DISRUPTIVE ORGANIZERS: WILD CHILDREN IN GERMAN REALISM (1850-1900)

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A dissertation submitted to the faculty at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Carolina-Duke Graduate Program in German Studies

Chapel Hill
2020

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ABSTRACT

Margaret Reif: Disruptive Organizers: Wild Children in German Realism (1850-1900)  
(Under the direction of Eric Downing)

This dissertation explores the intersection of childhood and wildness within the literary movement of German realism. The latter half of the nineteenth century saw the introduction of mandatory education and the consolidation of the middle-class family, both of which established childhood as a distinct phase. The literary movement of German realism emerged at the same time, with a focus on representing ordinary life and experiences with a particular concentration on bourgeois values and norms. But many children in the works of this movement prove more fantastical than realistic, more extraordinary than ordinary, and more deviant than safely bourgeois. This study therefore examines how representations of wild children interact with the aesthetics of the average within German realism. Ultimately, this dissertation has two main points: First, depictions of wild children should not be read solely as a means of celebrating the average, middle class reality of the nineteenth-century through a strategy of the literary containment of wild children. Rather, the wild child initiates a redemptive transformation of reality and is a means for introducing that which would otherwise escape representation in realist prose fiction. Second, the frequent appearance of wild children within the literary movement of German realism serves as a rhetorical strategy to depict a changing nineteenth-century reality with regard to education, family, gender, nation and art, as well as a means to question the success of these structures. In order to make these arguments, this dissertation engages with four types of wild children: literary descendants of Goethe’s Mignon, fairytale children, differently-
abeled children associated with the figure of Kaspar Hauser, and criminal children. It also considers the intersection of gender and wildness and the ways in which the language of wildness, culture and civilization have been used in Western literary traditions, particularly in a late-nineteenth-century German context.
In loving memory of my father, Thomas Reif
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to express my deepest gratitude to my advisor Eric Downing, without whom this project would not have been possible. I cannot thank him enough for his expertise, insight and invaluable feedback when working on this project, as well as for his kindness and encouragement. I would like to thank the members of my dissertation committee: Ruth von Bernuth, Stefani Engelstein, Priscilla Layne and Jakob Norberg, all of whom have helped me grow as a scholar and consider additional perspectives on the relationship between children, wildness and German Realism. I would also like to express my gratitude to the late Jonathan Hess for his advice in considering the wild topographies of German realism. I am extremely grateful for the faculty and graduate students of the Carolina-Duke Graduate Program in German Studies for the supportive intellectual community. Thank you, especially, to Martin Dawson, John Gill, Lea Greenberg, Jeff Hertel, Amy Jones, Edana Kleinhans, Patrick Lang, Ian McLean, Christoph Schmitz and Claire Scott, for the conversations, coffee, tea, and friendship.

I would also like to thank those who have supported me from beyond the academy. To my spiritual family at Chapel in the Pines (in particular Minnie Sue, Jerry, Marion and the handbell choir), thank you. Thank you to Elizabeth, Maya, Natasha and Yasameen for friendship, baking and countless cups of tea. To my family, your love and encouragement mean more than I can say.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION........................................................................................................................................... 1

CHAPTER 1: REALIST MIGNONS AND THE CONSTRAINTS OF THE REALIST IMAGINATION............................ 22

CHAPTER 2: REALIST FAIRYTALE CHILDREN AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF IDENTITIES........................................... 75

CHAPTER 3: REALIST KASPAR HAUSERS: THE AESTHETICIZATION OF BROKEN VOICES............................................. 131

CHAPTER 4: REALIST CRIMINAL CHILDREN AND THE TRANFIGURATION OF THE BOURGEOIS FAMILY................................. 174

CONCLUSION............................................................................................................................................. 228

WORKS CITED ........................................................................................................................................... 233
INTRODUCTION

Maurice Sendak’s 1963 *Where the Wild Things Are* might contain one of the best-known examples of a literary wild child. The protagonist Max dons a wolf costume and runs around the house, and when sent to his room, finds himself transported to another world where he is the king of the so-called “Wild Things” only to return home after he has exhausted himself. The children in Sendak’s work are, according to Maria Tatar, “mischief makers, with anarchic energy that can be primal, dark, and voracious” and the homes of Sendak’s stories are “the quintessential safe haven.”¹ Within contemporary children’s literature, wild children seem to celebrate the raw potential of children’s energy while carrying a didactic message: the home and family provide a space for the child’s wild self to return to.

This celebration of children’s wildness was not always the case in children’s literature. Within a nineteenth-century German-language context, one need only think of Wilhelm Busch’s *Max and Moritz* (1865), where the boys’ pranks finally end when a farmer grinds them up in his mill and within the village “ging ein freudiges Gebrumm: »Gott sei Dank! Nun ist’s vorbei mit der Übeltäterei!«”² Misbehaving children fare equally poorly in Heinrich Hoffmann’s *Der Struwwelpeter* (1845), where children’s misbehaviors are turned back on them: for example, a girl who plays with matches sets herself on fire and a child who sucks his thumbs has them cut off. Disobedient children fare no better in fairytales: obedient and hardworking children are awarded

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rewarded and disobedient and lazy children are punished. Wildness is not a virtue in nineteenth-century children’s literature.

When I began researching the figure of the wild child in nineteenth-century German literature, I was struck by how this figure shifts when transported into literature intended for adult readers. In general, childhood was a topic featured in many works of nineteenth-century literature as the latter-half of the nineteenth century saw the introduction of mandatory primary education in German-speaking lands and the consolidation of the middle-class family established childhood as a distinct phase, all of which was filtered into the literature of the period. Wild children represent one subsection of the children featured in nineteenth-century literature, and separated from the didactic purpose of children’s literature of the same period, a child’s wildness becomes an attractive trait, and its depiction more reminiscent of the attitude toward wildness in contemporary texts such as in Sendak’s *Where the Wild Things Are* or Astrid Lindgren’s *Pippi Longstocking* (1945). While a didactic element remains in the representation of wild children in works intended for adult readership, it is in the context of celebrating the efforts of intrepid pedagogues to incorporate wild children into larger society. At the same time, the loss of wildness is not accompanied by the same glee found in nineteenth-century children’s literature.

**Wild Children in Late-Nineteenth Century German Literature**

The literary deployment of the figure of the wild child not only represents a response to the shifting institutional and historical landscapes of this mid- to late nineteenth-century period, but also a unique opportunity to explore the aesthetics of its dominant literary movement,

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3 For example, Goldmarie and Pechmarie in “Frau Holle,” where the obedient, hardworking sister is rewarded with gold and the lazy sister is covered in pitch.
German realism. The artificiality of wild children interrupts the carefully-constructed representations of reality within German realism and is a means of investigating the paradoxical drives within its aesthetic program. Paul Fleming’s study *Exemplarity & Mediocrity: The Art of the Average from Bourgeois Tragedy to German Realism* describes many of the inherent conflicts within German realism, such as the ideal artist as an observer, not creator; transforming the everyday world into higher art; and using obscure, ordinary figures to achieve this transformation. Fleming’s account of German realism draws attention to the competing impulses within the literary movement, where the ordinary becomes extraordinary and the extraordinary becomes ordinary.

As marginal figures who are othered by class, gender or ethnic differences, wild children work with and against the privileging of the ordinary within German realism. The wild child presents an Other against which the center can fashion and reveal itself. The frequent removal of wild children from realist narratives – due to death, domestication or literal disappearance – is a means of expanding the aesthetics of the average within German realism. Writing about British literature, D.A. Miller and Nancy Armstrong interpret the abjection of non-normative figures as a literary representation of the expansion of bourgeois society. This reading resonates with

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4 John Lyon argues that the origins of German Realism lie in various crises of modernity, which include the shifting political landscape, the rise of imperialism and capitalism. *Out of Place: German Realism, Displacement and Modernity.* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2013).


6 Within Sara Ahmed’s notion of affective economies, hatred, fear and anxiety are essential for moments of self-creation. “Affective Economies,” *Social Text* 22.2 (Summer 2004): 117-139.


many representations of wild children in German literature as well and the attention given to their education and potential incorporation into bourgeois society. Moments of Bildung are opportunities for exerting control over wild children as they are reshaped according to the normative demands.\textsuperscript{9} The reshaping of wild children reveals the underlying ideological structures of the realities within the texts.

Although the containment of wild children in German realism does identify normative structures and portray the bourgeois child as the ideal result of the wild child’s transformation, her repeated presence across works of German realism from its beginnings in the 1850s until its end around 1900 suggest that her presence is productive and not at odds with realist texts and that she is a figure who can also work with a realist project and not just against it. From this perspective, the wild child’s wildness is not something to be abjected or contained within realist texts, but a key feature. In my dissertation, I argue that the wild child is one means by which authors of German realism initiate a process of “Verklärung” or a transformation that moves the everyday experience into the poetic realm, preventing realist literature from becoming what Theodor Fontane described as “das nackte Wiedergeben alltäglichen Lebens.”\textsuperscript{10} Author and political thinker Arnold Ruge (1802-1880) provides one definition of German Realism that illustrates how essential the connection of poetic and ordinary spaces is:

\begin{quote}
In der Poesie heißt Realismus, wirkliche Ideen und wirkliche Ideale hervorbringen und durch wahre Figuren so hindurchscheinen lassen, daß diese Figuren den Erdgeschmack verlieren und der Idee ebenbürtig werden, die sie auszudrücken haben. Die Nachahmer
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{9} Rebekka Horlacher, \textit{The Educated Subject and the German Concept of Bildung: A Comparative Cultural History}. (New York: Routledge, 2015), 2-4.

von Dickens und andern Engländer, die gar keine Idee auszudrücken haben, sondern nur copiren, sind Pfuscher. 11

The figure of the wild child is one means by which works of realism lose their “Erdgeschmack.” Realist literature navigates the space between poetic representation and extraliterary reality, and the wild child maintains the tension between poetic and ordinary spaces as a point of contact between poetic wildness and forces of socialization and education aimed at participation in ordinary life. The wild child brings dynamism and vitality into German realism and her frequent appearances counter Erich Auerbach’s description of German realism as giving “das Bild des Wirtschaftlichen, Gesellschaftlichen und Politischen als ein ruhendes.” 12 The wild child is not a quiet figure and her presence rejects an empty glorification of bourgeois values and structures.

The wild child is a disruptive organizer, who reveals the structures of extraliterary reality while destabilizing them. Her construction within works of German realism allows texts to respond to the prevailing ideas and norms of their time while imagining an alternative beyond them. Although Armstrong argues that the negative aspect of society must be negated for social cohesion, she also states “there is something important to be gained from a positive reading of what the Victorian novel deliberately abjects as antagonistic to the very terms in which it negotiates the fraught relationship of self to society.” 13 Within my dissertation, I argue that the wildness of these poetic figures is not something that must be destroyed within German realism but is an essential element for navigating between ordinary life and art. The wild child offers a

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13 Armstrong, *How Novels Think*, 152.
redemption of reality by pointing toward truths and narratives that otherwise elude representation in realist prose.

**What is a Wild Child?: An Overview of Terminology**

*What is a child?*

This dissertation focuses on representations of children and childhood, neither of which are straightforward to define. The dependence of definitions of children and childhood on specific cultural, historical and social contexts means that representations of children and childhood are uniquely suited for considering the contexts in which the texts appear, where the construction of children and shape of childhoods reflects the social values and structures in which they are found. I define childhood generally as a stage of development oriented toward the family of origin rather than toward a family of procreation, and children as individuals who are within this stage. This definition is complicated for representations of youths experiencing puberty and sexual attraction, who are then caught in a liminal period, oscillating between the family of origin and a desire for procreation, simultaneously belong to both and neither. For the purpose of my dissertation, the extension of childhood through the continued attachment to the family of origin means that representations of older-teenagers within this liminal period still fall under my definition of children.

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14 Birgit Jensen uses representations of childhood within Fontane’s oeuvre to analyze nineteenth-century childhood, devoting attention to the rise of the bourgeois family and childhood. *Auf der morschen Gartenschaukel: Kindheit als Problem bei Theodor Fontane.* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1998).


16 Other problematic categories include representations of individuals who have different cognitive abilities and are often described as child-like because they either do not experience sexual attraction or remain dependent on a
Nineteenth-century middle-class children occupy a space that is separate from the world of adults and greater political questions, but they are still intimately linked to that space through means of education preparing them to participate in that world. Representations of children are a means of observing the values and organizing principles of the familial, pedagogical and social forces and institutions that construct them. The socialization of children is a means of observing how society imagines itself being formed. John Locke’s description of children as tabula rasa provides the most literal example of children as texts whose authors are their families and societies. Jean-Jacques Rousseau’s concern about society’s influence over children also suggests that children can be “read” to interpret the environments that produce them. Both images of children, particularly Rousseau’s understanding of children as connected to nature and innocence, are suggestive of children occupying a space different from that of adults, but structure similar to a family of origin. Wilhelm Raabe’s posthumously-published Altershausen (1911) describes one such individual.

17 This is particularly true among middle-class families, where children were not expected to participate in the world of labor. Philippe Ariès observes this positioning of children alongside increased sentimentality and affect within the middle-class family, beginning in the eighteenth century. Rebekka Habermas’s account of the development of childhood counters Ariès argument that affect began to play a role as part of the family structure in the eighteenth century, and instead argues that the affective shift is in the nineteenth century, where it became a one-sided relationship. For Habermas, children were dependent on their parents for affection and support and argues that previously this relationship of affective dependence was mutual. Philippe Ariès. Centuries of Childhood: A Social History of Family Life. Trans. Robert Baldwick. (New York: Vintage Books, 1962). Rebekka Habermas. “Parent-Child Relationships in the Nineteenth Century.” German History 16, no 1. (1998): 43-55.


ultimately under their control.\textsuperscript{20} Given the unique position of childhood in the long nineteenth century alongside the normalization of the bourgeois family and bourgeois childhood, representations of children are uniquely suited for observing transformations of extraliterary reality. In the case of representations of wild children, their socialization can be linked toward the expansion of average experiences and values.

The copresence of different understandings of children, childhood and \textit{Bildung} within the nineteenth century provides a foundation for the formation of literary wild children in German realism. The idea of children as having insight that escapes adults and reason was particularly prevalent in German romanticism,\textsuperscript{21} and this is one understanding of children that carries over into German realism and the representation of wild children in particular. Children can be considered individuals who are closer to a complete, unmediated connection to nature and as individuals in need of domestication for group cohesion. Allowing a child’s insight to thrive and unfold naturally comes into conflict with the need to produce members of a complex society.\textsuperscript{22} These two goals of education – self-completion and social integration – can be seen by juxtaposing Wilhelm von Humboldt’s claim “der wahre Zweck des Menschen […] ist die höchste und proportionierlichste Bildung seiner Kräfte zu einem Ganzen.”\textsuperscript{23} with his appeal to Friedrich Wilhelm III of Prussia in his “Antrag auf Errichtung der Universität Berlin,” which


\textsuperscript{21} For further discussion of Romantic representations of children, see Angela Winkler. \textit{Das romantische Kind: ein poetischer Typus von Goethe bis Thomas Mann}. (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang Verlag, 2000) and Heinrich Detering. \textit{Kindheitsspuren: Theodor Storm und das Ende der Romantik}. (Germany: Boyens Buchverlag, 2011).

\textsuperscript{22} Armstrong identifies the modern subject as the one who can balance individual and group interests. 56.

\textsuperscript{23} Wilhelm von Humboldt, \textit{Ideen zu einem Versuch, die Gränzen der Wirksamkeit des Staats zu bestimmen}, (Breslau: Verlag von Eduard Trewen, 1851), 9.
aligns *Bildung* with the aims of the state.\textsuperscript{24} The shifting aims of *Bildung*, such as becoming a tool for national education rather than individual formation, link children and their literary representations to questions of how they can be incorporated into a larger society and what form that society takes.\textsuperscript{25} These different understandings of *Bildung* also expose how wildness and wild children can work against the structures being created, as their unique insight is lost through *Bildung*.

The child is not only a figure for examining nineteenth-century society. The wild child’s individualism and position as a target of socializing forces positions them alongside the larger discourse on *Bildung* where they are both creations and creators.\textsuperscript{26} In viewing children as creations, narratives of *Bildung* alongside wild children are not just about education and the instillation of norms, but narratives about creating art. The socialization of wild children offers a parallel process to how German realists construct realities within prose, but the child’s wild creativity re-introduces what is lost in the imposition of structures and undermines any god-like understanding of the realist author. Reading wild children as creations and creators emphasizes the creative processes surrounding representations of children and representations of children create moments of self-reflection on the production of literary art.


\textsuperscript{25} Friedrich Nietzsche lamented the state of nineteenth-century German education claiming that, even though very few individuals can ever succeed in attaining true *Bildung*, the structures of the universities should afford all students the opportunity. Friedrich Nietzsche, “Über die Zukunft unserer Bildungsanstalten” In Friedrich Nietzsche: *Werke in drei Bänden*, Vol. 3 (Munich: Carl Hanser Verlag, 1954), 174-263.

\textsuperscript{26} Horlacher observes that one of the first references to *Bildung* in the German language appears in Meister Eckart’s theological writings, where the language of creation – *Bildung* – was used to describe a process of spiritual transcendence. *The Educated Subject and the German Concept of Bildung: A Comparative Cultural History*, 8.
Children’s apparent disconnect from larger society also makes children figures well-suited for reflecting on German realism’s interest in exposing and imagining alternatives to the forces shaping their reality. In the foreword and introduction to his collection of six novellas, *Bunte Steine*, Adalbert Stifter uses the figure of the child to describe locating the sublime through the ordinary. Stifter writes:

Da die Menschen in der Kindheit waren, ihr geistiges Auge von der Wissenschaft noch nicht berührt war, wurden sie von dem Nahestehenden und Auffälligen ergriffen und zu Furcht und Bewunderung hingerissen; aber als ihr Sinn geöffnet wurde, da der Blick sich auf den Zusammenhang zu richten began, so sanken die einzelnen Erscheinungen immer tiefer, und es erhob sich das Gesetz immer höher, die Wunderbarkeiten hörten auf, das Wunder nahm zu.\(^{27}\)

Although Stifter is using childhood metaphorically to refer to stages of humankind’s development, his claim holds true for his and other realists’ claims about children. The child is emblematic of the small and ordinary individuals in society, who Stifter turns to for identifying the points of interconnectivity in life, but the child’s gaze is not yet oriented toward regularity. The child is a figure with the potential to interrupt and distract from the existing connections by jumping to conclusions and drawing attention to the coincidental, extraordinary moments, and Stifter suggests that the sublime is only perceived when a childlike gaze is subsumed by a scientific gaze. A child may be a small, ordinary figure who resonates with German Realism’s attention to the granting insignificant figures poetic significance, but she is also a figure not committed to maintaining the ordinary and can work against the structures being idealized within realism.

The figure of the child is an ideal figure for observing German realism’s reflection on its creative process alongside the contradictions of representing the ordinary and small in a poetic

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manner. Children do not exist in the center of society and are figures who have rules imposed upon them; the demands placed on children in socializing situations makes visible social forces and values, and the wild potential of children introduces spontaneity to the literary realities, maintaining the imaginative, poetic potential emerging from reality.

What is wildness?

Despite the increasingly disciplined and institutionalized form of Bildung and the middle class in the nineteenth century, the literary representations of children in German realism frequently appear alongside images of wildness, the antithesis of the ideal, middle-class nineteenth-century child. Because wild children are situated outside of society and thus as a threat to it, they are connected to the elements which would typically be abjected for the sake of social cohesion and a stable balance of personal and collective freedom. In individual works, these wild children appear as outliers and cases of exceptionality, whose presence necessitates an act of Bildung to reshape the child to conform with the ideals of her literary world. When this fails, the child disappears or dies, and when it succeeds, the child loses her individualism becoming a pale shadow of her wild self. The wild children of German realism exist in connection with spaces that might threaten to destabilize a systematic approach to organizing and containing the modern individual by offering an alternative mode of organization, such as nature, the past, femininity, or fairytales, which can redeem reality from its “Erdgeschmack.”

Although wildness takes on a positive connotation in its transformative potential, it should not just be considered a leftover of Romanticism or a category to define bourgeois children against. Wildness, and wild children, exist within a Western tradition of conceptualizing

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28 See Armstrong. How Novels Think: The Limits of Individualism from 1719-1900.
the history of human development that reinforces and often idealizes a Western-centric worldview. Prior to the eighteenth century, wild children were primarily thought of as elements of fiction, and during the Enlightenment, the idea of the wild human was repurposed alongside thought experiments connected to states of nature, perhaps best exemplified by Rousseau’s noble savage. \(^{29}\) Julia Douthwaite’s study *The Wild Girl, Natural Man and the Monster* examines the Enlightenment interest in wild humans as part of an attempt to define man in a manner that establishes Western civilization as either a telos of human development or the standard from which other civilizations and individuals deviate. \(^{30}\)

The language of wildness is a means of rhetorically naturalizing Western civilizations. Though he does not view wildness as a mark of belonging to a different species, Herder’s writings on wildness and civilization portray European civilization as the average, expected form. In *Ideen zur Philosophie der Geschichte der Menschheit* (1784-1791), Herder writes that “der Mensch nicht zur Wildheit, sondern zum sanften Leben geschaffen sei […] Alle Verwilderung der Menschenstämme ist Entartung, zu der sie die Noth, das Klima oder eine leidenschaftliche Gewohnheit zwang.”\(^{31}\) Wildness becomes a means of affirming Western civilization as the norm and marking non-European groups as Other.

In addition to appearing in philosophical discourse, the figure of the wild child also has its own literary tradition that is connected to the affirmation of Western civilization. Examining


this literary tradition, Dieter Richter concludes that: „Der Mythos vom Wilden ist der projektive Gegenentwurf zum »bürgerlichen Tugendsystem«, der »faule Wilde« ist der Widerpart des planenden, die Zeit messenden Bürgers, und die tobbenden, schreienden, gestikulierenden Figuren der fernen Kontinente sind die Gegenläufer jener steifen Musterkörper, wie sie, beispielweise, die kindliche Anstandsliteratur des 18. Jahrhunderts vorführt.“

Representations of wildness are a means of defining bourgeois life by providing a contrast. Given German realism’s interest in affirming the aesthetics of the average, wildness would at first appear to have no place in works of German realism, except as a strategy to affirm and define Western, bourgeois society.

To draw attention to the language and representation of wildness within late-nineteenth century German literature cannot neglect the questions of German imperialism and how these figures are intertwined with questions of German and European identity vis-à-vis the figure of the Other. While works of German realism focus on representing and transfiguring the average, middle-class life, the poetic figure of the wild child cannot be divorced from the Western literary and philosophical traditions of using an Other to define a standard. In this regard, I draw on Edward Said’s theory of Orientalism in addressing the representation of wildness within these literary works, where the figure of the wild Other reveals how Western society, in this case nineteenth-century German society, constructs itself and reveals the artifice of categories such as wild and civilized, of normative and non-normative.

Within my dissertation, I am interested in how the intersection of the domestic, bourgeois sphere and the wild child both advances and undermines the aesthetics of the ordinary within

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German realism. When addressing the use of wildness as a means of creating and naturalizing categories of Others, my approach is not to rehabilitate the colonial rhetoric present in nineteenth-century literature, but to analyze how authors of German realism draw on the assumptions and stereotypes associated with different forms of wildness and how this artificial figure is necessary for translating lived, middle-class reality into literature.

*What is the bourgeois child and family?*

The relationship of wild children with bourgeois structures of affection not only reveals what the normative values and structures were during the nineteenth century, but also reveals the power dynamics underlying the guise of domesticity and the expansion of bourgeois ideals beyond the bourgeois household. One of the problems I have encountered when focusing on wild children in German realism is the constant dialogue between representations of wild children and bourgeois children, since many of the wild children appear in pedagogical or socialization relationships that are attempting to create a bourgeois child out of a wild child.

The bourgeois child could be considered the standard image of a child within the nineteenth century, though as the standard to aspire to, it necessarily ignores the children of lower-class, working-class families, as well as aristocratic childhoods. As already mentioned, one of the key features of the bourgeois childhood is the use of affect as a means of regulating interactions between parents and children.\(^{34}\) This has strong implications for mothers in particular, with the mother as a self-sacrificing figure for her children.\(^{35}\) The mother’s affective


\(^{35}\) Rebekka Habermas, “Parent-Child Relationships in the Nineteenth Century,” 49.
control of the household, in part through her devotion to her children, is indicative of the gender roles prevalent in a bourgeois household. Another key feature of the bourgeois childhood is the emphasis on the family as offering a refuge for self-development, away from the outside world of labor. The image of the bourgeois family as an independent space ignores the necessity of a certain amount of capital and participation in the world of labor for this to be possible, as the children and women within this household would not be expected to contribute to the family’s financial stability.

Female children occupy a precarious position within the bourgeois family, as individuals who need to be controlled and individuals who will someday provide stability and support within a family. Rebekka Habermas describes the goals of girls’ educations as: “die Einübung in die weiblichen Eigenschaften der Emsigkeit, Geschicklichkeit und des »Kunstfleißes«. So wurden in der Nürnberger »Töchterschule für Töchter aus dem gebildeten Stand« nur Religion, Deutsch, Geographie und Geschichte, Schönschreiben und Handarbeit unterrichtet.” Girls’ lessons are intended to create women who can provide moral stability within a family alongside household management. The emphasis on girls’ moral characters suggests that these desirable traits of productivity and industriousness must be taught to women and that girls’ base characteristics are closer to irrationality or an absence of stability. Girls’ educations are not aimed at future

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38 Habermas contrasts the educations of the daughters and sons within one middle-class family in the first half of the nineteenth century. Where the girls’ education focused on domestic work and religion, the boys’ education included foreign languages at an early age, even for the boys who did not go on to secondary education, as well as lessons in accounting. Ibid., 336.
participation in the outside world of labor, but at the reproduction of the bourgeois family. The wild girl is a particular threat to institution of the bourgeois family, as she embodies a the absence of the necessary characteristics to preserve and reproduce the bourgeois family unit as a foundational part of nineteenth-century society.

What other concepts are useful for thinking about childhood and wildness?

The majority of the case studies I use in this dissertation involve the representation of female children. Representations of the liminal period between childhood and adulthood are often accompanied by representations of romance. Since this liminal period involves being oriented toward the family of origin and family of procreation simultaneously, representations of romance often involve the eroticization of child figures by male narrators. The power dynamics between male narrators and female children is indicative of how representations of women as creations occurs within a mode of artistic production that is one of control and conforming to the (male) author’s will. The tradition of female subjects created by male artists is, like the wild child, not an innovation of German realism and is reminiscent of Ovid’s Pygmalion, as well as the Biblical story of Eve being created from Adam’s rib. The representations of children I examine occur within this power dynamic, where the female child as an artistic product is an object of wonder and a means of celebrating the (typically male) artist’s prowess. Within this context of male narrative control, it is telling that the wild children’s fates can generally be categorized as death, loss of wildness through marriage, or disappearance.

39 Charitable organizations were one manner in which bourgeois women were able to be active outside of the household, bringing maternal actions to a larger sphere. Rebekka Habermas, “Parent-Child Relationships,” 53-55.

While it is necessary to take the image of female subjects as products of male artists into consideration, the relationship between gender and wildness reveals more than nineteenth-century gender relations. Elisabeth Bronfen’s *Over Her Dead Body* interrogates the aesthetic representation of dead, female figures within art, arguing that the dead, female body is not only an exertion of patriarchal authority, but a means of making present what society seeks to repress, with the feminine body and death as signs of some Other that society seeks to exclude. In this regard, while it is important to note that female wild children are particular sources of anxiety and need to be socialized according to normative standards, it is also important to see how these female children and their fates is more than a means of visualizing nineteenth-century gender politics.

**Chapter Breakdown**

Each chapter in this dissertation explores the questions of childhood and wildness in the context of a particular type of wild child and how the literary and historical expectations for these types of children are modified within German realism. The first chapter focuses on artistic wild children in the vein of Goethe’s Mignon, the second on fairytale children, the third on Kaspar Hauser children and the fourth on criminal children. To establish each category, I draw on a variety of sources, such as the philosophical and literary predecessors, as well as nineteenth-century pedagogical, psychological and literary texts. In focuses on these types of wild children, I do not claim that these are the only categories of wild children present in German realism, nor do I claim that the categories are unrelated. Within an individual work, the representation of the wild child often draws on multiple categories, such as how Fontane’s Grete Minde resembles...
both Mignon and a criminal child. My analysis within each chapter is framed by how the different categories of wildness interact with the complex relationship between ordinary reality and its poetic rendition in literature.

Each type of wild child explores the tensions within German realism: prose and other art forms, fairytales and history, constructed and natural language, and the bourgeois family and criminal outsiders. The figure of the child, as a creation of her environment, can navigate these tensions with the potential to bear multiple identities and the possibility of closing the distance between marginal, extraordinary figures and the structures underlying nineteenth-century reality. The wild child’s presence within a work of German realism creates opportunities for representing the vastness of reality in the forces that influence and seek to confine the wild child, while the wild child’s dynamism suggests that this confinement can never be fully realized and that, were the wild child to be completely confined, the text would lose its poetic qualities.

The first chapter turns to the figure of the artistic wild child within works of German realism to examine the self-reflexivity and self-conception of artistic production within German realism alongside realist adaptations of Goethe’s artistic wild child, Mignon. Through close-readings of Adalbert Stifter’s *Waldbrunnen* (1866) and Theodor Storm’s *Zur Wald- und Wasserfreude* (1879), the chapter analyzes how the socialization of artistic wild children reflects how realist prose translates other forms of art, such as poetry, visual arts, and music into literature. However, in using an artistic wild child as the figure for this reflection, authors create a situation where the texts’ artistic vision can conflict with that of the child’s, who is an artist in her own right. In both of these texts, the wild child disappears. Rather than reading their disappearances as the triumph of prose in removing the wild child and asserting an image of the average as an ideal, I argue that the wild child’s artistic approach, confronting past traditions,
turning to simple folk songs, and blending artistic media, is more emblematic of German realism than the image created by her absence. German realism is not the elimination of the wild child’s art, but the constant transformations arising from the interplay between normative, socializing forces and an extraordinary child’s creative voice.

