearly blind, 55 year old Baltic writer (59-60).

Friends often remembered Keyserling's gentle irony and wit. According to Otto von Taube, one of Keyserling’s nephews, Keyserling described his nephew Hermann as follows: “I have a nephew who regards himself the same way as a child who stands in front of a glowing Christmas tree.” And, “when asked whether the poet Stefan George, whom he knew, looked like Dante, Keyserling answered: 'No, he doesn't look like Dante, he looks like an old woman who looks like Dante” (Taube 325).

Keyserling's friend Frank Wedekind was an extremely contentious person who was said to have had a devilish appearance. He had many arguments with Keyserling's friend Max Halbe. Often they almost came to blows. At one point, a duel was proposed; it was only avoided through Keyserling's peacemaking efforts.

7 "Ach die Jungs! Lass sie schon. Wird bezahlt!"
8 "Ich habe einen Neffen, der steht vor sich selbst wie einen Kind vor einem brennenden Weinachtsbaum."
9 "Auf die Frage, ob Stefan George, den er kannte, wirklich wie Dante aussehe, antwortete er: 'Nein, er sieht nicht aus wie Dante; er sieht aus wie eine alte Dame, welche wie Dante aussieht."
After a sustained exchange with Halbe one evening, Wedekind filled with wine and hostility, told Keyserling that he must choose between the two combatants, because any friend of Halbe's was Wedekind's enemy. Korfiz Holm quotes Keyserling's gently ironic response: “Basically, I prefer not to be faced with such alternatives. Halbe didn't do so. Therefore, let's say him. And now, my dear Frank, goodbye forever.” Holm notes that Keyserling left with a quiet smile. He knew that in Swabia, “forever” has its limits (Homscheid 68).

Klaus Gräbner, quoting Holm, adds that Wedekind yelled after Keyserling: “Fine with me. It is always difficult to associate with people who are so ugly!” To which Keyserling replied, in a gentle tone, “I naturally chose you because of [your] beauty” (Feiertagsgeschichten, afterword 172). However, the author took these words deeply to heart. Who wouldn't have, especially since Wedekind was not exactly handsome himself?

Keyserling’s ugliness was often commented on by those who knew him. Gräbner stated that in an article in Der Tag, Keyserling’s friend, Max Halbe, wrote that when he first saw Keyserling he was shocked by his appearance. He described Keyserling as looking like “a seventy-year-old who died one hundred years ago, and who has been moldering in the grave from then until now” (Feiertagsgeschichten, afterword 172). At that time, Keyserling was only in his early fifties. However, Halbe went on to say that, such an impression was soon forgotten once one got to know Keyserling.

In the Munich museum, the Neue Pinakothek, hangs Lovis Corinth's 1900 portrait of Keyserling. Bearing witness to Halbe's description, it portrays an emaciated man in ill-fitting

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10 "Ich schätze es im Grunde mehr, wenn man mich nicht vor solche Alternativen stellt. Und Halbe hat es nich [sic] jetan [sic]. Sagen wir also: er! Und nun, meein [sic] lieber Frank: auf ewig lebe wohl.' Mit leisem Lächeln wendet er sich ab, er wusste ja, dass eine Ewigkeit in Schwabing ihre Grenzen hat."
11 "Ich habe mir dich natürlich nach der Schönheit ausgesucht [sic]. Aber krumm genommen hat er dieses Wort von Wedekind in tiefsten Herz doch.' Wer hätte es nicht, zumal Wedekind auch nicht gerade ein Beau war."
12 "eine[n], der vor hundert Jahren als Siebzügler gestorben wäre und seitdem bis heute nachmittag im Grab gemodert hätte."
clothes, his bulging blue eyes set in swollen bags. His lips are unnaturally red above a receding chin. His hands are clasped, the left one bearing a ring. His shirt cuffs are much too wide for his slender wrists. His face wears an expression of ineffable weariness and introspection. Korfiz Holm reported Keyserling's words as the two of them stood in front of the portrait: “It may be well painted,” said the writer, “in spite of the brutality of its content, and [the painter] conversed well with me while he was painting it. I would, however, prefer not to look like that”13 (Homscheid 52). Another Munich painter asked Keyserling if he might paint his portrait because his skin looked exactly like crumpled paper. The writer replied in his Baltic accent: “No, dear friend, why don’t you rather paint the day before yesterday's newspaper, 'Munich's Latest News'?"14 (Homscheid 52)

Despite suffering a range of maladies throughout his life, Keyserling was an extremely reticent man and never complained about his ill health. He tried to hide his impairments from the sisters with whom he was living. Indeed, it was two weeks after he went blind that they finally discovered his condition. Even while his blindness was an open secret, Keyserling still tried to conceal it from his acquaintances. He did not want any sympathy and would not discuss his poor health.

In a Die Welt article celebrating Keyserling's 150th birthday, the critic Tilman Krause quotes Holm:

> Often when I walked with my wife along Franz-Joseph-Strasse we would meet him, old, tottering, deadly pale, supported on the arm of his young servant. From far off we already saw how the latter whispered something to him, and how a few short sentences were hastily exchanged between the two of them. Then, ten paces away from us, he tipped his hat. We stood before him and shook hands with him. After the greeting he said gallantly, “Dear madam you are as lovely as the day,

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13 "Es mag, trotz der Brutalität, die drinsteckt, gut jemalt [sic] seein [sic], und gut unterhalten hat er mich dabeei [sic]. So aussehn aber möcht [sic] ich lieber nich [sic]."
14 "Nee, lieber Freund, dann malen Sie doch lieber die Münchner Neuesten von vorjestern [sic]!"
and oh, that lovely blue dress.” He always had some good words for us, in the old fashioned manner, full of spirit and good cheer.15 (Krause n.p.)

When Keyserling, crippled as well as blind, was unable to go out, his friends from the cafes and restaurants neglected him. With the exception of Max Halbe and one or two others, no one came to chat with him.

Near the end of his life, Keyserling was blind and bedridden in Munich, and was no longer receiving any income from his estate in Kurland. In need of money and in spite of his infirmities, his last four years became his most productive. He dictated many novels in this late period. His views remained optimistic; his belief in man’s basic decency was evidenced by the extraordinarily idealistic essay “Über den Haß” (“On Hatred”) that he published in 1916 shortly before his death:

At the moment, the air in Europe is embittered by terrible hatred among nations between whom dreadful, unbridgeable abysses exist. However, there has to be a time when instead of being against one another, they will work together on cultural tasks. Such a time has to come so that the deepest meaning of the human condition is not perverted. Won't the German with his need for comprehension, his inability to close off his conscience, won't he be the first before all others, to take on the duty of once again joining up severed connections, rebuilding broken bridges? Won't it devolve onto him to be the one to awaken people's consciousness of the understanding that human existence is a huge, common property, and that being human is a great mutual duty?16 (Feiertagsgeschichten, 153)

This excerpt might serve as the last words of a gifted, early twentieth century writer who maintained his belief in the ultimate goodness of humanity.

By 1918, all of Europe was involved in the “Great War.” As a result of the Russian revolution all the Baltic German estates had been expropriated. That same revolution finally put an end to the world into which Keyserling had been born.

The author died on September 28, 1918 at the age of sixty-three. He is buried in Munich's north cemetery. Although he has been sometimes forgotten he has not remained entirely unknown. There have been periodic revivals of interest in him and his work. Today he is regarded as a significant writer whose work chronicled the passing of the old aristocracy, and whose essays and reviews described his preoccupations of not only the German fin de siècle, but also the early twentieth century.
Chapter 2

Review of the Literature

In this chapter, I shall summarize some of the critical attitudes towards Keyserling’s work. The majority of critical comments deal with his fiction. I shall argue that he was often underestimated and in many instances misunderstood.

Critics have expressed many different opinions about where to situate Keyserling in the array of German literature, and how to describe his style. The majority of them, including early critics such as Ulrich Stülpnagel, saw him as an impressionist, citing his poetic and sensitive descriptions of the landscapes inhabited by his characters who were delineated with great psychological insight. The critics are almost entirely in agreement concerning Keyserling’s extraordinary ability to evoke sounds, colors, sights, and scents.

Walter Reichert, in his 1935 essay on Keyserling’s novel Abendliche Häuser (“Evening Houses”) describes him “Keyserling, the aristocrat, is a realist of Theodor Fontane's school; he avoids pathos and emotional display” (45). Other critics, writing more recently, prefer the label “naturalist,” citing Keyserling’s landscapes and his realistic, detached portrayal of aristocrats. Still others place him among decadent writers, referring to his descriptions of a dying society as portrayed in his Schloßgeschichten such as Dumala, Abendliche Häuser, and Harmonie, among others. William Webb Pusey III begins his critique, “The Generation Gap and Interpersonal Relationships in the Novels and Stories of Eduard von Keyserling,” by magnanimously granting that upon reexamining Keyserling’s novels and stories, he believes that, Keyserling “deserves a respected place as a minor novelist in the history of German literature, and not only because he constitutes an almost perfect exemplar of the decadent, fin-de-siecle [sic] impressionist writer.”
Pusey goes from a rather tepid attitude at the beginning of his article to a more enthusiastic, affirmative conclusion about the author, stating generously (and I believe accurately):

“Blending compassion and irony, Keyserling has delineated credible men and women, their interactions — frequently across the generation gap — and their human problems with such skill and authority that, it seems to me, that it is valid to say that his stories do indeed transcend their local time and place and relate meaningfully to the world today” (29-35).

Realism and naturalism are labels that have also been applied to Keyserling’s writings. In *Color and Light in the Writings of Eduard von Keyserling*, Richard Weber wrote: “As Keyserling first began to write in the 1880s…at a time when Realism was still prevalent and Naturalism probably approaching its peak, it should not be surprising to find in his work realistic description (23).

The desire to pigeonhole a writer is also a way of evading in-depth analysis, thereby not doing justice to the works under consideration. There is a sort of laziness in criticism that attempts to categorize a style of writing with one word. This topic is deftly dealt with in an essay by E. Allan McCormick, entitled “Eduard von Keyserling and the ‘fin de siècle’: A European Perspective,” presented at a 1974 Symposium:

“…the welter of labels used in literary history but of the outright confusion and contradiction that arise when any of them is made to serve as principle designation of the period. The difficulty lies of course in the fact that no single fact can possible [sic] catch the variety of tones, techniques, and intentions that manifest themselves in European literature around the turn of the century… In discussing a few of the major characteristics of Eduard von Keyserling’s fiction, I use the term “fin de siècle” rather than impressionism, which Calvin Brown, in “How Useful is the Concept of Impressionism? *Yearbook of Comparative & General Literature* 17 (1968), p.59, suggests be dropped from the literary vocabulary, or decadence, of which I fail to find many compelling instances in Keyserling altogether.” (22)

McCormick quotes Michel Benamou’s introduction to the “Symposium on Literary Impressionism,” held a few years earlier, in which Benamou quipped: “impressionism is one of
the four cardinal humors governing fin de siècle literature. The other three are…phlegmatic Naturalism, choleric Wagnerism, and splenetic Decadentism” (22).

In contradiction to McCormick, Benamou and Brown, Arnold Hauser in The Social History of Art, argues that “towards the end of the [nineteenth] century impressionism became the predominant style throughout Europe.” When Hauser uses the term, it becomes an umbrella for a large number of “isms,” incorporating naturalism. However, when Hauser applies the term to literature he admits: “As a literary style impressionism is, intrinsically, not a very sharply defined phenomenon” (880).17

I believe, as McCormick does, that the language of art criticism ought not to be applied to literature. The word “impressionist” that has been applied to paintings does not work as a tool for literary criticism. The term has to do with visual impressions. Keyserling’s carefully crafted prose poetically evokes visions of landscapes, colors, trees, flowers, gardens, and forests, but unlike impressionist paintings, these visions exist only in the reader’s imagination. Therefore, I argue that Keyserling is best understood as a fin de siècle writer whose work encompasses realistic descriptions of people and their environs, subtle social criticism, and trenchant psychological insight.

Keyserling, in his own time was so highly regarded that his work appeared in the most prestigious publications of his era. It was well received, reviewed and discussed in literary journals and papers by other men of letters, including Leon Feuchtwanger, who founded the famous German magazine Der Spiegel in 1908.18

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17 See the chapter on Impressionism, 869-925. Hauser uses the term as a wide ranging description of the uneasiness, pessimism, and uncertainty about time that were attributes of the turn of the century. The word ‘impressionism’ becomes an umbrella for a large number of “isms”.

18 Feuchtwanger was a German Jewish writer known for his novel Jud Süß. He was forced to leave Germany in 1933 because of Nazi persecution.
Klaus Gräbner, in his afterword to Feiertagsgeschichten (“Holiday Stories”), points out that in putting together collections of Keyserling’s writings, he found them published in various prestigious publications such as the Viennese Neue Freie Presse. Quoting Stefan Zweig in “Die Welt von Gestern,” Gräbner points out:

“In Vienna there was actually only one publication of the highest rank…in the Austro-Hungarian monarchy, equal in prestige to that of The Times for the English speaking world and Le Temps for the French one…The holiday issues of the Neue Freie Presse contained the writings of the greatest writers of the time, Anatole France, Gerhart Hauptmann, Ibsen, Zola, Strindberg and Shaw (167-168).”

Another writer included in this august company, Gräbner notes, was Keyserling.

Some of the commentaries on Keyserling’s legacy came shortly after his death in 1918, in eulogies written by Max Halbe, Otto Flake, and Thomas Mann. Halbe was a very close friend of Keyserling’s, and the two men frequently reviewed each other’s work. Halbe’s eulogy, published in Der Tag on October 11, 1918, just weeks after Keyserling’s death, is passionate and flowery, referring to Keyserling’s unparalleled intellectual attributes. Keyserling’s writings, according to Halbe,

“…was not so much an unbroken, passionate struggle with himself and the inner forces, as it was perhaps a most exquisite intoxicant to separate himself from his self and his inner forces, and more and more often, and particularly in later years, to master bodily suffering and depression.”

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19 "In Wien gab es eigentlich nur ein publizistisches Organ hohen Ranges, die 'Neue Freie Presse,' die durch ihre vornehme Haltung, ihre kulturelle Behmüttheit un ihr politisches Prestige für die ganze österreichisch-ungarische Monarchie und die gleiche bedeutete wie die 'Times' für die englische Welt und die 'Temps' für die französische...Die Feiertagssammern zu Weinachten und Neujahr stellten mit ihren literarischen Beilagen ganze Bände mit den größten Namen der Zeit dar: Anatole France, Gerhart Hauptmann, Ibsen, Zola, Strindberg, and Shaw..."

20 Other reminiscences about him were published, including the stage designer Theophile von Bodisco’s “Eduard von Keyserling” in Der Tag, Nr. 234, 1919.

21 “Das Dichten ist ihm nicht so sehr ein ununterbrochener, leidenschaftliches Ringen mit sich selbst und mit den inneren Gewalten gewesen, als vielleicht ein allerfeinsten, zartesten Rauschmittel, um sich von sich selbst und jenen inneren Gewalten abzulenken, oft und öfter wohl auch, in späteren Jahren, um körperlicher Leiden, schwerer Bedrückungen Herr zu werden.”
In Thomas Mann’s eulogy for Keyserling, first published in 1918 and then later included in his collected works, Mann compares Keyserling to Theodor Fontane (1819-1898), a highly regarded German writer, often called a realist, who wrote about the Prussian nobility and also about women’s roles in domestic life. Mann notes that whenever Keyserling’s name comes up, Fontane will always be mentioned. Comparing Keyserling to Fontane, Mann wrote that he was very similar in attitude exhibiting “the same distancing…skepticism and resignation. …Graceful and effortless dialogue…however, what is lacking in Keyserling is the breadth…His work is smaller…” (“Zum Tode Eduard Keyserlings,” 539).

Though Mann acknowledged that Keyserling’s novels are unvergänglich—everlasting—he ended his eulogy by saying “he was no leader, but he will always be beloved” (“Zum Tode Eduard Keyserlings,” 540). I believe that Mann, as a contemporary of Keyserling, focuses only on the surface of Keyserling’s work, missing the depth of perception inherent in it. Keyserling’s work concentrated on a particular segment of society. He did not make macroscopic observations; his work was far more focused on a particular group than Fontane’s was.

Mann’s eulogy is condescending, doing more to lionize Fontane than to memorialize Keyserling, in whose work there were broader implications and more trenchant social commentary than Mann seems to have recognized. He seems to have missed the fact that the manner in which Keyserling wrote combined psychological acuity in his portrayal of characters and wonderfully evocative descriptions of the settings for his stories.

Mann’s prediction that Keyserling will always be loved has been, unfortunately, only intermittently true. For example, Ernst Heilborn published an early biography in 1921 and in

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22 “Es ist dieselbe Distanzierung…Skepsis und Resignation. Dieselbe Grazie des Plauderns…Es felt bei Keyserling die Breite…Sein Werk ist schmaler.”

23 “Er war kein Führer; aber er wird immer geliebt werden.”

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1922 produced a four volume collection, *Eduard von Keyserling, Sein Leben und sein Werk: Gesammelte Erzählungen* (“Eduard von Keyserling: His Life and His Work: Collected Stories”), but these books are out of print and have never been reissued. It seems that every generation or so interest in Keyserling has revived, only to diminish again.


Of the early critics, the most interesting is Walter Reichert, who in 1935, wrote about the novel *Abendliche Häuser* (“Evening Houses”). He emphasizes the historical accuracy of Keyserling’s work, underlining, as have many critics, the author’s focus on the conflict between the older aristocrats and their children. Noting that the younger generation never wins, Reichert writes that Keyserling was a nineteenth century realist of the Fontane school who depicts a basic struggle of that century. Reichert calls him a “spokesman of his era” whose “psychological insight guides him unfailingly” (45-6). He continues, “in Keyserling’s work as a whole, love is the factor that complicates human relationships and causes tragic conflicts…love (is) an irrational desire that complicates the ordinary relationships of life” (46). He (Keyserling) emphasizes the confusion resulting from love. “For him restraint and tact are lost when love appears.” 24 “Sensuality,” Reichert goes on to say, leads to “complications which lead to tragedy.
not as a consequence of an all-consuming passion, but because human beings as individuals lose their personal freedom” (46).

Like the majority of Keyserling’s critics, Reichert does not mention the essay “Über die Liebe.” However, much, but not all of what he writes, echoes the sentiments found in “Über die Liebe.” In that essay, Keyserling shows that the difficulties inherent in love reside in the impossibility, as he sees it, of two people having the freedom to enjoy a satisfactory erotic relationship:

“One human spirit unique and solitary is supposed to join in a shared rhythm of life with another human spirit that is equally solitary. Even when a great love seems able to completely solve the problem of joining there always remains a residue of contradictions and antitheses that insert something tense and agitated into that love. Something akin to pain is present in all happiness.” (“Über die Liebe,” translation 44)

Reichert’s comments are exceptional, because there was very little scholarship about Keyserling during the long hiatus between the 1920s and the 1950s. This can be explained by the rise of Nazism and the general social conditions in Germany that were not conducive to any intellectual activity. On the contrary, there was a huge outflow of liberals and intellectuals, Jews and non-Jews alike.

Finally, in the 1950s, a new surge of interest in Keyserling began, and notably some of it took place outside Germany. From around 1950 until 1962 there were at least ten dissertations and critical writings about Keyserling, including: Brinkmann’s Wirklichkeit und Illusion: Studien über Gehalt und Grenzen des Begriffs Realismus für die erzählende Dichtung des 19 Jahrhunderts (“Reality and Illusion: Studies of the Content and Limits of Perception of Realism for the Narrative Fiction of the Nineteenth Century”) in 1957; Pusey’s Eduard von Keyserling als

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26 As is usually the case in a dictatorship, art of any sort, except when sanctioned by those in charge, is discouraged, often banned; books are burned. Totalitarianism is never a friend of free, artistic expression.

William Webb Pusey III wrote several critiques of Keyserling’s work. Often, in various of his articles, Pusey refers to the author’s “impressionistic prose.” Pusey, more than any previous critic of the time, writes about Keyserling’s essays. He makes a most valid connection between the 1905 essay “Zur Psychologie des Komforts” and the 1907 essay “Über die Liebe”—each of which appeared in the newspaper Die neue Rundschau—and he relates them to several of Keyserling’s stories. Pusey’s interest in Keyserling’s work was deep and thorough. He read all of Keyserling’s essays and critiques, and may well have been the impetus for the increased American interest in the writer that was manifested in succeeding years.

In the 1970s, there were several critical studies of Keyserling. Notable among them were 1972’s The Festschrift for Frederic E. Coenen and Eduard von Keyserling: A Symposium. Both these publications were the result of conferences held in the United States, an indication of continuing American interest in Eduard von Keyserling.

