**Morphological Intertextualities: Fading Forms of Life and the Honorio Subplot**

The narrator’s understatement via litotes was seen to point to a certain degree of restraint in the narrating of this storyworld and its characters, as if the very style of Goethe’s poetic prose had learned the lessons of renunciation (*Entsagung*) associated with his late age. This becomes most apparent in the case of Honorio, the only character with a proper name (though an admittedly abstract one). All other characters are designated by their social status (“Fürst,” “Fürstin,” “Oheim” or the rather stock name “Friedrich,” “Knabe,” etc.). As will become apparent through an investigation of an intertextual triangulation (Cooper, Tieck, Schikaneder/Mozart), Honorio stands in the novella as a cryptic signature for an entire textual archive. Indeed, what a structuralist account of narrative would elide by virtue of its search for an atemporal logic of consequence standing behind an ‘illusionary’ chronology here becomes apparent: the entire subplot of Honorio’s illicit passion for the princess.[[1]](#endnote-1) Before turning to such intertexts, however, some orienting plot summary is in order. In *Novelle*, Honorio’s passion comes to expression only surreptitiously, filtered through the understated conventions of courtly politeness (*Höflichkeit*). After Honorio shoots the tiger successfully, the following dialogue ensues:

„Gebt ihm den Rest,“ sagte die Fürstin; „ich fürchte, er beschädigt Euch noch mit den Krallen.“

„Verzeiht!“ erwiderte der Jüngling, „er ist schon tot genug, und ich mag das Fell nicht verderben, das nächsten Winter auf Eurem Schlitten glänzen soll.“

*„Frevelt nicht!“* sagte die Fürstin; „alles, was von Frömmigkeit im tiefen Herzen wohnt, entfaltet sich in solchem Augenblick.“

„Auch ich,“ rief Honorio, „war nie frömmer als jetzt eben; deshalb aber denk ich ans Freudigste; ich blicke dieses Fell nur an, *wie es Euch zur Lust begleiten kann*.“

„Es würde mich immer an diesen schrecklichen Augenblick erinnern,“ versetzte sie.

„Ist es doch,“ erwiderte der Jüngling *mit glühender Wange*, „ein unschuldigeres Triumphzeichen, als wenn die Waffen erschlagener Feinde vor dem Sieger her zur Schau getragen wurden.“

„Ich werde mich an Eure Kühnheit und Gewandtheit dabei erinnern und darf nicht hinzusetzen, daß Ihr auf meinen Dank *und auf die Gnade des Fürsten* lebenslänglich rechnen könnt. *Aber steht auf!* Schon ist kein Leben mehr im Tiere. Bedenken wir das Weitere*! Vor allen Dingen steht auf!“*

[...] *„Steht auf!“* wiederholte die Fürstin [...] Daß anstatt einer jugendlichen Freude eine gewisse Trauer über sein Gesicht zog, hatte die Fürstin nicht Zeit zu bemerken. (503-4, emphasis added)

Only through the narratively functionless repetitions of the princess – her exclamation of “Frevelt nicht!” that morphs into the thrice-spoken command “Steht auf!” – does the gravity of the situation become apparent. The narrator restrains himself from providing the background of their relationship, simply noting that Honorio offers her the pelt as a “Triumphzeichen […] mit glühender Wange” and looks dismayed after she agrees to allow him to travel the world. Indeed, the princess expressly mentions the fact that the prince (her husband) must approve Honorio’s travel, reminding the knight of her unavailability and class difference. Why does the narrator restrain himself at just the moment that Honorio begins to unrestrain and hint at his amorous passion for the princess? In Goethe’s narrative schema for *Novelle*, the unspoken background that reverberates in their dialogue becomes explicit:

86. Er kniet auf dem Tyger.

87. *Äußerer* Anstand.

88. Zugesagte Gnade.

89. Ausgesprochener Wunsch zu reisen.

90. Schon oft wiederholt und motivirt.

91. Warum sich entfernen jetzt eben da er so hülfreich geworden.

92. Höhere Bildung *als Vorwand*.[[2]](#endnote-2)

Already in this early schema, the civility of their dialogue remains but an “Äußerer Anstand,” Honorio’s wish to travel away from court but a “Vorwand” for testing whether the princess reciprocates his interest (had she replied that Honorio was not allowed to travel away, this would keep him in her vicinity). At this point, the musical family arrives onto the scene, preventing further humiliation and potential impropriety. The prince orders Honorio to start a small fire with which to frighten the lion should the family fail, but before Honorio can carry out his orders, he encounters the mother alone, as he was previously alone with the princess:

Aber die Herankommenden schien er [Honorio] kaum zu bemerken; er saß wie in tiefen Gedanken versunken, er sah umher wie zerstreut. Die Frau sprach ihn an mit Bitte, das Feuer nicht anzünden zu lassen; er schien jedoch ihrer Rede wenig Aufmerksamkeit zu schenken. [...] Honorio schaute gerad vor sich hin, dorthin, wo die Sonne auf ihrer Bahn sich zu senken begann. „Du schaust nach Abend,“ rief die Frau, „tust wohl daran, dort gibt’s viel zu tun; eile nur, säume nicht, du wirst überwinden. Aber zuerst überwinde dich selbst!“ Hinauf schien er zu lächeln; die Frau stieg weiter, konnte sich aber nicht enthalten, nach dem Zurückbleibenden nochmals umzublicken; eine rötliche Sonne überschien sein Gesicht, sie glaubte nie einen schönern Jüngling gesehen zu haben. (510, emphasis added)