The second chapter turns from the transformative potential of artistic wild children to the transformative potential of fairytale children. The fairytale is present throughout many works of German realism, despite it often being dismissed as a genre disconnected from reality, and in this chapter I argue that realist fairytale children are a means of structuring narratives rooted in psychological and historical realities. Through my close readings of Wilhelm Raabe’s *Else von der Tanne* (1865) and Eugenie Marlitt’s *Blaubart* (1866), I argue that the fairytale has been internalized as a structure and language for representing female figures and experiences, and that the fairytale child’s associations with femininity, innocence and the German nation reflect an ambivalent attitude toward the question of German unification in the 1860s. The death of the fairytale child, literal death in the case of Raabe’s Else and the rejection of fairytale narratives within Marlitt’s story, suggests that the femininity and innocence the fairytale child represents is the cost of social cohesion. Even though the fairytale child is destroyed by forces of history – mobs in the wake of the Thirty Years War and a man who fought in the second Schleswig-Holstein war and waged territorial war against his aunt – the female fairytale child presents a means of imagining alternatives to masculine, martial reality.

The third chapter turns from the internalization of wild children as narratives to the language used by wild children through realist representations of differently-abled children.\(^2\)

\(^2\) Neurologically divergent would be another potential means of categorizing this type of child, but given its medical connotations, I use terms such as differently-abled or mentally different to avoid the appearance of
Kaspar Hauser, who appeared in Nuremberg in 1828 with limited language skills, provides the starting point for my analysis of differently-abled individuals’ language in German Realism. In addition to the observations of two of Kaspar Hauser’s caretakers, Anselm von Feuerbach and Georg Daumer, as well as Kaspar Hauser’s own writings, I turn to writings on historical feral children, as well as to the tradition of natural fools in early modern literature to argue that children associated with learning disabilities are a means of offering insight that would otherwise escape representation in the ordered, controlled narratives of German realism. In my analysis of Conrad Ferdinand Meyer’s *Das Leiden eines Knaben* (1883), I argue that Julian, a child whose inability to understand the intricacies of language, is weaponized by the narrator who fails to recognize that Julian’s language is not a sign of victimhood but an alternative use of rhetoric. Julian’s use of language, though limited and broken from an outside perspective, draws attention to underexplored moments of interconnectivity and creation, and this use of language has a transformative potential that cannot be replicated by the narrator.

The fourth chapter explores the figure of the criminal child and German realism’s idealization of the bourgeois family and bourgeois society. Rather than using the figure of the criminal child as a means of criticizing urbanization and poverty as often happens in English and French realism, the criminal child in German realism is a sign of the problems of the bourgeois family as an organizing principle for nineteenth-century society. By drawing on nineteenth-century psychological and juridical texts on criminal children alongside Theodor Fontane’s *Grete Minde* (1879/80) and Marie von Ebner-Eschenbach’s *Das Gemeindekind* (1887), I argue

diagnosing either Kaspar Hauser or literary representations of children whose cognitive abilities are described, often negatively, as less-developed.
that the expansion of bourgeois values and imagery within German realism collapses the distance between the bourgeois and criminal child. Within these texts, the marginalized criminal children are connected to and inspired by the idea of the bourgeois family, even as that ideal is withheld from them. The desire for the bourgeois family by marginal figures intensifies the idealized image of the bourgeois family to its breaking point where it can no longer reproduce itself.
CHAPTER 1: REALIST MIGNONS AND THE CONSTRAINTS OF THE REALIST IMAGINATION

Seine Augen und sein Herz wurden unwiderstehlich von dem geheimnisvollen Zustande dieses Wesens angezogen. Er schätzte sie zwölf bis dreizehn Jahre; ihr Körper war gut gebaut, nur daβ ihre Glieder einen stärkeren Wuchs versprachen oder einen zurückgehaltenen ankündigten. Ihre Bildung war nicht regelmäßig, aber auffallend; ihre Stirne geheimnisvoll, ihre Nase außerordentlich schön, und der Mund, ob er schon für ihr Alter zu sehr geschlossen schien und sie manchmal mit den Lippen nach einer Seite zuckte, noch immer treuherzig und reizend genug. Ihre bräunliche Gesichtsfarbe konnte man durch die Schminke kaum erkennen. Diese Gestalt prägte Wilhelmen sehr tief ein; er sah sie noch immer an, schwieg und vergaß der Gegenwärtigen über seinen Betrachtungen.43


Mignon, the androgynous, musical, poetic child with mysterious origins in Goethe’s 1796 *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*, is perhaps the first wild child of German literature in the long nineteenth century. Mignon first appears as a performer among a troop of acrobats, and is treated cruelly before she joins Wilhelm’s traveling group. From the moment he first sees Mignon, Goethe’s titular character is fascinated, seeing Mignon as a mystery to solve. He wants to know where Mignon is from; he wants to categorize Mignon by age; he is particularly fascinated by Mignon’s body. Mignon is a riddle to unpack with features that seem too serious for a preteen, whose dark skin is covered by make-up, and whose broken German and silence hide the secrets of the past.

Goethe’s Mignon resists easy categorization. In his work on Mignon’s literary afterlives, Terence Cave relates the many different roles she plays within *Wilhelm Meister*: she is “the

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vulnerable and mistreated child, the adolescent barely aware of her own desires, the street
performer, the automaton, the feral child, the singer, the fragile and overwrought young woman
subject to seizures, the angelic being doomed to an early death, all these and others besides are
bound together in a single character.”

While there are many ways to approach Goethe’s
Mignon and her resonance in later works of German-language literature, her affiliation with
works of art and relationship to scenes of education serves as an entry point for reflections on the
relationship between prose and other artistic media in German realism.

Although Mignon’s wildness can be connected to many elements of her character, her
artistic creativity in particular sets her apart and is the focus of this chapter. Wilhelm observes
that “in alle seinem Tun und Lassen hatte das Kind etwas Sonderbares. Es ging die Treppe weder
auf noch ab, sondern sprang. Es stieg auf den Geländer der Gänge weg, und eh man sich’s
versah, saß es oben auf dem Schranke und blieb eine Weile ruhig.” Mignon moves differently
from others, tending toward motion and action, and when finding rest, occupying an
unconventional space. Mignon is unpredictable, especially to Wilhelm. When Mignon asks to
perform for him, he is hesitant, not knowing what to expect, and bears witness to Mignon’s
Eiertanz:

Behende, leicht, rasch, genau führte sie den Tanz. Sie trat so scharf und so sicher
zwischen die Eier hinein, bei den Eiern nieder, daß man jeden Augenblick dachte, sie
müßte eins zertreten oder bei schnellen Wendungen das andre fortschleudern. Mit
nichten! Sie berührte keines, ob sie gleich mit allen Arten von Schritten, engen und
weiten, ja sogar mit Sprüngen und zuletzt halb kniend sich durch die Reihen
durchwand.


46 Ibid., 115-116.
Mignon’s dance creates the illusion of art without effort, as she moves nimbly between the eggs, though Wilhelm later learns of the effort she went to in order to teach the violinist the appropriate music. Brigitte Jirku interprets this dance as conveying what words cannot: “Sprache heißt benennen und deuten, während im Lied und in der Musik sich die Bedeutung vervielfältigt.”47 The irony of Mignon’s dance functioning as an escape from language is its mediation through prose. There is a constant tension between Mignon’s artistry and its representation which will continue through later representations of artistic children as prose attempts to subsume other media and their artistic qualities such as movement and musicality.

Beyond raising questions about the ability of prose to represent visual and musical forms of art, the figure of Mignon also functions as a point of reflection on the creation of texts. Mignon takes to writing, and Wilhelm observes “Sie war unermüdet und faßte gut; aber die Buchstaben blieben ungleich und die Linien krumm. Auch hier schien ihr Körper dem Geiste zu widersprechen.”48 Mignon’s expression of writing and thought resists regularity in contrast to the effortless appearance of her dance. Instead, regularity and form are externally imposed on Mignon’s creative output, perhaps most visible in Wilhelm’s transcription of Mignon’s poem “Kennst du das Land.” When Wilhelm hears Mignon’s song, he is determined to record it:

Melodie und Ausdruck gefielen unserm Freunde besonders, ob er gleich die Worte nicht alle verstehen konnte. Er ließ sich die Strophen wiederholen und erklären, schreib sie auf und übersetzte sie ins Deutsche. Aber die Orginialität der Wendungen konnte er nur von ferne nachahmen. Die kindliche Unschuld des Ausdrucks verschwand, indem die gebrochene Sprache übereinstimmend und das Unzusammenhängende verbunden ward. Auch konnte der Reiz der Melodie mit nichts verglichen werden.49


48 Goethe, Wilhelm Meister, 134.

49 Ibid., 145.
Here, the narrator reflects on Wilhelm’s ability to successfully transcribe and record Mignon’s song. In the act of putting Mignon’s song to paper, Wilhelm encounters many problems. Even with the literal meaning of the song present, the translation into German loses the originality and genius of Mignon’s phrasing, and is a pale imitation of the original work. Wilhelm’s act of recording the song also imposes a sense of coherence to the song and repairs Mignon’s “broken” language, which results in the loss of the childlike innocence of Mignon’s expression, as well as the charm of her performance. Prose attempts to replicate other forms of art, but cannot compare to the live experience of hearing Mignon sing.

When considering representations of artistic children in German realism, I take a broader definition of Mignon than that used by Terence Cave, whose study on her literary afterlives in German and French literature only notes stories where Mignon’s name is present or her poems are cited. A Mignon-like child of German realism resembles Mignon in her artistic inclinations, her position as an outsider, her affinity for nature, an exotic appearance, and her pedagogical relationship with older, male characters despite having a fraught relationship to formal schooling. I explore two texts in depth, Adalbert Stifter’s Der Waldbrunnen (1866), in which Juliana, an untamed child who recites Goethe’s poetry while standing atop a rock formation in the forest, is domesticated by the paternal pedagogy of a grandfather-figure, and Theodor Storm’s Zur Wald- und Wasserfreude, (1878) in which the musically-inclined Kätti falls in love with her music teacher, earns money at her father’s inn, and runs away broken-hearted when her teacher marries another. Realist Mignons provide opportunities for observing how realist prose positions itself against other artistic media, particularly when the artistic subject is an artist whose vision does not always align with the structures imposed upon her.

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50 Cave, Mignon’s Afterlives, 21.
In focusing on these two cases, I do not argue that these are the only occurrences of realist Mignons. Stifter’s “braunes Mädchen“ in *Katzensilber* (1853) also references Mignon in her androgynty and saving of a child from a fire, as well her inability to fit into an increasingly-bourgeois society, as do Stifter’s Pia in *Die Narrenburg* (1841), Ditha in *Abdias* (1842) and Brigitta in *Brigitta* (1844)\(^51\). Other Mignon-like children can be found in works by Theodor Fontane, such as his eponymous *Grete Minde* (1880), who runs away with a performing group as opposed to leaving one, as well as Fontane’s Marie in *Vor dem Sturm* (1878),\(^52\) whose father was a traveling magician and who is affiliated with a poem about the return of magic to the town amidst the Napoleonic Wars. There is also Theodor Storm’s Lisei in *Pole Poppenspäler* (1874), who is the daughter of traveling puppeteers and a puppeteer herself who brings the protagonist narrator into the artistic world of puppetry, but who eventually leaves this itinerant world to marry the narrator. I have chosen to focus on Juliana in Stifter’s *Waldbrunnen* and Kätti in Storm’s *Zur Wald- und Wasserfreude* due to the prominence of the characters’ presences in the works and the attention devoted to the two figures as artists and their responses to pedagogical situations.

While these realist representations of Mignon-like children preserve her complex relationship to language, art, and nature, the fates of these literary children diverge from that of Goethe’s Mignon. Goethe’s Mignon, the product of incestuous aristocrats, cannot be


\(^{52}\) For more on the connection between Marie and Mignon, see Nacim Ghanbari’s “Dynastisches Spiel: Theodor Fontanes Vor dem Sturm,” *Deutsche Vierteljahrschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Geistesgeschichte* 85 no. 2 (June 2011): 186-207.
domesticated and dies at the end of the novel, dressed as an angel, while Wilhelm prepares to marry Natalie. Realist Mignons’ fates differ. Some, such as Fontane’s Marie Kniehase in Vor dem Sturm and Lisei in Pole Poppenspäler successfully marry the objects of their affections, and Stifter’s Pia in die Narrenburg is successfully adopted. Some realist Mignons die, such as Fontane’s Grete Minde enacting vengeance after being denied a bourgeois lifestyle, Fontane’s Effi Briest wasting away after the failure of her marriage, and Gottfried Keller’s Meretlein in der grüne Heinrich is suspected of witchcraft even before her death. Others reject the trappings of normative society altogether, as with Stifter’s “braunes Mädchen” in Katzensilber returning to the forest, Realist Mignons suffer a myriad of fates, which can generally be categorized as domestication through marriage or disappearance, and not the transformation into a work of art in her death. In examining Juliana in Stifter’s Waldbrunnen and Kätti in Storm’s Zur Wald- und Wasserfreude, I will examine both tendencies for the realist Mignon and how they relate to questions of realist representation of artistic children.

The figure of Mignon is repeated throughout the works of many authors over the course of many decades, out of place in the context of many works, yet a standard feature when looking at the literary period as a whole. Mignon-like children across works by several authors within

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53 Irmgard Roebling notes that Effi is like Mignon based on initial descriptions of Effi that emphasize her fondness for running, climbing, dreaming of being a sailor, of being a trick rider or trapeze artist, and that Effi is described as a “Tochter der Luft” which compares to Mignon’s own connections to high spaces (such as climbing to the top of a cabinet). For more on the connection between Mignon and Effi Briest, see “‘Effi komm’: Der Weg zu Fontanes berühmtester Kindsbraut” In Zwischen Mignon und Lulu, Ed. Malte Stein; Regina Fasold; Heinrich Detering (Berlin: Erich Schmidt Verlag, 2010), 267-303.

54 Sabine Brandenburg-Frank interprets Meretlein as a figure based on Mignon, by focusing on both characters as “Schwellenfiguren,” located between childhood and adulthood, with unclear heritages, with remarkable bodies, who speak and move strangely, appear on the margins of the narrative, and who die in mysterious circumstances. Mignon und Meret: Schwellenkinder Goethes und Gottfried Kellers. (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann. 2002), 9-10.

55 In Double Exposures, Eric Downing observes a dual nature of repetition in works of German Realism, where it serves not only as a strategy to represent and affirm dominant discourse, but is resistant to the very discourse it
German realism point toward a shared structure or vision of the literary movement as a whole. In her essay “Stifters Gitter,” Juliane Vogel examines the motif of the grid as a structure underlying artistic works, such as paintings, which remains below the surface as an unseen power capable of influencing the perception of reality, even after its removal from the final product. The representation of a Mignon-like child is not only of interest in how she is represented, but in the way she becomes a part of the structure on the level of individual works and the literary movement as a whole, and how she can both stabilize and agitate the structure within which she appears. Mignon-like children may be marginal figures, daughters of magicians, puppeteers, unknown fathers, and more, but their educators are not. Through the representation of Mignon-like figures’ educations, we gain insight into normative structures in the nineteenth century, such as with regard to gender, and the creation of art or children that adhere to these norms. Although the attempt of transforming a wild child into a bourgeois child has parallels to the celebration of the average in German realism, Mignon’s wildness cannot be forgotten. To be recognizable as a Mignon-like child, a realist Mignon must exist in the margins and create in a manner contrary to others’ expectations or understanding.


57 Edward Said argues that representations of the Other reveal more about the author of discourse rather than the subject. In this case, Mignon’s Otherness, both as a child and as one who is marked as ethnically different from the majority of the population, a group to which the narrators belong, tells the readers very little about actual minorities present in Germany in the late nineteenth century, such as the Roma or Sinti populations, for example in the case of the narrator’s fascination with a “Zigeunermädchen” in the frame of Stifter’s “Waldbrunnen.”
Issues in Realism connected to Mignon

It is fitting that the figure of a Mignon-like wild child serves as the medium for reflecting on realist representation. The figure of the child being molded by her teachers has parallels to the relationship between creator and creation, but Goethe’s Mignon is not merely a creation of Wilhelm Meister’s. She is both artist and artwork. The figure of a Mignon-like child poses a challenge to the narrative of artistic authority since she is an artwork that pushes back against the artist. Realist Mignons maintain a tradition as a literary figure who can be used to investigate the position of art and its immediacy, as well as a strategy to reflect on the creative process.

Even when presented in educational settings, Mignon-like children pose a particular challenge for realist authors since she is both the creation of her educator and an artist herself. A Mignon-like child’s artistic abilities interrupt the godlike portrayal of the author by giving the artwork agency to challenge the author’s creative ability. In his essay “Bedingungen, Reichweite und Widersprüche von Mimesis” (1870), Emil Homberger, a nineteenth-century literary scholar, explicitly notes the active role of the artist in creating realist work:

es ist also vergebens daß der Dichter uns glauben machen will: er verhalte sich nur empfindend und schaffe nicht, er gebe nur die Natur wieder und thue nichts von sich selber hinzu. Indem er die Natur wiedergibt, schafft er: er schafft mit geringerem oder größerem Bewußtsein, naiv oder reflectirend, er läßt sein eigenes Ich hervortreten, oder verbirgt es und ist subjectiv oder objectiv, aber immer ist er es welcher dem von der Außenwelt gelieferten Stoffe die Gestalt gibt, und immer thut er dieß indem er von der realen Welt deren ideales Bild zeichnet.58

In Homberger’s essay, we see the realist desire to create art that conceals its creation, despite the artist’s control and manipulation of the image created. In drawing on the literary tradition of

Goethe’s Mignon, realist authors have chosen a subject whose notion of artistic creativity can clash with those of the individuals trying to shape her. Representations of Mignon-like children are ideally suited to analyze this relationship between poet and work in German realism, as their natural talents for poetry and music are modified and mediated by male pedagogues. The use of female children to represent this process heightens the authority position of the pedagogue figure who can be understood as the author or shaper of the artistic child, perfecting her beyond her original state into a higher form, bringing her away from wildness toward ordered life.

While the relationship between an artistic child and teaching figure can be used to investigate the position of the artist as refining raw artistic energy and socializing or domesticating it into a better form, the relationship is problematized when the artistic energy is a child who is an artist herself. Even if writers such as nineteenth-century philosophy professor Moriz Carrière theorized that the realist author must strive to become “weniger ein Nachahmer der Natur als ein Nachahmer Gottes,” realist Mignons reveal the limitations German realism. The representation of an artistic child such as Mignon in prose brings with it the awareness of other media; though prose can imitate the sounds of poetry, the rhythms of song and the kinetic energy of dance, the readers of Stifter’s *Waldbrunnen* do not have access to all of Juliana’s poems, many of which are left unrecorded, and readers of Storm’s *Zur Wald- und Wasserfreude* will never hear Kätty’s music, repeating the problem of Wilhelm’s recording of Mignon’s poetry

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59 This is a contrast with Goethe’s Wilhelm Meister, whose role in educating Mignon takes a more distant approach.


61 These limitations are already present in Goethe’s *Wilhelm Meister*. Mignon becomes a complete artwork in her death, no longer the figure of vitality and movement of earlier books in the novel.
The representation of artistic children seems at first to only highlight the limitations of prose. However, the complicated layers of creation involved with a pedagogical figure and a child who is a creator herself creates moments of reflection on the production of prose amidst medial confusion. Davide Giuriato observes a different perception of reality in “dichtende” children, and defines the process of becoming an adult as one of children being instructed in the proper relationship between words and objects, “weil der Eintritt in die Welt der Kultur mit der Annahme eines rational geordneten Zeichensystems zusammenfällt.”\(^{62}\) Realist Mignons preserve creativity within their world understandings, and in the use of realist Mignons, authors preserve poetic spaces and connections, even as their art is limited to prose.

Although realist Mignons introduce wild creativity into a carefully-curated narrative world, they are the target of others’ creative visions. The artistic child is an object of fascination and conforming her to another’s vision is a violent act, one often containing erotic undertones alongside the unequal power between an older man and female child.\(^{63}\) The male artist or narrator is fascinated by her wildness and innocence, but fear the sensuality her form of art evokes.\(^{64}\) While prior scholarship rightly draws attention to how the figure of Mignon-like children can speak to the violence of the realist narrator in his representation of young girls as


\(^{63}\) This is not to say that representations of Mignon-like children are the only instances in which age disparity or unequal power structures appear in literary works. Other examples to be discussed in this dissertation include Wilhelm Raabe’s *Else von der Tanne* (1865) and Eugenie Marlitt’s *Blaubart* (1866). The eroticization of child figures has been of particular study in the case of Theodor Storm’s oeuvre, which Heinrich Detering addresses in *Kindheitsspuren: Theodor Storm und das Ende der Romantik*. (Germany: Boyens Buchverlag, 2011).

well as the relationship between German realism and Goethe, the frequent appearance of Mignon-like figures in works of German realism has not yet been fully explored through the lens of Mignon as a “Poesiekind.” Helmut Ammerlahn analyzes Mignon as a “Genius- oder Poesiekind,” who “scheidet aus Wilhelms Leben nur scheinbar als Leichnam, in Wirklichkeit als Kunstwerk.” For Ammerlahn, Mignon is an artistic creation of Wilhelm Meister, who becomes a work of art independent of her creator in her death. However, the realist Mignon-like children neither die nor cease to be artists, even if they are incorporated into bourgeois society; realist Mignons upset the illusion of control and a static understanding of art.

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65 Realists grappled with Goethe in particular, as well as Schiller, in their theoretical texts attempting to define German Realism. Karl Gutzkow’s turns to Goethe and Schiller, treating Goethe as a representative of realism and Schiller of idealism, but sees his contemporary moment as one favoring realism. In terms of idealized realism, Gutzkow cautions: “Verwerflich aber ist die Zwittragung, die ein Stück Realismus und ein Stück Idealismus ist. Idealisiern darf der Künstler, aber er darf es nur insoweit, als dem Realen dadurch kein Abbruch geschieht in Dem, was zu seiner ganzen Wesenheit nothwendig ist. Den Realismus zur Idee zu erheben ist schön und gibt Poeten im Geiste Goethe’s. Idee und Ideal sind aber hineinweise verschieden.” “Realismus und Idealismus” (1857) in Realismus: Das große Lesebuch, Ed. Christian Begemann, (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Klassik Verlag, 2011 ), 43. Rudolph Gottschall repeats this alignment between Goethe and realism, with his “Sinn für alle Formen und Farben der Wirklichkeit, aber der durchscheinende Untergrund der Idee hob und verklärte ihre bunte und vielbewegte Welt!” “Der Bund von Realismus und Idealismus” (1858) cited in Realismus: Das große Lesebuch, Ed. Christian Begemann, (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag, 2011), 49. Julian Schmidt also turns toward Goethe and Schiller when theorizing German realism defining the key difference between Goethe and Schiller as the former beginning with the “Erfahrung” and the latter with the “Idee,” though acknowledging that this distinction is ambivalent, giving the example of Goethe’s “Urpfianze” and how both Goethe and Schiller could defend defining the “Urpfianze” as an “Erfahrung” or “Idee.” For Julian Schmidt the truth of an object or experience is represented, there is a unity of idealism and realism since “Die Idee der Dinge ist auch ihre Realität.” Julian Schmidt “Der Realismus ist der Idealismus” (1858) cited in Realismus: das große Lesebuch, Ed. Christian Begemann, (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag, 2011), 47. Moriz Carrière most directly frames German Realism as a literary movement framing itself by German literary history, when he claims that the joining of Goethe and Schiller, of realism and idealism, is “das Ziel der Menschheit in der Kunst.” Carrière. “Die Versöhnung des Realismus und Idealismus,” 50.

66 The focus on Mignon-like characters as a means of reflecting on the creation of art is not the only possible approach. Her presence also raises questions connected to narratives of socialization, education, gender as well as the relationship between German Realism and Goethe. Paul Fleming addresses this feeling that “the Goethean artistic period had indeed succeeded in achieving what one can call an imposing legacy” in his analysis of Karl Immermann’s Die Epigonen. Exemplarity & Mediocrity, 126. For more on the relationship between realism and Goethe in the case of Stifter, see also Helga Bleckwenn’s Stifter und Goethe: Untersuchungen zur Begründung und Tradition einer Autorenzuordnung. (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1977).

Realist Mignons

While my focus in this chapter will be on instances of realist Mignons where there is an emphasis on her education and the tension between her artistic vision and her teacher’s, this is not the only manner in which Realist authors adapted Mignon. Before delving into Der Waldbrunnen, and Zur Wald- und Wasserfreude, I want to briefly address two other realist adaptations of Mignon in Storm’s Pole Poppenspäler (1874) and Theodor Fontane’s Vor dem Sturm (1878), where the Mignon-like child’s artistry is more-domesticated than the wild art in Der Waldbrunnen and Zur Wald- und Wasserfreude in order to demonstrate the spectrum of wildness associated with realist Mignons.

Storm’s Lisei in Pole Poppenspäler is an inverse of Goethe’s Mignon in many ways. Where Goethe’s Wilhelm Meister meets Mignon after having abandoned his childhood love of puppetry and joined an amateur theater group, Storm’s narrator, Paul Paulsen, develops an affinity for puppetry after meeting Lisei. Years later, the pair are re-united and marry, settling down in the northern German town, where puppetry has gone out of fashion, bringing with them Lisei’s father. At first, all that Lisei seems to have in common with Mignon is her association with a group of traveling performers, but her differences from Mignon speak to Storm’s domestication of Goethe’s Mignon. The performers Lisei travels with are not her kidnappers, but her parents. The world of performance is both artistic and domestic, with Lisei’s father at the center of the performance, supported by his wife and daughter. Lisei is both a traveling puppeteer and an obedient child, fearful of upsetting her parents, especially after the puppet is

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68 Although Wilhelm Meister is no longer involved with puppet theater, the theater group he joins can be seen as an evolution of his love of theater rather than a deviation from his childhood interest.
broken, and firmly devoted to them, bringing her father with her to northern Germany after marrying Paul.

Storm’s Lisei is not as wild as Mignon. She travels with her biological parents, does housework, and refuses to abandon her father. Her wildness appears mostly in both the frame and embedded narrators’ descriptions of her dark eyes and hairs, and her outsider-ness marked by her continued use of dialect. She can integrate into the town via marriage because puppetry was her father’s passion and not her own. Her father, on the other hand, suffers a fate more similar to that of Goethe’s Mignon. Upon his and Lisei’s arrival in northern Germany after her marriage to Paul, he arranges a performance, but this performance turns him into a laughingstock. Paul and Lisei can work through the insults circulating the village, including the graffiti “Pole Poppenspäler,” but Lisei’s father cannot and sells his puppets, though it breaks his heart and he dies soon after. Storm’s representation of Lisei and her father presents both a divergence from and continuity with Goethe’s Mignon. For the child whose wildness and artistry is mediated by her familial, domestic sphere, there is a potential to enter into adulthood; whereas the adult whose artistry is maintained by a child-like gaze that creates worlds cannot find a place in the world of adults. The child’s appreciation for the beauty of the puppeteer’s mediation of reality through his constructed world of puppets becomes a criticism of the adults and world that is moving away from this form of art.

Marie Kniehase, in Theodor Fontane’s first novel Vor dem Sturm (1878), presents another model of a domesticated Mignon whose art is not treated as a threat to the community. The daughter of a traveling magician, Marie is adopted by the local sheriff after her father’s death. Beyond the similarity of a hereditary connection to an itinerant performer, she is also
similar to Mignon in her silent affection for the protagonist, Lewin von Vitzewitz,\textsuperscript{69} and her defense of the Vitzewitz household, reminiscent of Mignon rescuing Wilhelm’s purported biological son Felix from a fire. As with Lisei, she is introduced as a performer alongside her father, and similar to Lisei, she never fully abandons this initial introduction of her otherness even after her integration into the social structure via adoption and marriage. Where Lisei remains Paul’s “Puppenspieler,” Lewin refers to Marie as his “Goldstern-Prinzessin” as they prepare to marry, referencing the gold stars of the costume she wore when she first arrived in town, performing alongside her biological father.\textsuperscript{70} Her artistic background is not something to overcome, but becomes a force for revitalizing the Vitzewitz family.

Where Mignon’s art was most clear in her poetry, song and dance, Marie’s greatest artwork is her transformation of the Vitzewitz family. After her adoption by the Kniehase family, Marie is quickly beloved by the village, who see her as a “Feenkind,” who sings and loves the snow in winter, and sleeps outside in the summer, with poppies in her hand and a bird sitting at her feet. She does not attend the village school, but instead becomes a companion to the von Vitzewitz children. Her adoptive father and the village do not try to change her, but encourage and celebrate her differences. Lewin’s father approves of the marriage, even with Marie’s backgrounds, telling Lewin “sie wird uns freilich den Stammbaum, aber nicht die Profile verderben, nicht die Profile und nicht die Gesinnung. Und das beides ist das Beste, was der Adel hat.”\textsuperscript{71} Marie rejuvenates the noble family, even while introducing non-noble blood to the

\textsuperscript{69}For more on the figure of Marie, see Jürgen Stackelberg’s “Der verschwiegene Fontane: Zur Figur der Marie in Vor dem Sturm” in Germanisch-Romanische Monatsschrift 57 No. 3 (2007): 357-363.


\textsuperscript{71}Ibid., 436.
family. In this, she fulfills the prophecy associated with the family: “und eine Prinzessin kommt ins Haus./das löscht ein Feuer den Blutfleck aus./Der auseinander getane Stamm/Wird wieder eins, wächst wieder zusamm’./Und wieder von seinem alten Sitz/Blickt in den Morgen Haus Vitzewitz.”

Jürgen Stackelberg sees the romance between Marie and Lewin as adding a social-historical component to the tradition of literary mésalliances tracing back to Hartman von Aue, with the step toward equality between nobility and a common girl as a step toward social equality and renewal. In Marie and Lewin’s union, the Vitzewitz family does not repeat the past of marriage between cousins, but instead creates a new future, connecting nobility with an everyday girl, albeit an enchanting, extraordinary everyday girl.