In an article entitled: “The Generation Gap and Interpersonal Relationships in the Novels and Stories of Eduard von Keyserling,” published in 1974, comparing Keyserling’s writings with Turgenev’s, Pusey states: “Keyserling, of course, is not a writer of the stature of Turgenev. Admittedly his themes are restricted, his settings monotonously similar, and his character types repetitive” (33). Here Pusey reveals himself as having missed the depth and breadth of Keyserling’s skill as a writer. In fact, the stories and novels have similar yet varied settings
mirroring the events of each story. However, there are subtle variations in the characters of every one of the aristocrats described.

Wayne Wonderley, discussing Keyserling’s story *Landpartie* ("Country Outing") in a dazzling mixture of painting and musical metaphors, writes, “the *painter* [italics mine] uses familiar, short brush strokes synesthetically orchestrated with the composer’s lambent, chamber music moods” (“Keyserling's Landpartie,” 137).

In this same era in Germany, Fischer Verlag reissued the novel *Wellen* with an afterword by Peter Härtling, who called Keyserling “the connection between Fontane and Thomas Mann” (207). Hartling sees Keyserling’s connection, however weak, to Mann as their mutual interest in examining the decay of families. He thinks Keyserling is a “great writer” who bridged the gap between a lost world and our world (211). It was also the 1970s that brought the first re-issues of a collection of Keyserling’s novellas, novels, and short stories. These were published individually until Rainer Gruenter, in 1973, brought together a collection of six stories and the important essay “Zur Psychologie des Komforts,” published by Fischer Verlag.

In the afterword to *Eduard von Keyserling: Werke*, Gruenter wrote that the atmosphere and background of the stories was far more important to the author than the characters he described. Gruenter sees these stories as Keyserling’s attempt to evoke the circumstance of his younger days, because he was writing from his “exile” in Munich. I doubt the veracity of this statement. Keyserling was in Munich writing trenchant yet subtle social commentary as he looked back from a distance not merely of kilometers, but also through the perspective of a seasoned student of the political and social mores of the time. It was not exile that was motivating him; it was his views of the world situation.

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27 “die Verbindung zwischen Fontane und Thomas Mann”
Keyserling has often been compared to the well-known, much admired writer Theodor Fontane, most famously by Mann himself, although the reverse is not true, with the exception of a book published in 1982, *The German Gesellschaftsroman at the Turn of the Century: A Comparison of the Works of Theodor Fontane and Eduard von Keyserling*, by Richard A. Koc. Koc sees Keyserling’s social criticism as sharper than Fontane’s and writes that in the works of Keyserling there are:

“obvious signs of advanced degeneration; frivolousness in Fontane’s characters becomes decadence in those of Keyserling; and Fontane’s skepticism of society and its future becomes Keyserling’s pessimism” (12).

Waldemar Eger, in his article *Eduard von Keyserling: Dekadenz oder Nihilismus*, describes Keyserling as a pessimistic, rather nihilistic portrayal of aristocratic deterioration, comparing him with Thomas Mann. Eger sees Mann’s *Buddenbrooks* as an example of the decay of a family, the end of a protracted decline from robustness to weakness and death. He compares the fate of the Buddenbrooks family, as it becomes weaker, to Keyserling’s older and younger aristocrats. He sees Mann’s characters as decadent but finds Keyserling’s novels filled with resignation and pessimism; therefore he calls them nihilistic rather than decadent (8).

Decadence was a late nineteenth century movement that dealt with artifice, and in some cases, an aversion to nature and the natural, as seen in the works of writers like Huysmans and Oscar Wilde; it was also linked to aestheticism as well as to homosexuality which was, at that time, thought to be a perversion.

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Keyserling’s portrayals of the dying aristocracy, some of whose attitudes might have been seen as decadent, do not make the writer himself a decadent writer. Keyserling was certainly pessimistic about the Baltic aristocrats, and by extension other aristocrats. He saw their mores and way of life decaying and becoming irrelevant. History, and the subsequent disappearance of those aristocrats, supports his characterization. However, someone who describes decadent behavior is not necessarily a decadent writer. Keyserling’s works do not feature anything about homosexuality, nor about artifice. On the contrary, he might more justly be called a realist, for he documented the actual decline of a social class and an era.

In the 1980s, the interest continued both in America and in continental Europe, but it was in the 1990s that there was a noticeable increase of attention to Keyserling, manifested in Europe, not only in Germany, and also in the USA.

In 1990, Peter Krauss, writing an article strangely entitled “Mourir pour le roi de prusse les baltes dans l’oeuvre d’eduard von keyserling,” [sic] presented a swift but superficial review of the history of the Keyserlings starting with the thirteenth century. He emphasized their connection to Russia, giving a brief history of the Baltic Germans, describing their importance to the region and their strong connections to the czars. Krauss was yet another among those who characterized several of Keyserling’s novels as impressionist. Krauss concludes with the appealing but unsubstantiated notion that since Keyserling was raised by Balts, the people of Europe who remained pagan the longest, his preoccupation with trees and nature in general are vestigial evidences of an almost forgotten pagan mythology.

“If one had known the respect, the veritable worship that Keyserling had for trees, birds, and nature in general, and were one to assess the presence and importance of these elements in his work, one might ask oneself if all of this might not have been transmitted in part by his wet nurse and those who shared her with him, the ruddy-cheeked servants who had initiated him into love, if he had not become, in spite of
himself, the as yet unrecognized guardian of the almost forgotten Baltic mythology”30 (181-186).

The suggestion is charming, but it is more likely that Keyserling, *den Augenmensch*,31 a man who lived through his eyes, was simply deeply sensitive to his surroundings.

I would be remiss not to mention some of the dissertations that have been written about Keyserling, most of which belong to the latest swell of interest in Keyserling’s work. They include Angela Schulz’s “Ästhetische Existenz im Erzählwerk Eduards von Keyserling” (“Aesthetic Existence in the Collected Works of Eduard von Keyserling”) from 1991, in which she declares that it is impossible to find any real influences on Keyserling. “Like no one else, Keyserling wraps himself in silence when it come to his own person” (13).32 She also notes that it was not until 1982 that Fischer Verlag began to issue his novels and stories; but she adds that there has been no complete collection of his works.

Hannelore Gutmann’s 1995 “Die erzählte Welt Eduard von Keyserlings: Untersuchung zum ironischen Erzählverfahren” (“Eduard von Keyserling’s Narrated World: an Examination of Ironic Storytelling”) notes, that Keyserling, one of the most distinguished writers of the turn of the century, is being rediscovered largely because that period has become of interest to literary and social critics. She bewails the fact that even while Keyserling’s fiction was praised very highly, his social and political attitudes have been overlooked. Many critics regarded his *Schlossgeschichten* as mere stories about the decline of the Baltic-German aristocracy, entirely

30 “Si l’on connaît le respect, le véritable culte de Keyserling pour les arbres, les oiseaux, pour la nature en général et si l’on évalue la présence et l’importance de ces éléments dans son œuvre, on peut se demander si tout cela ne lui a pas été transmis en partie par sa nourrice, ses frères de lait, les servantes rougeaudes qui l’ont initié à l’amour et s’il n’est pas devenu, peut être malgré lui, le gardien encore méconnu des croyances presque oubliées de la mythologie balte.”
32 “Wie kaum ein anderer hüllte sich Eduard von Keyserling über seine eigene Person in Schweigen.”
missing the author’s subtle, ironic social commentary. Gutmann points out that he was indeed a social critic and she regards *Schlossgeschichten* as incisive social criticism couched in ironic terms.

At the turn of the twenty-first century, the Keyserling family was claimed by the Latvians, who in 2003 hosted an international symposium about them in Tartu, Estonia. The proceedings were deemed important enough to be published in 2007 by Heidelberg University Press.  

Wolfgang Nehring, who participated in this international symposium, called Keyserling an impressionist because of his descriptions of landscapes, but above everything else because he described odors, along with mist and colors. Nehring suggests that Keyserling was influenced by Ernst Mach’s *Analysis of Sensations*, calling it a seminal work of the turn of the century. Mach's psychological study postulated that everything is fleeting and that the basic element of life is not truth but illusions, and that even the ego itself is “only of relative permanency” (*Analysis of Sensations*, 3). Nehring argues that such an attitude is in itself impressionistic. He asks, “Where does Keyserling’s work fit in here? What connection does it have with the impressionistic tendencies of the turn of the century? Is the author an impressionist or a critic of impressionism?”  

Seeing the whole period as impressionistic, Nehring answers his own question by suggesting that “Keyserling’s art consists of a mixture of a charming impressionist atmosphere, an anti-life aestheticism and decadence,

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which originally did not necessarily belong together but (in his work) produced an ambivalent whole” (295).35

I disagree with Nehring, because there is nothing “anti-life” about Keyserling’s writings; he was simply observing the life of aristocrats in general and showing that they were out of touch with the realities of their time. Once again, I take issue with the labels. What does “anti-life aestheticism” really mean? Furthermore, the color-filled depictions of the backgrounds of the stories are certainly reminiscent of the colors in impressionist paintings, but this doesn’t make the stories impressionistic. Perhaps the critics who used used this term were focused more on the settings of the stories and novels rather than the characters within them.

Jürgen Viering, who also contributed to the 2003 symposium, states in “Landschaftswahrnehmung und Dekadenzerfahrung in den Romanen Eduard von Keyserlings” (“The Reception of Landscape and Experience of Decadence in the Novels of Eduard von Keyserling”), that with the novel Die Dritte Steige (“The Third Level”), Keyserling is trying to make a connection with the naturalistic modern tendencies popular at the close of the nineteenth century, in a definitive attempt to reflect the prevailing German language literature around 1900, not just the traditions of the Baltic states (298).36

Jin Ho Hong, in his 2006 book Das naturalistisch-scientistische Literaturkonzept und die Schlossgeschichte Eduard von Keyserlings (“The Naturalistic-Scientific Literary-Concept and the Schloss Stories of Eduard von Keyserling”) finds that there has been a change in the critics’ view of Keyserling’s work. He divides commentary on Keyserling into two parts. Earlier, up to

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35 “Keyserlings Kunst besteht darin, dass er die reizvolle impressionistische Atmosphere zugleich mit lebensfeindlichem Ästhetizmus und Decadenz vereinigt, die ursprünglich nicht unbedingt zusammengehören, aber ein ambivalent Ganzes ergeben.”

36 „Mit diesen Roman versucht Keyserling Anschluss an die naturalistische ’Moderne’ zu gewinnen; ein entschiedenes Bestreben, Tendenzen, wie sie allgemein für die deutschsprachige Literatur um 1900 bestimmend sind…”
the 1970’s, Hong writes, Keyserling was seen by critics, such as Pusey, as a portrayer of a declining Baltic aristocracy, a writer who was identified with the figures he depicted and whose work was of little modern relevance (9-20). Later, Hong, in his impressively thorough review of the literature, points out that several critics began to characterize Keyserling as a fin de siècle writer who maintained a certain distance from his characters and whose social commentary was subtle and somewhat ironic. More than that, the idea that the Schlossgeschichten were set in no specific place with no real historical connections, whose inhabitants were psychological “types,” became a more frequent critical conclusion (217-218).

The word “naturalistic” to describe Keyserling’s style was also used more often towards the end of the twentieth and the beginning of the twenty-first centuries. This may be a reflection of the primacy of science. The practitioners of the arts of literature, painting and so forth, it seems to me, have long felt inferior to the sciences. Thus, critics have tried to use scientific methods to analyze literature in attempt to add more gravitas to their subjects. The very title of Hong’s excellent and insightful book indicates his effort to make his literary criticism as close to a scientific examination of Keyserling’s work as possible. While I object to the use of the word “scientific,” I agree with Hong’s conclusion that when Keyserling used memories of his early environment as the background for his broad social commentary; he was using them as a springboard for his general conclusions and criticism of the culture of not only the past, but also of his own time.

In 2008’s “Impressionismus und Identität bei Eduard von Keyserling,” Patrick Fortmann vigorously took issue with Thomas Mann’s characterization of Keyserling, saying that an examination of Keyserling’s reviews and essays show him to have been active in the art scene in Munich, contributing much to the understanding of impressionism and its effect on the viewer.
Quoting from Keyserling’s review of the Munich Secession, Fortmann insists that Mann grossly underestimated Keyserling’s importance in the literary world. “Keyserling’s critical writings, essays and opinions render more precise and correct the picture that Thomas Mann, in a hurry and under certain pressures, drafted” 37 (158). Because of Mann’s faint praise, Keyserling was unjustly dismissed by many critics who were influenced by the younger and more famous writer’s views.

Fortmann, citing “Über die Liebe” and Keyserling’s previously published essay, “Zur Psychologie des Komforts,” which deals with people’s relationship to their surroundings, and includes brief, but incisive descriptions of the national characteristics of Germans, French and Americans among others, argues that both essays present psychological insights that underscore the fact that Keyserling was very much a man of the new century. Both Fortmann’s examination of Keyserling’s work and his criticism of Mann’s commentary on it go a long way towards redeeming Keyserling’s reputation.

Fortmann's article is an exhaustive and deeply perceptive analysis of Keyserling’s theories about art, Impressionism and perception. While he does not quote him, Fortmann echoes the conclusions drawn by Donald Riechel in 1980, 38 who in turn quotes an excerpt of Keyserling’s 1903 review of the Munich Secession, “Eindrücke von der Frühjahrsausstellung der Münchner Secession” (“Impressions of the Spring Exhibition of the Munich Secessionists”):

“Today we have the distinction of a hasty and voracious manner of seeing. We see faster and more than before. We analyze and melt momentary forms and colors into one another. Our nerves have become more sensitive and react to light and color that earlier remain unnoticed. We want to read our own excitement in the picture we are looking at. We want to find something that corresponds to the vibrations of our soul, and because

37 “Keyserlings Kritiken, Essaies und Stellungnahmen präzisieren und korrigieren das Bild, das Thomas Mann in einiger Eile und unter gewissen Anstrengungen entworfen hat.”
this is the specific way of seeing in our time, impressionism must be the painterly mode of expression” 39 (195).

Fortmann also provides an impressive analysis of Keyserling’s literary style, making a connection between his reviews and his fiction, stating that they both are impressionistic and poetic in style. I do not agree with this last contention. 40 Perhaps one of the critic’s most important findings is the fact that Keyserling as an art reviewer was a groundbreaker on the subject of the relationship between impressionistic art and the perceptions of its viewers.

Fortmann declares that at the turn of the century and thereafter, impressionism affected not only art and literature but also psychology. He relates this to the manner in which perceptions are influenced reciprocally by what they are perceiving. This in turn leads him to the discovery that, as a novelist and short story writer, Keyserling caused his readers to arrive at conclusions without explicitly directing them, that is, without the proverbial omniscient author position.

Finally, based on his reading of Keyserling’s essays, reviews, and fiction, Fortmann (like Nehring), makes a strong case for Keyserling’s acquaintance with Ernst Mach’s Analysis of Sensations, or at least Herman Barr’s reading of Mach’s work. In Keyserling’s writings there are psychological insights similar to those of Mach’s. This is particularly evident in the above excerpt from Keyserling’s review of the art exhibition in Munich.

It is astounding that no one has ever issued a collection of his reviews and essays. There have been periodic spurts of interest in Keyserling, but apparently, there was never enough to make it profitable to collect his entire works and publish them. A few of Keyserling’s fiction

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39 “Keyserlings Kritiken, Essays und Stellungnahmen präzisieren und korrigieren das Bild, das Thomas Mann in einiger Eile und unter gewissen Anstrengungen entworfen hat.”
40 E. Allen McCormick in his essay “Eduard von Keyserling and “fin de siècle”: A European Perspective” prefers to use the term “fin de siècle” instead of Impressionism. He quotes Michel Benamou who introduced a symposium on literary Impressionism by saying that “impressionism is one of the four cardinal humors governing fin de siècle literature; the others are phlegmatic Naturalism, choleric Wagnerism, and splenetic Decadentism” (40).
works have been variously translated into French, Spanish, Italian, and English, but none of his essays or reviews have been included.

As with other Keyserling essays, very few critics and literary historians have spent time discussing “Über die Liebe,” a significant work central to understanding Keyserling's *oeuvre*. Other critics have overlooked the importance of this essay, which is why it has not been translated into English, but I am convinced that “Über die Liebe” is the key to understanding and appreciating the motivations of his characters and some of the common themes found throughout his fiction.
Chapter 3
Keyserling's Essay On Love, “Über die Liebe”

Keyserling’s essay “Über die Liebe” was published in *Die neue deutsche Rundschau* in 1907. *Die Rundschau* was a periodical founded in 1890 that appeared quarterly and was popular with intellectuals of the day.41 At the turn of the century, many of the most prominent authors in early twentieth century Germany, including Rilke, Mann, Schnitzler, Hesse, Hauptmann and Kafka, appeared in its pages. Keyserling’s inclusion within the pages of *Die Rundschau* indicates his professional stature at the time. He was well-educated, and had read, among others, Hesiod, Plato, Kant, Hegel, and Schopenhauer; he was acquainted with thinkers like Nietzsche, Simmel, and in his essay on love, also cites Homer, the Bible, Melanchthon, Shakespeare, Kierkegaard, Goethe, Nietzsche, Wilde, and Ibsen.

In this translation, I have taken very few editorial liberties, however I did decide to focus on Keyserling's ideas, rather than his style.

“On Love”

Within man there is a duality of mind and body that is constantly transforming and reshaping itself. What the senses perceive, the mind alters into something quite different. That transformation, in its turn influences the perceptions of the senses. Going back and forth, body and mind speak different languages, each one translating the same text into its own language. This is how a person builds his own world of practical experience, building a real world for himself, his own reality. However, this qualitative determination of reality and truth, based on

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41 It was banned by the Nazis in 1944 then reinstated, in exile, in Stockholm in 1945. It is still in existence today.
experience, differs completely from the reality that we ourselves acquire and accumulate from the consciousness of our existence. The self’s reality is the pattern upon which we create the reality of our surroundings so that we are able to believe it. We create the reality of our surroundings on the self’s subjective reality. The mind's rational reality is pale and bodiless as opposed to the feelings of one's own self.

Primitive man and the child unhesitatingly perceive life and existence outside themselves as identical with their inner lives. However, the manner in which they use and deal with that which is external to them clearly demonstrates how little they actually feel that reality. A child, curiously and unhesitatingly, regards the torture he inflicts on an animal as unrelated to him in any way.

Within all of us, these perceptions, structured by the intellect, against which we use and protect ourselves, with which we form the contents of our lives, simultaneously seem foreign and unreal in contrast to ourselves. On one side stands the self, certain of its own reality, on the other, outward reality. Reason cannot bridge this chasm by means of a logically understood reality; it is unable to tear the self from its solitude. Appearance is valued above everything else as the source of desire and aversion. What is real about appearance is that it precisely reflects the desire and aversion felt by the self. We must infuse our feelings of reality into our perceived reality, so that it can be brought closer to us. In fact, we value the abundance of acknowledged perceptions to the degree of reality that we lend them in proportion to their proximity to the self. At the very moment when external reality feels the same as perceived reality, we love. Love means lending one's own reality to an object, making it one with one's self.

42 I have chosen to translate "das Ich" as "the self" rather than using the word "ego." The latter was Freud's designation; I have not been able to find any evidence that Keyserling knew of Freud's work.
“Love thy neighbor as thyself,” says the Gospel.43 “Tat wam asi” is the Indian's greatest formula of love, its most precise definition.44

An animal is always solitary. It is surrounded by the means to satisfy its needs, but also by hostile forces. It knows only one purpose—itself. I believe that for an oyster there is only one oyster in the world: its shell, the seawater that provides nutrients, and the darkness and enmity against which it must close its shell. Man's behavior in the face of the outside world is basically related to that of the oyster.

Kant's moral dictum directs that we must never use people as a means, but always regard them as an end.45 It is through this syllogism that man is raised above the oyster's point of view. It is ethical to regard an individual as an end. To feel an individual as we feel ourselves, as an end: that is love. Love alone creates an existence outside of ourselves that is equal to our own. Love builds a bridge from one self to another self. It is love that creates a transformed world.

Hesiod names Eros as the creator of the world. Indeed, it is Eros who animates the world, giving us a world by which we are not only logically convinced, but that we can also feel.46

43 Mark 12:31, Matt. 22:34.
44 This slight misquotation from the Chandogya Upanishad ought to be “Tat Twam Asi.” It is one of the four mahavakyas [grand pronouncements]: 1. Consciousness is Brahman. 2. This self [Atman] is Brahman. 3. “Tat Twam Asi” means “that thou art: thou art that.” 4. I am Brahman. To explain the Tat Twam Asi, a father, Uddalaka, tells his son, Shvetaketu: “All the rivers of the earth merge in the sea, then they are part of the being and are no longer individual rivers. We are all part of that thou art,’ the being.” In all persons the self is the innermost essence—Atman. All essences are the god in oneself.
45 From the Basic Writings of Kant: “...man and any rational being exists as an end in himself, not merely as a means to be arbitrarily used by this or that will, but in all his actions, whether they concern himself or other rational beings must be always regarded at the same time as an end” (185). Kants gesammelte Schriften: “...der Mensch und überhaupt jedes vernünftige Wesen existiert als Zweck an sich selbst, nicht bloß als Mittel zum beliebigen Gebrauche für diesen oder jenen Willen, sondern muß in allen seinen so wohl auf sich selbst, als auch auf andere vernünftige Wesen gerichteten Handlungen jederzeit zugleich als Zweck betrachtet werden” (428).
46 Hesiod, Theogony: “...and Love, most beautiful of all the deathless gods. He makes men weak / He overpowers the clever mind, and tames / The spirit in the breasts of men and gods” (lines 120–23). Hesiod does not say that Eros created the world. However he names Eros—along with Chaos, Earth, and Tartarus—as the first among all the gods.
Sexual desire binds the sexes together through their common needs. Among animals, the male and female see one another simply as the means by which to satisfy such needs. Once the urge is satisfied, they are completely estranged from one another. The male crab tries to eat the female immediately after copulation, because he sees her merely as a means of appeasing his appetite.\(^4\) In humans, the physical and the spiritual are so closely connected that in physical desire the soul's desire is always mixed in.