As was the case with piety (*Frömmigkeit*), which migrated lexically from the princess’s speech to the “Frommer Sinn und Melodie” of the child’s poem, the semantics of (self-)overcoming (*Überwindung*) migrates from the mother’s advice to the narrator’s description of the child after the latter has tamed the lion: “wirklich sah das Kind in seiner Verklärung aus wie ein mächtiger, siegreicher Überwinder, jener [der Löwe] zwar nicht wie der Überwundene, denn seine Kraft blieb in ihm verborgen, aber doch wie der Gezähmte, wie der dem eigenen friedlichen Willen Anheimgegebene” (512). Critics have continually vacillated on the interpretive question of which scene of ‘overcoming’ to prioritize: does the lion represent a symbolic transfiguration of Honorio’s newly ‘tamed’ passions, as critics have such as Seuffert und Wäsche have contended, or does Honorio’s need to overcome himself simply form an anticipation in the subplot of the more primary, utopian conclusion of the child’s Orphic song that overcomes violence, as critics such as Beutler and Meyer have argued?[[3]](#endnote-3) Rather than prioritizing one scene over the other, the semantics of (self-)overcoming and piety common to both invite us to see the scenes in symbolic counterpoint: Honorio’s ‘prosaic’ passion and the child’s poetic song, the taming of human instinct mirroring that of a bestial “Tyrannen der Wälder.” With the *Bänkelsang* that figured Napoleon as a lion in mind, we may see *Novelle*’s tame lion as further recalling a third scene of human taming, that of the prince whom the child pacified by playing his magic flute as the father held his Biblical speech in praise of creation. Political authority is hence ‘tamed,’ in a sense even educated, by art. The syntagmatic order of narrative thus gives way to a triune paradigmatic equivalence between Honorio, lion, and prince that altogether eludes representation as a syntagmatically interlocked causal chain of narrative events.

The symbolic thrust of readings that construct such a paradigmatic resemblance between Honorio and the lion all too easily elide, however, the implicit background of his relationship with the princess. This unspoken background only becomes fully legible when seen as the understated outcome of a complex intertextual interaction. Turning toward neglected intertexts for Goethe’s *Novelle* will allow us to specify more fully the role of Honorio. *Novelle* will thereby emerge as the structural outcome of a metamorphic reaction set off by the contact and mutual interpenetration of different plot structures in texts by Cooper, Tieck, and Schickaneder/Mozart. Intertextual relationships can be understood in this way as a matter of morphological transformation, a twisting and bending of amalgamated plot structures projected into novel literary historical contexts.

When the mother finds Honorio melancholy and isolated, he looks westward toward the setting sun, and so, too, was Goethe looking westward when he took up the plan for the failed epic *Die Jagd* in 1827. As his working diary makes clear, Goethe was closely studying *The Pioneers, or the Sources of the Susquehanna; a Descriptive Tale* (1823) by James Fenimore Cooper.[[4]](#endnote-4) Indeed, the time of *Novelle*’s conception coincided with Goethe’s intense study of the United States. Herzog Karl Bernhard (Duke Karl August’s second son) had conducted a fourteen-month-long journey through the U.S. and Canada in 1825-26, and Goethe diligently read through Bernhard’s travel diary as well as met him in person upon his arrival, even facilitating the journal’s publication in 1828.[[5]](#endnote-5) Goethe was even studying American geology and reading Warden’s *Statistical, political, and historical account of the United States of North America from the period of the first colonization to the present day* (1819). Such multidisciplinary study of the U.S. accompanied his reading of a total of six novels by Cooper from September 1826 to January 1828.[[6]](#endnote-6) Cooper’s novels were almost instantly translated into German and French, a testament to European curiosity about America, which observers at the time claimed had yet to develop a literary tradition (the U.S. were an ‘adult’ nation that never had an infancy). Right before taking up his old schema for the unrealized epic *Die Jagd* on Oct. 4, Goethe reads Cooper’s *The Pioneers* a second time on Oct. 1: “Den Cooperischen Roman zum zweytenmal angefangen und die Personen ausgeschrieben. Auch das Kunstreiche daran näher betrachtet und fortgesetzt.”[[7]](#endnote-7) The very next day, he notes: “Die Quellen von Susquehanna fortgesetzt.” [[8]](#endnote-8) Finally, upon later finishing Cooper’s *The Prairie* (1827)*,* Goethe characterizes Cooper’s novelistic art in general: “Las den Cooperschen Roman bis gegen das Ende und bewunderte den reichen Stoff und dessen geistreiche Behandlung. Nicht leicht sind Werke mit so großen Bewußtseyn und solcher Consequenz durchgeführt als die Cooperschen Romane.”[[9]](#endnote-9) In the 1823 article titled “Stoff und Gehalt, zur Bearbeitung vorgeschlagen” from an issue of *Ueber Kunst und Alterthum*, moreover, Goethe recommends diverse subject matter for literary rendition by ambitious German authors. Among the three texts recommended is Ludwig Gall’s *Auswanderung nach den Vereinigten Staaten* (1822). Goethe notes the difficulty of adapting the source material, however, for “Der Bearbeitende müßte den Stolz haben, mit Cooper zu wetteifern, und deßhalb die klarste Einsicht in jene überseeischen Gegenstände zu gewinnen suchen.”[[10]](#endnote-10)

As the remarks collected above make clear, Goethe considered Cooper a literary equal and closely studied Cooper’s approach to novelistic construction. Goethe admired in particular “das Kunstreiche” at the beginning of *The Pioneers*, which deftly introduces a vast cast of characters and the multifaceted interests that come into conflict with one another as the sprawling novel develops. For the sake of orientation, it will be helpful to provide a quick structural summary of Cooper’s novel, for Goethe was not merely ‘influenced’ by it, but adapted and transformed its inner constitutive principles. Though the narrative may appear disjunctive, it is quite carefully and thoroughly composed. As Goethe remarked, Cooper organized subject matter in his plots with great “Consequenz.” [[11]](#endnote-11) If the status of the narrative event as anachronic was at issue in *Novelle* as the psychosocial problematic of an inflamed imagination, in *The Pioneers* the question of narrative agency – how to characterize people’s actions after the event, the retrospective account of what a human deed consisted in and was responsible for – becomes central. The novel begins with a deer being shot, but who killed the deer (and may therefore claim it) remains ambiguous: Judge Temple shot at the deer, as did Natty Bumppo (a white settler who has taken on the Native American form of life) and Edwards (Natty’s hunting companion and a mysterious character whose lineage is slowly revealed at end). Temple claims that he killed the deer, while Natty claims that he also shot at it but missed, arguing that a younger hand must have killed it. Edwards, it turns out, fired the killing shot, but was himself wounded by Judge Temple’s misfire. To complicate matters, Temple owns the land, and it is technically illegal for Natty (also known as Leatherstocking) to hunt on this land. At the same time, townspeople will later argue over whether Edwards should sue Temple for the injury. Both sides in the dispute are thus exposed to their act’s possible legal ramifications. Temple accordingly shifts from first claiming that he killed the deer to asserting his claim of ownership over the land qua hunting grounds and trying (out of goodwill) to buy the deer from Leatherstocking. In the end, Temple simply brings the injured Edwards into his home to be cared for. Cooper thus takes the novels’ very first narrative event – a deer is shot – and kaleidoscopically reflects it so as to introduce a world, seeing the deer’s killing in multiple, conflicting legal and moral dimensions: Who killed the deer? To whom does it belong? To whom does the land belong? All protagonists are imbricated in the deer’s shooting from the beginning, the deed not ascribable to one in isolation, the land (like the deer) sponsor to overlapping claims of ownership. The central conflict in the novel is between Natty and Judge Temple, respective representatives of the unwritten code of woodmanship and hunting ritual (primitive freedom, natural law), on the one hand, and the written, man-made laws of civilized mercantile progress, on the other. The rights to the land are negotiated in the space stretched by this polarity, but the town complicates such facile oppositions, for its “wasty ways” (as Natty terms them) stand in stark contrast to the self-discipline exercised by *both* Natty and Temple. Four prominent vignettes on town life thus double as scenes of ecological devastation: the ruination of the trees during the manufacture of maple; the massacre of the passenger pigeons with cannon fire; the wasteful netting of fish; and a fire that has spread from town onto the mountainside. These four scenes also correspond to the elements of earth, air, water, and fire.