In Storm’s Lisei and Fontane’s Marie, we have two cases of Mignon-like figures whose wildness does not present an obstacle for romance or integration into a community. It is telling that, for all their otherness, both representations of Lisei and Marie have strong associations with domestic units and do not share Mignon’s androgyny. Their romantic partners are of a similar age to them and are not in a position of pedagogical authority over them: Lisei is educated by Paul’s parents, and Marie by Lewin’s mother. Because their artistic talents and wildness are most-associated with their fathers’ professions, these girls do not face the same challenges of integrating into their communities. Their art is a sign of their genealogy rather than a resistance to the artistic designs of an authority figure. These two figures present images of domesticated

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72 Agnes in Fontane’s der Stechlin also raises similar themes, with her relationship to the elderly Stechlin.


75 Mignon’s father, the harpist, is also associated with art; however, since that relationship is not revealed until the end of the novel, her artistic wildness is presented as more innate, whereas in these cases there is a clear lineage.
Mignons in German realism, where they do reveal how the ordinary can appear extraordinary and create moments for reflecting on art, but the transformative aspects of their art are less-noticeable given their positions as secondary characters.

**Adalbert Stifter’s *Der Waldbrunnen* (1866)**

Stifter’s 1866 novella *Der Waldbrunnen* places the wild, Mignon-like child and discussions of her as a work of art and creator of art in the center of the narrative. The novella consists of a frame and embedded narrative, and the wild girl appears in both parts of the novella, though that is revealed only in the final lines. In the frame narrative at the beginning of the novella, the narrator tells his wife of a recent encounter with a beautiful gypsy girl outside of an inn, and how this reminded him of a trip to the mountains, where he and his school friends encountered a young, beautiful, aristocratic woman dressed in black.

The narrator then introduces a story of a grandfather traveling to the mountains in the summer with his two grandchildren, where they encounter a wild girl, who never speaks in school and climbs rocks near the forest well to recite poetry. The novella ends with the narrator’s discovery that the beautiful woman in black from his childhood is the wild girl in the embedded narrative. The frame and embedded narrators attempt to rhetorically capture Juliana, and in the frame narrator’s case also the gypsy girl, but despite the narrators’ use of prose to mediate the visual space, both figures resist complete narratorial confinement. The gypsy girl vanishes, and Juliana’s poetry is never accessible to the frame narrator. The narrators’ attempts to contain these beautiful figures

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76 I use the term “gypsy” in order to emphasize that the imagery and terminology within the novella refers back to a construct of the nineteenth-century imagination and not to the Sinti and Roma people. For more on the motif of gypsies in nineteenth-century German literature, see Nicolaus Saul, *Gypsies and Orientalism in German Literature and Anthropology of the Long Nineteenth Century*, (London: Legenda, 2007).
to words reveal the limitations of such an act by rendering visible the narrators’ mediation of such knowledge.

The novella’s opening highlights the intertwining of artistic female children and discussions of art. Stifter’s frame narrator begins Der Waldbrunnen by making clear his interest in art and beauty, though introduces himself as a consumer of art rather than its creator. He declares: “Ich habe zu zwei verschiedenen Malen ein Menschenbild gesehen, von dem ich jedes Mal glaubte, es sei das schönste, was es auf Erden gibt”77 He has not seen a human that is the most beautiful thing on earth, but an image of a human, and the two images that were superior to all others in the moment he saw them were that of a gypsy girl and of a woman on the mountainside. The narrator’s perception of these figures as images demonstrates how they exist as aesthetic objects and not human beings within in his imagination.

As the narrator describes these images, it becomes clear that he is not a mere consumer of art, and that he reads the world through the lens of turning people into images and images into words. The first image that he paints through words is of a scene where he spotted the gypsy girl in a crowed alley outside of an inn: “das war die schönste Menschengestalt, die sich je in meinen Augen gemalt hatte.”78 Again, the girl is not a girl, but a figure or image. He also distances himself from the construction of the image, using the reflexive to characterize this painting not only creating itself but imposing itself within his eyes. However, his following description complicates that claim as he recreates the image in prose:


78 Ibid., 639.
The narrator is actively recreating the moment of the image in his language, adding motion to description, all while attempting to remove himself from the scene through his emphasis on the girl’s body parts, as if the description only revealed the girl’s physical traits and not his own desire and judgment as his prose recreates his gaze up and down her body and reveals his curiosity about the form concealed by loose clothing.

The opening scene of the novella reveals a narrator who is concerned with the construction of images. He has actively reduced a living being to an art object, and is utterly unconcerned with her voice or her artistry of decorating her body with colorful ribbons and laces. In his narrative recasting of her as a painting, he erases her choice of color and collage, asserting narrative cohesion on her visual, collage creation. For all his concern and control over the image that he creates through his prose, the narrator still identifies a fleeting subject as most beautiful.

79 Ibid., 639.
The girl is gone when he returns to the inn, never to appear again in the text and she brings him
to a moment of doubt, as to whether or not she was as beautiful as he had imagined. For all the
power of his prose, the narrator cannot fully trust the veracity of what he has constructed because
it cannot be replicated. She is a girl who has vanished, not preserved in death like Goethe’s
Mignon, nor preserved in bronze like the statues the narrator praised, which can be looked at
over and over again. As a fleeting image, the gypsy girl has the ability to escape the narrator’s
gaze and reveal the impermanence of the image he attempts to construct.

The narrator’s memory, however, does give him a lasting ability to preserve images
according to his will, not just of the gypsy girl, but also of the woman he saw on the Rigi
mountain while a student. He tells his wife of this memory, repeating his process of describing a
woman’s figure:

Sie trug einen kleinen weißen Fächer in der Hand, am Halse ragte eine schmale weiße
Krause aus dem schwarzen Gewande hervor, und auf dem Haupte hatte sie einen runden,
gelben, sehr feinen Florentiner Strohhut. Manche Menschen des Berges sahen auf die
Frau. Die ungemein großen Augen waren schwärzer als das schwarze Gewand, so waren
auch die reichen Haare unter dem Florentiner Hute, die Zähne waren weißer als die
Krause und der Fächer, und für die Gestalt war nichts da, womit man sie hätte
vergleichen können. Sie war hoch; aber wäre sie um eine Linie höher gewesen, so wäre
sie nicht mehr so schön gewesen, und wäre sie um eine Linie niedriger gewesen, so wäre
sie auch nicht mehr so schön gewesen. Damals waren Frauengestalten noch Gestalten,
nicht wie jetzt häßliche Kleiderhaufen. Sanft baute sich die Gestalt empor, wenn sie sich
regte, so war die Bewegung weich und geltend. Die Menschen sagten, ihre Augen
erscheinen nur so leuchtend und ihre Zähne nur so weiß, weil die Farbe ihres Angesichtes
ungewöhnlich dunkel sei, dunkler, als sich mit Schönheit verträgt; aber gerade, weil in
das Rosenrot ihrer Wangen ein wenig Bräunlichschwarz gemischt war, glich die feine
Wölbung dieser Wange so sehr der zarten Führung des schönsten uralten Standbildes.80

80 Ibid., 641.
As with the figure of the gypsy girl, the narrator is attracted to the shapes, colors, sizes and contrasts within this image: the contrast of the black gown and white accessories; the roundness of the hat; the whiteness of her teeth and the darkness of her skin, as well as the undertones of her complexion. The narrator’s personal judgments are more present in this image than in that of the gypsy girl, with his subjunctive assertions that she would not be as beautiful were she taller or shorter, as well as his condemnation of contemporary women’s fashions. He wants women to be “Gestalten” rather than “Kleiderhaufen.” Despite his judgements being present throughout this scene, the narrator still attempts to distance himself from the creation of the beautiful scene, once more drawing on the reflexive: “sanft baute sich die Gestalt empor, wenn sie sich regte, so war die Bewegung weich und geltend.” Her body is the raw material and his gaze transforms the raw material into an image, even though the narrator distances himself from this act of creation.

In his description of the second woman, the narrator continues to reflect on the effectiveness of different artistic media in preserving such beautiful figures. One of his companions said: “Diese schwarze Frau sollte man nach München schaffen, und dort sollte sie in Ton gebildet und dann in Erz gegossen und in Marmor gehauen werden, daß die Welt erführe, was Schönheit sei.”81 The narrator’s companion believes that the best way to capture the beauty of the image would be the process of creating a sculpture, moving from tin to iron to marble. The narrator is somewhat skeptical of this approach, since a statue would not show: “wie sie die schwarzen Augen gegen ihren Gemahl aufschlägt und klare Worte spricht”82 For the narrator, the sculpture can recreate the form, but not the exact image, despite its three-dimensional quality.

81 Ibid., 642.
82 Ibid., 642.
The narrator does not consider sculpture to be a higher art form compared to prose, and his primary complaint focuses on the static nature of a statue and appears to desire a mode of art that is both contained and dynamic. While the mode of statue production proposed by the narrator’s companion falls short with its similarities to the mass-production of sculptures, prose and literary paintings or statues offer a medium that can simultaneously capture movement and stillness.

There is a certain irony in the narrator’s concern for the sculpture’s insufficiency to capture the words her eyes are speaking. The narrator had recounted to his wife the woman’s reputation for writing poetry, but when he finds her name and her husband’s in the guest book: “der Name der Frau stand mit einer klaren Handschrift da; aber keines der wunderbaren Gedichtchen war dabei. Ich habe den Namen später vergessen.” The narrator is no more able than the painter or sculpture to reproduce the words associated with the beautiful stranger. He does not, however, seem overly concerned with this. Her poems are described as “Gedichtchen” which seem lesser compared to the “Worte” that he reads in her eyes. He cannot even remember her name, despite having read it in the guest book and being able to recall her appearance in great detail. His words attempt to fill the space left by the exclusion of her words, and her loss of voice is necessary for the transformation into a text he creates, yet this transformation into black

83 Over the course of the nineteenth-century, the mass reproduction and popularization of antique statues relegated sculpture to a lesser art form. See Catriona MacLeod, *Fugitive Objects: Sculptures and Literature in the German Nineteenth Century*, (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2014), 8.

84 Writing specifically on Stifter’s *Der Nachsommer*, MacLeod counters a reading of statues, particularly Stifter’s literary representations of statues, as static objects, reading an ambivalence in Stifter’s objects, including statues, where they are objects that move, have been moved, and are modified according to their owners’ or creators’ aesthetics. MacLeod observes how the Asperhof residents “reconfigure and rejuvenate the statue according to their aesthetic project” rather than restoring it to its original condition, in addition to the statue’s displacement from its original, antique, Greek setting. *Fugitive Objects*, 119.

85 Stifter, “*Der Waldbrunnen*,” 642.
and white, much like with the colorful nature of the gypsy girl’s artistry, leads to a loss of poetry and denial of female artistry.

Both images in the frame present a narrator whose gaze and desire transform female figures into art. Despite different social standings, a gypsy and an aristocrat, the two are subject to the same process of being recorded and created through the narrator. Christine Oertel Sjögren contrasts the two images in the frame, of the gypsy and aristocrat, as different manifestations of beauty, where the gypsy is connected to a more immediate, direct exposure to the aesthetic moment, and the aristocratic Juliana is connected to a restrained encounter, with her beauty concealed beneath ruffles and voluminous coverings.\(^{86}\) Though the content of each encounter differs, the structure remains the same and demonstrates the narrator’s understanding of art: an act of distancing himself from the act of creation while encoding his prose with his desire.

Despite the narrator’s active creation of the women’s image in the text, his choice in subject matter still resists his complete control. He can claim that Juliana’s eyes are speaking, but he cannot truthfully claim to know the words she says. He defends his fascination to his wife by claiming to only focus on their forms, caring nothing for their souls. Their souls, however, are one thing that he cannot capture in his prose. The distance between the narrator and the women makes clear how much of a construction his impression is, and in their elusiveness, they cannot be fully known or recreated. The narrator’s ignorance is most apparent in the absence of the women’s voices, diminishing his credibility and artistic understanding.\(^{87}\) The narrator lingers on

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\(^{87}\) The emphasis on description reveals how the narrator denies the women agency as actors, instead presenting them as objects. Georg Lukás relates this process, arguing that prose based on observation excludes revelations about
their exterior appearances with no concern for their character or actions, revealing more about himself than the women in question. While the descriptions may not advance the plot of the novella, they do create a moment for revealing the narrator’s character, filled by the action of his gaze.

While the narrator remains distant from the two figures in the frame, the same cannot be said for the relationship between Juliana and Stephan Heilkun in the embedded narrative. In this relationship between paternal teacher and student, we see the notion of a child as a work of art, as raw material transformed into completeness by the teacher’s attention and care. In Stephan Heilkun’s treatment of Juliana, we see a depiction of Bildung as well as of parenting, with affection used as the tool for shaping the child, rather than any corporeal punishment. Stephan Heilkun transforms Juliana from the silent, wild child in the school house, attached to her grandmother, to a loving daughter, eager for Stephan’s affection.

In the embedded narrative, Juliana resembles Mignon more strongly compared to the figures in the frame, appearing as an active creator of art, rather than a coincidental creator of a beautiful image by virtue of having beautiful figure. When Stephan introduces himself to the school’s teacher, the teacher speaks of his problem student, who has never spoken in class. He describes the child: “das Kind sitzt auf der zweiten Bank, und wenn ich es frage und liebreich zu ihm rede, zeigt es die Zähne und schaut mich mit häßlichen Augen an, und sagt gar nichts, und


88 The description of the women’s appearance suggests an exotic quality and Edward Said’s theory of orientalism, where descriptions of the Other reveal more about the European gaze than the object of the gaze, provides one way of considering the power dynamics of the narrator’s gaze and the absence of the women’s voices in the text. Orientalism, (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978).
wenn ich seine Schrift oder sein Buch oder seine Rechnungstafel will, so hält es die Hand darauf und blickt noch abscheulicher.”

Stifter recreates some of Mignon’s mystery in the figure of a child who will not speak, and whose writings are not accessible to the teacher. When Stephan is able to read Juliana’s book, he is astonished at the content of her writings:

Es war nirgends das, was auf der Vorschriftstafel stand, abgeschrieben, oder etwas geschrieben, was in die Feder gesagt worden sein konnte, oder was man sich selbst zu denken vermochte, sondern ganz andere, seltsame Worte: Burgen, Nagelmein, Schwarzbach, Susein, Werdehold, Staran, zwei Engel, Zinzilein, Waldfahren, und ähnliches, dann Sätze: in die Wolken springen, die Geißel um den Stamm, Wasser, Wasser, Wasser fort, schöne Frau, schöne Frau, schöne Frau, alles leicht, alles grau, und solche Dinge noch mehrere.

Juliana’s writings do not follow the order set out by the teacher. There is no clear order to her collection of objects and fragments. Her poems seem childish and simple, yet it is uncertain how to interpret them. Her poems are not static and develop over the novella. Stephan and his grandchildren spy Juliana standing up on a high stone reciting her poem: “Schöne Frau, alte Frau, schöne Frau, weißes Haar, Augenpaar, Sonnenschein, Hütte dein, Märchenfrau, Flachs so grau, Worte dein, Herz hinein, Mädchen, Mädchen, Mädchen, bleib bei ihr, schmücke sie, nähere sie, schlaf da, immer nah, alle fort, himmelhoch, Sonne noch, Jana, Jana, Jana.” This poem is not only the first reference to Juliana’s name, but a biographical expression of her life and relationship with her grandmother. The poem uses the imperative to describe Juliana’s relationship with her grandmother, offering her trinkets to decorate her hair, and remaining in the woods, rather than with her mother and aunt. Poetry is Juliana’s method of communicating, not the orderly notes expected of school children, in addition to her visual artistry practiced by

89 Stifter, “Der Waldbrunnen,” 652.

90 Ibid., 656.
adorning her grandmother with a collage of colorful objects, reminiscent of the gypsy girl in the frame narrative.

Poetry is also one of the most direct means by which Stifter associates Juliana with Goethe’s Mignon and establishes Juliana as an artistic figure. Stephan later spies Juliana again atop a stone by the forest well, reciting poetry. This time, her poetry has literary references, with Juliana reciting a stanza of Mignon’s poem “Heiß mich nicht reden:” “Heiß mich nicht reden, heiß mich nicht schweigen:/ Denn mein Geheimnis ist eine Pflicht:/ Ich möchte dir mein ganzes Innre zeigen;/ Allein das Schicksal will es nicht!”91 Juliana then moves to another of Goethe’s poems, this time from Goethe’s 1788 Egmont: “Freudvoll und leidvoll, gedankenvoll sein,/ Hangen und bangen in schwebender Pein,/ Himmelhoch jauchzend, zu Tode betrübt./ Himmelhoch jauchzend, himmelhoch jauchzend, himmelhoch jauchzend!”92 Juliana then transitions briefly to Schiller: “Blumen, die der Lenz geboren/ Streu ich dir in deinen Schoß,”93 before returning to a variation on Goethe’s “Rastlose Liebe,” “Dem Winde, dem Regen/Dem Schnee entgegen. Immer zu, immer zu, immer zu,/immer zu, immer zu!”94 and finally ending on a variation from the final lines of Goethe’s “Prometheus,”: “Ich bilde Menschen,/Dein nicht zu achten, wie ich!”95 In this moment, Juliana cites her knowledge of the great poets before her, taking creative liberties in her recitations by juxtaposing stanzas from different poems, changing

91 Ibid., 674.
92 Ibid., 674. Here Juliana excludes the final lines of the poem “Zum Tode betrübt-/Glücklich allein/ Ist die Seele, die lieb’.”
93 Ibid., 675.
94 Ibid., 675. The first poem of “Rastlose Liebe” reads: “dem Schnee, dem Regen/Dem Wind entgegen,/Im Dampf der Klüfte/Durch Nebeldüfte,/ Immer zu! Immer zu!/Ohne Rast und Ruh’!”
95 Ibid., 675. The final stanza of Goethe’s “Prometheus” reads: “Hier sitz’ ich, forme Menschen/ Nach meinem Bilde,/ Ein Geschlecht, das mir gleich sei,/ Zu leiden, weinen,/ Genießen und zu freuen sich,/ Und dein nicht zu achten,/ Wie ich!”
the word order in “Rastlose Liebe,” leaving out the final references to the happy soul in “Freudvoll und leidvoll,” and reducing the final stanza of Prometheus to a declaration of creation. G.H. Hertling argues that in this moment, Juliana is depicted as showing her “Freude an onomatopoetischen Wort- und Lautwendungen” as well as her connection to eighteenth-century literary giants. Stifter does not deny the existence of his literary predecessors, but incorporates them into his novella. Juliana’s creative process involves references to the past, but she does not picture herself as an epigone, caught in despair of creative productivity in the age after Goethe and Schiller.

Although Juliana is not caught in a moment of writer’s block when confronting the works preceding her, her incorporation of Goethe and Schiller into her artistic works, marks the evolution of her poetry under Stephan’s paternal pedagogy and addresses how Stifter’s own prose seeks to control poetic language, even that of Goethe and Schiller. Juliana’s repetition and variation mode of poetry in the beginning of the novella is not fully divorced from her poems citing classic, German poetry. Her poetic language is still based on repetition, but now it is the repetition of others’ words; rather than singular images, her language has also moved to complete sentences. She has created a collage of poetry written by male authors, moving away from images of her matriarchal world in the forest with her grandmother. Despite being performed on a cliff in the forest, Juliana’s new poetry is indicative of how her artistic production is conforming to already-established traditions and becoming more ordered. Though Juliana’s poetry is still recognizable as poetry, it is embedded in a work of realist prose, which exerts itself as the dominant mode of artistic production in the novella. Stephan observes Juliana’s poetic performance, but when he approaches her afterwards, he does not acknowledge

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what the narrator calls Juliana’s “Rufen.” Within the text, poetry is not acknowledged as poetry but as an outburst of sound that is to be ignored for the sake of normative behavior.

Where Stifter presents Juliana as a child with an ability to produce and channel poetry, mixing words and movement as she stands atop rock formations crying out verse, her poems are not the masterpiece: Juliana is herself the masterpiece, not her own creation, but that of Stephan Heilkun. Where Wilhelm Meister fails to raise Mignon to transition from a child performer into a young woman, Stephan Heilkun succeeds by virtue of bourgeois, paternal pedagogy. He visits the schoolhouse regularly, rewarding the students’ efforts with his attention and small presents of drawings. He deliberately excludes her from his affections and she modifies her behavior to also receive the small presents.97

Through his new connection with Juliana, Stephan tries to reshape how she structures her family life. Juliana’s life with her grandmother is chaotic and antithetical to Stephan’s careful, ordered mode of living, most indicative in how Juliana adorns her grandmother with decorations:

In den weißen Haaren hatte das alte Weib Blumen, gefärbte Papierstreifen, einen Büschel Hahnenfedern, und es hing das rosenrote Seidenband von den weißen Haaren hernieder, das der alte Stephan dem wilden Mädchen gegeben hatte. Das wilde Mädchen trug gar keinen Schmuck, sein Rock war auch grün und zerrissen, sein Latz war blau, und sein Hemd, sonst wie das der Alten, hatte frische Risse.98

Juliana is not a vain child, seen in her disinterest in her clothes, but she is concerned with appearances. Juliana uses colorful flowers and paper and ribbon on the white background of her grandmother’s hair. The decorations do not appear to have any order to them and it as if Juliana

97 Eva Geulen describes these exchanges as an initial exchange economy, which transforms into unconditional love, “bedingungslose Liebe.” “Der Waldbrunnen.” In Stifter Handbuch. Leben-Werk – Wirkung. (Stuttgart: Metzler, 2017), 139.

has attempted to fit as many colors and objects as possible onto her grandmother. Her creation lacks any underlying organization, functioning as a colorful collage practiced by a girl on a female body, similar to the gypsy’s use of rags in the frame narrative. Stephan reacts to this chaotic, female creation by ceasing to give Juliana presents that she could re-appropriate for such purposes, denying her one medium of creative output in the name of influencing her to be proper. In doing so, Stephan tries to detach Juliana from the canvas and inspiration of her grandmother, which does not succeed until after her grandmother’s death.

When Juliana marries Stephan’s grandson, she is technically a grown woman, but the end product of Stephan’s caretaking is not a bride for his grandson but a child for himself. As the narrator writes “da mehrere Jahre vergangen waren und Stephan die Hand seines Enkels Franz in die seines Kindes Juliana, wie er sie nannte, legte, sagte er: “Franz, du erhältst eine Gattin, welche wirklich liebt und auch ihre Pflicht versteht, und das ist das Höchste.” 99 Juliana is no longer a “wildes Mädchen” in the forest schoolhouse, but Stephan’s child. Juliana’s devotion is now directed toward a family with a man at the center, and it is a love freely given, rather than one driven by blood.100 Juliana’s nature has not changed, but the object of her devotion can be found in a patriarchal, bourgeois family. The aristocratic woman dressed in black and white in the novella’s frame is unrecognizable from the colorful wild girl who does not think about appearances. Through Juliana’s love for him, Stephan has created a contained masterpiece using only black and white, the colors of ink on paper.

99 Ibid, 681.

100 Geulen writes that the grandfather’s search for selfless love is more central to the story rather than the domestication of a wild girl, as well as the association between love and beauty on Juliana’s part and the frame narrator’s humorous discussions of his attraction to the gypsy girl and the adult Juliana. “Waldbrunnen,” 139-143.
Though not as obvious as in the frame, the discussion of Juliana as an aesthetic object is present in the embedded narrative and offers another connection between Stephan’s creation of Juliana as a bourgeois child and a discussion of realist art. Stephan’s grandchildren Franz and Katherina discuss whether or not Juliana is beautiful and have different perspectives:

»Großvater,« sagte Katharina, »das kleine Mädchen ist recht häßlich. Als es den Kopf hervorstreckte, daß ihn die Sonne beschien, war es mit dem schwarzen Angesichte wie ein dunkles Bild in einem Holzrahmen.«

»Aber wie ein schönes Bild,« sagte Franz, »seine Wangen glänzten wie eine Glocke der Kirche, und seine Augen leuchteten wie die Kerzen an dem Altar.«

»Nein, wie die Kohlen im Backofen«, sagte das Mädchen.
»Man soll das Kind nur rein und schön anziehen wie dich,« sagte Franz, »dann siehe.«

Franz and Katharina discuss Juliana in the language of art. For Katharina, Juliana is a dark picture in a dark frame and unpleasant to look at, but Franz sees something shimmering underneath the dark surface. Where Katharina sees dark coals in an oven, Franz connects Juliana to church bells and candles on an altar, to light and sounds calling out from a place of salvation.

The disagreement is not just about subjective preferences, but about Juliana’s nature. For Franz, Juliana’s beauty peeks out beneath the wildness, and all that is needed to render it visible is to clean her up and put her in dresses. For Franz, Juliana’s wild self is most beautiful when it is malleable to domestication.

Juliana’s transformation or domestication occurs through her relationship with Stephan Heilkun. The transformation and preservation of her initial character, which Franz describes, is reminiscent of debates within realism of how artists can transform their subjects while maintaining their essential qualities. That Juliana’s devoted character remains unchanged is indicative of a realist transformation, where the truth of her character becomes all the more

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101 Ibid., 659.
apparent because of its consistency in different situations. Juliana’s transformation is indicative of a realist “Verklärung” which Christian Begemann defines as “eine Form der poetischen Überhöhung und Verdichtung, die das Wesentliche am Dargestellten gewissermaßen heraustreibt und in seinem vollen Glanz erstrahlen lässt.”¹⁰² Juliana’s transformation presents a case where the wild girl’s beauty is most apparent in her domestication. In her transformation, Juliana’s exotic appearance and unrestrained love are contained within a patriarchal world, she becomes a figure that can be admired without being considered threatening.

While Juliana’s domestication can at first be read as the triumph of realist narration being able to incorporate marginal figures into their narratives by using the domestic, bourgeois world as the means of presenting them at their most beautiful, Stifter’s representation of Juliana and her parallels with Mignon resist a narrative of pure confinement. The narrators’ and Stifter’s depiction of Juliana’s transformation from a wild girl into a loving child is not without its problems. Albrecht Koschorke in particular associates Juliana’s domestication with a type of death. For Koschorke, this death is visible in her poetic shifts: “Julianas Klassisch-Werden geht Hand in Hand mit ihrer eigenen Versteinerung zu einem künstlerischen Objekt.”¹⁰³ For Koschorke, Juliana loses vitality when she begins to cite others. Juliana’s death is not literal in the same sense of Mignon, but in the absence of her voice: “In ihrem Vollzug feiert die Erzählung ja den Triumph der männlichen Erzählstimme über jene Residuen von Fremdsprachigkeit, die nicht in den realistischen Duktus heimholbar sind […] Von den großen Sprachgebärden des wilden Kindes bleibt so nur ein stummer Rest des Inkommunikablen, des


Koschorke highlights Juliana’s silence in the frame, where she is an object of fascination to the narrator, a name in the guest book and a figure on the mountain, and her voice is silenced. Juliana might still be alive, but the loss of her voice evokes the tragedy of Mignon’s death and transformation into an art work.

In the frame, Juliana seems a completely different figure from the wild girl who decorated her grandmother’s cabin and hair with little presents. While the narrator’s disinterest in Juliana’s voice and praise of her confined beauty offer one interpretation of Juliana’s transformation as a kind of living death, the parallels to Mignon present another interpretation for her transformation. Juliana’s poetic language, which relies on citing and adapting other authors and features repetition and onomatopoeia, appear childish compared to the narrator’s effusive prose. Her poetic language is rooted in sound and images, not text, but the narrator focuses on the content of her words, rather than their sound, and reveals his ignorance of the beauty within Juliana’s art.

The frame narrator, Stephan and Juliana can all be interpreted as reflections on realist authorship. The frame narrator uses prose to capture a moment; Stephan transforms a girl in the forest into a contained, aristocratic woman with a bourgeois familial devotion; Juliana practices the art of small compositions. Within the embedded narrative, Juliana creates poems that are seemingly chaotic and simple, with heavy repetition of words and sounds, which appear childish compared to the narrator’s dexterous wielding of prose. In the frame narrative, she is said to have authored small poems “Gedichtchen,” or not real poetry. “Wunderschöne Gedichtchen” can certainly be read as a sign of the narrator’s own chauvinism and preference for the grand over the

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104 Ibid., 331.
trivial, yet it is also possible to read that line seriously, as a statement of the small and poetic being wonderfully beautiful. Stifter’s opening to his collection *Bunte Steine* values the small and frequent over the large, uncommon events. Stifter presents a final image of Juliana as a realist author, who can also render the ordinary extraordinary and whose artistry, misunderstood and warped by others, is perhaps most in line with his own.

**Theodor Storm's Zur Wald- und Wasserfreude (1879)**

Theodor Storm’s novella *Zur Wald- und Wasserfreude* exemplifies a different type of realist Mignon. Kätti harkens back to Goethe’s Mignon in her muse-like and musical qualities, as well as her unrequited love, but with a fate left open by her disappearance at the end of the novella, which presents a stark difference from the death of Goethe’s Mignon or Stifter’s Juliana’s transformation into a wife. Rosalie Zippel, best known by her nickname Kätti, is the daughter of aspiring capitalist Hermann Tobias Zippel. The novella consists of two parts, the first where Kätti is thirteen, and the second where Kätti is seventeen. In the first part, Kätti and her father are in a small town where Herr Zippel owns several businesses and Kätti attends school. She is a poor student who prefers to skip her afternoon classes to sneak into the rooms of an older student, Wulf Fedders, to use his guitar to teach herself to play the instrument. After her father discovers what she is doing, she approaches Fedders for formal lessons, though she quickly surpasses him. The first part of the novella ends with Wulf Fedders graduating, and Herr Zippel moving on to another business venture. In the second part of the novella, Herr Zippel has bought an inn outside of the city, which he is renovating as an upscale country retreat. Kätti provides musical entertainment, singing and playing the piano, often accompanied by a local tailor-turned-musician, Peter Jensen, best known as Sträkelstrakel. Kätti runs away to join a group of traveling musicians and is found by Wulf Fedders, who returns her to her father.
Fedders takes up residence at the inn for the summer and Kätti is once more enchanted by him, but when she sees him to propose to another, she runs away and is never heard from again.

