CONCEIVING GENERATION:
The Novel & the Nuclear Family around 1800

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A DISSERTATION
PRESENTED TO THE FACULTY
OF PRINCETON UNIVERSITY
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE
OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

RECOMMENDED FOR ACCEPTANCE
BY THE DEPARTMENT OF GERMAN
Advisers: Brigid Doherty and Joseph Vogl

June 2012
for my father
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Acknowledgments

My first thanks—no less sincere for being obvious—must go out to the advisors of this dissertation, Brigid Doherty and Joseph Vogl, and to Christiane Frey, who was a junior committee member and a reader. Their collected wisdom, advice, and support have been invaluable; in a situation that could quickly have turned into one of too many cooks, they collaborated with grace and intelligence, and I was the happy beneficiary. I have received cogent and clarifying comments from many other Princeton faculty in colloquiuia and conversation as well, and I am grateful for both the support and productive friction afforded by an intellectually vibrant department and institution. My graduate student colleagues at Princeton and elsewhere—Emily, Leif, Liz, Jeffrey, Peter, Matthew, Veronica, and many more—talked through endless ideas and problems, read countless drafts of chapters, grant proposals, and application documents over the past six years, and did so while continually being supportive and wonderful friends. Without them, and countless others (Andi, Beth, Caroline, Gabor, Lucy, Kate, Pat, Nick) who, though they are not enrolled in graduate programs in the humanities and may never see this page, have been both inspiration and distraction through the years (according to which was called for), I would never have made it to beginning a dissertation, much less finishing one. Finally, for reasons both concrete and intangible, this project could not have come into existence without my own family—my father and my sister, who read literally every word of this dissertation and took my comments on their own work seriously as well; my mother, who encouraged and reassured me more times than I can count (and so much more); my brother, who made me laugh at moments when it was much needed; my sister-in-law, who I am also happy to call my friend; my grandmothers, who showed me year after year that stubbornness is a virtue as well as a fault. If this project is in any sense a defense of what the family is or can ideally be, it is because of all of you. Thank you.
Abstract:

Starting from the rough historical correspondence of the emergence of the nuclear family as an entity of great symbolic importance for the bourgeoisie and the rise of the genre of the novel in its modern form, my project explores the ways in which these two fields mutually constitute each other. Changes in the internal economy of the family brought with them changes in the formal and representational strategies available to authors such as Goethe, Tieck, and Brentano as well as Caroline von Wolzogen, Sophie Mereau, Friederike Unger, Johann Jakob Engel, August Lafontaine, and Caroline Fischer. My first chapter outlines this historical simultaneity, starting by tracing the history of the family particularly in the bourgeoisie, who used the rhetoric of the affective nuclear family to differentiate themselves from the aristocratic and courtly classes. The novel, I claim, in addition to being the genre in which the much-touted ‘individual subject’ makes a first appearance, is also an ideal site for creative, empathetic experimentation with the possibilities of that subject’s connection to both previous and future generations.

My second chapter investigates models of generation in both a biological and a social sense: I analyze 18th-century scientific debates between preformation and epigenesis, and use this controversy as a lens through which to investigate parallel shifts in the relation between parents and children and modes of education. The novel explores the possibilities and difficulties that ensue when parents and children have different notions of what kind of resemblance or obligation should obtain between generations, with the perspective of the novels clearly advocating the cultivation of unique personalities rather than enforcing laws of direct resemblance and obedience. By deemphasizing blood connections and portraying affective and social ties that otherwise determine relationships, the novel both comments on and influences contemporaneous thoughts about how human life is generated, formed, and reproduced. In much the way that education substitutes for blood ties in generating social identities, narration itself, as a type of witnessing that is passed down between generations, substitutes for simple practices of inheritance within kinship groups. Thus in my third chapter I turn to the figure of ‘testation,’ in the dual sense of ‘testament’ and ‘testify,’ to discuss how the novel describes channels of transmission in families or surrogate families and how this both relates to and transcends contemporaneous legal practice. The novel is both a metacommentary on practices of testation, insofar as testaments and testimonies are frequent elements of its plots, and itself a practice of testation in a literary tradition.
Introduction:

In a pivotal scene in Caroline von Wobeser’s massively popular novel *Elisa, oder das Weib wie es sein sollte*, published in 1795, the eponymous heroine and her mother argue about whether or not Elisa has the right to choose the man she will marry. Elisa justifies her position with the words, “mit der Vernunft gab mir der Schöpfer das Recht, selbst mein Glück zu wählen. Indem ich Ihnen gehorche, widerstehe ich dem ersten Gebote der Natur, welches mich zum Glücke ruft”¹ Elisa explicitly couches her assertion in the language of late Enlightenment self-determination and rationality, which rest upon natural laws. Her mother, however, disagrees. “Das erste Gebot der Natur,” she replies haughtily, “ist kindlicher Gehorsam.” (68) I read this conflict as exemplary for certain questions that appear with particular urgency in Germany at the turn of the nineteenth century, questions about the individual subject, his or her blood or affective relations to family members, be they biological or adoptive, and the processes of generation and transmission that tie families together. In this dissertation I explore the historically simultaneous appearance of the nuclear family as a symbolic ideal and the novel as a modern genre. My claim is that these two entities are in a strong sense mutually constitutive: that neither could have come into existence as it did without the other, and that the two together are instrumental in the development of conceptions of individuality, family, and society that are—significant historical modifications notwithstanding—still relevant today.² This claim, for me, means not that the family ought to be idealized as a

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¹ Wobeser, Wilhelmine Karoline von: *Elisa oder das Weib wie es sein sollte*, ed. Anita Runge, facsimile reprint of the editions of 1799/1800, Georg Olms Verlag, Hildesheim/Zürich/New York, 1990, p. 68. All further citations are from this edition and will be given in the text as page numbers.
² Whether to make a strong claim for the specific Germanness of a given project or to leave it as taken for granted in a dissertation written in a German department is a somewhat sticky dilemma. At the risk of being accused of trying to have things both ways, I would assert both that these problems and questions are relevant in all of Western culture (indeed, in what follows I will draw some specific comparisons between
perfect form, the site par excellence of tradition and values, but rather that it is an entity
that is and remains eminently worth thinking about and questioning, in all of its
adaptations and permutations.

The tradition of the novel around 1800 has long been tied to scholarly and
philosophical narratives about selfhood, about individuality, or about bourgeois ideals.
The *Bildungsroman*, on this reading, tells the story of a young (white, upper-middle class
or lower aristocratic) man who leaves his family and travels through the world on a quest
for self-identification, and who eventually settles down and becomes a functioning
member of the *Bildungsbürgertum*. This style of interpretation has contributed to
subsequent dismissals of the novel as a whole as conservative, normative, steeped in
patriarchal values—suggesting that the novel collaborates in the project of naturalizing to
the point of invisibility the power structures that constrict the lives of ordinary men and
women. But this focus seems to me to be too narrow in a variety of ways. Insisting that
the novel around 1800 tells the story of a young man’s journey to maturity misses both
other themes that can play extremely important roles within the genre and ways in which

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3 One of the earliest and most famous of these statements is, of course, Hegel’s, in the *Vorlesungen über
die Ästhetik* “Mag einer sich auch noch soviel mit der Welt herumgezankt haben, umhergeschoben sein –
zuletzt bekommt er meistens doch sein Mädchen und irgendeine Stellung, heiratet und wird ein Philister, so
gut wie die anderen auch […].” Hegel, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich, *Vorlesungen über die Ästhetik II*,
S. 219. Another classic example is Wilhelm Dilthey’s *Das Erlebnis und die Dichtung: Lessing, Goethe,
Novalis Hölderlin*, originally published in 1906 and excerpted in Rolf Selbmann’s useful collection: *Zur

4 See, for example, John Bender’s *Imagining the Penitentiary*: “Both the realist novel and the penitentiary
pretend that character is autonomous, but in both cases invisible authority is organizing a mode of
representation whose way of proceeding includes the premise, and fosters the illusion, that the
consciousness they present is as free to shape circumstances as to be shaped by it.” Bender, John:
*Imagining the Penitentiary: Fiction and the Architecture of Mind in Eighteenth-Century England*,
the novel, even in some of its earliest incarnations, not only reinforces normative discourse but can also approach it sideways, sometimes even critically. These criticisms and slippages can be both deliberate and accidental, both formal and material. In this dissertation, I thus expand the frame to explore questions concerning the nuclear family—which, I argue, can be seen as the ground from which the form of the individual takes shape. My study contributes to existing research by both broadening the field of consideration and maintaining a connection to the novel’s traditional quintessential theme. Although it is true that novels from the mid-eighteenth to mid-nineteenth centuries are protagonist-focused, family often serves as both a starting and ending point: the origin and education of protagonists is always included, and frequently a sign of this much-touted maturity is that the protagonist begins a family of his or her own. In between, individuals in the novel assemble affective substitute families around them, following patterns that resemble lineages but without biological connection. It is the development and working out of these ties and their connection to narrative that I explore in this project.

Examining the family as an entity that appears and bears considerable significance in a great many novels allows me to side-step several questions of categorization (e.g. whether or not a novel qualifies as a Bildungsroman; whether there is

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5 This is not to say, of course, that the scholarship that takes the individual as a focal point cannot be extremely interesting, useful, and creative, or that it is ideologically bound to a conservative mode of thought. My aim here is additive rather than corrective, and builds in large part upon the work of ‘individual-focused’ scholars from Dilthey to Franco Moretti.

6 It is also certainly true that the novel around 1800 frequently tells the story of a protagonist finding a suitable husband or wife—that is, the single affective relationship that is most pivotal for the genre (though it usually occurs at the very end) is marriage. But I have chosen to widen the scope of my study beyond this particular connection not only because of the wealth of existing scholarship on marriage and the novel but also because I think that marriage is best seen as taking place within a network of affective relationships, and that neglecting parent child relationships, sibling relationships, and the surrogate versions of all of these connections gives a one-sided portrait of the kind of mixture of practical and personal concerns that were at stake in marriage as well.
such a thing as a ‘female Bildungsroman’; whether a novel ought to be labeled as serious/great literature or as Trivial- or Unterhaltungsliteratur; whether novels by men and women are most sensitively read in relation to each other or separately\(^7\) and focus on what these literary works have in common, thematically and structurally, as part of a shared cultural scene. This strategy is both more productive in terms of revealing and highlighting particular aspects of the genre and its exemplars and provides a more accurate representation of the literary epoch, as well. That four of the eleven authors whose works I discuss—Goethe, Engel, Mereau, and Wolzogen—were published in Schiller’s *Horen* already suggests that this sharp divide between canonical literature (which, it is implied, it is still worth our while to read) and trivial literature (which is sometimes ‘recuperated’ by various scholars but which is not widely read even among students of literature) is to a large extent the creation not of the eighteenth century but of more recent decades of literary scholarship.\(^8\) Nor is this divide particularly representative of late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth century readership: as I discuss below, these decades also marked an explosion of interest in fictional literary texts, and this interest included both genders and spanned works that are now categorized as having widely varying degrees of literary merit.

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\(^7\) In particular, this approach helps me avoid the tendency of some of the earliest studies recuperating works by women to ‘rank’ these authors according to some perceived standard of progressivity (which, inevitably, has more to do with the twentieth century than the cusp of the nineteenth). Although scholars in the 1980s and 1990s did invaluable work in cataloging novels by women and making them more available, their exclusive treatment of novels by women (sometimes in the name of establishing some sort of ‘female canon’) did not address the problem of the separation of these texts from the ‘canon,’ proper.

\(^8\) Helga Brandes, in an article entitled “Der Frauenroman und die literarisch-publizistische Öffentlichkeit im 18. Jahrhundert,” makes the interesting and relevant point that many of the characteristics for which so-called trivial literature is now derided—e.g. episodic plot structure, response to trends in philosophy or language, variety or randomness—are also characteristics that would have made these novels precisely successful in their publication in periodicals. That is, these authors, male and female, were responding in a savvy manner to their conditions of publication. in: Gallas, Helga, and Heuser, Magdalene (eds): *Untersuchungen zum Roman von Frauen um 1800*, M. Niemeyer, Tübingen, 1990, p. 46f.
I discuss the changes that concepts of the family underwent in this period extensively in the first chapter, but it is worth saying here that I am interested less in a perfect definition or list of qualities that would demarcate the family than I am in investigating what sort of work the idea of ‘family’ can do—what functions it can bear in various social systems, how it can serve as a locating principle for individual and class-based self-understanding. Albrecht Koschorke, in his study *Die Heilige Familie und ihre Folgen*, traces the various ways in which the symbol of the Holy Family captured the ‘collective imagination’ throughout Western History, and explicitly connects this, in the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries, to the establishment of bourgeois culture; his approach is helpful in that it explicitly ties together artistic and cultural production with sociological investigation. This is not to say that there is an imperative to the sociological in literary studies. But the novel is a particularly socially embedded genre (in contrast to, say, lyric poetry as it was conceived around 1800); these kinds of interpretations—which, ideally, take both the sociological background and the literary specificity seriously—are in therefore some way text-immanent.

It seems to me that the family bears particular significance as an entity that fits between the individual and the state (two concepts that are also, of course, highly historically contingent); it is an important categorizing institution that reflects understandings of these other institutions as well. In the seventeenth century the family was seen as a microcosm of the state, with the male head of house representing the wife, children, related and unrelated workers in the public world; Foucault calls it “above all a

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9 Koschorke, *Die Heilige Familie und ihre Folgen: Ein Versuch*, Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag, 3. Auflage, Frankfurt am Main, 2001, p. 150f. Koschorke’s study has both a much wider and much narrower scope than mine—he begins, literally, in Biblical times and carries on through the twentieth century, but focuses his study through the strict lens of the Holy Family.
sort of relational system”: “a bundle of relations of ancestry, descent, collateral relations, cousinhood, primogeniture, and alliances corresponding to schemas for the transmission of kinship and the division and distribution of goods and social status.”¹⁰ As the family changed its function as an economic unit and gained importance as a biological unit (that is, as the narrower ‘nuclear’ family became more important), the family came to be seen as the ‘seed’ from which the state was cultivated—I will discuss this in the second chapter, connecting it to a new interest in the development and education of children. To return to Foucault, this later family is “a sort of restricted, close-knit, substantial, compact, corporeal, and affective family core: the cell family in place of the relational family; the cell family with its corporeal, affective and sexual space entirely saturated by direct parent-child relationships.”¹¹ Foucault, of course, explores how this family unit meshes with a medical discourse as part of the eighteenth century’s power dispositif.

I am interested in investigating how the evacuations and reinvestments of meaning apropos the family intersect with literary discourse, particularly the novel. In doing so, I view literature not as exclusively a type of sociological document, not as mere evidence in what could be called historical forensics. Rather, I want to suggest that literature interacts with history more narrowly conceived in a variety of ways, that their relation is shaped by multiple factors. One of these is, as Adorno reminds us, the fact that artworks, literature included, are created and creative documents with a unique particularity. Writing particularly on modern music, Adorno warns against explaining

¹¹Ibid., p. 249.
artworks “unmittelbar gesellschaftlich.”\textsuperscript{12} Proper criticism, for Adorno, “kann nicht darin bestehen, die einzelne Phänomene als Illustrationen oder Exemplar eines bereits Feststehenden und von der Bewegung des Begriffs selber Dispensierten abzuhandeln [...]”\textsuperscript{13} Rather, one must begin from the dynamic particularities of the work in question and allow societal components to emerge from them: “Gefordert ist vielmehr, die Kraft des allgemeinen Begriffs in die Selbstentfaltung des konkreten Gegenstandes zu transformieren und dessen gesellschaftliches Rätselbild mit den Kräften seiner eigenen Individuation aufzulösen.”\textsuperscript{14} Social and historical factors should not be ignored in the analysis of works of art, but they cannot be the lone and guiding light for that analysis.

By looking at literature in conjunction with biological, pedagogical, and legal discourse, then, I want to claim not that literature is a passive mirror of these more assertive forms of cultural production, but rather that literature, like biology, pedagogy, and the law, was both responding to and participating in cultural shifts that run from the large-scale to the minute, and which have to do both with questions of individuality and self-determination and with those of industrialization, modernization, and capitalism. Causes and effects are difficult to determine, and both analyses that celebrate the triumph of individual identity and those that warn of the complete absorption of that identity in class structures and power mechanisms are too simplistic. My aim is to investigate in detail some of the apparently smaller shifts in both notions of what certain concepts—family, generation, inheritance—meant and what language is used, across disciplinary

\textsuperscript{12} Adorno, Theodor W.: Philosophie der neuen Musik, ed. Rolf Tiedeman, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt am Main, 1975, p. 32. Adorno is, of course, writing about very different kinds of artistic objects than I am—most particularly, as he himself says, the time period about which he is writing concerns the “Niedergang des Bürgertums,” whereas I am concerned with the rise of the bourgeoisie. Nevertheless, I think his methodological point about avoiding the temptation simply to slot artworks into historical theses as examples is relevant here. 
\textsuperscript{13} Ibid., p. 33. 
\textsuperscript{14} Ibid.
boundaries. Despite my interest in scientific and legal texts, however, I maintain throughout that literature possesses some important potential over and against the strictly historical. Literature is more than just a mirror of its own period; it can both push ahead of and lag behind that era’s mores, thus serving as a site of empathetic experimentation with the possibilities of familial and affective attachment, as well as with questions of individual development and transmission between generations. In the remainder of this introduction, I will trace some of the history of the novel and of the reading public in Germany, with particular attention to how certain quintessential traits of the novel also make it an ideal site for the exploration of the nuclear family.

The novel arrived late in Germany. Wieland’s *Geschichte des Agathon*, praised by Friedrich von Blanckenburg as perhaps the only true German novel in his *Versuch über den Roman*, was first published in 1766-67, over a quarter-century after Richardson’s *Pamela* and seventeen years after Fielding’s *Tom Jones*. By contrast, theories of the novel began appearing relatively early: Blanckenburg’s text was written in 1774, the same year as Goethe’s *Die Leiden des jungen Werthers*, and was one of several early texts that investigated both the novel’s unique formal and expressive capacities and its role in society. Blanckenburg writes in his preface: “Ich sehe den Roman, den guten Roman, für das an, was, in den ersten Zeiten Griechenlands, die *Epopee* für die Griechen war; wenigstens glaub’ ichs, daß der gute Roman für uns das werden könne.”

15 “Solcher Romane aber haben wir vielleicht nicht mehr, als zwey oder drey; --vielleicht gar nur einen.” Blanckenburg cites Wieland and Fielding as the impetus for his study (ignoring the fact that *Tom Jones* appeared nearly two decades before *Agathon*), and throughout refers to Fielding, very frequently in conjunction with Wieland, with high praise. Richardson does not come off so well in his estimation, but he in fact mentions *Clarissa* more often than any other work except for his beloved *Agathon*. Blanckenburg, Friedrich von: *Versuch über den Roman*, Faksimiledruck der Originalausgabe von 1774, J.B. Metzlersche Verlagsbuchhandlung, Stuttgart, 1965, p. VII.

ascribing to the modern novel the same cultural significance that the epic had for
Antiquity, Blanckenburg is making a strong statement about its cultural and artistic
value—value that he sees as still largely potential, rather than already established.

This early appearance of theory also suggests a high degree of reflective
consciousness about the status of a literary document and its role in a wider culture.
Blanckenburg and his slightly later colleagues go beyond the simple criticism of the
voracious and unthinking consumption of ever-increasing volumes of text that
characterized the so-called Lesesucht debates,17 and they conceive of the novel explicitly
as a genre that is tied to their own era. The novel, they argue, is a modern form of
expression that is suited to exploring essential topics of modern life—among which the
nuclear family is prominent. Already, writers like Blanckenburg, Bergk, and de Stael
identify features of the novel that are both paradigmatic of the genre and that make it
suitable for investigation of the family: its emphasis on originality of form and plot and
imaginative engagement with that originality; its representation of the probable rather
than fantastic or idealized; its related insistence on treating the domestic lives of fictional
individuals; its relative length that allows it to trace developments in families and
characters over time; and its ability to portray not just outward events but inward

17 Georg Stanitzek’s article “Brutale Lektüre, ‘um 1800’ (heute)” describes these debates as “jener
hysterisch besorgten anthropo- und psychologischen Argumente, die sich im Umkreis der Spätaufklärung
um die Themen des exzessiven, unkontrollierte, gefährlichen Lesens, der ‘Lesesucht’ und ‘Lesewut’
bekümmern […].” in: Vogl, Joseph (ed): Poetologien des Wissens um 1800, Fink Verlag, München, 1999,
p. 250. These types of criticism are entirely simultaneous—that is, Blanckenburg, Bergk, and others are not
later than the Lesesucht critics—but it is worth noting that anxious dismissal of the novel was not the only
form of engagement with it.
thoughts and emotions, which enables it to render the development of a middle-class individual more than a humdrum recitation of daily tasks.\textsuperscript{18}

One of the primary characteristics of the novel is that it should be, as the English name suggests, \textit{new}: each one is different from the last (at least theoretically), and they are supposed to be entertaining and original.\textsuperscript{19} Thus it is an ideal venue for the recording and investigation of changing social concepts in general, and the family in particular. Ideally, the novel can reflect the spectrum of human life in its infinite variety, as Johann Adam Bergk explains in his 1799 text \textit{Die Kunst, Bücher zu lesen}:

Durch anziehende Handlungen und anschauliche Beispiele lernen uns Romane das menschliche Leben kennen. Sie kündigen ein Spiel an, und nuzen mehr als die ernsthafteste Beschäftigung. Auf eine angenehme Weise lehren sie uns das, was wir in den Wissenschaften mit saurer Mühe und Arbeit erkämpfen müssen. Mitten unter den reizendsten Vergnügungen, die sie uns im Überflusse verschaffen, geben sie uns Aufschluß über die verborgenen und verwirklichten Erscheinungen im menschlichen Gemüthe, und entdecken uns die flüchtigen und sonderbarsten Züge im menschlichen Charakter.\textsuperscript{20}

Bergk makes a case for the novel’s exemplary fulfillment of the Horatian commandment to instruct and delight by virtue of its multitude of topics, emphasizing the extent to which novels are able to unite the instructive and the entertaining, which, he says, makes them even more useful than occupations and tasks that are ostensibly more ‘serious.’

Blanckenburg makes similar arguments in the \textit{Versuch über den Roman}, as does Madame de Stael in a piece that Goethe translated for Schiller’s literary journal \textit{Die Horen} in

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{18} It is also worth mentioning that these same traits continue to garner interest in modern scholarship on the novel as well; I have limited myself to footnoting some of the classic and contemporary research as it relates to the early novel theory I discuss in the body.
\item \textsuperscript{19} There are some difficulties of vocabulary pertaining to generic and temporal distinctions here—in English, the earlier ‘novels’ are often called romances, but this distinction does not exist in German or French. When referring to English historians of the novel, I follow their usage, but have otherwise generally used the word novel with various qualifiers to refer to earlier texts. I will also occasionally mention the ‘modern novel’ with reference to the genre from around 1800 onwards.
\item \textsuperscript{20} Bergk, Johann Adam: \textit{Die Kunst, Bücher zu lesen}, Jena 1799 (Unveränderter Nachdruck 1969), p. 209.
\end{itemize}
1796. The novel instructs and delights by presenting a variety of characters and scenarios to its readers; at the same time, its formal qualities can educate readers’ good taste, as well.

Connected to this notion that the dual goals of entertainment and instruction are answered to by a combination of individuality and newness is, of course, the shift towards emphasizing the private life of fictional individuals, of which there are potentially an infinite number with an infinite variety of traits and life stories. Furthermore, the primary location of those individuals and their connections to others around them is, precisely, the family—the family is in some sense the private/domestic institution par excellence. Madame de Stael (quoted here in Goethe’s translation) is quite firm that novels should not rely on thinly disguised historical anecdotes for their interest:

Diese Gattung [d.i. .Romane, auf die Geschichte gepropft—SVE] zerstöhrt die Moralität der Geschichte, indem sie die Handlungen mit einer Menge Beweggründe, die niemals existirt haben, überladen muß, und reicht nicht an den Werth des Romans, weil sie, genöthigt sich an ein wahres Gewebe zu halten, den Plan nicht mit Freyheit und mit der Folge ausbilden kann, wie es bey einem Werk von reiner Empfindung nöthig ist.

Unlike the courtly and gallant romances, the novel should not take history (which these other prose forms then embellish beyond all rationality) as its material, but should rather create a natural portrait of a fictional life—in Blanckenburg’s words, the novelist “zeigt uns in seinem Werke wenigstens die möglichen Menschen der wirklichen Welt.” De Stael puts it quite elegantly when she writes that “eine Dichtung, die Erinnerungen statt

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21 This impressive conjunction of figures is traced in Ueding, Gert: “Roman” in Ueding (ed): Hansers Sozialgeschichte der deutschen Literatur – Band 4: Klassik und Romantik, p. 361.
Entwickelungen zu Hülfe nimmt, niemals in sich selbst vollkommen sey." It is precisely the novel’s turn to the private individual that allows it to be eternally new, to treat the endless variations that appear as possibilities of actual human life, even when the humans it discusses are decidedly ordinary and furthermore fictional.

Madame de Stael is not alone in her emphasis on the internal coherence (“Entwickelungen”) that distinguishes good novels from bad ones. Blanckenburg, too, insists that the novel is not meant to be strictly mimetic in recording history, but should rather hang together internally, which in fact involves a difference between the ‘small world’ of the novel and the ‘big world’ in which we live: we must see more of the novel than we are able to of the real world, we must be able to see and evaluate both cause and effect, to understand “warum die Sachen vielmehr so, als anders erfolgen[.]” For Blanckenburg, the novel must be formed out of chains of cause and effect that lead plausibly into one another; otherwise, he says, how can an author justify including one event rather than another? Imaginative emplotment, then, is precisely not what makes the novel false, but rather what makes it in some sense true. This type of fictionality that

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27 Ibid., p. 316.
28 This question of the probable or Wahrscheinlichkeit has played a major role in more recent novel theory, as well. Rüdiger Campe has traced the simultaneous development of the notion of probability in literature and statistics, Elena Esposito has discussed the ‘doublings of reality’ that are part and parcel of modern concepts of fiction “im Zusammenhang mit strukturellen Veränderungen auf der Ebene der Kommunikations- und Interaktionsbedingungen,” and Catherine Gallagher and Michael McKeon, in their respective studies, investigate the conditions of fictionality and the epistemological shifts that had to take place historically in order for the novel’s brand of verisimilitude to take root. See: Campe, Rüdiger: Spiel der Wahrscheinlichkeit: Literatur und Berechnung zwischen Pascal und Kleist, Wallstein, Göttingen, 2002; Esposito, Elena: Die Fiktion der wahrscheinlichen Realität, Suhrkamp Verlag, Frankfurt am Main, 2007, (citation p. 8); Gallagher, Catherine: “The Rise of Fictionality,” in: Moretti, Franco (ed): The Novel, Volume I: History, Geography, and Culture. Princeton University Press, Princeton, 2006. and McKeon,
remains firmly within the realm of the everyday makes the novel an ideal place to work out the different possibilities that attach to family and to the connections between family members.

One of the reasons that the novel is particularly suited to this kind of portrayal is, quite simply, its length—the novel has space to treat the events of a protagonist’s life over time, to show his (or her) development from immaturity to adulthood, from a child very much under the influence and control of his parents to becoming a biological or surrogate parent himself. The novel traces the progress of a character from this restlessness through to a more settled position (though this resolution is often tenuous); it can extend stories through multiple generations of families. This portrayal of extended time distinguishes the novel in particular from the other literary genre that was frequently seen as a vehicle of morality and taste at the turn of the nineteenth century, the *bürgerliches Trauerspiel*. De Stael grants that the theater also belongs to the category of art forms that portray private life and natural circumstances, but qualifies this by adding that “die theatralischen Bedürfnisse hindern solche Entwickelungen, durch welche man das Beispiel auf sich beziehen kann, […] man kann nur starke Verhältnisse mahlen, weil man nicht die Zeit hat die Schattierungen abzustuffen.”

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29 Franco Moretti’s seminal work on the *Bildungsroman*, *The Way of the World*, points to the youth of the protagonist in the novel (as opposed to the mature hero of the epic) as the prime reason to call the genre—following the philosophy of Ernst Cassirer—the “symbolic form of modernity;” explaining this term, Moretti appends his own brackets to Cassirer’s definition: “through such a form ‘a particular spiritual content [here, a specific image of modernity] is connected to a specific material sign [here, youth] and immediately identified with it.’ ‘A specific image of modernity’: the image conveyed precisely by the ‘youthful’ attributes of mobility and inner restlessness.” Moretti, Franco: *The Way of the World: The Bildungsroman in European Culture*, Verso, London, 1987, p. 5.

portrays families, it places them immediately in states of extreme conflict or crisis.

According to de Stael, “nur der neue Roman ist im Stande, auf unsere Bildung durch das Gemälde unserer gewohnten Empfindungen nützlich zu wirken.” De Stael’s remarks speak to the connection of this expansive time character with the development of an individual within a family situation over many years, a concept that points to the inner subjectivity and complexity of these individuals and their relationships to others around them: they are not simply assailed by events that they observe passively, but rather are struggling to make sense of a world that invariably also changes them outwardly and, perhaps even more, inwardly.

This inwardness is the final characteristic of the novel to which I wish to draw attention here. Blanckenburg differentiates the novel from the epic along precisely these lines: in the epic, the deeds of the hero as a political actor and performer of public exploits (most frequently as a soldier) take precedence, but this is not the case for the novel, which concerns itself “mit den Handlungen und Empfindungen des Menschen.”

He draws out this comparison rather drolly (but quite aptly) by adding that “[b]ey einer gewonnenen Schlacht ists nicht das Innre des Feldherrn, um das wir uns bekümmern; die Sache selbst hat ihren Reiz für uns; aber bey den Begebenheiten unserer Mitmenschen, ist es der Zustand ihrer Empfindung, der uns, bey Erzählung ihrer Vorfälle, mehr oder weniger Theil daran nehmen läßt.” He is also quite explicit in stating that it is the

31 Ibid., p. 39. More recently, Dirk Göttsche’s study Zeit im Roman asserts that the late eighteenth century saw a fundamental shift in conceptions of time (here he follows Koselleck’s notion of a “Verzeitlichung” of thought) and that the novel, as a genre that was particularly strongly connected to history (as the presence of the word “Geschichte” in many titles of the era suggests), was instrumental in this process. Göttsche, Dirk: Zeit im Roman: literarische Zeitreflexion und die Geschichte des Zeitromans im späten 18. und im 19. Jahrhundert, Fink Verlag, München, 2001.
33 Ibid., p. 18.
development of these emotions and thoughts over time that is particularly important for
the novel: “Der bessere Romanendichter hat andre und muß andre Absichten mit seinen
Personen haben, als die bloße Bestimmung ihres äußern Geschicks. Die Ausbildung, oder
vielmehr die Geschichte ihrer Denkungs- und Empfindungskräfte ist sein Zweck.” This
interiority is important in the portrayal of the family: what seems on the outside to be a
perfectly-assembled unit is actual rife with inner conflict and complication; furthermore,
the developments of the various plots would likely be incomprehensible without
documentation of the protagonists’ inner feelings—confusion, growing attachment,
independence, perhaps disappointment and betrayal, etc.

As Blanckenburg’s insistence that Agathon was the only German novel suggests,
not only did the novel develop in England and France before arriving in Germany but
French and English novels were also enormously influential on both the efforts of authors
and the expectations of readers in Germany. The Abbé Prevost’s L’Histoire du chevalier
des Grieux et de Manon Lescaut (1731) is one of the first works in which the characters
are explicitly presented as struggling not with the external blows dealt to them by fate but
with the weaknesses in their own natures. The work begins with a preface in which the
reader is warned to take the following story as a lesson on the dangers of the passions, but
as with many cautionary tales, this message is somewhat submerged by the love story,
which is far more interesting and dramatic than the didactic frame. Marivaux’s La vie de

34 Ibid., p. 395, my emphasis. In modern literary scholarship, Dorrit Cohn’s Transparent Minds emphasizes
the uniqueness of the novel’s ability to portray this history of thoughts and emotions. Although Cohn is
focused mostly on the modernist novel and although she shares twentieth-century novel theory’s rather
distracting obsession with free indirect speech, she does outline some early strategies that novelists around
the turn of the nineteenth century invented in hopes of coming to terms with this strange capacity of the
novel (e.g. Fielding’s refusal to report on Sophia’s or Tom’s thoughts, or the justification of their inclusion
via epistolary narrative form), and her attention to the different manifestations of that capacity highlight the
extent to which the novel is genuinely exceptional in this regard. Cohn, Dorrit: Transparent Minds:
Marianne (published between 1731 and 1745, but never finished) resembles the picaresque novel in that the heroine is an orphan who does not know who her parents are, but who by virtue of her goodness, beauty, charm, and grace gains the affection of people at court and is universally accepted as noble. The notion that a titleless protagonist could advance and be selected as a potential marriage partner by a member of the nobility is a marked change from earlier gallant romances. Although these French authors were read in Germany, German readers and critics praised them less frequently than their English counterparts—possibly because of their freer attitude towards love and sexuality before marriage and certainly also (and increasingly) because of political attitudes towards France at the time. Ian Watt, in his classic study on the English novel, suggests that this may have had to do with writing styles as well—he asserts that the French tradition is not quite in synch with “the main tradition of the novel,” and his reason for this is that despite “its psychological penetration and literary skill, we feel it is too stylish to be authentic.”

Although this answer is perhaps somewhat simplistic when taken as a universal judgment, it makes a great deal of sense when applied to a German Bürgertum that was eager to distinguish itself from the aristocracy precisely by opposing its ostensible authenticity to the court’s polished artifice.

This new theme of love despite class difference—which, again, enables an entirely different plot structure and potential for character development from that in earlier texts—is also the decisive element of Samuel Richardson’s 1740 novel Pamela, or Virtue Rewarded. Richardson combines bourgeois morality with a sentimental love story in an epistolary form that captured readers’ imaginations in an unprecedented way, as did

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the tragic *Clarissa, or the History of a Young Lady* (1748). Richardson’s novels are also particularly significant—both for my project and for the history of the novel as a whole—because they are so exclusively focused on domestic life. Although the class difference between Pamela and Mr. B is a wider social difficulty, the only representative of this position within the framework of the novel is Mr. B’s sister. Clarissa is imprisoned by her own family when she refuses to marry the man they have chosen for her; it is this treatment at the hands of her blood relations that pushes her to run away with Lovelace. In addition to being easily four times as long and correspondingly more complex than *Pamela*, *Clarissa* has a more complicated didactic point and is connected to contemporaneous discussions of love and marriage. Clarissa insists upon making her own choice of partner, but this choice does not go as planned; it does not lead to a happy marriage, or indeed to any marriage at all. But her parents’ strategy of imprisoning her is what drives her to this step in the first place. Richardson does include a preface in which he suggests that lessons should be taken by both parents and children, but the book is made compelling not by its didactic point but by its minute exploration of the psychological life of his characters. The only novel to equal his in psychological inwardness, emotional intensity, and sentimentality (also in epistolary form, not coincidentally) was Rousseau’s 1761 *Julie, ou la nouvelle Héloïse*, which was translated into German the same year and was not only intensely popular with female readers (as was Richardson) but also garnered commentary from such notable intellects as Moses Mendelssohn and Hamann.36

36 This discussion is mentioned in Werber, Niels: *Liebe als Roman : zur Koevolution intimer und literarischer Kommunikation*, Fink Verlag, München, 2003, p. 104.
Whereas Richardson used the epistolary form to express new levels of inwardness and sentimentality, Henry Fielding, in *The History of Tom Jones, A Foundling* (1749), established the presence of a strong narrative voice that both reports and editorializes on the events of the novel. Within the framework of *Tom Jones*, Fielding includes a significant amount of novel theory that attempts to establish the novel as a serious intellectual genre. His novel also carefully eschews any element of the fantastical (including refusing at several points to recount what characters are thinking because a narrator could not know the inside of a character’s head), and he portrays his characters as very much in control of their own fates, if sometimes at the mercy of their own impulsive temperaments. A decade later, Laurence Sterne’s *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman* takes the notion of a critical narrator who continually comments on the events of the story to an extreme, creating a narrative that, in Tristram’s own words, “is digressive, and it is progressive, too—and at the same time.” Sterne—who was also much admired by German authors from Goethe to E.T.A. Hoffmann—turns Fielding’s tendency towards novel theory within the novel into the stuff of the novel itself and takes the notion of ‘realism’ and faithful reporting of thought and action to such extremes that they become absurd.

Despite their enormous differences in tone and form, Fielding, Richardson, and even Sterne share a commitment to portraying the private lives of ordinary fictional people, from more or less the middle of society, who attempt to make their way in an ordinary world. The history of the German novel is inextricable from the history of the

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38 For the novel as a bourgeois genre it is Richardson who initiates a conclusive turn: [Richardson] verbürgerlicht den galanten Liebesroman zur ‚empfandsamen’ Tugend und erzählt mit einer
French and particularly the English novel; the notion of the novel that developed in England in the early eighteenth century was enormously influential and was recognized contemporaneously as such.\textsuperscript{39} It was not until the second half of the eighteenth century that German authors began attempting to write novels that were entertaining as well as didactic; that featured neither kings or princes nor fools or outcasts as heroes but that treated people in the middle of society; that were centered not upon the series of events that fate inflicted upon the protagonists but on that protagonist’s inner thoughts and his or her development.

But, as Erich Schön points out at the beginning of Der Verlust der Sinnlichkeit oder Die Verwandlung des Lesers, books without readers are “bloß bedrucktes Papier.”\textsuperscript{40} Changes in the German book market and in the practices of reading combined—and reinforced each other—to create a new reading public and a new literary market to provide that public with new reading material. Exact figures are difficult to come by, especially as different scholars use widely varying criteria, but it is nevertheless true that both the number of readers and the number of books increased drastically beginning in the eighteenth century. Wolfgang von Ungern-Sternberg’s article “Schriftsteller und literarischer Markt” in the Hansers Sozialgeschichte estimates that at the turn of the eighteenth century, about 60,000 people in Germany could read; by the turn of the

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\footnotesize{39 It is perhaps worth noting Blanckenburg’s Versuch does not mention Prévost and Marivaux at all, and Rousseau only twice.}
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nineteenth, he says, Jean Paul’s estimate of 300,000 is almost certainly low.\textsuperscript{41} Roger Chartier suggests that increasing literacy in at least some portions of Germany was a direct result of Pietism’s view of the Bible as a book that all laypeople should read and which therefore needed to be produced and distributed in large quantity and at low prices.\textsuperscript{42}

Publication was increasing correspondingly, and there were significant shifts in the type of material appearing, as well: catalogs from the Frankfurt and Leipzig book fairs show that works in the category “Schöne Künste und Wissenschaften” began to make up more and more of the publications, whereas theological publications began to make up less. More journals and magazines were published, as well: from 1766 to 1790 there were 2191 new journals, of which 742 were for entertainment and 224 were literary journals.\textsuperscript{43} Schön cites Marion Beaujean’s statistics showing the number of novels published in a decade increasing from 73 between 1750 and 1760 all the way to 1,623 between 1791 and 1800.\textsuperscript{44} Despite the vagaries of historical data-collection, it is clear first, that in the later part of the eighteenth century there was a steep increase in the


literacy rate in Germany, second, that the number of books published increased, too, and
lastly, that ever more of those books were novels.

These drastic increases point to changes in practices of reading as well. Rolf
Engelsing’s study Der Bürger als Leser uses an impressive collection of individual
examples and more general observations to trace a “Lesergeschichte in Deutschland
1500-1800,” as his subtitle would have it, that documents an important shift in the late
eighteenth century, when reading ceased to be a repetitive activity that was limited to a
very few books picked by the authority of the church and patriarchy and became, instead,
an expression of individuality and of an individual’s particular taste.45 Readers prior to
1750 did not seek anything new or entertaining in their reading, and therefore reading
different books was utterly unnecessary.46 This changed in the decades around 1800,
however: the ‘intensive’ and habitual reading of relatively few texts gave way to
‘extensive’ reading of a variety of texts.47 Engelsing is perhaps too unquestioning in his
acceptance of the notion of ‘individuality,’ but the point that readers now cultivated a
particular taste and chose quantities of reading material accordingly nevertheless stands.

Erich Schön takes issue with Engelsing’s particular terminology, preferring to
describe the reading practices of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries as
“Wiederholungslektüre,” in which the repetitive reading is an act of religious observance

45 Engelsing, Rolf: Der Bürger als Leser: Lesergeschichte in Deutschland 1500-1800, Metzler Verlag,
Stuttgart, 1974, p. 182.
46 Ibid., p. 183. These arguments are confirmed by later studies by Lennerd Davis and Niels Werber.
47 “Die Intensität des Lesens, die dem zähen Festhalten an Gewohnheiten, Kleidersitten, einmal
angeschaffenen soliden Besitz usw. entsprach, das den Bürger bis zum Aufkommen der Moden, des
‘Zeitgeistes’ und der Zeitbedürfnisse am Ende des 18. Jahrhunderts selbstverständlich dünk, wich nun der
extensiven Lektüre der bildenden und belletristischen Aufklärungsliteratur. Das Buch wurde zu einer
rather than a specifically literary act.\textsuperscript{48} This type of reading is also ‘exemplary,’ in that it is regulated by an interest in the particular content, which is seen as transferable, the lesson or moral as applicable to the life of the reader.\textsuperscript{49} This is in contrast to the reading practices adopted at the end of the eighteenth century. As reading out loud started to disappear as a practice (and became, where it did still happen, less a display of authority than an enjoyable collective entertainment), the emphasis fell on critical mastery of a text, a mode that Schön calls empathetic reading.\textsuperscript{50} Overall, then, the changes in reading practice interlock with the changes in the publication, and these shifts all point towards the novel as the genre that was most capable of entertaining readers while (at least potentially) engaging their critical faculties at the same time.