Cooper depicts, then, the colonial settlement of Templeton near Lake Otsego in a *transitional* state, between the hunting culture of the Indians and the full establishment of an ordered, stable civilization. As the remnant of a past Indian form of life stands Mohegan or Old Indian John, who dies during the fire and is the only ethnic Native American in the novel (Natty has adopted the form of life). As a premonition of the future U.S., Edwards, on the other hand, symbolically merges all competing claims to land ownership within his complex identity: his father, the British soldier Major Effingham, was adopted by Mohegan after saving the latter’s life during the French and Indian War; Effingham also obtained the royal patent to the New York lands later purchased far more cheaply, after the Revolutionary Wars, by Judge Temple, who was a business associate of Effingham. By marrying Elizabeth, Judge Temple’s daughter, Edwards thus synthesizes the oldest, Native American claims to the land with Judge Temple’s most recent. Between past and future forms of life (Mohegan and Edwards), the main conflict unfolds between Natty and Temple, themselves characterized as deficient modes of clinging on to an irretrievable past (Natty) and destructively progressing to a modernized future (Temple). Though he lives as an Indian, Natty carries out an isolated existence in his hut in the woods, belonging neither to the white settlement nor to a native tribe, for Mohegan is the last of his kind. Estranged from human society by virtue of this isolating hybrid identity, Natty advocates instead on behalf of the animals and trees. During the massacre of the pigeons, for example, he holds a monologue on God’s creatures strikingly similar to that of the father in *Novelle* and thereby convinces Judge Temple of the procedure’s wastefulness. Temple is deeply affected and tries to help as best he can, not by conserving the birds but by facilitating their commodification: he commercializes the sale of pigeons, ordering the townspeople to collect all birds, for he will purchase them and sell them for profit in town. Temple’s own past evinces itself as complex: he abandoned his Quaker background and betrayed the Crown during the Revolutionary wars, evolving into a figure of mercantile progress at the expense of past tradition. Tellingly, he is the only character to possess a slave in the novel, which violates the religious principles of his past religious identity. The main protagonists in Cooper’s novel are thus akin to phenomenological reductions of forms of life locatable on an historical continuum:

----- {Mohegan 🡨 Natty Bumppo <--- conflict ---> Judge Temple 🡪 Edwards} ----->

The transitional historical stage of colonial settlement depicted in Cooper's novel thus takes narrative shape through the anachronistic coincidence of competing forms of life: that of Mohegan and Edwards, native past and American future, as mirrored in perverted form by Natty and Temple, an adopted and nostalgic primitivism pitted against a corrosive mercantile progress.

In *Novelle*, Goethe does not simply draw rhetorical inspiration from select passages in *The Pioneers,* but isolates four structural moments of the narrative that correspond to the four in *Novelle* discussed above: (1.) landscape description; (2.) the shooting of a wild feline; (3.) the outbreak of a fire; and (4.) departing from a protagonist who faces westward as the sun sets. The intertextual connection hence takes place as a structural transformation.

**1. Landscapes:** Landscape in Cooper’s novel takes on two functions: as a means of implicit characterization (no two characters perceive nature in the same manner) and, spoken with Greimas, as an esoteric micronarrative in hypotactic form (embedded, that is, within the explicit macronarrative). Two scenes of ecological ruination – the massacre of the passenger pigeons and the profligate netting of fish – are hence framed by two landscape descriptions: first that of Mount Vision by Judge Temple, who describes a scene of roads imposingly cutting through a seemingly untamable wilderness and thereby conquering it; second, Natty’s view from the Catskills of the town below. When Edwards asks the latter, ““Und was sahet Ihr dort?”,” Natty replies: “Die Schöpfung! […] Ueberall Gottes herrliche Schöpfung. Ich war auf diesen Bergen als Vaugh Sopus abbrannte im letzten Kriege […] Ihr wißt, daß die Indianer mir den Namen Falkenauge beilegten, wegen meines scharfen Gesichts […] Ja, es ist ein herrliches Gefühl hoch oben in der Luft zu stehen *und die Menschen mit ihren Wohnungen kaum sichtbar zu seinen Füßen zu sehen*”[[12]](#endnote-12) At *Novelle*’s precise textual and chronological midpoint (the tale lasts but a day), the princess describes the prospect at her feet so:

„Es ist nicht das erstemal,” sagte die Fürstin, “daß ich auf so hoher, weitumschauender Stelle die Betrachtung mache, wie doch die klare Natur *so reinlich und friedlich* aussieht und den Eindruck verleiht, als wenn gar nichts Widerwärtiges in der Welt sein könne, und wenn man *wieder in die Menschenwohnung zurückkehrt,* sie sei hoch oder niedrig, weit oder eng, so gibt’s immer etwas zu kämpfen, zu streiten, zu schlichten und zurechtzulegen. (600)

While in Cooper’s novel the Judge and Natty’s landscape descriptions function to frame the conflict between their respective attitudes toward nature during the pigeon shoot, in Goethe’s novella an inner psychological conflict takes the place of this external one. Natty’s view of creation is displaced onto the father’s prophetic speech before the prince. Like the princess, however, he expresses animosity for civilization: human “Wohnungen” remain almost completely invisible from the Catskills and, when visible, they register as the substrate sustaining the memory of a destructive fire from wartime. The princess displays this same attitude toward nature as a realm cleared of destructive human conflict, associated with “die Menschenwohnung.” As Cooper and Goethe both make clear, this view of a virginal nature cleansed of human conflict remains untenable: the pigeons end up a commodity sold en masse, while the princess will wild animals, nature in its aspect of elemental violence, as unleashed by a fire facilitated by humans in town below.