The connection between Kätti and Mignon has already been observed by scholars such as Louis Gerrekens, Mareike Giesen, and Michael Wetzel. Mignon is present in Storm’s novella not via direct citation, as with Stifter’s Juliana, but in her musical, muse-like presence, the image of her as an abused performer, and in her androgyny, which is seen in the initial descriptions of her as a “Ding” and the use of “-chen” endings to describe her and her body. It is worth noting that Mignon is not the only literary figure that Kätti resembles and there is a strong connection between her and the tradition of water spirits, such as Undine, Melusine, and Hans Christian Andersen’s little mermaid. Reading Kätti’s through the lens of Mignon emphasizes Kätti as an artist in her own right, as well as an artistic product of her relationships to pedagogical and parental figures.

Viewing Kätti in the tradition of Mignon offers a means of interpreting the facets of German realism present in Storm’s text, with a focus on the self-reflectivity created by the presence of an artistic child. Zur Wald- und Wasserfreude in studies of Storm’s approach to


107 Stefan Schröder notes the fairytale aspects of the text, including a witch-like figure in the woods who offers Kätti knowledge of a magic mushroom she might use to win Wulf Fedder’s affections, though a knowledge she ultimately refuses to make use of. Schröder pays particular attention to the motif of water as being a symbol for the erotic. “Von Feen und Nixen. Theodor Storms “Zur Wald- und Wasserfreude.” Zeitschrift für deutsche Philologie. 117 No. 4 (1998): 543-563. Giesen notes that Kätti’s affinity for water is shared by other Storm protagonists such as Lenore in “Auf der Universität,” Anna in “Auf dem Staatshof”, Fränzschen in “Im Sonnenschein.” Giesen makes particular note of the butterfly-like appearance of Kätti’s hair ribbons, noting that butterflies have often stood as symbols for souls, which water maidens lack prior to marriage. “Frühlings Erwachen,“ 42-55.
German realism since the novella contains fantastic elements, with Kätti’s similarities to water maidens, and an incident where she is tempted by an old, witch-like woman in the forest to use a special mushroom to win Wulf Fedder’s affections. In Kätti’s relationships with her father and Wulf Fedders, we see the means by which Kätti’s artistic talent is constructed by prevailing social structures, and in her vanishing, Kätti rejects these influences. Kätti’s rejection of these controlling forces can be interpreted as a failure of realist, average aesthetics, with her choosing a fantastic, itinerant lifestyle. However, in Kätti’s disappearance, Storm creates an artistic force who cannot be used as capital for father’s business schemes and one who cannot be fixed in stories. In Kätti’s transience and her moments of silence and movement, Storm’s protagonist comes to imitate the beauty of music in prose. Rather than demonstrating a failure of realist writing, her disappearance is a means for realist prose to capture the impermanence of other artistic media.

Kätti resembles Mignon most in her use of language and her musical talent, as well as in her appearance as an outsider. The narrator introduces Kätti as a puzzle: “Das einzige Kind des Hauses war eine Tochter, ein braunes, grätiges Ding mit zwei langen schwarzen Zöpfen und damals kaum dreizehn Jahre alt. In der Taufe hatte sie den Namen »Rosalie« erhalten, und wenn Herr Zippel, sei es pathetisch oder auch nur zornig war, dann wurde sie auch so von ihm gerufen, für gewöhnlich aber nannte man sie, aus Gott weiß welchem Grunde, »Kätti«. “ The narrator draws attention to Kätti’s dark appearance, not only with her hair, but as a “braunes, grätiges

108 Stefan Schröder interprets this texts as a “mythologische Ausweitung der realistischen Schicht” where the title is not just the name of the inn, but the balance between interiority and exteriority: “es zeigt den fundamentalen Konflikt, der die Erzählung beherrscht: Gefühlt oder Äußerlichkeit – Wald- oder Wasserfreude” (563). For Schröder, Kätti is aligned with the forest and emotionality, and Fedder’s fiancée Cäcilie with water and soullessness, where Kätti’s butterfly-like ribbons symbolize her soul or interiority, and Cäcilie’s being given a name only after Fedders proposes in in the vein of water maidens receiving souls only after becoming brides, 558-559.

Ding.” She is brown and boney, and is not a rosy, glowing child, despite her name “Rosalie.” Her nickname has no clear origins, much like Mignon’s own ambiguous name, which Cave describes as both masculine and feminine, Italian and French, and a name that raises questions of contexts, origins and intertextuality.\(^{110}\)

Kätti’s outsider status is furthered by her prodigious musical talent. As a young girl, Kätti is lonely, spending her time in her father’s company or with her cat Nickebold. Her interest in learning the guitar brings her into contact with the older student Wulf Fedders. Music becomes a way for Kätti to express herself where words fail. She loves to listen to Fedders sing, yet “der Worte dieses Liedes wurde sie sich kaum bewußt, es war ihr nur die Melodie zu der sich dunkel regenden Empfindung, mit der sie in das hübsche Jünglingsantlitz blickte.”\(^{111}\) Kätti experiences the world not in words but in feelings. The melody or form is superior for conveying her feelings than words can convey. Mareike Giesen interprets “Zur Wald- und Wasserfreude” as a story of a young woman’s coming of age and sexual awakening, and Kätti’s Wanderlust is a longing for transitioning to adulthood and sexuality, which cannot be expressed directly.\(^{112}\) Kätti’s attachment to music is a sign of her detachment from her present.

Kätti’s artistic self-expression conflicts with the artistic visions others impose upon her. Herr Zippel is associated with striving toward modernity and creating capital and success, and his daughter is one medium by which he approaches entrepreneurship. Herr Zippel’s attempts to mold Kätti into a life fitting his progress-oriented approach is apparent in the novella’s opening passage: “Im dritten Hause von der Marktecke, wo in dem Schaufenster der Tempel aus weißem  


\(^{111}\) Storm, „Zur Wald- und Wasserfreude,” 145.

Tragant mit Rosengirlanden und fliegenden Amoretten zwischen einer Garnitur von Franz- und Sauerbrötchen prangte, wohnte derzeit Herr Hermann Tobias Zippel.\textsuperscript{113} This description of Herr Zippel’s shop window, framed by garlands of milkvetch, roses and flying cupids, with baked goods interspersed between the decoration, demonstrates how Herr Zippel tries to conform Kätti to his world and how this configuration cannot succeed.

The rose garlands evoke Kätti’s real name Rosalie and in the milkvetch there is a notion of comfort tracing back to milkvetch’s meaning in nineteenth-century floriography: your presence eases my pain.\textsuperscript{114} While it is possible to see their copresence as a sign of the comfort that Kätti brings her father, it is also possible to connect the milkvetch to Kätti’s future pains in romance, symbolized by the flying cupids. The milkvetch is also a member of the Faboidae subfamily, alternatively known as Papilionaceae, *Schmetterlingsblütler*, which connects to how Kätti’s signature hair ribbons evoke the image of a butterfly. In the shop window’s garland, the narrator shows Kätti’s struggles with her identity and love, which both ease and exacerbate her pain. These images are also intertwined with symbols of her father’s business-driven approach to the world, in this case his current venture of a bakery and confectionary. Kätti and her struggles are ornamentation to draw in customers, viewed through their utility to create an attractive image rather than any concern for the pain associated with them. In this opening passage, the narrator introduces Herr Zippel as a creator who is less concerned with the deeper meaning of his daughter and her experiences and more interested in creating a superficially beautiful arrangement for the sake of business.

\textsuperscript{113} Storm, “Zur Wald- und Wasserfreude,” 138.

Herr Zippel’s appropriation of Kätti’s art to create the image of entrepreneurial success is heightened during his ownership of “Zur Wald- und Wasserfreude.” The narrator introduces the inn as having originally belonged to a farmer who extended hospitality to travelers on the river in need of rest, but the inn has now come under Herr Zippel’s ownership and he is in the process of improving it. In his improvements, one interpretation could be an attempt at a transfiguration of the everyday, in this case a humble inn, but it is an attempt that goes awry and distorts the initial beauty. Herr Zippel takes the local, where “die Gäste fanden neben bäuerlicher Behaglichkeit billige Preise, frische Butter zum selbstgebackenen Brote und goldgelben Rahm zum wohlgckochten und geklärten Kaffee,” and begins renovations, building a veranda behind the dance hall, and “eben wurde von den Zimmerleuten eine schwere Bekrönung darauf befestigt, welche auf blauem Grunde in goldenen Buchstaben eine fühohe Inschrift in die Welt hinausstrahlte […] als nun aber endlich da droben der letzte Hammerschlag verhallt war, las er halblaut, mit vor Erregung bebender Stimme: »Hermann Tobias zippels Wald- und Wasserfreude.«” Herr Zippel’s creative vision is of embellishment, adding on gold letters and proclaiming his ownership and authorship over this change. He constructs a bourgeois oasis in the countryside, attempting to recreate and expand upper-middle-class aesthetics and pleasure spaces, yet his efforts create a gaudy finish, rather than a realist “Verklärung.” In changing the inn to match high society’s standards, Herr Zippel distorts reality, removing it from its character of humble, quality hospitality.

Herr Zippel’s distortion of reality in the name of progress and capital is further evidenced by Kätti’s position in his vision for the inn. He no longer focuses on moments where his daughter playing his favorite song brings him to tears, but calculates Kätti as a quantifiable factor in a

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115 Storm, „Zur Wald und Wasserfreude,“ 147, 148-149.
business plan, echoing Marx’s description of commodity fetishism in *Das Kapital.* Kätti’s musicality is something that he can invest in, devoting additional resources such as hiring Sträkelstrakel with an eye toward future profit:

Und nicht nur Tänze und Liedermelodien, selbst eine Mozartsche Sonate hatte die junge Virtuosin mit [Sträkelstrakel] einstudiert. Herr Zippel unterstützte das nach Kräften, denn es gehörte mit zu seiner »Wald- und Wasserfreude«; während draußen in der Veranda die Gäste seinen Wein tranken und seine »Soupers« und »Dejeuners« verzehrten, sollte vom Saale aus die Kunst ihre höhere Natur ergötzen. Kätti’s music is a commodity for the guest to consume and her father to market. Her Mozart sonatas, along with French names for meals, provide a contrast to the earlier images of fresh cream, butter and coffee. In her father’s household, Kätti’s art is a commodity for mass-consumption rather than quality art that it bears the appearance of.

There is no doubt that Kätti is a skilled musician, but the narrator makes clear that her talents do not thrive in this commodified setting, where she is confined by assumptions of taste. In the contrast between the inn before Herr Zippel’s ownership and its current state, as well as the contrasts between high and low forms of music, the text suggests that the best art is created not by assumptions of taste, but by a love for and dedication to life without excessive embellishment. Ordinary life does not need golden letters or Mozart’s sonatas to be made beautiful. The narrator furthers this point in the fate of Herr Zippel’s golden inscription:

Die goldene Inschrift über der Veranda hat nun schon fast eines vollen Jahres Glut und Winterungemach bestehen müssen, sie leuchtete nicht mehr so lustig wie im vorigen Sommer, und vielleicht mochte es damit zusammenhängen, daß jetzt selbst an Sonntagen

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118 It is possible to read Kätti’s relationship to her father as bearing similarities to that between Mignon and her “großer Teufel” who was responsible for her being taken in as part of the group of traveling performers which mistreated her.
The gold fades with the passing of the year, worn away by the weather. The initial gleam cannot endure and displays its impermanence and artificial declaration of quality as its sheen vanishes. Herr Zippel’s mode of creation proves itself fragile as the guests recognize its artifice.

Wulf Fedders presents a different mode of attempting to conform Kätti’s artistic vision, which results in Kätti molding herself to bourgeois standards of femininity and resembles Juliana’s transformation in Der Waldbrunnen. Wulf Fedder’s relationship to Kätti highlights the insufficiency of such a mode of containment. The narrator introduces Wulf Fedders in a moment of writing and confinement, which Kätti interrupts. The narrator presents an image of Wulf Fedders hard at work, absorbed by his studies and confined within the walls of his rooms:

Ein paar Stunden später saß der hübsche Primaner – Wulf Fedders hieß er – in voller Arbeitstätigkeit an seinem Tische. Vor sich hatte er die Tür nach dem weiten Boden offenstehen; vermutlich nur weil der geschlossene Stubenraum ihm seinen Geist beengte; denn er blickte nicht hinaus, sondern war emsig bemüht, für seinen deutschen Aufsatz eine Kette von Satzfolgen zu Papier zu bringen, welche er eben auf einem Spaziergange in Gedanken sich zurechtgelegt hatte. Anmutig schwebte ihm bei seiner Arbeit das sonst so griesgrämige Gesicht des alten Rektors vor; er hatte ihm heute bei seiner Verdeutschung des Thukydides so wohlgefällig zugenickt; Wulf Fedders sah schon deutlich dasselbe Nicken bei Rückgabe dieses Aufsatzes. Und die Feder des jungen Primaners arbeitete behaglich weiter.\(^\text{120}\)

Fedders’ approach to writing an essay is to bring “eine Kette von Satzfolgen” to paper. For Fedders, the act of writing is one of interconnected ideas, but he has no passion for the process, only desiring an approving nod from his instructor. This mode of writing does not register with him as confining, since he writes “behaglich” or comfortably. Though Fedders does not see this

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\(^\text{119}\) Ibid., 154.

\(^\text{120}\) Ibid., 143.
mode of writing as limiting, the narrator emphasizes how it limits his perspective. Fedders’ preventative measures against confining himself appear in vain: he has opened the door so as to not feel trapped, but he does not look up. He organizes his thoughts while on a walk but thinks of writing as chains rather than something inspired by open spaces.

Though Fedders deliberately ignores the open spaces, he has created space for Kätти to challenge his comfortable, limited approach to writing. Kätти enters into this moment of studious writing and confesses her use of his guitar and requests that he give her lessons. He agrees and pushes aside his books: “und somit wurde das erste Ringlein fertig als Glied zu einer feinen unsichbaren Kette.” Here the narrator borrows Fedders’ metaphor for writing, the construction of a chain, but this invisible chain is one unconsciously created between Fedders and Kätти. The narrator affirms Fedders’ use of the metaphor of the chain to conceive of writing as a means of bringing ideas and objects and people into order, but the narrator’s chain of events does not require the same focus as Fedders at his desk consumed with classicizing impulse in translating Thucydides. The narrator continues “wie von selbst wurden die Stunden herausgefunden, in denen der kleine musikalische Verkehr sich ungestört entfalten konnte.” The hours unfold spontaneously, coming into order effortlessly. With Kätти, Fedders experiences a different mode of creation than he is accustomed to, one that is not calculated and confined, but free-flowing and structured.

Just as Kätти transforms Fedders’ time as a student with her wildness entering into the space he leaves open, Fedders changes Kätти as she strives to adhere to more normative behaviors for adolescent girls and make herself appealing to him. Much like Stephan von Heilkun, Wulf

\[121\] Ibid., 144.

\[122\] Ibid., 144.
Fedders calculates how to best interact with Kätti to yield the desired results: “Wenn sie dann eintrat, hatte er oftmals Mühe, seine bewundernden Augen abzuwenden, damit – so warnte er sich selber – das Kind nicht eitel werde.”123 Kätti brings wonder to Fedders’ closed world, but he attempts to conceal this from Kätti with the justification of molding her to be a humble, young woman and not grow vain. Yet this withholding of affection increases Kätti’s attraction to Fedders. The narrator immediately follows Fedders’ internal decision to limit affection to prevent Kätti growing vain with the information that Fedders had not seen: “wie sie kurz zuvor an ihrem aufgezogenen Schubfache kniete, um ein bestes Krägelchen oder ein anderes Putzstück daraus hervorzukramen; hatte er doch nicht einmal bemerkt, daß erst seit ein paar Tagen eine rote Seidenschleife gleich einem angeflogenem Schmetterling auf ihrem schwarzen Haare saß.”124 Fedders has reshaped Kätti, who tries to present herself in a more attractive light, and despite his wonder at her, he cannot see the changes she has made to her appearance.125 Fedders is not the conscious author of this change and seems unaware of his influence, but his influence is read in Kätti’s appearance, with the ribbons a visible sign of the invisible links between Kätti and Fedders.

Kätti presents the possibility of upsetting the careful plans and narratives Fedders has made for himself. He reappears in the second half of the novella, no longer a student and enjoying a brief respite before his academic career commences:

123 Ibid., 144-145.
124 Ibid., 145.
125 Giesen interprets this transformation as a sign of Kätti’s sexual awakening. She notes the symbolism of the butterfly made by her hair ribbons alongside the references to water maidens in the text: “In die Tradition der Wassergeister gesetzt, besitzt sie keine eigene Seele, den diese kann ihr nur von einem (Menschen-)Mann gegeben werden: stattdessen ist Kättis Seele zunächst ein reines Provisorium, ein äußerlich angelegter Schmuck, der jedoch nichts anderes bewirken soll, als einen Mann zu betören und damit der Trägerin eines Tages eine echte Seele zu verschaffen.” “Frühlings Erwachen,” 49.
Zunächst freilich nach all der angestrengten Arbeit mußte er sich ein paar Monden Ruhe gönnen; das heißt, was solche junge Büchermenschen Ruhe nennen; denn die Doktorabhandlung, die nur eine Quintessenz enthielt, sollte zu einem epochemachenden Werke ausgearbeitet, allerlei emsig gesammelte Drucke und Exzerpte nun erst gründlich benutzt werden.\textsuperscript{126}

The narrator parallels the first interaction between Kätti and Fedders, with Fedders once again at work and with Kätti once again interrupting his plans. Fedders has a clear idea for his future: to expand his dissertation to define a new era of scholarship. The work itself is less important than its reception, showing an instrumentalization of scholarship similar to Herr Zippel’s instrumentalization of Kätti’s art. As with the open door in his rooms as a student, he has once positioned himself in proximity to nature, here in the countryside, with the added benefit of the proximity of the blonde daughter of a major. Kätti’s reintroduction destabilizes his careful plans when he spots her among the musicians at the inn he is staying at. Rather than dwell on her grown appearance and beauty, he transitions into paternalistic concern that she was seduced into running away, asking her “zu denen da gehörst du?”\textsuperscript{127} To Fedders, Kätti is not an independent, seventeen-year old young woman, but a child. Even when the musicians tell him that she approached them about joining their group, he denies Kätti’s decision, since “sie ist ein halbes Kind.”\textsuperscript{128} Fedders places Kätti firmly into a category between childhood and adulthood and places himself into a role of protector and mentor to reestablish the control over the narrative he is constructing for himself.

After Fedders returns Kätti to her father, their relationship resembles that of Wilhelm Meister and Mignon, with Kätti taking on the role of companion and servant. Fedders cannot

\textsuperscript{126} Storm, “\textit{Zur Wald- und Wasserfreude},” 159.

\textsuperscript{127} Ibid., 160.

\textsuperscript{128} Ibid., 160.
help but treat her as he did when she was thirteen, with her hair still in her childish braids.

Despite continuing to see Kätti as a child, Fedders does not return to the relationship they once had, since music no longer has a place in his carefully ordered life:

Zum Singen, wie einstens in der Giebelstube, wurde sie nicht mehr von ihm aufgefordert, er selber hatte sein Musizieren wie eine Jugendtorheit hinter sich gelassen; zum Ausgleich schädlichen Studierensitzens fand er es weit ersprießlicher, statt der Gitarre sich eine Botanisier trommel umzuhängen und so, zugleich lernend und marschierend, seine Mußestunden zu verwerten.¹²⁹

Music no longer has a place in his world and the memories of music are memories of youthful foolishness rather than nostalgic memories of a more beautiful time. Art has been replaced by science and study. Kätti, ever a poor student and still a musician, cannot fit into this ordered world.

Fedders’ reluctance to acknowledge the space Kätti creates leads Kätti to transform herself further to fit within the narrative Fedders has created for himself. She tries to change herself to better fit him and be more than “die Wirtstochter.” For him, she pins up her braids. For him, she makes an effort to teach herself French, the language he speaks with the blonde daughter of a major, seriously. For Wulf Fedders, Kätti is unchanging, which is part of her charm; she is other-worldly, “une petite princesse dans son genre”¹³⁰ to admire from a distance rather than to take as a wife or to figure out the intricacies of. His fiancée Cäcilie, who shares a name with the patron saint of music, is also fascinated by Kätti and tries to make a story out of her, focusing on Kätti’s eyes and face, which she deems “ein Vagabondenangesicht.”¹³¹ Cäcilie sees Kätti as a story rather than a romantic rival, an object to enjoy. For both Fedders and

¹²⁹ Ibid., 165.
¹³⁰ Ibid., 176.
¹³¹ Ibid., 195.
Cäcilie, Kättri is an aesthetic object to enjoy, but not one that can transform their reality. Fedder has denied music the space to transform his life and is content to follow the path of bourgeois normality, choosing the patron saint of music confined to a bourgeois woman over the girl who creates music and brings movement and change.

Fedders confines Kättri to fiction. The novella ends with the narrator summarizing the next twenty-five years and how the inn is returned to a local farmer, but the last description is of Wulf Fedders and how he manages the documents left behind by Kättri:

Fedders has given up his dreams of academic fame for the security of a bureaucratic position. He encounters Kättri annually as he manages the accounts related to her inheritance. But this is not a story that lingers, and he forgets her by the time he returns home. A transformation into text is not sufficient to permanently capture Kättri, which is a strong contrast to the transformation of Juliana from a colorful girl to a black-and-white aristocratic woman in Stifter’s Der Waldbrunnen.

Both Herr Zippel and Wulf Fedders use Kättri within their creative ventures but stifle her potential to change her surroundings. Herr Zippel attempts to fit Kättri into his system of embellishment. Wulf Fedders unconsciously leaves space for Kättri but rather than allowing her to change him, he changes her into a lesser version of herself. Both cases are attempts to reshape

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132 Ibid., 196.
Kätti within another’s vision of how her art should engage with their ideals of financial success or ordered life and stories, but both approaches fail. Herr Zippel cannot transform Kätti into capital, and Kätti cannot be contained by a neat narrative. Kätti works as an artist in her own right, and through her artistic production and engagement with the world, the narrator illustrates how a realist narrative can represent the transience of music and celebrate the ordinary without gaudy decorations that detract from its simple beauty.

Kätti’s artistry lies in her combination of music and movement, which the narrator seeks to imitate through prose. The narrator’s representation of Kätti as present and absent, simultaneously at the center of the narrative yet marginalized, mirrors the transience of her artistry. Kätti’s prodigious talent becomes most apparent in her performance of folk songs on her guitar:

> Als sie mit der Sonate fertig waren, hob Kätti sich auf den Fußspitzen und langte über dem Klaviere ihre Gitarre von der Wand. »Nun zur Belohnung!« sagte sie, lächelnd auf ihren Spielgenossen blickend, und dieser, als ob er nun das Höchste leisten müsse, drehte emsig an den Stimmwirbeln, klimperte und strich und drückte fast das Ohr an seine Geige.

> »Sträkel-Strakel!« rief wiederum die junge Stimme; da kletterte er eilig von seinem Thron herab, und bald wanderten die beiden nebeneinander im Saale auf und ab; sie leicht dahinschreitend und mit ihrer lichten Sopranstimme singend, daß es von den leeren Wänden schallte; er mit seinem lahmen Fuße stets nach einer Seite wippend und zu ihrer Gitarre begeistert seine Geige streichend.133

In this passage, the narrator not only presents Kätti as a vibrant, dynamic artist, but mirrors this in his narration. The narrator makes no attempts to describe the music, focusing on Kätti’s response and movement. When she is on the guitar, she is in control, accompanied by Sträkelstrakel on his violin. The passage is likewise full of movement, of Kätti standing and stretching and speaking and smiling and moving throughout the room. The girl who disappears

133 Ibid., 151-152.
from crowds and hides away commands the room, with her voice resounding against the empty walls. Her freedom and movement extend also to Sträkelstrake. With her guitar and folk songs, Kätti is not trapped behind the heavy piano performing higher forms of music. For Kätti, the simple, ordinary songs are most beautiful. With the descriptions of Kätti’s movement and vibrancy compared to other images of her as quiet, the narrator captures the joy and vivacity of the songs she performs, even if the reader cannot hear them.

The narrator’s descriptions of Kätti’s movements demonstrate an understanding of art as dynamic and capable of building connections rather than a static object that can be repurposed. Kätti is most in her element when moving; rather than interacting with girls who are guests at the inn:

Manchmal nahm sie das kleinste der beiden weiß und grün gestrichenen Böte und ruderte den Fluß hinauf, bis wo am Ufer entlang sich große Binsenfelder streckten. Durch einige führte eine Wasserstraße wieder auf die Flußbreite hinaus; in andern gelangte sie nach einer schmalen Öffnung, durch welche das Boot nur mit eingezogenen Rudern hindurchglitt auf einen stillen, rings umschlossenen Wasserspiegel. Hier, an schwülen Sommernachmittagen, legte sie gern ihr Fahrzeug in den Schatten einer hohen Binsenwand; auf dem Boden des Bootes hingestreckt, die schmalen Hände über dem schwarzen Haar gefaltet, konnte sie ganze Stunden hier verbringen. Die Abgeschiedenheit des Ortes, das leise Rauschen der Binsen, über denen das lautlose Gaukeln der Libellen spielte, versenkte sie in einen Zustand der Geborgenheit vor jener doch so nahen Welt ihres Vaterhauses, in der sie immer weniger sich zurechtzufinden wußte.134

Mareike Giesen interprets this scene as a flight from modernity, as a moment of going against the stream in a trip back “in den Mutterleib, in welchem Kätti die ihr fehlende Geborgenheit wieder findet,” and away from the paternal, cultivated, artificial spaces of her father’s inn.

134 Ibid., 155.
though always separated from the water by the boat’s frame. It is also possible to interpret the passage as a reflection on realist authorship. Like an author with a pen, she exercises creative license in rowing upstream against the natural direction of the river; yet, to reach the most perfect space, she must embrace the river’s guidance. In her navigation, she demonstrates when authors can deviate from reality as it is and when reality’s truths, such as the river’s direction, must be followed to reach the perfect moment. Although she first appears still and passive lying in her boat, the passage is full of movement and sound with the rushing of the reeds and fluttering of the dragonflies, which appear more vibrant juxtaposed with Kätti’s quietness. The narrator brings the reader with Kätti into a moment of reflection and attentiveness to sense the sounds and sensations that can be overlooked.

Kätti presents a notion of realist art that is dynamic and not confining. Her perspective looks outward, which the narrator establishes in her interest in geography lessons. The narrator notes that Kätti was a poor student, with the exceptions of geography and piano lessons, but even then piano is not her preferred instrument: “der schwere Klavierkasten, der so fest gegen die Wand geschoben stand, war nicht das Instrument, das ihre eigenste Natur verlangte.” Kätti is drawn to the more mobile guitar in contrast to the heavy, immobile piano, displaying a desire for movement and music. This description of Kätti as restless and mobile echoes the narrator’s description of her listening to her geography teacher: “seine Vorträge gewannen zuweilen den Ton der Sehnsucht in die weite, weite Welt; dann starrten ihn die schwarzen Augensterne an, und

136 Storm, „Zur Wald- und Wasserfreude,” 139.
die mageren Arme des Kindes reckten sich über den Schultisch immer weiter ihm entgegen."\textsuperscript{137}

Music and longing for movement and freedom go hand in hand for Kätti.

Kätti is not a “Wirtstochter” bound to one location or institution, but a girl drawn toward a larger world through her music. Kätti’s mobility is accompanied by a song that she learned from Wulf Fedders. “Ein Vöglein singt so süße/Vor mir von Ort zu Ort!”\textsuperscript{138} The full poem appears after Kätti tries to persuade Sträkelstrakel into leave the inn with her:

\begin{verbatim}
Ein Vöglein singt so süße
Vor mir von Ort zu Ort!
Oh, meine müdten Füße!
Das Vöglein singt so süße;
Ich wandre immerfort.

Sträkelstrakel hatte sich selig lauschend gegen die Wand gelehnt, Geige und Bogen müßig in der herabhängenden Hand. »Geht es nicht weiter?« frug er leise, als Kätti nach dieser ersten Strophe schwieg.

»O doch! Aber ich weiß nur noch das Ende!« Dann griff sie wieder in die Saiten und sang aufs neue:

Wo ist nun hin das Singen?
Schon sank das Abendrot –
Die Nacht hat es verstecket,
Hat alles zugedecket;
Wem klag ich meine Not?

Kein Sternlein blinkt im Walde,
Weiß weder Weg noch Ort;
Die Blumen an der Halde,
Die Blumen in dem Walde,
Die blühn im Dunkeln fort.\textsuperscript{139}
\end{verbatim}

\textsuperscript{137} Ibid., 139.

\textsuperscript{138} Ibid, 145.

\textsuperscript{139} Ibid, 153.
The beginning of the song tells of the longing to follow a bird’s song, but the song disappears and the lyrical I is left alone. Mareike Giesen interprets this poem through the lens of Kätti’s struggles of becoming an adult and confronting her emerging sexuality in a world where she is so alone, connecting Kätti’s favorite song to her sense of not belonging and to her search for a place where she is truly heard. Kätti’s Wanderslust is a sign of the impossibility of Kätti finding a mature, adult relationship, and how she is fated to constantly be misunderstood and remain a mystery.  

To move away from an analysis of Kätti’s character and the struggles of adolescent girls in the nineteenth century with regard to sexuality, the poem that accompanies Kätti also presents a contrast between music, images and prose. The poem ends with a contrast between the bird’s song and blossoming flowers, with one vanishing with the sun, and the other enduring through the night. The impermanence of wandering and the bird’s song is balanced by the permanence of the blossoms through the dark, where movement and sound can vanish but images and text are sources of stability. Disappearance from a text marks the medial difference between sound and prose, one that prose draws attention to through narrating the act of vanishing.

Kätti’s disappearance at the end of the novella differs sharply from Mignon’s final scenes as a beautiful corpse. Returning to Hellmut Ammerlahn’s description of Mignon’s death as the “Beendigung ihres Werdens im vollendeten Werk,” Kätti’s disappearance rejects the possibility of completion. Her absence suggests an impermanence, rather than what Brigitte Jirku argues for Mignon, where Mignon, “lebt als verklärtes Bild in der Erinnerung.”