Just as we cannot perceive anything that is remotely familiar as a face without seeing an expression on it, in the same way we cannot desire a body without desiring the soul that permeates it. For us, every line and every movement of a human body is associated with the life and the emotions expressed by that soul. Thus, we never simply desire a mere body, but rather an individual in his uniqueness and singularity. The reciprocity of physical arousal is not only inflamed by one's own desire, but also by the other person's; this brings two people so close together that each clearly senses the other's life. Then we desire not only to possess that body, we want to make that unknown soul completely ours, for it has become as real as our own. However, when another life becomes so close, so real and essential, then it also demands to be felt and experienced. We want our reality to be simultaneously confirmed and substantiated\(^4\) by the other person's reality. The thirst that impels us to drink in the unfamiliar life also arouses in us the yearning to be felt and experienced by the other person's reality.

\(^4\) I have been unable to substantiate this example. Possibly Keyserling confused the crab with the female Black Widow spider who is said to devour her mate after sexual intercourse.

\(^4\) In "Eduard von Keyserling as Essayist and Literary Critic," Pusey translates the word *incommensurabel* as "verified."
Diotima calls Eros the son of Poros and Penia, of wealth and poverty, of abundance and insufficiency. 49 This is the give and take of love. 50 “The more I give, the more I also take,” says Romeo. 51

Helen climbs onto the parapet, looks down at the Hellenic host and shows and explains the heroes of her homeland to the old men surrounding her. Hellenic air wafts around her and intoxicates her. The magnificent Hellenic spirit warms her heart and her blood glows with ardor. When Paris, having escaped from the battleground, flees to his royal chamber and stretches out on his bed, Helen goes to him, sits by his bed and begins to taunt him. Paris, however, pulls her to him, because his heart burns for her in a way that it never has since he first embraced her.

What was it that made him glow more fervently than ever before? It was because he was simultaneously able to embrace and possess the body of the most beautiful woman in Greece, as well as all the ecstasy, the heroic pride, and the magnificent Hellenic spirit that moved Helen's soul. The Trojan's soul drank itself to satiety in Helen's beauty and Greekness. 52

49 In Plato’s “Symposium,” Socrates recounts a story that was told to him by Diotima, whom he describes as “woman wise… in many kinds of knowledge.” On Aphrodite's birthday, the gods had a feast. The god Poros, or plenty, got drunk on nectar and went to sleep in Zeus's garden. Poverty, or Penia, who often came to beg at feasts, decided to have a child by Poros. She lay next to him and conceived Eros, or love (534).

50 In using the terms “giving” and “taking,” Keyserling has alluded to the description of Eros in "Symposium": “Eros is naturally a lover of the beautiful because he was born on Aphrodite's birthday. He is anything but tender. He is always poor and rough and squalid... and always in distress... a philosopher at all times, terrible as an enchanter, sorcerer and sophist. He is neither mortal nor immortal... He is never in want and never in wealth... he is a mean between wisdom and ignorance” (535-36). Keyserling is correct in noting that Eros is marked by his constant movement between opposites—an example of the dynamics of love—although the analogy is rather flawed, as it is more concerned with the concept of back-and-forth movement rather than love itself.

51 This is a misquotation. The speech is by Juliet. Romeo und Julia: "So grenzenlos ist meine Huld, die Liebe/ so tief ja wie das Meer. Je mehr ich gebe./le mehr auch hab ich: beides ist unendlich." Romeo and Juliet: "My bounty is as boundless as the sea,/ My love as deep; the more I give to thee,/ The more I have, for both are infinite" (2.2.134–36). Keyserling's use of this text, compared to the "Symposium," is more directly concerned with the matter of love itself.

52 Keyserling conflated two episodes in book III of the Iliad. In lines 150–244, Priam asks Helen to identify the Greek heroes that they are watching from the tower by the Skaian gates. Later, beginning with line 380, Aphrodite, having saved Paris from death by removing him from the battlefield and putting him in his bedroom, goes to find Helen who is on a tower with a group of Trojan women. Aphrodite insists on taking Helen to Paris. Helen tries to resist but Aphrodite threatens her. Only then is Helen at Paris's bedside, and it is then that Paris speaks of his passion for her (lines 441–46).
Man wants to live; this alone is his occupation, his goal, and his suffering. Within us lies the urge to realize all of life's possibilities. Goethe says, “Life itself is the meaning of life.” Each organ inside us, when disturbed in the execution of its normal function, registers repugnance. However, when each can fulfill its function, it does so with pleasure. Therefore, everything within us that is alive wants to fully and completely take part in our existence. However, fate makes a selection from everything that impels us toward life and its selections are often meager. Within us lie the seeds of many lives and personalities, all of which strain for life. However, because of the fate assigned to us, most will wither. We are like travelers born to traverse many roads, and yet we are bound to a single path. A huge, unfulfilled thirst for life remains within us, but after all, who has lived to the fullest? Belief in immortality is the fruit of this unfulfilled urge for life. Man hopes that all his earthly yearnings that remained unrealized, here on earth, will be put into that great, invisible repository beyond the grave. Eternity does not seem too long a time for him to experience all of it.

Love brings us so close to someone else's life that we feel as though we are submitting our life to the conditions of another personality, and the experience of another's unfamiliar fate.

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53 Goethe's World View Presented in his Reflections and Maxims: "der Zweck des Lebens ist das Leben selbst" ("The purpose of living is life itself.") (132). Keyserling put it more ambiguously, probably because he is again quoting from memory. Keyserling writes: "Denn Leben ist des Lebens Sinn" ("Life is life's purpose").

54 This thought seems to be borrowed from Nietzsche's The Birth of Tragedy: “We are really for a brief moment Primordial Being itself feeling its main desire for existence and joy in existence; the struggle, the pain, the destruction of phenomena, now appear to us as necessary thing, in view of the surplus of countless forms of existence which force and push one another into life, in view of the exuberant fertility of the universal will" (60). “Wir sind wirklich in kurzen Augenblicken das Urwesen selbst und fühlen dessen unbändige Daseinsgier und Daseinslust; der Kampf, die Qual, die Vermichtung der Erscheinungen dünkt uns jetzt wie notwendig, die Übermaß von unzähligen, sich ins Leben drängenden und stoßenden Daseinsformen…” (93).

55 Here is an example of Keyserling using an image lifted from Kierkegaard without attributing it to the source. In Either/Or, Kierkegaard writes: "...indem der Geist seine Aktien mehr und mehr aus der vereinigten Firma herauszieht..." (...a spirit takes more and more of its shares of stock out of the united corporation...) (108). The quote is not exact, as Keyserling rarely seems to check the actual phrasing of his sources.
Because of this, love bestows upon us the gift of enhancing life. In the loneliness of our solitary existence, we have enriched ourselves through another being.

The female mind connects more easily and directly with the world around it, requiring fewer of the logical detours required by the male mind. Woman separates herself swiftly and surely from the outside world, and decides whether she is for or against every situation that she encounters. A woman is a born advocate. Before anything else, she impulsively makes a decision about the slightest details of life, and the most minor of matters. Once she has taken someone's side, she connects with him, unhesitatingly sharing something of her individuality, her life; she puts her imprint on him and in this way makes him her companion or her sweetheart.

When we see how a woman presides over her surroundings, be she a cook in her kitchen or a grand lady in her chamber, she always interacts personally with others. She favors one, distances herself from another, handles them in a motherly fashion or harshly. She understands them and senses their mood and animation. The security and constant certainty of knowing whether she is for or against something imbues a woman's life with a clarity and completeness that is lacking in a man's life. He wants to force a rational reality on the world, nevertheless, he surrounds it with doubts so that, essentially, no example of a clear outcome exists for him, consequently, he must always reestablish the threads that connect him to the world over and over again.

Essentially, for man, no example exists that has a clear outcome. Woman knows of nothing that is not a certainty. She has a very subtle view of the outside world, but she always

56 Pusey uses the word "partisan" in quoting an excerpt from "Über die Liebe": "A born partisan, a woman has the assurance and clarity in relationships that is lacking in a man..." (140).
57 The word "Freund" means "friend" but when used for the opposite sex it is intensified and implies a romantic relationship.
58 "Die Frau kennt nichts, das inkommensurabel wäre" ("The woman knows nothing that would have been "incommensurate"). This must refer back to the description of a woman's ability to be certain about her inclinations.
sees its fixed outlines and its true colors. She tolerates no unanswered questions, but the answer she gives does not have to be objectively true; however, it must be in tune with the whole tone of her being. At the same time, the female soul is a very delicate sounding board for everything from the outside world that resonates within her; the softest melody of things and nature, all the moods and rhythms that wander through the world vibrate in her. They are recomposed and transformed into the tonality of the soul, in the way that such tones sound to us across still waters, taking on something silvery, damp, and soft from the water itself.

Kierkegaard called Greek love psychical because the sensual and the spiritual dissolve purely into one another.\(^5^9\) For the Greeks everything spiritual took a form and everything physical became palpable. Diotima's Eros teaches man to desire the beauty of the idea within physical beauty.\(^6^0\) Alcibiades makes a declaration of love to Socrates' spirit, “that daemonic man,”\(^6^1\) with physical ardor, as though he were speaking to his beloved.\(^6^2\)

This tight bond between the soul and the senses is also an essential characteristic of womanly love. In her too, sensuality tears out the entire soul with it, and everything spiritual contains the color and warmth of sensuality. A simple village maiden perceives her sensual feelings as a matter of the heart. Even the unlucky, lowest sort of woman tries to adorn her poor, distorted, salable sensuality with a glimmer of feeling and deceptively tries to pretend that it represents part of her soul.

However, in the woman of higher culture everything born of sensuality becomes a symbol of spirituality containing the rhythm and color of flowing blood and the swift throbbing

\(^{59}\) *Entweder/Oder*: "Die Liebe der Griechen war...seelisch, nicht sinnlich" (113). *Either/Or*: "in Greek love of the psychical is predominant, or always in harmony with the sensuous. Its love was therefore psychical not sensuous..." (93).

\(^{60}\) It is worth noting here that Alcibiades is drunk and is speaking out of infatuation, thus exemplifying the danger that Diotima warned against. Instead of loving wisdom, he falls in love with the wisdom lover. (Ferrari, 262).

\(^{61}\) "Since Plato, daimones [δαίμονες] were conceived as beings intermediate between gods and men" (Daimones, 310).

\(^{62}\) See Plato’s "Symposium," 547-554.
of the heart. What resounds in one reverberates again in the other, like strings tuned to the same key. When a woman adorns her physical beauty, she also does so to elevate her soul. A woman's external beauty is always an expression of her inner self. Therefore, if she wants to deceive, she must also hide her true thoughts from herself, and deceive herself, for she can only do so with body and soul in concert. Lying demoralizes a woman much more than it does a man, because when she lies it is with her entire being, body and soul.

When a woman wants to be appealing, her spirit, her body, her clothing and all her possessions have to be admired or loved. Every lustful feeling she has becomes a spiritual experience. In this combination of body and spirit lies a woman's strength as well as her vulnerability; here, the area of such vulnerability to any attack is greater. The completeness and unanimity of her feelings creates a contrast to those of man. He always senses, whether consciously or unconsciously, the discontinuities and fissures of existence. Man is unable to use his feelings to overcome the gap that separates form and content, appearance and actual life. He uses his intelligence and his will to fight forcefully for unity. Therefore, the sensitivity and wholeness of the female soul that is based on feeling, must be experienced by him as restful. This is what he desires when he desires woman.

Mephisto easily maintains his contract with Faust, the great doubter who was tired to death of doubting, when he sacrificed the holy peace of Gretchen's soul to him. Yet, how was Gretchen able to bear being near the horrifying puzzle of this demonic spirit? Love's happiness as well as its tragedies are contained in these opposites.63

Ophelia, that sweet-natured person who even in madness dreamed only of flowers and songs, had to introduce soothing and comforting music into Hamlet's sick soul. He who had to

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63Keyserling has borrowed—again, without attribution—Kierkegaard's analysis of the the relationship between Faust and Margarete. See Either/Or, 207-210.
penetrate, churn, and dissect everything with his intellect, until only the ghostly conundrum that lies beneath everything remained, saw the innocent maiden's guiltless reality as a luminous, restful stillness, like the meadows where harebells and daisies bask in the sunshine. The poor child bound them into a wreath to adorn herself for death. This is the way in which Ophelia act; they want to be calm, healing and brightening as they unite with the beloved man's soul.

“Mild as childhood and like grace,” it is said of Cordelia. That is why Ophelia are so irresistibly attracted to deep, tortured, restless spirits. It is, as though their love looks for the darkest labyrinths, so that within them love will appear friendlier and lighter. Yet, when they attach themselves to their beloved to bring him peace, they lose their own peace. Man's uneasy, demoralized spirit muddies, disturbs, and frightens women's souls, so that they appear incomprehensible, puzzling and ghostly, making women strangers to themselves.

I have already said that the woman's psyche is particularly sensitive to impressions of the outside world; however, she can transform it and temper it, according to her nature. The wonderful thing about every woman's love is that she always incorporates the beloved's essence into herself, while surrounding it with the harmony of her own soul. Man's being is mirrored in her, but completely immersed in her subjective coloration. This is the only way in which she can endure the relationship.

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64 Taken from Hamlet "Es neigt ein Weidenbaum sich überrn Bach/ Mit welchen sie phantastisch Kränze wand/ Von Hahnfuß, Nesseln, Maßlieb, Kuckucksblumen..." ("There is a willow grows aslant the brook, / That shows his hoary leaves in the glassy stream, / There with fantastic garlands did she make/ Of crow-flowers, nettles, daisies, and long purples...") (The Riverside Shakespear, 4.7.167–69).

65 The sudden reference to "Cordelia" here, amidst discussion of Ophelia, brings to mind the long-suffering daughter of Shakespeare's King Lear. However, the Cordelia mentioned here is a character from one of the most famous sections of Kierkegaard's Entweder/Oder, called "The Seducer's Diary." In it, the young woman Cordelia is seduced and betrayed by Johannes Climacus, but remains devoted to him. As usual, Keyserling makes a reference without correctly quoting his source. Kierkegaard (as the Seducer) writes "Cordelia! That is a really excellent name, and it was also the name of King Lear's third daughter, that remarkable girl who did not carry her heart on her lips, whose lips were silent while her heart beat warmly. So it is with my Cordelia. She resembles her, I am certain of that." (49), "Cordelia! Es ist doch wirklich ein vortrefflicher Name, so hieß ja auch Lear's dritte Tochter, jenes ausgezeichnete Mädchen, dessen Herz nicht auf den Lippen wohnte, dessen Lippen stumm waren, wenn das Herz sich geweitet hatte. So auch mit meiner Cordelia. Sie gleicht ihr, dessen bin ich gewiß" (391).
For man, the strange aspect of the happiness connected with love lies in finding his own image again in the beloved woman's soul, where it is softened, ordered, and recreated into a calmer reality.

In love, there are enough people, both men and women, who never progress beyond the point of mirroring themselves in others. They cannot get away from themselves. They search within the other and only find themselves. They hope that when they find these selves again, they will have been elevated, beautified and enhanced. This is the way in which they want to relish being loved and enjoyed. They move as though through a gallery of mirrors, repeatedly seeing their own images reflected back at them. Then they complain that love neither enriches them nor stills their yearning.

We come across such pairs everywhere. They seem to exist merely for one of them to hold a mirror to the other. Man often bears this with difficulty until he either becomes indignant, or his self, which has been sidelined, atrophies. The most outstanding example of such an empty sensualist is Casanova. His feverish vitality needed constant external feeding, because he was not capable of nourishing it from within himself. He became the greatest virtuoso juggler of lives.66 He wanted to have the adventures of Gil Blas67 and Don Juan's love affairs68 so that he could feed his own ego with them. He searched for this self of his, and saw it in everyone, as well as in all the girls and women whom he seduced and conquered. He looked for himself, the seducer and

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66 Casanova (1725-1798) was an Italian adventurer and famous womanizer. He wrote: "Cultiver les plaisirs de mes sens—fit dans toute ma vie ma principale affaire; je n'en ai jamais en de plus importante. Me sentant né pour le sexe différent du mien, je l'ai toujours aimé, et je m'en suis fait aimer tant que je pu." ("The chief business of my life has been to cultivate the pleasures of my senses, it has been the principal business of my life; I never had anything more important. I felt that I was born for the sex opposite of my own, which I have always loved, and I have made love to them as often as I could.") Mémoires, I: 1725-1756 (xiv-xv).

67 Gil Blas, who had a series of adventures, was the hero of a picaresque novel by Alain-Rene LeSage.

68 Don Juan, legendary Spanish adventurer, was famous for his amorous exploits. A frequent subject of Spanish and other literature, he was immortalized by Mozart in his opera Don Giovanni, and by Molière in Don Juan, ou le Festin de pierre.
conqueror of all, in every woman. That is why all the female characters portrayed in his memoirs are so bodiless and shadowy. When old and impoverished, a nobody mocked by other nobodies, he wrote his memoirs. Nothing remained for him but to kneel adoringly before his colorful, decorated self. This relegated the book, despite its fresh and delightful tempo, to a melancholy reading.

If it were possible for desire to be aroused, uninfluenced by a person's spirit, then the fight for sensual pleasure would be more forceful, more inconsiderate and more brutal, but simpler and more direct. Human passion would flare up in the same as passion does in an animal in heat. Then, when it had run its course, desire would abate and calm would ensue. If flesh only sought flesh, and the body another body, only then the sex drive would not exert the all-pervasive, urgent influence that it does now, for the body always has an additional significance, and that significance is the soul.

The erotic controls all human relationships, gives them color, complicates them, imbues them with a blissful or a damning fever, becoming the driving force in society's life. If we want to understand a person's life, we need to know what role the erotic plays in it, for the erotic is the tireless dramatist, ceaselessly tying and unloosening knots. It is the writer of the tragedy and the comedy of human existence, tirelessly creating new forms from the hideous and the brutal to the most noble. How could the erotic attain this wonderful and uncanny power were it not for the fact that it casts its spell over all humanity? If the terrible, passionate hunt of human for human, body for body were only that, rather than a hunt by soul for soul, the erotic would not have been able to achieve its jurisdiction over all humanity.

Physical desire binds one person to another, for people seek a shared pleasure. Body and body get along and understand each another very well. Now the naked souls too are close to one
another, forced into a joint union. Whether they want it or not, they are compelled to come to terms with one another. Body and spirit, bound together, must influence and pull one another along. Their methods and goals are incomparably different, and incomprehensible to one another. One human spirit unique and solitary is supposed to join in a shared rhythm of life with another human spirit that is equally unique and solitary. Even when a great love seems able to completely solve the problem of joining, there always remains a residue of contradictions and antitheses that insert something tense and agitated into that love. Something akin to pain is present in all happiness.

In the most trivial of sexual encounters, the proximity of two souls who do not want to have anything in common with one another, leaves behind a bitter feeling of repugnance. The usual ending of the battle between two souls that are bound together by physical desire, is a compromise between tired tolerance and resignation. However, when the fight is unforgiving, the most gruesome conflict emerges. Here, each one wields his gender's most effective weapons, seeking out the opponent's greatest vulnerability. Man becomes brutal and uses the cold hardness of his intellect against woman.

A woman's certainty, which in love orders and clarifies a man's soul, just as her hand decorates and arranges his surroundings, now, in battle, becomes the most dangerous method of attack. Then she takes the side of the outside world and confronts man with the hard matter-of-factness of the business at hand. She does not want to understand his doubts or the detours in his reasoning.
Here, Oscar Wilde's ironic paradox “women are sphinxes without riddles,” reveals its deepest meaning. Woman denies all riddles. Everything is clear and simple to her, only man, in his clumsiness, brutality and logic cannot find himself in a puzzle. Because of this, woman becomes totally incomprehensible to man, evading him completely.