**2. Wild cats:** In the earliest of narrative schemas for *Novelle*, it becomes apparent that the princess’s encounter with the injured *tiger* was influenced by a scene from Cooper’s novel, in which Elizabeth encounters a baby *panther*, killed by her loyal dog, only to face the panther’s mother:

Nebel Morgen. schon versamelte Jager [sic]

Abschied.

Abritt.

Jahrmarckt. Buden gemahlte Thiere

Dame allein mit dem Schwager und Mahler

Zeichnung und Risse des alten Schlosses.

Auslegung Beschreibung

Dahin reiten.

Höhe Brand.

**Panther**

Flucht Vorab Retardation des **Tygers**

Erlösung[[13]](#endnote-13)

In his letters to Schiller on the epic *Die Jagd* from 1797, Goethe refers to “meine Tiger und Lowen;” a panther was never planned.[[14]](#endnote-14) The lexical substitution of panther for tiger is more than a casual mistake; rather, it functions as a kind of Freudian slip indicative of how narrative events from Cooper’s novel were amalgamating in Goethe’s imagination with congruent events in his planned novella. In *The Pioneers*, Natty saves Elizabeth by shooting at the panther twice, aiming for its head. In *Novelle*, Honorio similarly saves the princess by shooting at the tiger twice, though, unlike Natty, he misses the first time. Both Natty and Honorio, moreover, are emblematic within their narrative worlds for historically local cultural codes of honor, whether the native ways of woodsmanship taken on by Natty via his friendship with Mohegan or the aristocratic values embodied by Honorio down to his name. Both respective female characters are also similarly haunted by the trauma in the form of phantasmatic afterimages. In the case of Elizabeth: “So furchtbar auch der Anblick der gereizten Pantherin war, hatten Elisabeths Augen dennoch unverwandt auf ihr geruht; und noch lange nach diesem Ereigniß erschien ihr die wüthende Gestalt des Thiers in ihren Träumen, und störte ihren sanften Schlummer.”[[15]](#endnote-15) In the case of the princess, she notes to Honorio the grounds for her rejection of the tiger’s pelt: “‘Es würde mich immer an diesen schrecklichen Augenblick erinnern’” (503). As Honorio wishes to give the princess the pelt, so Natty takes the panther’s hide in order to cash in the bounty: for both, the animal morphs into a symbolic object of gift or exchange. Even a divine reverence for the *imago dei* in man seems to defer the panther’s killing of Elizabeth in *The Pioneers*: “Elisabeth sah sich nun der Willkühr des raubgierigen Thieres Preis gegeben. Man behauptet, daß etwas in dem Gesichte des Ebenbildes Gottes läge, was die Herzen der niederen Wesen seiner Schöpfung muthlose machte; und wirklich schien es, als ob eine solche unsichtbare Macht den drohenden Schlag im gegenwärtigen Augenblick aufhielt. Die Augen des Ungeheuers und des knieenden Mädchens begegneten sich…”[[16]](#endnote-16) The prophetic father of *Novelle* similarly invokes such an order of creation in his attempt to prevent the killing of the lion before the prince, for “das grausamste der Geschöpfe hat Ehrfurcht vor dem Ebenbilde Gottes“ (508). Goethe’s narrator, like Honorio (and Cooper, for that matter) also refers to the dead tiger as an *Ungeheuer,* as if he, too, were afraid of the harmless creature: “der Ritter beugte sich herab, schoß und traf mit der zweiten Pistole das Ungeheur durch den Kopf” (502).

*Unlike* Cooper’s panthers, Goethe’s wild cats are tame; as previously discussed, the tiger was needlessly slain by Honorio. The animals, furthermore, are trained to perform at the family’s circus; they provide entertainment. Such tame, performing animals, coupled with the narrator’s reference to Honorio as “der Ritter,” together recall Schiller’s poem “Die Handschuh,” sent to Goethe in 1797 as he was searching for a poetic form for what would become *Novelle*. In Schiller’s satiric ballad, a king and his royal court sit before a staged spectacle of violence, a den containing lion, leopard, and tiger. The cats, however, refuse to devour one another for the court’s entertainment, and so to enliven the spectacle, the coy princess Kunigunde ‘mistakenly’ drops her glove into the arena. The knight Delorges must maintain appearances and fetch it for her: “der Ritter in schnellem Lauf / Steigt hinab in den furchtbarn Zwinger / Mit festem Schritte / Und aus der Ungeheuer Mitte / Nimmt er den Handschuh mit keckem Finger” (53-57). Schiller ironizes this knightly display of virtue and *Minnedienst*, for Delorges throws the glove at Kunigunde’s face: “‘Den Dank, Dame, begehr ich nicht’” (66). Delorges may be so satirized because the kind of servile, platonic love he emblematizes is already anachronistic in the bourgeois world of Schiller’s time. Unlike the comic lampoon of an outmoded knightly form of love in the ballad, Goethe focuses on the potential for Honorio’s tragically illicit passion to come to expression in *Novelle*. The figure of Honorio thereby becomes legible as an imaginative merging of Schiller’s Delorges and Cooper’s Leatherstocking. His character, emblematic for the aristocratic martial code of honor, is the outcome of a symbolic negotiation between an outmoded knightly form of life in the Old World and an endangered form of native life in the New World. After the French Revolution, of course, royal courts would no longer stage such spectacles of bestial violence, and bourgeois love (often pedagogical in character) would replace the *Minnedienst*, just as, after the settlement of the frontier, Native Americans will have to move ever westward. Across the expanse of the Atlantic, aristocrats and Indians both fade away; Honorio emblematically fixes their sociohistorical self-withdrawal in light of the circumstances unique to modernity.