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140 Giesen, “Frühlings Erwachen,” 47.
Mignon is not transformed into a perfect art object like Mignon or a black-and-white aristocratic woman like Stifter’s Juliana, nor does she remain in anyone’s memory. For Giesen, Kätti’s disappearance is a triumph after having tried to reshape herself unsuccessfully to another’s standards: “Trotz der zahlreichen Rückschläge weigert sie sich weiterhin, den ihr zugesprochenen Status der passive Verfügbarkeit anzuerkennen, und nimmt stattdessen im Anschluss an die zierle Szene wortwörtlich das Ruder selbst in die Hand: Undine geht. Und dieses Mal für immer.” A Mignon who does not become a stable piece of artwork, such as Mignon’s corpse or Juliana’s text-like appearance, represents a dynamic form of art, which can only be represented in her absence.

Kätti’s removal of herself from the narrative is a moment of self-creation that rejects the appropriation of her art for others’ schemes. Wulf Fedders’ rejection of Kätti in favor of Cäcile, brings Kätti to a moment of self-reflection. After she watches Fedders propose to Cäcilie, Kätti is alone on the water in her little boat:

Das Abendrot überglänzte den Himmel und verging, der Tau versilberte das schwarze Haar des schönen Mädchenkopfes, und fern im lichten Blau des Äthers schimmerte der Stern der Liebe. Da erst richtete sich Kätti wieder auf. Lange blickte sie in den milden Glanz des ruhigen Gestirnes; dann betrachtete sie aufmerksam ihre Hände, ihre kleinen Füße; sie löste ihr schönes Haar und ließ es durch die Finger gleiten, bis sich plötzlich ihre Arme streckten und sie mit beiden Händen nach den Rudern griff. »Nur die Wirtstochter!« rief sie. »Die Tochter aus der Wald- und Wasserfreude!« Ein bitteres Lächeln flog um ihren Mund; vielleicht auch hat sie wieder laut gelacht; aber niemand hat es hören können, das Fahrzeug, welches die beiden Glücklichen trug, war längst den Strom hinab.

Through this passage, the narrator shows the diminishing color and warmth, with the red sunset disappearing and Kätti’s dark hair taking on a cold, silver sheen, and the emergence of blue light

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in the distance. Kätti focuses on her appearance—mild and calm, small and beautiful. She loosens her hair that she has bound with her red ribbon in the shape of the butterfly since the first half of the novella, erasing the shape or text it had created. She takes the oars by the hand, rejecting being “nur die Wirtstochter.” Only the narrator bears witness to Kätti’s self-study, and even then the narrator leaves open the possibility of Kätti’s bitter smile transforming into laughter. The narrator refuses to narrate despite his intimate knowledge of Kätti’s other actions leading up to this moment, allowing Kätti to remain a mystery and for the readers to imagine how this moment continues.

Despite the changes that Kätti puts herself through, she resists being turned into a story by Wulf Fedders or a means to an end in her father’s business plans. She disappears in a moment of becoming rather than as a completed work, ending as a verb rather than as an object. Like a song, she cannot be frozen without disappearing, since a stopped song is silence or absence. Though Kätti’s media of art are of music and movement, she provides the narrator with the means to consider the creation of prose. Seen as a realist artist, Kätti finds a balance between the ordinary and extraordinary, emerging from the household of a business-focused single father. She finds beauty in the ordinary songs rather than with forms of high art. In her disappearance, she is not confined to a single narrative but escapes the realm of representation.

Through Zur Wald- und Wasserfreude, Storm reflects on questions of realist authorship, as Herr Zippel, Wulf Fedders, and Kätti draw on Kätti’s artistic talent as a source of inspiration or raw material to repurpose. Where Herr Zippel and Fedders attempt to fit the raw material into pre-constructed narratives, those of financial success or a comfortable, unchallenging, middle-class life, Kätti’s mode of creation looks for openings, whether it is a group of musicians she can run away with or a hidden entrance to a cave. Kätti’s authorship finds a middle point between
following pre-existing paths and creating her own and her art, unlike her father’s golden letters or Fedders’ routine academic texts, is not based on words but on sounds. Though Kätti’s authorship avoids the written text, Storm’s narrator represents Kätti’s art through words, but. Kätti must disappear from the text for the narrator to textually represent sound and movement, remaining in a moment of becoming and motion.

Conclusions

Realist Mignons are both artistic creations and artistic creators. Adalbert Stifter and Theodor Storm present two divergent representations of realist Mignons. Both Juliana and Kätti are depicted as having an innate talent for art connected to sound and visuals rather than text, and come into contact with male figures who intentionally or unintentionally use a desire for affection to contain and transform their raw talent. Their transformations in these relationships demonstrates how prose can reshape a wild child in a manner that demonstrates the transformative power of prose that imposes normative structures. While the teachers, parental figures and narrators may be creating realist art through their focus on reproducing normal life over unstructured production, Juliana and Kätti can also be considered creators of realist art. Drawing on ordinary subjects such as folk songs and simple language, their art demonstrates a better understanding of what can and cannot be represented in German realism’s chosen medium of prose. Stifter and Storm’s narrators mimic poetic and musical language in their prose, and even show the transformation of Juliana and Kätti into texts, but Stifter’s narrator cannot remember Juliana’s poems in the alpine guest book, and Kätti’s transformation into a series of investment statements are forgotten over the journey home. Prose can transform these wild girls into stories, yet their representation comes at a loss. Juliana’s poems cannot be read, and Kätti’s
songs cannot be heard. The mediation needed for the translation of sound-based media to prose necessitates their disappearance, in the form of their unrecorded words or their uncertain fate.

In drawing on the familiar figure of Mignon and her relationship with Wilhelm Meister, authors of German realism repurpose her narrative for a reflection on the creation of realist art. The relationship between Juliana and Stephan, and Kätti and Herr Zippel and Wulf Fedders is not only about the socialization of a wild girl, but the transformation of wild art by realist prose. and the transformation of realist prose by wild art. The stories of realist Mignons, even the more domesticated Mignons in Storm’s Pole Poppenspäler and Fontane’s Vor dem Sturm, bring vitality that would otherwise be absent in the texts. The texts do not just celebrate the intervention of older male figures to bring female art under patriarchal authority. The texts present an image of art that moves between media and refuses to turn into a fossilized text for mass consumption. By denying direct access to a realist Mignon’s art while attempting to imitate it, these texts invite a reading that always searches for wild artistic energy beyond the pages.

While realist Mignons suggest that the transformative power of the wild child creates an otherwise-unattainable art, her rejection of the rules and marginal position can be considered threatening if her transformative power challenges the foundations of social organizations. The following chapter on realist fairytale children will examine how the wild child’s presence destabilizes communities and must be eliminated, even if her presence temporarily suggests an alternative life superior to that within the novella.
CHAPTER 2: REALIST FAIRYTALE CHILDREN AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF IDENTITIES

Kindermärchen werden erzählt, damit in ihrem reinen und milden Lichte die ersten Gedanken und Kräfte des Herzens aufwachen und wachsen; weil aber einen jeden ihre einfache Poesie erfreuen und ihre Wahrheit belehren kann, und weil sie beim Haus bleiben und forterben, werden sie auch Hausmärchen genannt. Die geschichtliche Sage fügt meist etwas Ungewöhnliches und Überraschendes, selbst das Übersinnliche, geradezu und ernsthaft an das Gewöhnliche, Wohlbekannte und Gegenwärtige, weshalb sie oft eckig, scharf und seltsam erscheint, das Märchen aber steht abseits der Welt in einem umfriedeten, ungestörten Platz, über welchen es hinaus in jene nicht weiter schaut. Darum kennt es weder Namen und Orte, noch eine bestimmte Heimath, und es ist etwas dem ganzen Vaterland gemeinsames.¹⁴⁵

Jacob und Wilhelm Grimm. “Einleitung” Kinder- und Hausmärchen, 1819

Despite the popularity of the Brothers Grimm’s Kinder- und Hausmärchen, whose seventh edition was published in 1857, fairytales posed a problem for late-nineteenth-century readers. Literary historian and professor Julius Klaiber (1834-1892) recalls responding to the question of whether or not mothers were doing their children an injustice by reading fairytales to them. For Klaiber, fairytales are products of a “poesiegetränkten Zeit” but “die bewegenden Interessen der Gegenwart liegen auf viel realeren Gebieten und die Poesie hat sich fast von Jahr zu Jahr auf einem bescheideneren Raum im Herzen des lebenden Geschlechts zurückgezogen.”¹⁴⁶ Fairytals belong to a time and space that is disconnected from contemporary interests and take on an escapist quality that is antithetical to an interest in realism. Literary historian Friedrich Theodor Vischer (1807-1887) takes particular issue with the simplistic worldview offered in fairytales:

¹⁴⁵ Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm. “Einleitung” Kinder- und Hausmärchen. 2. Ausgabe (Berlin: G. Reimer, 1819), XXI.

Das Wunder kommt nun wohl gerne dem verfolgten Guten zu Hülfe, doch nicht sowohl der thätigen, männlichen Tugend, als vielmehr der kindlichen Gutmüthigkeit [...] es handelt sich also immer mehr von Glück, als von Verdienst, es soll dem Menschen einmal wohl sein, er soll wie im glücklichen Träume vergessen, daß das Leben ein schweitzvoller Kampf mit unerbittlichen Gesetzen ist.147

For Vischer, the fairytale creates a world whose foundations are overly-simplistic categories of good and evil and values such as hard work are ignored in the face of fantastic fortunes. Fairytales create a sense of wonder that is deceptive and dangerous. For a nineteenth-century audience, fairytales distort representations of reality, either by reducing reality to simplistic structures or by abandoning it altogether.

Despite the alleged disconnect between fairytales and reality, fairytales are featured in many ways within works of German realism and the presence of fairytales and fairytale children throughout works of German realism in the latter half of the nineteenth-century suggests a more complex relationship.148 As the reading material for children, fairytales establish a link to extraliterary reading practices149 and contribute to the characterization of the figures reading them.150 The fairytale becomes a means of introducing those qualities that literary historians and

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148 Julia Neu summarizes the problems created by elements of the fantastic, such as fairytales, within works of German realism: “Statt Verklärung des Wirklichen zum Wahren (“was ist ideal?) erfolgt “Verwirrung”, statt eines wohlgeordneten Sinngebäudes wird ein “Labyrinth” errichtet.”148 Neu turns to Gregor Reichelt’s Fantastik im Realismus to conclude that “Realistische Fantastik behauptet dann nicht, wie die romantische, “die Realität könnte auch komplett anders sein”, sondern fragt: “Könnte die Realität nicht auch anders organisiert sein?” The fantastic in German realism is not a break from reality, but a tool for pointing towards how society could be re-organized. “Fantastik als Herausforderung für den Realismus.” Entsagung und Routines. (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2013), 131.

149 Katra Byram, citing Ruth Bottingheimer, notes that by 1887, when German realism was long-since-established as a literary movement, the collections of the Brothers Grimm and Ludwig Bechstein were used in school primers and curriculum. “Fairy Tales in the Modern(ist) World: Gerhard Hauptmann’s Bahnwärter Thiel and Marie von Ebner-Eschenbach’s Das Gemeindekind.” German Quarterly 86 No. 2 (Spring 2013): 141.

150 For example: Theodor Storm’s Elisabeth in Immensee (1849) and Anna in Im Schloss (1862), the tales told by the grandmother in Adalbert Stifter’s Katzensilber (1853), as well as the tales told to children in Wilhelm Raabe’s Chronik der Sperlingsgasse (1857) and those told in Raabe’s posthumously published Altershausen (1911). Some
concerned parents feared: a world that breaks from reality. Children who read fairytales or are
described as belonging in fairytales invite the possibility of a world where differentiating good
and evil is both simple and possible.\textsuperscript{151} While the fantastic plots of fairytales might have little
connection to nineteenth-century experiences, the copresence of female children and fairytales,
as reading material and character attributes, suggests that the fairytale provides a lens for
examining how girls are incorporated into larger communal structures.

Beyond considerations of extraliterary childhood and insight into an infantilizing and
idealizing male gaze, the fairytale is also linked to political concerns of the nineteenth century.
The “Vorrede” to the Brothers Grimm’s \textit{Kinder- und Hausmärchen} connects the creation of
fairytales and children with the construction of a German \textit{Kulturnation}, painting an image of
children and fairytales as innocent, precious, and in need of protection from the storms
threatening German culture, namely Napoleon in the case of the earlier editions.\textsuperscript{152} For the
Grimms, the fairytale, the child, nature and Germany are beautiful, innocent and wonderful and
the nation provides the fairytale child with a form of protection.

A realist fairytale child occupies a liminal space and creates an interpretive crisis, since
she appears in a world where she is out of place. Her presence reintroduces fantasy and models
how fiction can transfigure and structure a world increasingly filled with complex institutions,

fairytale are specifically referenced, with Theodor Fontane’s Grete Minde’s favorite story “Vom Machandelboom”
in \textit{Grete Minde} (1880), which provides a sense of the fairytale justice she believes in and eventually fulfills.

\textsuperscript{151} Fontane’s Melusine in \textit{Der Stechlin} (1898) is one example where the fairytale distances the figure from everyday
reality. She is not the only reference to Melusine in Fontane’s oeuvre; for further information see Bettine Menke.
“The Figure of Melusine in Fontane’s Texts: Images, Digressions and Lacunae.” \textit{The Germanic Review} 79 No. 1

\textsuperscript{152} Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm. “Vorrede.” \textit{Kinder- und Hausmärchen}. 1. Auflage. (Berlin: Realschulbuchhandlung,
1812), VIII.
rules and violence. The alternative world centered on the figure of the fairytale child recalls the image of innocent childhood threatened by history, but in the 1860s, the storms threatening the fairytale child are not French forces, but German nationalism. The imposition of fairytale structures onto realist narratives does not reject reality but organizes the complex interactions between adults and children, men and women, and history and individuals, while offering the potential to reject the violence in these relationships.

In this chapter, I address two works featuring fairytale children and their conflicts with their communities, Wilhelm Raabe’s *Else von der Tanne* (1865) and Eugenie Marlitt’s *Blaubart* (1866). In *Else von der Tanne*, Pastor Friedemann Leutenbacher finds his world transformed by the arrival of the fairytale child Else and her father in his village that is steeped in the misery of the Thirty Years’ War. In *Blaubart*, the protagonist and narrator, Lilli, places herself in the position of the fairytale child as she confronts a neighbor with a Bluebeard-like reputation. The publication of both texts within a year of one another also points towards a shared readership and shared literary tastes, especially given the success of *Else von der Tanne* and Marlitt’s rise as a successful author. In addition, given that the fairytale was dismissed as a genre for women and

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153 The success of Raabe’s “Else von der Tanne” is frequently discussed in the history of the work’s publication. For more on the publication of *Else von der Tanne* see Hans Opperman’s commentary to the text within Wilhelm Raabe: *Sämtliche Werke*, Band 9,1. (Göttingen: Vandenhoek & Ruprecht, 1974). 466. The reception of Marlitt’s work is more difficult to trace. *Blaubart* appeared between the publication of her two best-known works: *Goldelse*, her first novel and success *das Geheimniss der alten Mamsell*, both of which first appeared in *der Gartenlaube* in 1866 and 1867 respectively. In 1869, an anonymous review in *Die Gartenlaube*, the publication with which Marlitt enjoyed a close and fruitful relationship, claimed that “Wenn das Sprüchwort: Zahlen beweisen oder Zahlen frappiren, wahr ist, so dürfte augenblicklich Marlitt der gelesenste Autor in Deutschland sein” Anon. „Marlitt.“ *Die Gartenlaube*, Heft 49. (Leipzig: Verlag von Ernst Keil, 1875), 786. This praise is not repeated within more academic literary histories, such as that from Georg Müller-Frauenstein, which dismissively claims that “Ihr erstes Werk allein, “Goldelse”, hat ein natürlicheren und nach seiner Gedankenwelt wahrer Inhalt. Allen anderen kann man ohne große Kühnheiten voraussagen, daß sie bald vergessen sein werden” Von Heinrich von Kleist bis zur Gräfin Marie von Ebner-Eschenbach. Zehn gemeinständliche Vorträge über die neueste deutsche Literatur. (Hannover: Verlag von Leopold Ost, 1891). 344. Karl Kaulfuß-Diesch takes a more neutral approach, listing Marlitt as part of the “Eklektizismus, der sich aus klassischen, romantischen und jungdeutschen Bestandteilen zusammensetzte.“ He does not group Marlitt with realist authors such as Storm and Keller, but acknowledges that “die Familienblatterzählungen der Eugenie John, die unter dem Namen E. Marlitt eine regelmäßige Mitarbeiterin der
children, it is appropriate to juxtapose Marlitt’s melding of fairytales and realist narration with Raabe’s, an undeniable member of the German realist canon, to compare how the relationship between fantasy and reality plays out in both canonical and non-canonical texts within the literary movement.

There is no explicit magic in either story; the fairytale and magic exist on the level of narration, in the stories the characters tell themselves and the stories the narrators construct.\textsuperscript{154} The fairytale child becomes the center of the narrated world, upsetting the narrator’s understanding of how the world functions. Else transforms Leutenbacher’s reality of misery and war into one of beauty and hope, but becomes the target of villagers looking for an explanation for their pastor’s behavior; Lilli transforms her reality and liminal position between childhood and adulthood through reading her world and relationships through the “Bluebeard” fairytale. In these early works by Raabe and Marlitt, the fairytale child points to a conflict of reality and fiction; however, this binary division breaks down as the fairytale child instead reveals how the fairytale has been internalized as a strategy to reflect on contemporary events for individuals and the German state.

The concept of the \textit{Märchennovelle} is one approach to examine the copresence of fairytale and realist elements within these texts. A \textit{Märchennovelle} creates an interpretive

\textsuperscript{154} In \textit{The Chain of Things: Divinatory Magic and the Practice of Reading in German Thought and Literature 1850-1940}, Eric Downing connects the act of reading to practicing magic (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2018).
challenge as both supernatural and natural explanations appear valid within the text.\textsuperscript{155} The opposing explanations often create contrasts in the text. Dieter Arendt argues “es könnte sein, dass über die fixierten Gattungsbegriffe hinaus konkrete Gegensatzpaare sichtbar werden: Phantasie und Kalkül, Wunder und Wirklichkeit, Zufall und Ananke, Glück und Berechnung, Armut und Reichtum, Segen und Kapital, Gold und Geld und so weiter.”\textsuperscript{156} The paradoxical idea of a realist fairytale child makes these oppositions more apparent, as the child is placed into both spaces, unclear as to which world she belongs. Maren Conrad offers a different possibility for interpreting the interaction between fairytales and realism.\textsuperscript{157} Conrad suggests that the copresence of fairytale and realist elements lends itself to finding a “Mittelweg” between realism and fantasy.\textsuperscript{158} Representations of children and their liminality are particularly active sites for observing where fantasy and reality interact.

Wilhelm Raabe’s \textit{Else von der Tanne} and Eugenie Marlitt’s \textit{Blaubart} both address the interpretive challenge created by the clash between fairytales and realist narratives, with a realist fairytale child at the center of both tales. In both cases, the suppression of the fairytale, seen in Else’s death and the Bluebeard-like neighbor’s continued life, appears as a move on Raabe and Marlitt’s part away from a belief in fantasy, as proof that a belief in fairytales leads the narrator...
astray. And yet, the belief in fairytales is what allows both narrators to imagine a world where the fairytale child does not die and a world that acknowledges the violence underlying the image of progress found in the neighbor.

Wilhelm Raabe’s *Else von der Tanne* (1865)

Children and fairytales are present throughout Wilhelm Raabe’s oeuvre. The narrator of his first novel *Chronik der Sperlingsgasse* (1857) draws on the idea of the fairytale in order to contrast his recollections of childhood with his position as an old man in the frame narrative. Raabe’s last completed novel *Die Akten des Vogelsangs* (1896) performs a similar gesture as the narrator depicts his childhood as having taken place in a “Märchenwinkel” that has been lost to time and the encroachment of the city. These early and late examples from Raabe’s works portray the fairytale nostalgically but they are no longer accessible or relevant in a late-nineteenth-century German context. In Raabe’s 1865 *Else von der Tanne*, the fairytale child is more than a sign of nostalgia. Raabe not only reflects on Germany’s literary history by combining trademarks of fairytales and realist writing; he also reflects on Germany’s past, present and future, as the fairytale child and her fate bring Germany’s ideal image of itself into conflict with its contemporary militaristic trajectory.

Wilhelm Raabe positioned himself outside the programmatic discussions of German realism. His brand of realism is described as testing the ideological, epistemological and literary boundaries of realism, to question the image of self and world understanding they promoted and to experiment with narrative perspectives. Raabe’s use of fairytales participates in what Dirk Götsche describes as Raabe’s engagement with the “poetologischen Koordinatensystem” des

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Realismus mit seiner Spannung von Mimesis und Poetisierung, Realität und Idealität.\textsuperscript{160} The use of fairytales alongside a historical narrative allows Raabe to create a story with fantastic elements that is still rooted in reality.

*Else von der Tanne* begins in a frame narrative on Christmas Eve in 1648. It is a date that ought to be full of hope, as 1648 marked the end of the Thirty Year’s War with the signing of the Peace of Westphalia. Despite the date being one full of promise of salvation and peace entering the world, Pastor Friedemann Leutenbacher is not preoccupied with thoughts of the birth of a messiah, but with thoughts of Else’s impending death. While attempting to write his Christmas sermon, Leutenbacher’s thoughts turn to memories of how a then-six-year-old Else and father, Magister Konradus, arrived in 1636 as refugees from Magdeburg, settled in the forest on the outskirts of town, and grew close to the pastor. Everything changed on June 24, 1648, Else’s eighteenth birthday and the day of the feast of John the Baptist. On that day she was accused of being a witch and attacked in the church by the villagers.

On its surface, Raabe’s novella seems disconnected from the German-speaking lands of the 1860s; however, both the story’s historic content of the Thirty Years War and the presence of the fairytale child connect the novella’s content with the nineteenth century. The Thirty Years War wrought devastation throughout the German-speaking lands, with Catholics fighting Protestants and Germans fighting foreign invaders, resulting in great loss of life on all sides. The religious conflict of the Thirty Years War\textsuperscript{161} can speak to the religious tensions involved in

\textsuperscript{160} Ibid., 17.

\textsuperscript{161} Many realist texts are set in this historic period. To name only a few examples, Theodor Storm’s *Aquis Submersis*, Theodor Fontane’s *Grete Minde*, Adalbert Stifter’s *Der Hochwald*, the Meretlein episode of Gottfried Keller’s *der Grüne Heinrich*, and Conrad Ferdinand Meyer’s *Gustav Adolfs Page*.
German unification, and the presence of war and the anxieties for the future speak directly to Raabe’s contemporary situation. *Else von der Tanne* was published the year after the second Schleswig-Holstein war, which saw Denmark ceding Schleswig, Holstein, and Lauenburg to Austria and Prussia, a division which would serve as one of the pretenses for the 1866 Austro-Prussian War. Combined with the connection established between fairytales, children and Germany in the introduction to the Brothers Grimm’s *Kinder- und Hausmärchen*, the presence of a fairytale child in this novella saturated with images of war suggests that the ideal image of Germany preserved within this allegory is being threatened. The copresence of history and a fairytale child connect Raabe’s historic novella set in the seventeenth-century to concerns of the nineteenth-century.

**Realist Elements in *Else von der Tanne***

The novella begins by establishing the text’s connection with history and time. It begins in a snowstorm and “man schrieb den Vierundzwanzigsten Decembris im Jahr eintausendsechshundertundachtundvierzig.” In all of the characters needed to write out a date as words, Raabe firmly establishes the historical context. The text also references historical events and figures, such as Johan Banér, a Swedish general during the war. While the events of the embedded narrative occur in the seventeenth-century, the narrator who frames the story is

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oriented toward the nineteenth-century. The narrator muses on the significance of the Thirty
Years War:

eine solche Zeit des Greuels und der Verwüstung hatte die Welt nicht gesehen, seit das
Imperium Romanum versank vor den wandernden Völkern. Nun war das zweite
Imperium, das Römische Reich Deutscher Nation, auch zerbrochen, und wenngleich die
Ruine zur Verwunderung aller Welt noch durch hundertundfünfzig Jahre aufrecht stand,
so lösten sich doch bei jedem Sturm und Wind verwitterte, morsche Teile ab und stürzten
mit Gekrach hernieder. So war es geschehen, als man den Frieden zu Münster und
Osnabrück schloß, und zwei Drittel der Nation waren verschüttet worden durch den
Dreißigjährigen Krieg.\textsuperscript{165}

The narrator possesses nineteenth-century knowledge of the centuries following the Treaty of
Westphalia. For the narrator, the ruins of the war are things to wonder at, but they are being worn
away by time.

The narrator’s orientation toward the nineteenth-century becomes most apparent at the
end of the story, when the narrator resumes his discussion of the ruins left behind in the war. The
narrator reflects: “heute sind von dem Dorf Wallrode im Elend nur noch geringe Trümmer im
Walde zu erblicken; es ist nicht auszusagen, nicht an den Fingern herzuzählen, was niederging
durch diesen deutschen Krieg, welcher dreißig Jahre gedauert hat.”\textsuperscript{166} This end reveals the
narrator’s agenda. In telling this story, the narrator creates new ruins to remind his readers of
what has been forgotten. The ruins of the Thirty Years’ War have disappeared and without them
the past cannot speak and provide reminders and warnings of the destruction that German-
speaking peoples have both endured and committed.\textsuperscript{167} Dagmar Paulus argues that in Raabe’s

\textsuperscript{165} Ibid., 161.

\textsuperscript{166} Ibid., 198.

\textsuperscript{167} Similar temporal displacement is not unique to Raabe. To name only a few examples, other realist authors such
as Theodor Storm with \textit{Aquis submersus} (published 1876, set in 1656); Theodor Fontane with “Grete Minde”
(published 1879, set in 1617), or Conrad Ferdinand Meyer \textit{Das Leiden eines Knaben} (published 1877, set in 1709),
set their novellas in other historic periods, using the temporal distance as an additional framing device. Additional
particular case, “Raabe ist es weder um Monumentalisierung zu tun noch um die selbstbewußte Festschreibung nationaler Identität mit den Mitteln der Geschichte. Im Mittelpunkt stehen vielmehr in der Regel die ephemere Stimme einer einzelnen Figur und deren bei weitem nicht immer erfolgreicher Versuch, die Ereignisse der Vergangenheit in einen Sinnzusammenhang einzuordnen.” Raabe’s *Else von der Tanne* does not solve Germany’s identity crisis of the mid-nineteenth century, rather its narrator frames the story as a reflection on contemporary issues of identity and history.

The narrator’s engagement with history is also present in the characters’ complexities. The characters are not simply character types as defined in Vladimir Propp’s *Morphology of the Folktale*, where types of characters and their actions can easily move between texts. Raabe’s characters are situated in history and cannot be transplanted from one story to another. Leutenbacher’s body literally bears the marks of history: “um seine Handgelenke trug er die blutigroten Spuren und Striemen der Stricke und Riemen, welche ihm die Raubgesellen des General Pfuhl, der sich rühmte, allein achthundert Dörfer verbrannt zu haben, anlegten, als sie ihn zwischen den Gäulen fortschleppten in den Wald.” Leutenbacher’s body is a text written by the violence of history. Raabe also defines Else and her father by their historic moment as refugees after destruction of Protestant Magdeburg in 1631 by Bavarian General Johann

examples from Raabe’s oeuvre include *Das Geheimnis* (published 1860, set around 1700); “*Der Student von Wittenberg* (published 1859, set in 1559); *Die Hämelschen Kinder* (published 1863, set in 1258).


170 Raabe, *“Else von der Tanne,”* 161-162.
T’Serclaes von Tilly. The characters in Raabe’s novella are defined by their contact with historical events and not by their function within the novella.

Raabe’s story contains key markers of German realist texts in the presence of history, delineation of psychologically-nuanced and contextually-embedded characters, and reflection on storytelling. However, “Else von der Tanne” also contains traits indicative of fairytales, such as its tone, setting, use of animals, character types such as helpers, and certain plot elements such as the repeated fairytale warning.

**Fairytale elements in *Else von der Tanne***

Although the story begins with the overwhelming presence of history, the narrator also draws on fairy-tale conventions to create a fairytale atmosphere. Following an initial description of the weather (“Es schneite heftig”), the narrator paints a picture that would fit into a fairytale world:

> Im wilden Harzwald, nicht weit von dessen Rande die armen Hütten in einem Häuflein zusammengekauert lagen, sauste und brauste es mächtig. Es knackte das Gezweig, es knarrten die Stämme; der Wolf heulte, wenn die Windsbraut eine kurze Minute lang Atem schöpfte. – man schrieb den Vierundzwanzigsten Decembris im Jahr eintausendsechshundertundachtundvierzig.

The initial description juxtaposes the violence of the weather against the rhymes within the description. The rhymes and alliteration bring a playfulness to the description that would be more suited for a children’s tale than a historic novella. The fairytale-esque atmosphere of the opening description is furthered by the sound of a wolf, a frequent fairytale villain.

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171 Ibid., 161.
The forest setting also draws on the fairytale tradition, particularly since representations of nature in German realism tend to focus on domesticated natural spaces such as gardens.\(^{172}\) The forest is a space of possibility and danger, where fairytale protagonists go to find adventure, or where adventure finds them.\(^{173}\) Sonja Klimek argues that the forest in *Else von der Tanne* is both a site of the “Unheimliche” and danger and a site of self-discovery and peace.\(^{174}\) The novella’s setting on the edge of the forest creates a liminal space where the outcomes have not yet been decided.\(^{175}\) The geographic divide between the village and the forest within the novella marks the eventual conflict between reality and fantasy when individuals attempt to cross between those spaces and bring fantasy into reality.