The world is full of the winners and losers of these battles, in which victory as well as defeat leaves the soul equally wounded. The spirit tries to free itself from its forced relationship with sensuality by suppressing it. Cynicism about sensual matters is mostly spiritless and completely uninteresting, but often the spirit strains to separate itself from sensuality, driving it to make the sensual extremely coarse, ugly, and ridiculous. Using the opposite of that method, the Greeks spiritualized sensuality.

Kierkegaard clearly demonstrates that the concept of the separation of sensuality from the spirit first appeared because of Christianity. “The spirit withdrew its shares from the shared business.”

We know with what coarseness and unclean cynicism sexual matters were spoken about in monasteries. Melanchon writes that he hopes that Luther, when married, would refrain from

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69 In 1891, Oscar Wilde published a collection, *Lord Arthur Saville’s Crime*, which contained the story “The Sphinx Without a Secret.” It was about a woman who deliberately made herself seem mysterious. However, there was no truth to her actions. She simply wants to seem mysterious. "She had a mania for mystery... but she herself was merely a Sphinx without a secret" (205). *Sämtliche Erzählungen*: "Lady Alroy war einfach eine Frau mit der Manie für das Geheimnisvolle... aber sie selbst war eine Sphinx ohne Geheimnis" (118).

70 Kierkegaard discusses this matter in *Either/Or*, in which he states that Christianity brought sensuality into the world. *Entweder/Oder*: "Die Behauptung, das Christentum habe die Sinnlichkeit in die Welt gebracht, scheint recht kühn und frisch gewagt. Doch wie es heisst: frisch gewagt ist halb gewonnen, so gilt es auch hier, das wird man einsehen, wenn man überlegt, dass man, indem man etwas indirekt setzt, das andere setzt, das man ausschliesst. Da das Sinnliche überhaupt das ist, was negiert werden soll, so kommt es erst recht zum Vorschein, wird erst gesetzt durch den Akt, der es ausschliesst dadurch, dass er das entgegengesetzte Positive setzt." (74). *Either/Or*: “Sensuality was first posited... as an independent system by Christianity... placed under the qualification of spirit.... But when sensuality is viewed under the qualification of spirit, its significance is seen to be that it is to be excluded (from the spirit)” (61–62).

71 Not only is this image used in Kierkegaard, but Simmel uses it in his article "The Sociology of Secrets and Secret Societies” (460). Keyserling studied the article carefully; this is one of the few quotations he gets correct.
the monkish custom of speaking so cynically about sexual matters. When sensuality, as it does in asceticism, leads to deprivation and torment, it creates a new voluptuousness of pain that emerges in order to connect itself with the spirit and with spiritual love.

There is no help. Spirit and body understand one another so poorly, and yet the two must join forces to work on behalf of humanity's joy and suffering. This always generates conflicts whose only resolution is a miracle, love. Body and spirit drive people along, one after the other, each one craving the other's body and soul. It seems as though each portion of life allotted to people was so small that each person's allotment was insufficient, causing everyone to hunger feverishly for human life.

Kierkegaard characterizes Don Juan, the original voluptuary, as the representative of that kingdom of sensuality that Christianity separated from the realm of the spiritual. Don Juan wanted to possess womankind, and not the individual. I believe, however, that it is not an arbitrary matter that Elvira was a nun and Zerlina a village girl. He (Don Juan) wanted to enjoy woman's body in all its forms, and drink in woman's soul in all its individuality, both the nun's mournful, degraded soul, as well as Zerlina's soul that laughs and cries so sweetly and brightly in Mozart's music. Only then can Don Juan appear, as Mozart represents him in the last act, alone, filled to overflowing with the unfamiliar lives in which he drank himself to satiety, and bellowing the most audacious drinking song celebrating the joy of life.

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72 Philipp Melanchthon (1497-1560), professor of Greek at Wittenberg, was a friend of Luther who helped him translate the scriptures from Greek into German. He exemplified the Renaissance spirit and was instrumental in setting aside the old scholastic methods of instruction in favor of a more modern approach to teaching. In 1537, he was one of the signers of the Lutheran Articles of Schmalkalden.

73 Entweder/Oder: "Den Zwiespalt zwischen dem Fleisch und dem Geist, den das Christentum in die Welt gebracht hat, mußte das Mittelalter zum Gegenstand seiner Betrachtung und zu diesem Ende die streitende Kräfte jede für sich zu einem Gegenstand der Anschauung machen. Don Juan ist nun... die Inkarnation des Fleiches" (107). Either/Or: "The Middle Ages had to make the discord between the flesh and the spirit that Christianity brought into the world the subject of its reflection and to that end personified each of the conflicting forces. Don Juan... is the incarnation of the flesh" (88).
Nature pursues her aims directly and consciously, using whatever means she needs, for as long as necessary. Creating and retaining life is her solution. A hen's relationship with her chicks lasts only as long as they need her. It is only the human spirit, in its obstinacy, that uses this bond to make something absolute out of such a relationship. However, whenever the spirit takes possession of these practical remedies of nature to incorporate them into spiritual life, then the sources of deepest suffering, the most powerful pathos of the human soul, are always hidden inside them. Thus arises that wonderful emotion, mother-love, which astonishes us with its enormous tolerance for suffering, and its complete selflessness. It is a love that gives, but forgoes any recompense. It is like an Eros who only inherited lavishness and indefatigable generosity from Poros; it is an egoism installed in the center of another's life. A mother does not separate from the child; she has to live the child's life, feel its pain, and she must busy herself with anything that threatens its existence. Within the child, however, lies the urge to free itself from its mother and go on its way independently. A mother is forced to be knitted to another life with the strongest fibers of her being, but it is to a life that is always moving away from her. Filial love has nothing to do with understanding the mother, but it always wants to be completely understood by her. For the child, a mother is simply the holy sanctuary, which is the repository of all its suffering and happiness. All it looks for in its mother is its own self.

A mother's happiness consists of reflecting the child's life, settled, enhanced and improved, back into child's soul. It is here that woman most strongly shows her inclination towards partisanship. Whoever has a mother will always have access to a heart, forced by its nature, to take his side. This is the way in which the ordinary, silent tragedies of motherly love arise. It is as if a loving woman has completely given up the reciprocity of love. Forced to love

74 Once again, Keyserling is referring to the story of Eros's birth (see footnote 8, above).
by her intrinsic nature, woman decides on a one-sided love. She offers a love that is unconcerned with parity. It asks nothing in return.

This is the reason that mother love is the most sublime expression of woman’s nature. The ultimate resort of a woman's need for love is in serving and ruling simultaneously. Often it is also the final solution in the battle of souls that is emblematic of the love between man and woman.

Woman satisfies herself by feeling that her beloved, be it a man, a child, or even that small part of the world in which she lives, is hers. All these interests and fates become part of her own experience, are incorporated into the byways of her soul and then are placed in the beloved's soul. In the Don Juan manner of loving, the incorporation of someone else's soul is the height of selfishness; in mother love it is the ultimate act of resignation. At the same time, such love is the clearest expression that life is nourished by living, an expression of the commonality of humanity. Here, love is like the circulation of blood, creating movement, warming and shaping us, but also bringing the possibility of pain and pleasure.

When life in and around man begins to ebb, and old age causes colors to fade, and “people's faces at the windows become indistinct,” as the preacher Solomon says, and from the most alien depths of existence a cold draft blows, then the need for love becomes an anxious scream from selfish life. Growing old is only comprehensible to someone who has, in his own way, understood how to live life to the fullest. Only then that cool, benevolent understanding comes over him that lets him quietly observe how life recedes from him. He looks at it blithely

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75 This is an approximate quotation by Keyserling, obviously from memory, from Ecclesiastes. Keyserling would have used a Lutheran Bible. Die Heilige Schrift: "zur Zeit, wenn die Hüter des Hauses zittern und die Starken sich krümmen und müßig stehen die Müllerinnen, weil es so wenige geworden sind, und wenn finster werden, die durch die Fenster sehen," Prediger Salomo 12:3. (The Holy Bible: "When the keepers of the house tremble and the strong men stoop. When the grinders cease because they are few, and those looking through the windows grow dim." Ecclesiastes 12:3).
as if it were a colorful, thought-provoking stage set, while in his box it gets quieter and darker. Yet who today in our fast and superficial life ever lives life to the fullest? Most people stand at the threshold of aging, at a loss, looking at how life leaks away from them, how their chairs are gently being removed from life's commotion. Fearfully they cling to those who still have a right to a full life.

In his play [John] Gabriel Borkman, Ibsen horribly and clearly presents that kind of avid and greedy, geriatric love. The unfortunate old man whose life is ruined, incessantly paces back and forth in his room, like a captured animal. He makes plans for his life, and it is his son who is supposed to lend his own youthful ability to live the old man's unappeased drive for existence. Additionally, there are the two aging, abandoned women who have also completely imposed their lives on the youngster's so that they may live through him and in him. The youngster, his beloved by his side, (sleigh) bells ringing, goes off on his own foolish way, mindless of the old women's love. Then there is nothing left for them but to give up and die in the cold winter night.76

Old age is precisely what makes us blurred, incomprehensible, and unreal to those who live with us. Yet to be real is the passion of our lives. Other people's love has to confirm to us that we are still part of life. This too is what makes Lear an everlasting memorial of human loneliness. The old king, in whose spirit madness already lurks, feels that he has become ghostly to himself and others. With his own stubborn, royal hand, he tries to hold on to the life that is slipping away from him. The only thing that can save him is to be loved; and he wants to be

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76 John Gabriel Borkman is the story of two women and a disgraced man who vie for the possession of a young man. The Act 4 stage directions read: "Das Schlittengeläute ertönt ganz in der Nähe, auf dem tiefer liegenden Fahrweg, der durch den Wald führt" (82). "The sleighbells sounded very nearby on the low roadway through the woods." (English translation mine).
loved no matter the price. He gives away kingdoms to warm himself at the fickle hearts of his daughters.\textsuperscript{77} Afterwards, when he remains, for his daughters, merely an inconvenient, foolish old man with barely a right to exist, he sinks into the darkness of madness, losing himself and the world. In this case, the fight for love is a fight for life.

Love governed entirely by the intellect is friendship. Here, no ruthless force of sensual nature demands obedience. In this matter, conscious choice rules. Two minds get closer, presenting each one with the very best of themselves to each other. They exchange their treasures. The freedom to choose what they want to share of themselves is characteristic of friendship. Its degree and proximity may be mutually decided.

To give it a form, a body, the Greeks made friendship tangible. Yet, no matter how beautiful this form and body might have appeared in Plato's description of it, sensuality robs friendship of that very clarity and freedom that is its actual being. Socrates, in Plato's banquet, explains this dichotomy beautifully to Alcibiades.\textsuperscript{78}

Unlike the events of the marriage at Kana, in friendship we do not pour the precious, holy wine only when the guests are tipsy.\textsuperscript{79}

\textsuperscript{77} \textit{König Lear}: "Die Karte dort!— Wißt, daß wir unser Reich / geteilt in drei's ist unser fester Schluß, / Von unserm Alter Sorg und Müh zu Schütteln." \textit{King Lear}: "Give me the map there. Know that we have divided / In three our kingdom, and 'tis our fast intent / To shake all cares and business from our age" (1.1. 37–39).

\textsuperscript{78} Plato's "Symposium." Once again Keyserling is inaccurate. Socrates has explained love to the assembled guests, in answer to Agathon, not to Alcibiades who arrives at the end of the banquet completely drunk. In repeating what Diotima told him, Socrates (or really Plato) traces the progression of love for an individual to its highest form, love of beauty and wisdom and immortality that is the most beautiful form of love. Diotima also points out to Socrates that the word 'love' has many different meanings. (113-116)

\textsuperscript{79} \textit{Die Heilige Schrift}: "Jedermann gibt zuerst den guten Wein, und wenn sie trunken geworden sind, alsdann den geringeren; Du hast den guten Wein bisher behalten." The Holy Bible: "every man at the beginning doth set forth good wine; and when men have well drunk, then that which is worse: \textit{but} thou hast kept the good wine until now" (John 2.10). It seems that Keyserling misquoted. He meant to say that in friendship the best wine is always used. The worst wine was poured when the guests were tipsy because at that point they wouldn't have been able to detect the difference between good and bad wine.
Sensualizing friendship can essentially be compared to the actions of Goethe's apes, who tore pictures of beetles out of paintings and ate them. Sensuality demands total disclosure, and close, very close physical and intellectual contact.

Friendship, however, needs neither the one nor the other. Friends are very capable of just spending their spiritual holidays together and then excluding the same friend from their everyday life.

Georg Simmel, in his fine essay “On the Psychology of Discretion” says:

But specifically at this point, in regard to the question of discretion, meaning self-revelation and self-concealment, they (friends) pose a rigorous demand: that friends mutually do not look into those areas of interests and feelings that were not included in the relationship, for it might be painful if those regions of self understanding were to be touched upon. This thoughtfulness, instead of irritating the relationship, in the good cases, brings a new delicacy and togetherness.

A friend has to be able to see a friend in the way a writer sees his hero, that is, he must be able to overlook and ignore the callous and annoying.

How carefully and solemnly Goethe and Schiller get ready for their get-together. Each prepares, in advance, the treasures he would like to display to the other; each delights in what he is going to receive from the other. In doing so they diligently and carefully surround their friendship with a respectful set of rituals so that too much closeness will never disturb the

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80 Goethe wrote an article called "Wahrheit und Wahrscheinlichkeit der Kunstwerke" ("Truth and Verisimilitude in Works of Art"). He tells an anecdote about some monkeys who tried to eat the beetles pictured in a book (Goethes Werke: Schriften zur Kunst, Schriften zur Literatur, 71).

81 In this article, published in 1906 in Schriften zur Soziologie, which is partly excerpted from a larger article published in translation in the American Journal of Sociology entitled "The Sociology of Secrecy and of Secret Societies," Simmel discusses the limits that ought to be placed on friendships. "Aber gerade dann stellen sie in Hinsicht der Diskretionsfrage, des Sichoffensbaren und Sichverschweigens die strenge Forderung: daß die Freunde gegenseitig nicht in die Interessen und Gefühlsbezirke hinein sehen, die nun einmal nicht in die Beziehung eingeschlossen sind und deren Berührung die Grenze des gegenseitigen Sichverstehens schmerzlich fühlbar machen würde. Aber diese Rücksicht, statt das Verhältnis zu irritieren, bringt viel mehr, in den guten Fällen, eine neue Zartheit hinein, ja eine neue Gemeinsamkeit" (155).
enjoyment of this intellectual association. They are like hosts who only serve their guests the very best food, like stars that only turn their illuminated sides to one another. However, such a cautious, tasteful search for the best in the other does not preclude two minds from growing closer together. Our hunger for another life grows as we get nearer to it. Intellects that have found valuable points of contact with one another will be driven to enlarge them. In giving one another the very best of themselves, they start the process of belonging to one another completely.

On their nightly watch, Hagen and Volker sit together outside the Nibelungen's hall, quiet and ready for death. Then the troubadour picks up his violin and infuses his friend's bleak soul with his sweetest and loveliest possession, his music. This has always appeared to me to be the most profound symbol of friendship.  

“One ought to have one's best antagonist in one's friend.” Says Nietzsche. “You should be closest to him with your heart when you resist him.” That is the instructional aspect of friendship: the fight against what I dislike in my friend.

However, isn't it also instructional when two people only connect because of what they are fond of in one another, and which always drives them to become closer? This is the way in which each person always arranges to provide more for his friend to love. As I said, he turns his

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82 Das Nibelungenlied is a heroic German epic written in middle-high German, based on early Teutonic sagas dating from the 11th and 12th centuries. The story is based on the love and revenge of Kriemhild, the Burgundian princess. Keyserling's allusion is to the thirtieth adventure, "Das dreißigste Abenteuer," in which Hagen pledges to stand guard outside the great hall where his comrades have gone to rest before they meet Kriemhild's army. Volker, a famous troubador who plays extraordinarily sweet music, but whose bow is also a weapon, offers to join Hagen in his guard duty. Hagen thanks Volker and tells him that he wants no other companion, and that he too would stand with Volker to the death, if necessary. Then Volker plays beautifully and lulls the troops to sleep while he and Hagen guard them. "Da sprach der Fiedelspieler, Volker der Degen: 'Verschmäht Ihr's nicht, Hagen, so will ich mit Euch pflegen Heunt der Schildwache bis morgen an den Tag.' Da dankte Volkeren der Degen gültlich und sprach: 'Nun lohn Euch Gott vom Himmel,viel lieber Volker! Zu allen meinen Sorgen wünsch ich mir niemand mehr als nur Euch alleine, befahr ich irgend Not, ich will es wohl vergeltet, es verwehr es denn der Tod'" (78).

83 Also Sprach Zarathustra: "In seinem Freunde soll man seinem besten Feind haben. Du sollst ihm am nächsten mit dem Herzen sein, wenn du ihm widerstrebst" (81).
illuminated side towards his friend, but for his friend's sake he always aspires to increase that illuminated side.

Like every other sort of other love, in friendship we also want to experience an increase of life by incorporating an unfamiliar life into ours. Then we can, in turn, feel that our own life has been incorporated into the other person's life. Because the body, with its unclear, heated manner, is not involved here, the life that we give and receive is purified, like noble wine.

The self pushes beyond the limit of its solitariness. The fight against its separateness is the major component of its life; property, power, science and art are the weapons in this battle. The decisive weapon however, is love, for what we capture through it consists of body and essence.

Shakespeare's Richard III, who throughout his whole life strove to aggrandize himself by means of the atrocious use of enormous power, shouts out at the end: “I must despair, not a soul loves me.”

The Indian saint equates his psyche with all that lives around him. He dissolves his life into the world around him, but only to get rid of both of them so that he may sink into the boundlessness of the Absolute. The Christian saint adopts the opposite way: the way of love. He elevates everything around him to his own essence. He sees his blood in all blood and his soul in every soul. He has a “brother wind” and a “sister swallow.” For him there is nothing incorporeal, neutral, nor even dead. Life becomes a shared family property, with shared responsibility and shared ownership. Thus, the saint is never alone, never abandoned. His reality

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84 "Ich muss verzweifeln, keine Seele liebt mich!” The German translation of Richard III is slightly different. It reads: “Ich muß verzweifeln' kein Geschöpf liebt mich, und sterb' ich, wird sich keine Seel' erbarmen.” The original English reads: "I shall despair. There is no creature loves me; / And if I die, no soul will pity me" (5.4.200-20).

85 "Be praised, my Lord through Brothers Wind and Air, and cloud and storms, and all the weather through which You give Your creator sustenance." St. Francis of Assisi. Laudes Creaturarum (2-3).
greets the reality around him in a brotherly fashion, for he, only he owns the most real of worlds. The creator of this most real of worlds, once again, is Eros.
Chapter 4

Commentary on “Über die Liebe”

I have chosen to focus on “Über die Liebe” (“On Love”) for a number of reasons. First, it is one of several works by the author that have not been published in English. Second, this essay, along with the 1905 “Zur Psychologie des Komforts,” more than any of his others, provides an insight into the mind of the largely forgotten author, all of whose papers were, at his own request, destroyed after his death. Third, it illuminates his stories and novels, all of which deal in one way or another, with dysfunctional relationships, not only between men and women, but between the older and younger generations.

“Über die Liebe” is simultaneously evocative of romantic nineteenth century thought and the psychologically aware twentieth century. Keyserling’s juxtaposition of mind and body, his analysis of their influence on one another, as well as their reactions to the objective world outside them were in tune with psychological descriptions accepted at the turn of the century. It was a time of enormous interest in human psychology, an understanding of which as a science was part of the zeitgeist of that era.

As discussed in my review of the literature, chapter 2, Keyserling’s work has been interpreted in various conflicting ways in the century since his death. Earlier critics such as Wolfgang Nehring, perhaps reflecting the critical attitudes of his own time, saw him as an impressionist, in “Eduard von Keyserlings Impressionismus.” Later on, Wolfdietrich Rasch in “Décadence-Motive in Eduard von Keyserlings Romanen und Erzählungen”—among others—perceives implications of decadence underlying Keyserling’s characters. Benno von Wiese, in

87 A visit to Munich, where Keyserling spent the last eighteen or so years of his life, did not even reveal his apartment. It was gone, probably bombed during the Second World War.
his excellent essay “Keyserling am Südhang,” classifies Keyserling as a naturalist for his wistful detachment from his characters’ follies. Each of the assessments has value, but what is most important about these divergent views is that they point to the richness and complexity of Keyserling’s work.

One might also classify him as a fatalist. In “Über die Liebe” he writes:

“Within us lie the seeds of many lives and personalities all of which strain for life. However, because of the fate assigned to us, most will reflects an amalgam of the debt that he owes to his classical education, and his modern (for the time) acquaintance with psychological theory.”88 (“Über die Liebe,” 37).

In my view, he ought to be considered an early twentieth century writer who belongs in the company of thinkers such as Mach, Freud, Simmel and others who examined the psychological aspects of human behavior.

The last decades of the nineteenth century were rich in discoveries about psychology. It was a frequent topic of discussion and Keyserling must have been exposed to such ideas as the reciprocal relationship between the perceived and the perceiver, and the presumed psychological differences between men and women.