**3. Fires:** Though Natty Bumppo saves Elizabeth from a panther, his mysterious, younger hunting companion, Edwards, saves her from the later fire. Elizabeth sets out for a walk on the mountainside with a female companion and dog, leaving Edwards be on a hunt. She remarks of the latter: “daß ihm die feinern Sitten keineswegs fremd waren; daß er wohlerfahren in allen kleinen Höflichkeiten des gebildeten Lebens nur zuweilen durch die Heftigkeit seiner *unbändigen Leidenschaften*, besonders durch den häufig durchbrechenden Stolz, verhindert wurde, sich immer *mit Anstand* zu benehmen.”[[17]](#endnote-17) In *Novelle*, Honorio, too, displays “Äußerer Anstand,” though unruly passions circulate beneath the conventional courtly surface. As Goethe stated to Eckermann, he sought with *Novelle* to show “wie das Unbändige, Unüberwindliche oft besser durch Liebe und Frömmigkeit als durch Gewalt bezwungen werde.”[[18]](#endnote-18) Even the diction used by Cooper (in the German translation Goethe read) to describe the outbreak of fire – “die Annäherung und Verheerung des wüthenden Elements,” “ein lautes Prasseln […] wie die flackernde Flamme hoch aus dem Rauch in die Höhe schlug,” “die bloße Nähe des wüthenden Elements,”– greatly echoes Goethe’s emphasis on the elemental.[[19]](#endnote-19) At a climax amidst the flames, Edwards believes that he and Elizabeth are about to die, and the dialogue that ensues echoes that of Honorio and the princess: “‘O, Miß Temple! das war in der That eine unglückselige Jagd! ich fürchte, diese schreckliche Scene ist als Folge derselben zu betrachten!’ [Elizabeth replies:] ‘Wie könnt Ihr jetzt eines solchen geringfügigen Umstandes erwähnen – in diesem Augenblick ist das Herz für alle irdischen Gefühle abgestorben.”[[20]](#endnote-20) The princess similarly conjoins the semantics of the moment (*Augenblick*) with the heart’s outpouring (*Herz*) when she tells Honorio, “alles, was von Frömmigkeit im tiefen Herzen wohnt, entfaltet sich in solchem Augenblick“ (503). The scene in Cooper peaks when Elizabeth tells Edwards to flee and abandon her. In response, he gets on his knee – like Honorio after killing the tiger – and pleads:

‚Und von *mir* verlangt Ihr, das ich Euch verlassen soll! Ich Euch verlassen am Rande des Grabes! O, Miß Temple! wie wenig kennt Ihr mich,’ rief er auf die Knie fallend und sie mit seinen Armen umfassend, als wollte er sie vor den nahenden Flammen beschützen. ‚Verzweiflung trieb mich in die Wälder, *aber Eure Gesellschaft zähmte den Löwen in mir*. Ihr vermochtet mich dazu, Stand und Namen zu vergessen, und mein Leben unwürdiger Knechtschaft zu weihen. Euer Bild erfüllte meine Seele und beschäftigte mein Herz.[[21]](#endnote-21)

After being mistakenly shot by Judge Temple at the novel’s very beginning, Edwards has been housed and employed in the Judge’s home, working as a legal assistant – the very opposite of his free-ranging life on the hunt with Natty (hence the “Knechtschaft”). Throughout the novel, Edwards mediates between the Native American form of life and that of the white settlers. As Elizabeth noted, his very character is a negotiation between wild passion and civilized decorum. The symbolic counterpoint in Goethe’s *Novelle* between Honorio’s self-overcoming and the child’s taming of the lion here becomes audible as an intertextual echo of the same thematics of taming and self-mastery in Cooper’s novel. It is as if Edwards’s figure of speech had in Goethe’s imagination taken on the stature of a paradigmatic structure of symbolic counterpoint (Honorio :: Löwe). Indeed, Schiller and Humboldt claimed in letters that Goethe’s planned hunting epic in 1797 had no moment of retardation. If, in 1827, Goethe considered the tiger/panther to provide that earlier missing moment, then it would not be a philological leap to suppose that Goethe found his ‘epic’ moment of retardation in the Cooper he was then reading. Goethe imaginatively fused, then, Elizabeth’s twofold rescue from the panther by Natty and from the fire by Edwards into Honorio’s rescue of the princess from tiger and fire. In *Novelle*, the hero or knight’s epic deed is reduced to a vanishing point: a utterly implicit inner act of self-restraint merely hinted at in dialogue, yet utterly explicit in its aesthetic transfiguration as the lion’s taming “nicht wie der Überwundene, denn seine Kraft blieb in ihm verborgen, aber doch wie der Gezähmte, wie der dem eigenen friedlichen Willen Anheimgegebene” (512). Like Edwards, who transitions from a native life of hunting into a civilized clerkship under the Judge, Honorio transitions from killing the tiger and asserting the necessity of an external “Triumphzeichen” to overcoming himself inwardly and, thereby, generically overcoming the epic latent in *Novelle* by making room for a cathartic idyll. Like Edwards, Honorio becomes capable of forgetting “Stand und Namen,” looking away from the princess and the Old World towards the West.

**4. Setting suns, fading forms of life:** In *The Pioneers*, Mohegan represents an historical anachronism, a Native American form of life tied to the hunt and untenable in the agrarian society of the settlers. He dies as the fire rages on the mountainside and looks westward:

Hier hielt er [Mohegan] inne; denn die Elemente schienen der Macht des Menschen zu spotten. [...] Selbst in der Wuth des zerstörenden Elements trat eine Ruhe ein, als ob eine höhere Hand dessen Fortschreiten Einhalt thue. [...] Mohegan erhob sich, gleichsam als betrachtete er diese Naturerscheinungen als Signal zum Aufbruch, und *breitete seine Arme nach Westen aus. Sein dunkler Gesicht erhellte ein Strahl der Freude*, dem jeder andere Ausdruck allmählig wich; seine Muskeln wurden steif. Eine leichte Bewegung zuckte einen Augenblick spielend um seine Lippen; die Arme fielen langsam und bewegungslos zur Seite nieder, und die Gestalt des todten Kriegers sank gegen den Felsen, die gläsernen Augen weit geöffnet, und starr auf die fernen Berge gerichtet, als wenn sie dem scheidenden Geiste in die neue Wohnung folgten.[[22]](#endnote-22)