Despite the emphasis on historicity, the narrator actively engages in the enchantment of the novella’s setting. The narrator explicitly connects the narrative to fairytales when describing Leutenbacher’s relationship with the forest prior to Else:

Weil dem Walde die Seele fehlte und weil Undine, die sich nach einer Seele sehnte, nur ein schönes Märchen ist, konnte der Pfarrherr von Wallrode im Elend nur den dritten Teil seiner Predigten im Walde machen. Das erbarmungswürdige, halb tierische Leben um seine leere, halbzertrümmerte Behausung her hatte doch wieder mehr dafür zu geben als die Natur. Als nun von dem Frühling des Jahres sechzehnhundertsiebenunddreißig an

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\(^{173}\) Forest are the sites of magic in fairytales, a space contrasted with villages and cultivated society. They are the location protagonists enter upon leaving home, where they encounter magical helpers, where rules seem to break down. This contrast between cultivated and wild spaces is also present in Realism. Writing on Theodor Storm’s Kunstmärchen “Die Regentrude,” Conrad notes that “phantastische Elemente dürfen hier nur im Rahmen von Figurenreden und als von subjektiver Wahrnehmung oder großer zeitlicher Distanz verzerrte Ereignisse dargestellt werden.” Conrad, “Das realistische Märchen: Ein Oxyymoron?”, 60.


The narrator draws on Friedrich de la Motte Fouqué’s 1811 Kunstmärchen Undine to describe how the forest becomes an enchanted space for Leutenbacher. It is not Leutenbacher who gains a soul in the process of enchantment, but the forest. If the forest resembles Undine in the comparison, then Else fills the role of the knight whose love results in the creation of Undine’s soul. The use of this fairytale comparison already reveals the tragic end of the story; just as Hulbrand’s betrayal of Undine resulted in their separation and his death, Else’s attempt to leave the forest results in her demise. Even as the narrator qualifies this connection as only happening “für den Pfarrer,” the narrator uses the fairytale to structure the events being described.

Animals in Else von der Tanne often behave like animals in fairytales and characterize Else as good and connected to nature. Leutenbacher believes Else: “verstand die Sprache der Tiere, des Windes, des Lichtes ganz anders und viel besser als der Pfarrherr, und der Pfarrherr hatte viel mehr von dem Kinde zu lernen als das Kind von ihm.” This connection between children and nature repeats the connection drawn by the Grimms and seen in fairytales of protagonists showing kindness to animals and animals coming to the aid of protagonists. Whether or not Else actually understands the language of animals, the novella’s description of Else’s interactions with animals furthers the image of her as a fairytale child. The first image of Else is as she is resting among threatening dogs, one of them, “der Wolfshund, dessen Leib [dem

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177 Ibid., 179.

178 For example, Hänsel and Gretel are helped across a river by a swan; birds sort lentils from peas for Cinderella; animals help the servant perform the tasks needed to marry the princess in the “White Snake”; an owl, raven and dove mourn over Snow White’s coffin.
Mädchen] zum Kopfkissen gedient hatte.” While this image is certainly Biblical and evokes Isaiah 11:6 where the wolf lies with the lamb, it is also reminiscent of animal protectors and helpers in the proximity of good fairytale children. Animals appear to warn her of impending danger and eventually mourn her, with a deer and dove keeping vigil over her deathbed. The dove in particular evokes the image of animals gathered around Snow White’s glass casket. The text emphasizes Else’s goodness through her connection with animals in a manner that is both fantastic and Biblical.

Every fairytale needs a villain, and the villagers fill this role in Else von der Tanne. As the villagers attempt to trap Else in the church, believing her to be a witch, the narrator describes them as “selber bösen, schadenfrohen, heimtückischen Geistern und Kobolden so ähnlich wie möglich.” In addition to becoming evil spirits and creatures, the mob has become a singular collective sound, a “Geheul” as they attack Else. As a “Geheul” they reintroduce the sound of the wolf from the novella’s opening. Though the villagers may not literally become these fairytale villains, the fairytale structures the narrator’s account of the attack.

If the villagers take on the role of the villain, Else takes on the role of the princess. The narrator, similar to how he describes the villagers in their anger, uses explicit fairytale references when Else is leaving the safety of the forest:

das zahme Reh begleitete die schöne Herrin mit fröhlichen Sprüngen und schmeichelndem Anschmiegen durch den Forst; und der Meister und Vater mit seinem

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180 The dove is another animal imbued with Biblical symbolism alongside fairytale references and affirms an image of Else as good, recalling the dove bearing an olive branch to Noah as well as the holy spirit descending from heaven like a dove following the baptism of Jesus by John the Baptist, whose feast day marks Else’s birthday (Matthew 3:16).
182 Ibid., 186.
jetzt so weißen ehrwürdigen Bart und seinem langen Stabe glich wahrlich wohl einem Zauberer, aber einem guten, der ein aus dem Bann und der Gewalt unheimlicher Mächte gerettetes Königskind durch den Forst geleitete.\textsuperscript{183}

The imposition of fairytale language on Else in this moment comes from the narrator, not from Leutenbacher, who explicitly states that Else and her father resemble characters in a fairytale. Within the forest, Else is in a fairytale idyll. She is accompanied by a happy animal companion and her father who appears like a powerful good wizard. The narrator’s use of this fairytale imagery raises the expectation for a happy ending, since Else and her father are about to leave the forest. For a female fairytale child, the departure from the forest signals a return to civilization, the moment when they triumphantly become a bride.

In addition to the forewarning provided by the narrator’s comparison to \textit{Undine}, fairytale plot structures signal that Else’s departure from the forest will end in her death rather than marriage. The deer happily accompanies Else and her father to the very edge of the forest, then it suddenly stops and tries to prevent Else from leaving. But Else and her father do not heed the deer’s warning, dismissing it as a deer behaving like a normal deer. As in a fairytale, the warning is repeated. Else and her father have left the forest and along the way meet several people, “\textit{deren Blicke und Gebärden warnten deutlicher, als die Augen des Rehes es vermochten.”}\textsuperscript{184} The warning is growing more and more explicit, moving from the language of animals into the body language of humans. The third warning is most explicit and verbal as the old woman Justine warns her: “\textit{Hüt dich, hüt dich Mägdlein! Hüt dein jung Leben, Liebchen! Dein Schatten gehet vor dir, fall nicht über deinen Schatten! Wer fällt, fällt in seinen Schatten, und nicht alle stehen}

\textsuperscript{183} Ibid., 181.

\textsuperscript{184} Ibid., 182.
wieder auf.” Three warnings – one from an animal, one from human behavior and one from words – are ignored. The warnings are dismissed by Else and her father who interpret them as the normal behavior of animals, suspicious villagers, and a woman with a bad reputation. However, as any reader of fairytales knows, ignoring warnings leads to dire consequences.\textsuperscript{186}

**Realist Treatment of Fairytales in *Else von der Tanne***

For all of the fairytale elements present in the tone, setting, characters and plot, *Else von der Tanne* is not a fairytale. Raabe treats these fairytale elements in a realist way: the forest is full of Swedish soldiers not wolves; the animals act like animals; and the fairytale elements are focalized via Leutenbacher, the villagers and the narrator, all of whom need the fairytale child to create a coherent narrative out of the events around them.

Although narrator establishes the forest as an enchanted space for Leutenbacher, nature in *Else von der Tanne* is not a refuge from history. History finds its way into the forest, shattering the illusion of pure nature. In their introduction to *Kinder- und Hausmärchen*, the Brothers Grimm use storms as a metaphor for history and the threat to Germany during the Napoleonic Wars. Rather than providing shelter, nature is where individuals encounter greater historical forces. Leutenbacher is tortured in the forest and the narrator describes how Else had “in jungfräulicher Schöne ruhig und still gestanden und dem fernen, fernen Rollen und Donnern in der Ebene gelauscht, wo die Schweden unter ihrem Generalleutnant Königsmark sich mit den Kaiserlichen jagten.”\textsuperscript{187} The Swedish army is the oncoming storm that Else hears from a

\textsuperscript{185} Ibid., 182.


\textsuperscript{187} Raabe, “*Else von der Tanne,*” 191.
distance. The alignment of storms and war in both the Grimms’ introduction and in the novella encourages a new reading of the snow storm that dominates the story’s frame narrative. The storm that grows more and more violent until the moment of Else’s death\(^\text{188}\) can no longer be read as just a sign of the natural setting. Else is not just a fairytale child living alongside historical events, but a fairytale child threatened by history and violence, a personification of the idealized German nation threatened by its contemporary violence and also its history.

The narrator’s juxtaposition of the fairytale child and violent history is furthered as the narrator describes Else as an active participant in interrupting the forest idyll with history. Else’s longest moment of speaking is a song about the siege of Magedburg: “Vierzehn lange, lange Wochen/Gab die Liga Sturm auf Sturm/Vierzehn lange, lange Wochen/Trotzte Mauer, Wall und Turm./Tapfre, fromme, teutsche Bürger/Schützen Glauben, Ehr und Haus, - /Dreißigtausend Ketzerleben/Rottet heut die Kirche aus!”\(^\text{189}\) Else sings a song about historical violence, not innocence and nature. The narrator informs the readers “Aber nicht bloß dieses Lied, nein, manch andere Weisen, deren Noten niemals eine Menschenhand auf Papier festgebannt hatte wie die Buchstaben eines Buches, sang Else von der Tanne!”\(^\text{190}\) In providing the text to this song over any other song Else sings, the narrator emphasizes that Else is a child whose background lies in the ruins of Magdeburg.\(^\text{191}\) She is not a princess who has wandered into the forest, but a

\(^{188}\) Andreas Blödorn offers an alternative interpretation of the storm in his study of death semantics in “Else von der Tanne,” and how the process of dying was connected to a loss of senses, and how this process can be observed in Raabe’s representations of nature in the story. “Die Todessemantik des Realismus: Zum Zusammenhang von Sinneswahrnehmung, Tod und Narration am Beispiel von Wilhelm Raabe’s “Else von der Tanne.” Jahrbuch der Raabe Gesellschaft (2014): 1-19.

\(^{189}\) Raabe, “Else von der Tanne,” 178.

\(^{190}\) Ibid., 178.

\(^{191}\) Dagmar Paulus argues that “Im Gegensatz zu den anderen Figuren bleibt Else von der Traumatisierungen des Krieges zunächst verschont. Sie ist als Figur ohne Vergangenheit und ohne Gedächtnis konzipiert.” Abgesang auf
girl whose father sought shelter after losing the rest of their family. Her presence in the forest is not the product of fairytale structures but a decision made by her father to keep her safe from the violence their family had suffered in Magdeburg.

Just as the narrator breaks the image of the forest as an untouched fairytale space and Else as a fairytale figure, the narrator also counters the fairytale conventions around the representation of animals. After Else is attacked by the villagers and lies wounded on the ground:

Die kleinen Vögel, welche der Lärm aus den Bäumen des Friedhofs verscheucht hatte, kamen zurück, hüpfen von Zweig zu Zweig und reckten zwitschernd die Hälse und sahen neugierig herab auf die stille, traurige Gruppe, wußten sie aber sowenig zu deuten wie den Aufruhr und das schreckhafte Getös vorhin: harmlos spielten sie ihr heiteres Sommerdasein im Sonnenlicht und grünen Gezweig weiter.\[^{192}\]

The birds do not mourn over Else’s body like the raven, owl and dove mourn over Snow White’s glass coffin. The narrative order created by humans is disturbed, not that natural order; the natural world is unaffected by the tragedy that has occurred and is indifferent to Else’s suffering. With the deer expressing concern over Else’s departure from the forest, the narrator sets an expectation that all animals will behave like fairytale animals, but this expectation is subverted and undermines the earlier fairytale imagery.

The negation of the fairytale emphasizes the focalization of the fairytale elements by Leutenbacher, the villagers and the narrator. The fairytale elements and fairytale child reside in the narratives they create. Leutenbacher needs the fairytale child to restore a positive connection to nature in the midst of war and to suppress his erotic interest in a child. The villagers need the

den Helden, 119. However, Else’s song of Magdeburg belies that interpretation, though it is true that she is framed so that readers are denied any access to her true character and thoughts.

\[^{192}\] Raabe, “Else von der Tanne,” 188.
fairytale child to make sense of their pastor’s neglect of his duty. The narrator needs the fairytale child and fairytale elements to create an allegory that will connect the fairytale child’s fate to the fate of nineteenth-century German identity.

Leutenbacher is an educated man in an uneducated village. His creation of a fairytale child in Else seems out of place in a learned man; however, the creation of the fairytale child in his perception of Else addresses his trauma of living in the Thirty Years War, works as a strategy for him to reconnect with nature and his surroundings, and allows him to indulge in his relationship with Else while maintaining the appearance of innocence by constantly affirming her child-status. Christian Gardian and Andrea Rüttiger have addressed in part how Else is a product of Leutenbacher’s narration. For Rüttiger, Else is an underdefined character who only gains importance and interest through Leutenbacher’s gaze and becomes an “Ideenträgerin, die das Ideal des Guten, Reinen und Schönen repräsentiert.”

Christoph Gardian similarly argues that Leutenbacher’s idealization of Else is a strategy by which Leutenbacher can achieve a “Verklärung” of the world. For Gardian, the idealization of Else does transform Leutenbacher’s world, but this transformation is an illusion. While Gardian and Rüttiger convincingly argue that Else’s wonderous qualities exist in others’ imaginations, this reading neglects how the fairytale restructures and brings order to the troubled world in the novella.

The fairytale child provides structures and orientation where both seemed impossible. Through Else, Leutenbacher can see the forest as a site of healing rather than a site of violence.


For Leutenbacher, a great part of healing is building connections, which becomes possible through the fairytale child. Before Else, Leutenbacher passively engages with nature. The forest is his place of contemplation and an object of observation, but it is a one-sided relationship: “nun war der Wald nur schön, erhaben, lieblich, feierlich: eine Seele hatte er nicht wiederzugeben.”195 The fairytale child is the catalyst for Leutenbacher developing an interactive rather than passive relationship with nature.

Leutenbacher’s understanding of Else as a fairytale figure is based on the transformation he undergoes through his interactions with her. Else’s magic resides not in her actions, but in Leutenbacher’s relationship with her. This connection begins when Leutenbacher visits an ill, seven-year-old Else and their eyes meet:

Dem Zauber, der aus diesen beiden dunkeln Kindesaugen auf den Mann, den Diener am Worte Gottes, den Gelehrten, den Menschen, der soviel litt und erfuhr, strahlte, war nicht zu widerstehen; – von dieser Stunde, von diesem Augenblick an war Friedemann Leutenbacher an die Hütte des Magisters Konradus gebannt; von diesem Augenblicke an bekam der große Wald eine Seele, und der Pfarrherr brauchte nicht mehr aus ihm zu fliehen, weil er sich fürchtete in seiner Einsamkeit. Dieses Kind bedeutete für den Mann aus dem Elend die Offenbarung eines Daseins, welches er nicht kannte, nach welchem er nur ein dumpfes, schmerzvolles, unbestimmtes Sehnen im Herzen trug.”196

It is their shared gaze, a moment of reciprocity, which brings wonder back into Leutenbacher’s world, a moment that the narrator depicts through the lens of magic with the “Zauber” of Else’s eyes and description of Leutenbacher as “gebannt.” Meeting the eyes of this fairytale child is the connection that sparks new connections. Leutenbacher creates a fairytale child out of Else to find order and peace and overcome his trauma. Leutenbacher’s perception can be read as a form of

196 Ibid, 176.
escapism, but the fairytale structures to which he turns provide insight into Leutenbacher’s psychological reality.

Leutenbacher constructs the image of Else as a fairytale child as a means of processing trauma and positioning himself in a state of innocence. Leutenbacher describes his interactions with Else as a return to childhood: “Er war so jung geblieben in seiner Verlassenheit, daß er mit ihr ein Kind sein konnte, daß in ihrem kindischen Herzen kein Ton anklangen konnte, der nicht in seiner Brust einen Widerhall fand.” The fairytale child is a means of restoring innocence and suppressing eroticism. There is no denying Leutenbacher’s fascination with Else, but in framing their interactions in the language of childhood, Leutenbacher conceals the erotic undertones of his obsession. In his study of fairytales, Bruno Bettelheim argues that the power and allure of fairytales is their ability to address anxieties. Bettelheim claims that fairytales reveal inner conflicts of human beings, and provide a means “to make some coherent sense out of the turmoil […] he needs ideas on how to bring his inner house into order, and on that basis be able to create order in his life.” Leutenbacher’s construction of fairytales around Else is not a delusion but a strategy for addressing his internal conflicts. Leutenbacher uses the innocence of a fairytale child to distance himself from sexual impulses and to return to a state prior to the trauma of war.

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197 Many programmatic thinkers surrounding German Realism, such as Julian Schmidt, were particularly critical of fairytales and Romantic literature, considering them escapist and disconnected from reality. Clifford Bernd. Poetic Realism in Scandinavia and Central Europe. (Columbia, SC: Camden House, 1995), 127.


199 This is not to say that Leutenbacher’s relationship to Else is unproblematic or without erotic undertones. The moment of his “enchantment” occurs when she was a seven-year-old child. The narrative jumps through her childhood, with her suddenly an 18-year-old at the climax, but the image he was enchanted by was a pre-pubescent girl, which I am interpreting as being transformed by the innocence associated with childhood and not as an inherently erotic act.

Where Leutenbacher needs fairytales to rediscover connections and innocence in a war-torn world, the villagers need the fairytales to explain their pastor’s abandonment. For the villagers, however, Else is not a fairytale child, but a witch. The villagers tell stories of how: “der Pfarrherr von dem „fremden Volk“ zuerst und am giftigsten verzaubert worden sei.” Within the text, their conclusion that Else is a witch is realistic, given the seventeenth-century setting. Witchcraft provides the logical explanation for their pastor’s behavior, as he neglects them to spend more and more time in the forest. Reading Else as a witch also allows the villagers to blame an external, female force for their pastor’s abandonment rather than blaming Leutenbacher or themselves for the growing distance in their relationship.

Problems arise when the villagers begin to read fairytale structures in their interactions with Else and her father. Magister Konradus offers the villagers four gold pieces in return for help in building his hut, and this business transaction is colored with the imagery of a deal with the devil when combined with Magister Konradus’s refusal to speak of his origins, use of Latin, and the narrator’s description of the bargain as a “Pakt.” The narrator demonstrates sympathy for the villagers’ position, describing how the villagers’ “besten und bösesten Willen” was frequently directed towards the idea of attacking Else and her father’s hut in the forest. The narrator presents the villagers’ fear as justified in the circumstances of war, one driven by self-defense. Seeing Else as a fairytale figure provides the villagers with justification for their fears of outsiders

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201 Else is not the only female figure read as a witch by her community in German realism. Other examples include Gottfried Keller’s Meretlein in *der grüne Heinrich*, Theodor Storm’s Renate in his novella of the same name, and also the destructive qualities and association with fire of Theodor Fontane’s Grete Minde could be read as witch-like in imagery.

202 Raabe, “*Else von der Tanne,*” 172.

203 Ibid., 170.
Where Leutenbacher needs a fairytale child to rediscover innocence and beauty, the villagers need to destroy the fairytale child to achieve their fairytale ending. When Else and her father arrive at the church, “die Alten schwatzten untereinander, die Jungen kosten und lachten oder neckten und höhnten einander, die Kinder jagten sich um die Gräber.”204 At this point, they are not a mob, but a group enjoying an ordinary Sunday morning until the strangers who have driven their pastor away from his calling, arrive. The narrative of the witch serves to further justify their anger, displacing their dissatisfaction with Leutenbacher’s behavior to the object of his obsession. They begin to shout: “»Die Hex! Die Hex! Der Hexenmeister!« ging es anfangs leise, dann immer lauter in der Runde. »Was wollen sie hier? Weshalb kommen sie herab aus ihrem Schlupfloch? Sie sollen bleiben, wo sie sind! Sie sollen nicht herniederkommen ins Dorf!«”205 Else and her father are not like a witch or sorcerer, they are a witch and sorcerer. The villagers need a literal witch to explain their pastor’s neglect and create a narrative they can control.

In reading Else as a witch, the villagers create a solution to the threat she represents: kill the witch who represents the dangerous, feminine and foreign in their midst.206 The villagers embrace this narrative, throwing dirt from a fresh grave, branches from a gallows tree, and stones at Else. The stone that causes the injury from which Else succumbs months later is thrown by a child: “aus der Hand des Buben, welcher den dürren Zweig vom Galgenbaume brach, die Hexe und Unholdin in die Kirche zu bannen, flog ein scharfkantiger Kiesel und traf die Jungfrau auf

204 Ibid., 183.
205 Ibid., 183.
die linke Brust.” This moment of violence is morally ambiguous. The boy acts like an innocent child fighting against evil with the only weapon at hand, a stone, reminiscent of a humble fairytale hero or David fighting Goliath. The stone also calls to mind John 8:7 and Jesus’s call that he who is without sin may cast the first stone. From the villagers’ perspectives, they are victims of war and witchcraft, acting in defense of their way of life. The villagers’ interpretation of Else as a witch is indicative of the fear in which they live; clinging to that narrative provides them with control they otherwise lack.

While the fairytale elements are focalized by Leutenbacher and the villagers, the narrator crafts and undermines the image of Else as a fairytale child. The first image of Else is her bathed in the red, evening light: “Vor allem aber sah [Leutenbacher] auf das schlafende Mägdlein, welches plötzlich ein Strahl der abendlichen Sonne, in rötlichem Glanz um den Stamm einer uralten Eiche schießend, traf und welches nunmehr in diesem Glanz und Blenden die Augen aufschlug.” The light striking Else is both illuminating and blinding, providing and blocking insight to the subject it hits. The narrator describes Else as a sight to marvel at, though she does nothing extraordinary. The narrator furthers this impression in Else’s first words to Leutenbacher: “Einen fröhlichen Abend wünsch ich dir! Er hat dich wohl schwer erschreckt, der arme Marschalk? Zürn ihm nicht, ich bitt dich.” This is a poetic greeting, not the words of an ordinary six-year-old girl. The narrator positions Else beyond the realm of the ordinary. At the same time, the narrator cautions against that reading. When the narrator describes the attack in the churchyard, the narrator recreates the initial image of Else: “So rot war der Schein der

208 Ibid., 165
209 Ibid., 166.
In the repetition of the image of a sleeping Else in the red light of the evening, the narrator reveals how the image of a fairytale child is both transformative and blinding. The light that revealed her beauty now conceals the severity of her injuries. The repetition of this imagery emphasizes the narrator’s control over Else’s image.

The narrator also mediates access to Else’s voice. After providing the text of Else’s song about the city of Magdeburg, the narrator states:

> aber nicht bloß dieses Lied, nein, manch andere Weisen, deren Noten niemals eine Menschenhand auf Papier festgebannt hatte wie die Buchstaben eines Buches, sang Else von der Tanne! Else von der Tanne, die schönste Maid – Else von der Tanne, die von der Sünde und dem Greuel der Welt im Wald, im Elend unberührt geblieben war! Else von der Tanne, die reinste, heiligste Blume in der grauenvollen Wüstenei der Erde – Else von der Tanne, die Seele des großen Waldes!\(^{211}\)

The narrator denies the reader knowledge of Else’s other songs, ironically claiming that they have never been recorded, which draws attention to the narrator’s decision to record this song over any of her other poems. The reader must trust the narrator’s claim that her poems are as marvelous as he says. The removal of Else’s voice is immediately followed by the narrator’s transformation of Else’s name into a song. He repeats her name as if it were a magic spell whose incantation will bring into existence the idyllic space to which his poem connects her. For the narrator, Else is the material to craft this amalgamation of narratives, fairytales and history.

Throughout the novella, the narrator maintains the image of Else as a child, which sustains the associations between her and fairytales. Else enters the story as a six-year-old girl and is eighteen at its end. Throughout the story, she is referred to as “Kind,” “Mädchen,” “Mägdlein” or “Jungfrau.” The erasure of puberty calls to mind its erasure in fairytales, where

\(^{210}\) Ibid., 188.

\(^{211}\) Ibid., 178.
young girls become brides without any reference to the stage between childhood and marriage. The narrator’s continued reference to Else as a child erases any sexual desires she might have, and actively works against reading her as an object of desire, despite her transition into adulthood. The narrator preserves the image of the innocent child, and the attack against her on her eighteenth birthday represent the loss of innocence.

Else’s character is defined by how others view her, more so than her own actions, and the narrator participates in this mixing of signs and images. This can be seen in the moment Else is injured, where: “aus der Hand des Buben, welcher den dürren Zweig vom Galgenbaume brach, die Hexe und Unholdin in die Kirche zu bannen, flog ein scharfkantiger Kiesel und traf die Jungfrau auf die linke Brust” Else is simultaneously a “Hexe” “Unholdin” and “Jungfrau.” The child throwing the stone is both hero and villain; the child being hit is both villain and innocent victim. The narrator’s juxtaposition of Else as both witch and victim is indicative of the overall problem of the novella: though Leutenbacher and the villagers interpret Else differently, they resemble one another through their shared action of reading Else as a fairytale figure in order to construct narratives that grant them peace and hope for a restoration of order.

Though the narrator mixes imagery of villains and victims in the moment of Else’s stoning, the narrator is relatively consistent in painting Else in the language of innocence, frequently coded with Christian overtones. It is not a coincidence that Else is stoned on the Saint Day of John the Baptist and dies on Christmas Eve. Else has a final message for Leutenbacher


213 This is not to say that others do not see her as an object of desire. For more information on references to women described as children in romantic contexts, see Zwischen Mignon und Lulu: Das Phantasma der Kindsbraut in Biedermeier und Realismus, ed. Malte Stein, Regina Fasold, Heinrich Detering, (Erich Schmidt Verlag: Berlin, 2010).

“er soll das Vergangene von sich werfen und soll der Kinder gedenken und zu den Alten reden wie zu den Kindern. Wir sind so glücklich, glücklich gewesen in ihrem Walde, und als sie die Steine auf uns warfen und mich trafen, wüßten sie nicht, was sie taten”215 Where Else’s first words are poetic, her final words, reported by her father, recall Christ’s final words on the cross in Luke 23:34: forgive them father, they know not what they do. The narrator frames the story on Christmas Eve, 1648, a date that should be welcoming the restoration of order and peace, and yet it ends with the death of a Christ-figure.216 The Christlike representation of Else further associates her with an idyllic world beyond the world of violence and war. The narrator’s representation of Else as a female, fairytale child allows the narrator to also represent her as Christlike. Artistic representations of children as innocent developed from angelic representations of Christ based on of the childlike, innocent cherubim.217 By the nineteenth century, however, children were independently sources of innocent imagery. From a nineteenth-century perspective, Else’s position as a child connects her to innocence and goodness and makes it possible to read her as a Christlike figure in a way no adult could be represented. In addition being categorized as a child, Else’s gender positions her beyond the world of male violence. In representing her as a Christlike fairytale child, the narrator positions Else firmly outside of a world that turns toward violence, hate and suspicion.

215 Ibid., 194.

216 Günter Cremer argues that Else’s death should not be read as that of a martyr, understanding martyrdom as having a religious and worldly meaning of dying for one’s belief or level of self-sacrifice for a non-religious cause. Cremer cautions against this interpretation because Else appears “weniger als menschliches Wesen aus Fleisch und Blut den al seine Allegorie der Seele; mit der Verkörperung einer Märtyrerrolle wäre diese Deutung nicht zu vereinbaren.” in his article “Gott oder Satan? Negierte Heilsbotschaft und Nihilismus in Raabes Erzählung “Else von der Tanne” in Jahrbuch der Raabe-Gesellschaft (2000): 83. Though Else is not a perfect image of a martyr, the Christian-imagery cannot be overlooked, as well as the absence of salvation upon her death. Cremer also notes that Leutenbacher, in his attraction to Else, seeks salvation in her and nature, rather than God.

The narrator constructs Else as the ultimate Other. She is not from the village; she does not have clear origins (to them); she is associated with nature, not civilization; she appears to connect with animals more than people; she has no voice of her own; she is a beautiful, innocent child living in a world of violence; and she is female with power over a village authority figure. In her study of the novel, Nancy Armstrong argues that the modern subject must “find a way of being themselves within the constraints that transform any diverse group of individuals into a coherent whole.” Part of belonging to a social structure is accepting its norms and placing limits on fantasy for the sake of belonging. Else never puts on such constraints and cannot be integrated into the village order.

Else represents the villagers’ fears because she, by virtue of how others read and create images of her, is set apart from the norms. Armstrong later suggests that “there is something important to be gained from a positive reading of what the Victorian novel deliberately abjicts as antagonistic to the very terms in which it negotiates the fraught relationship of self to society” since doing this invalidates all categories that “support and lend their features to differences among classes, races, sexualities and ethnicities.” From the villagers’ perspective, killing Else was necessary for the good of the community, since by doing so they eliminate the outsider who has seduced their pastor away from them. In killing Else, they restore modern order because they reject the presence of the fantastic in their midst; they reject the alternative poetic world that Leutenbacher sees in her, and the world the narrator creates around her which allows for the coexistence of fantasy and history.

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218 Nancy Armstrong, How Novels Think, 56.

Though the villagers see Else as an outsider, the narrator’s alignment of Else with fairytales and nature suggests an interpretation beyond the elimination of a threat to modern subjectivity. Characters such as Else cannot exist in the world of modern subjects. Though the fairytale imagery surrounding Else emphasizes the construction of her representation, this imagery also binds her presentation to the nineteenth-century narrator. The fairytales and history link Else to the image of the child in the Grimms’ foreword— the child who is aligned with an image of Germany that Germans have invested in through the proliferation of fairytales that create the image of Germany as an innocent, beautiful child.

The narrator needs for Else to be a fairytale child to create an allegory for Germany in the nineteenth-century. Though portrayed as an outsider, Else and her father are Germans, as are the villagers who kill her. The fairytale child, an image German cultural identity has invested in, is killed by Germans in the name of self-defense. The narrator needs a fairytale child to demonstrate concern for how German modernity is destroying the very ideal it has created through a disavowal of that which allows the feminine, fantastic child to thrive.