Additionally, “Über die Liebe” reflects the influence of Kierkegaard and Simmel, each of whom was influenced by Kantian philosophy. Kantian ideas are contained in Keyserling's emphasis on the duality of mind and body. Making a distinction between the two, he described the constant back-and-forth movement between them. When he used the term “real world,” he was speaking of a subjective reality that differs markedly from that which he saw as an “objective” reality. He viewed objective reality as das Ding an sich: “the thing in itself,” well-known Kantian expression. This reality is opposed to what he called the “self's reality.”

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88 All references to “Über de Liebe” are my own translation. See Chapter 3, pages 32-54.
Here we find what Richard Brinkmann characterized as “the objectification of the subjective,” namely the difference between subjectively perceived reality and objective reality, the reality external to the perceiver (Am Südhang, Afterword 84-5). Keyserling emphasized that it is the self's subjective perception that is most real. To express this conviction, he cited the fact (as he saw it) that primitive man and children recognize only one reality: that of the self.\(^\text{89}\)

Keyserling made the point that a child who tortures an animal feels no relationship to the animal. The objective reality of his actions does not touch his subjective experience. On the other hand, the author says, that when we recognize that another person's reality is as “real” as our own, then we love (“Über die Liebe,” 33-35).

Keyserling presented a profound duality between Christian and Hindu philosophies of love in two short phrases: “love thy neighbor” and “tat twam asi.” The Christian world is a world of individuals who are commanded to love their neighbors as themselves. This latter sort of bond maintains each person's individuality and applies primarily to the treatment of others. Keyserling does not explain what he means by “love thy neighbor,” possibly because he assumed that the biblical injunction was self-explanatory to his largely Christian readership.

When Keyserling cited “love thy neighbor as thyself,” he placed the statement just after “love means lending one's own reality to an object, making it one with one's self” (“Über die Liebe,” 33). In this statement, he used the word “love” in a sense quite different from the love between individuals. For Keyserling, objective love was love felt for god, nature or the world spirit. He coupled this Christian formulation of spiritual love with “tat twam asi,” which is quite

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\(^{89}\) It is unclear on what evidence he bases his description of primitive man. It may be that he simply meant “lesser” human beings, rather than early man. There may be a clue as to what he meant in the terms in which he discusses various types of women, contrasting "women of higher culture," with "simple" village women and "the lowest" sort of woman, a prostitute. Clearly, he had what today we would call an elitist attitude.
a different concept. *Tat twam asi*, Sanskrit for “that thou art,” applies to the relationship of man to the world spirit.⁹⁰ Far from the idea of loving someone as much as oneself, here, the self is *submerged* into the world spirit, becoming part of that spirit. In that process, man loses his individuality and merges with the world spirit in the same way that rivers merge into the sea. Keyserling sees this merging and the concomitant loss of self as “the Indian's greatest formula of love, its most precise definition” (“Über die Liebe,” 34).

The notion of individuality itself is a western idea that is discussed by Jacob Burckhardt, a nineteenth century Swiss professor, in the chapter “The Rise of the Individual” in his book *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy*, first published in 1860. He attributes the birth of the consciousness of individuality to the period following the enlightenment in Italy, citing “l'uomo universale,” who, in the fifteenth century, was endowed with great knowledge and many talents (84). Burckhardt states that the recognition of individuality outside Italy only occurred in the sixteenth century in northern Europe with Trithemius, the first German to write about famous individuals who were, of course, men. This was the first time, according to Burckhardt, that an individual’s accomplishments were chronicled. Until that time, there had only been literature about saints and others who were the stuff of legends, but were not real people.

It is also clear that Keyserling owed a debt to Kant, who insisted that man should love his neighbor because it is his duty to do so. And in doing so, out of duty, whether or not he even liked his neighbor he was demonstrating a “practical” love that springs from the will not from an

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⁹⁰ Although Keyserling never cites Schopenhauer, he must have read him. In Schopenhauer's essay "Human Nature" he writes: "The reader of my Ethics knows that with me the ultimate foundation of morality is the truth which in the *Vedas* and the *Vedanta* receives its expression in the established, mystical formula, *Tat twam asi* (This is thyself), which is spoken with reference to every living thing, be it man or beast, and is called the *Mahavakya*, the great word” (23).
inclination. Otto von Taube, Keyserling’s nephew, described the Keyserling’s family’s longstanding association with Kant. In Taube’s Nachwort (“afterword”) to Schwüle Tage, he wrote that there were “philosophical, Kantian components found in the works of so many of the Keyserlings, as well as in Eduard’s writings” (319).92

Despite his familiarity with the new ideas of the early twentieth century, most relevant to the current discussion is Keyserling’s rigid conception of gender. This is particularly visible in his descriptions of women. He viewed women idealistically, in a romantic, nineteenth century manner. He grew up with several sisters and was deeply devoted to his mother. However, apart from his family, he may never have had a close relationship with a woman, or if he did, it was platonic. The women he would have met would have been social contemporaries—that is, other aristocrats—or servants.93 In the late nineteenth century women of Keyserling’s class were not only restricted to the home, but they had to be models of decorum and domesticity. They were not supposed to be thinkers, nor were they permitted to share in men’s education.

In “Über die Liebe,” Keyserling described woman as having: “a very subtle view of the outside world, but she always sees its fixed outlines and its true colors.” He goes on to describe the female soul in poetic—even lyrical—terms:

“…a very delicate sounding board for everything from the outside world that resonates within her; the softest melody of things and nature, all the

91 “For love as an affection, cannot be commanded, but beneficence for duty’s sake may; even though we are not impelled to it by any inclination—nay, are even repelled by a natural and unconquerable aversion. This is practical love, and not pathological—a love which is seated in the will, and not in the propulsions of sense—in principles of action and not of tender sympathy; and it is this love alone which can be commanded” (Basic Writings of Kant, 158).
92 “Aus diesem Haus kommt her die philosophische, die kantische Komponente, die sich bei so vielen Keyserlingen, gerade auch bei Eduard findet.”
93 It is tempting to speculate that Bill’s connection with Margush, the maid in “Schwüle Tage”, might have been based on Keyserling’s own experience. In the novel, the young protagonist Bill, alienated from his father, Gerd, not really understanding the relationship between Gerd and the newly engaged Ellita with whom Gerd has had an affair, is upset by the tension surrounding him. At night, hearing Margush singing, Bill climbs out of his bedroom window and goes to her. She understands that he is sad so she takes him in her arms and “gives herself” to him. “Da gab sie sich mir hin…” (Schwüle Tage, 59).
moods and rhythms that wander through the world vibrate in her. They are recomposed and transformed into the tonality of the soul, in the way that such tones sound to us across still waters, taking on something silvery, damp and soft from the water itself” (“Über die Liebe,” 39).

Keyserling concedes that women have a sex drive, but insists that such a drive has to be cloaked in spirituality or sentiment. “[I]n the woman of higher (my italics) culture everything born of sensuality becomes a symbol of spirituality containing the rhythm and color of flowing blood and the swift throbbing of the heart” (“Über die Liebe,” 39). What could be more romantic than this poetic transformation of flesh into spirit? In his view, the more upper class a woman was, the greater her spirituality. Yet, he also includes lower class women in his idealized, unrealistic portrayal of woman. “A simple village maiden perceives her sensual feelings as a matter of the heart.” Writing about prostitutes whom he describes as “the unlucky, lowest sort of woman,” he continues, even she, “tries to adorn her poor, distorted, saleable sensuality with a glimmer of feeling and deceptively tries to pretend that it represents part of her soul” (“Über die Liebe,” 39). Throughout his essay, Keyserling, in an effort to put the best possible interpretation on the behavior of aristocratic women, minimizes their sexuality. Almost all of Keyserling’s women respond to, rather than initiate sexual involvements.

When the author depicted men, there was neither poetry, nor any gilding of the lily. His depiction of male behavior was not sympathetic, but reflected the turn of the century interest in and understanding of psychology. He painted man as inherently selfish and animalistic, especially compared to woman. In “Über die Liebe,” he drew an analogy between an oyster’s self-centered view of life, namely that its entire purpose is self-sustenance, and man’s attitude towards the outside world. Man, according to Keyserling, was self absorbed and, like the oyster, felt the need to defend himself against an, at best indifferent, and at worst, hostile world. As a
corrective to this state, Keyserling introduced Kant’s dictum that man must never be regarded as a means, but rather as an end. If this instruction is put into practice, then man rises above “oyster” status because he can use his abilities to look out for others and relate to them.

Even so, Keyserling saw man’s sense of connection to the world outside himself as always transitory:

“He wants to force a rational reality [onto the world], nevertheless, he surrounds it with doubts so that, essentially, no example of a clear outcome exists for him, consequently, he must always reestablish the threads that connect him to the world over and over again” (“Über die Liebe,” 38).

As I have already noted, Keyserling’s partisanship is unmistakable. Diverging sharply from Kant, Keyserling never speaks of women as inferior to men. He simply describes the ways in which they differ from men. His sympathy is for women; his unbiased analysis of male psychology owes nothing to sentiment, but is more realistic than his views about women.

In discussing love, Keyserling uses the same word for very different sorts of relationships, for the erotic connections between men and women, for the devotion of mothers toward their children, and for the spiritual connection exemplified in friendship. Kierkegaard, speaking of Eros, says that while he “was the god of erotic love he was not himself in love…(he) did not fall in love” (Either/Or, 64). Keyserling, who cites Kierkegaard multiple times in his essay, seems to have taken this central irony to its logical conclusion; so as far as he is concerned, the highest forms of eros are sexless. They include motherly love, and the intellectual friendship between men.

Keyserling sees mother-love as pure, finding no erotic or sensual element in it. Here again, we find a nineteenth-century view that ties in with his ideas about female psychology and sexuality. Mother-love is pure, “white.” There is nothing of the Freudian insight into mother-
child relationship, possibly because Keyserling was unfamiliar with Freud, but perhaps because he balks at the idea of sensuality as an aspect of maternal relationships. He depicts motherly love as characterized by abnegation and sacrifice, rather than pleasure or affection. On this subject Keyserling lapses into sentimentality, yet even here, he never entirely loses his characteristic insight. His understanding of mother-love is idealized, but his view of the child’s role in relation to its mother is clear and unsentimental. Mother-love is the only love that gives everything and demands nothing in return. The child takes without any feeling of wanting to give back. The author notes that while a child takes whatever its mother gives, nonetheless, it is always moving away from her.

When the older generation searches for love from the young, such love is doomed to be unrequited and painful. Keyserling contends that in old age, which he sees as a diminution of life, “the need for love becomes an anxious scream from selfish life” (“Über die Liebe,” 48). Old people turn to the young to feed on them. Keyserling invokes King Lear to show how an aging man attempts to prolong his life and escape loneliness by trying to bribe his daughters with land. As another example of the attempt to escape loneliness, Keyserling uses the Ibsen play John Gabriel Borkman to demonstrate the way in which old people try to nourish themselves by living through the young, demanding their affection, trying to hold them near, only to be rejected. In each case “the fight for love is a fight for life” (“Über die Liebe,” 50) and it is a fight that cannot be won.94

In his novels and stories, Keyserling’s aristocratic mother figures were rarely actual mothers. More often, they were aunts (notable exceptions include the two mothers who appear in

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94 In the Ibsen play the sound of sleigh bells is the signal of the young people’s escape from their elders. Interestingly enough in the novels Dumala and Abendliche Häuser, Keyserling too uses the sound of sleigh bells to signify the nightly, erotic expeditions of the protagonists, Barons Rast and Egloff.
The mother figures are benign, virtuous women whose main concerns are domestic and who always defer to the males in the family. One such person, the aunt in *Abendliche Häuser*, Baroness Arabella, sister of Baron von der Warthe, steps in to help bring up the baron’s children after his wife’s death. Another mother figure appears in the novel *Bunte Herzen*, Komtesse Betty, sister of Graf Hamilkar von Wandl-Dux. After the count’s wife’s death, Komtesse Betty takes over the care and raising of his daughters, Erika and Billy. Consistent with the description of motherhood in “Über die Liebe,” the aristocratic women in Keyserling’s novels and stories are rather two-dimensional figures who love their charges, but do not seem to expect anything in return.

In many of Keyserling’s works, the mother figure is invariably a kind, reliable preserver of the status quo who comforts and supports the male members of her household, without necessarily understanding much of what is going on with them. Keyserling’s attitude towards older women is reflected in the various descriptions of the mother figures in his stories and novels. As William Webb Pusey III puts it in his “Eduard von Keyserling as Essayist and Literary Critic,” quoting from the essay “Zur Psychologie des Komforts”:

> “the veritable guardian of comfort is woman. By her ability to give her own tone to the environment, by empathy with the things around her, she makes comfort personal and gives support, solace, and co-operation” which, according to Keyserling, “is the strict meaning of comfort, and his definition of the part woman is intended to play in life” (136).95

There is an interesting contrast between Keyserling’s idealized mother figures and his deftly delineated and much more realistic, young female rebels who try—always unsuccessfully—to break away from the traditional roles imposed on them. While they are not

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95To understand Keyserling’s interpretation of the meaning of comfort, see his essay entitle “Zur Psychologie des Komforts,” in *Die neue Rundschau.*
sexually active, the young women are sympathetically yet realistically drawn three-dimensional figures, as compared with the rather two-dimensional “mother” types.

The author’s view of motherhood was so highly idealized and romantic that it belongs much more to the nineteenth century than to the twentieth, and echoes his views of the sexless nature of aristocratic women. His description of the child’s behavior is supported by twentieth century psychological literature, but he seems not apply his psychological insight to mothers. This may have to do with his relationship with his own mother, but there has been nothing written about that connection.96

Because Keyserling is clearly uncomfortable with the thought of women of his own class vis-a-vis sexuality, the females in his novels and stories who are involved in erotic love are never aristocrats, but often singers, performers, and in the case of Daniela in Am Südhang (“On the Southern Slope”) divorced, and therefore socially diminished. Keyserling’s obvious sympathy for women, as well as his equally obvious distaste for the erotic, impelled him to attempt to resolve his conflict by insisting that where there was eroticism in woman it was always combined with spirituality, which mitigates sexuality. Too intelligent and knowledgeable to be able to deny completely feminine sexuality, he tries to soften it by coupling it with spirituality, even when his topic turns explicitly to a discussion of the erotic.

Keyserling sees love at its best as an individual’s sense of unity with the universe. However, he views romantic relationships, the union of two individuals, as dangerous. His ideas about erotic love are dark. He feels that sexuality interferes with the possibility of friendship, or indeed any successful relationship between men and women, therefore his analysis of male-

96 We only know that after his father’s death he spent some time with his mother administering the family estate.
female relationships is pessimistic. In “Über die Liebe,” he presents many kinds of unsuccessful romantic relationships, in all of which the existence of sexuality played a destructive role.

The author describes various aspects of erotic love in his essay and characterizes them as fraught with problems—at least among humans. Keyserling sees sexual desire as the impetus for animal sexual unions as well as human ones. In the natural world, the sex drive is merely the outcome of nature’s imperative to reproduce and so propagate a species. Although purely sexual passion can be brutal97, when satisfied, “desire would abate and calm would ensue” (“Über die Liebe,” 43). Once the drive is satisfied, there is no more association between the (animal) sexes. Yet, when discussing human relationships Keyserling writes that “in humans, the physical and the spiritual are so closely connected that in physical desire the soul’s desire is always mixed in” (“Über die Liebe,” 35). This statement is another rather romantic, nineteenth-century idea. Keyserling insists that human intercourse always involves the soul, which, according to him, is absent in animals.

The erotic “achieve(s) its jurisdiction over all humanity,” (“Über die Liebe,” 43) leaving souls troubled. In his view, each person is basically solitary, and because the erotic element can disrupt that solitude but not permanently overcome the differences between men and women, there is something “…tense and agitated” (“Über die Liebe,” 44) in love that leaves the participants unhappy and unable to resolve their differences. “Something akin to pain is present in all happiness” (“Über die Liebe,” 44). Keyserling’s ideas are exemplified in all his novels and stories; there are no happy endings in any of the love relationships he depicts. His conviction that there are dangers inherent in erotic love is demonstrated, with slight variations, in all of his fiction.

97 here he means animalistic
For Keyserling, erotic (by which he means sensual) love, is hopeless, but also inevitable, because of the intrinsic psychological and spiritual differences between the sexes, and the fact that men lack—and need—what women have. Pusey in “Keyserling as Essayist and Critic,” quoting from “Über die Liebe,” notes the contrast drawn by the author between a woman’s part in a love relationship and a man's: “A born partisan, a woman has the assurance and clarity in relationships that is lacking in man, a doubter for whom, basically, no problem comes out even (resolved)” (140). It is clear to me that Keyserling also felt that men, because of their psychological make-up and their erotic urges, were to blame for the difficulties inherent in male-female unions.

Keyserling believes that man can redeem himself only by “finding his own image again in the beloved woman's soul, where it is softened, ordered, and recreated into a calmer reality” (“Über die Liebe,” 42). This not only romantic, but there are echoes in it of courtly love.

The author sees men as destroyers of woman’s peace. Unhappy men such as Faust or Hamlet, both of whom Keyserling refers to in his essay, are drawn to gentle women in whom they search for peace. Women, such as Gretchen and Ophelia, respond to men, and in doing so lose their own tranquility. “Man's uneasy, demoralized spirit muddies, disturbs, and frightens women's souls, so that they appear incomprehensible, puzzling and ghostly, making women strangers to themselves” (“Über die Liebe,” 41). This is a deeply pessimistic, almost nihilistic view of love. As he shows in his works of fiction, love, for Keyserling, always ends badly because of his stated belief in the impossibility of a successful relationship between the sexes.

We know that Keyserling read Kierkegaard because he references and paraphrases him at length in “Über die Liebe.” Keyserling picks out examples from the chapter “The Immediate Erotic Stages,” and then uses these examples to reinforce his statements about sensuousness.
Kierkegaard includes a long discussion about the male and the female figures in Mozart’s Don Giovanni and in Goethe’s Faust. Kierkegaard used Don Giovanni because he viewed the opera as the epitome of sensuousness, and he saw the figure of Don Juan as symbolic of the “aesthete” who lives primarily through the senses. The philosopher wrote that it was the music in Don Giovanni that exemplifies sensuality, even more than words.

Keyserling, in portraying certain types of sensual characters, employs the Don Juan figure somewhat differently from Kierkegaard. He simply uses Kierkegaard’s discussion about Don Giovanni’s sensuality to cast him as a voluptuary whose aim in life is to possess womankind. Keyserling feels that Don Juan and others of his type, who only pursue the erotic, are doomed to live empty lives because the erotic alone is not conducive to happiness, yet neither is the amalgam of the spiritual and the erotic. Keyserling contrasts Don Juan’s type of sensuality with a mother’s selflessness, an “eros” that he sees as devoid any sensuality, a “pure” love. He imagines an Eros who has only inherited “lavishness and indefatigable generosity from Poros; it is an egoism installed in the center of another’s life” (“Über die Liebe,” 47). With this statement, we find Keyserling once again rejecting the erotic in favor of an asexual, saintly mother figure. His characterization shows clearly how much he felt the need to reject sensuality.

Finally, and where Keyserling seems the most comfortable, is with the feelings inherent in friendship, without the disturbing element of sex. He shares Kant’s view that friendship is the most desirable form of relationships. Twentieth century ideas admit more complexities, and more possibilities of sensuality in friendship, but “Über die Liebe” is a repeated rejection of the notion of physical relations in friendship.

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98 It must be noted here that Keyserling did not cite his references and often quoted from memory, sometimes incorrectly; for example, his misquotation of Romeo and Juliet.
99 Modern psychologists would surely have a field day with this!
Keyserling’s description of the relationship between Goethe and Schiller suggests that in an ideal friendship each individual gives the other his best and in doing so enriches the relationship but without too much intimacy. This is certainly a culturally determined view, as in Keyserling’s day the standards of aristocratic behavior demanded reticence about personal matters. In his short stories, Keyserling frequently refers to appropriate behavior as “wie es sich gehört” (“the way it is supposed to be”), and also uses its French equivalent, “tenue.”

Georg Simmel, with whose work Keyserling was familiar, wrote in “The Sociology of Secrecy and of Secret Societies,” that the solution to a successful relationship was a carefully designed reciprocity of friendship, but without too much intimacy and without “telling all” (458-9). Keyserling, when he wrote about the friendship between Goethe and Schiller, presented it as an ideal one in which each person showed the other only his “brightest side” (“Über die Liebe,” 52), and as a result, each elicited the best of the other’s abilities. The Kantian concept that our notion of reality is dependent on our subjective perceptions of it is evident in Keyserling’s description of friendship, which in turn is based on Georg Simmel’s work.