As the terms “around 1800” and the “long eighteenth [or nineteenth] century” suggest, the selection of starting and ending dates inevitably presents a problem for scholars attempting to investigate either large-scale or more minute shifts in modes of thought and forms of literary creation. The rise of the bourgeoisie has been pinpointed anywhere from the early seventeenth century (especially in England) to the end of the eighteenth—likewise the rise of the novel. In the first chapter, where I am looking for evidence of changes and shifts in conceptions in the family, I investigate three of the earliest German novels: Goethe’s \textit{Die Leiden des jungen Werthers} (1774), Sophie von La Roche’s \textit{Die Geschichte des Fräuleins von Sternheim} (1771), and Christian Fürchtegott


\textsuperscript{49} Ibid., p. 41.

\textsuperscript{50} “An die Stelle der die Affekte erregenden Überwältigung durch die Texte ist die Fähigkeit getreten, literarisch vermittelte affektive Zustände empathisch zu übernehmen, sie als vorübergehend eigene aber auch dergestalt zu beherrschen, daß sie auf den geschlossenen Gültigkeitsbereich literarischer Erfahrung beschränkt und jederzeit wieder abgelegt werden können. Damit ist zugleich – aber nicht identisch mit dem generellen Verlust bestimmter Formen Sinnlicher Erfahrungen im Ende des lautenden Lesens – an die Stelle einer (unspezifischen) affektiven eine spezifische ästhetische Erfahrung getreten.” Ibid., p. 121-2.
Gellert’s *Das Leben der schwedischen Gräfin von G* (1748/49). In each of these three texts we can see hallmarks of clashing systems of family and social class, and in Gellert’s, in particular, we see a hybrid of bourgeois morality and Baroque form.

But because I am arguing for the importance of the self-awareness of the German *Bürgertum* (which did arise somewhat later than similar English or French classes), in the second and third chapters I have chosen to focus exclusively on novels that were published after 1795—by which point the French Revolution had conclusively shattered notions that society would continue to function in the old way, and the ensuing Terror had, in turn, shattered the ideal of the dawn of a completely new and egalitarian order. By the end of 1793, these conflicts had established themselves on German soil, with the founding and quick disbanding of the Republic of Mainz. By the early 1790s, the novel had begun to establish itself as a genre that could be of interest in both high and popular culture, and 1795 was also the year in which Goethe published Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre, the novel that has been called the *Bildungsroman* par excellence, the only true *Bildungsroman*, and an anti-*Bildungsroman*. As an ending point, I have chosen the year of publication of Goethe’s final novel, *Wilhelm Meisters Wanderjahre*—1829, by which point Romanticism as a literary movement had come and gone and the first traces of Realism were beginning to appear. Goethe is not a framing figure of this project in any strong sense, but these two dates nevertheless seem to me to encompass a reasonable period for the investigation of the nuclear family in the novel.

Even within this time period, of course, the choice of novels remains vast. My aim has been to select works by authors who represent the multi-faceted nature of the literary scene and flexible notions of authorship in Germany around 1800. Though all of
them but one (Clemens Brentano, whose fervent practice of Catholicism in fact set in after the bulk of his literary production) are from Protestant backgrounds, they otherwise are comprised of both (now) canonical and trivial writers, representatives of Enlightenment philosophies, Weimar Classicism, and Romanticism, both men and women. They published both in journals and independently; they were not only authors but also translators and editors. The first, aside from Goethe, is Johann Jakob Engel, whose *Lorenz Stark: Ein Charaktergemälde* was published in 1795 and 1796 in Schiller’s journal *Die Horen*. Engel was an Enlightenment philosopher and pedagogue who was a tutor of both Alexander and Wilhelm von Humboldt.\(^{51}\)

Therese Forster Huber’s novel *Die Familie Seldorf* was also published in those two years. Huber published almost her entire literary output under her husband’s name, although later in life she served as the editor of the Cotta Verlag’s *Morgenblatt für gebildete Stände* under her own name. Huber’s letters bear witness to the extent to which, like many women authors of the day, she had a somewhat tortured relationship to her own literary production—she continually disavows her own level of education and intellectual ability, insists that she is prouder of her skill at knitting stockings than at conversation, and defends her literary activities by asserting that they never took time away from her family; when she finally becomes more open about her literary occupations, she still explains “da ich keine Töchter mehr zu erziehen habe, Tue ich ihnen keinen Schaden durch mein literarisches Pfuschen” and goes on to insist that “[ich] hätte es freilich lieber anders. Mir ist eigentlich nur wohl beim Strückzeug; aber wenn ichs

nichts wie dieses zum Beruf hätte, würde es mir doch zu leer sein.”\(^{52}\) Perhaps to avoid these sorts of inconsistencies between professed values and actual literary activities, Wilhelmine Caroline Wobeser published *Elisa, oder das Weib wie es seyn sollte* (1795) anonymously. The novel was immensely popular and had reached its fifth printing by 1800, inspiring multiple imitators as well. Despite this, Wobeser refused to allow her name to be published in successive editions, and Carl Wilhelm Otto August von Schindel quite likely expressed a view not far from Wobeser’s own when he wrote in 1825 in his *Die deutschen Schriftstellerinnen des neunzehnten Jahrhunderts* that “Ihr Verdienst als Schriftstellerin wurde von dem weit übertroffen, welches sie in der kurzen Zeit ihres Lebens als Gattin und Mutter besaß.”\(^{53}\) At least publicly, these women refused—as did other women authors from Sophie von LaRoche to Caroline von Wolzogen—to suggest that they derived a sense of professional identity from their writing. But it does not follow from this that their writings were either uniform or unimaginative, or, least of all, unread.

Also in 1796, Johann Gottwerth Müller published a German translation of a Dutch novel by Elisabeth Bekker and Agatha Deken, called, in the German, *Sara Reinert: Eine Geschichte in Briefen dem schönen Geschlechte gewidmet*. It is interesting to begin with that a male author in Germany would edit and translate a foreign novel by two women, but perhaps even more striking to modern readers is the fact that Bekker and Deken’s names are mentioned nowhere in Müller’s translation. He refers to them, in notes at the beginning and end of the novel, as two Dutch women, but he never names them. The title page says that the book is “vom Verfasser des Siegfried von


Lindenberg”—that is, Müller, whose Siegfried is a courtly satire that appeared in 1779. Despite the fact that Müller does label himself the translator, this strategy is indistinguishable from the editor and translator fictions that were so common in the period, and it would in fact have been extremely difficult for readers to tell that Müller was not the author. This is not to accuse Müller of dishonesty or plagiarism, but rather to point out that authorship was a flexible concept in the late eighteenth century: the fetishism of Great Names was much less than we usually impose on this period looking back at it, and the circulation of texts under different names was common.

This is not to say, of course, that certain names did not attract a degree of attention and speculation, as was the case of a novel published anonymously in 1796 and 1797 in Schiller’s Horen that was believed by many (including Friedrich Schlegel) to have been written by Goethe himself: Agnes von Lilien, which was actually written by Schiller’s sister-in-law Caroline von Wolzogen.\footnote{The history of the novel’s publication and its reception, including citations from letters from Schlegel, Schiller, and Goethe, are usefully documented in Janet Besserer Holmgren’s study The Women Writers in Schiller’s Horen: Patrons, Petticoats, and the Promotion of Weimar Classicism, University of Delaware Press, Newark, 2007, pp. 80-84.} Wolzogen’s novel was so successful that it single-handedly delayed the bankruptcy of Schiller’s journal for several months, and both Schiller and Goethe spoke highly of Wolzogen’s literary talent. But Wolzogen’s popularity, and indeed Goethe’s, pale in comparison to that of August Lafontaine, who, though he is now nearly forgotten, was “[b]is in die vierziger Jahre des 19. Jahrhunderts hinein […] unangefochten der Lieblingsdichter der Nation.”\footnote{Sangmeister, Dirk: “Der Lieblingsdichter der Nation,” in Die Zeit, 29 July 1999; accessed online at http://www.zeit.de/1999/31/Der_Lieblingsdichter_der_Nation/komplettansicht on 30 January 2012.} Lafontaine published well over one hundred novels and counted Schiller, Jean Paul, Novalis, and Jakob Grimm among his admirers; he was also, with the help of his publisher, Johann Daniel Sander, a...
master of early literary marketing.\textsuperscript{56} In his 1800 \textit{Karl Engelmanns Tagebuch}, Lafontaine combines the by-then-familiar first-person diary form with a series of cleverly self-reflexive remarks about the diary within the novel, creating a work that both conforms to and comments upon popular literary convention of the time.

This self-reflexivity, which has been called a hallmark of the Romantic movement, is also on display in Clemens Brentano’s \textit{Godwi, oder das steinerne Bild der Mutter}, published in 1800 and 1801. Brentano plays elaborately with editor fictions and the conventions of the epistolary novel—at one point, his main character turns to the narrator and informs him that they are passing the pond into which the character fell on a certain page of the first volume. Although it is very much a Romantic novel, especially with regard to its treatments of aesthetics, it does share attitudes towards family constellation and the circulation of text with these other works. Brentano’s wife, Sophie Mereau (Brentano), also published a novel that melds Romantic attitudes towards love and the aestheticization of life and nature with more traditional eighteenth-century forms—\textit{Amanda und Eduard}, published in 1803, is an epistolary novel that uses multiple sets of correspondents to create a richly textured novelistic world.

Karoline Auguste Fischer’s ironically titled \textit{Die Honigmonathe} (1802) carries the epistolary form to extremes, with letters that are so short that they verge on dramatic dialogue. Fischer’s novel is surprisingly feminist even by contemporary standards, turning the ‘fairytale’ of the naturally sweet girl who is rewarded by a perfect marriage upon its head. An anonymously published text now believed to have been written by Frederike Helene Unger, \textit{Bekenntnisse einer Giftmischerin, von ihr selbst geschrieben} (1803), is likewise satirically critical of early nineteenth-century bourgeois society. Unger

\textsuperscript{56} \textit{Ibid.}
takes as a reference for her title a real poisoning case, but then uses her novel to sketch an utterly irredeemable main character, who vehemently denies the possibility of free will and claims that the crimes she commits are a direct result of a poor upbringing. In a second “confessions” text (1806) that takes the title of the sixth book of Goethe’s *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* and adds the simultaneously conventional and audacious “von ihr selbst geschrieben,” Unger (again, publishing anonymously; the work was only later attributed to her) presents a protagonist who makes a strong case for her happiness and self-sufficiency as a single woman without children.

The latest novel I treat is *Wilhelm Meisters Wanderjahre*, which makes a fitting end point not only because it was Goethe’s final novel, but also because it plays interestingly with generic conventions, disturbing the resolution at the end of the *Lehrjahre* and interrupting its own narrative with a series of novellas that range from the satirical to the fantastic. Goethe’s last long prose work can thus be seen either as signaling the breakdown of the coherence of the genre, or as a first experiment with some of the complex and disrupted forms that appear through the nineteenth and into the twentieth century.

In the first chapter, I analyze certain pivotal scenes in three early German novels to illustrate ways in which conceptions of the family were changing—uncertainly and unevenly across classes—and ways in which those changes coincided with the emergence in Germany of the novel in its modern sense. In the second chapter, I turn to an investigation of the concept of generation, in its biological and social senses, across scientific, pedagogical, and literary texts. I explore the thematic and formal features of the novel that are woven together to create a more dynamic and open model of generation
and development than in previous literary forms, arguing that these discourses can be seen as related facets of an overall paradigm shift in the way people thought about development and individuality. In the third chapter, I take up the question of what I call ‘testation,’ in the dual sense of transmission and bearing witness, and use this notion to analyze legal discourse (in the *Preussisches Allgemeines Landrecht*) and the novel. In a sense, testation is the natural pendant of generation—whereas generation is involved in questions of origin and initial cultivation, testation describes the continuation of the family, reaching out to subsequent generations and investigating what can be seen as inherited. I claim that property and money are not the only things that can be passed down from generation to generation; rather, knowledge—particularly personal knowledge as related by experience—and also text (in the form both of individual stories and circulate documents) serve as important links of transmission between both biological and affective kin. I close by expanding this notion of the transmission of text from the simple relation of characters within the novel to the transmission of text from authors to readers, and from previous historical eras to our own. In a brief coda, I touch upon the ways in which these notions of the assembly of families via affective kinship are called into question almost as soon as they appear; the novel is not necessarily an optimistic and triumphant document of the establishment of emotional bonds—it is also a record of their fragility and the impossibility of their stability. Hence the phenomena of family, identity, generation, and testament are in shifting play with one another in historical time, as is the novel itself.
Chapter 1: The Family and The Novel around 1800

In this chapter, I use analysis of literary texts to illustrate that there were changes in conceptions of the family in Germany at the turn of the nineteenth century, particularly in the bourgeoisie, and that the German Bildungsbürgertum was involved in a complicated process of self-staging for which the nuclear family was an ideal site onto which they could project their values pertaining to familial affection, individualism, and culture. Taking up a term that has by now become something of a fixture in cultural and literary studies, I see the family as occupying an important position in the ‘cultural imaginary’ of the bourgeoisie around 1800—what Graham Dawson usefully describes as “those vast networks of interlinking discursive themes, images, motifs and narrative forms that are publicly available within a culture at any one time, and articulate its psychic and social dimensions.” This last aspect is particularly important: cultural imaginaries do not simply mirror some simple notion of ‘what really was,’ nor are they completely based on fiction or fantasy or individual perception. In what follows—and throughout the dissertation—I seek to show that notions of what family means and how it functions were a topic for intense exploration at the turn of the nineteenth century and that, furthermore, the novel was a particularly important site of those explorations. I want to argue for a cycle of influence and reaction between the novel and the nuclear family—one can, I think, apply Dawson’s elaboration to say that novels, as part of a system of cultural imaginaries, “furnish public forms which both organize knowledge of the social

57 Dawson, Graham: Soldier Heroes. British Adventure, Empire and the Imagining of Masculinities, Routledge, London, New York, 1994, p. 48. Although Dawson’s object of study is, of course, very different from mine, the elements he combines in it—a sense of affective bonds that have a relation to gender roles and play out in a particular milieu—run in some ways parallel to my own, and his commitment to the ways in which these ‘forms’ relate both to fantasies and to social systems of order strikes me as useful and important.
world and give shape to fantasies within the apparently ‘internal’ domain of psychic life.”

The literary scenes that I will analyze show distinct clashes between two models of kinship and domesticity, illustrating that the notions of domesticity and kinship that I have identified as belonging to bourgeois consciousness in particular were in some ways decisively new.

Examining the linguistic record also indicates a change in this period: the word “family” did not exist in German prior to the eighteenth century; instead, what we now call the family was part of the household, “das Haus,” that comprised not only a mother, father, and children, but also other related and non-related individuals who worked and ate in the house. As Michael Mitterauer explains: “Die biologische ‘Familie als Fortpflanzungsgemeinschaft’ wird begrifflich gar nicht gesondert erfasst,” and is therefore not viewed as a separate entity in the general understanding. This shift from the notion and use of “das ganze Haus” towards that of “Familie” is also highlighted in Dieter Schwab’s article on the word “Familie” in Koselleck’s *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe*. Schwab describes the concept of family—or again, more properly, the “Haus”—in the early modern period as strongly influenced by an Aristotelian notion of *oeconomica*. This linguistic conception emphasizes the extent to which the household was a mode of classification and a space for the enforcement of systems of order rather than a sanctuary. The ‘Haus’ was thus in some sense analogous to the state. Furthermore, it was dedicated primarily to economic production, not biological reproduction.


60 *Das Haus bildet einen sozialen Körper der Schöpfungsordnung, in dem der einzelne je nach seinen familiären Rolle als Hausvater, -mutter, Kind, Knecht, oder Magd den Platz seines alltäglichen Lebens, den Raum für seine persönliche Entfaltung und für seine Pflichten, die Befriedigung seiner Bedürfnisse findet.*
goes on to explain that the evolution of the concept of the family saw the disappearance of these economically productive components, a process that turned the family into a unit of consumption but also initiated the personalization of relationships within the family unit and made the family the site of the training and formation of character. All of this points to the fact that the family, particularly in the bourgeoisie, was marked in the late eighteenth century by a sort of functional vacuum. It needed a new story to tell about itself and its role in society, and that story, I claim, is worked out and developed in the nascent genre of the novel. I will illustrate the setting out of these questions by taking as case studies three of the earliest and most well known German novels—in, as it happens, reverse chronological order: Goethe’s *Die Leiden des jungen Werthers*, La Rochefoucauld’s *Die Geschichte des Fräuleins von Sternheim*, and Gellert’s *Leben der schwedischen Gräfin von G*. Reading these novels in terms of the emergence of particular ideals of family and domesticity, and of particular literary forms and conventions, will prepare my detailed analysis of the dynamic concepts of generation and testation, which place the novel in conversation with discourses of biology, pedagogy, and the law, in the following two chapters.

Of the reasonable candidates for the title of ‘first German novel,’ none generated anywhere near the popular fervor that Goethe’s *Die Leiden des jungen Werthers* did. Published in 1774, the semi-autobiographical epistolary novel was an instant sensation,
inspiring both rhapsodic praise and intense criticism from its earliest readers.\textsuperscript{61} According to these early detractors, the novel’s epistolary form leaves no room for critical or moral reflection on the events of the story or on Werther’s emotional state and his reactions to it, which led them to claim that it was immoral and encouraged suicide.\textsuperscript{62} Although Goethe later distanced himself from the novel, especially in \textit{Dichtung und Wahrheit}, where he places the blame for the \textit{Werther}-fever on the influence of sentimental English novels in particular, its success signaled that the novel had at last definitively arrived in Germany as a genre with a significant readership and major societal influence.

In the passage of the novel in which Werther describes his first encounter with Lotte, Goethe uses his protagonist to express both paradoxes of formal expression and paradoxes of constitution of the family as it pertains to reproduction and domesticity. Werther begins with one of his frequent remarks on the inadequacy of writing—after telling Werner to guess “Warum ich dir nicht schreibe?”\textsuperscript{63} he claims that it will be difficult for him to recount “in der Ordnung,” because, being happy, he is “kein guter Historienschreiber.” (36) Bliss undoes the composure necessary to write a letter.\textsuperscript{64}

\textsuperscript{61} Many of these contemporaneous opinions are usefully—and entertainingly—collected in: Müller, Peter (ed): \textit{Der junge Goethe im zeitgenössischen Urteil}, Akademie-Verlag, Berlin, 1969.
\textsuperscript{62} Martin Andrée, in his study \textit{Wenn Texte töten: Über Werther, Medienwirkung und Mediengewalt}, suggests convincingly that \textit{Werther} was published in a sort of threshold period between exemplary and empathetic reading, and that thus certain readers reacted by \textit{imitating} Werther as a character rather than empathizing with him whilst still being able to reflect critically on \textit{Werther} as a novel, and goes on to argue that although Goethe complained about the furor his novel had generated, his mixture of truth and fiction in the novel was an ingenious and at least semi-deliberate marketing ploy. Andree, Martin, \textit{Wenn Texte töten: Über Werther, Medienwirkung und Mediengewalt}. Wilhelm Fink Verlag, München 2006, p. 114-15; p. 132.
\textsuperscript{63} Goethe, Johann Wolfgang von: \textit{Die Leiden des jungen Werthers}, in: Borchmeyer, Dieter, et. al (eds): \textit{Sämtliche Werke, Briefe, Tagebücher und Gespräche}, volume 8 (ed: Wiethölter, Waltraud), Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, Frankfurt am Main, 1994, p. 36. All further citations are from this edition and will be given in the text as page numbers.
\textsuperscript{64} This necessary but impossible conjunction of seeing and writing, in \textit{Werther}, bears at least some relation to David Wellbery’s concept of the ‘specular moment,’ in which “[t]he absolute positive of the text is specular in the sense that it is encoded as the sheer immediacy of seeing and being seen, while being made available only in its reflection of a poetic medium, the epistemological status of which is uncertain. In the \textit{clausula}, at the very point when the poem seeks to coincide with itself and exemplify its achievement, it
continues by exclaiming “Einen Engel!” but then once again gives vent to his frustration: “Pfuy! das sagt jeder von der seinigen! Nicht wahr? Und doch bin ich nicht im Stande, dir zu sagen, wie sie vollkommen ist, warum sie vollkommen ist, genug, sie hat all meinen Sinn gefangen genommen.” (36) Despite his insistence that he cannot say why Lotte has struck him as perfect, he continues by delivering a statement on her particular virtues; in Lotte, Werther finds “[s]o viel Einfalt bey so viel Verstand, so viel Güte bey so viel Festigkeit, und die Ruhe der Seele bey dem wahren Leben und der Thätigkeit.” (36) These apparently contradictory pairs of traits—simplicity and understanding, gentleness and firmness, tranquility and activity—sketch the outlines of an ideal of feminine domesticity that was taking shape in the late eighteenth century, in part precisely as a result of portrayals like Goethe’s. Werther oscillates back into irritation, however, at the “leidige Abstraktionen” into which he has fallen; abstractions, he says, “die nicht einen Zug ihres Selbst ausdrükken.” (36) The ideal, however, programmatically Werther has stated it, cannot grasp the impression that this particular woman has made on him.

Werther’s false starts and insistences that he cannot write adequately about what has happened to him go on for six short paragraphs, until, finally, he admits that he has told Wilhelm absolutely nothing so far: “Wenn ich so fortfahre, wirst du am Ende so klug seyn wie am Anfange. Höre denn, ich will mich zwingen ins Detail zu gehen.” (38) While it is true that Wilhelm has learned very little about Werther’s evening, Goethe presents his readers with a very clear portrait of Werther’s emotional state. Precisely the fact that Werther is not capable of writing about his emotions testifies to the depth and

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marks its own internal divergence.” (p. 50) Wellbery, David: *The Specular Moment: Goethe’s Early Lyric and the Beginnings of Romanticism*, Stanford University Press, Stanford, California, 1996, p. 50. Of course, Wellbery is writing explicitly about the lyric, not the novel, but I think that we can see something of the same emotional structure and the same relation between immediacy (of emotion) and writing.
authenticity of those emotions. His impatience with his own medium of communication registers the vehemence of his desire to make Wilhelm understand the importance of this experience to him. Furthermore, by including this record of Werther being too overcome by his own affect to write coherently, Goethe both emphasizes and naturalizes the process of writing: the passage expresses not only the authenticity of Werther’s emotions but the authenticity of the epistolary form, which cannot be too seamless if it is to appear plausible. The artistry of the novel, in this case, consists in its being consistent with the intensity of its character’s emotion—if Werther were to emphasize the ways in which he is buffeted by his inner life (as he does throughout the narrative), but then to relate all these tempests perfectly calmly, we would either regard him with suspicion, as a duplicitous character, or we would dismiss Goethe’s novel as inauthentic.

Of course, Werther the character must eventually settle down and write, every time, or Werther the novel would not exist, and—after going to visit Lotte again—Werther does finally give a coherent account of his first meeting with her. Here, the beginning of his narrative emphasizes the prosaic and unimportant. He has already been introduced to “den Amtmann S.,” who has invited him to visit, but he has neglected to do so until an evening on which it is decided that he and several other young people, including Lotte, should share a carriage to a ball. He reports that on the way to Lotte’s house, his other companions warned him not to fall in love with her, because she is already engaged. At this point, Werther explains, “[d]ie Nachricht war mir ziemlich gleichgültig” (38), and they go on to discuss the weather. Of course, there is certainly a sense in which this warning actually sets the stage for Lotte to make such an impression on Werther—she has been singled out as worthy of the affection of another, and
Werther’s attention has been explicitly drawn to her before he lays eyes on her, whether or not he is willing or able to admit it. But for Werther, these quotidian snippets of conversation serve to mark the shift in significance between his life before he meets Lotte and thereafter. He gets out of the carriage and walks through the courtyard to fetch Lotte, whereupon, as he enters the house, his superlatives return: “da ich […] in die Thüre trat, fiel mir das reizendste Schauspiel in die Augen, das ich jemals gesehen habe.” (40)

Already, Werther presents the encounter as an aesthetic experience, which is particularly interesting in light of the apparent inconsistency in his description of the scene as a “Schauspiel” and his subsequent emphasis on the naturalness of the interaction between Lotte and her siblings. But in the language of the eighteenth-century bourgeoisie, this contradiction is no contradiction at all: that which is the most aesthetically pleasing is, at the same time, that which is most free of artifice.

Indeed, Werther has encountered Lotte at a particularly intimate moment—she has not yet assumed a public role as a young woman on the way to a party, but is rather participating in an intimate family scene, standing in the midst of her younger siblings and giving them their evening bread (in keeping with the natural modesty of the scene, her white dress is described as “simple” and the bread is “schwarzes Brod” rather than

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65 Nicholas Boyle, in his canonical biography of Goethe, points out that Werther is not simply an individual artistic dreamer: “Werther’s innermost life is determined by a public mood, he lives out to the last, and inflicts on those around him, the loyalties which—because they are literary, intellectual, in a sense imaginary loyalties, generated within the current media of communication—most of his contemporaries take only half-seriously. His obsessions are not gratuitously idiosyncratic—they belong to his real and socially determined character, not just too a pathologically self-absorbed consciousness.” Boyle, Nicholas: Goethe: The Poet and the Age, Vol. 1: The Poetry of Desire, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1991, p. 176.

66 Albrecht Koschorke’s study Körperströme und Schriftverkehr: Mediologie des 18. Jahrhunderts (Fink Verlag, München, 1999) provides a particularly compelling account of this ‘cultivated naturalness.’ It is also, of course, related to the dissolving of formal rules about the appropriateness of certain artistic forms and subject matters (e.g. tragedy and nobility, comedy and the lower classes), and the novel as a genre that began to subvert these forms. See: Grimminger, Rolf (ed): Hansers Sozialgeschichte der deutschen Literatur Band 3 – Deutsche Aufklärung bis zur Französischen Revolution 1680-1789. Carl Hanser Verlag, München/Wien 1980.
Werther is struck by the affection between the family members, remarking on the “Freundlichkeit” with which Lotte gives each child his or her proper portion and the children’s “ungekünstelt” thanks, and commenting on the way in which each child behaves naturally according to his own character. Lotte is unmistakably fulfilling the role of mother in this scene. She is the one who provides nourishment for the children, and she refers to them, in fact, as “meinen Kindern.” Lotte also instantly proves herself an indispensable figure in this family constellation: she apologetically explains to Werther that she cannot leave yet because ‘her’ children “wollen von niemanden Brod geschnitten haben als von mir.” (40) Furthermore, Lotte’s status as the surrogate mother to her younger siblings enables her to embody both maternal and virginal ideals (suggested all the more strongly by the aforementioned white dress). Her solicitous care for the children draws attention to her fecundity without sacrificing her purity.

67 “jedes […] nun mit seinem Abendbrote vergnügt entweder wegsprang, oder nach seinem stillern Charakter gelassen davonging nach dem Hoftore zu […]” (21). In recognizing the distinct personalities of particular children, Werther is acts according to what Lawrence Stone, in his classic study, called ‘affective individualism’ on which model children, were not seen as willful creatures who needed to be crushed by discipline, but rather as individuals worthy of their love and attention. Stone, Lawrence, The Family, Sex and Marriage in England 1500-1800, Weidenfield and Nicolson, London, 1977, pp. 7-8. Stone’s research has been much problematized in more recent studies; in particular, Rebekka Habermas suggests in Frauen und Männer des Bürgertums that this type of affective relation was less an absolute historical shift (as Stone and other so-called mentalité historians have suggested) than it was part of a self-conscious program of self-staging on the part of the German bourgeoisie. Habermas, Rebekka: Frauen und Männer des Bürgertums : eine Familiengeschichte (1750-1850), Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, Göttingen, 2000. Habermas’ argument is particularly interesting apropos my study of the novel, because the genre was an important component in that self-staging and thus played a role in the shaping of concepts of affective family bonds and the individualization of children.

68 Albrecht Koschorke, in his study Die heilige Familie und ihre Folgen, suggests that the nuclear family in the late eighteenth century (as exemplified by the Protestant parsonage) was simultaneously a secularization of the model of the Holy Family and a sacralization of the everyday life of the family itself: “Die Frau als Gottesgeschenk, die eheliche Liebe als eine auf den Partner zurückreflektierende Gottesliebe: Solche Vorgaben lassen die protestantische Familie zum Schauplatz einer umfassenden Reform des Gefühlslebens werden, die weit über Konfessionsgrenzen hinaus ausstrahlen wird und den Grundstein für die sich im 18. Jahrhundert etablierende bürgerliche Gefühlskultur […] Der Beitrag des evangelischen Pfarrhauses zur Geschichte der Emotionalität besteht darin, dass es durch seine historische Abkunft dazu bestimmt ist, die Beziehungen zwischen den Familienmitgliedern mit einer Aura der Heiligkeit zu
That Lotte is portrayed as a mother also suggests a certain flexibility of biological ties. Of course, she is related to her siblings, but the mode of her interaction with them is based not on her biological status but on the role she has taken on—motherhood is thus established not by the literal act of giving birth, but by affective ties. This notion of affective kinship is extended later in the scene, when Werther greets one of the younger children, who shies away until Lotte encourages him to “gieb dem Herrn Vetter eine Hand.” (40) Werther is so delighted by this that he spontaneously kisses the child (despite its snotty nose), and then exclaims “Vetter? sagt’ ich, indem ich ihr die Hand reichte, glauben Sie, daß ich des Glüks werth sey, mit Ihnen verwandt zu seyn?” (40) Lotte explains lightly that “unsere Vetterschaft ist sehr weitläufig, und es wäre mir leid, wenn sie der Schlimmste darunter seyn sollten” (42), that is, that she views kinship as being determined not by blood ties (or by the prospect of material gain, as in godparent relationships that were often a form of patronage between classes) but by choice and by affection. Goethe creates a portrait of the family that is marked by intimacy and affectionate relationships between its members, regardless of whether those members are biologically related. The letter continues as Werther describes the carriage ride, in which Lotte impresses him with her taste in literature by dismissing novels that consist of the “Glükke und Unstern einer Miß Jenny” and favoring instead “der Autor […] indem ich meine Welt wieder finde, bey dem’s zugeht wie um mich, und dessen Geschichte mir doch so interessant so herzlich wird, als mein eigen häuslich Leben, das freylich kein Paradies, aber doch im Ganzen eine Quelle unsäglicher Glükseligkeit ist.” (44) Once

again, Goethe weaves together domesticity and writing, and once again it is Lotte’s combination of sensitivity and good sense that attracts Werther. By the end of the evening, with the climactic “Klopstock!” scene (which, once again, pivots on a shared literary reference), Werther is hopelessly smitten.

It is perhaps unnecessary to say that Werther falls in love with Lotte in her unique particularity—Lotte is an absolutely individual being, like no one else in the world, and Werther believes that the two of them are a uniquely perfect match for each other.69 This is, in large part, because of the seamless meshing of their inner lives—they share emotional responses to nature and literature (the Klopstock scene is only the most succinct example). Though they are without a doubt physically drawn to one another, the reader is meant to understand that the attraction of their common sensibility is much stronger. This is, of course, contingent upon us as readers being aware of their inner and emotional lives: we are certainly privy to every oscillation of Werther’s emotional life (the epistolary novel is, again, a particularly natural form in which to record not only events but a character’s thoughts and feelings about those events), and Lotte is also portrayed, admittedly through the eyes of the man who loves her, as an individual subject possessed of a rich inner life. Werther grants even Albert, albeit grudgingly, a kind of individuality; yes, he is stodgy and not very imaginative, but he is responsible and caring and dutiful. But Werther’s instant attraction to Lotte as an individual and particular person is quite different from his reactions to members of both the aristocracy and the

69 In his massively long and thorough study, Liebe als Roman, Niels Werber argues that the “Kontaktanbahnung” of two fictional individuals is one of the hallmarks of the modern novel as a genre; this trait enables it to answer to a taste for variety and newness that was cultivated in the middle of the eighteenth century by the moralische Wochenschriften (Werber is, as he himself admits, very much indebted to Lennard Davis’ Factual Fictions, but he usefully transposes many of Davis’ arguments to a German context). Werber, Niels: Liebe als Roman: zur Koevolution intimer und literarischer Kommunikation, Fink Verlag, München, 2003.
peasantry. One could suggest that this is simply because Werther himself is a part of the Bildungsbürgertum that was trying to establish itself via its education and culture, but I think it is possible to go further and argue that it is not only Werther but the genre of the novel that is tied to the bourgeoisie as its unique mode of self-staging and expression.70

The novel expresses both the hope and the difficulties inherent in the narrative that one might, as an individual, achieve socially acknowledged tokens of success precisely through that individuality. Caught between the aristocracy—in which individuality is ignored in favor of inherited status and ritualized social forms—and the peasantry—in which closeness to nature precludes both the reflection required for individuality and the actual tokens of success—the bourgeoisie around 1800 finds itself in a double bind, wanting to be both original (individual) and intelligible (successful).

Although neither the aristocrats nor the peasants in Werther could be said to be endowed with anything like subjecthood, Werther does not relate to both classes the same way. His view of the lower classes is almost entirely positive, in large part because they seem to him to be more nearly connected with nature. He remarks in a very early letter that “[d]ie Stadt ist selbst unangenehm, dagegen rings umher eine unaussprechliche Schönheit der Natur”(12), and the next several letters discuss a series of interactions with the people who live just outside the city. As he does frequently in Werther’s letters,


71 Werther also remarks that the garden that makes the area so lovely, which was designed by a count (now deceased), “ist einfach, und man fühlt gleich bey dem Eintritte, daß nicht ein wissenschaftlicher Gärtner, sondern ein führendes Herz den Plan bezeichnet” (12), thus illustrating once again the positive valuing of the kind of ‘cultivated naturalness’ that I mentioned with respect to Lotte and her interaction with her siblings.
Goethe begins with more general pronouncements before moving to specific events. We know that Werther is genuinely happy to spend time with the country people because he laments that it took him some time to win their trust, as “Leute von einigem Stande werde sich immer in kalter Entfernung vom gemeinen Volke halten, als glaubten sie durch Annäherung zu verlieren, und dann giebts Flüchtlinge und üble Spasvögel, die sich herabzulassen scheinen, um ihren Uebermut den armen Volke desto empfindlicher zu machen.” (18) This does not mean that Werther is blind to class difference; he continues: “Ich weiß wohl, daß wir nicht gleich sind, noch seyn können. Aber ich halte dafür, das der, der glaubt nöthig zu haben, vom so genannten Pöbel sich zu entfernen, um den Respekt zu erhalten, eben so tadelhaft ist als ein Feiger, der sich für seinem Feinde verbirgt, weil er zu unterliegen fürchtet.” (18) The novel alternates, in these early pages, between letters containing utterances like the above and letters in which Werther expresses dissatisfaction with the state of society around them, in which people work so very hard with so little idea of what they want from life.

Several letters later, the weaving together of the lower classes with nature is even more explicit: Werther has gone to Wahlheim and is enjoying the scenery (and the solitude, as the villagers are all working in the fields72) when he sees two young boys sitting on the ground, the younger being supported by the older. “Mich vergnügte der

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72 Heidi Rosenbaum, in the section of *Formen der Familie* that treats agricultural families, points out that little changed in this family type during the late eighteenth century: the importance of land in providing a sense of continuity between generations, the preservation of one’s livelihood, and the maintenance of social status continued unabated. This adherence to tradition affected all areas of life, and the entirety of the household’s time and energy was devoted to the production of its livelihood, and this resulted in there being little distinction between blood relations and Gesinde or Inwohner who lived with the family and worked alongside them—Rosenbaum says that both agricultural and artisanal families, were marked by “ein insgesamt geringes Niveau der (positiven) affektiven Beziehungen.” Rosenbaum: *Formen der Familie: Untersuchungen zum Zusammenhang von Familienverhältnissen, Sozialstruktur und sozialem Wandel in der deutschen Gesellschaft des 19. Jahrhunderts* (Suhrkamp Verlag, Frankfurt am Main, 1996. [1st ed. 1982], p. 65, p.175.) Goethe certainly portrays an idealized portrait of peasant life in *Werther*, but this idealization is interesting when contrasted with Werther’s impatience with the careerist streben of the bourgeoisie and, especially, the status-obsession of the aristocracy.
Anblik,” he writes, “und ich setzte mich auf einen Pflug, der gegen über stand, und zeichnete die brüderliche Stellung mit vielem Ergötzzen” (26). He goes on to sketch the surrounding objects as well, and on realizing “daß ich eine wohlgeordnete sehr interessante Zeichnung verfertigt hatte, ohne das mindeste von dem meinen hinzuzuthun” he embarks on something of an aesthetic treatise, beginning from the principle “mich künftig allein an die Natur zu halten.” (26-28) After drawing the boys, he becomes acquainted with them and their mother, and, as he writes to Wilhelm in a subsequent letter, “[s]eit der Zeit bin ich oft draus, die Kinder sind ganz an mich gewöhnt” (32).

Throughout, his contact with the lower classes, particularly with children, is both aesthetically inspiring and soothing to Werther: they offer an image of naturalness which is desirable to him but which he can also submit to his control by making it an object of his sketches.

This is far from the case in his interactions with the aristocracy. In the second book of the novel, Werther finds only frustration, disappointment, and humiliation in the social world of the court where he goes in hopes of breaking his attachment to Lotte. His enthusiasm for the change of scene lasts only for a few letters before discontent and anger at the status obsession of the world around him become the predominant tone of his writing. Unlike in the passages in which he writes about his relationship to Lotte, Werther is here a perfectly good “Historienschreiber”—unencumbered by excessive happiness, he is able to recount one event after another without the frequent interruptions, expressions of frustration at his own inability to express himself adequately, and remarks on the inadequacy of writing as such that characterize the earlier letters. As Werther struggles to fulfill the duties of his Amt, his writing becomes more amtlich. Even when he is writing
about a dispute with his superior, he limits himself to recording what he would have liked to do but did not ("[d]arüber hät ich ihn gern ausgeprügelt" [128]) and then what each said. As time goes on however, and his unhappiness increases, his outbursts return and he devotes more space to investigating the causes of his frustration.

The greatest of these, in this context, is the "Rangsucht" that he sees all around him—"wie sie nur wachen und aufpassen, einander ein Schrittgen abzugewinnen, die elendsten erbärmlichsten Leidenschaften, ganz ohne Rökgen!" (130) This discontent is also, of course, because Werther is not very good at participating in the rituals that determine social position—his emotions prevent him from acquiring polished good manners. In addition to finding this kind of behavior inauthentic and ridiculous, Werther abhors it because it prevents him from making the intense friendships that, for him, are the only friendships worth having with members of the aristocracy. He repeats a sentiment very similar to his observation about the peasants, "[z]war weiß ich so gut als einer, wie nöthig der Unterschied der Stände ist, wie viel Vortheile er mir selbst verschafft," before continuing, "nur soll er mir nicht eben grad im Wege stehn, wo ich noch ein wenig Freude, einen Schimmer von Glük auf dieser Erden geniessen könnte." (130) Furthermore, despite his impatience with and even contempt for the aristocracy, Werther also cannot simply ignore their social world.73 Not content either to isolate himself completely or to mimic the aristocracy in order to be accepted by them, he wants to be recognized for his own individual merits without having to sacrifice his originality.

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73 Boyle, again arguing against readings of the novel that dismiss its title character as an extreme and isolated subjective consciousness: "Werther, like Goethe, may not be living his life in Germany’s intellectual centre, in the universities which he almost contemptuously disregards, but his confrontation with the determining social realities is direct: through the social and economic station which gives him leisure, through the barrier to his advancement constituted by aristocratic privilege, through the real restrictions imposed by the convention of marriage, through books and conversations about them.” Boyle, Nicholas: Goethe: The Poet and the Age, Vol. 1: The Poetry of Desire, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1991, p. 177.
Werther also makes it quite clear that he thinks that jostling for position is not only ridiculous but also ineffective; he opens the next letter by exclaiming, “[w]as das für Menschen sind, deren ganze Seele auf dem Ceremoniel ruht, deren Dichten und Trachten Jahre lang dahin geht, wie sie um einen Stuhl weiter hinauf bey Tische sich einschieben wollen.” (132) In doing this, he writes, they waste time and fail to complete tasks of actual importance, and that others who fulfill their duties are in fact more influential: “Wie mancher König wird durch seinen Minister, wie mancher Minister durch seinen Sekretär regiert. Und wer ist dann der Erste? der, dünkt mich, der die andern übersieht, und so viel Gewalt oder List hat, ihre Kräfte und Leidenschaften zu Ausführung seiner Pläne anzuspannen.” (132) Though this comment is very clearly influenced by Werther’s wounded vanity, he is also consciously advancing a view of a society based on meritocracy that marks bourgeois consciousness. In addition, it bears a rather striking resemblance to the role an author plays in the completion of a novel: he (or she) must have both a sense of the whole and the adequate energy to direct individual plot strands and characters towards that whole. The author and the bourgeois subject (and, as I will discuss in the next chapter, in some ways also the reader) thus occupy homologous places in the paradigm shifts taking place around 1800.

But this point of view is not yet wide-spread, and Werther’s interactions with the aristocracy only become more disastrous, resulting eventually in his complete

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74 Albrecht Koschorke provides a very convenient—if admittedly somewhat reductive—characterization of the two models, which he is differentiating temporally here but which can also be said to have existed simultaneously in different social circles around the turn of the nineteenth century: “Man kann die Oppositionen fast schematisch auflisten: dort die Erwartung einer allseitigen erotischen Reizbarkeit, hier die in sich ruhende Scham; dort öffentlicher Umgang, hier ein dem Ideal nach beschauliches und zurückgezogenes Leben; dort das Zeremoniell mit seiner Hervorhebung der Außenseite, hier eine von Äußerlichkeit freie Intimität; dort die Konversationskultur mit ihren Anforderungen an Geistesgegenwart, Witz und Charme, hier schlichte Häuslichkeit, und, darauf wird noch ausführlicher einzugehen sein, Bildungslektüre.“ Koschorke, Albrecht: Körperströme und Schriftverkehr: Mediologie des 18. Jahrhunderts, Wilhelm Fink Verlag, München, 1999, p. 20.
humiliation—to which he is initially oblivious and which strikes him all the more strongly since it must be explained to him by one of the few people at court with whom he feels a genuine affinity. It is perhaps worth noting, in passing, that when Werther writes a long letter to Wilhelm about this humiliation and his subsequent decision to leave his position, he remarks defensively upon his own writing style: “daß du nicht wieder sagst: meine überspannten Ideen verdürben alles; so hast du hier lieber Herr, eine Erzählung, plan und nett, wie ein Chronikenschreiber das aufzeichnen würde.” (140) The flipped similarity between this remark and his cheerful admission in the first Lotte letter that he is too happy to be a good “Historienschreiber” is unmistakable—but of course, what makes Werther an interesting character and Die Leiden des jungen Werthers an interesting novel is precisely not his ability to describe one event after another in their logical sequence (indeed, the events of the plot could be succinctly summarized in about three sentences) but the faithfulness with which Goethe portrays his inner tumult. This emotional life is, not coincidentally, also what differentiates Werther from the aristocracy, who are too preoccupied with the outward pomp of their positions to notice that they have wounded an intelligent and sensitive man in a way that is unbearable to him.