Despite the pessimism of the story’s ending, the frame narrative’s discussion of ruins offers an alternative to despair. The narrator does not advocate following Leutenbacher into the wilderness upon losing Else, but calls for reflection. In creating a fairytale child, the narrator creates a reminder of the ideals Germany associates with itself, and in killing the fairytale child, the narrator mourns that this child cannot exist in a modern Germany that orients itself around discipline in the school, war with its neighbors, and suspicion and hatred of those within its borders who profess different beliefs. The artificial ruins created by the text caution against Leutenbacher’s escapist detachment from reality as he falls into fantasy, and against the villager’s fear of outsiders as it results in the destruction of beauty and nature. Instead, they
position the fairytale child within history. The text puts the fairytale child in dialogue with the present, as a figure capable of addressing real-world concerns and psychological realities, and it is through this that the fairytale child can bring order and imagine a better world, even if that world seems unattainable.

**Eugenie Marlitt’s Blaubart (1866)**

Frederike Christiane Henriette John (1825-1887), better known by her pseudonym Eugenie Marlitt occupies a more marginal position than Raabe in the context of German Realism, often categorized as an author of popular fiction in Ernst Keil’s liberal family magazine *die Gartenlaube*, though recent scholarship seeks to reassess Marlitt’s position vis-à-vis German realism as well as the literary merits of *Trivialliteratur* or *Unterhaltungsliteratur.* If the division between reality and fairytales were as simple as Vischer claimed in his *Ästhetik oder Wissenschaft des Schönen*, Marlitt’s frequent use of fairytale motifs would present an obstacle.

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220 Tobias Klein provides a comprehensive summary of research on Marlitt, from the 1870s to the 2000s. He notes particular strands such as criticism of her writing (and women’s writing in general) [Otto Heller; 1905], the sentimentality in her work [Bertha Potthast, 1926], viewing Marlitt as a political, liberal, middle-class author [Ernst Kohn-Bramstedt, 1937], a focus on the trivial aspects of her work- reading it as apolitical [Gustav Sichelschmidt, 1969; Gabriele Stecker, 1969], a return to reading Marlitt’s work as political and kleinbürgerlich [Sigurd Paul Scheichl, 1984], feminist approaches [Ruth- Ellen Boetcher-Joeres, 1998; Marina Zitterer, 2002], as well as strands of research attempting to liberate Marlitt from the category of the trivial [Cornelia Brauer Hobohm, 2006; Hans Arens, 1994; Erika Dingeldey, 2007.] He also notes Marlitt’s position in research on the role of popular literature, such as in Kirsten Belgum’s *Popularizing the Nation* (1998), Todd Kontje’s *Women, the Novel and the German Nation* (1998). Von deutschen Herzen- Familie, Heimat und Nation in den Romanen und Erzählungen E. Marlitts. (Hamburg: Verlag Dr. Kovač, 2012). 15-23.

for analyzing her works within German realism.\textsuperscript{222} The main character and narrator of Marlitt’s *Blaubart*, Lilli, is caught between ideas that seek to enforce a clear division of fact and fantasy, as she navigates the space between childhood and adulthood. Drawing on the tradition of Bluebeard starting with Charles Perrault, Marlitt positions her protagonist Lilli as a wild, fairytale child, who will flout authority and question limits placed upon her in the name of feminine curiosity.\textsuperscript{223} In her contemporary take on Bluebeard, Marlitt reflects on the use of fairytales in the socialization of women, as well as on female authorship and storytelling as a means of experiencing freedom even while spreading domesticity as a national trait. Marlitt’s use of the fairytale in *Blaubart* provides a narrative structure to represent characters’ psychological realities and indirectly connect Marlitt’s work to the wars in German-speaking lands in the 1860s prior to German Unification.

*Blaubart* begins with Lilli’s arrival in a small Thüringen city to spend time with Hofrätin Falk, a family friend whom she refers to as Tante Bärchen. While spending time with her aunt, she becomes entangled in a family feud tracing back to Tante Bärchen’s grandfather Erich Dorn and his cousin Hubert. The feud began with the cousins’ competing collections of paintings, was exacerbated by Hubert’s acquisition of a Van Dyck painting, and culminated in the painting’s disappearance and accusations and subsequent denials that it had been stolen by Erich. At the time of Lilli’s visit, Hubert Dorn’s great-grandson Herr von Dorn has returned from war and has enacted plans to demolish Tante Bärchen’s pavilion for intruding onto his property. Dorn is the


\textsuperscript{223} Mererid Pew Davies notes that “Bluebeard” is a unique fairytale concerning female disobedience, since it is a tale where a female character defies male authority and survives. *The Tale of Bluebeard in German Literature: From the Eighteenth Century to the Present*. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2001), 41.
subject of tales amongst the servants and in the village, where he is described as a Bluebeard-like figure with a woman trapped in the tower of his house. Lilli finds herself in the middle of the feud, caught between her loyalty to Tante Bärchen and her curiosity and desire for Dorn. Unlike the fairytale of the same name, Marlitt’s tale does not end by revealing Dorn as a wife-murdering villain. Instead, Lilli’s curiosity leads her to the discovery of the stolen painting, thus ending the generations-old feud.

**Realist Elements in Blaubart**

Taking place in a house in a Thuringian village, Marlitt’s *Blaubart* seems cut off from the nineteenth-century political reality with its focus on the domestic sphere and romance. Marlitt’s Lilli does not die, seeming to find domestic bliss in her marriage to Dorn. The fairytale is presented as an obstacle to this happy ending, and Lilli must learn to read the world through a different lens and give up her position as a fairytale child to become a wife. The loss of the fairytale child and her worldview reveals a violence different from that of Raabe’s *Else von der Tanne*: the violence of domesticity in the construction of female identity in the mid-nineteenth century. That Marlitt transforms Lilli from a wild, fairytale child to a tamed, bourgeois wife emphasizes the new domestic narrative being disseminated via literature, particularly in the family magazines. Girls such as Lilli are allowed to indulge in wildness via stories, but those stories can only exist as fiction, since they would otherwise interrupt the image of domesticity as a stable foundation for the German family, the growing German middle class, and the German nation.

Despite the emphasis on domesticity, Marlitt’s story does have a historical and social context. Unlike Raabe, Marlitt does not displace her story to the seventeenth-century but locates it in the mid-nineteenth century in a Thüringen village. The regional and domestic spaces are
linked and appear isolated from large political concerns. The domestic focus creates an illusion that the region and household are separate from the greater world, but in reality the spaces are intimately connected. After Lilli arrives, a servant brings in an “altmodische silberne Theekanne und zwei wohlbekannte kostbare Täßchen von chinesischem Porzellan […] das war freilich nicht der kostbare Blumenthee, den Seine Majestät von China höchstselbst zu schlürfen pflegt […] die Blätter der heimischen Walderdbeere waren es.” The objects in Tante Bärbchen’s house, such as the teacups, point to the outside world but these objects have been domesticated. These cups made of Chinese porcelain contain tea made from local foliage. Tante Bärbchen’s lets the outside world enter in only a limited capacity. Dorn’s return to his family home is the arrival of the outside world in a way Tante Bärbchen cannot control. Tante Bärbchen comments: “der junge Herr denkt vermutlich, weil er den Krieg in Schleswig-Holstein mitgemacht hat, da darf er nun auch Annexationsgelüste haben” and Dorn later reveals he was wounded in the battle of Översee. Dorn explicitly connects the world of the novella to the history of the 1860s. The illusion of the domestic sphere as a refuge from the rest of the world breaks down in Marlitt’s novella.

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224 For more on the connection between regional narratives and narratives of nationalism, see Arne Koch. *Between National Fantasies and Regional Realities: The Paradox of identity in Nineteent-Century German Literature.* (New York: Peter Lang, 2006), 58.


226 Ibid., 277.

227 The Battle of Översee, (also called the Battle of Sankelmark) took place on February 6, 1864. The second war in Schleswig-Holstein ended in 1864, and the Austro-Prussian War ended in 1866, which resulted in the annexation of Schleswig-Holstein by Prussia. *Blaubart* was published in the 27th through 31st/32nd volumes Familienschrift *die Gartenlaube*, most likely between the weeks of July 2 – August 6, though the exact publication dates are not listed on the original copies. The Austro-Prussian War took place between June 14 and July 26 of 1866, though tensions had been building since the end of the second Schleswig-Holstein war in 1864.
Even with the interruptions of the outside world, the novella’s setting is predominantly within a domestic, bourgeois world. Marlitt contrasts Tante Bärbchen’s regional domesticity and Dorn’s military worldliness, aligning Tante Bärbchen with strong, bourgeois, German sensibilities, and Lilli’s attraction to Dorn could be seen as an attraction to the forbidden, amoral, and exotic. Looking beyond the family feud, Tante Bärbchen finds moral grounds to criticize Dorn’s family:

Er ist wie sein Vater [...] dem war auch die Welt zu eng und der Platz, auf dem er stand, zu niedrig. Er pfropfte auf den alten, ehrenhaften Stamm der Dorns ein adliges Reis; das befand sich aber sehr übel in der bürgerlichen Atmosphäre, und da hat er sich flugs auch den Adel gekauft … Gekaufter Adel! Das heißt in den ursprünglichen Begriff übersetzt, gekauftes Verdienst.

That Dorn’s title is grounds for criticism is indicative of the idealization of the middle class in German realism. Tante Bärbchen moves beyond the family feud to read ill intent in Dorn’s behavior; Dorn is an immoral figure due to Tante Bärbchen’s valorization of the bourgeois class and criticism of the aristocracy. Her understanding of the aristocracy is one of excess and the absence of the morals of hard work and honesty.

Lilli belongs to the bourgeois world, which for a girl is located within the home. Aside from a brief jaunt into the forest (on a path constructed by a servant carrying stones in his pocket), the story takes place entirely within Tante Bärbchen’s house, garden, and garden pavilion. The pavilion, located on the property line between the two houses, is most-connected to Lilli:

Sie liebte den Pavillon, wie ein Kind einen alten Hausfreund seiner Eltern liebt, der es auf den Knieen schaukelt, ihm ergötzliche Geschichten erzählt und die schützende Hand abwehrend ausstreckt, wenn es gestraft werden soll. Sie hatte sich stets in dem alten, achteckigen Häuschen lieber aufgehalten, als drüben im großen Wohnhaus. Hier hatten sich die interessanten Lebensläufe ihrer Puppen abgewickelt, in dem gemütlichen Salon war das kindliche Herz erfüllt gewesen von dem Selbstbewußtsein der gebietenden Hausfrau, denn sie durfte ihn benutzen als Empfangszimmer für ihre kleinen Besuche aus der Stadt, deshalb hieß er auch »Lillis Haus«. Die alten Wände waren Zeugen ihrer
ganzen Kindesseligkeit gewesen, aber sie hatten auch ihr leidenschaftliches Weinen und Klagen gehört, wenn im Wohnhause gepackt worden war zur Heimreise.  

In Lilli’s eyes, the pavilion is more than a garden house. The pavilion provides Lilli with a space to act out the role of a household mistress in a human-sized dollhouse. The pavilion is a space to act the grown-up lady while holding onto her childhood toys. Within its walls, Lilli is like a doll in a dollhouse, being socialized into bourgeois reality via her imagination. Lilli’s relationship with this ordinary space as a site for fantasy transforms it beyond a garden shed or storage space for the amateur paintings done by Tante Bärchen’s grandfather Erich Dorn. Marlitt uses the wonder of a child playing pretend as a strategy to position this ordinary setting in the center of the story.

Lilli is also an ordinary child with a middle-class background. She does not come from a mythical castle to this strange house on the edge of the forest outside a small Thüringen town. Lilli’s background is made most clear when her aunt scolds her:

Kömmst daher aus der großen Stadt, gebärdest dich als völlig erwachsene Dame mit deinem entsetzlichen Reifrock und den Schleppkleidern, die zu Dortes Ärger den Sand von Flur und Treppen wegfegen; hast Englisch und Französisch gelernt und deine Nase in Chemie und andere hochgelehrte Sachen gesteckt, und bist so kindisch dabei geblieben, daß ich nächstens die Schulregeln wieder dort neben das Uhrgehäuse werde hängen müssen.  

Tante Bärchen’s critique focuses on Lilli’s education and bourgeois standing. To her aunt, Lilli is still a child. Lilli’s transition into long, adult dresses is like putting on a costume and not a true sign of maturity, since Lilli still lacks common sense and has too much of an imagination. Unlike in fairytales where girls such as Snow White go from being six years old to marrying a prince with no clear markers of time, Tante Bärchen does not gloss over the transitional period

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228 Marlitt, “Blaubart,” 278.

229 Ibid., 300.
between childhood and adulthood Marlitt’s narrator draws attention to Lilli’s position between childish fantasies and sensible, middle-class adulthood.

Marlitt’s focus on the domestic space, with the intrusion of the outside world, as well as on the bourgeois childhood are all traits indicative of German realism and its emphasis on provincial and ordinary subjects. A final realist element of note is Marlitt’s self-reflection on the nature of art seen in her representation of paintings. The cousins’ feud over the paintings can be read as commentary on the division between high and low art. The feud begins because of a “Sammelleidenschaft,”\textsuperscript{230} which results in the art being treated as objects to collect and whose value lies in making one collection look superior to the other. Although the feud begins with the men’s collections, their wives are responsible for the greatest point of contention, the Van Dyck painting:

Es ereignete sich nämlich, daß ein entfernter Verwandter von Huberts Frau starb; sie war Universalerbin. Nebst vielen Kapitalien und Kostbarkeiten fiel ihr auch ein Oelbild zu, ein herrlicher van Dyck. Sie machte es ihrem Manne zum Geschenk, der es stolz und frohlockend seiner Sammlung einreihete. Aber gerade diese Sammlung war der Zankapfel zwischen den beiden Vettern; ihre Zusammenstellung zeugte von keinem besondern Kennerblick, es war viel Spreu darunter.\textsuperscript{231}

It is Hubert’s unnamed wife who acquires the Van Dyck by means of her family. Erich Dorn cannot tolerate an artistic masterpiece be included in an amateur collection. To Erich, Hubert’s collection appears like the popular publications of the time, including \textit{die Gartenlaube}, the literary journal where this novella was published. In contrast, Erich’s collection is more like the carefully-curated literary canon, with a specific program for how he defined art. The Van Dyck appearing among supposedly inferior artworks can be read as a means of positioning Marlitt and other women’s writing: it re-values popular and successful works of writing, arguing that

\textsuperscript{230} Ibid., 269.

\textsuperscript{231} Ibid., 270.
appearing in a popular collection is not a sign of lesser quality, and that everyone, even a woman, is capable of producing works of literature as valuable as a Van Dyck painting is in the world of visual art.

The reflection on the art is strengthened by the contrast between the Van Dyck masterpiece and the Orestes painting concealing it, a relationship revealed only at the end of the novella. The narrator’s describes Erich’s painting of Orestes hanging over Lilli’s play area earlier in the novella:

Es war ein Orest, den die Furien verfolgen. Mit flüchtigem Pinsel und einer gewissen Hast gemalt, war es auffallend verzeichnet in den Proportionen, Fehler, die den Eindruck des Bildes zu einem lächerlichen hätten machen können, wäre nicht der Kopf des Orestes gewesen; aber dieses Gesicht hatte etwas Überwältigendes in seinem Ausdruck. Nicht das haarsträubende Entsetzen in den Zügen war es allein, was den widerstrebenenden Blick des Beschauers immer wieder fesselte; tiefer noch ergriffen die namenlos bitteren Schmerzen der Reue, welche der sonst ungelenke, steife Maler mit wahrer Meisterschaft diesem Antlitz aufgedrückt hatte.

The painting is described as being painted “mit flüchtigem Pinsel” rather than with care. The painter is called “ungelenk” and “steif” except in his representation of emotion. Marlitt reverses the gendered expectations, attributing emotional talent and artistic dilettantism to a male painter.

In the context of the story, Orestes’ regret points to Erich’s regret and guilt for his theft. As a reflection on art, the text suggests that the dilettante’s art is capable of representing emotional depths and truths that are not visible on the surface.

The layers of the painting – an amateur Orestes over a Van Dyck portrait of a young woman – raise questions about the ability of artwork to reflect and represent reality faithfully. Robert Holub argues that realist art holds a commemorative function, “called upon to represent

232 Ibid., 290-291.

233 Van Dyck, a Flemish painter of the seventeenth-century is frequently associated with his lifelike portraits of European nobles and the reference to a Flemish painter in the text resembles Theodor Storm’s references to Dutch paintings in *Aquis submersus* (1877), where the Dutch painting represents realist aesthetics within the text.
life, to take the place of an absent reality.” The original Van Dyck is literally an absent reality of domestic peace between the family branches, embodied by the image of a young woman. This missing reality is revealed in the penultimate scene when the Orestes painting is torn: “von einem grünlich-grauen Hintergrund erhob sich eine bezaubernd schöne Mädchengestalt und stand, vom wärmsten Lebensodem durchhaucht, vor den vergehenden Blicken der Hofräfin. Die lange Zeit der Haft war wirkungslos an der rosigen Frische dieser Züge vorübergestrichen.” The reveal of the enchanting young woman reconstitutes the family, destroying the mythic image that stands for the consequences of the family feud. Dorn suggests that they burn the painting to put the past behind them, but Tante Bärchen decides to preserve it, saying: “Es soll fortfahren zur Freude anderer und mir zur steten Mahnung, daß wir Menschen sind und leichtlich irren können.” This ending could be read as a simple moral of the story: to remember that humans err and that art should serve as a reminder, in this case the representation of the young woman serves as a reminder of the now-absent Orestes and commemorates the destructive family history.

Marlitt’s story draws on elements of the developing literary movement of German realism. She sets her story in an ordinary setting – a home in the countryside – and publishes it in another ordinary setting – the popular Gartenlaube. Despite the provincial setting of the story, it is intrinsically connected to the outside world in the presence of historical references, foreign objects, and commentaries on the connection between art and reality. Marlitt’s story is full of layers, as different perspectives on a family story are revealed like the layers of a painting.

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236 Ibid., 337.
Fairytale Elements in *Blaubart*

With its title being a German translation of Perrault’s “Bluebeard,” the fairytale elements of Marlitt’s *Blaubart* must be considered alongside its realist elements. Fairytales are most immediately present in Marlitt’s story in the plot and expectations set by the novella’s title. Perrault’s “Bluebeard” tells the story of a young woman who is courted by her blue-bearded neighbor and won over by his wealth and social standing, despite his appearance. Once married, he gives permission to explore the entire house, except for what lies behind one locked door. The woman eventually gives into temptation and finds the bodies of his previous wives. Unable to wash the bloodstains from the key, the woman’s disobedience is discovered by her husband, who grants her a little time to pray before he kills her. From the tower of the house, she is able to call out to her sister and she is saved from death by her brothers.

Marlitt’s Herr von Dorn is superficially the inverse of Perrault’s Bluebeard. Where Perrault’s Bluebeard is revealed to be a murderous husband, Marlitt’s is revealed not to be the villain his reputation makes him out to be, although Mererid Davies notes that, while Dorn is not a murderer, he is surrounded by images of dead women.\(^{237}\) These artistically dead women maintain the fairytale atmosphere. Lilli is first drawn to Dorn’s home by the light glowing in the tower, illuminating a stained glass window of Romeo and Juliet, and Lilli begins to imagine that it must be “der tückische Nachbar, der Blaubart, der ein unglückliches Weib gefangen hielt, damit kein anderes Auge als das seine auf ihr schönes Antlitz falle.”\(^{238}\) Lilli’s curiosity is awakened by the idea of a fairytale occurring just beyond the hedge. She is drawn to disobey the Bluebeard neighbor she has never met and catch a glimpse of what is forbidden to her by the

\(^{237}\) Davies, *The Tale of Bluebeard in German Literature*, 154.

\(^{238}\) Marlitt., “*Blaubart*,” 281.
family feud and division of properties. When Lilli looks through to Dorn’s property, she spots 
the mysterious woman whom the servants refer to as Bluebeard’s wife. In spotting the 
mysterious woman, Lilli finds herself entranced, and “in Lillis Kopf wirbelten noch einen 
Moment Märchen und Wirklichkeit durcheinander.” Marlitt’s novella resembles Perrault’s 
“Bluebeard” as a curious young woman seeks to acquire forbidden knowledge and is confronted 
by a strange woman, albeit not a murder victim. The fairytale provides the base structure for 
Marlitt’s text, setting expectations for the readers and figures such as Lilli.

Marlitt’s text not only draws on the original plot of “Bluebeard,” it also evokes different 
fairytale character types. With her house on the edge of the forest and mountain, Tante Bärbchen 
resembles both an evil witch and a helpful older woman, much like Justine in Raabe’s Else von 
der Tanne. Tante Bärbchen sets the first prohibition, instructing Lilli to not think about the house 
on the other side of the hedge: “sieh nicht dort hinüber. Ich stelle dir eine Bedingung – aber in 
vollem Ernst – daß du während deines Hierseins thust, als höre da drüben mit dem Zaun die Welt 
auf … was dort lärmst, schwatzt und geigt, darf nicht für dich existieren.” In the context of the 
story’s title and fairytale motifs concerning prohibitions, Tante Bärbchen is simultaneously a 
maternal and Bluebeard figure. Setting the prohibition is not the only trait that aligns Tante 
Bärbchen with fairytale figures. She is described as having “dunkle Züge” and is missing an arm- 
all traits that have her resembling a witch. Tante Bärbchen’s garden also gives her a witchlike 
character. Her garden is filled with herbs and her tea is made of forest plants. Despite Tante

239 Ibid., 284.

240 Ibid., 265-266.

241 Davies notes that most characters in the text can be considered Bluebeards- Tante Bärbchen with her name and 
prohibitions, and Lilli and Dorn for their collections of artistic representations of women. Dorn has his tower with 
his sister, Tante Bärbchen has a room of paintings, and Lilli has her pavilion filled with dolls. All of the main 
characters collect images of women, be they paintings, statues, or dolls. The Tale of Bluebeard in German 
Literature, 154.
Bärbchen’s similarities to fairytale antagonists, she is also depicted by Marlitt’s narrator as a fairytale helper. Marlitt’s narrator introduces Tante Bärbchen as having “bei den Bewohnern der Stadt R. einen großen Stein im Brett. War auch die Art und Weise, wie sie den Leuten die Wahrheit ins Gesicht zu sagen pflegte.” Tante Bärbchen is not known for deception, tells people what they need to hear and is well-liked in the village. She also has a reputation for philanthropy: “Der Bedrückte fand stets ihre Hand und Thür offen […] in der Stadt kein Kind zu finden war, das nicht wenigstens einmal Obst und Kuchen bei der Frau Hofrätin gegessen und sich auf den Rasenplätzen ihres Gartens herumgetummelt hatte.”

She is the wise old woman in the village, a helper to all. That Tante Bärbchen simultaneously resembles two fairytale character types is indicative of Marlitt’s text having more-complex characters and a more-complex structure than a fairytale.

The text’s comparison of Tante Bärbchen’s house and Dorn’s solidifies Tante Bärbchen’s dual identity as both witch and helper. Though the narrator describes the objects within the house, speaking to its materiality, the narrator’s description of the house itself places it outside of the material world and time:

Es war alt und unschön. Ein ungeheures Ziegeldach mit zwei mächtigen Schornsteinen saß so anspruchsvoll auf der einstöckigen Fronte, als sei sie lediglich um seinetwillen da. Einige dickstämmige Weinstöcke umspannen zwar die Wände, aber sie vermochten nicht ganz einzelne Streifen der schmucklosen, weißen Tünche und die vom Alter braunefärbten Holzrahmen der Fenster zu verstecken. Und doch lag es so traut und heimlich da, gleichsam auf den grünen Pfuhl des Waldes gebettet, der seinen Atem darüber hin wehte, jenen Hauch der Romantik.

242 Marlitt, “Blaubart,” 266.

243 In this case, I am referring to Volksmärchen such as those of the Brothers Grimm or Ludwig Bechstein and not to Kunstmärchen.

244 Marlitt, “Blaubart,” 268.
Tante Bärbchen’s house is swallowed by time like Sleeping Beauty’s castle, covered with vines concealing the whitewash, and with the window frames peeping through. It is old and ugly, but its position on the edge of the forest manages to imbue the space with a sense of Romanticism that makes it seem magical. The objects give the house a real quality, however, they also seem to come to life: “es summte und schnurrte jahraus, jahrein, Sommer und Winter, und der Perpendikel meinte mit Recht, sein Ticktack und das Gesumme gäben eine schöhere Harmonie, als ein Zwiegespräch zwischen ihm und seinesgleichen.” This is a clock that seems to have thoughts of its own and agency over its repeated actions. Marlitt’s use of rhythm, alliteration, and repetition in this moment further distances the moment from reality, even if the rhymes do realistically imitate the sounds of spinning wheels and clocks. The harmony between a clock, a marker of time and history, and a spinning wheel, which is frequently found in fairytales, is a further link between reality and fairytales.

Dorn’s house also speaks to the fairytale setting of the text. When Lilli breaks her aunt’s prohibition and sneaks out to the pavilion to look at Dorn’s house, she seems to find herself in an enchanted world:

Da lag es vor ihr, das mondbeglänzte Schloß des Blaubarts, und all jener bestrickende, geheimnisvolle Zauber, hinter welchem in dem schauerlichen Märchen Blutströme rieseln, er stieg auch hier aus fremdartigen Blütenkelchen und webte um die glitzernden Wassergarben, die himmelan sprangen und als silberner Duft wieder herniederstäubten.

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245 Annette Keck argues that the plainness of Tante Bärbchen’s house, along with her nickname and the prohibitions she gives Lilli create an identity more in line with the male Bluebeard, rather than with any femininity. “Blaubart und Pygmalion? Zur Refiguration des mörderischen Märchens im deutschsprachigen Realismus.” Fabula 54, 1-2 (2013): 72.


247 Ibid., 283.
Dorn’s house becomes a fairytale palace in Lilli’s eyes and she describes it in indicative language. Lilli is drawn into another world, one of the moonlight, of glittering water and silver air through her senses that suggest what she is seeing and hearing are true.

The text’s fairytale child, Lilli, moves between these fairytale figures and settings. Marlitt introduces Lilli’s fingers and hands before introducing Lilli as a hand peeking out from underneath a window screen: “da erschien eine schmale Damenhand unter dem Lederbehang, der die Fentseröffnung des Wagens bedeckte.” Marlitt then introduces readers to Lilli feet-first: “ein reizendes Füßchen erschien, aber es vermied den Wagentritt; wie aus der häßlichen Puppe der Schmetterling, so flog eine leichte Mädchengestalt aus der altfränkischen Kutsche auf den Boden.” Though she is not wearing magical glass slippers like Cinderella, the attention to Lilli’s delicate features and graceful movements like an emerging butterfly suggest she is an otherworldly figure. Beyond the princess imagery associated with her features, the emphasis on individual body parts evokes an image of the broken-down corpses in Bluebeard’s hidden chamber. Marlitt introduces Lilli like a fairytale figure, though she combines the imagery of princesses and murdered wives, and disorients the reader as to which fairytale expectations will be fulfilled.

**Realist Treatment of Fairytales in Blaubart**

The fairytale elements of the text that cast Lilli in the role of the fairytale child and establish a fairytale tone and setting are, similar to Raabe’s *Else von der Tanne*, located in the narratives constructed by Tante Bärbchen, Dorn, the stories Lilli tells herself, and by the narrator.

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248 Ibid., 263.
249 Ibid., 263-264.
Although the fairytale and the fairytale child exist within narratives, the fairytale elements do not distort reality but offer more-accurate insight into the experiences and interpersonal relationships within the text. Lilli needs to be a fairytale child to expose the power dynamics of romance and the bourgeois family, to narrate female sexuality and coming-of-age experiences in a way suitable for middle-class readers.

Despite not being one for fantasy, Tante Bärchen places Lilli in the role of a fairytale child to maintain her prohibition against speaking with Dorn. Tante Bärchen reminds Lilli of the servants’ stories about Dorn having a woman trapped in the tower to ensure Lilli’s obedience. When Lilli suggests that Dorn does not seem like a bad person, Tante Bärchen asks her: “Wie kannst du dich mit einem völlig fremden Manne in einem Wortwechsel einlassen, noch dazu mit einem Mann, der … hast du vergessen, was gestern Dorte von ihm sagte? Solch einer ist nicht wert, daß ein Frauenzimmer von Reputation mit ihm spricht.” Tante Bärchen uses the fairytale to keep Lilli away from the man whom she despises. The language of fairytales is the means of explaining the dangers of interacting with men with poor reputations. A fairytale such as “Bluebeard” warns against hasty romance and in this case is a means for Tante Bärchen to maintain Lilli’s loyalty to her in the family feud, lest Lilli be won over by kind words and finery and not see Dorn’s true character.

Where Tante Bärchen uses the fairytale to keep Lilli away from romance and in a state of childhood, Dorn uses fairytales to structure the romance between himself and Lilli. Dorn and Lilli first meet after Dorn’s servants begin the demolition of the pavilion by poking a hole in the outer wall, with Lilli still inside with her dolls. Having spotted Lilli trying to rescue the Orestes painting, as well as put her dolls into order, Dorn attempts to engage Lilli in conversation using

250 Ibid., 301.
humor: “Seien Sie wie jene freundliche Fee, die dem armen Mann drei Wünsche gewährte, gestatten Sie mir drei Fragen.”251 Although his tone is described as humorous, he brings the rules of fairytales into the real world, as if they would grant him power over Lilli. Dorn does not believe Lilli is truly a supernatural creature – the narrator notes that his tone in this is full of humor, creating distance between his tone and the content of his words. The fairytale becomes a means for him to approach Lilli and interrupt the narratives her aunt raised her with, as well as a means for him to position himself as the hero in the narrative.

Dorn uses fairytale imagery to set Lilli apart from other women and initiate romance, but he also uses the language of childhood to frame their relationship. When Dorn encounters Lilli in the forest outside of her aunt’s home, he asks her to intervene on his behalf in the family feud, since he has heard good things of her and knows “daß Sie lachen, so lieblich und herzerquickend lachen können, wie ein Kind, das noch keinen Raum für Haß und dergleichen unselige Dinge.”253 Dorn simultaneously addresses Lilli with the formal “Sie” while comparing her to a child. He is careful not to call her a child, but he praises her child-like qualities, which he associates with innocence and being impartial within the family feud. The appeal to Lilli’s childlike qualities ironically asks her to turn away from the childish fairytales she has heard and used to frame her understanding of him and his behavior.