Keyserling views friendship as the only relationship likely to yield a meaningful and satisfying connection. He believes that friendship has the greatest chance of being a successful connection between men, reasoning that the absence of sexuality simplifies and clarifies a relationship. When Keyserling turns to a depiction of friendship, he emphasizes it as a conscious choice, unmarred by the element of eroticism (which compromises the will). He draws a contrast between such a choice and a sensual relationship, saying that “[sensuality] robs friendship of that very clarity and freedom that is its actual being.” (“Über die Liebe,” 50).

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100 French, as it had been in the court of Frederick the Great, continued to be the language of the educated class in the nineteenth century in Germany as well as in Russia, spoken in the presence of servants so that they would not understand matters not meant for their ears.

101 See footnote 40.
It is interesting to note that he does not include women in his discussion of friendship. In some of his novels, Keyserling does present friendships between women, but they do not resemble the profundity of the Schiller-Goethe connection. These elderly females are friendly with one another, but those friendships are the relatively superficial associations of older women in the position of overseeing their brothers’ children as well as their households. Such women understand one another because they share similar views about tradition and aristocratic mores, but there is never a deeper connection than that.

Most of Keyserling’s theories about love, both in his essays and in his fiction, also reflect other turn-of-the-century preoccupations, namely loneliness and alienation.102 Andreas Sturies, in his 1990 dissertation, “Imität und Öffentlichkeit: Ein Untersuchung der Erzählungen Eduard von Keyserlings” (“Imitation and Openness: An Examination of the Stories of Eduard von Keyserling”) points out that unlike many of his contemporaries who turned away from their world as a result of their perceived estrangement of the ego from its surroundings, Keyserling asserts that love can overcome such alienation (28). However, that sort of love, the author insisted, could only to be found in friendship, religion, and faith. It owed nothing to the erotic. It was only through non-erotic love that the greatest connection to the outer world could be achieved.

At the end of his essay Keyserling returns to the Indian mystic and the Christian saint, noting that even while their ways are opposite to one another, each of them has overcome the inherent loneliness of existence. In the former, the self disappears or is subsumed into the “world spirit” whereas in the latter, the individual joins the universe, loving god and all his creations, yet maintaining his individuality by owning “…the most real of worlds. The creator of this most real

of worlds, once again, is Eros” ("Über die Liebe,” 54). This, however, is an Eros who represents a pure love, devoid of any destructive sexuality.

The writer’s aversion to erotic love might be seen as a reflection of his own experiences. Based on what is known about his extreme homeliness, Keyserling might have had little to do with women sexually. Though he had many friends of both sexes throughout this life, there is no evidence that he had any erotic involvements beyond his youthful experience in a brothel.

His profound appreciation of male friendships, starting with the Greeks and including Goethe and Schiller, as well as Hagen and Volker in *The Nibelungenlied*\(^\text{103}\), raises the question that he may have had homosexual leanings. Critic Klaus Gräbner mentions the possibility that Keyserling was homosexual, but quickly adds that were that the case it would make no difference to him (*Feiertagsgeschichten*, afterword 170). There is absolutely no evidence of any sexual relationships in the author’s life with the exception of the visit to the brothel during his college years. Because of the destruction of Keyserling’s papers, we have lost the opportunity to know anything about him except for what he wanted us to know. So in a real sense, his life embodied his definition of friendship, we see only his bright side.

While it has been largely ignored, “Über die Liebe” is in fact a key to Keyserling's novels and stories. Without it, it is impossible to understand the basis for the interactions between men and women, which make up the essence of most of his works of fiction. The negative outcomes of all of the romantic relationships found in his work can be connected to the theories Keyserling presents in “Über die Liebe.”

\(^{103}\) *The Nibelungenlied* (“The Song of the Nibelungs”), is an epic German poem.
Chapter 5

Themes: Generational Conflicts, the Erotic, and Landscapes

In this chapter, I will discuss Keyserling's main themes and detail how they appeared in his writings. Between 1887 and 1918, he published thirty-eight novels, plays and short stories. During the same period, he also published about thirty non-fiction pieces including philosophical essays and review of books, and plays. Before he went blind, he reviewed various exhibitions of paintings including those that were part of the Munich Secession. His articles and stories were published in the most prestigious magazines and newspapers of his time, such as Die neue Rundschau, Kunst für alle, Die Zeit, Der Tag, Nord und Süd, Jugend and Freistatt, among others. Demonstrating his wide range of interests, he reviewed publications by Martin Buber, Oscar Wilde, Georg Hirschfeld, Max Halbe, Rudolph Kassner, Benno Geiger, and Johannes Jensen among others.

In his novels and stories, he repeatedly returned to similar situations, placing protagonists drawn from a specific social milieu into familiar settings and familiar conflicts. His portraits of the old aristocracy and its conflicts with the younger generation were rich in psychological insights. He was able to depict detailed portraits of distinct individuals as well as more traditional descriptions of peasants and foreigners. His stories and novels generally ended sadly because of the author's conviction, as it was expressed in “Über die Liebe,” that erotic relationships must end badly.

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104 Münchner Secession was a group of German artists who, in 1892, broke away from the Munich Artists association in protest against the conservatism of the government controlled art association and started their own group; they established their own group later known as the Munich Secession. It is still extant.
Almost all of Keyserling's works describe not only the Baltic aristocracy, but also the waning days of aristocracy in general, in settings similar to the environment in which he grew up. The worlds Keyserling describes are all in the past, but his insights are colored by his knowledge of present day psychology. However, he never diverges from his view of the deleterious nature of erotic relationships. He makes a careful distinction between the upper class women he portrays, who are always either sexless or repressed, and the lower class, erotically charged women. Keyserling’s prejudice against Poles and other foreigners, including Jews, is discernible in some of his novels. However, his descriptions of them, while including stereotypical images, go beyond stereotypes. Skilled writer that he is, Keyserling makes them into three-dimensional human beings.

Keyserling is not in the least tendentious. He expresses his social criticisms through the mouths of various characters rather than commenting as the omniscient author. Usually, he allows his readers to arrive at their own conclusions. All of Keyserling’s writings—his stories and essays—present an author without dogmatism, who exhibits the same sort of restraint considered appropriate by people of his class.

The older generation in Keyserling's writings typify the traditional values of the aristocracy: their manners, their dedication to the preservation of property, and their insistence on the perpetuation of their standards of comportment. They often disapprovingly discuss what they see as the unfortunate behavior exhibited by their children's generation. These children are sympathetically drawn, yet they never manage to evade their parents’ rules. It is interesting to note in passing, that the males of the younger generation are depicted with little of the sympathy that the author shows for the young women.
In *Wellen* (“Waves”), as in all his writings, Keyserling demonstrates an affectionate understanding of older women. For him they are the mainstays of households, whether rich or poor, noble or plebeian. These women regulate the home and are supportive of the older males, even if they do not understand exactly what is taking place. They comfort the younger women, love the young men, and guide the servants in their daily tasks. They are the preservers of religion and the organizers of daily devotions.

Some of the older women are more worldly and sophisticated than others. *Wellen* centers on Doralice, a young aristocrat who has run away from her old husband to live by the ocean with a painter, Hans Grill. Generalin von Palikow, a general's widow, is a grandmother who has rented a house for the summer so that her daughter, Frau von Buttlär, and her grandchildren may enjoy a vacation by the sea. The Generalin is a sophisticated, realistic, old aristocrat. Nothing shocks her; she knows a great deal about the world. Her daughter, on the other hand, is a conventional, anxious, narrow-minded person who worries about the influence that Doralice's behavior will have on her children. Beneath the surface of the novel, the theme of sexuality is rampant. Doralice, in yielding to her attraction to Hans, has given up her aristocratic, well-ordered, dull world to live by the sea, a symbol of uncontrollable nature. In acting out her desires Doralice represents a threat to the carefully repressed Frau von Buttlär who fears that Doralice, who has rescued one of her daughters from drowning, will influence the child. In *Am Südhang* (“On the Southern Slope”), old Frau von Wallbaum cries a little at the absence of the scandalous young Daniela, the seductive divorcée who flirts with the young lieutenant who has returned to his ancestral home for the summer, but the old lady soon recovers saying: “Now we are back in our ordered existence…it feels so secure to have one's own around one. With strangers one never
knows…” (Am Südhang, 215). These sentiments reflect the older generations’ opposition to change and its comfort with the status quo.

In their turn, the young try to escape from the rules imposed upon them by their tradition-bound elders, but they always fail. Some of the younger, female family members leave home to pursue their dreams and to search for new and more meaningful lives. For example, Fastrade von der Warthe and Gertrud Port in Abendliche Häuser (“Evening Houses”). In every instance, they too fail to achieve their goals. They are forced to return to their ancestral homes doomed to accept their parents' way of life.

In Abendliche Häuser, Fastrade von der Warthe follows a family tutor, with whom she is in love, to care for him in a distant hospital, where he dies. At the same time, Fastrade's father suffers a stroke after his only son is killed in a duel. Fastrade returns home to take her place as the surviving member of the younger generation; her father expects her to replace her brother, look after the estate's accounts, and familiarize herself with its business dealings. In a neighboring manor house, Gertrud, daughter of Baron Port, suffering from a nervous breakdown, has also come home from a distant city where she went to study singing.

In most cases, Keyserling's young, aristocratic women are stronger, more enterprising, and more sympathetically rendered than their male counterparts. They try to rebel against the established rules and in their searches for new ways of life; they often temporarily escape from their constricting home life. Even the most liberated of these young women, for example, Doralice in Wellen, although she has succeeded in leaving her husband, in the end finds herself in a permanent state of limbo caught between the sea and the land, walking back and forth, going nowhere. Keyserling, in showing the tenacious power of that tradition-bound society, has also

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105 “Nun sind wir wieder in unserer Ordnung […]. Es ist so sicher, nur die Seinen um sich zu wissen; denn mit den Fremden, man weiß nie—.”
chronicled its death. The circumstances of most of his stories are set in the past. He is looking backwards.

The author often places his criticisms of the “old” way of life in the mouths of young characters—such as Dietz von Egloff in *Abendliche Häuser*—as well as a few of the “old guard”—for example, Count Hamilkar in *Bunte Herzen* (“Gay Hearts”).

Dietz von Egloff, a young neighbor of Fastrade von der Warthe, has never left home, but in his attempt to separate himself from the rules of the older generation, is “parting his hair in the middle, like a Mennonite preacher; this is supposed to be an American style,” and spending time gambling with foreigners, such as “a Portuguese Marquis who is as black as an ink pot, and a long, gray haired Polish count wearing blue-tinted glasses”\(^\text{106}\) (*Abendliche Häuser*, 362). These unflattering remarks are made by Baron Port to his wife and to the Baroness von der Warthe.

In his turn, Egloff describes the unsatisfactory education that young aristocrats like himself received:

> My upbringing was stupid. I was terribly spoiled, yet at the same time everything was forbidden. Later, I threw myself greedily in pursuit of my freedom. It disappointed me. I had expected more. In fact, around here my whole generation lacks something. Our fathers were terrifically good. They took everything very seriously and reverently. It was actually your father [he is speaking to his fiancée, Fastrade] who used to like to speak of the holy vocation of preserving and administering his forefathers' estate. We weren't able to subscribe to such devotion, nor could we imagine doing it ourselves. So we couldn't take anything really seriously, neither our fathers nor our grandmothers. Out of this came the desire to cock a snook at every worthy ideal\(^\text{107}\) (415).

\(^{106}\) “der Egloff…daß er sein Haar gescheitelt trägt wie ein Mennonitenprediger… das soll amerikanisch sein… da stellte er mir so einen kleinen Kerl vor, schwarz wie ein Tintenfass, der ist ein portugiesischer Marquis, und einen langen Grauhaarigen mit einer blauen Brille… ein polnischer Graf.”

\(^{107}\) “...meine Erziehung war dumm, ich wurde unmenschlich verwöhnt, und doch war alles wieder verboten. Als ich mich später gierig auf meine Freiheit warf, enttäuschte sie mich, ich hatte mehr erwartet. Überhaupt, an meiner ganzen Generation hier in der Gegend ist etwas versäumt worden. Unsere Väter waren kolossal gut, sie nahmen alles sehr ernst und andächtig. Es war wohl dein Vater, der gern von dem heiligen Beruf sprach, die Güter seiner Väter zu verwalten und zu erhalten. Na, wir konnten mit dieser Andacht nicht recht mit, nach einer neuen Andacht für uns sah man sich nicht um. Und so kam es denn, daß wir nichts so recht ernst nahmen, ja selbst die Väter nicht, nicht einmal die Großmütter. Da entstand wohl auch die Lust jenes brave Ideal einmal an die Nase zu fassen.”
In *Bunte Herzen*, seventeen-year-old Billy, daughter of Count Hamilkar von Wandl-Dux, is in love with her flamboyant, handsome Polish cousin, Boris von Dangellô. Boris persuades her to elope with him after her father has refused to consent to their engagement, but the affair ends very badly: Billy runs home and Boris commits suicide, having failed to persuade Billy to join him in death. Billy’s father, Count Hamilkar, in a discussion with his sister Betty, expresses doubts about the way the younger generation is being brought up:

> What sort of creatures are we raising? They cannot live. The thing that we call living we can hardly entrust to them. A house maid who slinks out to a stableboy and lets him seduce her, knows what she wants. But what we are bringing up, Betty, are little, besotted ghosts, that tremble with longing to go out and around, and when they emerge, they cannot breathe. That is what we are raising, Betty.\(^{108}\)

Once again, criticism of the prevailing mores is put into the mouth of one of Keyserling's characters. This time, the author uses one of the old aristocrats to make the observation. This is typical of Keyserling's ability to create characters that are not entirely stereotypical. He is portraying a member of the older generation, but a person who demonstrates his insight into “modern” problems and who expresses doubts about the validity of the way in which girls were being raised.

Eroticism is a constant theme and generally the primary motivation in all Keyserling's works. In “Über die Liebe” he writes: “the erotic controls all human relationships…becoming the driving force in society's life. If we want to understand a person's life, we need to know what role

\(^{108}\) "…was erziehen wir da für Wesen? Die können ja nicht leben. Denen kann man ja das Ding, das wir Leben nennen, gar nicht anvertrauen. Ein Stubenmädchen, das zum Stallknecht schleicht und sich verführen läßt, weiß was es will, aber was wir da erziehen, Betty, das sind kleine berauschte Gespenster, die vor Verlangen zittern, draußen umzugehen und wenn sie hinauskommen, nicht atmen können. Das ist's, was wir erziehen, Betty."
the erotic plays in it”109 (“Über die Liebe,” 43). Here, the author echoes the sentiments of many of his contemporaries, thinkers who were examining the role of the erotic.

Carl Schorske, in his book *Fin de-Siècle Vienna*, illuminates many of the changes in attitude towards history as well as the *Gefühlskultur* (“new world of feeling”) (345). He points to the fact that Vienna was what Hebbel called “the little world in which the big one holds its tryouts,” thus becoming a center of avant-garde ideas (introduction xxvii).

In the late 1880s, Keyserling spent time in Vienna and, according to Homscheid, became part of the eminent Austrian playwright Ludwig Anzengruber’s circle. He probably met the cultural elite, such as Ernst Mach, who was not only a physicist, but also a pioneer in the field of psychology and sexuality. These early experiences undoubtedly made a lasting impression on him.

Because Keyserling was extremely reticent about details of his life, and because of the stipulation in his will that all his papers be destroyed, very little is known about his activities after he left the university in Dorpat. No hard evidence exists that he read either Freud or Mach, but one may assume, because of his time in Vienna, that he had at least met the latter and perhaps absorbed some of his ideas. In any case, the erotic, for Keyserling, is a powerful force, and is inextricably connected with death.

For example, in *Am Südhang*, Daniela flirts with the men around her, and has sex with a young lieutenant out of pity because he is going to fight a duel the next day. However, she has no further interest in him after he survives. Later in the novel, the tutor, Aristide Dorn, commits suicide because of his unrequited love for Daniela. Here is another example, among many, of

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Keyserling’s view of the destructive nature of eroticism. He sees it as causing relationships to end, at the very least, in frustration, in the worst cases, in tragedy. In his work, the erotic drives men to infidelity, often with women outside or below their own social class. The implication is that sex is best kept as an extra-marital activity, albeit a dangerous one.

In many of Keyserling’s novels and stories, husbands call their wives Kind (“child”). This word removes the wife from the role of an adult, sexual women, and relegates her to the position of an asexual child. We see this in other stories as well. In Harmonie, Felix refers to his wife as “halbe(s) Kind” (“half-child”) (221). In Die Verlobung (“The Engagement”) Hans, in speaking about love, calls Elly “Kind” (29). Keyserling often indicates that a successful marriage is one in which paternalistic friendship predominates. The author views sex as a disruptive experience, rarely related to a spiritual or emotional relationship. The infantilization of women is hardly specific to Keyserling's work; among many other works of this era is the character of Nora in Ibsen's A Doll's House.

The variety of females in Keyserling’s work has been discussed at length in various books and dissertations.110 The “red” women were designated as the passionate, sexual types, the “white” were repressed and non-erotic. Richard Weber, in Color and Light in the Writings of Eduard von Keyserling, also refers to the “white” and “red” types of women: “White symbolizes purity and chastity, a fear of or repugnance for sexual pleasure” (89). Weber describes the “red” women as “passionate, warm, and in the extreme, animalistic” (92). Similarly, Thomas Homscheid, in his book Eduard von Keyserling—Leben und Werk, speaking of Beate in the story

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110 These were briefly noted in Chapter 2: A Review of the Literature.
“Beate und Marie,” writes, “Beate is effectively the prototype of the ‘white woman’ in contrast to the transparent, thirsty for life, sensual red women”111 (256).

The absence, or rather the suppression, of the erotic renders certain upper class “white” women in Keyserling's *oeuvres* unable to function in or indeed remain in the world. This is so in the case of Annemarie, in *Harmonie*, who drowns herself rather than take up a full married life. Her husband Felix, unable to have a normal sexual relationship with his wife, turns for erotic satisfaction to Annemarie's friend's foster-child, the non-aristocratic “red” Mila. However, that relationship is purely physical and has no future. Felix is caught between his unreciprocated desire for his wife, and Mila's unreciprocated love for him:

“In the white room a white figure [Annemarie] crouches, listening fearfully whether, outside, a footstep, his footstep was coming nearer. Below, in the park Mila sat crying because he had not come. Why did it have to be like that? He couldn't understand it!”112 (84)

Fastrade, in *Abendliche Häuser*, breaks her engagement with Egloff when she finds out about his affair with the doll-like, infantile Lydia Dachhausen. The affair has meant little to Egloff but a great deal to Lydia, a silly, superficial woman who was not an aristocrat but became one by means of her marriage. After Lydia's husband discovers the affair, he feels forced to fight a duel with his wife's seducer. Egloff hopes to die, but instead kills Dachhausen. Neither Egloff nor his friend Dachhausen actually wants to kill one another. In fact, Egloff thinks of dueling as a *widerwärtige Komödie* (“an abominable comedy”) (467).

111 “Beate ist gewissermaßen der Prototyp der ‘weißen Frau’… im Gegensatz zu den leicht durchschaubaren, lebensdurstig-sinnlichen ‘roten Frauen’.”
112 “Im weißen Zimmer kauerte die weiße Gestalt und horcht angstvoll hinaus—ob nicht ein Schritt—sein Schritt—sich nähere. Unten im Park saß Mila und weinte, weil er nicht kam…Warum—mußte das sein? Er konnte es nicht verstehen!”
In *Am Südhang*, Keyserling skillfully puts the criticism of dueling into the mouth of Doctor Ulich. Keyserling describes the doctor as “a young man with a round child's face on to which red sideburns seemed to have been stuck, as if for a joke.” (197) The doctor speaks of dueling as “a mystery, a senselessness action, a sacramental event—I believe it because it is absurd. Who gains an advantage from it please? And yet, what an impact.” (201) The doctor's naive pronouncements are reminiscent of the Biblical phrase “Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings…” (Matt. 21:16). Ulich sees the events with unsophisticated eyes. He is not an aristocrat familiar with a long tradition of dueling, so he simply views it as a useless activity.

The novel *Dumala* portrays the Baroness Karola, the beguiling wife of a terminally ill husband. Pastor Erwin Werner visits the couple, ostensibly to offer pastoral comfort, but really because he is deeply attracted to the baroness. Werner's unfulfilled longing alienates him from his own wife. It also almost causes him to allow the baroness's lover, Baron Rast, to die. The pastor contemplates failing to warn Rast about a defective plank on a bridge that he has to cross when he goes to his mistress. At the last minute, the pastor reconsiders and alerts Rast to the impending danger (90–92). With this episode Keyserling again shows the erotic as a disturber of peoples’ lives and a subverter of morality; it is clear that the pastor's attraction to Karola has made him come close to compromising his integrity.