This clash between social systems based on meritocracy and those based on lineage is also visible in another extremely popular novel of the period, Sophie von La Roche’s Geschichte des Fräuleins von Sternheim (1771). La Roche begins her novel, which was introduced and published anonymously by Wieland, also provides an interesting window onto female authorship in the period—although the novel, particularly in its epistolary form, was the first genre in which women began to publish extensively, they frequently explicitly disavow both the literary and the public aspects of their work, insisting that these texts were meant to be private didactic stories or insisting that their writing had not taken time away from their duties as mothers and housewives. Anonymous publication with extensive editor fictions was common in novels by both men and women, but women tended to be especially wary about acknowledging that they were educated and could
epistolary novel with a long narrative from the character who has supposedly collected these letters, in which the reader learns about Sophie Sternheim’s parents and their courtship. (As I will discuss in the third chapter, the novel around 1800 frequently includes not just the history of its protagonist, but of his or her parents as well). The marriage is in some sense a mésalliance: Sophie’s mother comes from a long line of nobles (she is the sister of the Baron von P.), whereas her father (a great friend of the Baron) is the son of a professor who is awarded nobility as a result of his exemplary war service: “Ihr Verdienst, nicht das Glück, hat Sie erhoben”, sagte der General, als er ihm im Namen des Fürsten in Gegenwart vieler Personen das Obersten-Patent und den Adelsbrief überreichte.[76] When the war is over, Sternheim takes up residence near the Baron and his family—which, “als eine der Angesehensten in der Gegend, wurde von dem zahlreichen benachbarten Adel öfters besucht.” (14) The difference in their social standing is unproblematic for the friendship between Sternheim and Baron von P, but it causes difficulty when he and Sophie von P fall in love with each other and thus provides occasion for an extensive discussion of whether true nobility is obtained through virtue or through aristocratic blood. La Roche’s text portrays a moment when these two models—lineage vs. merit—still exist alongside each other, and the clashes and misunderstandings that obtain when the two come into contact provide the material for the remainder of the novel.

produce widely read fiction. They were also often dependent on personal or professional contacts with men in publishing. La Roche’s novel was both a popular success and an example to other female writers. For more on this, see: Bland, Caroline, and Müller-Adams, Elisa (eds): Frauen in der literarischen Öffentlichkeit 1780-1918, Aisthesis, Bielefeld, 2007, and Holmgren, Janet Besserer: The Women Writers in Schiller’s Horen: Patrons, Petticoats, and the Promotion of Weimar Classicism, University of Delaware Press, Newark, 2007.

76 La Roche, Sophie von: Geschichte des Fräuleins von Sternheim (nach der Erstausgabe 1771, Nachwort, ed: Günter Häntzschel), Winkler Verlag, München, 1976, p. 13-14. All further citations from this edition and will be given in the text as page numbers.
Initially, Sternheim refuses to confess his love for Sophie to her brother because he thinks his recent nobility makes him unworthy, and it is only because the Baron’s wife overhears him sighing “O, Sophie, warum bist du die Schwester meines Freundes! Warum bestreiten die Vorzüge deiner Geburt die edle, die zärtliche Neigung meines Herzens!” that they learn of his love. (19) La Roche then stages a series of conversations between her characters in which the topic is more thoroughly explored. That these differences in opinion are discussed explicitly on a thematic level is perhaps not surprising for a text that—at least according to the preface written by Wieland—explicitly disavows all claim to literary status. This claim is not, in fact, entirely accurate: as the novel goes on, La Roche proves to be an elegant and skilled writer who successfully portrays a complex and multi-faced social world through the various perspectives of her different characters. But the discussions of class in the opening pages are indeed largely programmatic. First, the Baron von P. and his wife agree that they support the match, arguing that “[s]ollte denn das Verdienst des recht schaffnen Mannes nicht so viel Wert haben als die Vorzüge des Namens und der Geburt!” (19) Then the Baron begins to inquire of Sophie whether either her scruples or her affections would prevent her from marrying Sternheim. She proves quickly that she values “Tugend und Vernunft” more than “Vorurteile” by answering her brother that “der Oberste der einzige Mann auf Erden ist, dessen Gemahlin ich zu werden wünsche,” and that “sein edles Herz, seine Wissenschaft, und seine Freundschaft für dich ersetzen bei mir den Mangel der Ahnen.” (21-2) Sophie is described as a quiet and somewhat melancholy young woman who prefers reading in her room to large social gatherings, but “ohne gleichwohl die Gelegenheiten zu versäumen, wo sie, ohne fremde Gesellschaft, mit den Personen ihrer
Familie allein sein konnte” (14)—she espouses virtue over social status and values domesticity and intimate sociability with her family over grand appearances, and thus she judges her future husband on his own merits and not his rank.77

Objections come, first of all, from Sternheim himself, who, when confronted about his affections by the Baron, admits that “Ihre Fräulein Schwester ist das erste Frauenzimmer, welches die beste Neigung meiner Seele hat,” but insists “ich will sie überwinden; man soll Ihnen nicht vorwerfen, daß Sie Ihrer Freundschaft die schuldige Achtung für ihre Voreltern aufgeopfert haben. Fräulein Sophie soll durch mich keinen Anspruch an Glück und Vorzug verlieren.” (23) Eventually the Baron prevails upon Sternheim to make a formal offer of marriage, and the next series of discussions are with the other members of the von P family. The Baron’s mother is fairly easily persuaded when the Baron points out that although marriages should take place within class lines, “die Tugenden des Sternheim sind die Grundlagen aller großen Familien gewesen” (25).

Virtue is not simply given by blood, but is rather acquired via experience and effort, and true nobility depends on that virtue more than blood. The Baron, perhaps recognizing his audience, does not completely remove blood from the equation entirely; he goes on to Sternheim will certainly have children who are noble in every sense of the word: “Man hatte nicht unrecht zu denken, daß große Eigenschaften der Seele bei Töchtern und

77In these preferences, Sophie represents the bourgeois ideal of the family that serves as a refuge or sanctuary from the outside world that was beginning to take shape in this period. Scholars have argued that this ideal brought about the notion of ‘separate spheres’ for men and women; Rebekka Habermas usefully complicates this idea by countering that although it is without a doubt true that marriage separated itself from public life to an increasing degree and that the construction of a private realm was important, it was not simply the marriage pair (much less merely the woman) who retreated, but rather the entire family, including intimate friends. Habermas argues that, according to the evidence she has amassed, this privacy is not gendered: a closer look at daily married life shows not an absolute separation between private/feminine and public/masculine spheres, but rather that the family became the “Bildungsraum” for both men and women, with and without their children—and that as such it became the center of the social life of the family’s friends, as well. (Habermas, Rebekka: Frauen und Männer des Bürgertums : eine Familiengeschichte (1750-1850), Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, Göttingen, 2000, p. 316) The novel plays a crucial role in both the intimacy of the family and the Bildung that took place within it.
Söhnen erblich sein könnten, und daß also jeder Vater für einen edlen Sohn eine edle Tochter suchen sollte.” (25) The Baron’s mother admits that “ich habe Bedenklichkeiten,” but nevertheless yields in recognition of Sternheim’s individual virtues, saying “der Mann hat meine ganze Hochachtung erworben. Ich würde ihn gern glücklich sehen.” (25)

The only family member to raise harsh objections to the marriage is the Baron and Sophie’s youngest sister Charlotte. That these objections are not the gentle worries of their mother is made clear by the entirely selfish way in which Charlotte frames them. When her brother asks her why she would not be happy to have Sternheim as a brother-in-law, she answers, “[w]eil diese Schöne Verbindung auf Unkosten meines Glücks gemacht wird,” and asks angrily “Wer wird denn unser Haus zu einer Vermählung suchen, wenn die ältere Tochter so verschleudert ist?” (25) She uses this insulting and sarcastic language throughout the scene, insisting that her mother “hören zu, wie ich wegen des elenden Kerls mißhandelt werde?” (26) The epithet “elender Kerl” is too much for the Baron, who tells her that this outburst “hat dir deinen Bruder genommen!” and that it is she who is damaging the honor of the family: “Dein Herz entehrt die Ahnen, auf deren Namen du stolz bist! O wie klein würde die Anzahl des Adels werden, wenn sich nur die dazu rechnen dürften, die ihre Ansprüche durch die Tugenden der edlen Seele des Stifters ihres Hauses beweisen könnten!” (26) Here the Baron draws an explicit contrast between nobility of blood and nobility of the heart, and suggests that not only is the latter more important than the former but that it is also rarer—that the blood nobles
have, in some cases, betrayed the nobility of the heart that gained their families the title in the first place.\textsuperscript{78}

This friction between systems is still visible later in the novel, particularly apropos notions of marriage. When the younger Sophie’s parents have both died and she has been sent to court to live with her aunt Charlotte (the very one who objected so strongly to Sophie’s parents’ marriage, but who in fact ultimately meets her own husband, the Graf Löbau, through Sternheim\textsuperscript{79}), it quickly becomes clear that Sophie has very different notions of proper behavior from the court society around her. It is at this point that La Roche switches from the third-person narration in which a fictional character provides long stretches of backstory (with a few letters interspersed) to a fully epistolary novel, with all of the multiple perspectives this style entails. In the very first letter that Sophie writes to Emilia after her arrival, she describes the way in which her aunt attempts to use family ties to promote political advancement: “Endlich kam die Gräfin F***, für welche mir meine Tante vielse Achtung zu haben empfohlen hatte, weil ihr Gemahl meinem Oncle in seinem Prozesse viele Dienste leisten könnte.” (54) Sophie also expresses her own discomfort with this mixing of the private and the professional:

\textsuperscript{78} Though it is not relevant to my arguments here, it is striking that in this scene La Roche also displays her indebtedness to the English novels of the earlier eighteenth century: when defending Charlotte’s actions to some extent, the Baron’s mother says to her son, “Hast du aber nicht selbst einmal deine dir so lieben Engländer angeführt, welche die Heirat außer Stand den Töchtern viel weniger vergeben als den Söhnen, weil die Tochter ihren Namen aufgeben, und den von ihrem Manne tragen muß, folglich sich erniedriget?” This is exactly the argument that Mr. B, in Richardson’s \textit{Pamela}, makes to his sister in favor of his being able to marry Pamela despite her humble origins—he is not lowered by marrying her, because she takes his name, she is raised up, but if a noblewoman were to marry below her class, she would indeed lower herself. In La Roche’s novel, the Baron insists that an exception would be made for his virtuous friend, but it is striking that La Roche repeats the arguments of Richardson’s earlier text almost verbatim.

\textsuperscript{79} “Der benachbarte Adel ehre und liebte den Obersten Sternheim so sehr, daß man ihn bat auf einige Zeit junge Edelleute in sein Haus zu nehmen, welche von ihren Reisen zurückgekommen waren, und nun vermählt werden sollten, um den Stamm fortzuführen. Da wollte man sie die wahre Landwirtschaft eines Edelmanns einsehen und lernen lassen. Unter diesen war der junge Graf Löbau, welcher in diesem Hause die Gelegenheit hatte, das endlich ruhig gewordene Fräulein Charlotte P. kennenzulernen und sich mit ihr zu verbinden.” (39)
“[i]ch tat alles, aber doch fühlte ich einen Unmut über die Vorstellung, daß die
gefälligkeit der Nichte gegen die Frau des Ministers die Gerechtsamen des Oheims sollte
stützen helfen. An seinem Platze würde ich weder meine noch des Ministers Frau in diese
Sache mengen, sondern eine männliche Sache mit Männern behandeln.” (54) Like
Werther in Goethe’s novel, Sophie finds the superficial rituals of the court both baffling
and ineffectual; unlike Goethe, however, La Roche treats specifically the exploitation of
family connections in the name of political advancement.

Sophie is not even aware of the extent of this exploitation, however; she knows
that she is supposed to flatter the wife of a man who could assist her uncle, but she is
blind as to her aunt’s further plans for her. Here the multiple perspectives available to the
epistolary novel are particularly crucial: Sophie cannot of course be aware of her aunt’s
schemes, but we as readers must be. Instead of breaking the authenticity of Sophie’s
innocence and high-mindedness, La Roche relates the story through another set of
correspondents. Lord Seymour, an Englishman who is instantly drawn to Sophie, writes
of the plan to a friend “was werden Sie dazu sagen, daß man dieses edle reizende
Mädchen zu einer Mätresse des Fürsten bestimmt? daß mir Mylord verboten ihr meine
Zärtlichkeit zu zeigen, weil der Graf F. ohnehin befürchtet, man werde Mühe mit ihr
haben? Doch behauptet er, daß sie deswegen an den Hof geführt worden sei.” (77) The
Graf and Gräfin Löbau view their niece as a resource to be used to further their political
aims. Sophie is not completely naïve; she has learned to detect duplicity in the
compliments that people give her and their praises of her father—she complains to Emilia
that “der Ton, worin es geschieht, klingt mir gerade, als wenn man sagte: Ich weiß,
daß Sie von Ihrem Vater sehr eingenommen sind, ich sage Ihnen also Gutes von ihm.”
(82) She also is aware that the way the Fürst looks at her is distinctly sexual and therefore unwelcome to her; what she cannot grasp is the extent to which her own family members plan to manipulate her. As in Werther, the aristocracy in Sternheim is presented as status-obsessed; La Roche connects this explicitly to models of behavior that use both family ties and sexuality as leverage in political struggles.80

The various nuances of these intrigues are too complicated for me to relate here, but it is worth noting that La Roche does not present an ideal of virtue that is completely insusceptible to corruption. Lord Derby, another Englishman at the court who prides himself on his abilities as a seducer, is able to manipulate Sophie’s moral sense in such a way that she falls in love with him. After his servant observes Sophie secretly coming to the aid of a poor family, he resolves: “ich will diese Familie aufsuchen, und ihr Gutes tun, wie Engländer es gewohnt sind, und dieses, ohne mich merken zu lassen, daß ich etwas von ihr weiß. Aber gewiß werde ich keinen Schritt machen, den sie nicht sehen soll.” (105) His further exploits to win her favor involve acts of charity and moral high-mindedness, and he is the only member of the court society who does not assume that she has yielded to the prince and who bothers to find out the truth.81 Lord Seymour, who

80 Perhaps the most canonical treatment of the shift between marriage as political alliance and marriage as love match that we see playing out La Roche’s novel is Niklas Luhmann’s Liebe als Passion: Zur Codierung von Intimität (Suhrkamp Verlag, Frankfurt am Main, 1982); Heidi Rosenbaum adds that in all classes except the bourgeoisie, marriages were arranged according to the interests of larger kinship groups, whether the interests in question involved political connection, possession of land, or ability to work on a farm. Rosenbaum also points out that the members of the bourgeoisie did not choose their partners entirely based on affection rather than capital or capability, but rather that friendship and love became additional factors to be considered. Rosenbaum, Heidi: Formen der Familie: Untersuchungen zum Zusammenhang von Familienverhältnissen, Sozialstruktur und sozialem Wandel in der deutschen Gesellschaft des 19. Jahrhunderts. Suhrkamp Verlag, Frankfurt am Main, 1996. (1st ed. 1982)

81 As other scholars have pointed out there, is also a sense in which Sophie at least temporarily seduces Derby to virtue—even in his first letter about her, he finds himself rhapsodizing about her “reine unbefleckte Seele,” and checks himself: “Halt einmal: Wie komme ich zu diesem Geschwätz? – […] – Sollte mich diese Landjungfer auch zum Schwärmer machen?” (85-6) See: Baldwin, Claire: The Emergence of the Modern German Novel: Christoph Martin Wieland, Sophie von La Roche, and Maria Anna Sagar, Camden House, Rochester, NY and Woodbridge, UK, 2002.
supposedly loves Sophie for her virtue, instantly assumes that this virtue was all merely “Scheintugend” and describes his “hohen Grad von Verachtung und Abscheu” for her (122-3), while Derby is able to use the efforts of her aunt and uncle to make her the prince’s mistress in order to appear falsely in the guise of a rescuer. More interestingly, he flatters her precisely through her virtuousness, telling her “daß ich mich nicht würdig schätzte, ihr von Liebe zu reden, ehe ich mich ganz umgebildet hätte, wobei ich ihr Beispiel zum Muster nehmen würde.” (147) La Roche does not depict her heroine as perfect—she is susceptible to flattery and all her intelligence does not enable her to escape Derby’s seduction. The ideal of bourgeois virtue is not infallible; authenticity can be deceived by duplicity, and the task of La Roche’s novel is to show—in an entertaining and original manner—her character’s efforts to understand and balance her principled education with her worldly experience.

In the remainder of this chapter, I want to assert that the novel, too, was a new literary type that appeared in its modern form in these same decades. It cannot be said that longer prose forms did not exist prior to the second half of the eighteenth century, of course. But these earlier texts have a fundamentally different relation to plot, history, character, individuality, and truth/falsity from what we begin to see in the late eighteenth century, and, further, their readership was vastly smaller and limited almost entirely to the nobility. In general, these earlier prose texts divide into two categories: the high or courtly/gallant, and the low or picaresque. Courtly novels or romances were set on the

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82 Griminger, Rolf: “Roman” in: Griminger, Rolf (ed): Hansers Sozialgeschichte der deutschen Literatur Band 3 – Deutsche Aufklärung bis zur Französischen Revolution 1680-1789. Carl Hanser Verlag, München/Wien 1980, p. 656. Although it is now over thirty years old, this source remains an exceptional resource in tracing the broad strokes of literary development and its connection to social history in the German context. As with the previous sections of this chapter, I will move from this broader argument to examining more recent and more specific sources.
grand stage of world-historical events and involved the love story of princes and princesses, whereas the picaresque novel features the mishaps of a hero who is an outsider—an orphan or a fool. In both the gallant and picaresque forms, the strong message is that the world is ruled by fate, that protagonists—be they princes or fools—are simply buffeted by external events over which they have no control, and that the only mode of survival is passive acceptance of a divine providence that will mete out just rewards in the end, making the ultimate resolution of the plot fairly certain and unsurprising. And, in both, the characters are fixed types who act invariably in the ways one would expect: in this system of prudence and fate, according to the logically interpretable meanings of the various episodes, fools are a priori wrong, and the good or clever a priori right; they behave in a particular way and serve as examples of a particular doctrine—beyond that, they are uninteresting as subjects. There is no sense in which these characters develop as individuals, change over the course of a novel, or come to a level of self-knowledge that reaches beyond the ‘Schein’ of the seventeenth century’s culture of representation and ritual.

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84 The most notable German example of the *Pikaroroman* is Grimmelshausen’s 1669 *Simplicissimus*; this tradition overall is heavily dependent on Spanish novels from the 16th and 17th centuries. Grimminger, Rolf: “Roman” in: Grimminger, Rolf (ed): *Hansers Sozialgeschichte der deutschen Literatur* Band 3 – Deutsche Aufklärung bis zur Französischen Revolution 1680-1789. Carl Hanser Verlag, München/Wien 1980, p. 669. Grimminger describes the hero of the Pikaroroman as one who “beginnt seinen Kampf um die Befriedigung der einfachsten Lebensbedürfnisse noch in seiner Kindheit als Betrogener und Opfer; klug geworden, setzt er ihn als Betrüger und Täter fort.” *Ibid*, p. 667.

By the mid-eighteenth century, however, both the reading public and its expectations had begun to change (as I discussed at some length in the introduction), and literary production began to reflect these changes. Christian Fürchtegott Gellert’s Leben der schwedischen Gräfin von G***, published in two volumes in 1747 and 1748, illustrates some of these shifts very nicely, representing a kind of hybrid between Baroque prose forms and the modern novel. Gellert (a pastor’s son who was also known as a writer of moral fables and letters) depicts characters who, although they are largely from the aristocracy, espouse distinctly bourgeois morals. The novel opens with the Gräfin’s account of her early education, provided by her uncle, who reasons that education and good sense will be of crucial importance for her, since “reich ist sie nicht, also wird sie niemand als ein vernünftiger Mann nehmen. Und wenn sie diesen nicht, also wird sie niemand als ein vernünftiger Mann nehmen. Und wenn sie diesen

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86 As I mentioned in note 6, Niels Werber, in his study Liebe als Roman, provides a thorough and interesting account of how the Moralische Wochenschriften cultivated a taste for newness and originality that Werber sees as being crucial to the rise of the novel in the later eighteenth century. Werber argues that the novel fulfills a genuine social problem, namely, the need to occupy newly increased amounts of free time. This problem Werber sees as having been addressed first by the moral weeklies, which cultivated a taste for newness and the impulse to consume ever more and ever more varied reading material. Like Davis, Werber traces the peculiar indifference of readers to whether a story was technically ‘true’ or ‘false’ to the “news”—ballads, pamphlets, and weeklies. The novel, for Werber, is not merely a more modern romance, but also “literarisierte News.” (Werber, Niels: Liebe als Roman : zur Koevolution intimer und literarischer Kommunikation, Fink Verlag, München, 2003, 175). Gerhard Sauder’s article on the Moralische Wochenschriften in Hansers Sozialgeschichte provides a succinct and useful characterization of these weeklies: In Germany, they were at their most popular between 1720 and 1760—that is to say, immediately prior to the novel’s rise to prominence; they were also overtly imitative of the successful English weeklies or dailies, particularly the Spectator and the Tatler. Formally, the weeklies, which can be seen as a bridge between religious Erbauungsliteratur and secular (if still didactic) Unterhaltungsliteratur, were distinguished by their lack of time-sensitive news content, their overt claim to educate and moralize their readers, their mixing of different types of text (dialogues, satire, character portraits, fables, and fictive letters all appeared in addition to straightforward narratives), and by the strategy of tying together these diffuse pieces via a single fictitious titular figure, who supposedly collected these various documents from his family and friends. Sauder, Gerhard: „Moralische Wochenschriften“ in: Grimminger, Rolf (ed): Hansers Sozialgeschichte der deutschen Literatur Band 3 – Deutsche Aufklärung bis zur Französischen Revolution 1680-1789. Carl Hanser Verlag, München/Wien 1980, p. 267-270.

87 Interestingly, the Gräfin also writes that her uncle explains to his wife (who objects to some extent to his educational program) that “Vormittags […] soll das Fräulein als ein Mann und Nachmittage als eine Frau erzogen werden.” (9) In this strange formulation, I believe that Gellert is expressing a variant of an Enlightenment belief that both men and women are rational beings, and that both sexes should thus be taught how to use their reason—while acknowledging that the two sexes had different roles in society and therefore also needed to acquire different skills. See: Honegger, Claudia: Die Ordnung der Geschlechter: Die Wissenschaften vom Menschen und das Weib 1750-1850, Campus Verlag, Frankfurt/New York, 1991.
This education does not take the form of “eine hohe und tief Sinnige Philosophie;” rather, the Gräfin writes that her uncle “brachte mir die Religion auf eine vernünftige Art bei und überführte mich von den großen Vorteilen der Tugend, welche sie uns in jedem Stande, im Glück und Unglücke, im Tode und nach diesem Leben bringt.” (10) Religion and understanding are completely intertwined, here, and the goal of this education is not to acquire “die Weisheit, mit der wir in Gesellschaft prahlen oder, wenn es hochkoommt, unsere Ehrbegierde einige Zeit stillen,” but rather to gain the kind of wisdom “die von dem Verstande in das Herz dringt und uns gesittet, liebreich, großmütig, gelassen und im Stillen ruhig macht.” (10) These principles could very well have come from some of Gellert’s moral fables—the novel is fairly narrowly didactic, illustrating clearly the lesson that if one remains virtuous and rational, one will be carried through all life’s difficulties calmly.

Calmness is, in fact, perhaps the Gräfin’s most striking trait. In marked contrast to Werther’s wild extremes of feeling, which, as I pointed out earlier, frequently render him incapable of coherent narration, the Gräfin’s text never shows evidence of the feelings it describes. This is of course to some extent a formal difference: Werther is an epistolary novel, ideally suited to show immediate shifts in affect and mood, while Gellert’s text is a fictional autobiography, written after its events have been lived through, composed in hindsight and with reflection. The differences go deeper than that, however: the Gräfin simply does not possess the sort of interiority and subjective depth that we see in Goethe’s novel. Of her initial meeting with her husband, in which she comments that

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their class difference made her assume that she could not view him as a potential partner, she writes, “[i]n der Tat gefiel er mir im Herzen sehr wohl; allein sosehr ich mir ihn heimlich wünschen mochte, so hielt ich’s doch für unmöglich, ihn zu besitzen.” (11) The disparity between this statement and Werther’s extremes of ecstasy at loving Lotte and despair at knowing she is already promised to someone else could hardly be greater. The Gräfin includes the letter in which the Graf proposes to her, which does contain some more effusive expressions of affection, but even this more immediate document remains measured throughout; for example, one of its most emotional exclamations runs: “Wie inständig müßte ich Sie nicht um Ihre Liebe bitten, wenn ich bloß meiner Empfindung und meinen Wünschen folgen wollte! Aber nein, es liegt mir gar zu viel an Ihrer Liebe, als daß ich sie einem andern Bewegungsgrunde als Ihrer freien Einwilligung zu danken haben wollte!” (12) The marriage between the Graf and the Gräfin is not a result of a lengthy process in which two individual subjects find themselves particularly drawn to one another. This has structural consequences, as well: whereas the novel in the later eighteenth century frequently ends with the marriage of its protagonist (as per Blanckenburg’s advice in his Versuch über den Roman), Gellert’s couple marries in the first pages of the novel. The plainness of the marriage ceremony – the Gräfin travels to Sweden, and nine days later she is married, with only her husband, uncle, and father-in-law in attendance – is matched only by the plainness of the Gräfin’s narration.

The Gräfin’s even-keeled disposition is tested repeatedly over the course of the novel, in which she is assaulted by a series of seemingly random events interspersed with startling coincidences.89 These events do not proceed along a path of coherent plausibility

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89 Joseph Vogl, in his book Kalkül und Leidenschaft: Poetik des ökonomischen Menschen, points out that the accumulation of capital throughout the novel can also be seen as a counterbalance to the apparent
but rather follow one after another with very little connection, while the Gräfin remains the same—virtuous and serene—throughout: in her very first days as a wife, she learns that her husband has fathered two children with a lower-class woman who still lives on his estate. When the Graf and Gräfin go to court, they run afoul of the Prince, who wants to have an affair with the Gräfin, and who, when she refuses, sends the Graf to war and gives him an impossible assignment, which he is sentenced to death for failing to complete. Believing her husband to be dead, the Gräfin marries his best friend, R***. All of this happens—along with several incidents involving secondary characters that bring in missing children, incest, and murder—in the first volume of the novel. In the second, it transpires that the Graf was not dead, after all, but had simply been deported to Siberia. Rather than break off their friendship with R***, the Graf and Gräfin insist that he continue living with them (though the Gräfin returns to viewing the Graf as her husband), along with the Graf’s first mistress. The story of the Graf’s experiences in Russia and Siberia take up much of the second volume. At the end of the novel, as a result of a series of developments that are too long for this breathless summary, the main characters find themselves in England, where they are invited to dinner by a local nobleman. When they arrive, they are shocked to find that one of the other guests is Prince S***, the author of all their troubles. He has reformed in the meantime, however, and when the Graf dies suddenly, he offers to marry the Gräfin, whose response is to point to R*** and say “Hier ist mein Gemahl.” (124) The novel closes with the Gräfin’s remark that R*** also died soon after this, “und die Betrübnis über sein Verlust überführte mich, wie sehr ihn mein Herz noch geliebt hatte.” (125) Although this tumultuous plot, episodic in structure and randomness of fate—the rewards due to Gellert’s moral characters are also meted out financially despite the series of catastrophes that continue to occur. Vogl, Joesph: Kalkül und Leidenschaft: Poetik des ökonomischen Menschen, Sequenzia, München, 2002, p. 182f.
rife with coincidence, seems rather ridiculous to modern readers, Gellert did important work in making the novel a socially acceptable genre, paving the way to its popularity by attaching it to a certain moral perspective. It is also worth noting that although his novel is still far from being an internally coherent narrative focused on the development of richly emotional individual characters through a series of plausible events, Gellert’s Gräfin does assemble an affective family around her in much the same way as do Werther, Sophie von Sternheim, and the protagonists of the novels I will discuss throughout this project.

At the beginning of this chapter, I discussed to some extent the importance of writing and its thematization in Werther and mentioned that Bildung was an extremely important (and self-acknowledged) differentiator of the bourgeoisie from other classes. Goethe’s novel is not unique in its staging of writing as a constitutive part of individual subjecthood. I will discuss scenes of writing and embedded documents in the novel more extensively in the third chapter, but there are several points that seem to me to be relevant with respect to the role of writing as a practice in the novel. Writing, for the

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90 As Robert Bledsoe puts it in an article entitled “Empathetic Reading and Identity Formation,” “Gellert was the perfect person to promote the novel, because his works were viewed as ‘das Fundament der deutschen sittlichen Kultur.’ Through his fables and other Lehrdichtungen, he had obtained the status of a cult figure which he helped cultivate through extensive correspondence. Gellert’s status, his personal reputation and professional standing put his works beyond reproach and thereby opened the way for the acceptance of the novel as a respectable genre in Germany.” (Bledsoe, Robert S.: “Empathetic Reading and Identity Formation,” In: Lessing Yearbook XXXIII 2001, ed: Rowland, Herbert, and Schade, Richard E., Wallstein Verlag Göttingen, 2002, p. 206)

91 Rebekka Habermas describes the connection between the bourgeoisie and Schrift thus: “Stunden verbrachten diese Frauen und Männer an ihrem Sekretär, am Schreibpult oder auch in freier Natur mit nichts anderem als der Niederschrift unterschiedlicher Begebenheiten oder Empfindungen. Sie griffen zur Feder, um Begegnungen mit Freunden zu schildern, Beobachtungen über eigene oder fremde Seelenzustände zu notieren oder um zu vermerken, wer geboren oder gestorben war, welche Speisen zum Abendessen gereicht wurden und wie die Symptomfolgen von Krankheiten zu bewerten seien [...] ; dann wieder wurden kleinere Erzählungen verfaßt, Gedichte abgeschrieben und Skizzen von denkwürdigen Bauten oder Personen verfertigt. [...] In jedem Fall hatten die Autorinnen und Autoren das Bedürfnis, die Begebenheiten oder Überlegungen, die ihnen wichtig erschienen, festzuhalten, festzuhalten oder besser: festzuschreiben.” Habermas, Rebekka: Frauen und Männer des Bürgertums : eine Familiengeschichte (1750-1850), Vandenhoec & Ruprecht, Göttingen, 2000, p. 274
bourgeoisie around 1800, served as a connecting point between the familial private sphere and a literary public sphere: letter writing was not just a way of apprising absent friends and family members of what was going on in the daily life of the family, but also an activity for developing a natural but cultivated writing style, for acquiring personal expression, and letters—published and unpublished—were read with pleasure and valued as literary documents.\footnote{Ibid., p. 340-350. See also: Koschorke, Albrecht: \textit{Körperströme und Schriftverkehr: Mediologie des 18. Jahrhunderts}, Wilhelm Fink Verlag, München, 1999}

Meshing with and participating in this general interest in written culture, novels around 1800 frequently present themselves as some other form of writing: letters, autobiography, diaries. In part this is because the authors of novels hoped to establish both respectability (this text is not a scandalous romance, but rather a document of ordinary lives; by imitating types of writing that were fixtures of bourgeois life, they declare themselves in sympathy with it) and authenticity or plausibility (as I have discussed elsewhere, one of the major shifts innovations of the genre is that it negates the need to base itself on true historical events by establishing that it \textit{could} be true, that is, that it is plausible). First-person narrative forms also provide a very natural conceit for the inclusion of narrated thought, whether that thought is immediate, as in the epistolary novel, or reflected, as in retrospective autobiography (I will return to this thought in the second chapter). By writing about fictional ordinary people in plausible ways and in types of documents that would have been familiar to those people, novel authors created a constant interpenetration between the everyday and writing. In doing so, they problematize the ontology of the family: exchanges around what the family is, how its bonds are formed, and how it relates to other social institutions were urgent and of vital
significance. The genre of the novel and the concept of nuclear family are thus mutually constitutive—appearing around the same time in Germany, they shaped and influenced each other. It is the forms and variations of some of these influences that I discuss in the following chapters.
Chapter 2: Models of Generation: Epigenetic Thought in Biology, Pedagogy, & Literature

Introduction: Historical Semantics of Generation. Since Hieronymus’ Latin translation of the Bible in the fourth century, the term “generation” has had a doubled meaning. On the one hand, it denotes procreation or reproduction. On the other, “generation” describes an age or peer group. This double conception of the term has persisted to the present and exists in both English and German (as Zeugung and Menschenalter, respectively). As a consequence of this duality, generation as a concept plays out on both horizontal and vertical axes, marked by a distinct semantic openness. Especially at the end of the eighteenth century, as the term was being defined in German, the concept of generation was highly susceptible to cultural influences as a range of disciplines, from pedagogy to biology explored its meanings and connotations. Around 1800, the nascent genre of the novel investigates the semantic richness of “generation” and actively participates in the formation of the various implications of both sides of the term. Particularly in its treatment of the family as a social entity, the novel interrogates the notion of the family as a unit that generates (in the sense of procreation) generations (in the sense of peer groups).

93 “Hieronymus übersetzt also zwei im Hebräischen ganz verschiedene Wörter – toledot und dor -, die auch im Griechischen noch unterscheidbar, wenngleich bereits etymologisch aufeinander bezogen sind – genesis und genea -, mit ein und demselben Wort generatio, das er somit durch die Übersetzung semantisch bereichert.” Parnes, Ohad; Vedder, Ulrike; Willer, Stefan: Das Konzept der Generation : eine Wissenschafts- und Kulturgeschichte, Suhrkamp Verlag, Frankfurt am Main, 2008, p. 31. I follow Parnes, Willer, and Vedder extensively in this historical reconstruction.

94 The modern definitions have broadened somewhat: the Oxford English Dictionary includes creation by both natural and artificial means in its definition of the first type; the second includes people of roughly the same age living at roughly the same time, noting that there is often an implication of shared cultural and historical experience. From: "generation, n.", OED Online. September 2011. Oxford University Press. http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/77521?rskey=QBg0Tt&result=2&isAdvanced=false (accessed September 21, 2011).
In German, ‘generation’ does not appear in standard dictionaries until the mid-nineteenth century.\textsuperscript{95} This does not, however, mean that the term was itself unheard-of; rather, it was generally regarded as a foreign word and included in dictionaries that were intended to introduce foreign words to German readers and to delineate these foreign words from German ones. Thus Karl Philipp Moritz’s successor Johann Ernst Stutz writes in the second volume of the \textit{Grammatisches Wörterbuch der deutschen Sprache} that “Die von einem Stamme zunächst entsprungenen Menschen, auch die Zeit, durch welche sie dauern, nennt man eine Generation.”\textsuperscript{96} Of the first meaning, he continues, “Die deutschen Wörter, Geschlecht, Menschenalter, werden in dieser Bedeutung gebraucht, passen aber nicht recht auf den Begriff;” of the second, he writes “Zeugung könnte den Begriff so gut ausdrücken als Generation, es kommt nur darauf an, ob man ihm diese Bestimmung geben will,” before concluding somewhat mournfully that “Ein besserer Ausdruck fehlet uns bis jetzt.”\textsuperscript{97} Stutz’s entry highlights nicely the desire to assert German equivalents to the imported term and the simultaneous admission that these equivalents are inadequate. Other dictionaries and encyclopedias are less candid, sometimes listing all of the German translations/definitions next to each other, sometimes simply omitting one of the meanings.\textsuperscript{98}

Generation was, of course, not the only concept undergoing semantic shifts in this period: as I have discussed in the previous chapter, the decades around the turn of the nineteenth century were among the first in which people began (at least in the

\textsuperscript{95} Parnes, Ohad; Vedder, Ulrike; Willer, Stefan: Das Konzept der Generation : eine Wissenschafts- und Kulturgeschichte, Suhrkamp Verlag, Frankfurt am Main, 2008, p. 21.
\textsuperscript{96} Moritz, Karl Philipp and Stutz, Johann Ernst: \textit{Grammatisches Wörterbuch der deutschen Sprache}, Band II, Berlin, bei Ernst Felisch, 1794, p. 204.
\textsuperscript{97} \textit{Ibid.} Emphasis in the original.
\textsuperscript{98} Parnes, Ohad; Vedder, Ulrike; Willer, Stefan: Das Konzept der Generation : eine Wissenschafts- und Kulturgeschichte, Suhrkamp Verlag, Frankfurt am Main, 2008, p. 23-4.
bourgeoisie) to think about the nuclear family as an entity that was affectively determined and independent from wider concerns of lineage rather than being cyclical and embedded within large kinship groups. As successive generations ceased to be understood merely as repetitions of those before them, it was no longer given that children would simply follow in their parents’ footsteps—girls to become wives and mothers by marrying inside the same class as their parents; boys to imitate their fathers in becoming farmers, craftsmen, or lords of a noble estate. Instead, children could be viewed as the unique product of the affectionate bond between their parents, and each child had his or her own path to adulthood and an appropriate career.99 Late eighteenth-century opinions regarding affective relationships and the reproduction of children thus developed in tandem and mutually reinforced each other. Further, because of the increased possibilities for social mobility (to a certain degree and within certain classes; again, I am primarily interested in the bourgeoisie’s deliberate projects of self-staging in order to differentiate themselves, in particular, from the aristocracy), the family in this period also became the testing ground for new theories and processes of education, thus giving rise to a generation (in the social sense) of children who had been exposed to these particular values and subsequently shared this cultural identity.

These two valences intersect neatly in another crucial term for the novel, which can also be mapped onto both sides of the ‘generation’ concept: Bildung. Nearly untranslatable in its full resonance (as has been pointed out in the extensive scholarship on the Bildungsroman), Bildung contains notions like ‘formation,’ ‘education,’ and

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99 Although women’s options were narrower and almost inevitably led to marriage and motherhood, the path through these options began to involve choice on the part of the daughter in question, creating a notable increase in the contingency of these choices. See: Werber, Niels, “Vom Nein der Frau: Steuerung und Kontingenz in der Liebe der Literatur,” in: Pethes, Nicolas & Torsten Hahn (eds), Kontingenz und Steuerung: Literatur als Gesellschaftsexperiment 1750-1830.
‘cultivation.’ In the biological sense Bildung has to do with how the organism gradually comes into being; I will discuss this more in the following treatment of epigenesis and preformation. Socially speaking, Bildung is extremely complex. Wilhelm Voßkamp, to name only one of the most well-known and sophisticated examples, has written several books on the term and its resonances with the notion of the image. Questions of modeling and imitation are indeed quite clearly at stake here. But this pictorial conception loses out on something of the process component—Bildung, in the social sense, is not a prescriptive set of rules for direct imitation but rather an ongoing, gradual, and individual path. While the eighteenth century novel has been read extensively in conjunction Bildung as a social and artistic concept, the biological connection, which emphasizes in particular the gradual and processual elements of Bildung, has been largely ignored. By investigating models of generation and generative language in biological, pedagogical, and literary texts, this chapter elucidates the coexistence of and occasional tension between image and process.

I. From Preformation to Epigenesis—late-eighteenth Century Biology

Between the seventeenth century and the second half of the eighteenth, opinions about the manner in which life was generated, formed, and nourished underwent several shifts, both in Europe more widely and in Germany in particular. These have been well

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101 The reading together of literature and biology does appear in scholarship—e.g. works by Robert Richards and Jocelyn Holland—on Romanticism and the so-called ‘life sciences.’ While this connection is clearly warranted by the overt interest that the Romantics themselves took in science, it is nevertheless puzzling to me that the resonances between theories of biology and the much more contemporaneous novels of the turn of the nineteenth century have not been discussed; the “Bildungstrieb/Bildungsroman” connection remains largely ignored, perhaps because of the prevailing scholarly trend towards exploring the “Bild/Bildung/Bildungsroman” connection.
documented by historians of science, and it is not my object to reconstruct the minute specifics of each eighteenth-century scientist’s argument, far less to evaluate them in terms of their correctness relative to modern models of evolution and genetics. Rather, I hope to trace the general outlines of the controversy and to highlight particular aspects—both in the content of the arguments and the manner in which they are made—that show how emphasis shifted in this period from a static to a dynamic model of development.

Although I will focus on texts by authors who were proponents of epigenesis, I will also give a brief characterization of some preformationist arguments as well to provide necessary context for the later epigenetic writings.

Broadly speaking, then, these changes in scientific theory can be viewed in the debate about whether generation is best explained by preformation (frequently called ‘evolution,’ a term that has very different connotations for modern readers) or by epigenesis. On the preformation model, all life was formed by God at the creation of the world, and lies dormant, waiting to be activated at the proper moment. Either the male sperm or the female egg (both theories had their advocates in this period, though ovism was somewhat more common) contained the offspring in a complete but tiny and partially transparent state, and sexual reproduction served merely to activate its process of growth, which involved only getting larger and becoming more opaque. According to the epigenetic model, however, the germs of offspring are unformed, undifferentiated, literally un-organized—that is, not possessing organs—and their development involves not just an increase in their size, but a formation of their parts. Each of these theories had its particular challenges (if a child existed preformed inside its mother’s ovaries, why did children often resemble a mixture of both their parents? or if offspring were initially
unformed, how could the growing body possibly ‘know’ whether a given area was to become a nose or a knee?) and each had wide-ranging implications for religious beliefs and cultural practices.