Even nature in the formlessness of the fire violently raging about him seems to hold its breath as Mohegan passes away. Honorio is similarly described as looking “nach Abend,” i.e. facing westward like Mogegan’s outstretched arms, while “eine rötliche Sonne überschien sein Gesicht” (510), just as Mohegan’s “dunkler Gesicht erhellte ein Strahl der Freude.” Just as Mohegan’s soul seems to flee westward, so the novel concludes with Natty, Mohegan’s companion, fleeing to the frontier: “Man hat ihn [Natty] nie wieder gesehen, noch von ihm gehört. Des Richters Nachforschungen blieben umsonst. Er [Natty] ging dem Niedergang der Sonne zu, und war der Erste, der den Amerikanern einen Weg durch das feste Land zum andern Ocean bahnte.”[[23]](#endnote-23) The frontier here emerges as the spatial site into which anachronistic forms of native life are displaced, only, of course, to be later encroached upon by further settlers. Cooper’s novel thus ends in a tone of mourning for a lost form of life among Native Americans. In the figure of Honorio, Goethe has amalgamated Mohegan facing westward, Natty shooting the panther, and Edwards protecting Elizabeth from the fire, ultimately taming his leonine passion for her. These three characters all adhere, in greater (Mohegan) to lesser (Edwards) degree, to the native form of life fading away in Cooper’s novel, and so Honorio represents a kind of crypto-Indian. Goethe has amalgamated the last three structural moments mentioned above in order to stage the fading away of an *aristocratic* form of life exemplified by Honorio while simultaneously pointing toward the settlement of America as a hopeful site for the reinvestment of civilizational energies. After the French Revolution, as after the settlement of the frontier, such aristocratic or native forms of life come to take on the aspect of historical anachronisms. Like Natty and Edwards, Honorio is meant to emigrate to America and conquer the frontier after conquering himself.[[24]](#endnote-24)

To make full sense of how Cooper’s Native Americans merged and morphed in Goethe’s imagination into the knightly Honorio, we will have to turn to a second key intertext that sheds further light on the unspoken background between Honorio and the princess (herself modeled on Cooper’s Elizabeth): Tieck’s *Leben und Tod der heiligen Genoveva* (1801). Tieck finished this metrically heterogeneous romantic drama three years after Goethe’s *Jagd* failed to materialize (Tieck even read the play aloud to Goethe and his son in Jena on December 7, 1799).[[25]](#endnote-25) Both *Genoveva* and *Novelle* begin with the same initial situation (*Ausgangssituation*): a husband with political authority departs on official business, leaving his wife behind in the care of a trusted confidant of lower social status. In Tieck’s drama, prince Siegfried departs for the crusades, leaving princess Genoveva behind with Golo, who secretly desires his superior’s wife. After attempting to seduce Genoveva, who rejects him, Golo accuses her of betraying her husband with a monk. Siegfried hears of the alleged infidelity on the war front, and, enraged, sentences his wife to death. The executioners of Golo’s scheme, however, have mercy on Genoveva, cutting off the tongue and taking the eyes of wild animals in place of Genoveva’s. She flees to a cave, where she has the prince’s child, named Schmerzenreich and nursed by a goat just as Hercules’s son Telephus was. During a hunt, Siegfried discovers that his innocent wife still lives, meets his son for the first time, and learns of Golo’s betrayal; all ends well. In Goethe’s *Novelle,* Honorio takes on the role of Golo, yet does not give in to revenge after rejection, but is capable of overcoming himself. Indeed, in Cooper’s novel, Elizabeth is a largely passive character, while in Tieck’s drama, Genoveva takes on the stature of a saint whose magical capacity to survive in the wilderness is effected precisely through her ardent piety and self-subjection to suffering. Like Tieck, Goethe grants his female protagonist more agency, but substitutes an aesthetic education of the sense organs (eye and ear) for Christian piety. Furthermore, the Tieck intertext lends depth to the implicit familial background (even conflict) in play at the outset of Goethe’s *Novelle*. At the drama’s opening, Genoveva attempts to hold Siegfried back and prevent (or at least defer) his departure:

Siegfried: Nun, warum willst du mich zurück halten?

Genoveva: Nicht halten, nein zum Ruhm möchte ich dich treiben,

Zu widerstehn den feindlichen Gewalten.

Doch zittr’ ich hier allein zurück zu bleiben: --

Es schweben vor mir furchtbare Gestalten, […]

Siegfried: Wir weilen im Gespräch, die Reiterei

Ist aufgesessen, alle Mannschaft schon

Im Zuge, -- nun in Gottes Namen denn. [...]

Siegfried [*an Golo*]: Du bleibst zu Haus und bist des Hauses Stütze,

Hofmeister über mein Gesinde, Vogt

Des Schlosses, meines theuren Weibes Hüter.

Gern hätt’ ich dich in mein Gefolg genommen,

Gern, lieber Knab’, dich bei mir streiten sehn:

Doch weil ich keinen kenne, dessen Treue,

Des Herz mir so von Herzen ist ergeben,

So hab’ ich dich gewählt, zurück zu bleiben [...]

Genoveva: O Siegfried! – Golo, Wolf, laßt uns allein – (*Golo und Wolf ab*)

Siegfried: Was willst du Genoveva? Wahrlich, nicht

Erkenn’ ich wieder, was du vordem warst. […]

Genoveva: Bist du so rauh, Gemahl, so wenig freundlich,

Dem schwachen, kranken Weibe? – Nun so höre,

Ich will die Zunge zwingen, es zu sagen:

Ich fühle mich seit wenig Wochen Mutter.[[26]](#endnote-26)

In *Novelle*, too, “die ganze Jägerei zu Pferde und zu Fuß” is already assembled in a manner akin to “die Reiterei / […] aufgesessen, alle Mannschaft / schon im Zuge” in *Genoveva* (491). Both princes are being waited upon as their wives hold them back; in *Novelle,* “Alle jedoch warteten auf den Fürsten, der, von seiner jungen Gemahlin Abschied nehmend, allzulange *zauderte*” (491, emphasis added). What the recently married couple is discussing remains unspoken in Goethe’s text, but the Tieck intertext suggests that the princess of *Novelle* may very well be pregnant with child as Genoveva is. Just as Tieck depicts Genoveva, the narrator in *Novelle* remarks that “Die Fürstin blieb ungern zurück,” while the prince states: “‘Auch lasse ich,’ sagte er, ‘dir unsern Honorio als Stall- und Hofjunker, der für alles sorgen wird’” (492). Honorio, like Golo, is quite pleased at the prospect of remaining behind, potentially alone, with the princess: “Und so war auch Honorio von der *sonst* so ersehnten Jagd *willig zurückgeblieben,* um ihr ausschließlich dienstbar zu sein” (496, emphasis added). The narrator of *Novelle* even describes the prince’s hunt as a crusade-like war, as if Goethe merged Siegfried’s first departure for the crusades with his later departure for the hunt: “man hatte sich vorgenommen, weit in das Gebirg hineinzudringen, um die friedlichen Bewohner der dortigen Wälder durch einen unerwarteten Kriegszug zu beunruhigen” (492).