In *Schwüle Tage* ("Sultry Days"), the erotic plays a part in the death of Bill's father, Gerd, who overdoses on cocaine at the end of an affair with his niece, Ellita. Gerd and Ellita's relationship is ending because of Ellita's engagement to her cousin Went. Bill himself has been introduced to sex by one of the maids who works on the estate. For Bill, just eighteen years old,
sex is a source of comfort and security to which he turns as he begins to understand what has been going on between his father and Ellita. In Gerd's case, sex is disturbing and inappropriate; it violates the aristocratic rules by which he is supposed to live. Gerd not only represents the *mores* of the older generation, he pontificates about them frequently: “Let's have some proper behavior,” he declares (8). Yet, his old-guard values have been swept aside by the power of his erotic attraction to Ellita, and his death is the result. Bill’s erotic experience is quite acceptable. Traditionally the young aristocrat is often initiated into the sexual experience by a lower class woman, in this case, a maid.

Eleven-year-old Paul, in *Im stillen Winkel* (“In a Quiet Corner”), is surrounded by the erotic, even if he himself is not yet sexually mature. He overhears his mother being wooed by a young man who works in her husband's bank, but he doesn't really understand what is taking place. Paul is fascinated by a pair of local children who sneer at him. Lolo, the boy, constantly denigrates him, calling him “das Würmchen,” the little worm” (162), while Nandl, the small girl who goes around with Lolo, watches and laughs. Paul develops a great longing for Nandl and Keyserling describes Paul's nascent sexuality with tenderness and subtlety. The reader understands what is happening around the boy; Paul doesn’t understand it. He is desperate to impress the children, especially Nandl. When his father's death fails to elicit any sympathy or interest from them, Paul announces that he will go up and across a nearby mountain to the war zone. That expedition proves to be the cause of his death. The two children come to his funeral and, in a final ironic moment, Nandl says to Lolo, “That he knew how to do… to die” (226). In this particular story, there is a thread of sado-masochism woven into the narrative.

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115 “Also—etwas *Tenue*—”
116 “Das konnte er doch… sterben.”
In *Wellen* as previously discussed, the heroine, Doralice, leaves her husband and her secure but dull life to run away with the painter, Hans Grill. Their relationship, founded on sexual attraction, is not proof against the abandonment of the established mores from which Doralice has tried to escape. The affair ends in Hans's death by drowning. Doralice is left without anyone except the hunchback, Knospelius, an unusual figure who is an observer and commentator on the action. She is doomed to walk back and forth with him, beside the ocean in whose boundless depth her lover lies. Knospelius says, “You have to have someone who accompanies and protects you, and I am the born companion, the born protector, the born guardian. I don't compromise anyone”\(^{117}\) (201). Here again, Keyserling depicts friendship without eroticism as preferable to a sexual relationship. For the friendship to flourish the woman and, in this case the man, must be desexualized, as Knospelius is. The contrast between the sea, here a symbol of the power of nature (eroticism) and death is clearly rendered. Hans Grill tries to capture the sea in his paintings, but in the end, the sea captures him. He drowns. Knospelius and Doralice forge a friendship devoid of sexuality, yet they walk up and down adjacent to the powerful symbol of its potentially deadly character.

Landscapes, gardens, flowers, and colors are interwoven in the themes in Keyserling's works. They are integral to the action and often mirror it. All his stories are enhanced and deepened through their settings. Inside the houses dark colors—somber reds, greens and browns—are symbolic of the traditional values of the older generation as are the rooms filled with heavy furniture, large ceramic ovens, and suffocating draperies. Everything in these rooms has been unchanged for generations. The light is dim, and its static inhabitants are also dark figures. Dining rooms, often the setting for discussions during dinner, are places of formality.

\(^{117}\) “Ich bin der geborene Begleiter, der geborene Beschützer, sozusagen der geborene Vormund, ich kompromitiere niemand.”
Meals are served by servants who are silent watchers. At times, French is spoken so table talk will not be understood by servants or young children (Schwüle Tage, 8). The rigid hierarchy that separates the classes is much in evidence. When the servants are included in the life of the Schloss ("manor house"), it is only because they are invited to listen to prayers and Bible readings.

People push themselves into the corners of large sofas or are dwarfed by the big armchairs in which they sit. Lamps are shaded and only emit low light. The old floors make crackling noises when they are walked on. Occasionally one hears the sounds of the mice inside the walls (Dumala, 48). The furniture is imposing and stolid. All the colors are muted. When Fastrade returns from her temporary escape from home she pushes the furniture around as though she wants to wake it and tell it that she was there.

"Finally, she goes into the room that served as her study.... There was her desk and her things and her books but they said nothing to her, as yet she had no relationship with them" (Abendliche Häuser, 371).118

Sometimes, inside the rooms, people look towards the outside. One critic described the windows of the manor house as "die schönsten Bilder dieser Zimmer" ("the loveliest paintings in the room") (Gruenter, xii). Only in the summertime are windows and drapes opened, admitting sunshine and the sweet smell of the outdoors. The internal dimness and silence are left behind as people go out.

The world directly outside the rooms is that of the veranda whose steps lead down to gravel walks and the gardens. Here, light and bright colors rule. The gardens are rich with

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118 "Sie trieb sich in den Zimmern umher, rückte an den Möbeln, als wollte sie dieselben wecken und ihnen melden, dass sie da sei. Endlich ging sie in das Kabinett, das ihr als Schreibzimmer diente... Da war ihr Schreibtisch, da standen ihre Sachen und Bücher, aber sie sagten ihr noch nichts, sie hatte noch kein Verhältnis zu ihnen." Keyserling enlarges upon this theme in his 1905 essay "Zur Psychologie des Komforts," but this perspective also evokes the relationship Marcel has with furniture in Marcel Proust's A la Recherche du Temps Perdu.
flowers of many hues. Vegetables grow in carefully ordered beds. The gardens are ordered just as the interiors of the houses are, but they are brightly colored, scented, and plants are growing in them; growth contains the possibility for change. Even when such changes are limited to ripeness or autumnal decay, they are a result of movement that is in contrast to the static quality of the interiors.

Parks are the final areas still under the control of the inhabitants of the houses; they are the last areas of landscape that people actually construct and control. These landscapes contain a variety of bushes, some of which are spring-blooming lilacs of many different shades. A certain amount of erotic activity takes place behind the bushes. For Keyserling, erotic activity must always be hidden, be surreptitious, or occur in the dark.

Beyond the park's confines lie the forests. Even though they are owned by the aristocrats, nature dominates in them and they dwarf those who walk on their paths. Tall trees tower above people and sway in the wind. Sometimes the animals and birds found there are benign, sometimes ominous. Colors are muted in shadows, but blaze in patches of sunlight or moonlight. Nature's forces—snow, wind and rain, thunder and lightning, sunlight, moonlight and starlight—accompany human activities. Here the erotic lives unconfined under the trees.

Sunset is a time for a variety of actions, for when light yields to darkness, the erotic comes into play. Meetings take place behind bushes in the gardens and parks as well as under the trees or on the moss that carpets parts of the forest floor. The wind moves through various landscapes bringing with it snow, rain, creaking tree trunks, rustling branches, and dripping dew. At times, fallen tree trunks serve as seats, and green glades among the trees become dance floors or the sites of picnics.
In the forests, some paths lead to huts and hideouts for hunters. Sometimes assignations take place in these structures as well as in peasants' houses and small inns where wine and beer are served. The inhabitants of these places are frequently girls with large breasts who are redolent with sex. They serve aristocratic visitors in various ways. For example, it is at an inn in the forest that Dietz flirts with “die schwarze Lene” ("black Lene"), daughter of the innkeeper in Abendliche Häuser.

In winter, snow covers the trees like great blankets of cotton wool. Then the forest paths are so deeply concealed that horse-drawn sleds lose their way and end up in ditches. In the same way that snow obscures roads and pathways, snowfall also blurs the rules of society. When people are out in a snowy, formless environment, they relinquish their self-control and yield to erotic urges.

Dietz von Egloff often rides in his forests at night. There he hunts and also plays out his sexual desires with Lydia von Dachhausen, among others. The sounds of the forest—the groaning trees, the flutter of unseen wings—are all background to his illicit activities. Keyserling uses the forest as a powerful locus of humanity's dark impulses, but also as a symbol of the aristocratic heritage that is passed from generation to generation. Not only does Egloff betray his fiancée in the woods, he goes so far as to destroy his birthright and violate the sacred task of preserving his heritage by having some of his trees chopped down to pay off his gambling debts.

Keyserling uses water, streams, and lakes to represent the transition from order to freedom. When his characters get into boats they leave their rigid, tradition-governed lives and give themselves over to a natural world that becomes the setting for the battle between man and nature. When they are in their boats, people are still largely in control of their lives, but when they enter the water, nature, with its weeds and currents, dominates them.
In Harmonie, Felix rushes to try to stop his “white” wife, Annemarie, from drowning herself. While he is swimming towards her,

“the weeds in the lake grasp his feet, his arms, like soft, cool fingers. Breathless, he fights, thrusting his hands into this net of weeds that was like a bundle of cool, smooth-as-silk limbs. He tore at them, heard their quiet cracking. He forgot everything in the rage of this fight against the mute, treacherous life here around him.” (87)119

Felix’s vitality and desire for life is directly contrasted with his wife’s death. When Felix pulls her out of the water she is already dead. On her face he sees an expression that says: “O, no—thank you—not for me.” (88) She has used the lake as a means of rejecting life; yet, it is the same element in which Felix has fought for his life.120

The complete opposite of the confined manor house dwellers’ lives is the powerful, uncontrollable ocean. It represents the unconquerable force of nature. The sea, in its absolute formlessness and boundlessness, is raw nature; it dwarfs humanity and even overpowers the erotic. For Keyserling, it represents the futility of man’s attempts to control his fate. The perimeter of the beach is the last place where human beings can at least attempt to exert some mastery over their own lives. Beyond that point the sea represents total freedom, but also death and annihilation.

As I have noted, Keyserling does not show much sympathy for mature, male figures. He is, however, extremely sensitive to adolescents. The boy Wendig in Wellen is somewhat reminiscent of Paul in Im stillen Winkel; he is also delicate and very sensitive. Keyserling has a

120 “O nein—ich danke—nicht für mich.” Keyserling also uses this phrase at the beginning of the novel to describe Annemarie’s general attitude towards life.
deep sympathy for adolescents. Other male figures that reoccur in many of Keyserling's works are the young officer, usually a lieutenant, and the older baron. The former is susceptible to romantic impulses and the latter hews close to convention. Finally, there is often the figure of a tutor who generally falls in love, unhappily, with a member of the aristocratic household.

In *Welten* there are two unusual Keyserling protagonists. Hans Grill is a freethinker and an artist. He is unconcerned with convention and deeply engrossed in his paintings of the sea. He can never really capture its changing image and, in the end, he drowns, overpowered by it. The second person is the hunchback Knospelius, a privy councilor. He is close in outlook to Keyserling himself. A somewhat mysterious figure, Knospelius observes what occurs around him, but is not judgmental. He walks on the beach between the sea and the land, a benign and non-erotic figure who is philosophical, a little ironic, and very perceptive.

Knospelius meets Doralice very early in the morning and gives her his thoughts about sleeping or not sleeping:

"There is nothing stupider, more senseless than sleeplessness, than lying in bed and waiting for sleep and not being able to sleep. In such hours it seems to me I am being robbed of my duty as a human being." 121 (38-39)

When Doralice asks him what he means by his duty as a human being, he replies that one must either sleep or work. He explains that it is our duty to sleep, but if we cannot sleep then we must carry out our duty to do our jobs. He remarks than even his dog knows this because, when he cannot carry out his doggy tasks, he goes to sleep. Not being able to sleep is a scandal and ought not to happen to people, he states. If anyone among Keyserling's protagonists represents the author, it is Knospelius, both because of his deformity as well as his cool, detached style.

121 "Es gibt nichts Dümmeres, nichts Sinnloseres als die Schlaflosigkeit, als im Bett zu liegen, auf den Schlaf zu warten, und nicht schlafen zu können. In solchen Studen komme ich mir vor, wie meiner Menschenrechte beraubt. Ich tue nicht meine Pflicht als Mensch."
Notable among the peasants and servants that appear in some of Keyserling’s writings are foreigners and Jews. The author’s prejudice against such people does not prevent him from giving them distinct personalities.

Keyserling clearly had some knowledge of Jews and their traditions. While his Jewish figures are stereotypes (money-loving, grasping characters with black hair and brown eyes), they also have some individuality. Merenstein, the broker who buys Egloff’s trees in Abendliche Häuser, is a believable individual. Deftly Keyserling describes Merenstein's pain and worry about his ailing wife, leading Egloff to realize that although he has always seen Merenstein as merely a businessman, now he notices that: “here also there is weeping and death” (447).122

Another touching moment occurs when Egloff finds Laibe, a troubled little Jewish man whose sleigh has fallen into a snow-filled ditch. Laibe explains to Egloff that he has lost his way and now it is Schabbes (“the Sabbath”). Egloff, unsympathetic to the little man's travails, tells Laibe that this is what comes from smuggling. Later, in a kindlier tone, Egloff says that Laibe may come home with him and have his Schabbes. That evening, Egloff asks to have Laibe sent to his room: “The Jew, Laibe, should come up to me after he has finished his ceremonies” (382–84).123 During their dialogue, Egloff is scornful; however, the little Jew is presented as a sweet simple soul who only asks for a warm room and a roof over his head. Egloff, by contrast, comes off as brusque and impatient. Later, Egloff asks Laibe scornfully why he seems so happy, and Laibe answers that on the Sabbath Jews must be happy, whether or not they really want to be. This description about the enjoyment of the Sabbath clearly indicates that Keyserling had more than a little familiarity with Jewish customs. The Jew, Laibe is characterised by Egloff as money

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122 “Hier wird auch geweint und gestorben.”
123 “Der Jude Laibe soll zu mir heraufkommen, wenn er seine Zeremonien beendet hat.” Keyserling understood that Jewish law forbids traveling on the sabbath because to do so would make the horse work and it is supposed to be a day of rest.
hungry and a smuggler. Yet as the two men converse, the little Jew becomes an individual with specific personality traits, and distinctive clothing.

“He was tightly buttoned into his green-gray dress. His gray hair and his thick, gray beard had been smoothed out and his face wore an ingratiating, friendly smile. He bowed several times, rubbed his hands together and said: ‘Good Schabbes your lordship, good Schabbes.’” (382)

In *Bunte Herzen*, Billy and Boris, the eloping couple, escape a storm by taking refuge in the Jew Wolf’s family home. Here too one finds a mixture of stereotypes, such as Jews with dark hair and almond shaped eyes, but they also are three-dimensional characters. In the novel, the children gaze with “round onyx eyes” and their mother is wearing a reddish-brown wig pulled down too low on her forehead, a detail that evokes a particular individual (518).

In a scene in *Dumala*, evoking a common stereotype, the pastor describes the shadows of a group of Jewish smugglers, contrasting their heavily laden images with the slim, unburdened shadow of Karola, the aristocratic woman for whom he yearns. Smuggling was often attributed to Jews, just as gypsies were said to be thieves. The pastor explains that he feels sorry for people carrying clandestine burdens that weigh them down. He explains that Karola's svelte erect shadow shows that she bears no such burdens (39–40).

In Keyserling's works, foreigners, in particular Poles, are pictured as overdressed, pretentious and heavily perfumed. They wear many rings on their small, white, feminine hands. Graf Hamilkar's oldest daughter, Lisa, is divorced from a Greek count. The implication is that some of his customs were barbaric, necessitating a divorce. In this manner Keyserling highlights one of the many prejudices of the aristocrats and, possibly, his own.

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124 «[E]r war fest in seinen grüngrauen Rock eingeknöpft, das graue Haar und der dichte, graue Bart waren glatt gestrichen, und sein Gesicht verzog sich zu einem unendlich liebenswürdigen, freundlichen Lächeln. Er verbeugte sich mehrere Male, rieb sich die Hände und sagte: ‘Gut Schabbes, Herr Baron, gut Schabbes.’ “
Graf Hamilkar warns his sister, Betty, to monitor the relationship between his young daughter and his Polish nephew. When Betty tries to make light of the relationship saying, “Let the youngsters talk to one another. After all, we were also once young,” Hamilkar responds: “The Polish liquor eyes cause an unhealthy intoxication; we've just had our fill of Greek intoxication. You should watch out” (*Bunte Herzen*, 487).\(^{125}\) The xenophobia that Keyserling has the count express runs counter to the author’s published opinions. In 1916, shortly before his death, in an essay entitled “Über den Haß” (“On Hate”), Keyserling decried the hatred among European peoples and stated that a time must come when people will get on with one another and “understand that they share the consciousness that being human is a great, common good; a mission shared by all human beings” (153).\(^ {126}\) It became clear how wrong he was less than a decade after his death. Yet, in today’s Germany his sentiments would be hailed by many.

On the back cover blurb of his posthumously issued *Sommergeschichten* (“Summer Tales”), Gräbner elegantly sums up Keyserling's attributes as a writer.

“[I]n masterly fashion, with few strokes, Edward von Keyserling understood how to capture a particular atmosphere or way of life. The gay, melancholically ironic tone of his descriptions of the relationships among high society, still enchant today one-hundred-and-fifty years after the birth of the Baltic count.”\(^ {127}\)

This early twentieth century writer may have looked backwards to portray a vanished aristocracy, but in his essay “On Hate” he shows himself to be a forward-looking, optimistic writer with a deep faith in humanity. The writer of “Über die Liebe” had an equally profound

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\(^ {126}\) “...es muß eine Zeit wiederkommen, in der den Völkern wieder das Bewusstsein weckt, daß das menschliche Dasein ein großes, gemeinsames Gut, das Menschensein eine große gemeinsame Aufgabe ist...”

fear of the erotic. How much of this view is colored by his own experience is a matter of speculation. I believe his history serves as a clear explanation for his attitudes. Syphilis, which was the AIDS of the time, would certainly have soured him in relation to erotic pursuits. The disease, for which in those days there was no cure, destroyed his health and finally his life. The destruction of his family holdings would not have endeared the peasants to him. His real attitude towards them is not evident in any of his writings except in his correspondence with his nephew Hermann, the publication of which he could not have anticipated. In spite of Keyserling’s intention to leave nothing behind, there are some letters that were found in the archive of his nephew, the philosopher Hermann von Keyserling. In these letters, one perceives the elegant, gently ironic Keyserling, but also the somewhat arrogant, cynical aristocrat who asks: “What do the peasants want?” and answers “Fress freiheit”: Fress freedom.128 This spoonerism of “press freedom” results in a second meaning because fressen is a slang term meaning “to gorge oneself like an animal” ultimately meaning the “freedom to gorge.”

In public, Eduard von Keyserling remained the reticent, charming, witty, gently ironic nobleman. He was very much a fin de siècle person. He looked back at the past, but with modern psychological insight as he viewed it through the lens of the present. He was not a towering literary figure, but nonetheless he was an important one. In the firmament of German writers, he remains a small but beautiful star.

Conclusion

Eduard von Keyserling was, in the early twentieth century, considered to be among the important writers of his era. After his death in 1918, he was largely forgotten. Germany was experiencing economic and political problems that culminated in the rise of the Nazis. A large number of prominent intellectuals fled the country. Germany lost most of its scientists, its intellectuals, its artists and its critics; with them went the freedom to think, to be creative and critical. Now, in the twenty first century, Keyserling’s works are once again attracting well-deserved attention. His writings, like the man himself, are subtle and incisive. They chronicle the transition from the nineteenth century to the twentieth. A close reading of these writings, especially his essays and reviews, shows a mind educated in the best traditions of a nineteenth century aristocrat. Yet he was also attuned to the new ideas, principally, the psychological and philosophical insights that developed in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Keyserling published an impressive number of essays, reviews, novels, plays, and short stories during a career that spanned from 1896 until his death in 1918. For as long as he retained his sight, he attended many plays and art exhibitions. Commenting on the latter, he discussed the changing manner in which paintings were perceived. After he went blind in 1908, he drew on the treasury of his memory, dictating his stories and articles to his sisters.

The breadth of his interests make him difficult to categorize. He was intermittently read and appreciated for his subtle irony and his sense of humor. During his lifetime, he was admired and respected, but after he died, interest in him surged but then abated.

Even at the height of his popularity, little attention was paid to his essays and reviews. They were never assembled for publication, nor were they translated. In largely ignoring his
essays, particularly “Über die Liebe” and the earlier “Zur Psychologie des Komforts,” literary scholars missed the opportunity to understand much of the philosophy that underlay Keyserling’s fiction, and was the key to a deeper understanding of his writings. Carefully parsed, the attitudes and opinions found in “Über Die Liebe” explain the philosophical basis for the unhappy relationships found in all of his fiction.

It is surprising that so few German-speaking critics have made the connection between the “Über die Liebe” and Keyserling’s works of fiction. I believe that critics who do not read the 1907 “Über die Liebe” and the earlier, 1905 “Zur Psychologie des Komforts,” cannot understand the subtle social commentary in his writings. The fact that so little of his work has been translated into English, explains why he is hardly known in the English-speaking world.

It would be a considerable amount of work to translate all Eduard von Keyserling’s writings into English, but it would be a great gift to scholars as well as to discriminating readers.