Historically speaking, it is worth noting that epigenesis is in fact the older model, dating back to Aristotle.\textsuperscript{102} It was with the advent of Newton’s mechanics and the subsequent increasing attempts to explain the entire world by way of mechanical forces that scientists began to formulate notions of generation based on preformed germs.\textsuperscript{103} Nicolas Malebranche, in 1674, was the first theorist to advance a notion of ‘encasement’ (\textit{emboîtement}), in which each seed contains all future seeds inside it (Roe 5). This theory seemed to resolve a deep philosophical problem, namely that to put together epigenesis and a mechanistic world view was to concede that development proceeded by blind chance and, worse yet, left no active role for God as Creator in the world—a deeply disturbing notion for seventeenth-century thinkers. Roe emphasizes the extent to which preformation theories were motivated by a desire to combine a mechanistic world view and a belief in God’s creation of the world: “Preexistence avoided the atheistic and materialistic implications of development by epigenesis, while also accounting for the

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\textsuperscript{102} In my reconstruction of the earlier portions of this debate in the history of science I will be following: Roe, Shirley A., \textit{Matter, Life, and Generation: Eighteenth-century embryology and the Haller-Wolff debate}, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge/New York, 1981, p. 3. All further citations from this work are from this edition and will be given in the text as (Roe page #). There are, of course, more recent works that treat the history of biology in this period, including: Creath, Richard and Maienschein, Jane (editors): \textit{Biology and Epistemology}, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2000; Robert, Jason Scott, \textit{Embryology, Epigenesis, and Evolution: Taking Development Seriously}, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge/New York 2004, and Metzger, Stefan: \textit{Die Konjektur des Organismus : Wahrscheinlichkeitsdenken und Performanz im späten 18. Jahrhundert}, Wilhelm Fink Verlag, München, 2002. Roe’s book is still exemplary in its clarity and thoroughness, and it is ideally suited to this project because of her focus on Haller and Wolff in particular and her careful dissection of the biological and philosophical components of their debate.

\textsuperscript{103} Julien Offray de La Mettrie offered one of the most extreme versions of this materialist philosophy in his 1748 \textit{L’homme machine}. Materialism was, of course, linked at least indirectly with atheism, a serious charge in this era—La Mettrie himself was forced to flee from the Netherlands to Prussia as a result of outrage at his work.
source of animal organization. Embryos develop into the proper organisms because all of their parts were created at one time and arranged in the proper fashion by God.” (Roe 8)

By the early eighteenth century, preformation had established itself as the single theory that enabled the reconciliation of what people knew about the physical world and its (mechanistic) forces and their religious beliefs.

In the seventeen-forties, however, a trio of scientists—Maupertuis, Buffon, and Needham, who corresponded extensively with each other and performed some collective experiments—began to challenge preformationist theories, suggesting that perhaps there existed biological forces that worked in ways similar to the attractive and repulsive forces observable in the physical world (Roe 19). Buffon, whose *Histoire naturelle* began appearing in 1749 (and continued, in thirty-six volumes, until 1788), suggests that generation is enabled by consumption of organic particles (i.e. nutrition) that, once an animal has achieved its adult size, are no longer needed for the growth of that animal and therefore are diverted to the reservoirs of seminal liquid. These liquids (which contain ‘representatives’ from each part of the body) are mixed in the sexual reproduction of two adult animals, and they form a new organism according to ‘interior molds’ that guide the development and solidification of these fluids (Roe 15). Buffon’s theory—and those of Needham and Maupertius as well—has the advantage of being able to explain phenomena like hybrids, not to mention the resemblance of children to both of their parents. Their key innovation was to reanimate older mechanistic theories of epigenesis via a discourse of forces—attractive and repulsive, but also ‘vegetative.’

These theories provoked a response from a new group of preformationists, most notably Albrecht von Haller and Charles Bonnet. Haller’s case is particularly interesting
because within the course of his career, he went from matter-of-fact, unquestioning preformationism (adopted from his teachers at Leyden), through a conversion to epigenesis, and then yet another one back to a more considered and vehement preformationism, initiated and supported, he believed, by his experiments at the time (Roe 21f). Haller—who was also a noted poet—is perhaps now most remembered for his discussions of irritability (Reizbarkeit) and sensibility (Empfindlichkeit), and it was his work on these forces that enabled him, after his second conversion back to preformationism, to develop a narrative for how generation would work on that model. In his treatise *Sur la formation du coeur dans le poulet* (1758), he uses his experiments on incubated chicken eggs to argue that the embryo, from the very first, contains the complete essential structures of the organism. At the moment of reproduction, the sperm galvanizes the heart into action, which is possible because the heart, like all muscles in Haller’s theories, is endowed with irritability, causing it to contract in response to stimuli (Roe 36). The heart’s beating, in turn, propels the growth (again, understood purely as increase in size and opacity) of the embryo. Any structural changes in the embryo are merely apparent, due to our inability to observe particularly tiny or transparent parts. Haller’s theories—along with those of Bonnet, whose primary contribution seems to have been the entrenchment of Haller’s views, as he restated what for Haller were tentative hypotheses as absolute certainties—were contested within Germany by Caspar Friedrich Wolff. In the remainder of this section, I examine primary sources by Wolff and his successor Johann Friedrich Blumenbach in order to analyze the dynamic elements that emerge in this scientific paradigm shift.
Wolff first elucidated his notion of epigenesis in his dissertation, *Theoria generationis* (1759) and then in a later (though similar) book entitled *Theorie von der Generation* (1764). As he himself points out in the first section of his work, Wolff is the first scientist to offer an actual account of how generation and growth take place on an epigenetic model, as opposed to theories that describe them temporally or anatomically, or, at best: other theorists, according to Wolff, “zeigen uns zwar den Ort, wo die Formation geschieht, aber nicht die Art, wie sie geschieht. Sie enthalten die Umstände, die die Generation begleiten, aber nicht diese selbst.”\(^{104}\) Wolff embarks on a lengthy discussion of why preformation is implausible, on logical grounds, and he refutes the arguments of Haller and Bonnet at length. He answers the preformationists’ charge that he supports his theory of gradual development and organization (i.e. the literal formation of organs) on the premise “was ich nicht sehe, ist nicht da” with the rejoinder that it is also not the case that the current coexistence and continuity of two things (here, the membrane of the egg yolk and the intestine of the developing chick) necessarily means that they were created at the same time: “Ich sehe gar nicht den Zusammenhang zwischen diesen Sätzen; Ein Theil eines Dinges continuirt gerade fort in den andern Theil desselben Dinges; daher hat der eine Theil desselben niemahls ohne dem andern Theil existiren können, sondern das ganze Ding hat in instanti producirt werden müssen.” (105-6) He equates this with the saying that because a brick wall that has been covered in mortar is continuous, every part of it must have been created simultaneously—which is clearly nonsense. There is not a great deal to differentiate Wolff and Haller in terms of the acuity of their experimental observation—and so their arguments often did reduce to

\(^{104}\) Wolff, Caspar Friedrich: *Theorie von der Generation*, Berlin, Friedrich Wilhelm Birnstiel [Verlag], 1764, p. 26. All further citations from this work are from this edition and will be given in the text as page numbers.
such logical maneuvers, which were informed by their particular philosophical commitments.\textsuperscript{105}

Finally, Wolff does embark on his own attempt to explain how it is that plants and animals grow, develop organs, and eventually reproduce. He posits that all organisms are initially in a fluid state (something more easily observed in plants), and that as they develop organs (are ‘organized’), they become solid, thus forming the cells\textsuperscript{106} and vesicles of bodies. (131-2) All development is reducible to this process of secretion and solidification—fluids are pushed further and further out by a “wesentliche Kraft” (called the \textit{vis essentialis} in the earlier dissertation), which he describes as “eine den vegetabilischen Körpem eigene und wesentliche Kraft.” (160) This force is, like gravity, not a force that we can explain, but we can observe it and describe its effects, and see “daß sie diejenige Kraft ist, durch welche in den vegetabilischen Körpem alles dasjenige ausgerichtet wird, deswegen wir ihnen ein Leben zuschreiben.” (160) Bodies, then (in animals as in plants) develop from the center outwards, one part after another: “Die verschiedene Theile entstehen nemlich alle einer nach dem andern, sie entstehen alle so, daß immer einer von dem andern entweder excernirt, oder deponirt wird [...]Ein jeder Theil ist im Anfange, wenn er excernirt oder deponirt wird, unorganisch, und er wird erst organisiert, wenn er schon wieder andere Theile excernirt hat” (210-11). This process extends, in plants, to the smallest tips of their leaves, and, in animals, to the fingers and toes, and can even be used to explain sexual reproduction.

\textsuperscript{105} For a thorough description of the technology available to Wolff and Haller, and of the comparison with what they could observe with what modern microscopes can detect, as well as for a thorough reconstruction of the two men’s philosophical commitments, see Roe, chapters 3 & 4.

\textsuperscript{106} Wolff here does not mean “cells” in the modern biological sense, as did not know that these existed (Leeuwenhoek had already observed cells and their nuclei in the late seventeenth century, but the functional systems of cells were not accurately observed and described until well into the nineteenth century), but rather sort of ‘blisters’ or ‘bubbles’ in the structures, which were hollow and could allow fluid to pass through them.
When the animal has reached its adult size (which Wolff suggests might be
limited by the strength of its bones, though he insists it is not necessary to have a
conclusive explanation), the continued action of the essential force and the movement of
nutritive fluids creates for the animal “eine Empfindung, die dem Thiere bishero
unbekannt war, eine Art von Beängstlichkeit, die aber angenehm ist, und davon sich
dennoch das unruhige Thier, ob es gleich nicht weis wie, loszumachen bemühet.” (254)
This sensation, according to Wolff, intensifies at the sight of an animal of the same
species but opposite sex, and “alles dieses läuft am Ende auf nichts anders hinaus, als auf
die Vereinigung beyder Geschlechte; hierdurch wird dem Thier alle Unruhe, alle
Beängstlichkeit, auf einmahl benommen.” (254) Thus, says Wolff, the process begins
again: „Die Vegetation fängt nemlich an demjenigen Orte, wo sie vor Zeiten stehn
geblieben war, nun wieder von neuen an, fortzufahren, und zur Erhaltung derselben
werden nunmehro diejenigen Säfte dahin zugezogen, die durch ihre Anhäufung im Blute
jene Unruhe verursacht hatten.“ (254-5) Although this process is cyclical, because each
organism is built anew from an undifferentiated fluid, there is room for variation amongst
individuals. Indeed, much of Wolff’s later work was focused on hybrids and species,
including, notably, the extent to which a species could vary as a result of its particular
environment.107

Although the scientific debate between Haller and Wolff remained largely
inconclusive, in one instance Wolff clearly displays how much more he was aligned with
the sensibilities of younger thinkers in terms of his views on science and nature as open
and dynamic. In his discussion of Haller and Bonnet’s theories, he contrasts the concept

107 Wolff develops this work both in the De leone observationes anatomicae of 1771 and an unpublished
work on monsters that Roe treats at length in her fifth chapter.

In a sort of pseudo-eulogy, he mourns the loss of a nature that was “lebendig,” possessing “eigene Kräfte” and endless variation, that continually destroyed itself but also created itself again “von neuen.” Wolff’s use of the past-tense indicative instead of the subjunctive (if we were to believe this theory, then nature would be dead) is a canny twist of rhetoric: the contrast “Bishero”/”Jetzo” makes it seem almost as if it is Haller and Bonnet themselves who have killed nature and stripped her of her beauty. Now, according to the preformationists, nature’s lively changes are merely an illusion, and instead of being self-renewing, nature is simply “abgenutzt.” “leblos,” and losing its pieces one after another. Although Wolff’s vanished model of nature is cyclical (“destruierte”/ “schuff”), this does not mean that it is repetitive: it admits great variety (the phrase “unendliche Veränderungen” occurs twice) and can always present us with something new (“sich immer wieder auf einer neuen Seite zu zeigen”). By temporarily assuming the preformation model as fact and portraying its consequences, Wolff contrives to argue against it. It is not difficult to see how Wolff’s language, which moves strongly away from a mechanistic and narrowly law-determined concept of nature and towards the idea of nature as dynamic, variable, and sometimes potentially sinister, would have been appealing to his contemporaries and even to the Romantics several
decades later. And in this flight of rhetoric, Wolff highlights precisely the combination of connectedness and variation that becomes so important for perceptions of the relationship between parents and children and the for portrayal of these relationships in the novel.

Wolff’s work was taken up and revised by Johann Friedrich Blumenbach, who first published his treatise Über den Bildungstrieb in 1781. Like Wolff, Blumenbach begins his treatise with an overview of the various positions that have been taken on the topic of generation, mentioning that it is a topic that has retained interest since Antiquity, and explaining that all existing theories can be grouped either under evolution (i.e. preformation, see explanation above) or epigenesis. Either, he says, we believe in epigenesis and its gradual formation of new organisms from the reproductive material of the parents, “[o]der aber man verwirft alle Zeugung in der Welt, und glaubt dagegen, dass zu allen Menschen und Thieren und Pflanzen, die je gelebt haben und noch leben werden, die Keime gleich bey der ersten Schöpfung erschaffen worden, so dass sich nun eine Generation nach der andern blos zu entwickeln braucht.”\footnote{Blumenbach, Johann Friedrich: Über den Bildungstrieb, Göttingen, Johann Christian Dieterich [Verlag], 1791, p. 14. (This revised edition contains more descriptions of experiments than the original version but does not fundamentally change in its argument.) All further citations from this text are from this edition and will be given in the text as page numbers.} Also like Wolff, Blumenbach names Haller and Bonnet as the most modern and also most formidable proponents of preformation. Still, he finds at least Bonnet (who was from Geneva) to be quite clearly ridiculous, writing:

Auch hat uns daher vor Kurzem einer der neuesten Verfechter dieser Theorie, ein berühmter Genfer Naturforscher, mit nichts geringerem, als einem Entwurf der organisirten Körper vor ihrer Befruchtung, beschenkt, und uns darin belehrt, dass wir 1) alle weit älter sind als wir geglaubt hatten; dass 2) alle Menschen in der Welt von gleichem Alter sind, der Grossvater nicht um einen Tag älter als sein neugeborner Enkel etc. und dass sich 3) diese ehrwürdige Alter aller Menschen, die gegenwärtig auf dem Erdenrund leben, nahe gehen 6000 Jahre erstreckt. (24)
In contrast with Wolff’s impassioned portrayal of a lifeless nature, Blumenbach makes his opponents seem absurd (adding, after his passage, another account in which each successive generation has more space in the ovaries than the one before it, so that “wir konnten uns nemlich bey Cains Schwester schon ein bisschen mehr ausdehnen als bey ihrer Mutter, wo sie selbst nebst ihren Geschwistern bey uns lag und uns den Raum beengte [25]). But, Blumenbach continues, “So abentheuerlich romanhaft diese letztern Behauptungen scheinen mögen, so fliessen sie doch im Grunde ziemlich natürlich aus den Grundsätzen jener Theorie.” (26) This is a logical move not unlike Wolff’s discussion of the brick wall and its continuity as against Haller’s attempted membrane continuity proof.

Blumenbach becomes more serious, however, when he turns to narrating his own scientific career, and he admits that due to the convincing and extensive explanations that Haller and others have offered for these apparent absurdities, which led to the widespread acceptance of preformation in the thirty years prior to his writing, “ich habe ihr [diese Theorie] vorhin beygepflichtet, habe sie gelehrt und in mehreren Schriften vertheidigt; so dass in so fern hier diese Blätter das Geständnis eigner Irrthümer enthalten” (26). Indeed, in keeping with the notion of a confession, the next section of Blumenbach’s treatise reads much like a conversion narrative: he relates how ‘[d]er unerwartete Erfolg eines kleinen Versuchs” – an experiment he had in fact begun with the intent of using it to prove preformation—brought him first to doubt what he had been professing and then “öffnete mir bald eine neue der vorigen sehr entgegengesetzte Bahn.” (27) While it would be a stretch to label Blumenbach’s treatise a ‘novel of biology,’ it is certainly worth remarking that his text shares with the genre a sense of the importance of the process of
moving from error or immature thought to a more complete and considered position; that is, development-based modes of thinking and writing are visible in the texts that themselves describe what epigenesis is and how it works.

To illustrate the process of his conversion from preformation to epigenesis, Blumenbach describes an experiment that involved slicing polyps in two and watching them regenerate and another case in which he observed the healing process of a wound in a man’s leg. Since this time, he continues, he has devoted a great deal of time and effort, in both experiment and reflection, to this issue, and all of this:

führt mich am Ende zu der Überzeugung: Dass keine präformierten Keime präexistiren: sondern dass in dem vorher rohen ungebildeten Zeugungsstoff der organisirten Körper, nachdem er zu seiner Reife und an den Ort seiner Bestimmung gelangt ist, ein besonderer, dann lebenslang thätiger Trieb rege wird, ihre bestimmte Gestalt anzunehmen, dann lebenslang zu erhalten, und wenn sie ja etwa verstümmelt worden, wo möglich wieder herzustellen. (31)

He goes on to discuss the nature of this force, explaining that, as with other forces in the physical realm, like attraction and gravity, we are able merely to observe its effects in the world, not to identify its cause, and that further study of this force is intended merely to describe these effects more accurately in hopes of being able to generalize them into some sort of law. In his view, then, the force that is responsible for generation is:

Ein Trieb, der folglich zu den Lebenskräften gehört, der aber eben so deutlich von den übrigen Arten der Lebenskraft der organisirten Körper (der Contractilität, Irritabilität, Sensibilität etc.) als von den allgemeinen physischen Kräften der Körper überhaupt, verschieden ist; der die erste wichtigste Kraft zu aller Zeugung, Ernährung, und Reproduction zu seyn scheint, und den man um ihn von andern Lebenskräften zu unterscheiden, mit dem Namen des Bildungstriebes (nisus formativus) bezeichnen kann [sic]. (32)

This force is in point of fact different from Wolff’s vis essentialis/wesentliche Kraft (as both authors point out in subsequent texts), in that whereas Wolff’s force is responsible

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109 Although the word “Trieb” is generally translated—at least since Freud—by “drive,” I have chosen to use “force” to preserve the parallel between the Bildungstrieb and the other forces at work in nature that Blumenbach is eager to establish and that is one of the main consistencies between his work and Wolff’s.
only for the movement of nutritional fluids through the body such that the process of secretion and solidification can take place, Blumenbach’s has an active role in the formation of the different organs. How, precisely, this should work is unclear (how does the Bildungstrieb ‘know’ what it is supposed to be forming at any given point?), just as Wolff’s theory does not completely explain how the essential force uses secretion/solidification to create different organs. It was not until the middle of the nineteenth century, with the advent of cell biology, and, eventually, Darwin, that scientists developed a more complete picture of how generation worked.

Nevertheless, there are several elements of Wolff’s and Blumenbach’s theories that are extremely important in a wider cultural sense and for conceptions of the family in particular. In fact, precisely that there were no major experimental or technological breakthroughs is significant, because it means that epigenesis managed to become the dominant explanation by the end of the eighteenth century by virtue of a kind of paradigm shift, which we might indeed reasonably expect to see paralleled by movements in other areas of cultural production. Regardless of whether it was ‘correct,’ epigenesis was a much more open and variable model of generation than preformation, where everything was literally predetermined at the Creation. On an epigenetic model, there was room for development to take different directions, for it to be influenced by its environment and, perhaps most importantly, by both parents. As Müller-Sievers points out, if one believed in preformation, the choice of marriage partner was utterly irrelevant.

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110 Helmut Müller-Sievers, in his study *Self-Generation*, may overstate the case somewhat when he writes “Hypothetically proposed at first as the more economical way to account for the generation of living beings, epigenesis is soon taken, without any significant advance in reproductive physiology, as the irrefutable and sufficient foundation of organic life” (Müller-Sievers, Helmut: *Self-Generation: biology, philosophy, and literature around 1800*, Stanford University Press, Palo Alto, 1997, p. 5), but Roe and others agree that there were not enormous advances in biology in this period and that the shift was therefore as much philosophical/cultural as it was scientific.
because all complete children were already stored in the sexual organs of one partner or the other (depending on which branch of preformation one chose)—it therefore made sense to base choices of partner on economic factors and/or the interests of a wider network of kin. Thus, says Müller-Sievers, “Preformationism is the proper scientific theory behind the practice of arranged marriages in the eighteenth century.”  

Epigenesis, by contrast, involves a mixing of the contributions of two parents to create a new being that depends on those particular contributions rather than being predetermined, and therefore meshes with the rising notion of marriage based on affection: the child is not someone who would always have been that way regardless, but rather an embodiment of the unity of its parents. On epigenetic theories, further, the newness of each individual life means that there is a massive increase in the potential for variation and unique development.

Furthermore, epigenetic theory places increased emphasis not only on the material that is being combined from the two parents, but also on the process of reproduction and the different forms it can generate—an emphasis that becomes particularly clear in Wolff’s later work on plant species that can vary so widely in different climates as to be unrecognizable as variations of the same plant but which then ‘change back’ when returned to their original setting. After all, as Stefani Engelstein points out in her book Anxious Anatomy, a “major distinction between epigenesists and preformationists lay in the issue of whether life could be created, whether the newborn was actually new.” This newness is precisely what enables the drastic increase in potential variation and

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112 Again, see Roe’s treatment of Wolff’s later works, Roe, Chapter 5.
individuality on epigenetic theories—an idea that carries over quite naturally into a strong interest in the raising of children once they had been born. Formally speaking, we can see this emphasis on process both in Wolff’s discussion of preformation’s lifeless nature (as contrasted with the lively and cyclical nature of epigenesis) and in Blumenbach’s recounting of his own process of development and conversion to epigenesis.

In the rest of this chapter, I will trace what might be called epigenetic thought as it pertains to philosophies of education and the novel, where we see many different variants of generation (biological and social) and education being creatively developed and thought through. These developments cannot be mapped one-to-one onto each other, nor can the biological shift be read as a matrix for evaluating cultural production. Rather, these changes can be seen as multifaceted components—components that sometimes take on passive/reactive roles but also themselves sometimes serve as motors of change—of a historical paradigm shift that still in large part determines the way we think about these matters in the twenty-first century.

II. Philosophies of Education

In the years between Wolff’s treatise and Blumenbach’s, and continuing thereafter, the German territories and Europe more widely saw an explosion of interest in the raising and education of children. Rousseau’s *Émile, ou De l’éducation* was published in 1762 and received massive amounts of attention in Germany.114 The “Recensionsorgan” *Allgemeine deutsche Bibliothek*, which started in 1765, contained scattered works on education from its inception—though these earlier instances were often specifically religious in nature. But from 1773 onwards, the journal included a

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section on recently published “Erziehungschriften,” and in every volume there were at least two or three works mentioned, sometimes many more.\textsuperscript{115} This interest is, in my reading, parallel to the biological shift between preformation and epigenesis—it depends, building on Engelstein’s point, on the radical \textit{newness} of each individual child.

Education, on a preformation model, can never be anything but superficial. Since each person is already completely formed at the Creation—preformation, as we recall, involves \textit{only} growth in the strict sense of expansion, not actual change or development—education has little power to influence a person’s life. Skills or talents can be attached to a person like so many merit badges, but this training can never deeply alter that person’s life trajectory. On an epigenetic model, by contrast, education is crucial precisely because of the new and unformed quality of each individual life. Far from being a simple code of behaviors that must be merely imitated, education comes to be seen as \textit{formative}.

Reading this upsurge in attention to the education of children along with the preformation-epigenesis debates makes it clear that this new interest mirrors the simultaneously occurring paradigm shifts that I have discussed above. In the most interesting of these texts on education, we can also see strong evidence—both thematically and in the types of language used by the authors—of an open, dynamic mode of thought that also correlates with the epigenetic.

Of course, not all educational treatises were overtly ‘epigenetic’ in their methods. The prescriptive nature of the texts themselves limited some authors to providing what essentially remain sets of rules for behavior, framed in most cases by the skeleton of an anthropological approach. But even these texts display quite clearly the notion that the

early education of individual children is in fact formative not only for those children but for the state as a whole. Joachim Heinrich Campe’s *Väterliche Rath für meine Tochter*, for example, focuses on the proper role of women in bourgeois society, and it consists largely of a fairly mundane enumeration of what skills women should have (those that will help with the running of a household) and those that should be avoided (all types of ‘charming’ or pleasing activities), what books are appropriate for them to read, and so on. This advice is preceded, however, by a plea for women to recognize the importance of their role in society (even as that role is limited to that of wife, housekeeper, and mother):

Denn nicht bloß das häusliche Familienglück, sondern auch - was dem ersten Gehöre nach ungläublich klingt - das öffentliche Wohl des Staats, steht größentheils in eurer Hand, hängt größentheils, um nicht zu sagen ganz, von der Art und Weise ab, wie das weibliche Geschlecht seine natürliche und bürgerliche Bestimmung erfüllt. Wie die Quelle, so der Bach; also auch, wie das Weib, so der Bürger, der vom Weibe geboren wird, der die ersten, durch keine nachherige Erziehung jemahls ganz wieder auszutilgenden Eindrücke zum Guten und zum Bösen von ihr erhält. Wie die Quelle, so der Bach; also auch, wie das häusliche Leben der Menschen, so ihr öffentliches; wie das häusliche Familienglück, so das öffentliche Staatswohlergehen.\(^{116}\)

This emphasis on the importance of the mother and of early education to the formation of the entire state is in fact one trait that Campe’s text shares with those that are more comprehensive in their vision of educational programs.\(^{117}\)

Indeed Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi, the pedagogue whose influence has probably been most lasting, was adamant that if practices of early childhood education were not improved, Europe was essentially doomed. In an early text “Die Methode [1800],” he charges that “das Menscheneschlecht,” though provided by nature with a great deal of potential, “ist von ihrer Bahn [der Natur—SVE] abgewichen,” with the consequence that


\(^{117}\) This is a notion that is shared by more philosophical thinkers such as Johann Gottfried Herder and Wilhelm von Humboldt as well; taking their views fully into account is beyond the scope of this project, but it is worth pointing out that emphasis on the importance of education was not limited to authors who were pedagogues in a narrower sense.
“Der Arme ist von ihren Brüsten weggestoßen, und die Reichen verderben sich beides mit ihrem Schwelgen und mit ihrem Tändeln an ihrem überfließenden Busen.”118 Two years later, in “Wesen und Zweck der Methode,” he devotes the bulk of the text to depicting the fallen state in which the people of Europe—having been educated in a fashion that is too one-sided—now find themselves, and he closes this negative description with a call to action:

Es rettet Europa nichts und kann Europa nichts retten als hohe und einfache Kraft in seiner Nationalbildung! Es rettet Europa nichts und kann Europa nichts retten als ein entschlossenes Zurücktreten zu den Grundsätzen, die mit der Menschennatur in dem Grad übereinstimmen als diejenigen, die über sein nahes Verderben entscheiden, von dieser Natur abweichen. Es rettet Europa nichts als die Anerkennung der reinen Elemente, von denen die physische, intellektuelle und sittliche Bildung meines Geschlechts ausgehen muß. (220)

The principles that ought to guide our development, although given to us by nature, have been forgotten, cast aside in favor of artificial training and pseudo-intellectual exercises. Pestalozzi is explicit that educational reforms are crucial to redeem a European society that has gone badly astray and has not focused equally on physical, intellectual, and moral education, and that these reforms must develop and guide man’s natural potential.

The language of nature/naturalness in these two passages is also far from coincidental. Pestalozzi rests his entire educational philosophy on a return to the principles of organic development and acquisition of knowledge that are, in his view, innate to human beings. In the “Wesen und Zweck” piece, he explains that “Der Wilde geht an der Hand der Natur, aber dann ganz isoliert und ohne von irgendeiner Kunstkraft unterstützt und gestärkt zu werden, ganz den Weg meiner Methode.” (206) That is, his method of education is designed to do nothing more than assist nature in her processes,

118 Pestalozzi, Johann Heinrich, “Die Methode [1800],” in: Pestalozzi, Johann Heinrich, Wie Getrud ihre Kinder lehrt und Ausgewählte Schriften zur Methode, collected Pfeffer, Frizt. Ferdinand Schöningh Verlag, Paderborn, 1961, p. 30. All further citations from Pestalozzi’s various works are from this edition and will be given in the text as page numbers.
and to hold each child’s development to those processes rather than to artificial training of skills that the child is not yet ready to develop. In yet another text, *Wie Gertrud ihre Kinder lehrt*, he explains (of ‘das Kind’) that “die erste Stunde seines Unterrichts ist die Stunde seiner Geburt. Von dem Augenblicke, in dem seine Sinne für die Eindrücke der Natur empfänglich werden, von diesem Augenblick an unterrichtet es die Natur,” and goes on to describe the process of learning in terms that are strikingly resonant with Blumenbach’s description of the *Bildungstrieb*:

Die Neuheit des Lebens ist selbst nichts anders als die eben gereifte Fähigkeit, diese Eindrücke zu empfangen; sie ist nichts anders als das Erwachen der vollendeten physischen Keime, die jetz mit allen ihren Kräften und mit allen ihren Trieben nach Entwicklung ihrer Selbstbildung haschten; es ist nichts anders als das Erwachen des jetzt vollendeten Tieres, das Mensch werden will und Mensch werden soll. (59-60)

Children, that is to say—in being radically new—are marked primarily by a potential for development, and the responsibility of parents and educators is to guide that development along its natural lines. As with the gradual formation of physical organs in response to the *Bildungstrieb*, education must guide the gradual unfolding of the seeds that transform individuals from mere animals into human beings.

The progression of this development, for Pestalozzi, ought also to be conceived according to the processes of nature, which are, for him as for Wolff, characterized by the progressive formation of one part after another. In the 1801 “Methode” text, he urges human beings to imitate the “hoher, einfacher Gang” of nature:

Ahme es nach, dieses Tun der hohen Natur, die aus dem Kern des größten Baums zuerst nur einen unmerklichen Keim treibt, aber dann durch ebenso unmerkliche als tägliche und stündlich fließende Zusätze zuerst die Grundlage des Stammes, dann diejenige der Hauptäste und endlich diejenigen der Nebenäste bis an das äußerste Reis, an dem das vergänglich Laub hängt, entfaltet. Fasse es ins Aug, diese Tun der hohen Natur, wie sie jeden einzelnen gebildeten Teil pflegt und schützt und jeden neuen Teil an das gesicherte Leben anschließt! (33-4)

There is definite change taking place on this analogy; Pestalozzi is not describing a process of mere enlargement (à la preformation) but rather a progressive adding of new
parts, one at a time and only after the preceding parts have been formed and stabilized. Both the thematic content and the formal process of Pestalozzi’s educational method, then, take nature as their starting point and ultimate goal. Though there is no concrete evidence that Pestalozzi had in fact read Wolff or Blumenbach, this depiction of a nature that unfolds gradually, adding new pieces only when the previous ones have been fully nourished and developed, at least indicates that his philosophy of education was informed by an appreciation of gradual and dynamic development that had a strong influence on the subsequent life of the person.

Concretely, Pestalozzi’s method involved encouraging children to use their powers of observation to notice and formulate thoughts about things in the world around them, explaining that “Die Anschauung der Natur selber ist das eigentlich wahre Fundament des menschlichen Unterrichts, weil sie das einzige Fundament der menschlichen Erkenntnis ist.” (32) He specifies this by saying that “Jedes Wort, jede Zahl, jedes Maß ist ein Resultat des Verstandes, das von gereiften Anschauungen erzeugt wurde.” (32) Pestalozzi is particularly adamant that children should be taught to speak and describe things properly before they should be taught specifically how to read, that they should learn mathematics from the simple processes of counting concrete objects, and that they should learn writing through drawing circles, diagonals, and squares. In appendices to the 1800 “Methode,” he includes several examples of how this method should work, featuring a dialogue between a mother and child that shows how the process of making tea can lead a child to think about his perceptive organs and which ones he uses for which sense (“Mutter: ‘Womit schmeckst du, daß [der Zucker] süß ist?’ […] Kind: ‘Mit dem Mund’” –which is then later specified to “Mit der Zunge.” [43-4],
various tables to show related words (rhyming, ending changes, etc), and suggestions for counting forwards and backwards by ones and twos. In the later “Zweck und Wesen” piece, he chastises parents and teachers for forcing children to struggle with “Büchersprache […] ehe es die Menschensprache kannte,” adding: “Es ist wahr, indem du dieses tatest, […] decktest [du] die tabula rasa ihrer Unschuld, auf die sich die Welt von Gottes wegen bilden sollte, wie sie wirklich ist, mit einem Quark von Worten, die den Eindrücken, auf die sich die Welt von Gottes wegen auf dasselbe machen, keinen Platz mehr ließen.” (208) Education, for Pestalozzi, must proceed gradually, with no gaps, and must always be rooted (a biological metaphor that he himself uses) in the observation and description of nature.

This emphasis on the gradual and “lückenlos” quality of proper education is also present in Betty Gleim’s 1810 *Erziehung und Unterricht des weiblichen Geschlechts: Ein Buch für Eltern und Erzieher*, which, it is worth mentioning, does not mention the gender of the hypothetical pupils for some fifty pages, so that it continues to be applicable to boys as well as girls for much of the first volume. In the dedication to her text she explains that she does not expect the benefits of this program of education to be immediately apparent; rather “gern möchte ich niederlegen in Euer Herz meine Überzeugungen, meine Wünsche und Hoffnungen, als Saat zu einem fröhlichen Aufblühen, zu einer gesegneten Ernte,” and she goes on in the preface to advocate explicitly for gradual progression: “Der Gipfel wird nur erreicht von dem, der die Stufe

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119 This is in marked contrast to Campe, who, after an introduction in which he asserts that women belong to the human race, is extremely narrowly focused on women.
Gleim, like Pestalozzi (by whom she was extensively influenced\textsuperscript{121}), ties her educational philosophy strongly to principles of Christian morality, but this does not prevent her from being surprisingly progressive regarding the right of women to be educated.\textsuperscript{122}

Also like Pestalozzi, Gleim is somewhere between contemptuous and despairing about the state of European society at the turn of the nineteenth century, and, like him, she sees education as the only possible way to remedy this situation. She notes that earlier programs of education had been too harsh, that “man tyrannisirte die Kinder zwecklos; befahl und verbot, um zu befehlen und zu verbieten; um, wie man sich ausdruckte, die elterliche Autorität zu behaupten,” but she also complains that recently, parents and educators have swung too far in the other direction and created a population of willful, irrational children. (121-3) Admitting that “[d]ie Menschen, was sie sind, werden schwerlich sich je ganz ändern,” she goes on to use precisely the language of biological renewal and potential to describe the importance of her own project:

\begin{quote}
Aber die Menschheit regenerirt sich ja täglich, und was vergebens ist von der daseienden Generation zu erwarten, wird vielleicht die werdende leisten. Was der Mitwelt zuzumuthen zu kühn wäre, darf vielleicht der Nachwelt abgefordert werden.

Auf die Kinder richte sich denn der Blick, der sich oft schwermüthig von der übrigen Menschheit wegdendet; sie zu bewahren, sie zu leiten, sie innerlich stark zu machen, ihnen das Auge zu öffnen und zu schärfen für die Wahrheit, und es auf ewig zu verschließen dem Wahn und der Lüge, sei uns ernsteste, innigste Angelegenheit.

Die Erziehung ist also das Senfkorn, aus dem der Stamm eines neuen Geschlechts erwachsen kann. (6-7)
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{120} Gleim, Betty: \textit{Erziehung und Unterricht des weiblichen Geschlechts: Ein Buch für Eltern und Erzieher}, G. J. Göschen, Leipzig, 1810, p. xi. All further citations from Gleim are from this edition and will be given in the text as page numbers.

\textsuperscript{121} Not only are there marked similarities throughout their texts; Gleim also cites Pestalozzi’s \textit{Elementar Entwicklungsmitte: das Buch der Mutter}, p. 149.

\textsuperscript{122} Gleim even goes so far as to suggest that women should be trained to be more than just wives and mothers because not all of them will actually enter into those roles—she thus suggests other occupations (governess, teacher, nurse) that are appropriate for women. pp. 107-114. She also insists that all people are entitled to education regardless of their class: “Die Bildung ist nicht das Privilegium einiger besonders Begünstigten, sondern sie ist Gemeingut der Menschheit.” (53)
It could not be clearer that education is of paramount importance to Gleim; indeed, it is the only possibility open to mankind for improving its own situation. It is also striking the extent to which developmental biological language has permeated into other areas of cultural production; Gleim uses ‘generation’ to refer to a social entity, but the verb form ‘regenerate’ carries stronger biological connotations. This is only reinforced by the metaphor in the last line of the passage, which combines the biological with the biblical\textsuperscript{123} to express a hope that education will reform the human race.

Although Gleim shares Pestalozzi’s insistence on cultivating the various capacities of children in balance with each other,\textsuperscript{124} she is far more insistent on the notion that the inner state of the child is much more important than the outward: “Ja gewiß, es ist unwidersprechlich, das Inwendige ist das Erste, Wichtigste, Größeste; und bei dem Menschen das, was allein ihn heiligt oder verunreinigt.” (3) This plays to some extent into a distinction that she makes between \textit{Erziehung} and \textit{Bildung} (in marked contrast to other authors, who tend to use the terms virtually interchangeably). She correlates \textit{Erziehung} with the ‘contents of development,’ whereas \textit{Bildung} is ‘das Formale’ of that development. This is not to say that \textit{Bildung} is therefore the less important element; on the contrary:

\begin{quote}
\textit{Bildung} ist nicht den Besitz eines Aggregats von Kenntnissen; denn nicht die extensive Größe des Geistes hat Werth, sondern die intensive; nicht der Grad, sondern die Art des Verstandes; Bildung ist eine freie, selbstständige, allseitig harmonische Gestaltung oder Gestalt seiner selbst und seines Lebens, und die daraus hervorgehende Richtung des Geistes und Gemüths, welche das Mannichfaltige zur Einheit bringt! das Getheilte zur Totalität verbindet, und in allem Wechsel und Wandel der Erscheinungen nur auf das Eine, Unveränderliche und Ewige sieht. (13)
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{124} “Erziehung ist Erregung, Entwicklung und Bildung aller Kräfte des Menschen, in und zu einem harmonischen Einklange und für einen gemeinschaftlichen Zweck.” (7)
Again, although Gleim is specifically religiously motivated, her concept of education, of formation, is one that involves not the accumulation of various skills or conformity to a series of social codes, but rather involves the deep molding and unification of the most inward parts of a human temperament. Furthermore, as for Pestalozzi, this is a process that has a deep impact not only on the individual, but also on the family unit and, even further, on the life of society as a whole.

Two major components of this molding, for Gleim, are inner authenticity and individuality. She condemns “Unwahrheit” as the “Grundübel” of human kind, and goes on to list a number of ways in which this dangerous falsity is not so much “Unwahrheit durch Worte, […] sondern vornehmlich die Unwahrheit des Sinns; der Empfindung, des Denkens und des Handelns,” all of which attempt to present to the outside world something other than what is truly taking place in the inner self, according to one’s own sense of virtue, reason, and duty. (131) She closes the more theoretical half of her treatise by stating that “[d]as, was viertens in der Behandlung des Zöglings beobachtet werden muß, ist Schonung seiner Individualität,” and goes on to warn parents not to mistake their own individuality for that of their children:

Viele Eltern wollen sich selbst, wie sie nun einmal sind, in ihren Kindern wiederfinden, sie streben daher, nicht das Kind seinen individuellen Anlagen nach möglichst vollkommen auszubilden, und es dem Ideal der Humanität möglichst vollendet entgegen zu führen; sondern sie trachten, ihre eigene Persönlichkeit ihren Kindern anzueignen und aufzudringen, und sich in diesen, ganz sie selbst zu wiederholen. Das ist nun ein großes Unglück, weil gerade manchmal das, was der völligen Vertilgung werth wäre, dadurch permanent gemacht wird. (161-2)

Not only do parental attempts to form their children in their own image cause the perpetuation of undesirable qualities and prevent the application of each child’s

125 The second volume devotes itself to more concrete methods of education and is therefore less relevant to my arguments here.
individual talents towards a humanistic ideal; they also, Gleim goes on to say, contribute to a superficiality of education that is intensely damaging to the children:

Die meisten Eltern wollen durch, in und mit ihren Kindern glänzen; daher ist es denn erklärlich, daß so Vielen eine gute Tournüre, eine gefällige äußere Politur und Appretur, das Höchste ist; und in dem Wissen und Können vorzugsweise das, was gezeigt, gesehen und gehört werden kann. Viele Eltern lieben sich und nur sich in ihren Kindern, und daher bringen sie ihrer Eitelkeit und Thorheit sogar das, was ihnen auch sonst das Liebste ist – ihre Kinder – zum Opfer. (162)

Because parents want their children to be impressive in ways that can be displayed outwardly, they neglect the elements of education that are most important. Gleim’s conclusion thus identifies a problematic trend among parents to emphasize superficial skills and outward family resemblance at the cost of genuine and individual development.

As we shall see in the next section, this is a theme that appears with great frequency in the novels of the era as well, with the surprising result that it is frequently not biological parents who are the best educators of their own children, but rather foster parents or, after the child has reached a certain age, sometimes even schools. Pestalozzi and Gleim are so single-mindedly focused on educational reform that it might seem as if there is a simple and direct transition from preformationist to epigenetic modes of thought; that this shift from the directly mimetic to the developmental did not take place all at once or unproblematically is clearly evident in the literature of the period. In it, different permutations of parent-child relationships (both biological and adoptive or surrogate), accompanied by varying forms of resemblance and imitation, and commitments to obedience or individuality, are worked out, developed, and themselves become a process of narrativizing and self-reflecting that makes up the genre of the novel.

III. Cultivated Resemblance: Imitation and Education in the Novel
In the remainder of this chapter, I want to discuss some of these permutations in a bit more detail, to show not simply how literature was influenced by the scientific and pedagogical paradigm shifts going on around it but how literature explored the possibilities inherent in these shifts more minutely and deeply than the biological or theoretical texts were capable of doing. By engaging in the same discourse about dynamic development and the cultivation of new forms, literary texts, particularly the novel, also actively participate in the paradigm shifts that produced the biological move from preformation to epigenesis. In striking ways, using both plot arcs and formal devices, authors depict intergenerational misunderstandings and disagreements about likeness or obedience as most acute in biological relationships, whereas foster parents or surrogate parental figures often appear more attuned to more modern notions of individuality and development. Furthermore, I will argue that the novel itself—to a greater or lesser extent depending on the sophistication of the individual texts—motivates a parallel process of development in its readers. Although the novels I treat range from canonical to trivial and vary widely in their linguistic quality, complexity, and overtness of didactic message, they all involve their readers in thinking about questions of family resemblance and difference, of filial duty and individual self-formation.