The Tieck intertext allows us to return to Cooper’s Native Americans and make sense of the transformative intertextual interaction that yielded *Novelle*. Goethe took four structural moments from Cooper’s novel about the New World and projected them into the Old World setting of Tieck’s medieval romance. Developing from the same initial situation shared with *Genoveva*, Goethe’s *Novelle* redeems the Golo-figure in the character of Honorio, who takes on the dignity of Cooper’s endangered Native Americans in *The Pioneers*, for he rescues rather than destroys the princess’s life (from the tiger/panther, from the fire, and even from the ‘lion’ of his own unruly passion). Three distinct narrative events carried out by three different characters in Cooper’s novel (Natty’s rescue, Edwards’s rescue, and Mohegan’s death) thus morph into one plot structure associated with one character (Honorio), only to be projected into an entirely new context so as to generate an utterly novel narrative. This itself recalls how the child of *Novelle* repeats his poems in a new context so as to speak the novelty of the final situation as the event of poetic speech. The generic transformations immanent to the text of *Novelle* thus mirror more generally the literary historical transformations carried out by Goethe’s own imagination.

If the aristocratic form of life is, like the Native American one, fading away as Honorio looks westward toward the setting sun, then Goethe remains beset with the residual problem of a character whose life would seem unlivable after the text’s conclusion. Asking what Honorio does after text ends is, of course, a ‘prosaic’ kind of concern (as Goethe remarked to Eckermann), but it remains a problem generated by the intertextual interaction. There is no frontier in Europe into which to displace anachronistic forms of life in order to preserve them in a spatial elsewhere. If Cooper displaces his Native Americans – his origin – westward into an untamed wilderness, then Goethe relocates the origin eastward: the Orient wanders into the world of *Novelle* in the form of the gypsy-like family of performers. It is the mother, after all, who tells a melancholy Honorio to overcome himself, perhaps implanting in him the idea of migrating to the U.S.: “‘Du schaust nach Abend’, rief die Frau; ‘du tust wohl daran, dort gibts viel zu tun; eile nur, säume nicht, du wirst überwinden.’” Two historical anachronisms, the nomadic Orientalized mother and a Western knight of the court, thus meet to cancel one another out, as it were, and point to the future.