When one reads his essays, including “Über die Liebe”, as well as the many art and book reviews he published, one begins to understand the depth of his perceptions and to appreciate the importance of his ideas. Unfortunately, only by means of such translations would Eduard von Keyserling be awarded a well-earned place in literary history, that of a significant fin de siècle writer.
Appendix I

“Über die Liebe“ by Eduard Von Keyserling


"Liebe deinen Nächsten als dich selbst", sagt das Evangelium. Das "Tat wam asi" des Inders ist die große Formel der Liebe, ihre präziseste Definition.


Die Liebe allein schafft außer uns ein dem unsern ebenbürtiges Leben, sie schlägt die Brücke vom Ich zu dem anderen, sie ist es, die uns eine verwandte Welt schafft. Hesiod nennt Eros den Schöpfer der Welt, und er ist es allerdings, der uns die Welt eigentlich belebt, uns eine Welt gibt, von der wir nicht nur logisch überzeugt sind, sondern die wir auch empfinden.

Der Mensch will leben, nur das, das ist sein Beruf, sein Ziel, sein Pathos. Das Streben ist in uns gelegt, alle in uns wohnenden Lebensmöglichkeiten zu verwirklichen. “Denn Leben ist des Lebens Sinn“, sagt Goethe. Jedes Organ in uns, wird es in der Betätigung seiner Funktion gestört, meldet Unlust an; kann es aber diese ganz und voll erfüllen, so quittiert es mit Lust. So will alles in uns, was leben kann, diese Leben voll und ganz betätigen. Allein eines jeden Schicksal trifft unter allem, was in uns zum Leben drängt, seine Auswahl, und oft ist sie karg genug. In uns liegen gleichsam die Keime vieler Schicksale und Persönlichkeiten, die alle zum Leben drängen und in dem uns beschiedenen Schicksal verkümmern müssen. - Wir sind wie Wanderer, geboren, um viele Wege zu durchwandern und die dennoch an einen einzigen Weg gebannt sind. Es bleibt in uns ein großer Rest ungestillten Lebensdurstes. Wer hat sich satt gelebt? Der Unsterblichkeitsglaube ist die Frucht dieses unbefriedigten Lebensdranges. Der Mensch hofft, daß alles an Lebenwille, das hier unverwirklicht blieb, jenseits des Grabes in der
großen, unsichtbaren Bank angelegt wird, und eine Ewigkeit ist ihm nicht zu lang, um es zu durchleben.

Die liebe bringt uns ein fremdes Leben so nah, daß wir es fühlen, daß wir gleichsam unsere Lebensfähigkeit unter die Bedingungen der anderen Persönlichkeit und des fremden Schicksals stellen und sie so erleben.

Dadurch beschenkt die Liebe uns mit einem Mehr an Leben. In der Einsamkeit des Einzeldaseins haben wir uns mit dem Dasein der Wesen um uns bereichert.

Die weibliche Psyche findet leichter und direkter die Verbindung mit der sie umgebenden Welt, bedarf weniger der logischen Umwege als der Geist des Mannes.

Die Frau setzt sich schnell und sicher mit der Außenwelt auseinander und entscheidet sich bei jeder Erscheinung, die ihr entgegentritt, ob sie dafür oder dagegen ist.

Eine Frau ist die geborene Partei. Impulsiv nimmt sie vor allem Partei, bis in die kliesten Details des Lebens und den geringfügigsten Gegenständen gegenüber.

Ist einmal für etwas Partei ergriffen worden, dann vermag die Frau mühelos einen engen Kontakt damit herzustellen. Sie teilt ihm etwas von ihrer Personlichkeit, ihrem Leben mit, sie gibt ihm ihr Gepräge und macht es sich so zum Kameraden oder Freund. Wenn wir sehen, wie eine Frau in ihrer Umgebung waltet, sei es eine Köchin in ihrer Küche oder eine große Dame in ihrem Gemach, immer verkehrt sie gleichsam persönlich mit den Gegenständen, sie begünstigt die einen, setzt die anderen zurück, behandelt sie mütterlich oder streng, versteht ihren Charakter, fühlt in sie Stimmung und Leben hinein. Die Sicherheit und die stets bereite Bestimmtheit im Für und Wider legt in das Leben der Frau eine Klarheit und Ganzheit, die dem Mann fehlt, der der Welt eine verstandesmäßige Wirklichkeit aufzwingen will und sie dennoch
mit Zweifeln umstellt, der immer wieder den Faden, welcher ihn mit ihr verbindet, neu anknüpfen muß.

Für den Mann gibt es im Grunde kein Exempel, das rein aufgeht, die Frau kennt nichts, das inkommensurabel wäre. Sie sieht sehr subtil in die Außenwelt, aber sie sieht immer feste Konturen und reine Lokalfarben. Sie duldet keinc unbeantworteten Fragezeichen, und die Antwort, die sie gibt, braucht nicht objektiv wahr zu sein, sondern muß mit dem Gesamtton ihres Wesens stimmen. Dabei ist die weibliche Seele ein sehr empfindlicher Resonanzboden für alles, was von der Außenwelt in sie hineinklingt, die leiseste Melodie der Sache und der Natur, alle Stimmungen und Rhythmen, die durch die Welt wandern, zitiren in ihr nach, aber umkomponiert und die Tonart der Seele umgesetzt, so wie Töne, die über ein stilles Wasser zu uns herüber klingen, etwas Silbernes, Feuchtes und Weiches von dem Wasser annehmen.

In der Frau aber von hoher Kultur wird alles Sinnliche zur Gebärde, zum Symbol des Geistigen, und dieses erhält Rhythmus und Farbe von dem Wallen des Blutes und dem Pochen des Herzens. Was in dem einen erklingt, tönt im andern wider, wie bei gleichgestimmten Saiten. Wenn die Frau ihre körperliche Schönheit schmückt, so tut sie es auch, um ihrem Geist eine erhöhte Sprache zu geben. Die äußere Schönheit ist für die Frau stets ein Selbstbekenntnis, und die Frau, die täuschen will, muß ihre wahren Gedanken gleichsam vor sich selbst verbergen, sich selbst täuschen, denn sie kann nur mit Leib und Seele zugleich täuschen. Die Lüge demoralisiert das Weib mehr als den Mann, denn es lägt mit seinem ganzen Wesen, mit Leib und Seele. Will die Frau gefallen, so soll ihr Geist, ihr Körper, ihr Kleid und alle Gegenstände, die zu ihr gehören, bewundert oder geliebt werden. Jede körperliche Lustempfindung wird zum seelischen Erlebnis. In diesem Zusammenstehen von Körper und Geist liegt die Stärke der Weibes und zugleich seine Verwundbarkeit; die Angriffsfläche für alles, was verletzen will, ist hier größer.

tröstende Musik hineintönen. Ihm, der alles mit seinem Geist durchdringen, wenden, zersetzen mußte, bis ihm nur das gespenstige Rätsel, das auf dem Grund aller dinge liegt, übrig blieb, ihm erschien die unschuldige Wirklichkeit dieses Mädchens wie Ausruhen in heller Stille, wie es die Wiesen waren, auf denen sich Hahnenfuß und Kuckucksnelken sonnten, die das arme Kind zum Kranz band, um sich damit für den Tod zu schmücken. So wollen die Ophelien wirken, sie wollen sich beruhigend, heilend und erhellend der Seele des geliebten Mannes vereinigen. “Mild wie Kindheit und wie Gnade“ heißt es von Cordelia, und deshalb werden sie so unwiderstehlich von den tiefen, gequälten, unruhigen Geistern angezogen. Es ist, als suchte ihre Liebe die dunkelsten Labyrinthe auf, um darin um so freundlicher und heller zu scheinen. Aber während sie sich an die Seele des geliebten Mannes klammern, um ihr Frieden zu bringen, verlieren sie ihren Frieden. Der friedlose, zersetzende Geist des Mannes träubt, beunruhigt und ängstigt ihre Seele, so daß sie sich selbst unverständlich, rätselhaft und gespenstisch erscheinen und sie ratlos vor dem eigenen Leben stehen.


Es gibt genug Menschen, Männer und Frauen, die in der Liebe nie weiter kommen als bis zu dem sich selbst in anderen bespiegeln. Sie kommen von sich selbst nicht los. Sie finden und suchen im andern nur sich selbst und hoffen dieses Selbst erhöht, verschönt und gewachsen
wiederzufinden. Sie wollen sich selbst so geliebt und bewundert genießen. Wie durch eine Spiegelgalerie gahren sie, in der ihnen immer wieder ihr eigenes Bild zurückgeworfen wird. Und dann klagen sie, daß die Liebe sie nicht bereichere und ihre Sehnsucht nicht stille.


Könnte das sinnliche Begehren unbeeinflußt vom Geist sein Wesen treiben, dann wäre der Kampf um die Wollust wohl noch gewaltsamer, rücksichtsloser und brutaler, aber einfacher und direkter. Wie in der Brunftzeit der Tiere würde die geschlechtliche Leidenschaft auflodern, und hat sie ihre Zeit gedauert, wäre die Begierde gestillt, so träte Ruhe ein. Suchte das Fleisch nur das Fleisch, der Körper nur den Körper, so könnte das Geschlechtsleben nicht den
allesdurchdringenden Einfluß erlangen wie jetzt, da der Körper immer eine Bedeutung hat und
diese Bedeutung die Seele ist.

Jetzt beherrscht das Erotische alle Verhältnisse des menschlichen Daseins, gibt ihm die
Farbe, Kompliziert sie, legt in sie sein beglückendes oder vernichtendes Fieber, wird zur
treibenden Kraft des gesellschaftlichen Lebens. Wollen wir ein Menschenleben verstehen, so
müssen wir wissen, welche Rolle das Erotische in ihm spielt. Es ist der unermüdliche Damatiker,
der unaufhörlich die Knoten Schürtzt und löst, der Tragiker und Komödiendichter des
menschlichen Daseins, unerschöpflieh in neunen Formen vom Häßlichsten und Brutalsten bis
ezum Edelsten. Wie könnte aber das Erotische diese wunderbare und unheimliche Macht
erlangen, zöge es nicht den ganzen Menschen in seinen Bann, wäre die furchtbar
leidenschaftliche Jagd des Menschen nach den Menschen nur einen von Körpern nach Körpern
und nicht auch eine Jagd von Seelen nach Seelen. Das sinnliche Begehren bindet einen
Menschen an den andern. Sie suchen gemeinsame Lust. Körper und Körper vertragen und
verstehen sich gut. Aber nun stehen sich auch die Seelen ganz nah und nackt gegenüber, ihnen
wird eine Gemeinsamkeit aufgezwungen. Sie müssen, ob sie wollen oder nicht, sich miteinander
auseinandersetzen. Körper und Geist, miteinander verbunden, müssen sich beeinflussen und
einer den andern mit sich fortziehen, allein ihre Methoden und Ziele sind unvergleichlich
verschieden und dem andern unverständlich. Ein Menschengeist, einzig und einsam, soll sich mit
einem anderen Geist, der ebenso einzig und einsam ist, zu gemeinsamem Lebensrhythmus
verbinden. Auch wenn eine große Liebe das Problem noch so vollkommen löst, immer bleibt ein
Rest von Widersprüchen und Gegensätzen, die in jede Liebe etwas Gespanntes, Erregendes, in
alles Glück etwas wie Schmerz legt. Und in der trivialsten geschlechtlichen Begegnung läßt das
Sich-Nahesein zweier Seelen, die nichts miteinander gemein haben wollen, ein bitteres Gefühl

Der Geist versucht es, sich von der Gefolgschaft der Sinnlichkeit, zu der er gezwungen ist, zu befreien, indem er sie herabdrückt. Zynismus in geschlechtlichen Dingen ist meist Geistlosigkeit und ganz uninteressant. Aber oft ist es das Streben, sich von dem Sinnlichen zu lösen, was den Geist treibt, das Sinnliche möglichst grob, häßlich und lächerlich zu machen. Es ist das umgekehrte Verfahren, welches der griechische Geist einschlug, indem er die Sinnlichkeit vergeistigte. Kierkegaard zeigt sehr einleuchtend, wie der Begriff der Sinnlichkeit als vom Geist
getrennt erst durch das Christentum in die Welt kam. “Der Geist zog seine Aktien as dem gemeinsamen Geschäft zurück.“ Wir wissen, mit welchem derben und unreinlichen Zynismus in den Klöstern die geschlechtlichen Dinge besprochen wurden. Melanchthon schreibt, er hoffe, Luther würde in der Ehe die böse Mönchsgewohnheit ablegen, so zynisch von geschlechtlichen Dingen zu reden. Und wo der Sinnlichkeit, wie in der Askese, mit Entbehrungen und Qualen zu Leibe gegangen wurde, da schaffte sie sich in ihrer Bedrängnis eine neue Wollust des Schmerzes, um sich dem Geist in seiner geistigstein Liebe zu verbinden.

Es hilft nichts, Geist und Körper, die sich so schlecht verstehen, müssen zusammen an dem Glück und Elend der Menschen arbeiten, sie müssen stets Konflikte schaffen, deren einzige Lösung ein Wunder ist: die Liebe. Sie treiben die Menschen hintereinander her, begierig ein jeder nach des anderen Leib und Seele. Es ist, als sei die Portion Leben, welche auf die Menschheit kam, so gering gewesen, daß der Anteil eines jeden nicht ausreicht und daher der Mensch fieberhaft nach dem Leben des Menschen hungert. Für Kierkegaard ist Don Juan in seiner sinnlichen Genialität der Repräsentant jenes Reiches der Sinne, welches das Christentum von dem des Geistes schied. Er wollte das Weib als solches besitzen, nicht das Individuum. Aber ich glaube, es ist nicht gleichgültig, daß Elvira eine Nonne und Zerline ein Dorfmädchen war. Er wollte den Leib des Weibes in allen seinen Formen genießen und die Seele des Weibes in allen Besonderheiten trinken, die düstere, zerrissene Seele der gefallenen Nonne und die Zerlinenseele, die so süß und hell lacht und weint, wie Mozarts Musik. Nur dann kann der Don Juan dastehen, wie Mozart ihn im letzten Akt hinstellt, ganz allein, zum Übersprüdeln voll von all dem fremden Leben, an dem er sich sattgetrunken, das keckeste Trinklied der Lebensfreude hinausschmetternd. Die Natur verfolgt ihre Zwecke direkt und zielbewußt, und sie gebraucht die Mittel gerade so lange, als sie ihrer bedarf. Leben schaffen und erhalten so lange, als sie ihrer
bedarf. Leben schaffen und erhalten ist die Lösung. Die Henne fühlt ihre Zugehörigkeit zu den Küchlein nur so lange, als diese der Mutter bedürfen. Nur der Menschengeist nimmt diese Bande, um daraus etwas Absolutes, ein Gefühl zu manchen, das um seiner selbst willen da ist.


Das Alter macht uns eben für die Mitlebenden undeutlich, unverständlich und unwirklich, aber wirklich zu sein, das ist die Leidenschaft unseres Lebens. Die Liebe der anderen soll uns bestätigen, daß wir noch zum Leben gehören. Das ist es auch, was aus Lear das unvergängliche Denkmal menschlicher Einsamkeit macht. Der alte König, in dessen Geist schon der Wahnsinn lauert, fühlt, wie er sich selbst und den anderen gespenstisch wird. Mit eigenwilliger, königlicher Hand versucht er das entgleitenden Leben zu halten. Das einzige, was ihn retten kann, ist geliebt zu werden, und er will geliebt sein um jeden Preis. Er gibt Königreiche dahin, um an dem „vielberedten Herzen seiner Töchter“ zu erwarmen. Und als er für diese Töchter zu erwarmen.

Und als er für diese Töchter doch nur ein unbequemer, törichter alter Mann bleibt, der kaum ein Recht hat, da zu sein, da versinkt er in das Dunkel des Wahnsinns, verliert sich und die Welt. Der Kampf um Liebe ist hier Kampf um Leben.


Georg Simmel sagt in seinem schönen Aufsatz über "Psychologie der Diskretion": "Aber gerade dann stellen sie in Hinsicht der Diskretionsfrage, der Sichoffbarens und Sichverschweigens die strenge Forderung: daß die Freunde gegenseitig nicht in di Interessen- und Gefühls bezirke hineinsehen, die nun einmal nicht in die Beziehung eingeschlossen sind und deren Berührung die Grenze des gegenseitigen Sichverstehens schmerzlich fühlbar machen würde. Aber diese Rücksicht, statt das Verhältnis zu irritieren, bringt vielmehr in den guten Fällen eine neue Zartheit hinein, ja, eine neue Germeinsamkeit! "Der Freund muß den Freund sehen können, wie der Dichter seine Helden sieht, das ist, er muß das Gleichgültige und Störende übersehen und übergehen können. Wie sorgsam und festlich bereiten Goethe und Schiller ihr Zusammensein vor. Ein jeder legt im voraus die Schätze bereit, die er vor dem andern ausbreiten will, und freut sich auf das, was er von dem andern empfangen soll. Dabei umgeben sie ihre Freundschaft sorgsam und vorsichtig mit einem rücksichtsvollen Zeremoniell,
damit nie ein Zuviel der Annäherung den Genuß dieser geistigen Gemeinschaft störe. Sie sind wie Gastgeber, die ihrem Gast nur das Beste auftischen, wie Gestirne, die einander nur die beleuchteten Seiten zukehren. Aber solch behutsames, gleichsam feinschmeckerisches Auswählen des Besten in dem andernschließt ein enges geistiges Verwachsen zweier Geister nicht aus. Kommen wir einem anderen Leben nahe, so wächst unser Hunger nach diesem Leben. Geister, die vorsichtig einige kostbare Berührungspunkte miteinander gefunden haben, werden getrieben, die Berührungspunkte miteinander gefunden haben, werden getrieben, die Berührungsflächen zu vergrößern. Indem sie einander das Beste, was sie haben, schenken, beginnen sie ganz einer dem andern zu gehören. Hagen und Volker sitzen auf der nächtlichen Wacht vor dem Saal der Nibelungen still und todesbereit zusammen. Da nimmt der Spielmann seine Fiedel und legt in die düstere Seele seines Freundes das Schönste und süßeste hinein, das er hat, seine Musik. Das ist mir stets als eines der tiefesinnigsten Symbole der Freundschaft erschienen. "In Seinem Freunde soll man seinen besten Feind haben", sagt Nietzsche, "du sollst ihm am nächsten mit dem Herzen sein, wenn du ihm widerstrebst." Das soll das Erzieherische in der Freundschaft sein, der Kampf gegen das, was mir an dem Freund mißfällt. Allein, ist nicht auch das Erziehung, wenn zweie sich aneinanderschließen nur durch das, was sie aneinander lieben und weil es sie treibt, immer näher zueinander zu kommen? So sorgt ein jeder dafür immer mehr dem Freunde zu zeigen, was dieser lieben kann. Er wendet ihm, wie ich sagte, die beleuchtete Seite zu, aber er strebt auch darnach um des Freundes willen, daß diese beleuchtete Seite wächst.

Wie in jeder anderen Liebe, so wollen wir auch in der Freundschaft ein mehr an Leben erlangen, indem wir fremdes Leben in uns aufnehmen und fühlen, daß unser Leben in dem
ander sei; aber weil der Körper hier nicht in seiner unklaren und hitzigen Art hineinspricht, kann dieses Leben, das wir geben und nehmen, geklärt sein wie edler Wein.

Das Ich drängt über die Beschränkung seiner Eizelheit hinaus, der Kampf gegen die Einzelheit ist der Hauptinhalt seines Lebens, und Besitz, Macht, Wissenschaft, Kunst sind die Waffen in diesem Kampf. Die entscheidende Waffe aber ist die Liebe, denn was wir durch sie ergreifen, erhält Körper und Wesenheit. Shakespeares Richard III., der sein ganzes Leben hindurch daran strebt, sein Ich durch Macht ins Ungeheure zu vergrößern, ruft am Schluf
aus: “Ich muß verzweifeln, keine Seele liebt mich!” Der indische Heilige stellt sein Ich allem, was um ihn lebt, gleich, aber nur, um das Ich mit der umgebenden Welt im Schein aufzulösen, um sie beide los zu sein und in das Grenzenlose des Absoluten zu versinken. Der christliche Heilige schlägt den entgegengesetzten Weg ein, den Weg der Liebe. Er erhebt alles, was ihn umgibt, zu seiner eigenen Wesenheit, er sieht in allem Blut von seinem Blut und Seele von seiner Seele. Er hat einen “Bruder Wind” und eine “Schwester Schwalbe”. Für ihn gibt es nichts Wesenloses, Gleichgültiges, ja nichts Totes. Das Leben wird zu einem gemeinsamen Familiengut mit gemeinsamer Verantwortung und gemeinsamer Besitzteilnahme. So ist der Heilige nie allein und nie verlassen, seine Wirklichkeit grüßt brüderlich die Wirklichkeit, die ihn umgibt, denn er und nur er besitzt die wirklichste der Welten. Der Schöpfer aber dieser wirklichsten Welte ist wieder Eros.
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