The generational divide between biological parents and children often takes the form of a failure on the part of the parents to recognize something about their own offspring. This failure points to a problem of visibility that is, in fact, new for the novel in the later parts of the eighteenth century. In earlier narrative types, bringing up children took the form of providing them with a series of rules; the success of the educational program is then proven by a child’s successful passage through the trials of the outside
world (or contradicted by his or her failure). The protagonist must learn merely to behave as his or her parents have behaved, and the text can simply show whether or not this is the case. On the later, more open model that I have been correlating with epigenesis, however, this process is no longer outwardly discernable: since each child is a unique individual who develops under particular circumstances, direct imitation is no longer a good test of whether or not a child has learned his or her lesson, as parents and children are not necessarily themselves similar. In addition, the very qualities that come to be viewed as positive in this era are inherently less visible, less easily portrayed—authenticity is not as instantly demonstrable as, say, great courage in battle; moderation and self-reflection are more difficult to discern than political skill. Because a child is an unpredictable mixture of contributions from two parents; because a child is genuinely new, unformed, and shaped by the conditions around it; because these conditions themselves are historically subject to change, the child’s character can be significantly different from that of either individual parent.

Thus virtue and values are displaced to the inward personality of the child, and understanding a child’s temperament requires more than just matching up outward behavior with a parent’s own. Superficial correspondence of appearance and behavior may not be in evidence, and the more important measures of a personality are based upon inner characteristics. This focus on inwardness is, as I mentioned in my first chapter, a hallmark of the novel as a genre; the focus on problems of misunderstanding and misrecognition that ensue between generations is one facet in the novel’s attempt to

126 The quintessential form for this is the ‘quest’ structure of medieval epic, in which the quality of a hero’s instruction in strength and virtue is tested by a series of outward challenges and ordeals. As I mentioned in the first chapter, Gellert’s Das Leben der schwedischen Gräfin von G*** is a kind of transitional example, in which the rules of conduct in question are emphatically bourgeois, but the plot structure is still determined by a series of outside catastrophes that test the moral fiber of the characters in question.
investigate how family relations do, can, and should function. Parents in the novel around 1800 are thus forced to attempt to understand their children in new ways, ways that require an acceptance of the independence of those children. In a jarring contrast with the idealization of the nuclear family in the bourgeoisie of the period (as I discussed in the first chapter), misunderstanding between generations is most severe between children and their biological parents, who still expect a certain kind of resemblance, imitation, and obedience on the part of their children. Foster parents, by contrast, are freed from these expectations and are instead governed by active principles of education. Thus to some extent, Bildung in the biological sense—the development of an unformed individual life into its organized state—is transposed into Bildung in the educational sense—the complex and multi-faceted cultivation of an individual personality. Furthermore, this process must, by its very nature, not be seamless and unproblematic: development, when it is not simple imitation, requires difficulty and friction to progress.

Authors have a variety of strategies at their disposal for portraying these intergenerational misunderstandings in biological families: sometimes they are explicitly discussed within the framework of the plot (either by a narrator or, in first-person/epistolary texts, by the characters themselves); sometimes they are merely portrayed and not commented upon; sometimes narrators intervene and provide hints to the reader. And the novel is particularly suited to show these difficulties with the inner and outer manifestations of virtue because it is able to depict the thoughts and feelings that motivate its characters’ actions (what Blanckenburg calls the “Nothwendigkeit” of their actions) in addition to those actions themselves. As I discussed in the first chapter, Blanckenburg views this ability of the novel to focus on the “innrer Zustand” of the
characters (whom he describes as “unserer Mitmenschen”) as the most important factor in how much we are able to empathize (“Theil […] nehmen”) with them and, therefore, in how effective the novel itself will be in its stated task: the novel “soll die Empfindungen des Menschen bilden.”127 Blanckenburg is explicit that the novel ‘forms’ the inner sensations of the reader in much the same way that the novel’s characters must be formed and developed throughout the work.

In the eighteenth century, as Dorrit Cohn points out in her classic study Transparent Minds, it is possible to see certain novelists actively struggling with the strategies available to them for portraying the internal states of their fictional characters128—the epistolary novel provides a fairly natural conceit for this representation, but can become so exaggerated in its attempts at temporal and emotional immediacy as to become absurd (one need only think of Fielding’s Shamela). In Fielding’s Tom Jones, the authorial narrator breaks in on several occasions to announce that readers must hazard their own guesses as to the characters’ thoughts and feelings, as the narrator is no more equipped to see inside their heads than we are. By the turn of the nineteenth century, authors and readers had become somewhat more accustomed to the novel’s unique propensity for what Cohn calls ‘psycho-narration,’ but they still experimented with the possibilities of mixing and combining narrative voices. Through all of these strategies, novel authors create a kind of multi-perspectivalism, playing different sets of values and opinions off of each other and opening up a critical gap

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through which these questions of generation can be extended and struggled with by the readers as well.

This is not to say that all novel authors are equally successful in these strategies of psycho-narration and the creation of multiple perspectives—there is, existing contemporaneously within the decades around 1800, a range in degrees of sophistication and self-awareness of narrative techniques. The simplest instances tend to spell out the misunderstandings and failures of recognition purely on the level of the plot; they essentially tell the reader what to think. This type is closer to the more overtly didactic prose forms of the earlier eighteenth century (e.g. pieces in the *moralische Wochenschriften*) and to the prescriptive norms of pedagogical treatises. More complex and interesting cases, however, involve a kind of isomorphism or mirroring between education of characters in the plot and the education of the readers of the book, who have to overcome difficulties in the reading process and reflect for themselves on what the novel is trying to say. When a novel presents a variety of narrative voices, the reader is forced to figure out how these strategies work and what the text is doing—it is when this complexity is at its highest pitch that the novel is most successful. The education and formation of the characters inside the novel is parallel to the process of education and formation undergone by the reader in engaging with the novel, not as didactically imparting a simple message, but as complicated, nuanced, and sometimes even ambiguous.

It is, of course, worth noting that gender plays a role in these problems of resemblance: in the following cases, a mother compels her daughter to marry against that daughter’s will, and a father badgers his son to the point of hindering that son’s
development to maturity. One could, perhaps, put this down to the genders of the respective authors—but I think the more interesting suggestion has precisely to do with questions of imitation and obedience. Biological parents expect that the child of their own sex will resemble them, imitate them, and conform to their wishes most of all, clinging to a point of view that is not quite preformationism (as that would mean that children were formed at the same time as their parents and the resemblance would therefore be Divinely arbitrary) but that nevertheless is not focused on the particular development of each child. Rather than viewing their children as unformed individuals who should be guided along their unique paths, the biological parents of protagonists in the novel around 1800 insist on adhering to a model in which their children are static replicas of themselves.

### III.1. **Verkennung & Narrative Distance**

In Caroline Wobeser’s massively popular *Elisa, oder das Weib wie es seyn sollte* (1795), the issue of resemblance and misunderstanding between the eponymous heroine and her very traditional mother is explicitly discussed on the level of the plot. Even in this relatively unsophisticated instance, the ways in which these questions are depicted and problematized in the novel, in addition to being a near-perfect illustration of Gleim’s final warning to parents, resonate strongly with the biological debates I discussed above. The narrating voice does little besides emphasize the heroine’s astonishing virtue and capacity for sweetness, gentleness, and forgiveness. The reader is assured repeatedly throughout the narrative that Elisa is both virtuous and rational, and that those who oppose her are marked by serious character flaws. Wobeser uses conversations between her characters—which she generally represents as dialogue in a theatrical style, complete with directions such as “mit schwacher Stimme” (76) or “mit erstickten Thränen” (69)—to play out their
different conceptions of virtue and the misunderstandings that therefore arise between them. In the pivotal scene I discussed in the opening of this dissertation, in which Elisa’s mother forces her to give up the man she loves and marry a man she dislikes, both characters couch their assertion in terms of following laws of nature. Elisa justifies her initial refusal of her mother’s command with the words “mit der Vernunft gab mir der Schöpfer das Recht, selbst mein Glück zu wählen. Indem ich Ihnen gehorche, widerstehe ich dem ersten Gebote der Natur, welches mich zum Glücke ruft!” Her mother, however, disagrees, answering “Das erste Gebot der Natur ist kindlicher Gehorsam.” It is hardly surprising that these two statements are irreconcilable, and Elisa’s decision to yield to her mother is portrayed as a virtuous self-sacrifice rather than an admission of her own error. This is emphasized later in the narrative when Elisa’s mother brings up the topic of their conflict and Elisa’s marriage and asks her daughter if she is happy. Elisa assures her that “Ich […] finde mein Glück in den Bemühungen, meine Pflichten zu erfüllen,” to which her mother replies (“Mit einem Seufzer”), “Elisa, ich verkannte Dich!” Every recalibration of values, every admission of error on the part of a character has to be explicitly stated out loud by one of those characters. Because Wobeser’s text works with a novelistic discourse that does not engage in either distanced authorial narration or psycho-narration, the intergenerational failures of recognition and the problems of visibility must be overtly discussed on the level of the plot.

The language of development and individuality that is so clearly missing from Wobeser’s depictions of Elisa and her mother appears to some extent, instead, in the descriptions of Elisa’s relationship to and memory of her dead father. While her mother is depicted as cold, proud, and overly concerned with lineage, disliking Elisa and preferring
her other daughter who is “fast ganz das Ebenbild ihrer Mutter” (3), Elisa’s father is depicted as a positive influence on her throughout the novel. Although it opens with the death of Elisa’s father, Wobeser leaves her readers in no doubt that he was and remains an important figure in Elisa’s life, writing that: “Seine Worte prägten sich tief in ihr Herz; sie fiel nieder bey der Leiche ihres Vaters, küßte seine erstarrte Hand, und sprach: Vater, ich will stets Deine Tochter seyn!” (2) ‘To be forever his daughter’—in short, to make herself like him, in a way that cannot involve outward comparison, as her father is no longer with her, but rather takes the form of abstract inspiration. The language of family resemblance appears quite strongly here, and meshes with that of development; the narrator tells us (in one of the passages where the purpose of this largely non-critical authorial narrator is to move quickly through large swathes of time) that “[Elisa] vergaß nicht die Lehren ihres Vaters; sein Bild umschwebte sie, und seinen Schatten zu verehren, bildete sie ihre Seele zu jedem Guten” (2) and records Elisa’s remark to a friend that she “versprach es seinem Schatten, ihm ähnlich zu werden” (3, my emphasis). Nor does this idea vanish later in the narrative; when Elisa renounces her own claim to happiness and follows her mother’s wishes in her marriage, the same friend praises her virtue by bringing up her father, with a notable reference to the laying/planting of a ‘seed’: “O, daß Dein Vater seine Tochter sehen [...] in welches er den Keim zu jeder Tugend, und dadurch den Grund dauerhafter Glückseligkeit für sie legte!” (88) This is not a preformed and unchanging seed; it is simply an initial impetus that must be developed in response to particular situations throughout the text. It is extremely interesting that in order for Elisa’s father to be an abstract inspiration, to be portrayed as a positive influence according to the value system of Wobeser’s text, he cannot be actively
involved in her daily life. Wobeser ends up implicitly arguing that the only good father is a dead father. As with the clash between Elisa’s and her mother’s conceptions of the laws of nature and family obligations, Wobeser depicts the inspiration provided to her character by a parent who has influenced her positively but then left her to develop in her own way according to that principle on an explicitly thematic level.

Further, the question of the extent to which Elisa’s self-sacrifice is indeed virtuous or is simply self-negating is well worth asking—it cannot be said that Elisa in fact resolves any of the problems in her life (her desire to marry a man of her own choosing, her inability to keep her husband from being unfaithful or ignoring her advice); she simply endures and represses the difficulties and throws herself into charitable work on behalf of the lower classes. She is so over-cathected apropos her father’s notion of virtue that it prevents her from developing an independent personality in her own right, instead striving endlessly to be like her idealized memory of her father. She ignores the potentially productive friction between herself and her mother by yielding to her mother’s demands, and only the somewhat unconvincing conversion—on the part of her mother and her husband—brought about by their sheer awe of Elisa’s ‘virtue’ brings the narrative to its supposedly-happy conclusion. Wobeser’s novel, despite its popularity, thus ends up being both bluntly didactic (as evidenced by the subtitle “das Weib wie es seyn sollte”) and blatantly implausible (what human being could, possibly, be like Elisa, and what use—even passing over the question of how positive Elisa’s example actually should be—is a perfect but unattainable role model?).

In his 1795 novel *Herr Lorenz Stark*, which is fittingly subtitled “ein Charaktergemälde,” Johann Jakob Engel uses a variety of strategies, on both textual and
formal levels, to display generational misunderstandings. On a thematic level, Engel highlights the question of visibility in the issue of establishing virtue by drawing overt attention to modes of dress. That the elder Herr Stark is not precisely a model of adaptability is made clear in the first pages of the novel, where the narrator teasingly reports that “mit seinem kleinen Hute kam er zweimal ausser die Mode und zweimal wieder hinein.”\textsuperscript{129} We also learn that he is “kein Freund” of “überflüssiger Leinewand vor dem Busen und über den Händen” (5). Simply by describing his taste in clothes, Engel shows us that Stark the father is sensible but narrow-minded. His son, by contrast, is indeed a bit of a dandy—the first time he appears he is wearing “ein lichtbraunes sammtnes Kleid mit goldgestickter Weste” (7), and he defends his right to spend his own money on “Putz” and on occasional entertainment. These contrasts, in addition to being amusing and (likely) making the novel attractive to female readers, make it clear from their outward appearances that father and son are “in Geschmack und Denkungsart allzuverschieden” to agree on minor points of lifestyle; the novel’s plot documents their misunderstandings and ultimate realization that their inner values and notion of genuine virtue overlap much more than their superficial characteristics have led them to believe.

Engel reinforces this point by using a variety of narrative devices to illustrate the ways in which the two men fail to understand each other. The third-person narrator of Engel’s text sometimes has omniscient qualities and sometimes seems to be filtered through the perspective of a particular character. In the opening pages, as the characters are being introduced, the narrator authoritatively reports, of the elder Herr Stark, that

\textsuperscript{129} Engel, Johann Jakob, \textit{Herr Lorenz Stark: eine Charaktergemälde}, Zenodot Verlagsgsellschaft mbH, Books on Demand, Nordersdet, 2007, p. 5. The novel was printed in part in Schiller’s “Horen” in 1795; the first full book printing was in 1801. All citations are from this edition and will be given in the text as page numbers.
“[d]ie Fehler, deren dieser vortreffliche Mann nicht wenig hatte, und die denen welche mit ihm leben mussten, oft sehr zu Last fielen, waren so innig mit den besten seiner Eigenschaften verwebt, dass die einen ohne die andern kaum bestehen zu können schienen” (5). This statement illustrates nicely the extent to which the novel’s characters are indeed, to use Blanckenburg’s term again, our “Mitmenschen”—they are not simple types, but rather complex figures whose good and bad points are inextricably mixed up with each other. Engel’s narrator then goes on to give a full account of Stark’s character, illustrating the ways in which this is the case for this particular figure. This authorial narrating voice clearly possesses knowledge both of Stark’s relation to the world around him (over an extended period of time) and of the inner workings of Stark’s mind; it continues “weil er fühlte, dass man ihm selbst seiner Gesinnungen und Handlungen wegen keinen gegründeten Vorwurf machen könnte, so war er gegen Andre ein sehr freier, oft sehr beschwerlicher Sittenrichter” (5, my emphasis). This narrative perspective maintains a strong critical distance to the characters even as it reports on their thoughts and feelings.

But just a few paragraphs later, this critical distance disappears, and the narrator is much more closely attuned to Herr Stark’s thoughts, recording things that could not possibly have come from any source outside Stark’s own mind (they are too specific and too personal to have been, for example, excerpts from conversations with other characters—in addition to which they are reported before any conversations at all occur in the novel). When describing Herr Stark’s opinions on his son, the narrating voice begins by using reported markers such as “Er hielt ihn …” or “er war ihm …” but then but then slips into free indirect speech for a sentence: “Er selbst war der wahre Sparsame,
der bei seinem Sammeln und Aufbewahren nicht sowohl das Geld, als vielmehr das viele Gute im Auge hat, das mit Gelde bewirkt werden kann.” (6) This is not the voice of the detached narrator, who describes the mixed qualities of the characters; it is a strongly partisan depiction of Herr Stark based on his own self-assessment. Indeed, that the designation of ‘der wahre Sparsame’ is not quite so simple as Herr Stark assumes is one of the leading threads of the novel—Engel uses this free indirect speech to illustrate precisely the point the authorial narrator makes in the opening pages about the interweaving of vice and virtue, showing that the elder Stark is prideful in his thrift and self-congratulatory in his generosity. These faults set the character up to be excessively critical of his son and occasionally mistaken in his choice of beneficiary.

Engel uses similar strategies when portraying Stark, the son. Instead of using free indirect speech, Engel (after having the narrator describe the scene in which the younger Stark, insulted by his father, stomps up to his room to sulk) actually counters the son’s first-person outbursts with more measured commentary from the narrator. Stark the younger complains, “So mich zu misshandeln, rief er: seinen einzigen leiblichen Sohn, und das in Gegenwart eines so verächtlichen, eines so nichtswürdigen Menschen!” (14), whereon the narrator corrects, “Eines so unbedeutenden, armen Wichts! hätte er sagen können: der sich mit Bücklingen und Schmeicheleien durch’s Leben windet, und der übrigens noch eine ganz gute, ehrliche Haut ist!” (14) This pseudo-dialogue goes on for some time, with the younger Stark’s passionate outbursts continually countered by more measured interjections from the narrator:

[Stark:] Mich der Verachtung, dem Spott, dem bittersten Hohngelächter Preis zu geben; und das auf eine so hämische, so gesuchte, so recht ausgekünstelte Art!

[Erzähler] Auf eine freilich ärgerliche, aber dem Alten nun einmal gewöhnliche, und hier von selbst sich darbietende Art, wobei doch, wie sonst immer, der Ehre und des guten Namens geschont ward. –
Of course, the character himself is not privy to these interjections; they are for the benefit of the reader, who has to untangle the statements and interpret them—in their subtlety, complexity, and multiple valences—in order to see that Engel uses this juxtaposition of authorial narration and thought quotation to demonstrate that the younger Stark’s complaints have some truth to them, but that he is still reacting to them in an exaggerated, immature way. We are thus able to realize that both father and son have erred to some extent in their judgments on each other. Engel does not overtly tell his readers to come to this conclusion (as Wobeser does apropos Elisa’s virtuousness), but rather requires us ourselves to progress to a greater understanding of his characters. Instead of imparting an explicit message, the novel uses formal devices to enable us to come to these conclusions ourselves.

Perhaps the most intriguing technique that Engel uses to express discrepancies in the outside opinions of his characters and those characters’ opinions of themselves is when he does not simply use the narrator to comment upon the thoughts, actions, or utterances of the characters but rather creates a kind of compound voice of several minor characters. When the elder Stark’s wife, daughter, and son-in-law are conspiring to convince him that he should treat his son with more kindness and respect, Engel does not report each family member’s opinion individually but generalizes them into the impersonal pronoun ‘man.’ Of their overall strategy, he writes: “Man hielt sich versichert, dass auf das erste freundliche Zureden des Vaters, der Sohn mit Freuden einen Entschluss würde fahren lassen, wobei er selbst am ersten und am meisten verlieren

[Stark] Mir in dem Augenblicke, wo ich mich hinsetzte und für ihn arbeite, so grundlose, so aus der Luft gegriffene, so abscheuliche Vorwürfe zu machen!

[Erzähler] Grundlos nun in der That, wenigstens was Spiel und was Nachtschwärmen betraf, aber darum nicht aus der Luft gegriffen… (14; I have added the attributions in brackets for the ease of readers unacquainted with the context and typographical conventions of Engel’s novel)
müsstе” (17).\textsuperscript{130} Again, this is a narrative strategy that places significant demands on the reader, who must then reflect on the ways in which opinions reinforce each other and how this affects their validity. More significantly, the narrator continues with this same pronoun when reporting the family’s opinion on Stark the father’s attitude and behavior. They find his manner of addressing his son inappropriate, they agree that he fails to treat his son as an adult, and, perhaps most importantly, they insist that the temperamental differences between father and son must be respected by both of them:

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auсh war man darin ganz einig, dass der hofmeisternde Ton und die spöttelnde Laune des Alten zuweilen ins Unerträgliche fielen; dass ein Sohn in männlichen Jahren anders, als im Knaben- und Jünglingsalter müsste behandelt werde; und das jeder Mensch seine ihm eigene Sinnesart habe, die man wohl in gewissen zufälligen Ausserungen leiten, aber nie im Ganzen und im Wesentlichen umschaffen könne. (17)
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This strategy both gives the reader an effective sense of the way in which the two men’s family members are unified in their attempts to reconcile father and son, and it also gives their opinions a sense of objectivity and general applicability. This is no longer the slightly absurd planning session in which Stark’s son-in-law will approach him one way, followed by his wife and her methods, then followed by his daughter—who, because of the “grosse р Übereinstimmung ihrer eigenen Gemüthsart mit der seinigen,” expects that she will have the greatest chances of success. (18) Rather, the compound opinion of Stark’s family meshes with what the narrator reported at the beginning, further convincing the readers that although there are misunderstandings on both sides, it is the father who is mostly in the wrong in their disputes, whereas the son is merely somewhat immature.

\textsuperscript{130} Interestingly, this “Entschluss,” which the rest of the family decides that Stark the son must give up, is a resolution to leave home and the family business. In marked contrast to the traditional themes of the Bildungsroman, Engel suggests that in some instances, maturity means not leaving one’s family behind but learning to act as an adult apropos one’s own relations.
This statement of compound opinion is also, it must be noted, a strong endorsement of the notion of individuality. Each person has his own temperament, and it is impossible to reform this disposition completely (“nie [...] umschaffen”). Indeed the most effective strategy is to direct personal reforms through casual asides (“zufälligen Äußerungen”), which can eventually lead the individual to be correct to draw the same conclusion on his own behalf. This is, the compound voice implies, a more effective strategy than continually picking at someone about the same things over and over the way that Stark the father has done with his son. This notion can indeed be extended to the way in which the genre of the novel itself ought ideally to function: instead of bludgeoning us with its didactic point, the novel interests us in some “zufälligen Äußerungen” about its characters, which then just happen to lead us through to empathy with those characters and insight into how to interpret and interact with the characters around us; this capability of the novel is what distinguishes it from the didactic messages contained in abstract theories of philosophy or the concrete results of empirical disciplines.

Herr Stark the elder receives an embarrassing proof of his own failures of discernment when he discovers that Herr Specht, a man to whom he is *Pathe* and who often borrows money from him, has been simply telling him what he wants to hear. When the elder Herr Stark and his son-in-law confront Specht about the origin of his negative views on the widow with whom the younger Stark is secretly in love (specifically, that the family’s financial distress has been brought about by the widow herself and not by her late husband), Specht admits “Kaum, dass ich Herrn *Stark* von der tollen Wirtschaft […] die erste Nachricht brachte; so rief der Herr Pathen sogleich: das kömmt von der Frau her! Das ist die neue Modewirtschaft der Weiber! […] Meinem Herrn Pathen muss ich
doch glauben; denn der hat Erfahrung, o der kennt die Welt, der weiss Alles.” (72) That is, as the son-in-law adroitly points out, “Sie [...] haben die Sache von Herrn Specht, und Herr Specht hat die Sache von Ihnen.” (72) The elder Stark has been tricked into accepting his own prejudice as valid information, and the young man he had praised as embodying the values he himself espouses has turned out to be a sycophantic liar. Engel also, in another passage in which the narrating voice is very close to the processes of Stark’s own mind, makes it clear that Stark knows that he has been “hintergangen” not so much by his poor beneficiary but “durch sein eigenes Vorurtheil,” and Engel once again illustrates the mixture of warm-heartedness and narrow-mindedness in his character by adding of Stark’s anger on this occasion that “der Grund davon lag weit weniger in seiner gekränkten Eigenliebe, als in der Rechtschaffenheit seines Herzens, das ihm alle gegen die Witwe begangenen Ungerechtigkeiten auf einmal bitter vorwarf” (74). This moment of self-awareness and self-criticism on the part of Stark the father also clears the way for a reconciliation between Stark and his son. Although this plot is in many ways conservative, with its concluding marriage and neatly-tied loose ends, this happy ending is contingent upon the older generation of characters dismissing their own strictly imitative mode of relation to their children and recognizing the younger generation’s individuality and freedom to develop and make decisions in its own way. And without overtly claiming that his readers should learn from his characters’ mistakes, Engel introduces a series of narrative techniques that engage his readers and allow them—while still being amused by the witty language and the somewhat farcical plot—to reflect on those characters’ behavior and their own.
III. 2. Epistolary Multi-perspectivalism Perhaps no text crystallizes the conflict between philosophies of child-rearing that allow for individuality and those that rest on complete obedience more succinctly than the epistolary novel *Sara Reinert*, edited and translated from the Dutch and published in his name by Johann Gottwerth Müller (the actual authors, who are never mentioned, are Elisabeth Bekker and Agatha Deken). Contrasts between blood relations and substitute relatives appear throughout the text, as I will discuss in somewhat more detail in the next chapter, but Bekker and Deken use one exchange in particular to highlight these differences. This conflict is one of many disputes and misunderstandings between the multiple characters who correspond with one another in the novel—the authors take seriously the ability of the epistolary genre to play different characters’ opinions against each other, creating the impression of a thickly textured social world. Heinrich Edeling, a young man who has fallen in love with the protagonist, Sara, writes to her legal guardian to ask for permission to visit her, but mentions that his father disapproves of the match because his family is Lutheran and hers is Calvinist. Then Edeling’s father writes to Sara’s guardian expecting his support in the matter, and in the process providing a picture of his strict mode of raising his children: “Ich brauche mit meinen Jungen nicht viel Worte; ich sage nur: Haltet’s Maul! so soll es seyn, Ihr Herren! – Denn, so bald wir Väter uns ins räsonniren einlassen, so ist mit den Schlingeln kein Auskommen.”131 According to him, giving a child any reason whatsoever for a parental prohibition is a mistake, because “Das kömmt so heraus, als ob man den Jungen das Recht zugestände, Einwendungen machen zu dürfen, und das ich nichts! Wo

131 Müller, Johann Gottwerth [trans] of Bekker, Elisabeth and Deken, Agatha: *Sara Reinert – Eine Geschichte in Briefen, dem schönen Geschlechte gewidmet*, Berlin/Stettin, F. Nicolai [Verlag], 1796, Band II, p. 237-8. All further citations are from this edition and will be given in the text as page numbers. I have chosen to follow the German publisher’s convention of citing this work under Müller’s name since that is how it was received by the German public.
bliebe unsere väterliche Autorität?” (238) Reason and guidance have no place in Edeling’s educational system, which is based purely on prohibition and obedience. Authority is far more important than being wrong or right on a given matter.

This is very much opposed to the philosophy of Sara’s guardian Blankard, who writes back and opines that he and Edeling “im Glauben nicht so sehr, als in der Denkart verschieden sind.” (264) Although he admits that he is not a biological father, he nevertheless explains at length how he would go about raising children if he had them, asserting that he would be pleased if he saw evidence that his children were learning to use their reason and apply it, and that “Sähen sie in der Folge einmal ein Ding besser ein als ich, so würde ich sie loben, und nach ihrer Einsicht thun.” (265) Blankard also offers evidence that this is precisely how he has behaved with respect to Sara; when she correctly disagrees with him, he celebrates it as evidence that she is a rational person who can think for herself. He rounds off his tirade by sarcastically asking Edeling “All sind Sie Vater, so sind Sie doch nicht Pabst? Sie können doch Unrecht haben. Oder sind Sie unfehlbar?” (268-9) This does not mean that he supports the idea of Sara marrying Edeling’s son—not because of the religious difference, but because “Meine Pupille ist ein vernünftiges Geschöpf, und so will ich, daß man sie behandle!” –which would be hardly likely with “Papa Edeling” as her father-in-law. (271) The contrast between a strict authoritarian biological father and a rational, principle-ruled guardian could not be more marked. Although Blankard provides comic relief throughout the novel—the different styles of letters from the different characters are quite expertly developed—the reader must look beyond his slang-filled blustering and sarcasm enough to see that he is making
a worthwhile point. It is the solemn and dignified biological father who remains attached to narrow-minded systems of family lineage, obedience, and imitation.

Even when the novel has moved yet further from its didactic origins and is anchored to a different set of thematic concerns—in this case, transcendent romantic love (and Romantic style)—misunderstandings between parents and children continue to come to the fore in ways that highlight processes of self-recognition and individual development. In Sophie Mereau’s 1803 epistolary novel *Amanda und Eduard*, Amanda’s father makes the mistake of using his worries about outward security (that is, economic stability) to persuade her to marry a man whom she does not love. He fails to recognize that Amanda’s character is entirely determined by her ability to love in an intense and utterly devoted fashion, an ability that is largely ignored and sometimes even derided by her husband. Amanda’s father himself admits his shortcomings as a father and educator, though unlike Elisa’s mother or the elder Stark, he dies before realizing the extent to which he has misunderstood his daughter. In one of the novel’s first letters, which serves to fill in a great deal of Amanda’s previous life story, she reports to her friend Julie a conversation with her father that took place before her marriage, in which he confesses that he has lost their entire fortune and, since “Die Umstände vergönnten mir nicht, dir eine Erziehung zu geben, welche die, in dir vielleicht schlummernden Talente hätte gehörig entwickeln können, damit du jetzt in ihrer Ausbildung Mittel zu einem leichten und anständigen Unterhalt finden möchtest”¹³², he urges her to accept the expedient way out of material want by marrying Albret, a much older man who has asked for her hand. He preemptively dismisses any thought she might have of marrying for love, telling her

¹³² Mereau-Brentano, Sophie: *Amanda und Eduard: Ein Roman in Briefen*, Herausgegeben und mit einem Nachwort von Bettina Bremer und Angelika Schneider, Kore Verlag, Freiberg (Breisgau), 1993, p. 79. All further citations are from this edition and will be given in the text as page numbers.
to “Bedenke, wie selten Liebe allein eine eheliche Verbindung schließt, wie selten vorzüglich ein Weib in ihrer abhängigen Lage darauf Anspruch machen kann!” and closing his speech by calling upon her filial affection, ostensibly leaving her to think things over, but adding “bedenke daß die Ruhe deines Vaters davon abhängt.” (79-80) At the time about which she is writing, as a young woman with no education and no fortune, Amanda was both incapable of resisting her “bittenden Vater,” and insufficiently self-aware to realize that she was making a mistake.

It is only at the time of writing that Amanda can reflect on her own development, on her own personality, and realize that she has made a disastrously wrong decision. Mereau includes several markers in Amanda’s letter that highlight that this conversation with her father is already a fairly distant, though still poignant, memory for her—she flags the beginning of this explanation with the phrase “In jener Zeit” (78) and emphasizes the contrast between the present of the fabula she recounts and her own discursive present by adding “ich sehe es noch, wie er vor mir stand” (79, my emphasis). Amanda’s letter also includes commentary and corrections from her later life; when she describes the speed with which her marriage followed upon her engagement (“er verlangte die schnelle Vollziehung unserer Verbindung mit einem Eifer, den ich für wahre herzliche Liebe zu mir nahm”), she interrupts the flow of the narration by adding the knowledge she has since gained, namely, that Albret was not motivated by love for her (“Ach! dies war es nicht!”), but that rather “ganz andere Wünsche, andere Zwecke fesselte ihn an ferne, mir unbekannte Gegenstände…” (80) Mereau uses the epistolary form here not as a way of representing emotional immediacy but rather in order to show the reflections of her protagonist upon her own past and her own character. Amanda is
also already intensely aware of the extent to which love is an important but absent element of her life—in this same letter, she describes how she watches a gardener’s daughter sneaking out of her house to meet a young man, and reflects that “Die Welt wird wohl nie ihren Namen nennen, niemand als die nächsten Nachbarn kennen sie, ihr Anzug, ihre Beschäftigungen verrathen ihren Mangel an allen Gütern des Glücks, aber die Liebe hat sich ihrer angenommen,” and that this love is “die reichste Entschädigung für alles, was ihr die Laune des Glücks versagte!” (82) The reader can thus synthesize these various comments into an understanding that Amanda failed, at the time of her marriage, to understand her own personality, and that this failure led her to be unhappy and to feel strongly that her own life is incomplete. Because her father was still a product of an older model of society in which marriage was chiefly a mode of ensuring economic stability, and because he did not educate his daughter well, she is trapped in a marriage that is antithetical to her own character, and Mereau dedicates the bulk of the plot to Amanda’s love affair outside of her marriage. This is, it should be pointed out, very far away from the moral message of, say, Wobeser’s Elisa (and there is no doubt which novel is thematically and stylistically superior), but the notion that protagonists are not necessarily best served by the interests of their parents and must instead come to recognize their own character (or convert others to the recognition of that character) remains.

Although Mereau’s novel, as I have said, is primarily about the course of the all-consuming love between Amanda and Eduard, she does not abandon the theme of education and the importance of understanding individuality later in the novel. By this point, the space between the epistolary discourse and the events that are narrated in that form is much smaller than in the initial letter, and so there are fewer markers of reflective
distance. Nevertheless, Amanda’s remarks on education themselves are particularly noteworthy in comparison to her statements (both explicit and implied) on her own education and individuality—or more correctly, her lack thereof—in the first letter to Julie. Though she has no children of her own, Amanda takes a lively interest in Wilhelm, a child living on her husband’s estate, and when she discovers that he is actually Albret’s child (and that his mother died shortly after Albret abandoned them), she takes over his education completely.

Her notion of education is a noteworthy one, however; she does not describe the tasks she has him perform or the skills she wishes him to cultivate, but rather, as she writes to Julie, “Ich werde für seine künftige Bildung sorgen, so gut ich kann, das heißt, ich werde ihm seine Eigenthümlichkeit zu erhalten suchen.” (158) There is no discussion of obedience or of economic concern. Amanda continues: “Denn die Menschen werden verschieden gebohren. Wie die Pflanze, das Thier, jede Erscheinung, eine besondere Form hat; so auch sie.” (158) The connection to other types of life and the distinct resonance with Blumenbach’s language are unmistakable—there is a particular form that is inherent to each being, and the individual needs to receive a kind of Bildung that corresponds to its own variation on its species. Although—or perhaps precisely because—she is not biologically related to him, Amanda is committed to cultivating Wilhelm’s particular character and allowing him to develop in his own manner. In opening up this difference between Amanda’s remarks on her own education in the first letter and her philosophy of education when she is in the instructing role, Mereau both makes it clear that Amanda has reflected on her own upbringing—and how it has affected
her fate—and presents a more positive model of education in Amanda’s role as a foster parent.

Furthermore, it is precisely by giving Wilhelm the freedom to develop as befits him that Amanda actually succeeds in making him imitate and resemble her, in bringing him to view her as a genuine ‘mother’ (despite, again, their lack of biological connection) and as an inspiration for his own behavior. When Amanda tells him the story of his parentage, he “hörte es still und nachdenklich an, dann schlang er sich mit Innigkeit um meinen Arm, und sagte freudig gerührt: ‘O! du warst mir schon längst Alles, warst mir, vom ersten Anblick an, da ich dich sah, mehr als Vater und Mutter!’” (172) Like Amanda, Wilhelm has developed into a person very much determined by his ability to love. The novel itself raises the question of whether this is truly a positive quality, at least for Wilhelm: at one point, after he is sent away to travel and educate himself, he writes a letter to Amanda, in phrases that border extremely suggestively on the sexual rather than filial (though he continues to address her as “Mutter” throughout), and begs to be allowed to return to her. Amanda is herself somewhat concerned about this dependency that comes from “einem beklommenen Herzen” (213), but expresses a hope that this “frühe Neigung” if it is “glücklich geleitet,” could be positive: “[sie] vermag über sein ganzes Leben den schönsten zauberischen Duft zu hauchen, der alle Blüthen desselben mit höheren Reizen beleben, und vieles Schädliche von ihm entfernt halten wird.” (213) Once again, Amanda expresses faith that the tendencies of an individual, if allowed to develop and guided only by gentle suggestion, are natural and benevolent. This perspective is explicitly avowed by the very end of the novel itself, in which, after Amanda herself has died, a narrative voice breaks in for the first time to tell the readers what has happened to
the characters. The very last words return to Amanda’s relationship with Wilhelm (not with Eduard, her great romantic love) and speak to her continuing influence on him even after her death: “Wilhelm ist zu einem sehr vorzüglichen Menschen herangewachsen. Der Tod seiner von ihm angebetenen Mutter, brachte ihn am Rand des Wahnsinns; aber ihr Andenken, ist der Genius seines Lebens geblieben.” (224) The novel privileges this notion of education as guidance in individual development rather than direct obedience from its opening pages to its very last, and it does so not by explicitly and didactically advocating a particular educational philosophy, but rather by illustrating this philosophy for the readers through the individual paths of its characters.

For all the aspirations to naturalness of the epistolary novel, it is worth remarking that, especially for novels like Mereau’s in which there are multiple sets of correspondents, the sheer collection of these letters in one place is itself artificial, though frequently justified by an introduction or conclusion in a narrative voice—as is the case with Mereau’s novel, where the unidentified “ich” that tells us the fate of the various character also provides an extremely sparse explanation for the novel’s existence: “Diese Briefe kamen in meine Hände, und ich hielt sie für interessant genug, sie […] der lesenden Welt mitzuteilen” (223). Notes like this, though they justify the epistolary conceit, also serve to remind us that only we, as readers, are privileged with the entire breadth of the correspondence and that it is up to us to synthesize the various perspectives into an artistic and thematic whole.

Caroline Auguste Fischer’s 1802 Die Honigmonathe uses these techniques of perspectival juxtaposition almost to the exclusion of anything else; her text is made up of letters largely from two sets of correspondents, Julie and Wilhelmine, and Reinhold and
Olivier, with occasional letters between Reinhold and Wilhelmine, and from Wilhelmine to her parents. These two pairs of friends are wildly different in character from one another, and they dash off lines to each other that are informed by completely different morals and goals. Julie, who is the stereotypical image of natural femininity—beautiful, loving, forgiving, and incapable of asserting her own wishes against those of the people around her—is forced to marry Olivier, whom she does not love, by her mother, who supports the match for economic reasons. Wilhelmine’s blunt response to this news is to complain, “Ich weiß recht gut, die Frau Mutter wird alles [zu Deiner Heirat] beytragen. Aus welchen Gründen? […] Mit einem Worte! man will Dich verhandeln, und zwar so bald und so theuer wie möglich”\(^\text{133}\), while Julie cannot bring herself to say anything more critical about her mother than that she “war milder” before the death of Julie’s father and that since then –“es ist […] so viel Bitteres in ihrem Wesen [...].” (10-11) Wilhelmine herself is described as an “Amazone,” strong-willed, rational, and highly ambivalent about marriage.\(^\text{134}\) Julie is compared to an angel or to the Madonna. Reinhold is rational, affectionate, and gentle; Olivier is hot-tempered, passionate, and (until he falls in love with Julie) unscrupulous.

Fischer’s portrayal of the clashes between these characters does not allow for a great deal of development of any one of them—her text, in addition to resembling

\(^{133}\text{Fischer, Karoline Auguste Ferdinandine: }\textit{Die Honigmonathe,} \text{ ed. Anita Runge, facsimile reprint of the original 1802 edition, Georg Olms Verlag, Hildesheim/Zürich/New York, 1987, p. 10. All further citations are from this edition and will be given in the text as page numbers.}

\(^{134}\text{In one of the novel’s more surprising passages, Wilhelmine writes to Julie that she thinks marriage should be entered into on provisional basis; pretending to address a suitor, she writes: ” Mein Freund – sage ich dann – gefalle ich dir; so mögte ich wohl auf ein Jahr der fünf deine Frau werden. Sind wir glücklich; so geben wir noch vier Jahre zu. Dann drey, dann zwey, und zuletzt hast du die Freiheit, dich alle Jahr von mir zu trennen.” (136-7) This is an astonishingly bold position, and though modern readers might be inclined to read Wilhelmine’s insistence that she would keep all the children from the marriage as a conservative slippage, it is actually itself unusual: the }\textit{Preussisches Allgemeines Landrecht} \text{specified that custody of children was to be awarded to the father, not the mother, except in extraordinary circumstances.}
somewhat older narratives in which the figures are types rather than fully drawn characters, verges on the dramatic (generically speaking) in the brevity and pace of its epistles. But the fates of these figures do suggest certain conclusions about their respective decisions, and Fischer is careful not to spell her message out too didactically. Like many epistolary novels of the period, she begins with a note “An den Leser,” which reads in its entirety:

Wie viel Böses man den Leidenschaften auch nachsagen mag; ohne sie scheint es gleichwohl dem Menschen unmöglich, sich seiner ganzen moralischen Kraft bewußt zu werden. Wer uns demnach irgend eine dieser wohlthätigen Feindinnen treu darzustellen versucht; darf sich schmeicheln, nichts überflüssiges unternommen zu haben. Den Versuch habe ich gewagt; ob er gelungen ist—mögen die Leser entscheiden. (3-4)

This suggestion is already intriguing in comparison to, say, the strong emphasis on rational moral virtue in *Elisa* or even the light-hearted conflicts and their resolution in *Lorenz Stark*—passions, for Fischer, are necessary to the full realization of oneself, even as they are dangerous. Knowing the full extent of one’s own moral strength is one of the goals to which development should aspire, and the achievement of this goal, far from simply depending on the memorization of rules of virtue, requires experience, even error. Her statement becomes even more striking when one considers the types of morals that are in fact implicitly endorsed by Fischer’s text: sweet, obedient Julie marries to please her mother, and then through the course of the novel is imprisoned in a series of increasingly remote places as a result of Olivier’s insane jealousy; eventually, Olivier kills the young man to whom Julie is inevitably attracted (though she of course does not act upon this) and is himself killed in battle. We are told in a closing note that Julie, though she is still young, “konnte sich zu keiner zweyten Verbindung entschließen. Jedesmal, wenn ihre Freunde davon sprachen, suchte Reinhold die Einsamkeit; sie aber blickte lächelnd gen Himmel.” (199) Heavenly as ever, Julie has become a picture of isolation and
resignation—there is no positive example of surrogate parenthood in this text; Julie’s
sacrifice to her mother’s wishes is absolute. It is to Wilhelmine, described as a badly
behaved child with a “wilden eigensüchtigen Charakter” (65), much in need of education
and restraint, who is rewarded with a happy marriage at the end of the novel. Fischer’s
text does not go so far as to suggest that a woman could want a life that did not include a
husband and a family, but she does make a strong claim that a woman has the right to
choose her husband herself and to be independent and set the own terms of her existence,
independent of the wishes of her parents. Although Fischer’s text is largely without formal
sophistication, the thematic values her novel espouses are opposed to notions of narrow
family obedience and deeply connected to openness and appreciating the individuality of
children, including girls. As with Mereau’s text, the message is not overtly stated but must
be discerned, via the comparison of the multiple perspectives and the ultimate fate of the
characters, by the reader—we must perform the interpretive work that Fischer’s preface
asks of us.