1. One only learns of this through the subtlest hints at the level of sentence and dialogue, what Barthes would term ‘informants’ sneakily embedded within ‘catalysers’ that do not immediately drive the action-sequences making up the plot forward. Informants for Barthes refer ‘vertically’ to character or atmosphere rather than ‘horizontally’ to the sequential chain of narrative events. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. CF. *WA* I/18, pg. 487 (paralipomena). Emphasis added. [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. Cf. Bernhard Seuffert. “Goethe’s ‘Novelle.’” In: *Goethe-Jahrbuch*. Vol. 19. 1898. Pg. 133-166. & Erwin Wäsche. *Honorio und der Löwe: Studie über Goethes ‘Novelle’ mit einem Abdruck derselben.* Salckingen: Hermann Stratz Verlag. 1947. & Ernst Beutler. “Ursprung und Gehalt von Goethes ‘Novelle.’” In: *DVjs*. 16, 1938. S. 324-352. & Hermann Meyer. *Natürlicher Enthusiasmus. Das Morgenländische in Goethes ‚Novelle.’* Heidelberg: Lothar Stiehm Verlag. 1973. [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. Nicholas Saul has investigated Cooper’s influence on the conception of the *Wanderjahre*, while Jane Brown has drawn connections between *The Last of the Mohicans* and *Novelle* (cf. footnote 76). Sp. Wukadonovic has also reconstructed the exact chronological arc of Goethe’s study of Cooper’s novels and notes a number of parallels to *Novelle* (examining the mother’s lament in light of *the* *Mohicans*, for example) without, however, moving beyond the philological confirmation of influence to the exact nature of the intertextual connection. In what follows, I focus on Cooper’s *The Pioneers,* the first Cooper novel Goethe read, rather than *The Last of the Mohicans.* Cf. Nicholas Saul. “Goethe and Colonisation: the *Wanderjahre* and Cooper.” In: *Goethe and the English-speaking World: Essays from the Cambridge Symposium for his 250th Anniversary.* Ed. Nicholas Boyle & John Guthrie. Camden: Rochester, NY. 2002. Pg. 85-98; Jane K. Brown. “The Tyranny of the Ideal: The Dialectics of Art in Goethe’s ‘Novelle;’” Sp. Wukadonovic. *Goethes ‘Novelle.’ Der Schauplatz – Coopersche Einflüsse.* (cf. footnote 69). [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. In a passage relevant to the threat of revolution qua elemental violence in *Novelle,* Bernhard calls John Adams, after meeting the man in person, a “Veteran der heilsamsten Revolution die je gewesen war” (August 3, 1825; pg. 92). Adams died a year later. Noteworthy as well is Bernhard’s ambivalent relationship to American slavery. Arriving in Baltimore on Oct. 26, 1825, he notes, for example: “Ich bemerkte eine ungewöhnliche Anzahl Neger in den Straßen. Der Staat *Maryland* ist der erste, den ich betrat, in welchem die Sclaverei der Neger gesetzmäßig beibehalten worden ist. Weiter südlich herrscht sie überall. Ich aber bleibe bei dieser Thatsache stehen. Es kommt mir nicht zu, mich über diesen delicaten Gegenstand zu äußern. Auf meiner Reise habe ich von Neuem die alte Erfahrung gemacht, daß man sehr leicht irrige Urtheile über Gegenstände fället, die man nicht genau kennt, nicht selbst gesehen und selbst geprüft hat” (Oct. 26, 1825; pg. 251). Bernhard’s liberal, open-minded attitude remains ever alert and evolves as he experiences more of the country. After witnessing an altercation between an enslaved hotel servant girl and a Spanish guest, for example, he notes: “Fast täglich sieht man Beispiele von der niederträchtigen Behandlung, welche die armen Neger erfahren. Ich mag davon nicht sprechen. Aber einen besonderen Auftritt, der mich – am 22. März [1826] – auf das Tiefste indignirte, kann ich nicht übergehen…” (pg. 104). Cf. *Reise Sr. Hoheit des Herzogs Bernhard zu Sachsen-Weimar-Eisenach durch Nord-Amerika in den Jahren 1825 und 1826*. Hsg. Heinrich Luden. Erster Theil. Weimar: Wilhelm Hoffmann. 1828. [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
6. Goethe’s diary makes clear just how imbricated the study of the United States was with *Novelle*’s conception: on Oct. 4, 1826, Goethe notes “Erneuertes Schema der wunderbaren Jagd,” on Oct. 6: “Abends Herzog Bernhard. Ich besprach mit ihm sein Tagebuch und darauf Bezügliches,” on Oct. 7: “Geologie der vereinigten Staaten. Cleavelands Mineralogie. – *Herrn Frommann* d.J., mit Wardens Beschreibung der Vereinigten Staaten,” on Oct. 8: “An der Jagdgeschichte schematisirt. Eine Reinabschrift des Schema dictirt,” on Oct. 9: “Die Jagd theilweise Ausführung,” and finally on Oct. 10: “Kleines Gedicht zum Abschluß der projectirten Novelle.” Cf. *WA* III/10, pg. 251-255. [↑](#endnote-ref-6)
7. Cf. Ibid., pg. 251. [↑](#endnote-ref-7)
8. Ibid., pg. 252. [↑](#endnote-ref-8)
9. Cf. WA III/11, pg. 76 (June 1827). [↑](#endnote-ref-9)
10. Cf. *WA* I/41.Pg. 294. [↑](#endnote-ref-10)
11. Some contributions in the secondary literature have brought out this structural organization in the background of Cooper’s seemingly disjointed novel. Cf. Peter Valenti. “’The Ordering of God’s Providence:’ Law and Landscape in *The Pioneers*.” In: *Studies in American Fiction*. Vol. 7, No. 2. Autumn 1979. Pg. 191-207. & Thomas Philbrick. “Cooper’s The Pioneers: Origins and Structure.” In: *PMLA*. Vol. 79, No. 5. Dec. 1964. Pg. 579-593. & Gerry Brenner. “Cooper’s ‘Composite Order’: ‘The Pioneers’ as Structured Art.” In: *Studies in the Novel*. Vol. 2, No. 3. Fall 1970. Pg. 264-275. [↑](#endnote-ref-11)
12. Natty here refers to General John Vaughn and the burning of the defenseless Hudson river town of Kingston, also called Esopus, by British troops on Oct. 16, 1777. The entire town was burned to ashes. Goethe would have read the 1826 translation of *The Pioneers*. Cf. *Die Ansiedler, oder die Quellen des Susquehannah. Roman von Cooper.* Trans. by Fuditta. Bd. 3. Frankfurt a.M.: Johann David Sauerländer. 1826. Pg. 78-79 (emphasis added). & *The Pioneers, or the Sources of the Susquehanna; A Descriptive Tale.* Historical Introduction & Explanatory Notes by James Franklin Beard. Text established by Lance Schachterle & Kenneth M. Andersen, Jr. Albany: State University of NY Press. 1980. Pg. 463. [↑](#endnote-ref-12)
13. The multiple schemas are presented in their original layout in: Christian Wagenknecht. *Novelle: Erläuterungen und Dokumente.* Stuttgart: Reclam. 1982. Pg. 21. Emphasis added. [↑](#endnote-ref-13)
14. An Schiller. 27. Juni 1797.Cf. *Briefwechsel zwischen Schiller und Goethe.* Bd. 2. 1797-1798. Berlin: Deutsche Bibliothek. Pg. 63-64. [↑](#endnote-ref-14)
15. Cf. Cooper. *Die Ansiedler*. Pg. 104. [↑](#endnote-ref-15)
16. Ibid., pg. 103. [↑](#endnote-ref-16)
17. Cf. Ibid., pg. 93. Emphasis added. [↑](#endnote-ref-17)
18. Cf. *WA* V/6, pg. 24. [↑](#endnote-ref-18)
19. The passage casts Elizabeth into the role of one of the Graces set on fire, what Warburg would have termed a nymph. Cf. Cooper pg. 48-49 (emphasis added). [↑](#endnote-ref-19)
20. Cf. Ibid., pg. 55-56. [↑](#endnote-ref-20)
21. Cf. Ibid., pg. 59. Second emphasis added. [↑](#endnote-ref-21)
22. Cf. Ibid., pg. 76-77. [↑](#endnote-ref-22)
23. Cf. Ibid., pg. 132. [↑](#endnote-ref-23)
24. Cooper himself visited Germany during a tour of Europe along the Rhein. Upon seeing Marbach, Schiller’s birthplace, Cooper expressed an American admiration for Schiller as a self-made man: “Poor Schiller! In my eyes he is the German genius of the age. Goethe has got around him one of those factitious reputations that depend as much on gossip and tea-drinking as on a high order of genius, and he is fortunate in possessing a *coddled celebrity* – for you must know there is a fashion in this thing, that is quite independent of merit – while Schiller’s fame rests solely on its naked merits.” Cf. James Fenimore Cooper. *A Residence in France: With an Excursion up the Rhine and a Second Visit to Switzerland.* Vol. 2. London: Smauel Bentley. 1836. Pg. 33-34. Emphasis in original. [↑](#endnote-ref-24)
25. As Tieck notes, “Ich habe nun das Trauerspiel *Genoveva* fertig gemacht. […] Gestern habe ich Goethe die Hälfte vorlesen müssen, indem wir beide ganz allein waren, und er schien sehr zufrieden, heute soll ich es ihm vollends hinauslesen. Er hat mir viel Gutes darüber gesagt. Ich war gar nicht geniert, und hatte es vorher recht sehr geglaubt zu sein.“ Quoted in: Hartmut Fröschle. *Goethes Verhältnis zur Romantik*. Würzburg: Königshausen und Neumann. 2002. Pg. 220-24. [↑](#endnote-ref-25)
26. Cf. Ludwig Tieck. *Leben und Tod der heiligen Genoveva*. Berlin: G. Riemer. 1820 (ursp. 1801). Pg. 16-20. [↑](#endnote-ref-26)