**III. 3. Self-Reflection and Elapsed Time** In first-person narratives that are not
epistolary but are rather long documents that stem from the mind and pen of one literary
character, layered perspectives can be created not so much by the contrasting statements of
different characters (though of course those can be recorded within the framework of the
narrative, mediated by the writing character’s report) as by the elapsed time between the
events of the story and the time of narration. In the preface to Caroline von Wolzogen’s
*Agnes von Lilien* (which was supposed to have come at the end of the book, as it reveals
significant plot details, but was printed at the front—in keeping with the notes to the
reader in many novels of the period—by mistake\textsuperscript{135}, the author uses her character’s voice to explain the purpose of her text, dedicating it to her children and asserting that “Die klare Ansicht einer fremden Existenz ist nie ohne Wirkung auf unsre eigne. Was ich bin, oder was ich zu seyn wähne, und unter welchem freundlichen Einfluß des Schicksals ich es wurde, - sollen Euch diese Blätter zeigen.”\textsuperscript{136} Wolzogen’s language, here, meshes nicely with notions of education that depend not on strong didactic message—Agnes does not explicitly tell her children to imitate her, to learn from her example (or from her mistakes)—but rather on the philosophy that entering imaginatively into and reflecting critically on the story of another person will have an effect on the reader, a theory that is just as relevant for actual readers of the novel as for Agnes’ fictional children. Agnes closes the preface by remarking on the changes that have come about since she lived through the events of her narrative: “Die Gestalt des alternden Mütterchens macht einen sonderbaren Kontrast mit der glühenden Leidenschaft die in diesen Blättern athmet. Die Zeit macht von selbst unser Leben zu einem vollendeten Gemälde, in dem jede Farbe der allgemeinen Harmonie untergeordnet ist. Nur wenn ein irrer Wille dem stillen Naturgang widerstrebt, entstehen grelle Töne.” (I, IX) This harmonious resolution befits the happy ending much more than it does the tumultuous events of the novel, in which Agnes embarks on a secret quest to discover the identity of her biological parents, is led to believe at several points that the man she loves is in fact already married, and is kidnapped and imprisoned by agents of her grandfather. This is not to criticize Wolzogen, or her

\textsuperscript{135} Holmgren, Janet Besserer: The Women Writers in Schiller’s Horen: Patrons, Petticoats, and the Promotion of Weimar Classicism, University of Delaware Press, Newark, 2007., p. 80.

\textsuperscript{136} Wolzogen, Caroline von: \textit{Agnes von Lilien}, Johann Friedrich Unger, Berlin, 1798, vol 1., III-IV. All citations are from this edition, and will be cited in the text as (volume number, page number).
narrating figure, for idealizing the events of the novel, as some critics have done, but to point out that despite the preface’s disavowal of all “Kunstforderung” (I, IV), the novel is in fact deliberately and carefully structured (indeed, Wolzogen also creates a flashback effect by inserting a long narrative written by Agnes’ mother into the second volume; I will treat this narrative and its role in Agnes’ life more in the following chapter), and that the reflective distance between experiencing character and writing character is carefully preserved.

As is only logical for a text that purports to have been written for the benefit of its protagonists’ children, Agnes’ account devotes a significant amount of space to her early education, and once again, a foster parent proves to be a model of principled education and rational guidance. Agnes is raised by a pastor, believing initially that she is his orphaned niece but later learning that her family circumstances are complicated and mysterious. Her foster father both teaches and plays with her, and Agnes writes that she was “weich und liebend gebildet” (I, 6) and that her worst punishment was to be “entfernt” from her father (as she always calls him) “für wenige Stunden.” (I, 7) The pastor explains his educational philosophy to Agnes by saying “Du sollst herrschen und dienen lernen, […] wenn man beides mit Einsicht und mit Achtung für sich selbst zu thun versteht, so ist eins so leicht als das andere; aber sicher ist es Quelle mannichfaltiger Schiefheit und Verworrenheit, wenn unsere Fähigkeit ausschliessend für das eine oder für das andere entwickelt wurde.” (I, 7-8) This principle, prescriptive though it may be, is not a simple rule of behavior: it includes recognizing the particularity of various situations and people; additionally, the opposition involved between ‘herrschen’ and ‘dienen’ requires

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careful reflection on the part of the individual as to what is entailed in each and which is appropriate in a given instance. Agnes’ father also recognizes her own individuality—namely, her “glückliches Gedächtniß” and “leiser Sinn für die Schönheit”—and decides to teach her Latin and Greek; the books they read in these languages give her imagination healthy and productive objects. Rather than forbidding her to read certain things, or to participate in certain activities, the pastor provides her with positive thoughts and activities; the adult Agnes who is supposedly penning this narrative reflects that although as a child she was aware that “Ich hatte einige Lehrstunden, um mich an regelmäßige Arbeit zu gewöhnen” (I, 10), she later realizes that her father is always educating her: “mir damahls unbemerkbar war mein Vater, während dem ganzen Lauf des Tages, mit meiner Bildung beschäftigt.” (I, 10) In general the degree to which Agnes, as writing character, is able to synthesize and streamline the events of her life as an experiencing character draws the reader’s attention to the ways in which, despite its pretensions to being a simple account from an old woman’s memory, the novel is deliberately and carefully constructed; constructed in such a way that as to highlight the importance of good education to a happy life—education which, in this case as in several of the others I have discussed, comes not from biological parents but from a foster father. In the novel around 1800, it is foster parents who are depicted as truly leaving old social and biological models—of alliance-based kinship structures and preformation—behind and as embracing the paradigmatic shifts that emphasize open, dynamic models of development.

That the education Wolzogen creates for her character, mediated through the figure of her foster father, is indeed exceptional is made clear not only from the extensive description of it that Agnes includes in her narrative, but also through several remarks
later in the text. In Agnes’ first meeting with her biological mother (which takes place after a series of plot intrigues that are far too long to include here), she exclaims “Wie vielen Dank bin ich Ihnen schuldig, meine theure Mutter, für die Erziehung, die Sie mir durch den ehrwürdigen Pfarrer von Hohenfels geben ließen! Mit der väterlichsten Zärtlichkeit pflegte er meiner Kindheit.” (I, 168) Her mother, although she regrets the long separation from her daughter, is actually relieved that she was not brought up in a courtly setting, where “Du wärest vielleicht ein Püppchen geworden, das am Seile der Meinung hin und her getanzt hätte – und so bist du ein selbstständiges Wesen, das in der Fluth des Lebens sein besseres Selbst bewahren kann.” (I, 172) And Agnes proves able precisely to preserve her better self throughout the novel, avoiding the mistakes that her biological parents made (and which led to her separation from them) and is rewarded by marrying the man she loves in the presence of both biological parents (she eventually finds out who her father is as well) and her foster father. In Wolzogen’s novel, the characters themselves explicitly mention the fact that Agnes’ parents would not have been able to give her as exemplary and education as her foster father did, and this suggests to the reader that it is this education that enables her to make her way in the world and achieve independence to make her own decisions and happiness in a loving marriage. The happy ending with a marriage is, of course a novelistic convention, but it is also more: far from being a sacrifice of individuality, on this (admittedly idealized model), choosing appropriately in marriage is evidence that a child has reached sufficient

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138I owe to Richard Eldridge the observation that this is, perhaps, also the fate of bad readers of novels, who—at least in terms of the Lesewut-Debatte raging in these decades—are unable to maintain critical distance from the texts that they are reading and devour them one after the next, yanked to and fro by every momentary emotion that issues from the page.
maturity to think for him- or herself, thus signaling the success of that child’s education and development.

**Coda: Pedagogy and Institutions** We can, of course, also see this emphasis on open and principle-based modes of education in Goethe’s ‘Wilhelm Meister’ novels—in the *Lehrjahre*, Wilhelm’s father ignores his artistic leanings and attempts to mold him into a capitalist in the family concern. This results, as I will discuss in the next chapter, in Wilhelm leaving his family and entering into a new social or spiritual lineage in the institution of the Tower Society. It is in the *Wanderjahre* that Goethe gives us a portrait of a program of education designed to cultivate the individuality of each child, and, perhaps most interestingly, he describes this program in a fully-developed institutional setting, rather than within the realm of the family. The “pedagogical province” described in Book Two of the novel—where Wilhelm leaves his own son while he continues on his journey—is perhaps the logical extension of the trend I have identified between biological and foster parents but it is also a far cry from the cautionary tales of French-influenced boarding schools that appear in Wobeser’s novel, and, perhaps most paradigmatically, in a 1787 novel by Friederike Helen Unger entitled *Julchen Grunthal*. Goethe’s depiction of a pedagogical province certainly meshes well with Pestalozzi and Gleim’s emphasis on not only parental education but on the reform of educational institutions as well; by transferring all but the very earliest education from the hands of the parents, schools ought ideally to ensure that the focus is not on outward resemblance between generations but precisely on the principled guiding of each child’s development. The notion that children were perhaps *not* best educated by their parents is a new one for
the novel around 1800, and Goethe’s imaginary institution reveals him here, as so often, to be at the forefront of contemporary thought.

The principles advocated in the pedagogical province do not, however, differ so very widely from the notions of education espoused by foster parents in the other novels I have discussed. Children are seen as naturally possessing potential, which needs to be developed, or, perhaps, allowed to develop on its own: “gesunde Kinder […] bringen viel mit; die Natur hat jedem alles gegeben, was er für Zeit und Dauer nötig hätte; dieses zu entwickeln ist unsere Pflicht, öfters entwickelt sich’s besser von selbst.”139 According to these tenets, the crucial element to be introduced by education is not strict obedience or etiquette, but rather “Ehrfurcht,” which teaches the children proper regard for those above him, for those below him, and for his companions and equals. (420) This reverence is touted as an appropriate way of guiding and directing the natural fear that people feel at the unknown. The province also takes pains to allow the individual character of its charges to manifest itself—upon inquiring why all of the children are dressed differently, Wilhelm is told that it is “ein Mittel […] die Gemüter des Knabens eigens zu erforschen. Wir lassen, bei sonstiger Strenge und Ordnung, in diesem Falle eine gewisse Willkür gelten.” (432) Lastly, the punishment for misbehavior is not some unwanted task or physical pain, but rather that the offending parties are not permitted to participate in the ritual gesture of reverence, and are thus “genötigt, sich als roh und ungebildet darzustellen; sie tun aber das mögliche, um sich aus dieser Lage zu retten, und finden sich aufs geschwindeste in jede Pflicht.” (431) As with Agnes’ foster father’s practice in

Wolzogen’s novel, punishment takes the form of isolation from routine and community rather than an explicit act of discipline. But despite the similarity of philosophy between the pedagogical province and adoptive and foster parents in the novels, the school established in the province is an institution, designed to inculcate many children, not just siblings in a family, with a particular program. Schools are thus another kind of intermediary—in addition to the family—between the individual and society. Like the bourgeois family around 1800, they are invested in moulding children into productive citizens, and as such they are both formative and normative. Though these entities, as they are portrayed in the novels of the era, emphasize individuality and independence over harsh regulation and obedience, it is worth remembering that their programs are not extended to all members of society and that the tenets of these institutions can be manipulated in ways that are far from benign.

**Conclusion: Epigenetic Thought and the Novel**

In reading together biological debates, pedagogical treatises, and the portrayals of programs of education in the framework of the family in the novel, I have tried to show how the shift from static and mimetic models of generation to open, variable, and dynamic ones took place on a broad scale around the turn of the nineteenth century. Epigenesis rejected preformation’s notion of already-determined life forms that only increased in size; pedagogical treatises moved away from the thought that children were inherently sinful beings who needed to be subjected to a harsh regime of discipline and training and towards a philosophy of education that emphasized the as-yet-unformed potential of individual children. The novel takes up these different shifts in its varied explorations of the possibilities that adhere to different modes of education or obedience.
and the difficulties that ensue when parents and children have different notions of what kind of resemblance or obligation should obtain between generations. The perspective of the novels clearly advocates the cultivation of unique personalities rather than enforcing laws of direct resemblance and obedience, a process that is slowly drawn out through the length of the narration and that continually reflects and comments upon itself. The novel’s social commitments to individuality and gradual development are thus tied together with its quintessential formal characteristics. By deemphasizing blood connections and portraying affective and social ties that otherwise determine relationships, the novel both comments on and influences contemporaneous thoughts about how human life is generated, formed, and reproduced. In the following chapter, I will discuss these relations between family members and surrogate family members in the novel not in terms of biology or education, but in terms of testation.
Chapter 3: Text as Testament

Introduction – Theory of the Testament: The notion of a testament invokes both inheritance or transmission (sometimes strictly legal, sometimes more broadly) and bearing witness (testifying, being a testament to). These semantic fields are connected by more than a related etymology from the Latin verb testari and the noun form testamentum.\(^{140}\) They both involve modes or channels of connection, a speaker or testator and a listener or heir. Legal testament connects the testator and the heir via the passing along of property or objects, and the acceptance of these objects may entail certain conditions or obligations. Testament as bearing witness implies a strong claim to authenticity or truth, and it creates an emotional or empathetic connection between speaker and hearer (which may be violated if the sincerity of the speaker is contrived, if the account itself is shallow, or if the hearer is unresponsive). Thus the figure of testation at the broadest level binds together transmission and witnessing, inheritance and responsiveness. Testators-testifiers must both transmit and witness; receivers of testaments must both inherit and respond to what is transmitted. None of these interrelated processes—transmission and testimony, inheritance and response—is simple and unproblematic. Both how to transmit and testify and how to inherit and respond are caught up in economics, history, kinship, affection, values, and memory. These matters, in turn, are shaped by how testaments are generated and received. A focus on the figure

of testation does not simply point to narrow intersections between literature and the law;\textsuperscript{141} it also brings into view broader issues about the complex, ongoing reshaping of relations and subjectivities in historical time and social space. Both the entity of family and the genre of the novel are readily-available sites for the working through of what is said as testament and testimony (as well as how it is said), and what is received as inheritance and story (as well as how it is received). The novel is both a metacommentary on practices of testation, insofar as testaments and testimonies are frequent elements of its plots, and itself a practice of testation in a literary tradition.

Testaments within the framework of the family help to ensure both the continuation of the family line (via material assistance) and a sense of unity and identity (either through the continuity of property or possessions or through the sharing of values and philosophies). This also includes a significant element of narration: inherent in the idea of creating a testament for one’s biological or affective descendents is the idea of giving account of oneself and one’s life, of what one has accumulated both in the way of property and of experience. Thus not only the objects and the actors but also the process of transmission becomes important, particularly in cases where what is being passed on is not simply property or material things. In these cases, text in particular is figured as a way of establishing the genealogy of a family and as a legacy to be passed from one generation to the next. Narration, as both a mode of transmission and which is

\textsuperscript{141} This is a field with a rich tradition in literary scholarship; of particular note is Ulrike Vedder’s recent book \textit{Das Testament als literarisches Dispositiv im 19. Jahrhundert}. Vedder, in her thorough and fascinating \textit{Habilitationsschrift}, is working strictly with the testament as actual document in nineteenth-century literature. Here I must also gratefully acknowledge Professor Vedder’s generosity both in allowing me to read her manuscript and in conversing with me about this chapter. Although her work is centered in a later period than my own and has a more specific focus, both her theoretical approach and her sensitive treatment of literary texts as active agents in cultural production have been highly influential. The book is now published as Vedder, Ulrike, \textit{Das Testament als literarisches Dispositiv: Kulturelle Praktiken des Erbes in der Literatur des 19. Jahrhunderts}, Wilhelm Fink Verlag, München, 2011.
transmitted, at once represents and transcends purely biological relation. Testation then becomes an issue of intergenerational transfers, of passing down, of kinship ties and substitute kinship ties, of what, exactly remains and can be passed on—“Tradierbarkeit.”

The figure of testation functions then both on a straightforward level and in more abstract ways. Simply speaking, it involves both the transmission of property as a plot element in the novel and the contemporaneous laws of inheritance as they were laid out in the 1794 Preußisches Allgemeines Landrecht. At more complex levels, it involves how stories themselves are and can be passed from generation to generation as a kind of legacy, and how transmittive textuality can include not only intergenerational narratives but also embedded documents and, finally, the novel itself. As I have done throughout, in this chapter I will be treating a fairly wide selection of novels from between 1790 and 1832, not as exhaustive coverage of but as representative of a literary scene. While the common themes of transmission and bearing witness here come to the fore especially strongly in the novels below, the other differences between these texts and the sheer variety with which they treat these themes—that is, the variety of transmittive textuality’s functions, modes, powers, and significances—speaks to the extent to which questions of testation as testament and testimony are decisive for the novel as such around 1800.

I. Inheritance in the Preussisches Allgemeines Landrecht (ALR): Codified legal writing must necessarily work with generalities, whereas novels portray specific characters in specific situations, and it is true that none of the novels treated here makes explicit reference to legal code. Nevertheless, it is clear that jurists and novelists alike, in their respective fields, were concerned with how property could be fairly (systematically) and sensibly (rationally) transmitted between generations—and with what role the state
had to play in guaranteeing this transmission. The development and introduction of the
ALR do not simply determine and explain independently the plots of the novels. Rather
both novels and the ALR represent two kinds of contribution to the discussion of what
testaments are and how they work.

The ALR, which was first commissioned in the early 1780s and finally enacted in
1794, was the first of what have been known as the great naturalistic legal codes (the
others being the Austrian Allgemeines Gesetzbuch and the Napoleonic Code civil).142
Although it has been criticized, especially by Savigny and his generation of legal
scholars, as ‘nannying’ and overly loaded with casuistry, it remains an important
document both historically and legally: it represents the first attempt in German-speaking
lands to create a comprehensive and coherent legal code based not on the authority of
various Roman and Germanic sources, but on systems of natural law.143 As such, it is
concerned with the definition of the relations between the individual and the state,
between individuals themselves, and between classes of individuals. It is fundamentally
bound up with the philosophy of the Enlightenment (visible not least in the drive to
systematization and codification), and shares that movement’s interest in the
improvement of the state via the instruction and the improvement of that state’s
components, down to the individuals. The ALR, then, combines an increased sense of the
importance of individual rights and freedoms with an emphasis on the insurance of the
rights and welfare of future generations. Though it does not go so far as the famous
statement in France’s 1793 Déclaration des Droits de l’Homme et du Citoyen that “Une

142 Wieacker, Franz: A A history of private law in Europe with particular reference to Germany, trans: Tony
143 Ibid., p. 264-5.
génération n’a pas le droit d’assujettir à ses Lois les générations futures,”¹⁴⁴ it does tend to favor younger generations over older ones in its patterns of succession,¹⁴⁵ a tendency that prefigures a similar shift in notions of family relations.

One particularly important aspect of the ALR, not just in its sections on inheritance law, but overall, is that the state is especially responsible for the protection of the rights and property of those who cannot, or cannot yet, look after themselves: “Diejenigen, welche wegen noch nicht erlangter Volljährigkeit, oder wegen eines Mangels an Seelenkräften ihre Angelegenheiten nicht selbst gehörig wahrnehmen können (§ 25. – 31.)¹⁴⁶, stehen unter der besonderen Aufsicht und Vorsorge des Staats.” (Th. I, Ti. 1, § 32, p. 56) Concern for this group’s interests is very much in evidence in the sections of the code that treat inheritance. This concern is not, however, the only one: the code makes it clear that an individual is largely free to dispose of his property as he likes, either upon his death or before it. In the portion called “Von den Titeln zur Erwerbung des Eigenthums, welche aus Verordnungen von Todeswegen entstehn,” the law spells out that the testator can identify his own heir or heirs, that he can bequeath part of his property in specific ways but allow the rest of it to follow the standard patterns of succession, that he can himself determine the order of succession and substitutions should the originally named heir decline the inheritance, that he may make the inheritance

¹⁴⁵ “Im Unterschied zum Gradsystem, das im römischen Recht und auch im Code civil die Erbfolge nach dem Grad der Verwandtschaft des Erben zum Erblasser bestimmt […], folgt das deutsche Parentelsystem einem Denken in Ordnungen, die durch eine jeweiligen gemeinsamen paren (Stammelternteil) bestimmt werden […]. Während also nach dem Gradsystem der Vater eines Erblasses (im ersten Grad verwandt) vor dem Enkel des Erblasses (im zweiten Grad verwandt) erb, ordnet das Parentelsystem den Vater des Erblasses in die zweite und den Enkel in die erste Ordnung und bevorzugt so die jüngere Generation.“ Vedder, Ulrike, *Das Testament als literarisches Dispositiv im 19. Jahrhundert*, p. 147-8.
¹⁴⁶ *Allgemeines Landrecht für die Preußischen Staaten von 1794*, Alfred Metzner Verlag, Frankfurt am Main/Berlin, 1970. All citations are from this edition and will be given in the text by paragraph and section number, followed by page number.
contingent upon the fulfillment of various conditions or duties, and that he may explicitly leave out people who would, under the rules of intestate inheritance, become heirs. All of these provisions point to the freedom of an individual to bequeath his property according to his—or her, though the property of women must be explicitly and contractually separated from that of their husbands or fathers—preference. The individual’s rights are placed firmly above those of a larger clan or kinship group (which might be inclined to insist, for example, that a family property not be divided, or that only children who themselves already possess male heirs are eligible to inherit). This does not mean that the individual’s rights are unlimited, however. One of the most striking instances of limitation answers precisely potential attempts at preserving the unity of family estates: embedded in a later section on common property is a section on the rights and duties of joint heirs, in which the law explicitly states that “[e]in Verbot des Erblassers, daß sein Nachlaß niemals getheilt werden solle, hat keine rechtliche Wirkung.” (247) In short, although he can impose some limits on the division of his property, at least for his immediate heirs, no one can legally insist that his entire property remain completely undivided for all future generations.

Nor is the legal devolution of property limited to testaments that regulate the distribution of wealth when a person dies\textsuperscript{147}: the ALR also outlines specific obligations that parents, in particular, have towards their children during their lifetime (though it does specify also that children have mutual obligations to support and care for their parents in

\textsuperscript{147} In his corrective history \textit{The European Family: An Historico-Anthropological Essay}, Jack Goody emphasizes the extent to which the transmission of property cannot be limited purely to bequests upon the decease of a parent. Although Goody perhaps goes too far in stating that this signals a progressive treatment of daughters in Europe, his statement “I see both dowry and inheritance as part of an intergenerational process of devolution in which daughters have access to parental property” draws important attention to additional modes of transmission between generations. Goody, Jack: \textit{The European Family: An Historico-Anthropological Essay}, Blackwell Publishers, Oxford/Malden, MA, 2000, p. 86-87.
illness and old age). These obligations begin with the nourishment (including the prescription that healthy mothers are to breastfeed their children, for a duration to be determined by the father) and education of the child in its minority and continue through its “Ausstattung” – the providing of means to set up an economy when the child leaves home and is officially emancipated from the father’s power. In the case of male children, “Söhne, welche eine abgesonderte Wirthschaft anfangen, müssen zu deren ersten Einrichtung, und zur Anschaffung der Geräthschaften, welche zum Betriebe ihres Gewerbes unentbehrlich sind, mit einer Ausstattung versehen werden” (Th. II, Ti. 2, Ab. 4, § 232, p. 390). For female children, emancipation, with Ausstattung, happens on the daughter’s marriage: „Auch den heirathenden Töchtern beführt dergleichen Ausstattung, so weit dieselbe zur Hochzeit, und zur ersten Einrichtung ihres Hauswesens erforderlich ist” (ibid. § 233). This provisioning only happens once, and children are not entitled to demand an additional dowry or wedding present, but they are legally entitled to complain to the courts if their parents do not fulfill this obligation. Furthermore, each child is entitled to the same amount of money in the Ausstattung, and if the parents die before this can be provided, the child’s older siblings must assume the responsibility and the costs must be deducted from the estate before the children’s various portions are distributed. There are also extensive provisions to ensure that parents do not make inappropriate use of funds designated by other relatives to the children’s use, and to protect the children’s assets in the event that their parents separate or remarry.

Children are also, in the absence of testaments to the contrary, their parents’ principle heirs—intestate succession moves first in a descending line, then to an ascending one, and only then to “Seitenverwandten” (Th. 2, Ti. 2, Ab. 5). The surviving
spouse of a deceased couple stands to inherit (these laws vary according to whether the partners had declared commonality of property or not), but aside from that, any portion of the estate that is not specifically bequeathed is divided equally among the children (Th. 2, Ti. 2, Ab. 5, § 302, p. 393). The law goes even further, however, in prescribing a “Pflichttheil” that is due to each of the children, and that significantly limits the testatory freedom of the parents. This portion is calculated based on the standard intestate patterns of inheritance: “Der Pflichttheil ist, wenn nur Ein oder nur Zwey Kinder vorhanden sind, Ein Drittel; wenn Drey oder Vier Kinder vorhanden sind, die Hälfte, und wenn mehr als Vier Kinder vorhanden sind, Zwey Drittel desjenigen, was jedes Kind zum Erbtheile erhalten haben würde, wenn die gesetzliche Erbfolge statt gefunden hätte.” (Th. 2, Ti. 2, Ab. 5, § 392, p. 396) A child can be disinherited as a result of treason against the state, incestuous adultery with either a parent or step-parent, and dishonoring the family, but if on any other occasion a child is deprived of this inheritance, the courts can intervene to provide the appropriate sum out of the inheritance of the other heirs (Th. 2., Ti. 2, Ab. 5, § 433, p. 397).

These various provisions do, of course, become more complicated when the relations in question are not simply those between a parent and his or her biological children from a full, legitimate marriage. Unless the father has decreed otherwise in an official testament, children from morganatic marriages have no legal claim on fortune of their father if there are children from a full marriage surviving (they are, however, entitled to both Ausstattung and money for their continued care after the father’s death). If there are no other children, the morganatic children can inherit (if there are less than

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148 It is, of course, interesting that the law counts adoptive relationships in its incest prohibitions, despite the fact that there is no biological reason to do so—it thus places affective/elective relationships on the same level as biological ones.
three) either a third (or if there are more than three) a half of the inheritance, with the remainder going to the various other successors of the testator. Children from morganatic marriages have the same rights to their mother’s estate as children from full marriages. (Th. 2., Ti. 2., Ab. 8). Illegitimate children have very few claims unless they have undergone a process of legitimization (Th. 2., Ti. 2., Ab. 9)—they may request support, at a subsistence level, from their fathers until they are fourteen years old, but at this point all parental obligations cease. They have no right to inherit, though in the absence of other children they can obtain up to a sixth of the estate (the rest going to relatives in ascending or side lines of the family).

Overall, then, the inheritance law in the ALR—in addition to testifying, itself, to an interest in a rational and systematic codification of property devolution between family members and creating its own narrative of transmission—represents a strong shift away from legal policies that protect the rights of family lineages to keep property unified under a single male line. Instead, these sections—despite the code’s initial commitment to a testator’s freedom—emphasize the responsibility of parents for their children, both during the parents’ lives and at their deaths, and attempt to ensure that all children will be provided for equally, at least when they share the same legal status. The priority of the younger generations over the older ones (inheritance in descending lines before ascending ones) is also noteworthy. In codifying these family relations and the

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149 Sara Eigen, in a footnote to her essay “A Mother’s Love, a Father’s Line: Law, Medicine and the 18th-Century Fictions of Patrilineal Genealogy,” remarks that the ALR was in fact the first legal code that included any rights or support at all for bastard children—previously they could not demand any support from their parents, and they were not allowed to enter guilds or have any of the privileges of citizens. Eigen, Sara: “A Mother’s Love, a Father’s Line: Law, Medicine and the 18th-Century Fictions of Patrilineal Genealogy,” in: Genealogie als Denkform in Mittelalter und Früher Neuzeit Eds. Kilian Heck and Bernhard Jahn. Tübingen: Niemeyer, 2000, p. 92.
transmission of property between generations, the code shows a distinct orientation towards the future.

This emphasis on the future is also exhibited in family relations of the period. Rebekka Habermas argues firmly and persuasively against earlier theses (e.g. those of Philippe Ariès and Lawrence Stone) about the ‘creation of childhood’ and the idea that this period was the first in which parents truly loved and cared for their children. She suggests instead that the actual shift was precisely in terms of this orientation towards younger generations on the part of their parents. In many social classes at the turn of the nineteenth century, child care was seen as time lost, of unfortunate necessity, to the economic labor of the household—time which would then be compensated for by the child when it was old enough to contribute to that labor.150 Bourgeois parents, by contrast, viewed themselves as motivated by affection and an altruistic notion of care. In accordance with this affection and altruistic vision of parenthood, they attended to their children’s every need and cultivated their distinct personalities according to their individual talents.151 This qualitative shift in the nature of the relationship meant that parents became more directly responsible for their children’s education and for organizing their days between lessons and chores of various sorts. This constituted a significant shift even from the early-bourgeois generation just before the turn of the

nineteenth century, when it was still common for children to pass much of their time in the care and company of servants. By the following generation of Bildungsbürger, this trend had been reversed: both mothers and fathers in bourgeois families were called upon to be directly and constantly involved in their children’s lives.

This is borne out in the novels of the period—but the fictional families in question are often not biological ones but are rather marked by the absence of biological kin and the substitution of affective connections. It is striking, however, that these affective relationships are not described as intergenerational friendships (and far less as any kind of romantic relationship), but that they are instead still couched firmly in the language of family relations. Characters in the novel at the turn of the nineteenth century assemble substitute families around them. Therefore, by removing the biological element of kinship, the novels tend to highlight the affective components that cement these substitute bonds—again, components that were explicitly formulated and carefully cultivated as part of the bourgeoisie’s program of self-identification and differentiation. These substitute structures serve not to devalue the family as such, but instead to place a higher value on the components of family relations that are not biologically determined (and thus, ostensibly, common to families of all social classes). The novel is a form of creative psychological investigation into what these affective components are, how they function, and where they break down.

II. Inheritance in novel plots: That the idea of testation was indeed viewed as important at the turn of the nineteenth century is evidenced by the repeated appearance of complex and potentially conflict-ridden situations of inheritance and transmission in the

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novels of the period, where they frequently serve as narrative motors. Here, disagreements between generations and disputes between parties tend to come to the fore, speaking to the impulse in this period towards differentiation from previous generations and towards highlighting changes, towards the end of the eighteenth century, in patterns of inheritance and family constellations. In J. J. Engel’s 1795 *Lorenz Stark*, the entire conflict of the plot revolves around whether Stark, the son, is capable and steady enough to assume control of the family business. This mode of inheritance before the actual decease of the parent was not at all uncommon in business concerns. In the elder Stark’s assessment, his son’s lack of business sense, immaturity, and failure to produce an heir are explicitly connected: “Er hielt ihn für ein Mittelding von einem Geizhalse und einem Verschwender [...] Was ihn aber am meisten auf den Sohn verdross, war der Umstand: dass dieser noch in seinem dreissigsten Jahre unverheiratet geblieben war, und dass es allen Anschein hatte, als ob er die Zahl der alten Hagestolzen vermehren würde”.

(6) The assumption is that a bachelor, without family and responsibilities, will be careless and wasteful, which will cause the business to suffer; only a family man will have the motivated commitment necessary to maintain the growth of the business, in much the same way as he concerns himself with the growth of his family. The story develops as the younger Stark attempts to prove to his father that he is, contrary to his father’s impression, both moral and responsible—and that he is already in love with a widow with two children of her own. The father continues to doubt, however, and devises a test for

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153 Rafaella Sarti, in her wide-ranging book *Europe at Home*, offers a comprehensive if necessarily somewhat superficial treatment of the way in which inheritance practices varied locally across Europe; she mentions specifically the practice of the *Alterntil*, in which one son (usually the eldest, but not always) would take over the management of the family property upon his marriage, rather than waiting for his father’s death. Sarti, Raffaella: *Europe at Home: Family and Material Culture 1500-1800*, [trans. Allan Cameron] Yale University Press, New Haven/London, 2002, Chapter 2. This practice seems to have been extended, in later times, to business concerns as well.
his son that touches exactly on issues of inheritance and generosity, saying of the widow’s children: “Was du ihnen zuwendest, werden deine eigenen Kinder verlieren. An fremdes Blut wirst du thörichter Weise wegwerfen, was deinem eigenen zu Guten kommen könnte. – Ich bitte dich: wie kannst du einen solchen Gedanken nur fassen?” (109) The younger Stark’s emotional answer—that his father is speaking not from the depths of his own soul but from “eine fremde, enge, äusserst beschränkte Seele, die Sie mir als die meine leihen” (109)—serves to convince the father that his son has developed sufficiently to assume control of their capitalistic concerns and that he is capable of choosing his own wife. The reversal inherent in this particular test highlights the extent to which Stark, despite being a businessman, does not put personal profit above all else. Consistent with Rebekka Habermas’ portrayal of the pre-full-industrialization urban “Kaufmann” (both in terms of self-perception and economic reality) as embedded in a complex network of connections that must be maintained in a balance with each other, Stark finds it much more important that his son be able to consider the variety of factors surrounding his choices and to accept them unselfishly than that he maximize the portion of future inheritances that will go to his own flesh and blood. Despite their earlier differences, father and son are completely aligned in this regard (indeed, Stark’s poor opinion of his son is largely informed by misunderstandings and overhasty judgment): reconciliation and resolution follow shortly thereafter, and the novel closes with a reversal of the old man’s fear of remaining heirless: “Herr Stark […] genoss das süsse, kaum mehr gehoffte Glück, Enkel an seine Brust zu tragen, die nicht bloss seines Bluts, 154

sondern auch seinen Namen trugen.” (111) When the line of succession has been extended to a third generation, when the strength of the family name is preserved, the novel can be ended.

Like Stark the younger, Goethe’s Wilhelm Meister stands, at the beginning of the *Lehrjahre*, in a position to inherit a capitalist endeavor currently managed by his father, a man who sells the art collection left to him by his father and uses the money to build an extravagant house, hoping “seinen Kindern Güter zu hinterlassen, auf deren Besitz er den größten Wert legte.”¹¹⁵⁵ That Wilhelm, his father, and his grandfather disagree about which goods are most worth possessing is perfectly clear, and the narrator’s staging, which describes this house as majestic but usually empty, “denn jede Mahlzeit war ein Fest, das sowohl wegen der Kosten als wegen der Unbequemlichkeit nicht oft wiederholt werden konnte” (392), tends to bias the reader towards Wilhelm and his grandfather’s opinion. Nevertheless, it is his father’s initiative (and his capital) that sends Wilhelm on his *Bildungsreise*, on which he is supposed to see the world of trade and manage his father’s concerns in various other cities. Unlike Stark, Wilhelm does not remain in this biological pattern of inheritance. Although he intends, after his disappointment with Mariane, to dedicate himself to his father’s trading interests, he finds himself, once embarked on his journey, repeatedly drawn away from the world of merchants, finding his prescribed tasks to be “verdrießliche Geschäfte.” (442) These duties fade ever further into the background, as he becomes more entangled with the troupe of actors (including investing his capital in their equipment). He officially breaks with his father’s trade when

he receives a letter from Werner informing him that his father has died—and that Werner has essentially taken his place by marrying Wilhelm’s sister, caring for his mother (“Deine Schwester zieht nach der Heirat gleich in unser Haus herüber, und sogar auch Deine Mutter mit.” [654]) and managing the family’s joint finances. Wilhelm’s response to this letter, in which he refuses to follow the plans his father and, in turn, Werner have formulated for him, insisting “mich selbst, ganz wie ich da bin, auszubilden, das war dunkel von Jugend auf mein Wunsch und meine Absicht” (657), marks his exit from his family’s traditional occupation. Much of the remainder of the novel is devoted to Wilhelm’s attempts to find a proper replacement for this family trade (the theater proving, ultimately, to be a disastrous mistake).

It is Wilhelm’s initiation into the Society that marks the final phase of transition from the biological family of his father, with all of its capitalist endeavors, to the non-biological but still generational structure of the Tower Society and its philanthropic-cultural mission. The particular conditions that obtain in relation to inheritance in connection with the Society become clearer in the early chapters of the Wanderjahre, where we see Wilhelm deferring the comfortable bourgeois existence promised by his marriage at the end of the Lehrjahre. Instead, he wanders indefinitely through distant lands and may not remain anywhere for more than three consecutive days—the resolution and stability that his initiation into the Tower Society seemed to offer Wilhelm as a replacement for his father’s business are postponed, and a new set of obligations is entailed by the entrance into this alternative lineage. Nevertheless, Wilhelm follows the Tower Society’s instructions, and their arrangements lead him, at the very last possible moment in the Lehrjahre, to his ultimately happy marriage. Wilhelm, by breaking with
his father’s lineage and ritualistically entering a new one, enacts in his own life path the cultural shift inherent in bourgeois sensibility: one is no longer bound by one’s father’s profession but is free to choose one’s own. At least at the end of the *Lehrjahre*, Wilhelm has successfully entered a non-biological generational system based on shared values and goals, and Goethe allows him to rest there for several decades. That he disturbs this order in the *Wanderjahre*, which itself remained unfinished, raises interesting questions about the durability of this ideal of static resolution, in which a character’s choice to leave one line of succession and enter another is figured as permanent and unproblematic. Both the sudden ending of the *Lehrjahre* and the appearance of a sequel also evince the difficulty inherent in bringing a novel about a character in constant development to a satisfying end. These are observations that have to some extent been made before, but approaching them through the lens of opposed biological and social generational systems with parallel patterns of inheritance sheds light on some of the thematic connections that tie *Wilhelm Meister* not only to other canonical *Bildungsromane*, but also to other types of novels at the time.

In Johann Gottwerth Müller’s translation of the Dutch novel *Sara Reinert*, the actual will and testament have already been implemented at the novel’s beginning, but Sara’s two appointed guardians, Abraham Blankard, himself a bachelor without heirs -- “ein alter Junggeselle, wenn Du willst” [3], as he himself puts it – and her aunt, Susanna Hofland, argue explicitly and at length about her inheritance. They disagree about how much control each one of them should have over the fortune that was bequeathed to Sara at her parents’ deaths, but which she is still too young to manage herself. Although he cautions Sara that she should not act rashly or unfairly, Blankard does say of her aunt
“Sie ist ein habsüchtiges filziges Weib, eine Erzheuchlerlinn.” (5) Sara, in a letter to a friend, outlines the story of her parents’ deaths and the provisions that were laid out for her, including the reason that Sara’s aunt has agreed to take her in: “Während dieser Krankheit ernannte meine Mutter die Tante zur Mitfürmünderinn neben dem Herrn Blankard, und bestimmte ihr, wenn sie mich zu sich nehmen wollte, 700 Fl. jährlich, bis ich heyrathen oder volljährig seyn würde.” (24) That Sara is truly mistreated and not just an oversensitive child is clear because we are given letters from multiple correspondence partners, including Susanna Hofland’s missives to a “Schwesternchen” from her religious sect that reveal her selfish motivations and lack of basic affection for the girl. When Sara grows weary of her aunt’s abuse and runs away, ‘Demoiselle’ Hofland is undeterred and attempts to hold the other parties to a narrow interpretation of Sara’s mother’s testament, writing to Blankard, “Ich verlange das volle Kostgeld bis sie heyrathet oder fünf und zwanzig Jahr ist; sie ist aus ihrem eigenen Kopfe weggegangen.” (80) Blankard fires back “Wissen Sie was? Das Geld einer Waise haben Sie mit Ihren Freßbrüdern und Sauenschwestern verschlampampt, und das Mädel noch dazu gebraucht dem Geschmeiße aufzuwarten; das haben Sie!” (87) The dispute continues (with Sara’s aunt calling her pastor to her assistance) until Blankard cuts off correspondence—in this case the conflict is not between generations of family members, but between an unrelated friend who has Sara’s best interests at heart and a family member who clearly does not. That which Sara finds a surrogate father in Blankard but has to look elsewhere for female guidance despite the fact that her female guardian is her blood relation emphasizes the extent to which wider family structures no longer functioned as a single entity with allied economic interests, as was the case in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Despite the fact that
Sara is the sole heir of her parents’ not-inconsiderable fortune, because she is young and female, her property is continually contested.

That these various problematic situations pertaining to inheritance, guardianship of orphaned children, and patterns of succession appear explicitly in the novels suggests that they are trying to work through the different permutations and conflicts that can arise in the transfer of property from one generation to the next. These conflicts are, at least at the level of the plot, successfully resolved: Stark passes his father’s test, Wilhelm finds a new system of testation to enter into and acquires a wife and son of his own, Sara and Blankard manage to keep her fortune out of the hands of her aunt (and peace is eventually made between them). Moreover, the conflicts, where they do not result from pure misunderstanding, as in the case of the Starks, tend to be resolved in favor of the younger—more ‘emotional,’ ‘empathetic,’ or ‘personal’—generations, suggesting that these novels are thoroughly invested in the self-portrayal of the rising bourgeoisie as more open-minded, less stratified, and more individualistic than their courtly/aristocratic predecessors. If, however, we consider testaments more broadly—that is, as encompassing not just the transmission of property but also of experience or values via some sort of narration or text—the path of transmission is not quite so smooth.

**III.1 Parents and origins; transmission through story-telling:** Thus actual property is not the only thing that is transmitted from generation to generation (and explicitly discussed) in these novels. Origin stories make up a significant portion of the protagonist’s ‘legacy’—like property, they are carefully preserved and deliberately transmitted from generation to generation. They bear witness to a parent’s experience, which is seen within the framework of the novel as relevant and valuable. These stories
are seen both as didactic and occasionally cautionary, containing a sentient point for the protagonist’s further development, and as confirming or even creating family ties. They rarely come all the way at the beginning of a narrative; instead, they mark a pivotal point in a character’s development—sometimes as a rite of passage, sometimes once a required level of trust has been reached (this latter situation mirrors nicely the situation of the reader: what might seem, at the beginning of a novel, a lengthy and pointless preface, has become relevant information about the origins of a character in whom we have become interested).

In Die Familie Seldorf, this ‘origin story’ is particularly noticeable because it is doubled: the third-person narrator, a disembodied voice that is never identified but that nevertheless filters the plot through a strong and occasionally moralizing perspective, provides us with background information at the very beginning of the novel. We learn a good deal about Seldorf’s life: he marries late, has two children, leaves his family to go to war and returns to find his wife pregnant with another man’s child; she dies shortly after that child’s birth, causing Seldorf to retreat into the country. The narrator provides both relevant background and significant psychological motivation for this withdrawal from society in the first chapter, and the focus of the story then shifts to Sara and Theodor Seldorf’s upbringing on an isolated estate in the French countryside. Seldorf, who has become bitter and mistrustful, is of the opinion that he is protecting his children from the inherent deceitfulness and evil of the world outside, but in fact he is raising them to repeat his mistakes. He never tells them about his past or their mother’s, and by depriving them of social experience he prevents them from developing the critical ability to judge

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156 Huber, Therese: Die Familie Seldorf, facsimile reprint of the 1795 edition ed. Heuser, Magdalene, George Olms Verlag, Hildesheim, Zurich, New York, 1989. All citations are from this edition and will be given in the text as page numbers.
when they are being misled or deceived. Thus, when he finally breaks his long and bitter silence to tell Sara the story of his life before his children’s birth—because he is on the verge of death and because Theodor is about to marry the daughter of the very man who wronged him—it takes on the tone of a didactic tale that misses its mark. Seldorf, unable to see what the isolation and silence he has imposed has done to his children, believes that he is warding off disaster; the reader, however, is well aware that it is far too late. Theodor has long since been seduced by the plight of the embattled aristocracy in the French Revolution and has run away to fight on the side of his father’s enemies. Sara, starved for affection and too naïve to recognize duplicity, has already fallen irrevocably in love with the charming aristocrat L***, who eventually deceives her even more thoroughly than her father was deceived. It is worth noting, too, that Seldorf’s material property has also been destroyed at this point: he has literally nothing to leave his children except his own story and the lessons that could have been drawn from it, had he been honest with his children earlier.

Nevertheless, Seldorf decides to tell Sara “seine Jugendgeschichte, bis zu dem erst spät bei ihm entstandenen Wunsch, in die Verhältnisse des ehelichen Lebens zu treten.” (242) The “Jugendgeschichte” begins in the third person, told through the voice of the narrator, but switches to Seldorf’s own voice at a point of particular emotion (the death of Seldorf’s only close friend), whereupon it continues in the first person until the end. The increase in emotionality and the immediacy inherent in the first-person

157 Although it is unwise to extrapolate from an author’s biography to a literary text, it seems relevant enough to deserve mention, here, that Therese Huber and her first husband Georg Forster were supporters of the revolutionaries in Mainz. [see: Heuser, Magdalane, “Nachwort”]. The novel itself is quite nuanced in its political perspective, emphasizing the brutality of both sides in the Revolution and ensuing fighting, but it is clear from the portrayals of the rebels, which I cannot discuss at length here, that their solidarity and belief in freedom and equality are positively valued.
perspective, which in this era are generally hallmarks of a type of story-telling that vouches for its own authenticity,\textsuperscript{158} take on a slightly different valence here. Instead of convincing us that Seldorf is at last reflecting productively on his own life by passing his experience on to his daughter, the removal of the narrator’s moralizing voice serves to call the reliability of Seldorf’s judgments (which have already been shown to be biased by his bitterness and distrust of the world) further into question. Without the presence of the narrator’s commentary, the reader can plainly see that Seldorf never admits wrongdoing or mistakes on his own part. Although we had been told at the beginning that Seldorf had married relatively late, it is only revealed at this point that he did not in fact fall in love, but that his wife was ‘given’ to him by a dying friend to save her honor. At least in Seldorf’s assessment, the union is nevertheless a happy one: “ein Gefühl lebhaft wie die Liebe, und nicht trügend wie sie, verband mich mit einem jungen, reizenden, für jedes Schöne empfänglichen Weibe, deren moralisches und bürgerliches Daseyn mein Werk war.” (246) Although the child she is carrying dies, Theodor and Sara’s births “erhöhten nach und nach das Glück meiner Ehe.” (247) That this rather sanctimonious attitude towards his wife might not be the best ground on which to build a life-long connection does not occur to Seldorf, and he goes on blithely to describe the life he and his wife lead as a kind of simple idyll, until he has to go to war in the American colonies. Upon his return, the affirmation of his faith in humanity as a whole is shattered by the faithlessness of his wife: “Nach fünf Jahren kam ich zurück, mit festerem Glauben an

\textsuperscript{158} Jean Marie Goulemot, in a section of \textit{The History of Private Life} entitled “Literary Practices: Publicizing the Private, describes how this process is intended to work, writing about the second half of the eighteenth century: “Authors will henceforth invoke their own moral authority as proof of the truth of their writing” [365] and continuing, “What is interesting is the narrative appropriation of the new fictional practices by a subject who in effect vouches for the story’s truth. Because the subject speaks directly to us, we believe what he or she says.” (384) Huber subverts this convention by allowing a character that has been portrayed critically to assume this form of confession without accepting the self-questioning and critical reflection that it requires.
Menschenwerth und Menschenglük als ich je habt hatte […] Ich kam zu meiner Gattin, und fand Kälte, Verlegenheit, künstliche Liebkosungen, ich fand sie für mich verloren” (248). It transpires that Seldorf’s wife has had an affair with a count, who is none other than the father of Theodor’s fiancée. This betrayal, and not his wife’s death, is what leads Seldorf to abandon society and take his children to live with no companions but each other and their peasant neighbors.

Seldorf continues with his narrative, describing how he tried to extricate his wife from her immoral circumstances, but how she berates him even as she is dying in childbirth, claiming that “Eigennuz und Herrschsucht waren die Quelle deiner Wohltaten,” and describing herself as his slave. (256) Seldorf is completely unable to consider whether his wife may be partially in the right: “Ich habe sie nie verstanden; ein undurchdringliches Dunkel verhüllt den Weg, auf welchem sie in’s Verderben wandelte” (257). Although he repeats her words, he does not reflect on them, and the reader is not given the assistance of the narrator’s intervention to determine whether his wife’s accusations might have some truth to them. And, though he remains unable to see beyond his own subjective position, he still hopes to ward off further disaster for his children. The point of his narrative is to exhort Sara to write to her brother and command him to return home, as “die Verbindung mit der Tochter jenes Verworfenen wäre unnatürlich und schändlich” (257). Not satisfied with ruling out the actual daughter of his rival, he goes on to forbid any marriage between a child of his and a member of the aristocracy: “sage ihm auch noch, daß keine Verbindung, von welcher Art sie seyn mag, mit irgend einem aus dem verhaßten Stande, um dessen Gunst er so schimpflich bühlt, je meine Segen haben wird” (257). Sara goes to fulfill her father’s command, “aber auf einmal vor
Schreken erstarrt ließ ihre Hand die Feder fallen, wie sie des Vaters Schwur niederschrieb, nie einer Verbindung mit jenem Stande seinen Segen zu geben.” (261) Too far in love to renounce her connection to L***, Sara resigns herself to a doubled existence (not unlike her mother’s) until the death of her father—except that her father does eventually discover her relationship with L***, and curses her on his deathbed, irrevocably damaging the kinship ties between them at a point when reconciliation is impossible.

Seldorf’s cautionary tale comes far too late, and his legacy is precisely that his children, whom he tried so hard to protect, are particularly susceptible to the kind of deceit that embittered his life, and that they eventually come to ruin because of it. Theodor is executed by anti-aristocratic rebels in the fighting following the Revolution, and Sara, after her own illegitimate daughter with L*** is accidentally killed by L*** himself, retreats to the ruins of L***’s ancestral home to raise his legitimate, now orphaned son. When she takes the child into her care, she specifically refers to notions of legacy and transmission between generations, swearing to her companions that, “Des Knaben Tugenden sollen einst seines Vaters Verbrechen versöhnen!” (II, 287) Given the situation in which the two find themselves at the end of the novel, this seems doubtful: like her father, Sara is left to raise a child without a partner, in complete isolation, and without property—with only her own story to pass on to him. Seldorf’s attempt to pass on the lessons of his own life to his children fails in every way: his account lacks the moments of self-questioning and acceptance of personal shortcomings that a genuine process of bearing witness to one’s own life requires (a lack that is highlighted by the
removal of the narrator’s framing),\(^{159}\) and it comes so late that the paths of his children’s lives are already formed. It therefore serves not to cement the biological familial bonds, but to sunder them. The channels of testation are warped here in such a way that the only things Seldorf bequeaths to his children are the certainty that their fates will be as marked by bitterness and betrayal as his and, further, that the family line will not be perpetuated by either son or daughter.

Other ‘origin stories’ have a much more positive valence—they serve to reinforce or create familial bonds, rather than sundering them, and their didactic point is taken, rather than missed. In *Sara Reinert*, the narration of a story actually substitutes for familial ties. Madame Leenig, a widow who takes in boarders but who serves as a surrogate mother for the girls who live with her, decides at the end of a long illness during which Sara and another boarder have patiently and attentively kept her company to tell them the story of her life. She introduces her narration specifically in terms of family, or rather, its lack: “Sie haben beyde keine Eltern mehr; mir nahm Gott sehr früh meine einzige Tochter. Lassen Sie mich meine Luise in Ihnen wiederfinden!” (285) By telling Sara her story, Madame Leenig places herself in the role of Sara’s long dead mother. Here, as with Seldorf’s narration, the story is set up explicitly didactically: “An mir sollen Sie jederzeit eine Freundinn haben, die ihre mehreren Jahre und Erfahrungen stets zu Ihrem Nutzen anwenden wird. In diesem Gesichtspunkte will ich Ihnen eines und andres aus meinem Lebenslaufe erzählen, in der Ueberzeugung, daß Sie das was ich Ihnen vertraue, bey sich behalten werden.” (285-6) She then begins a long tale of how she is pressured, as an innocent girl, into marrying a rich nobleman whom she does not

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\(^{159}\) The resonance with tropes of religious conversion and confession, here, are clear; I will investigate these traditions and their relation to writing practices and the novel more explicitly later in this chapter.
love. When she protests, she is told “Ey, was, Miekchen! hast Du so viele Monate unter Beaumonde gelebt, und noch nicht gelernt, daß Liebe und Ehe zwey sehr verschiedene Dinge sind, die nimmer zusammenfallen?” (288) This remark, which is something of a caricature of historical theses about love and marriage in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, is belied by Madame Leenig’s experiences. Her marriage is neither an ideal of companionship and affection nor a practical alliance providing economic stability and social standing: Leenig proves to be a profligate who runs through his entire fortune, abuses his wife, and leaves her to take in boarders after his death. Unlike Seldorf, Madame Leenig reflects on her life, admits that she was mistaken in following the advice of these elders, and renounces her all her connections with “Leben nach dem sogenannten bon ton” (300). And here, in marked contrast to the fate of Sara Seldorf, both of the Widow Leenig’s ‘daughters’ do learn from her mistakes, and marry for love (though with the sensible approval of their elders).

In this case, the recounting of an oral narrative fulfils a purpose on both sides: the widow is able, despite the fact that she has no legal heirs, to pass down her story and her values, and the orphaned girls are guided by a trustworthy surrogate mother figure and thereby prevented from having to repeat her fate. But Madame Leenig’s story is not just a cautionary tale; it also creates pseudo-familial bonds—bonds that are recognized and commented on by the characters themselves. Though no property has changed hands, a strong bond of spiritual kinship is formed through this process of narration. The narrative is effective not because of the overt lessons it imparts, but because of its emotional impact; Sara writes, of listening to the widow’s story, “Wie oft drückte ich nicht ihre zarte Hand an mein Herz! Nie war ich so gerührt!” (307) Additionally, Sara almost
immediately copies this story into a letter to her friend Anna—of course this serves the purpose of making an oral conversation available to the reader in an epistolary novel, but it also highlights the extent to which narration is a form of social connection: because this story is important to Sara, she must pass it on to her friend, transmitting it intra- as well as inter-generationally.

In *Agnes von Lilien*, the story of Agnes’ parents and their ill-fated love serves in part as their introduction to her, as she has only just learned who they are. In the first volume of the novel, Agnes’ mother is heavily veiled whenever they see each other—in the second, she confirms Agnes’ “wunderbare Ahndung” that she is a princess whom Agnes has seen at court, and she also tells Agnes that the painter who has been arranging their meetings is in fact her father. This part of the conversation is conducted orally, but the remainder of their conversation deals with the difficulties caused by Agnes’ grandfather, who has kidnapped her and plans to force her to marry against her will. Because they are meeting in secret, Agnes’ mother cannot finish her story in person—instead, “welch ein Vater, welch ein Mann er ist, wirst du aus einer kleinen Lebensgeschichte sehen, die ich seit unserer ersten Zusammenkunft für dich aufschrieb.” (II, 32) The transfer of the papers is rather fraught in this instance, as the princess worries that she will destroy her daughter’s peace of mind and hopes for the future by forcing her either to forsake her beloved Nordheim and marry another man, or to know that her refusal to make this choice resulted in her father’s imprisonment: “Bald riß sie die Papiere, welche sie mir eben zugestellt hatte, aus meinen Händen und rief: Nein ich will die Ruhe deiner Liebe nicht morden! Bald gab sie mir wie wieder mit den Worten: Rette deinen edlen Vater!” (II, 37) Eventually Agnes’ uncle has to lead his sister from the
room, assuring her that “Agnes muß alles wissen – die Pflicht wird in ihrem schönen Herzen siegen.” (II, 37) In this case, the story of how Agnes’ parents fell in love, were secretly married, then separated by the forces of her mother’s family is presented as the necessary background for Agnes to make a decision.

Given that it ostensibly serves such a specific purpose, however, the story is surprisingly long—it takes up a substantial portion of the second volume, and begins with the earliest childhood of Agnes’ mother, long before she meets Agnes’ father. In it, the reader is provided with a striking contrast to Agnes’ own development and education, which were treated at length in the first volume. Agnes’ mother begins her account: “Ich wurde in jener Beschränkung erzogen, zu welcher so oft die isolierte Lage eines höhern Standes führt. Meine Mutter hielt streng auf einmahl hergebrachten Gewohnheiten, und in allen einfachen fröhlichen Genüssen der Jugend kliirten die Fesseln der Etikette mit ein.” (II, 41) She goes on to describe how she cultivated no particular talent but merely performed empty exercises, and how, in the absence of loving connections, she retreated further and further into her fantasy. In particular, “Mein Verstand entwickelte sich nicht im gehörigen Verhältnisse zu meiner Einbildungskraft.” (II, 43) In this instance, the recounting of an origin narrative serves not only to reinforce the ties between Agnes and the parents she has just met, but also to provide a study in contrast between Agnes’ own education in the competent hands of her foster father, who is a country pastor, and her mother’s formal but empty training. In yet another embedded narrative, in which Agnes’ father tells her mother how he has discovered that Agnes is alive and thriving, he comments precisely on this contrast, saying that “unter dem Drucke der Meinungen und Vorurtheile, die mein Leben so fürchterlich zerstört hatten, war es mir ein wohltätiges
Gefühl, mein Kind entfernt von allen künstlichen Schränken der Gesellschaft zu halten, und nur durch Wahrheit und Natur die Kraft seines Herzens entwickelt zu sehen.” (II, 131-2) Unlike her mother, Agnes has learned to be independent and to use her reason, and so despite the fact that at this point in the narrative it looks as though she is to meet a fate similar to her mother’s, the reader nevertheless suspects that her superior reason, good sense, and capacity to love—not to mention loving relationships with both her newly-discovered parents and with her superlative foster father—will work in her favor in the end. And indeed this proves to be the case: unlike her mother, Agnes does not act impulsively and in secret. She refuses to abandon her family, and her patience wins her grandfather over enough that he does not insist that she take any immediate steps, which allows her to marry Nordheim after his death. The narrative of Agnes’ mother’s life provides her with a point of contrast for her own behavior at the same time as it introduces her to her long-absent parents and enables her to love them.

All of these origin stories provide a link across generations, between characters who relate to each other as parents and children, whether they are biologically or socially connected. The narration of past life experience actively places characters into these parent-child constellations, even when there is no actual biological relation. Whether they are explicitly presented as cautionary narratives, points of comparison, or introductions, they all serve to create channels of communication and of affective connection between generations. Whether or not these stories successfully transmit experiences and values from one generation to the next does not seem to depend on biological relation, but rather on the ability of the parental figure to reflect critically on his or her past life in such a way that the lesson is not only orally delivered but is embodied in the continuing life of
the parent. The sincerity of narrative, not the authenticity of blood ties or the duration of
the acquaintance, is what creates effective channels of testation. Inherent in all of these
stories is the premise that it matters where one comes from and what one’s forbears, be
they biological or adoptive, chose to do, and that this information can affect one’s own
subsequent actions, extending the relevance of the passed-down story into the future.
Resolution is here less certain than in the cases where the testament involves merely a
transfer of property—sometimes the story is received successfully and the listener is able
to learn from it, but sometimes he or she is not; in other instances, as with the extended
discussion of Agnes’ mother’s education, points of comparison and ultimate meaning are
implicit, and only the reader is in a position critically to compare and evaluate the
authenticity and worth of the story within the larger framework of the narrative.

III.2 Documents, written culture, and the writing of life Of course, the explicit
and extended narrative of a life, either written or oral, presented by a parental figure, is
not the only way of embodying a life in a text—of creating biography.\footnote{\“Der Ausdruck \textit{Biographie} ist ein Kompositum aus dem griech. Nomen \textit{βίος} [bios] \‘Leben\’ und dem Verb \textit{γράφειν} [gráphein] \‘schreiben\’, das in dieser Verbindung erst im 6. Jh. n. Chr. auftaucht. […]\ Biographie, Autobiographie und z.T. auch Roman werden im 18. Jh. nicht klar getrennt […].\” \textit{Weimar, Klaus, et al.: Realllexikon der deutschen Literaturwissenschaft}, 3\textsuperscript{rd} Edition, Walter de Gruyter, Berlin, New York, 1997. Thus we can see a ‘written life’ not only as a single long-form narrative but as the summation of texts and documents that accrue to that person and the representation of his or her life story.} In some novels,
an explicit intergenerational origin story is impossible due to the formal constraints of the
text’s construction: the plot has already separated the protagonist from his parents, à la
Wilhelm Meister, or the epistolary form of the text makes this kind of extended narration
seem improbable (though obviously some authors chose to circumvent this problem, as in
Sara’s letter that transcribes Widow Leenig’s story). In these cases, documents embedded
in the body of the novel often take on the same didactic and connective functions.
Although they are usually overtly introduced, these documents do not require as much active ‘staging’ as the parental narratives do—they are less specifically addressed, and their importance is vouched for by their mere presence. Such an interruption carries certain risks with it: the internal coherence of the novel (which is identified as a hallmark of its prized ‘Wahrscheinlichkeit’ over and against the Baroque novel or courtly Romance) may be compromised, or the authenticity and intimacy implied by the narrative voice may be shattered, or the various epistolary styles may be flattened by this greater contrast. Thus the sheer technique of transcription in the face of these risks justifies these documents’ inclusion and flags them as particularly significant. In general, these novels are marked by a profusion of embedded texts: letters are circulated, narratives copied down, records are kept of births and deaths, conflicts and resolutions. It is important to note that this to some degree mirrors historical writing practices: scholars emphasize the extent to which bourgeois culture around 1800 was a written one. Letters, in great quantity, were read aloud, copied, and circulated far beyond their original recipients (this was not a betrayal of confidence; the writers expected as much), and there was a veritable profusion of journals and diaries amongst both sexes.

Novels represent an important part of this culture—both in their portrayal of inner emotions of characters and in their reflexive thematization of the act of writing, they stage and exemplify the written culture to a generation of bourgeois men and women. To a certain extent, text as such is the legacy of this culture, carefully developed, represented, and preserved within its novels. So, despite the fact the circulation of embedded documents no longer takes the form of a simple passing down from one generation to the next of either property (as in the legal statutes of the Allgemeines
Landrecht or in the plot situations I discussed above) or narrative bearing witness to a life experience (as with the origin stories), techniques of transcription are still techniques of transmission, and still fall into a genealogical pattern—here not only between characters in the novels, but also from authors to their readers. Thus investigating what kinds of texts the novel decides to present as separately-staged texts rather than assimilated into a narrative, and what purposes these texts can serve in relation to the larger narrative, offers suggestions as to what information (connections, theories, values) was considered important, what merited inclusion and particular emphasis within the wider framework of the novel. In nearly all of these embedded documents, the thematics of the family and family-like connections remain at the forefront—the entanglement of family and text seems to be what we as modern readers have inherited in the novel at the turn of the nineteenth century.

Perhaps the most famous instance of an embedded text in a novel from this period is the scroll that Wilhelm receives upon entering the Tower Society at the end of the Lehrjahre. In keeping with my earlier argument that Wilhelm steps out of the genealogy of his biological family and into that of the Tower Society, this document bespeaks their authority (Wilhelm’s father having long since died and his influence over Wilhelm having completely dissipated). Despite the fact that it comes at a pivotal moment (when Wilhelm’s Lehrjahre are officially declared to be over and he is initiated into the Tower Society) and is ceremonially presented in a way that gives it extreme import, the text that is actually reproduced in the framework of the novel is both short and cryptic, made up of a series of proverb-like statements about imitation, art, progress, language. It is also incomplete: as Wilhelm is reading, the Abbé stops him and says “das übrige zu seiner
Zeit. Jetzt sehen Sie sich in jenen Schränken um.” (875) I would suggest that this interruption of the actual text in favor of pointing out the other scrolls (“Lotharios Lehrjahre, Jarnos Lehrejahre und seinen eignen Lehrjahre daselbst […] unter vielen anderen, deren Namen ihm unbekannt waren.” [875]) emphasizes precisely the genealogical and pseudo-familial nature of this particular moment. The Tower Society’s staging presents text and genealogical structure as almost identical; as the novel nears its conclusion, we see the invention of an institution in which family and text appear completely intertwined. This overlap is confirmed by the reappearance of biological themes in the ceremony as well. There is a mysterious figure present that claims to be the “Geist deines [Wilhelms] Vaters” (874), and Wilhelm’s only subsequent question after learning that he may read the scrolls of all of his fellows is whether the members of the Society can tell him “ob Felix wirklich mein Sohn sei?” (875) This scene is the final step in the process by which spiritual kinship system of the Tower Society completely envelops Wilhelm’s family connections. It replaces those biological ties (with the father) that were inadequate and confirms those (with the son) that are deemed appropriate and necessary. The inclusion of Wilhelm’s Lehrbrief among the others is a textual representation of this process.

In Lafontaine’s Karl Engelmann’s Tagebuch, the sheer act of writing itself is foregrounded, rather at the expense of the eponymous character, who can hardly be called a hero as much as a scribe. The text begins with a section entitled “Beruf zum Biographen,” in which Karl describes the impression that his father’s careful notation of a reconciliation with his brother (Karl’s uncle) in the family Bible made on him and concludes “Ich lebte nicht, wie andere Kinder, in den Tag, sondern in meine Biographie
The fact that Karl is inspired to embark on this project of extensive writing by observing another instance of writing is also significant—not least because of the difference between Karl’s writing practices and his father’s. The notation in the family Bible is in fact quite short: “den 18ten habe ich mich durch Gottes Barmherzigkeit mit meinem lieben Bruder versöhnt. Ich war zu hart gegen ihn.” (5) The previous relationship of the two brothers, the circumstances of their disagreement, the scene of the reconciliation are not explained. The Bible is simply a record in which Karl’s father registers the most basic accounts of momentous family events. Karl, on the other hand, feels a compulsion to tell a ‘whole’ story: he does describe the scene in which his father and uncle dismiss their disagreement, and he then goes back and describes the reason for their dispute. It is not that text is not valued in the earlier generation—Karl’s father says that “für kein Rittergut wäre mir die Bibel feil” (7), but he is not compelled to write comprehensively about his own life or the lives of his family members, unlike Karl himself, who is so gripped by this compulsion that he explicitly states that writing is for him what life is for other people.

The contrast is even more striking as the generations stretch back further: Karl’s great-grandfather made annotations in the church register next to the names of women he suspected of having conceived their children before marriage. Here, too, the issue of recording and text is precisely connected to questions of legitimization and family status. These notes, which take the form of “bittern Ausdrücken, oder doch wenigstens einen großen NB” (346), are then repeated next to the name of the bastard child when he or she

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161 Lafontaine, August: Karl Engelmanns Tagebuch, Berlin, bei Johann Daniel Sander, 1800, p. 12. All citations are from this edition and will be given in the text as page numbers.
marries, performing the transmission of the sins of the parents into the next generation. Again, the reader does not learn the exact content of the annotations, but it is clear that they contain no explanation or justification—they contain either harsh judgments or a warning to ‘take note.’ They are also emphatically public, not private or intimate, and have public consequences: “Eine solche scharfe, bittere Anmerkung in dem Kirchenbuch hatte einmal eine Verbindung zwischen zwei jungen Leuten getrennt, und sie Beide unglücklich gemacht.” (346-7) But, in these earlier generations, the solution is precisely not to add more information, but to include less. After one such incident, Karl’s grandfather (who inherited his father’s position), softened the system: “Er half sich nun so, daß er bei jeder Braut, deren Ruf nicht ohne allen Flecken war, ein ganz kleines Spinnengewebe mit den feinsten, kaum sichtbaren Federzügen mahlte. Das Spinnengewebe war größer und deutlicher, je anstößiger ein solches Mädchen gelebt hatte” (347). The function of condemnation remains, but the shift from a script notation to a graphic symbol makes it less transparent and thus less public. Despite this modification, these annotations are still much less comprehensive than even the annotations that Karl’s father makes in the family Bible. Two generations removed from Karl, there are no mitigating circumstances included that might lead one to forgive these girls with bad reputations. The purpose of writing is to pass judgment and to warn. As the generations of the family progress, then, as the task of writing is inherited, the flow of writing becomes more expansive, more personal, and more intimate. When Karl is given a written narrative of another character’s life story, he does not summarize it, but rather copies it down in full.
Despite the somewhat sinister character of the church register notations, writing in Lafontaine’s novel generally has an inclusive and connective rather than exclusive character. Karl’s record of the life of Waldenbruch, the man who seduces his cousin Suschen, causing her father to throw her out of the house, becomes a means of first bringing Waldenbruch and Suschen together again and to reconciling Suschen’s parents to their union. By transcribing Waldenbruch’s biography, Karl provides the proof of good intentions that allows Waldenbruch to become a legitimate part of his family, just as his narrative becomes part of Karl’s own Tagebuch. It is also significant that Karl, as he copies the narrative, transposes it into the third person and continues to use the first person when talking about his own family—that is, Waldenbruch is “er,” but when Suschen’s father is mentioned as the father of Waldenbruch’s beloved, Karl refers to him as “mein Onkel.” By absorbing Waldenbruch’s story in the same narrative voice that he has used throughout his Tagebuch, Karl reinforces the sense of inclusion and continuity. The family remains the focal point, and other characters are framed with reference to it.

Karl is also explicitly aware of the function his Tagebuch serves in ending family conflicts. Towards the end of the novel, as truths are being revealed and disputes resolved, Karl reads his father and uncle portions of the diary in order to fill them in on various back stories that they have missed; shortly thereafter, he tells a skeptical Waldenbruch that “mein Tagebuch, von dem er so ungern etwas höre, bei Suschens und meinem Vater sehr nützliche Dienste geleistet hätte.” He goes on, half-joking, “Es sind, sagte ich, viele Tagebücher geschrieben; aber schwerlich eins, worin das Tagebuch selbst eine Rolle spielt, und zwar eine so wichtige.” (337) Writing practices and their importance for the family are in fact recognized and reflected on the level of the
characters, not just referred to for the sake of the reader. Nor is the diary the only text that
is explicitly discussed amongst the characters: the church register also plays a significant
role in the resolution of conflicts at the novel’s end. When trying to persuade Karl’s
father to allow his daughter Linchen to marry a *Jungfernkind*, Karl’s uncle refers not only
to Karl’s diary (“Sieh, wenn dein Sohn nun schreiben müßte: deine Tochter und Rudeli
[…] hätten mit gebrochenem Herzen unsre Seligkeit angesehen!” [386]), but to the
church register, as well: “Duldet doch Gott die Leute mit den Spinnengeweben auf der
Erde; was sollten wir nicht!” (386) It is the reference to these two books that finally
brings Karl’s father to relent, whereupon he also couches his reply in terms of the books:
“Nein, sagte mein Vater; mag er [Karl] doch nichts aufschreiben. […] Und am Ende,
Bruder, frage ich noch, ob es nicht überhaupt ein Aberglaube mit den Spinnengeweben
war, und Hochmuth von uns dazu.” (386-7) Reflection on the newer book, on Karl’s way
of writing, enables his father to reject the older and more judgmental record. When the
bastard children have been accepted and legitimated, when three couples have been
happily married, Karl can stop writing—his uncle tells him to “schließ dein Tagebuch
einmal!” and the novel closes with Karl’s response “Ich lächelte, und halte Wort.” (388)
The compulsion to write is only in effect as long as family ties remain to be legitimated,
individuals remain who need to be textually and legally bound to the group.

Nor is this obsession with writing, documentation, and the circulation of text
pertaining to families and their origins limited to non-reflexive, at least largely realistic
novels. Clemens Brentano’s *Godwi*, which describes itself on its title page as “ein
verwildeter Roman” and which is deeply informed by the narrative and aesthetic
principles of the Romantic movement, appears, in the first volume, to be an epistolary
novel about mysterious relations and family origins. The characters we meet in the first volume of the novel are scattered in incomplete and frequently isolated pairs—Godwi, Joduno, Ottilie, Römer, and Eusebio have all grown up either entirely or largely without their mothers (the ‘steinerne Bild der Mutter’ of the story’s subtitle only serves to highlight to absence of any actual flesh and blood mothers). Godwi’s father receives a letter from an Antonio Firmenti in which he describes yet another instance of lost family members—in this case, a lost brother who cannot bear the yoke of his father’s tyrannical behavior after the early death of his mother. Antonio also comments explicitly on the need to narrate this family history, even to Godwi’s father, a relative stranger who has simply stumbled on information about the lost brother: “Es ist eine innerliche Gewalt, die mich zwingt, Ihnen alles zu erzählen, es ist mir, als hätten Sie mich gefragt, als wären Sie ein Glied meiner Familie, das ganz von ihr getrennt, jetzt erst von ihrer Geschichte unterrichtet werden müsste.” (210-11) Antonio in fact feels an affectionate, pseudo-familial connection to the man who has given him the news that his actual biological brother is alive, and he responds to this precisely by telling this man the story of his family.

Of course, there are important differences between Godwi and, say, Agnes von Lilien or Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre. The second volume begins not with a single and lengthy document directly explaining all the mysterious connections—instead, the fictional author-character Maria addresses the reader directly, explaining that he has freely altered the letters and also “[sie] mit dem [s]einigen vermischt” (273). He then

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162 Brentano, Clemens: Godwi, oder das steinerne Bild der Mutter, in: Bellman, Werner [ed]: Clemens Brentano, Sämtliche Werke und Briefe, Band 16 (Prosa 1), Verlag W. Kohlhammer, Stuttgart/Berlin/Köln/Mainz, 1978. All citations are from this edition and will be given in the text as page numbers.
recounts how he received a packet of letters from the very same Römer who is an author of many of them, with the assignment “den Versuch zu machen, diese Briefe nach dem Fade, den ich Ihnen geben will, zu reihen, und hie und da zu ändern, damit mehr Einheit hinein kömmt” (274). Römer is extremely displeased with Maria’s work, and calls it “unbeholfne Buchverderberei” (275). The levels of narrator and narrated are continually mixed in the second volume (in fact, the “author” Maria dies and his character, Godwi, must finish the story himself).

But this is not to say that the concerns about the family disappear: upon leaving Römer’s estate in disgrace, Maria embarks on a journey to find the younger Godwi, in order to complete his narrative, this time as “die treue Geschichte, wie ich ihn fand, und was mir mit ihm begegnete” (275). Maria also, on the first evening he meets Godwi, tells the story of his own childhood, in an attempt both to gain Godwi’s trust and to excuse, if only partially, the way in which he has appropriated and freely altered Godwi’s own story. Happily, Godwi is much better pleased with the narrative than Römer—he offers various editorial comments, corrects certain mistakes that Maria has made, and agrees to help him finish the narrative. Nor does the technique for this completion vary significantly from that of more realistic novels—as with Agnes’ mother’s story, or Karl Engelmann’s writing activities, it involves the ordering, transcription, and oral connection of a series of texts:

Er [Godwi] nahm mehrere Papiere aus dem Schreibpulte, und sagte: diese Papiere enthalten die Geschichte meines Vaters in Bruchstücken, wie auch die meiner Mutter, und das meiste der Jugendgeschichte des Alten und Molly’s, von Cordelien nichts, auch von mir nichts; aus allem diesem nun müssen Sie ihren zweiten Band zusammenschreiben [...] das Uebrige meines Lebens, bis jetzt, will ich Ihnen dann erzählen. (381)
These papers, too, are filled with stories of dead mothers and missing family members. Eventually the family connections between the characters are uncovered, but this preoccupation with the past and with family mysteries takes a serious toll both on Godwi and on Maria. The last part of Godwi’s story takes place after most of the characters have moved to Italy, leaving Godwi behind, and we are told that he throws himself into trivial pursuits: “Genießen wollte er, und wie gern war es ihm zu verzeihen, der so lange in traurigen Familien-Geschichten verstrickt war. Mit Bequemlichkeiten wollte er genießen, das Leben oben auf dem Berge hatte ihn mit Bedürfnissen bereichert.” (488) Although he seems to have recovered by the time Maria arrives to write his family’s story, it is noteworthy that he himself is unmarried and has no children. His only legacy is the story he helps Maria to write. And Maria himself, having almost finished his novel, sickens and dies. Even a quintessentially Romantic novel—one that comments on its own conditions of production, includes extensive discussion of art and theories of art, and idealizes ‘reflection’ as a mode of creation—is marked by the questions of family relations, circulation/authenticity of texts, and legacies. At least in the instance of Godwi, this narrative legacy takes on a somewhat threatening character—carried to the point of obsession, it hinders those involved from pursuing actual lives and experiences of their own.

III.3 Fictional Confessions and Childless Women While Brentano deals with the fact that his main character has no children by creating the author-character Maria and by extending the treatment of his Romantic art-theory into the realm of the reader by explicitly thematizing the issues of writing and transmission, there are, of course, other strategies for preserving the experiences and lessons of childless protagonists.
Childlessness seems to require particular explanation when the ostensible writer of a text is a woman, because motherhood, as I have discussed elsewhere, was seen as a woman’s ultimate, and indeed only, role; to put it in contemporaneous terms, “Mutter zu seyn, das lehrt [die Frau] der bereitete Nahrungssaft in ihrer Brust, und die zärtliche, sorgsame, sich aufzuopfern so willige Liebe in ihrem Herzen.”¹⁶³ Using “[d]er Unterschied, den die Natur selbst, in der Bildung des weiblichen und männlichen Geschlechts gezeichnet hat”¹⁶⁴ as his starting point, Ewald goes on to say that women, unlike men, are called exclusively to the home, where they prepare a future generation of citizens for their entrance into society: “‘Das Weib braucht blos Weib, Gattin, Mutter zu seyn und weiter nichts. Alles erinnert sie an diesem Beruf; alles übt sie in diesem Einzigen Berufe. Mit ihren Anlagen kann sie in ihrem Berufe Virtuosin werden, und soll's werden, weil sie nur diesen Beruf zu erfüllen hat.’”¹⁶⁵ This elevation of motherhood to a near-religious sanctity leaves no clear role for women who are not mothers, either by choice or by circumstance.

But women with no children do appear in the literature of the period, often as the ‘authors’ of pseudo-autobiographical texts that call upon the trope of the confession. Goethe’s “Bekenntnisse einer schönen Seele” in the Lehrjahre, and two anonymous texts generally attributed to Friederike Helene Unger, the 1803 Bekenntnisse einer Giftnischerinn, von ihr selbst geschrieben and the 1806 Bekenntnisse einer schönen Seele, von ihr selbst geschrieben,¹⁶⁶ are all long single-perspective first-person narratives.

¹⁶³ Ewald, Johann Ludwig: Die Kunst, ein gutes Mädchen, eine gute Gattin, Mutter und Hausfrau zu werden, 3rd edition, Frankfurt am Main 1804, p. 75.
¹⁶⁴ Ibid., p. 23.
¹⁶⁵ Ibid, p. 44. Kleist, of course, makes similar points in his famous letter to Wilhelmine von Zenge about which spouse has more to lose with the early death of the other; I quote Ewald here particularly to show that this perception was prevalent in popular—even trivial—culture as well.
¹⁶⁶ For a review of the debate over the authorship of these two texts, see Raleigh Whitinger and Diana Spokiene’s introduction to their edition of the Bekenntnisse einer Giftnischerin. An opposing (though in
supposedly written by women who, for one reason and another, do not have children of
their own. Each of these texts represents a different kind of engagement both with the
genre of autobiographical confession and with the place a childless woman occupies in
society, and each leads to a rather different result (a word that is less problematic than is
perhaps usual in the case of literary texts because all three do have some kind of explicit
claim to a didactic message). I do not wish to maintain that childless women are the only
fictional demographic to write confessions (indeed, the link between ‘confessions’ and
the novel more widely has been clear at least since Friedrich Schlegel’s remark that the
genre consisted of a mixture of “Grotesken und Bekenntnisse,” and many other novels
share the “Confessions of…” form in their titles) or have an impulse to self-justification,
but rather that when it does appear, this particular figure almost always requires
explanation. By looking at these three texts—one very firmly within the realm of the
canon, the other two outside it—I hope to highlight the ways that literature, often in more
socially complex and psychologically complicated settings than treatises like Ewald’s,
explored the roles that women could occupy around the turn of the nineteenth century.

The tradition of “confession” has, of course, been an important part of both public
and private life since Antiquity, with a particular relevance in a Christian tradition. In his
late work on the ‘care of the self,’ Foucault discusses the Greek concept of care of the
self as distinct from the more famous dictum to ‘know thyself’ and identifies writing as
particularly important for this process: “One of the main features of taking care involved

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my view hasty and less plausible) opinion is presented in Nebrig, Alexander: “Helene Ungers Übersetzung
des ersten Teils von Rousseaus Confessions im Kontext der deutschen Bekenntnisliteratur um 1800,” in:
Wehinger, Brunhilde and Brown, Hilary (Eds.), Übersetzungskultur im 18. Jahrhundert, Wehrhan Verlag,
Hannover, 2008.

167 Schlegel, Friedrich, “Brief über den Roman,” in: Rasch, Wolfdietrich (ed), Friedrich Schlegel:
taking notes on oneself to be reread, writing treatises and letters to friends to help them, and keeping note-books in order to reactivate for oneself the truths one needed.”

Oral culture was originally dominant in Greek life, but as growing bureaucracy necessitated the wider spread of writing it became a more prevalent feature of private life as well. Thus, “[t]aking care of oneself became linked to constant writing activity. The self is something to write about, a theme or object (subject) of writing activity. That is not a modern trait born of the Reformation or of romanticism; it is one of the most ancient Western traditions. It was well established and deeply rooted when Augustine started his *Confessions.*”

In Christianity, knowledge of the self becomes associated with a transformation of the self: salvation is not possible without renunciation. This is, of course, the form we recognize in Augustine—the retelling of the self’s sinful past which is then entirely rejected on the moment of conversion, which, as William Spengeman points out, marks a radical break in the narration of a life: “Because conversion is an event of a different order, it is removed from the chain of temporal causality that bound together his sinful life. […] Conversion divides the life in two, severing all connections between the mortal and the immortal soul.”

This structure is absolutely essential to the traditional religious form of confession. Or, to return to Foucault: “You cannot disclose without renouncing,” either in written or performed (penitential) confession.

But, again following Foucault, it is precisely this moment of self-renunciation that drops out of later forms of confession narrative: “From the eighteenth century to the

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169 Ibid.


present, the techniques of verbalization have been reinserted in a different context by the so-called human sciences in order to use them without renunciation of the self but to constitute, positively, a new self.”

And that new self is bared less to God, as with Augustine, than to one’s social surroundings. This is clearly the case with the most immediately resonant exemplar of the genre in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, namely Rousseau’s Confessions, which Friederike Helen Unger herself translated. For Rousseau, there is no ultimate authority to which he submits in a pivotal moment of conversion, but rather, a series of what might be called micro-conversions, as Rousseau attempts repeatedly to identify cruxes in the narrative of his life where he becomes more and more divorced from his original, pure state: “Instead of reviewing the process by which he came into possession of true being, Rousseau reviews the process through which his originally true being has been scattered among the times and places of his progressively unhappy life. His experiences, in other words, have taught him that experience is the enemy of truth and happiness.”

Furthermore, he writes not to bear witness to God’s greatness but to justify his scandalous behavior in a social context. As Huck Gutman puts it in his article “Rousseau’s Confessions: A Technology of the Self,” “So we see that Rousseau’s confession develops as a response to social accusation, that it consists in total exposure, and that its revelations are to be subjected to an external (and judging) gaze.” This shift marks, I think, a fundamentally different relationship between the subject that is writing and the subject of the remembered actions: Augustine condemns the self about which he writes in the first part of his confessions, whereas

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172 Ibid., p. 49.
Rousseau—and not just because of his narrative of successive degradation—wants that self to be explained and affirmed as it is. The justificatory impulse is present from the very beginning.

But however much differentiates Augustine and Rousseau, they have in common that they are both writing genuine autobiographies, works that make some kind of claim to ‘actual’ truth. They participate, therefore, in what has been known since Philippe Lejeune’s classic 1975 essay as the “pact of autobiography,” in “which the author, the narrator, and the protagonist must be identical.” Lejeune concedes that this pact can be played with by authors of fiction, but insists that there is an ultimate referent in “the final term – namely the name of the author.” He refers to fictions that claim autobiographical status as “literary fraud” and says they entail “breaches of trust.”

While the historical conditions of publication in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries—both anonymous publication and editor fictions were exceedingly common—would to some extent have prepared readers for this kind of playing with the status of fiction and anonymity, it is nevertheless worth asking why this pact is either breached or, as I would prefer to maintain, merely gestured towards in these three texts. First, what Lejeune refers to as the ‘legitimate mistrust’ that is called up by anonymous texts may in fact have been viewed as a positive characteristic: by awakening extra attention on the part of the reader, anonymity can serve as a strategy to combat the kind of voracious

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176 Ibid, p 15.
177 Ibid, p. 11, p. 15.
178 The best-known treatment of these historical conditions is Lennard Davis’ Factual Fictions: the Origins of the English Novel (Columbia University Press, New York, 1983); for an adaptation of these arguments in a German context see: Werber, Niels: Liebe als Roman, zur Koevolution intimer und literarischer Kommunikation (Fink Verlag, München, 2003).
consumption of literature that was much criticized in the “Lesewut” debates of the period. It also serves to displace the question of authenticity onto the internal structure of the text itself; the *Confessions of a Poisoner* contains a preface that refers specifically to this question of truth and fiction and then sidelines it, saying that, as attempting to prove the truth of an account only results in calling this truth into doubt. At least for these three literary confessions these questions are connected precisely to the topic of gender and motherhood.

Perhaps the most baffling instance of supposedly autobiographical female confessions is in the *Lehrjahre*, where the flow of the novel (and with it the *Bildung* of the male protagonist) is interrupted for an extended period while we read what has been introduced merely as a text designed to give solace to Aurelie in her final illness.¹⁷⁹ The justification angle here is only implicit—the beautiful soul is presented on the level of the plot of the *Lehrjahre* as a positive example, though this is somewhat qualified by the doctor’s introductory remark “daß er diejenigen Personen sehr glücklich gefunden habe, die bei einer nicht ganz herzustellenden kränklichen Anlage wahrhaft religiöse Gesinnungen bei sich zu nähren bestimmt gewesen wären” (719), which does suggest that religious tendencies are a help chiefly to the invalid or the emotionally unstable. But the bizarreness of her way of life is never overtly discussed, either.¹⁸⁰ The text takes the form of a straightforward autobiography: the beautiful soul recounts the childhood illness that provided the first impetus to stillness and reflection, followed by a period of

¹⁷⁹ There is a significant amount of scholarship that I cannot hope to account for here—especially given the extent to which various authors disagree about the significance and message of the text. Given the multitude of perspectives, I will simply pursue my own argumentative strand and footnote articles that happen to touch on some of the same concerns.

¹⁸⁰ This is not the case in the criticism of the text, where authors have called the beautiful soul solipsistic, asocial, “impatient of direction [and] disinclined to social activities” [Heitner, Robert R.: “Goethe’s Ailing Women,” in *MLN* 95, 1980, p. 506]. Feminist critics, on the other hand, have praised her independence, her self-recognition, and her refusal to submit to the normative bourgeois constraints of marriage.
distraction by worldly amusements “Der große Schwarm, mit dem ich umgeben war, zerstreute mich und riß mich wie ein starker Strom mit fort. Es waren die leersten Jahre meines Lebens.” (734) Despite this distraction, when her fiancé fails to receive a promotion she instinctively turns to a higher comfort, believing firmly that “Es ist aber doch nicht von ungefähr geschehen” (747), and trusting to God to bring the best from the situation. As she grows more accustomed to taking refuge in prayer and reflection, she becomes isolated from those around her and eventually dissolves her engagement. Without the religious aspect, her story would indeed be a bleak one of increasing detachment and failure to participate in her social milieu. Instead, it is striking the extent to which the text emphasizes the pleasure and comfort that this woman gains from her relationship with God rather than the difficulties caused by her adherence to her religious principles.\(^\text{181}\) She admits that she has to renounce certain amusements and pleasures, but this struggle is one whose outcome is never in doubt—of the end of her engagement she writes, “schon war der Streit in meiner Seele ohne mein eigentliches Bewußtsein entschieden.” (750)

As she grows older and more independent from the pressures of society, her religion becomes ever more personal and intense, remaining the one constant in her life as her parents die, her siblings marry and have children, and these children grow up. Although she has progressively rejected or removed herself from marriage/family, court life, and even a specific religious community, she is completely content with her way of

\(^{181}\) Friedrich Strack sees this tendency towards eroticization of religious moments as a sign that Goethe is writing a “parodistische Verwendung pietistischer Kultvorstellungen” [Strack, “Pietismus in ‘Wilhelm Meisters Lehrejahre,’ in: Wittkowski (ed), Verlorene Klassik, Niemeyer Verlag, Tübingen, 1986, p. 58, emphasis his]; Burkhard Dohm argues much more convincingly that precisely this highly physical and eroticized language, including the displacement of Jesus’ wounds onto one’s own body, was typical for Pietist texts of the time [Dohm, Burkhard—“Radikalpietistin und ‘schöne Seele’: Susanna Katharina von Klettenberg” in: Kemper (ed): Goethe und der Pietismus].
life: “Ich erinnere mich kaum eines Gebotes; nichts erscheint mir in Gestalt eines Gesetzes; es ist ein Trieb, der mich leitet und mich immer recht führet; ich folge mit Freiheit meinen Gesinnungen und weiß so wenig von Einschränkung als von Reue.”

(793) It is also noteworthy that, although the beautiful soul’s confessions are strongly religious in nature, there is no single moment of conversion as for there is Augustine—this process of being guided by impulse takes the form of a gradual acceptance of the primacy of a faith that was nascent in her, not a radical renunciation of a former self in favor of a new religious faith. She has no need to negate the early parts of her biography; they serve not to emphasize the contrast between her former and her writing self but, rather, to explain the incremental evolution from one to the other. She closes her account by saying that she is never in danger of being proud of her own capabilities, “da ich so deutlich erkannt habe, welch Ungeheuer in jedem menschlichen Busen, wenn eine höhere Kraft uns nicht bewahrt, sich erzeugen und nähren könne.” (793) This is the lesson that her confessions impart—how and by whom this lesson is to be taken is not entirely clear as, after all, if all women were to follow this beautiful soul’s example, the human race would die out in a generation.182

It seems to me that despite the exemplarity of the title character (which, unlike Heitner et al., I do not wish to dispute), there is perhaps a slight undertone of defensiveness and an attempt at normalization throughout the text: the beautiful soul’s early childhood and her instincts or drives (“ein Trieb”) were responsible for her

182 That the text is ‘successful’ in its primary stated purpose of calming Aurelie before she dies is explicitly shown in the novel; Susanne Zantop also points out that it functions as a successful autobiography/pseudo-conversion narrative insofar as the other characters who read it identify themselves in it—Wilhelm sees her purity of being, her independence, and refusal to do anything that is not consistent with her way of life; Natalie emphasizes her exemplarity, etc. (Zantop, Susanne, „Eigenes Selbst und fremde Formen: Goethes „Bekenntnisse einer schönen Seele““ in: Goethe Yearbook 1986, p. 82)
withdrawal, rather than a conscious choice. Nor is the notion of family absent from the text despite the fact that she remains unmarried and never has children. Just before the end of the narrative, there is a long passage about family resemblances, and in the midst of her comments on “die Ähnlichkeiten des Äußern und Innern” (789) between her family members—which otherwise run purely in direct lines of descent; her sister’s older son resembling his grandfather and her younger daughter resembling her own mother—she also includes herself: “Die älteste Tochter hatte meine ganze Neigung gefesselt, und es mochte wohl daher kommen, weil sie mir ähnlich sah und weil sie sich von allen vier am meisten zu mir hielt.” (790) This older daughter also shows similar tendencies towards reflectiveness, though the beautiful soul insists that her niece surpasses her in active charity and generosity. After this description she imagines, with pleasure, her own possessions being distributed amongst her nieces and nephews and the different ways in which they will use them. Even when a woman chooses not to have children, it seems, she must have child-substitutes; it is impossible that a woman simply would not feel a need for affective intergenerational ties. It is, in fact, only after the Oheim (who is a character in the main narrative and a representative of the male Bildungsweg) deprives her of an active role in the upbringing of her nieces and nephews that she turns to writing instead.183 The radicalness of the beautiful soul’s mode of life is smoothed over and minimized, even as the very existence of the text speaks to it by highlighting the fact that this narrative represents the only way in which she can influence future generations.

183 I owe this observation to Susanne Zantop, though she reads this as the successful fulfillment of the beautiful soul’s personal Bildung rather than as having anything to do with a genealogical order. (Zantop, Susanne, „Eigenes Selbst und fremde Formen: Goethes „Bekenntnisse einer schönen Seele”“ in: Goethe Yearbook 1986, p. 84)
The *Bekenntnisse einer Giftmischerin* could not be more different: the emphasis is precisely on the scandalousness and the extreme behavior of the main character. The magnitude of the poisoner’s crimes is striking, as is her brazenness in refusing to regret her actions—she is guilty not only of three murders but also of repeated theft and embezzlement, and she dismisses regret as “nichts anderes […] als Furcht vor Strafe” (164). But there is some similarity in the two writer figures’ claims that their fate was essentially determined by the interaction of their natures and their circumstances. The poisoner goes so far as to insist that this absolves her from blame: “das, was ich getan habe, [war] nach meiner ganzen Individualität und mit den mitwirkenden Ursachen immer notwendig […] Die Freiheit des Willens ist mir gar nicht problematisch; ich bin von dem Gegenteil aufs festeste überzeugt.” (214-5) One of these circumstances, which she mentions specifically, is her inability to have a child as the result of a poorly performed abortion in her adolescence. As with Goethe’s beautiful soul, a woman’s desire to be connected to a family cannot even be called into question—and here, the fact that this desire cannot be fulfilled and no substitute is available is a decisive factor in a life gone badly wrong. At the very beginning of her narrative she describes observing the woman to whom she addresses the text with her children, writing “Der Gedanke, der mich einzig beschäftigte, war: ‘Hättest du je einen solchen Sohn gehabt, so würd’ es besser um dich stehen.’ Ich werde in meinen Bekenntnissen noch mehr als einmal auf diesen Punkt zurückkommen.” (6) The implication is that if she does not become a mother, a woman must remain unfulfilled and may even turn to crime.

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184 [Unger, Friederike Helene (attributed)], *Bekenntnisse einer Giftmischerin, von ihr selbst geschrieben*, ed. Whitinger, Raleigh, and Spokie, Diana; The Modern Language Association of America, New York, 2009. All citations are from this edition and will be given in the text as page numbers.
The poisoner does, as she promises, return to the notion of family and parenting—indeed, she points to it as the origin of the chain of events in her criminal life: “Mag die Geburt an und für sich etwas gleichgültiges sein, so ist sie doch in Beziehung auf die unmittelbar darauf folgende Erziehung alles. Ich habe hierüber sehr lange nachgedacht, und das Resultat meines Nachdenkens ist: dass ich gerade von solchen Eltern geboren und erzogen werden musste, um das zu werden, was ich geworden bin.” (8) This theory is also the reason that the poisoner gives for having written down her confessions: she does not, she says, wish for absolution, nor does she wish to shock decent society by revealing herself as a monster living in their midst. Instead, her claim at the conclusion of her confessions is that she is writing down the story of her life to serve as a warning about the education of girls: “Nichts wird in unseren Zeiten mehr vernachlässigt als die Erziehung der Töchter.” (216) She sees her own education as having been not only deficient, but, more importantly, as inappropriate to her gender: “Ich bin ein warnendes Beispiel von den Folgen einer mehr männlichen als weiblichen Erziehung […] Benutzt man mein Beispiel nicht, um junge Mädchen innerhalb der Schranken der Weiblichkeit zu halten, so seh’ ich vorher, dass viele nur der Umstände bedürfen werden, um in meine Fußstapfen zu treten.” (216) She also gives this correction of girls’ education a great deal of importance not only for the individual girls but for the entirety of society, insisting that “das Glück der Ehe“ depends on it —„und von dieser das Heil der Welt” (216). Instead of leaving descendants behind, she leaves her confessions—this confluence of childlessness and didactic or cautionary message requires a narrative, an explanation of her actions. The fact that even when the woman writing her confessions is highly atypical, she still expresses a desire to have a family and indeed blames her ruined life in part on her
inability to do so emphasizes the degree to which it is necessary for a childless woman to explain this fact about herself.

This explanatory aspect, latent in the beautiful soul’s confessions and combined with other factors in the poisoner’s, comes to the fore in the 1806 text *Bekenntnisse einer schönen Seele, von ihr selbst geschrieben.* Unger’s Mirabella is precisely not an isolated hermit, nor is she a deceitful criminal, but she is also not a mother. Her life story combines the exemplarity of Goethe’s beautiful soul with the poisoner’s compulsion to self-justification. The text is staged as a letter to an absent friend during a time when Mirabella’s other constant friend and companion, Eugenie, is also away, and “*Schriftsprache*” is a substitute for their usual conversations. Mirabella writes that she knows that, however discreet her friend Cäsar may have been, he must want to know the answer to the question of “Woher es doch kommen möge, daß Ihre Mirabella, trotz ihrem Altern und ihrer Jungfrauschaft, noch immer ihren Platz in der Gesellschaft behauptet, und sogar ein Gegenstand der Zuneigung und Achtung bleibt?” (4). This question, which she also describes as a “Räthsel,” leads back to the “Hauptfrage,” namely: “Wie ich mit den körperlichen und geistigen Eigenschaften, in deren Besitz ich gewesen und allenfalls auch noch bin, eine Jungfrau habe bleiben können? In Wahrheit, dies ist das Hauptproblem, das gelöst werden muß, wenn man mich in meiner Individualität begreifen will.” (5) She does not, however, want her friend to think that she is answering this question out of some unhappiness or dissatisfaction—on the contrary,

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185 In contrast to the *Bekenntnisse einer Giftmischerinn*, on which almost nothing has been written, there are several essays on the *Bekenntnisse einer schönen Seele, von ihr selbst geschrieben*. Almost all of them, however, are chiefly concerned with Unger’s ‘rewriting’ of Goethe’s text and, as such, are not particularly relevant here.

186 [Unger, Friederike Helen (attributed):], *Bekenntnisse einer schönen Seele, von ihr selbst geschrieben*, Berlin, Johann Friedrich Unger, 1806, p. 5. All further citations are from this edition and will be given in the text as page numbers.
“Im Übrigen wissen Sie, mein angenehmer Freund, daß es wenig Menschen giebt, die mit ihrem Geschick zufriedener sind, als ich.” (7) Although she admits that she is somewhat exceptional, she does not think that she is unnatural, saying that “Die Natur wollte nun einmal, daß in der Reihe der Wesen auch ein solches Geschöpf existieren sollte, wie ich bin.” (7) She abstains from judgment as to whether her life has been a good one and suggests that this very question is counterproductive, opting instead to “nehme [...] meine Zuflucht [...] zu dem Grundsatz: What ever is, is right.” (8) That there is some tension between this contented philosophy and Mirabella’s attempt to solve the Hauptfrage of her life is obvious, but she is consistent in her assertion that her way of life leaves nothing to be desired and, furthermore, that she is in no way deficient as a woman.

The story of Mirabella’s life is, in fact, a fairly standard one—like many protagonists, she does not know who her parents are (though unlike other protagonists, she never finds out), and she is raised by foster parents, this time a brother and sister rather than a married couple. This quiet, cooperative, and non-sexual partnership makes a positive impression on Mirabella and likely serves as a model for her own adult relationships: “Es war in der That eine Freude, zu sehen, wie diese Geschwister sich gegenseitig achteten.” (14) Mirabella also sees in them the complementarity that usually is reserved for the marriage partnership, writing, “Beide schienen, ohne förmliche Verabredung, darin überein gekommen zu seyn, daß sie sich als vernünftige Wesen in ihrem Thun und Treiben respektieren wollten, da es in der Natur der Sache lag, daß sie sich gegenseitig ergänzen mußten” (15). Like the poisoner, the beautiful soul, Agnes von Lilien, and Agnes’ mother, among others, she lays great importance on the education she receives, in which she values simplicity and above all else—but this simplicity is
intended precisely to cultivate individuality: “Es [d.i. der Erfolg der Erziehung] kommt zuletzt doch nur darauf an, daß man eine achtungsgiebietende Individualität gewinne.” (18) This is precisely the kind of upbringing Mirabella receives in the country environment of her foster parents. Simplicity, orderliness, and cleanliness lead naturally to morality and decency, all of which are grounded on a firm sense of self. Mirabella’s early youth is therefore remarkably smooth: “Unbemerkt wuchs ich unter so wohltätigen Einflüssen, als meine Pflegeeltern waren, heran. Meine Entwicklung ging um so glücklicher von statt, da nichts vorhanden war, was sie hätte stören oder verhindern können.” (24-5) She also, in a gesture that clearly points to the fact that she intends her text to be read by people who do not know her, describes her appearance, taking care to point out (anticipating doubts that might naturally arise from her unmarried state) that “keine von meinen Gesichtszügen widersprach der Weiblichkeit” (25).

In general, Mirabella feels a great compulsion to explain things—the text is marked by layered qualifying statements. As she is describing her appearance in the scene quoted above, she interrupts herself to remark that we mustn’t think that she is vain, simply because she remembers her youthful beauty so well—it is merely “das Eigenthümliche der weiblichen Einbildungskraft, daß sie im Stande ist, die Bilder fest zu halten, welche derselbe Gegenstand in verschiedene Entwicklungsperioden gegeben hat.” (26) Likewise extremely important to her assertion that she would have been a perfectly eligible marriage partner is the fact that she was at one point engaged to a young man, who died in the Seven Years’ War before they could get married. Mirabella writes that although she of course grieved for him, she understood that he had died for his ideals, and therefore, “In sofern er für mich das Symbol des Schönen und Edlen war, existierte er für
It is, she suggests, only natural that she should not think of marrying again. But this excess of explanation is also coupled with consistent declarations of her own independence; towards the end of her narrative, she says that she remained a virgin “weil nach Moritz sich mir kein Mann dargestellt hat, dem ich meine Freiheit aufzuopfern der Mühe werth gehalten hätte.” (380) Instead of finding a new potential husband, she cultivates a number of extremely important friendships in her adult life—mostly with women, but sometimes with men (as with the Cäsar to whom her Bekenntnisse are addressed), thus preserving her freedom but at the same time maintaining fulfilling social connections.

As she closes her narrative—having finished recounting her past, she turns at the end to her “Lebensweise” and “Erwartungen” (379)—she reiterates the significance that these friendships within her own generational group have had for her: “Das Einzige, worum ich den Himmel bitten möchte, ist die Erhaltung der letzten Freunde, die er mir zuführte. Bessere werd’ ich niemals wiederfinden, und ein freundloses Leben hat so viel Abscheuliches für mich, daß ich lieber gar nicht mehr existieren will, wenn die nackte Existenz durch sich selbst bedingt ist.” (383) She then breaks off her narrative, not only because she has finished what she intended to write, but because Eugenia, the friend with whom she lives, is due to return the next morning. She expects to see Cäsar visit them soon, she says, and “es wird sich zeigen, ob ich durch meine Aufrichtigkeit bei Ihnen gewonnen oder verloren habe. Immer war es meine Sache, für nichts mehr und nichts weniger gelten zu wollen, als was ich wirklich bin.” (384) Unlike Goethe’s beautiful soul and Unger’s poisoner, Mirabella does not feel the need for a family of her own—and precisely because of this, the justification in her text must be much more explicit.
It is complicated to draw a strong conclusion from reading these three ‘confessions’ in conjunction with one another. They are, after all, extremely different—Goethe’s beautiful soul is deeply connected with members of her family’s younger generation despite her own childlessness and explicitly figures herself as belonging to them; Unger’s poisoner, on the other hand, is an unrepentant criminal who nevertheless maintains that the account of her sinful life will be useful in improving the education of girls. Any ‘progressive’ aspects of these narratives, in a modern feminist sense at least, is submerged. Mirabella’s account, though it does present more strongly the point of view that a life without children must not be a lonely or criminal one, is also the most defensive of the three. All of these confessions start from the premise that a woman who is not a mother must provide some kind of explanation for herself. Still, these narratives—particularly in that they are not staged simply as narratives to be passed down from generation to generation within a family but, via a particular addressee, gesture towards a wider audience—do at least begin to introduce the notion that women who do not have children exist. While one ought to be cautious about making strong claims that life imitates literature it seems safe to say that by portraying a variety of women who were not mothers, these novels began at least to open up the possibility that women could choose another “Beruf” for themselves—perhaps even as authors.

Conclusion: Transmission in the family – Transmission of the novel. Of course, all of these texts, not just the confessions, had wider audiences, because they are works of published fictions, not autobiographies (though some certainly have autobiographical elements), collections of letters, or diaries. Many of them use prefaces to play with the notion of authenticity and staging—Wolzogen’s Agnes von Lilien begins
with a note “An meine Kinder,” which addresses her children directly and tells them that
the purpose of the text is to show them “Was ich bin, oder was ich zu seyn wähne, und
unter welchem freundlichen Einfluß des Schicksals ich es wurde” (I, IV). The note also
disavows all “Kunstforderungen,” which is of course disingenuous in the context of the
novel. Here, the claim to tell a family’s story is the justification for the entire text. Other
texts speak more directly to the reader—Therese Huber begins Die Familie Seldorf with a
note to readers exhorting them to shed a tear for her poor characters, especially Sara, and
Brentano writes multiple dedications and introductions to the two volumes of Godwi.
Perhaps the most fascinating preface appears at the beginning of the Bekentnisse einer
Giftmischerinn, where a short note preceding the narrative avers that attempting to prove
the truth of an account only results in calling this truth into doubt. Thus, the preface
continues, the reader should take the following such that “dadurch ein merkwürdiges
psychologisches Problem gelöst wird.” (3) This might well be seen as good advice for all
novel reading. But these prefaces do more than simply instruct the reader how best to
approach the novel; they exhibit a remarkable textual self-awareness. The dedications,
introductions, and forewords in the novel around 1800 suggest that it is somehow aware
of its own tradition, able to question its own tasks and purpose, and assert that it is
supposed to be speaking to us.

I have shown in the foregoing how the figure of testation functions as a key point
of connection and differentiation between generations of the family. Within the
framework of the novel, testation serves to highlight ways in which the bourgeoisie in the
novel around 1800 portrayed itself as affectively or sentimentally determined and as
oriented towards the younger of the generations. In this latter point, in particular, these
novels strongly mirror contemporaneous legal mandates. By investigating the figure of
testation not only on the level of legal code and novel plots, but also as a form of forging
family ties and creating legacies of text that are passed down between generations, I
wished to show that the novel itself is a genre that can be seen generationally, as passed
from character to narrator to reader. The idea of testation, of writing down, bearing
witness, passing on, is to some extent what *literary* culture is about. The problems,
strategies, questions, issues raised in these novels, about the family, about the movement
between generation of property, of traits, of texts—these are the themes of the novel
itself.
Conclusion: Instability and Onward

The paradigm shifts in family life, inheritance law, and biological understanding and the exploration in the novel of associated values and concepts that took place at the turn of the nineteenth century were neither immediate nor inevitable. In Die Wahlverwandtschaften—published, strikingly, in between the two Wilhelm Meister novels—Goethe subverts the thematic and generic conventions that have established themselves in the novel, in ways that illustrate painfully how tenuous and double-edged notions of family and affective bonds can be. The histories of the four protagonists do not extend back to their childhood and education (with the exception, to some extent, of Ottilie’s), but rather focus on events within their adulthood, particularly Eduard’s and Charlotte’s first marriages. These marriages, instead of being a starting point for the generation of a new family—the next link in a chain of testation—becomes a deadening double bind that traps the characters regardless of their married or unmarried status; instead of developing, these characters repeat themselves endlessly and futilely. The only biological children in the novel are Luciane, the endlessly polished but cruel daughter of Charlotte’s first marriage who spends her life away from her mother, and Otto, a short-lived hybrid semi-monster, who is not breastfed by his mother or even by a wet-nurse, but instead fed milk and water.187 There is no continuation, no biological issue, of the marriages portrayed in the novel. Instead, the adult protagonists busy themselves with the

187 It is also noteworthy that Goethe displaces the agency of this decision—Ottilie can be the primary caregiver for Otto, “um so mehr […] als man es keiner Amme zu übergeben, sondern mit Milch und Wasser aufzuziehen sich entschieden hatte.” While it is probably too far-fetched that this is a direct reference to the ALR’s stated rule that children should be breast-fed for a duration of time determined by the father, Ottilie’s subsequent reflection that it is desirable that the child should grow up “vor den Augen des Vaters, der Mutter,” does suggest that Goethe was deliberately depicting the household as marked by a lack of agency during Eduard’s absence. Goethe, Johann Wolfgang von: Die Wahlverwandtschaften, in: Borchmeyer, Dieter, et. al (eds): Sämtliche Werke, Briefe, Tagebücher und Gespräche, volume 8 (ed: Wiethölter, Waltraud), Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, Frankfurt am Main, 1994, p. 461.
endless improvement of Eduard and Charlotte’s estate. Cultivated naturalness has become a manic obsession; the characters do not stop to enjoy the results of one project before moving on to the next. The tight structure of the plot and the serenity of the language, as many critics have pointed out, only contribute to the sense of despair with which the reader experiences the characters’ downfall.\textsuperscript{188}

From the opening lines, it is clear that Goethe’s novel is upending the traditions of the genre that, by 1809, were indeed well established. Eduard, we learn, is not a young man about to journey into the wider world for the first time, but rather is already “einen reichen Baron im besten Mannesalter” who has his first marriage behind him.\textsuperscript{189} This advanced age does not, however, mean that Eduard is mature: the second chapter begins with the words “[s]ich etwas zu versagen, war Eduard nicht gewohnt,” and goes on to tell the reader that Eduard was spoiled by his parents and by his far older first wife, “nach ihrem baldigen Tode sein eigener Herr, auf Reisen unabhängig, jeder Abwechselung jeder Veränderung mächtig, nichts Übertriebenes wollend, aber viel und vielerlei wollend, freimütig, wohltätig, brav, ja tapfer im Fall,” and that given all this, “was konnte in der Welt seinen Wünschen entgegenstehen!” (278-9) Nor does this change in the course of the novel—there is no development here, and Eduard remains as impatient that his own wishes be fulfilled as ever; when he and the Hauptmann discuss the possibility of a divorce between Eduard and Charlotte, Eduard responds to his friend’s warnings and objections by insisting that he, as a respectable person, renders all of his actions

\textsuperscript{188} The novel has, of course, been extensively treated in literary scholarship, from Benjamin’s famous essay to the present. While I am not really engaging with the literature on the novel here, I am indebted to the chapter of Helmut Müller-Sievers’ \textit{Self-Generation} that treats the novel in conjunction with discourses of epigenesis. See notes to chapter 2.

\textsuperscript{189} Goethe, Johann Wolfgang von: \textit{Die Wahlverwandtschaften}, in: Borchmeyer, Dieter, et. al (eds): \textit{Sämtliche Werke, Briefe, Tagebücher und Gespräche}, volume 8 (ed: Wiethölter, Waltraud), Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, Frankfurt am Main, 1994, p. 271. All further citations are from this edition and will be given in the text as page numbers.
acceptable and that he has earned the right to please himself: “Was mich betrifft, ich fühle mich durch die letzten Prüfungen die ich mir auferlegt, durch die schwierigen gefährvollen Taten die ich für andere getan, berechtigt auch etwas für mich zu tun.” (487)

This simultaneously selfish and sanctimonious insistence makes it clear that Eduard’s perspective, his inability to deny himself anything, have remained completely static.

Charlotte, meanwhile, is less hasty and willful than her husband, but she is no better than he is at accepting the limits of her own subjective agency—indeed, her denial of the catastrophic coincidences that take place around her is nothing short of extraordinary. In the passage that introduces the chemical analogy, the narrator writes, in a tone that mirrors Charlotte’s own matter-of-factness, that “da sie gern leben mochte, so suchte sie alles Schädliche, alles Tödliche zu entfernen.” (298) Although the context is specifically the cultivation of a pharmacy and the removal of containers containing potentially poisonous materials, but the opening ‘da sie gern leben mochte’ gives the statement an air of general prescription. And the idea that one could simply remove everything dangerous from life is heartbreakingly absurd. Even when Eduard and the Hauptmann have left, when Charlotte is alone with Otilie and Otto, she feels almost instinctive stirrings of blind, inattentive hope: “Auch auf dem festen Lande gibt es wohl Schiffbruch; sich davon auf das schnellste zu erholen und herzustellen, ist schön und preiswürdig. Ist doch das Leben nur auf Gewinn und Verlust berechnet. Wer macht nicht irgend eine Anlage und wird davon gestört!” (464) Charlotte admits in the metaphor of the shipwreck that the course of her life has gone badly awry—but in the following sentences, she subsumes this realization under an insistence that this is because even better things are in store: “Wie oft werden wir von einem scharf ins Auge gefaßten Ziel
abgelenkt, um ein höheres zu erreichen! [...] Das Schicksal gewährt uns unsre Wünsche, aber auf seine Weise, um uns etwas über unsere Wünsche geben zu können.” (464) At this point in the narrative—when Eduard has failed to return to meet his own son, when Ottilie has not managed to dull her passion for Eduard in the slightest—Charlotte’s optimism verges on the pathological. And, perhaps needless to say, fate does not fulfill Charlotte’s wishes, much less transcend them.

In the figure of Ottilie, Goethe calls up the types of pedagogical discourse that I discussed in my second chapter. While the head of the pension at which Ottilie and Luciane study expresses only impatience with Ottilie’s inability to master the skills she is ostensibly taught, her assistant takes a more positive view. He explains Ottilie’s difficulty at the pension in terms that are strikingly reminiscent of Pestalozzi and Gleim’s insistence on gradual learning that builds on what has already been learned: “Wenn es bei einem Kinde nötig ist, vom Anfange anzufangen, so ist es gewiß bei ihr. Was nicht aus dem Vorhergehenden folgt, begreift sie nicht.” (294) Ottilie’s learning process follows Pestalozzi’s admonitions to follow the gradual formative processes of nature and illustrates the consequences of failing to build upon existing training: “Sie steht unfähig, ja stöckisch vor einer leicht faßlichen Sache, die für sie mit nichts zusammenhängt. Kann man aber die Mittelglieder finden und ihr deutlich machen, so ist ihr das schwerste begreiflich.” (294) But Ottilie does not seem to be able to display this learning within any kind of interaction: “Freilich ist es wunderbar, sie weiß vieles und recht gut, nur wenn man sie fragt, scheint sie nichts zu wissen.” (295) However ideal the process by which she learns may be, the method fails to help Ottilie transfer her knowledge into situations—particularly social situations—in which it might be useful. Ottilie’s mind is
completely isolated from those around her, and this isolation (into which the reader gains glimpses through her diary) is taken to extremes when she stops speaking at the end of the novel.

This contrast between the learning process and the social scenarios of life outside a learning environment is also commented upon later in the novel, when the Gehülfe has come to visit Charlotte and Ottilie on the estate. Once again, the Gehülfe discusses the importance of the progression of learning in which the pupil does not move to a new topic until the previous one has been grasped. Charlotte responds rather flippantly: “Das ist artig [...] die gute Pädagogik ist also gerade das Umgekehrte von der guten Lebensart. In der Gesellschaft soll man auf nichts verweilen, und bei dem Unterricht wäre das höchste Gebot, gegen alle Zerstreuung zu arbeiten.” (444) The Gehülfe’s answer acknowledges both the difference between learning and living and the difficulty of keeping variety and distraction in their proper balance: “Abwechselung ohne Zerstreuung wäre für Lehre und Leben der schönste Wahlspruch, wenn dieses löbliche Gleichgewicht nur so leicht zu erhalten wäre!” (444) While Charlotte is amused by the contrast and the Gehülfe seems confident that his theories of education are correct, the question is one that the reader must take seriously—it is worth asking whether the kind of education advocated by the Gehülfe and taken to extremes by Ottilie is in fact useful in the outside world, where distraction is inevitable and contingency intervenes constantly.

Ottilie’s otherworldliness has consequences beyond the non-communicability of her education. Like so many of the other protagonists I have discussed, Ottilie, who has no children of her own, takes on the role of a surrogate mother both to some of the village girls and, of course, to Otto. But Ottilie proves inept in this role, and both relationships
end in disaster. Her acquisition of a particular favorite among the girls appears harmless—“Anfänglich duldete Ottilie die Begleitung des Kindes; dann faßte sie selbst Neigung zu ihm; endlich trennten sie sich nicht mehr und Nanny begleitete ihre Herrin überall hin.” (383) This is much the same type of relation that we see in Agnes von Lilien between Agnes and Bettina, except that when Otto arrives, Ottilie neglects Nanny to the point that the girl leaves her: “Nanny hatte sich seit einiger Zeit, eifersüchtig auf den Knaben, dem ihre Herrin alle Neigung zuzuwenden schien, trotzig von ihr entfernt und war zu ihren Eltern zurückgekehrt.” (482) And of course it is Ottilie’s haste that causes Otto, to whom she is “so viel als eine Mutter, oder vielmehr eine andere Art von Mutter” (482), to fall in the lake and drown. Finally, it is Nanny (returned to Ottilie after Otto’s death) who, at Ottilie’s command, eats the food intended for Ottilie and tells no one about it until Ottilie is already dying. Far from preparing her for her own eventual motherhood, Ottilie’s surrogate-mother relationships end, in one case, with the death of the child and, in the other, in the death of Ottilie herself.

The novel also includes a flat denial of the ALR’s general tendency towards freedom of testation. The narrative situation of this utterance is somewhat bizarre: it comes in the middle of a passage in which the reader learns of the Baroness’ intent to effect a marriage between Ottilie and the Gehülfe. “Auch hatte die Baronesse [dem Gehülfen] fühlen lassen, daß Ottilie immer ein armes Mädchen bleibe,” Goethe writes, suggesting (tentatively) that the following sentiment might also be stated from her perspective. But the text proceeds without any coordinating conjunction (in this case, an “aber” would make most sense), and there is no further mention of the Baroness as agent/subject—instead, the opinion is attributed to a vague and nonspecific “es” and its
prediction is couched in the equally vague “man”: “Mit einem reichen Hause verwandt zu sein, hieß es, kann Niemanden helfen: denn man würde sich, selbst bei dem größten Vermögen, ein Gewissen daraus machen, denjenigen eine ansehnliche Summe zu entziehen, die dem näheren Grade nach ein vollkommeneres Recht auf ein Besitztum zu haben schienen.” (449) The passage goes on to emphasize the strangeness of this ostensible truth, adding, “Und gewiß bleibt es wunderbar, daß der Mensch das große Vorrecht, nach seinem Tode noch über seine Habe zu disponieren, sehr selten zu Gunsten seiner Lieblinge gebraucht, und wie es scheint, aus Achtung für das Herkommen, nur diejenigen begünstigt, die nach ihm sein Vermögen besitzen würden, wenn er auch selbst keinen Willen hätte.“ (449) The narrative shifts at this point back to a recounting of the Gehülfe’s reception at the castle, and the topic of wealth and inheritance is not picked up again. This statement is striking because it suggests that one’s “Lieblinge” are not the same as one’s blood relatives, but that affective bonds precisely do not overrule family ties when it comes to inheritance—and it remains a non-localized statement not attributable either to any particular character or to the narrator figure. Goethe raises the question of the privilege of affective and strictly familial bonds and then defers any answer to it, suggesting that regardless of what affective ties may have permeated social groupings, tradition still holds back the possibility of any real change.

Indeed, a final passage with the Gehülfe also expresses a strong skepticism regarding the possibility of meaningful change by explicitly conceiving of those changes as cyclical. As he is wandering in an orderly row of lindens, the Gehülfe reflects that this work of Eduard’s father has fallen out of favor with the current inhabitants, who prefer their natural, English-style gardens, which leads him to the observation that
Es gibt wenig Menschen, die sich mit dem Nächstvergangenen zu beschäftigen wissen. Entweder das Gegenwärtige hält uns mit Gewalt an sich, oder wir verlieren uns in die Vergangenheit und suchen das völlig Verlorene, wie es nur möglich sein will, wieder hervorzurufen und herzustellen. Selbst in großen und reichen Familien, die ihren Vorfahren vieles schuldig sind, pflegt es so zu gehen, daß man des Großvaters mehr als des Vaters gedenkt. (453)

Although Charlotte is initially less than thrilled by this remark when the Gehülfe repeats it to her, she admits that what people perceive as their individual taste is in fact “nur die Pläne, die Neigungen der Zeit, die wir mit auszuführen genötigt sind.” (453) The Gehülfe agrees, and adds that this will lead to large differences between generations of families: “Fällt die Jugend eines Sohnes gerade in die Zeit der Umwendung, so kann man versichert sein, dass er mit seinem Vater nichts gemein haben wird.” (453-4) Although these observations are couched in the form of a discussion about taste in design, they line up very clearly with the types of shifts in conceptions of domesticity and society that I discussed in the first chapter (e.g. Charlotte’s description of current taste “an Kunst, an Zwang soll nichts erinnern” [454]). But in Goethe’s novel, these are not shifts that signal genuine change or—to remain within the program of the novels I discuss throughout—anything that can be called progress. Charlotte tentatively asks the Gehülfe: “Haben Sie wohl einen Begriff, mein Freund, daß man aus diesem in einem andern, in den vorigen Zustand zurückkehren könne?” (454) His reply, though not stated as absolutely certain, is unambiguous: “Warum nicht? [...] jeder Zustand hat seine Beschwerlichkeit, der beschränkte sowohl als der losgebundene. [...] Glauben Sie mir: es ist möglich, daß Ihr Sohn die sämtlichen Parkanlagen vernachlässigt und sich wieder hinter die ernsten Mauern und unter die hohen Linden seines Großvaters zurückzieht.” (454) All of the clashes, all of the conflicts between parents and children that have been the stuff of the novel from its emergence, are here negated by their impending reversal.
Lastly, *Die Wahlverwandtschaften* upends the traditional plot structure of the novel as well. Its length places it in borderline consideration for the label ‘novella’ (a genre that was gaining popularity in the nineteenth century and that has an interestingly different relation to the new or improbable from the novel more strictly speaking), and the *Märchen*-like novella included within it gives it some resemblance to the Romantic tales that feature extensive self-reflexive frame/embedded narratives. Both the famous analogy at the beginning and the novella in the second volume suggest strategies of interpretation for the novel, the plot of which is somewhat similar to the Baroque novel in its heaping of random tragedies upon its characters. Strikingly, these lessons are internal to the narrative: that is, the protagonists hear and comment upon them—but they fundamentally misinterpret them. This interpretation is most obvious in the case of the famous chemical analogy. After systematically anthropomorphizing the chemical process of switching bonds, they explicitly compare themselves to the chemicals in question. Eduard blithely suggests that they see the chemical process as a “Gleichnisrede, woraus wir uns eine Lehre zum unmittelbaren Gebrauch ziehen” (306) and goes on to elucidate the comparison:


That he is wrong, and that the bonds do not form this way but rather between the two couples of opposite gender, is obvious—but the interesting point is that Goethe has his characters themselves attempt to assert a kind of symbolic meaning in their lives, and that the readers can quickly see that this attempt is a spectacular failure.
The status of the novella is considerably more complicated. It seems to provide a counter-narrative to the main frame: the two neighbors, potential marriage partners according to parental choice, move away from that choice and then back to it again of their own free will—the visitor telling the story to Charlotte and Ottilie gives it a happy ending with a wedding. But the story fails to have the desired comforting effect on its listeners, because they have already heard it and know this ending in fact not to be true. Furthermore, because the young man in the story is in fact the Hauptmann, who is himself one of the protagonists and emphatically not happily married, the visitor’s tale serves as a painful reminder to both women of the missing partners in their own lives. In contrast to their cheerful (mis)interpretation of the chemical analogy at the beginning, the characters leave the room or fall into silence, and what was supposed to have been a pleasant diversion is abandoned as a tactless mistake. It seems to me that the refusal of Charlotte and Ottilie to engage with the story, to acknowledge their familiarity with it and why it causes them sorrow, is a refusal to admit that they are affected by situations far beyond their control. They cannot assimilate the story into their conception of their own narratives, and so they abandon it. (It is perhaps also worth noting that the story is followed by a scene in which the characters play with a mystical pendulum—which Charlotte initially accepts as a diversion but then vetoes when the Englishman suggests a real-world application for it, namely, curing Ottilie’s headaches.) The novella, like the analogy, seems to offer some kind of lesson, but even the reader can no longer grasp at some kind of sure interpretation by reversing the characters’ own. The novel’s tragic end, in which Ottilie wastes effortlessly away and Eduard staggers behind her, struggling to give up his creaturely desire to stay alive, puts off any resolution to beyond the limits of
human life, and the possibility of reunion is described not with a “wann” but with a “wenn.”

I have treated Goethe’s deliberate undoing of many of the themes and formal qualities I discussed in the body of this dissertation not to invalidate those discussions but to demonstrate, again and more forcefully, the extent to which the models of family I trace through the novel are recognized as tenuous almost as soon as they appear.

Although the novel around 1800 is concerned with the assembling of the family as an affective unit, it does not trace a smooth or triumphant progression. The constellations it uses to assert the primacy of affection over blood are marked with loss, disappearance, and questionable legal status. The independence of children comes at the cost of conflict with their parents, or the self-sacrifice of the children. The novel, even as it generates notions of individuality, subjectxod, independence, love, and the importance of narrative, testifies to the fragility of all of those notions. Exploring the nuclear family in the novel at the turn of the eighteenth century is thus not an attempt to recuperate bourgeois values as in whole cloth as positive, liberal, or progressive, but rather a plea to recognize both the genuinely emancipatory and the insidiously repressive elements of those values. I have tried to suggest that many novels that have been dismissed as trivial or clichéd are in fact far more interesting and complicated than they may seem on the surface, and that attention to both thematic and formal features is illuminating. Above all, I want to suggest that the family and the novel, as entities that took shape around 1800 and continue to be massively influential cultural forms in our own century, are objects we should keep looking at, keep interrogating, keep revisiting.
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