Whether Dorn is focusing on Lilli as a fairytale figure or appealing to a childlike sense of goodness, Dorn uses the language of fairytales and childhood to maintain the upper hand in their

251 Ibid., 294.

252 This moment also calls to mind encounters between Jane and Rochester in Charlotte Brontë’s Jane Eyre. For more on similarities between Marlitt’s “Blaubart” and Brontë’s Jane Eyre, see Lynne Tatlock, “Jane Eyre’s German Daughters: The Purchase of Romance in a Time of Inequality (1847-90).” Literarische Öffentlichkeit im mittleren 19. Jahrhundert. Vergessene Konstellationen literarischer Kommunikation zwischen 1845 und 1885. Katja Mellmann, Jesko Reiling, ed. (Göttingen, de Gruyter, 2016), 177-202.

253 Ibid., 310
interactions. When Lilli tells Dorn about the rumors of him in town, he responds condescendingly: “und Sie hatten natürlicherweise nichts Eiligeres zu thun, als an dieses Geheimnis zu glauben und mich zu verabscheuen.”254 He is paternalistic, scolding Lilli for believing such silly rumors and stories. He tells Lilli the truth about the woman in the rumors and how she is his ill sister, and having told her the truth says “ich habe bisher unwissentlich gegen ein Phantom ankämpfen müssen.”255 Dorn frames the fairytale as a childish way of thinking that distorts Lilli’s reality. He shifts Lilli’s perspective on their encounter so that there is no longer an active villain, and of course the defeat of a phantom should be followed by the fairytale ending of a wedding. He opens the possibility of her moving beyond the position of child if she gives up on the Bluebeard fairytale and accepts a different narrative, one that draws her to him and romance rather than warning her away.

Even though Dorn dismisses fairytales as childish nonsense, he is dependent on fairytales for describing Lilli. He positions her beyond the everyday, setting her apart from other women. He affirms this when, after admitting that he has “keine hohe Meinung von den Frauen … Da geschah es eines morgens, daß ein zartes Wesen vor mir stand, an Gestalt ein elfenartiges Kind, sah es mich doch mit Augen an, aus denen der ganze herbe Trotz der Jungfrau, die Funken eines rasch denkenden, beweglichen Geistes sprühten.”256 Fairytales provide Dorn with the language for describing his attraction to Lilli and indicate that it is not just woman and children who interpret the world through fairytales. Both Dorn and Lilli see each other through the lens of fairytales, though where Lilli sees Dorn as the villain opposing her, Dorn sees Lilli as a magical

254 Ibid., 326
255 Ibid., 327.
256 Ibid., 328.
creature and child. In each case, the fairytale shapes their relationship as one of power, with Dorn either as a murderous (prospective) husband or the hero with the ability to bend a magical being to his will and the fairytales they turn to are indicative of their understanding of the other.

Fairytales provide a narrative to navigate interactions with a stranger she is simultaneously afraid of and attracted to and allow her to be the brave hero of her story. Lilli’s decision to sneak out to the pavilion and peek into Dorn’s garden is driven by her curiosity: “Die Hängelampe im Turmzimmer erlosch. Das war aber nicht der Moment, den Laden zu schließen und die schlaflosen Augen in die Kissen zu stecken, meinte Lilli. Der Blaubart da drüben ging sicher zur Ruhe.”

Lilli thinks of Dorn as Bluebeard, not like Bluebeard, and positions herself as the heroine of the story who will defeat him. This desire becomes explicit when she contemplates the woman she sees in the garden:

Ihr Herz wallte auf bei dem Gedanken, jener Unglücklichen vielleicht beistehen und ihr helfen zu können, und deshalb verließ sie das Fenster nicht, sondern bog ihr wunderfeines Köpfchen voll heldenmütiger Entschlüsse weit hinaus und ließ ihre leichte Gestalt, die wie ein schaukelndes Elfenkind aus den breitblätterigen Schlingpflanzen auftauchte, vom Mondschein voll beleuchteten.

The narrator describes Lilli like a fairytale figure, diminutive and fine, but particular attention is given to her determination to be the hero. This determination has her not only look through the forbidden window to the forbidden garden, but to stick her head through it. Seeing herself as part of a fairytale gives Lilli the agency to disobey her aunt and follow her curiosity and to find a world full of sensations and enchantment.

Seeing herself as part of a fairytale also helps Lilli find strength to resist Dorn’s attempts of exerting control over her. When Dorn enters Tante Bärchen’s garden having begun the

257 Ibid., 282.

258 Ibid., 285-286.
demolition of Lilli’s pavilion: “Da standen sie sich gegenüber, Auge in Auge, der fürchterliche Blaubart und die junge Dame, die plötzlich ihre ganze, bedeutende Dosis Trotz und Willensstärke nötig hatte, um in diesem wichtigen Augenblick nicht aus ihrer Heldenrolle zu fallen.”259 Lilli feels as if she is playing the role of the hero rather than being heroic in her own right. Lilli can be defiant by channeling fairytale heroes rather than positioning herself as a fairytale victim. Lilli uses fairytales both to understand her relationship with Dorn and to control the outcome of their interactions and not play the role he expects her to play. Lilli’s insistence on reading herself as the heroine of “Bluebeard” contrasts with Dorn’s insistence on reading Lilli as a magical being he can influence. Both fairytale narratives reveal their expectations for their encounters and understandings of the other.

Whereas fairytales frequently gloss over the liminal period between childhood and adulthood, Marlitt’s text explicitly focuses on this tradition and fairytales are one means of representing Lilli’s sexuality in a manner still appropriate for a family publication. Lilli’s first encounter with Dorn can be read as a loss of innocence, as he breaks into her childhood space, literally breaking down the walls and forcing his way in as she plays with her dolls. During this encounter, “Lilli fühlte, wie sein Auge unverwandt auf ihr ruhte.”260 Their first encounter is filled with sexual tension, a feeling Lilli is unfamiliar with. Lilli’s desire is described through the language of fairytales and magic:

Lilli hatte den Kopf noch nicht nach ihm umgewendet, und doch zweifelte sie nicht, daß, während seine Lippen zu scherzen versuchten, ein Blick voll Groll und Weichheit zugleich auf ihr ruhe. Aber jetzt galt es, diesen unerklärlichen Zauber für alle Zeiten abzuwehren. Die Warnung der Tante und ihre eigenen kühnen Vorsätze standen mit einemmal wie in riesengroßen Lettern vor ihr; sie hob sich und wollte, ohne zu

259 Ibid., 292.

260 Ibid., 293.
antworten, mit einer Verbeugung an ihm vorüberschreiten; ohne es zu wollen, sah sie dabei flüchtig zu ihm auf.\textsuperscript{261}

The narrator describes Lilli’s desire to give into Dorn’s desire as an inexplicable, irresistible magic that causes her to ignore her aunt’s warning. Lilli’s desire is described as coming from without, from some spell or external force, rather than from her own awakening sexuality, much as how Leutenbacher uses fairytale and child imagery to disguise his erotic desire. The fairytale can point to Lilli’s psychological reality, even as Lilli is unaware of it.

Lilli reevaluates her relationship with Dorn as she receives new stories about and from him. These new stories beyond that of Bluebeard and potentially-murderous spouses provide her with the guidance and narrative justification to turn toward romance rather than away from it:

\begin{quote}
Statt des vermeintlichen Verbrechens, das seiner kühnen, herausfordernden Erscheinung etwas Dämonisches verliehen hatte, las sie jetzt auf seiner Stirn nur die edelsten Gedanken … Es war von Kindheit an ein fest ausgesprochener Zug ihres Charakters gewesen, das Bewußtsein eines ungesühnten Unrechts gegen andere nicht in ihrer Seele zu dulden.\textsuperscript{262}
\end{quote}

With a new narrative framing her understanding of him, Lilli’s entire perception of Dorn changes. She no longer refers to him as a “Blaubart” but instead only sees the positive sides of his character. She chooses to disregard the fairytale narrative in favor of the adult or real narrative about Dorn, and she begins to consider her previous reading of him as a dangerous Bluebeard character as an injustice she has committed against him. Despite this new truth, she still needs another story to fully accept him against Tante Bärchen’s wishes and extirpate both the Bluebeard fairytale and the Orestes myth for domestic romance to triumph. The final story she needs is the truth of the paintings, how Erich Dorn stole the Van Dyck from Hubert Dorn. As Tante Bärchen puts it, it is in Lilli’s hands “ein großes Unrecht der Erichs an den Huberts

\textsuperscript{261} Ibid., 309.

\textsuperscript{262} Ibid., 327.
gutzumachen.” Lilli gets one final narrative from her aunt that still positions her as a hero. Instead of saving a woman from her Bluebeard husband, she is undoing an injustice and reuniting a family.

Marlitt’s narrator actively participates in the creation of Lilli as a fairytale child, mixing reality with fantasy. The narrator’s connection to Lilli brings the fairytale to life in the world of a middle-class girl caught in the liminal period between childhood and adulthood. The narrator’s interaction with Lilli’s inner thoughts and desires position Lilli as a fairytale child, one journeying into the world of the fantastic and emerging ready for marriage. The narrator sets the scene when Lilli is drawn out of bed to investigate the garden:

The narrator interrupts the image of the moonbeams enchanting the outside world with a definition that goes to the core of Lilli’s character—Sehnsucht. With this “Sehnsucht” the narrator characterizes Lilli as a girl longing to go beyond the restraints of her aunt’s bourgeois household. The narrator emphasizes Lilli’s sense of wonder by granting the readers access to her thoughts: “Horch, war das nicht der volle, tiefe Klang einer unbeschreiblich rührenden Menschenstimme, die durch die Lüfte zitterte? … und noch einmal – und abermals! […] … es war übrigens keine menschliche Stimme, sondern ein Cello.” When Lilli sneaks out past the servants, the narrator closely follows Lilli’s impressions, with ellipses acting as pauses as Lilli receives sensory

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263 Ibid., 336.
264 Ibid., 282.
265 Ibid., 282.
impressions and then interprets them. The world becomes magical through Lilli’s encounters with it because Lilli’s psychological reality structures the narration.

Though the narrator follows Lilli’s thoughts, she also asserts her own commentaries that interrupt the fairytale reality within Lilli’s mind. The narrator has intimate knowledge of Lilli’s desires and she knows Lilli better than she knows herself and uses this knowledge to shield Lilli and the text’s readers from impropriety. When Lilli encounters Dorn in the forest, she does not read Dorn’s desire as sexual, which the narrator affirms: “ihre Gesinnungen waren zu rein und unschuldig, und deshalb ahnte sie nicht einmal, daß er sich in seiner Gereiztheit hatte hinreißen lassen, sie der Koketterie zu beschuldigen.”²⁶⁶ The narrator affirms Dorn’s less-than-innocent interest in Lilli while affirming Lilli’s innocence. Though her position as a bourgeois child, or young woman, Lilli does not have the language to describe erotic desire and thus turns to the fairytale, a genre she has access to. Marlitt’s narrator emphasizes Lilli’s voice so that the reader may voyeuristically experience Lilli’s encounters with the mysterious neighbor alongside her, but the narrator still asserts her narratorial control and censorship by positioning Lilli in the realm of innocence, unconsciously taking part in a romance. Lilli may be a fairytale child in this regard, but the narrator’s acknowledgement of Lilli’s desire and sexuality in general breaks with traditional fairytale narratives that erase puberty and sexuality.²⁶⁷

Marlitt’s *Blaubart* blends a nineteenth-century setting with elements of fairytales fantastic. In *Else von der Tanne*, we see how fairytales are imposed on interpretations of Else, but Marlitt reverses this and shows how Lilli imposes fairytale narratives upon herself and others. In reading herself as a fairytale child, Lilli can address her developing sexuality, and in

²⁶⁶ Ibid., 311-312.
writing her as a fairytale child, Marlitt’s narrator can maintain bourgeois sensibilities for the readers of *die Gartenlaube* as Lilli is not a knowing participant in her sexual awakening, which is displaced into fairytales and the narrator’s commentary.

In her adaptation of “Bluebeard,” Marlitt addresses the use of stories in socializing women in a growing bourgeois context. In Charles Perrault’s “Bluebeard,” the story begins with a marriage and ends with the protagonist’s freedom from her murderous husband, inheriting his property and using it to find a better-tempered partner. Marlitt’s ending shows that her realist Bluebeard’s violence is psychological rather than physical. Lilli does not defeat Bluebeard in. Kirsten Belgum argues that Marlitt’s genius was “her ability to create these desiring women, figures who are both morally strong and the source of focalization, but who eventually (willingly) participate in the domestication of desire."²⁶⁸ In dismissing the story of Bluebeard as a childish fantasy rather than as a means of seeing the darker sides of Dorn’s character, Lilli becomes one of his trapped women, already seen in how the narrator shows her body in pieces throughout the narrative. In dismissing the fairytale, Lilli accepts a bourgeois ideology of romance, one that is rife with psychological violence and manipulation. The triumph of the domestic romance highlights the wildness of the fairytale child, as a figure that has the unrealized potential to interrupt these systems, to imagine a different conclusion to the story that might be possible in a world without the dominance of bourgeois morality over girls’ psyches.

Although Marlitt does not write as explicitly about German history as Raabe, it is still possible to read her fairytale child Lilli as standing in for Germany and the text expresses anxiety for Germany’s future, particularly within the *Gartenlaube*’s interest in contributing to creating an understanding of the German nation. Lilli chooses a man whose household is outwardly wealthy,

²⁶⁸ Belgum, *Popularizing the Nation*, 136.
whose garden, servants and sister are foreign, and leaves behind her Tante Bärbchen whose household, though filled with foreign objects, is closer to the forest and whose garden is full of local plants. The reunification of the houses is not a meeting of equals. Lilli choses the bright, shining future offered by Dorn, despite his self-proclaimed bad temper and misogyny. She leaves behind the fairytales as childish stories and is no longer protected by them. Fairytales do not belong in her marriage because they warn against his militaristic, violent character, as seen in his history as a soldier in Schleswig-Holstein and military service in general.

**Conclusions**

Wilhelm Raabe and Eugenie Marlitt created narratives which construct and destroy fairytale children during the 1860s in the wake of rising Prussian aggression and prior to any answers on the form of German unification. Raabe’s fairytale child is stoned by a superstitious village and Marlitt’s fairytale child dismisses the fairytale as a childish delusion. In both cases, the fairytale child is destroyed in the name of a community, either to protect the village or restore the family. The fairytale child’s destruction in both works points to her incompatibility with the narratives’ world, both of which can be read as commenting on nineteenth-century German political and social questions. Both Raabe and Marlitt first published their stories in family magazines intended for a wider, middle-class audience in the mid-1860s, after the second Schleswig-Holstein war, and just before or during the Austro-Prussian War. The family story and fairytale are never fully separated from political instability, both within the narratives and their references to war and politics, and in their places of publication.

Despite her ultimate destruction, the fairytale child still functions as a strategy for Raabe and Marlitt to make clear the role of narratives such as fairytales in creating communities and potential for transforming these communities. In *Else von der Tanne* and *Blaubart*, the
seventeenth-century and nineteenth-century settings are permeated with a language of wonder, with the fairytale child at the center. Else brings wonder into Leutenbacher’s world and Lilli brings a sense of wonder into her encounter with her aunt and Dorn’s households. The wonder the fairytale child brings with her provides a different perspective and suggests an alternative world. She brings with her the possibility of a world where she can exist—a world where innocence and femininity can thrive rather than be abjected in the name of communal security or the assertion of patriarchal, bourgeois family structures.

The fairytale child also functions as a means to indirectly narrate romantic interest without offending bourgeois sensibilities. The category of a fairytale child allows authors such as Raabe or Marlitt to narrate the liminal phase prior to marriage for girls. As fairytale children, Else and Lilli can push the boundaries of normative behavior by living on the edge of the village or by defying maternal or spousal authority, without challenging the standards acceptable for middle class girls and women. Leutenbacher’s interest in Else can be read as more innocent because he views her through the lens of a fairytale child, and Lilli’s desire for Dorn is not explicitly erotic because she sees herself as participating in a fairytale. Her curiosity about Dorn is about solving the mystery of the missing painting and the truth of the woman in the garden, rather than sexual curiosity. Raabe and Marlitt use the fairytale child in these texts to simultaneously narrate what is problematic to nineteenth-century society, namely female sexuality, while containing it within an image of children and fairytales.

While Raabe’s story directly engages with questions of German history and nationalism and Marlitt’s with the bourgeois domestic sphere, both are concerned with nineteenth-century German society. Marlitt and Raabe’s fairytale children illustrate the necessity of fairytales for narrating female experiences and childhood, as well as how the fairytale child can be connected
to questions of constructing German cultural and national identity. Their fairytale children do not survive because the realist fairytale child exists in the borders and in figures’ imaginations and cannot be incorporated into a militaristic nation state or into a patriarchal marriage and maintain their innocence and potential to enchant these spaces. Despite the fairytale child’s incompatibility with the changes in German society and extraliterary reality, she continues to appear throughout works of German realism. Her presence reveals the narratives’ shaping and influencing of the psychological realities and experiences of men and women in nineteenth-century Germany.
CHAPTER 3: REALIST KASPAR HAUSER: THE AESTHETICIZATION OF BROKEN VOICES

Er legte mich auf die Erde hin, aber ich konnte nicht gleich einschlafen und weinte eine zeitlang und sagte: »Roß ham«, womit ich sagen wollte, warum mir denn immer meine Augen so wehe thun, mit diesen Worten u.s.w. endlich einschlief. 269

Kaspar Hauser, Autobiographie, 1829

Aber die Fremden, die wilden Menschen, sind Fleisch, in dem kein Wort wohnt, und sie sind vollkommen vereinzelt, falls man einen solchen Gedanken überhaupt aushält. Ist der Geist (oder der Irrsinn oder etwa die Seele, wenn man dran glaubt, denn was soll denn das sein?) das, was durch die Dunkelheit geht – und manche dieser wilden Kinder können, dank ihrer besonders geschärften Sinne, in der Dunkelheit viel besser sehen als wir, hören können sie sowieso besser, über weiteste Fernen, und es ist berichtet worden, daß die Augen zweier indischer Wildkinder, Mädchen, im Dunkel blau geleuchtet hätten wie die der Tiere – und sich selbst den Weg zeigt, da es ja kein anderer tut? 270


On the evening of May 26, 1828, a cobbler in Nuremberg was surprised by the appearance of a teenaged boy at the city gates. The boy kept repeating the phrase “ä sechtene möcht ih wähn, wie mei Vottä wähn is,” 271 and he carried with him a letter telling the horrifying story of how he had been kept in a basement for his entire life. To the shock of those who were


placed in charge of investigating this strange occurrence, he was able to write his name: Kaspar Hauser. Kaspar Hauser was a nineteenth-century foundling child though he differed from other instances of feral children in that, if his story is to be believed, he was not the survivor of abandonment in the forest but the survivor of a deliberate effort to keep him on the threshold of society. He was placed in the care of doctors and teachers who made extensive observations of his mental development, linguistic development, sensory perceptions, notions of morality, and construction of selfhood, since the idea of a child raised without the influences of a family, society or education presented opportunities for studying questions of human nature, such as whether or not humans had innate knowledge of God or language. The extraordinary tale of a “Mensch ohne Kindheit”\(^\text{272}\) fascinated a curious public during Kaspar Hauser’s lifetime and his life became a source of inspiration after his mysterious death in 1833.

Kaspar Hauser’s literary afterlives in German realism and beyond often grapple with many of the same questions of human nature that fascinated his caretakers, for example questions of language and sensory perception. Language is a central theme in Kaspar Hauser’s biographical writings. For example, Kaspar Hauser’s writings create the image of a child whose language has no relationship between signifier and signified. According to his recollections, the words “Roß ham” could mean anything from wanting his wooden horses to being tired to wondering why he was in pain.\(^\text{273}\) In addition to tracking Kaspar Hauser’s development in language, his teachers also observed his heightened senses while conducting experiments on him based in animal magnetism. Literary adaptations of Kaspar Hauser’s life draw on these observations, in addition to the mysteries of his origins and death, often through the lens of the

\(^{272}\) Ibid., 41.

effects of education. For the purposes of my chapter, I am less concerned with literary adaptations of the historic Kaspar Hauser’s biography and more with how elements of his life, namely language, senses and education, are combined with images of feral children, developmental differences and fools to form the basis for a type of literary child who exists on the margins of society and whose position and language suggest an alternative mode of observation than that produced by formal education.

Reading Kaspar Hauser’s literary afterlife as an intersection of multiple traditions expands the literary figure of Kaspar Hauser beyond adaptations of his biography to serve as a way of considering representations of differently-abled children in the nineteenth-century. While there are several figures in works of German realism who bear strong resemblances to Kaspar Hauser, particularly in the works of Adalbert Stifter, this chapter will focus on a child who at first glance bears little resemblance to the historic Kaspar Hauser. In reading the figure of Julian Boufflers in Conrad Ferdinand Meyer’s Das Leiden eines Knaben (1883) through the lens of Kaspar Hauser and the literary traditions colliding within his representation, my goal is not to prove that Kaspar Hauser was an inspiration for Meyer’s work, but to use the discourse of different cognitive ability present in discussions of Kaspar Hauser, fools and feral children to

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274 For more on literary adaptations of Kaspar Hauser’s life, see Ulrich Struve, Der Findling: Kaspar Hauser in der Literatur (Metzler Verlag: Stuttgart, 1992), which lists texts from 1828 through 1990. Many texts appeared shortly after Kaspar Hauser’s death in 1833 (for example Philipp Konrad Marheineke’s Das Leben im Leichentuch (1834)) and then there was a resurgence around 1900 such as with Paul Veraline’s poem “Gaspard Hauser spricht” (1873/1881) which was translated into German by Otto Händler in 1903 (“Kaspar Hauser spricht”) and Stefan George in 1905 (“Kaspar Hauser singt”). Other notable literary adaptations of Kaspar Hauser around 1900 include Rainer Maria Rilke’s Der Knabe (1906), Jakob Wassermann’s Kaspar Hauser oder die Trägheit des Herzens (1907), and Georg Trakl’s “Kaspar Hauser Lied” (1913).

275 For example, the girl in Turmalin who is kept isolated in a cellar by her father following her mother’s disappearance, das braune Mädchen in Katzensilber who appears in the forest to help three bourgeois children, the blind Ditha in Abdias who is sensitive to thunderstorms, uses childish speech, and cannot differentiate between inner and outer worlds, and Juliana in der Waldbrunnen, who is raised in the forest by her grandmother. See Eva Geulen, “Adalbert Stifters Kinder-Kunst: Drei Fallstudien.” In Der imaginierte Findling. Studien zur Kaspar-Hauser-Rezeption, edited by Ulrich Struve. (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag C. Winter, 1995), 123-143.
analyze Julian Boufflers as a figure presenting a realist mode of observation and language that cannot be replicated in a nineteenth-century schoolhouse. In Das Leiden eines Knaben, the story of the fourteen-year-old son of one of Louis XIV’s marshals is told to Louis XIV by his doctor, Fagon, to warn the King against taking on the Jesuit priest Tellier as his confessor. Fagon portrays Julian as a prodigious artist, gifted around animals, and eager to serve the King, before relating how Julian’s classmates took advantage of his developmental differences to trick him into insulting one of their teachers, which resulted in Julian being beaten by Tellier and ultimately led to his death. The novella ends with Louis XIV ignoring his doctor’s warning and taking Tellier on as his confessor.

The figures of Kaspar Hauser and Julian Boufflers seem at first completely divorced from one another. One of the key traits of Kaspar Hauser is the mystery surrounding his origins and that is not present in the novella. The relevance of drawing on Kaspar Hauser as a lens to interpret Julian lies not in a mystery of Julian’s origins, but in Julian’s unique relationship to language and the text’s emphasis on Julian as being mentally different from his peers. Julian is unable to realize that his drawing of a bee and the caption suggested to him by his classmates is a means of insulting one of their teachers. Julian is unable to see that the bee and its long stinger combined with the caption “bête à miel” would resemble “bête Amiel” and refer to his teacher Père Amiel, who has a very large nose. Despite Julian’s difficulties with language and school in this instance, the text presents him in a sympathetic light. The narrator not only depicts Julian as an individual with a more innate understanding of his surroundings, but also attempts to use Julian as a means to reveal truths about the King’s choice of confessors. Reading Julian

276 Although there is no mystery around the appearance of Julian Boufflers, there is a possibility of him being the illegitimate son of Louis XIV, which bears similarities to the discussions of Kaspar Hauser being a lost descendant of the house of Baden.
Boufflers through the lens of Kaspar Hauser, fools and differently-abled individuals provides a framework for interpreting how language and representation are problematized in Meyer’s text.

**The Historic Kaspar Hauser**

Though my analysis of *Das Leiden eines Knaben* is not centered around identifying similarities between Kaspar Hauser and Julian Boufflers, I want to emphasize the elements of Kaspar Hauser’s biography that raise questions relevant to German realism, namely problems of narrative, language, representation, and a sensitivity to underlying forms. Much of the contemporary information on Kaspar Hauser comes from the notes made by his caretaker, Georg Friedrich Daumer, and Anselm von Feuerbach, father of Ludwig Feuerbach and a criminologist who became interested in Kaspar Hauser’s case. These contemporary observations introduce a complex set of characteristics in their attempts to understand Kaspar Hauser, and present him as a figure whose representation merges well with questions of narrative and language and provides a framework for thinking about narratives centered on individuals with differing ability in the nineteenth century.

Kaspar Hauser raises questions for narrative with regard to the mystery of his origins and his own ability to be a narrating subject. Feuerbach draws attention to the two notes Kaspar Hauser arrived with in Nuremberg, one describing his education and the other allegedly from his mother.\(^{277}\) The letters present Kaspar Hauser as a child who is defined by his origins, but Kaspar

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Hauser is denied any means to discuss his lived past. He has no reference to where he grew up and the only name he knows is his own. The mystery surrounding his origins has led to numerous theories, such as Kaspar Hauser being lost royalty, though others were convinced that he was a liar who made up the entire ordeal. The need for an explanatory narrative conflicts with Kaspar Hauser’s inability to narrate. Despite his initial linguistic limitations, his teachers do assume that narrative will eventually be possible. Feuerbach does not describe him as incapable of learning, instead saying that his situation is “dem Zustand eines Perscherä vergleichbarer, Mangel an Worten und Begriffen, eine gänzliche Unbekanntschaft mit den gemeinsten Gegenständen und den alltäglichsten Erscheinungen der Natur.” Feuerbach compares Kaspar Hauser to a resident of Patagonia, the southernmost point of South America. He emphasizes that Kaspar Hauser’s lack of knowledge is connected to his lack of experience. Feuerbach’s assessment assumes that education and interactions with society will supply the missing words and terms that prevent narrative. The intertwining of descriptions of Kaspar Hauser’s situation with assumptions about civilized and uncivilized areas of the world establishes how the figure of Kaspar Hauser is combined with images of feral children in literature, such as the “braunes Mädchen” in Stifter’s *Katzensilber*, who appears in the woods to Mit einem Bericht von Johannes Meyer und einem Essay von Jeffrey M. Masson. (Frankfurt am Main: Eichborn Verlag, 1995), 14-15.


279 As Kaspar Hauser wrote in his autobiographical notes, he used the same phrase for multiple situations. Hauser, *Autobiographie*, 18.

save a group of bourgeois children from a hail storm and disappears after a failed attempt at assimilating her into a middle-class family.

For all his difficulties with language, the historic Kaspar Hauser is also associated with writing and artistic production, which is seen in his caretaker’s notes, as well as in the few poems left behind in his writings. Once he was set up in an apartment in Nuremberg, Kaspar Hauser not only covers his walls with pictures sent to him by curious well-wishers, but spends his time practicing writing and drawing. Kaspar Hauser’s approach to writing and drawing is apparent in Feuerbach’s description of Kaspar Hauser’s attempt to draw an exact copy of a lithograph of the mayor:

> die ersten Versuche glichen ganz den Bildern unserer kleinen Kinder, die ein Gesicht gezeichnet zu haben meinen, wenn sie eine Figur, welche ein Oval vorstellen soll, mit einem Paar rundlicher Schnirikel, nebst einigen langen und Quer-Strichen darin, auf ein Papier hingesudelt haben. Allein fast in jedem der folgenden Versuche waren Fortschritte sichtbar, so daß allmählich jene Striche einem Menschengesicht immer ähnlicher wurden, und endlich das Original, obgleich noch ziemlich unvollkommen und roh, bis zur Kenntlichkeit darstellten.\(^{281}\)

According to Feuerbach, Kaspar Hauser’s understanding of art is the creation of an exact copy. His drawings identify underlying shapes in the earliest stages, which progress to producing a recognizable form in later versions. This method of production is also present in Georg Daumer’s\(^{282}\) account of Kaspar learning to write: “wenn man ihm einen Buchstaben vorschrieb, den er noch nicht geschrieben hatte, so zog er zuerst die Feder oder den Bleistift über den vorgeschriebenen Buchstaben hin und macht ihn dann aus freier Hand mit großer Leichtigkeit.

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\(^{281}\) Ibid., 49.

\(^{282}\) Georg Friedrich Daumer was a grammar school teacher who lived with his mother and sister when Kaspar Hauser entered his care on the request of Kaspar Hauser’s legal guardian, Christoph Karl Gottlieb von Tucher. Daumer had been instructed by Hegel after Hegel lost his professorship at Jena and become the headmaster of a grammar school in Nuremberg, as had Tucher whose sister Marie von Tucher later married Hegel. Daumer was a prolific writer, poet and rationalist. Kitchen, *Kaspar Hauser: Europe’s Child*, 32-35.
So machte er es schon als ich ihn kennen lernte.” Daumer notes that this technique of copying a form before attempting other creations comes from Kaspar himself. Kaspar Hauser is presented as an individual whose mechanics of writing and drawing begin with attempts to understand structures. This interest in forms echoes elements of realist writing. Juliana Vogel observes a strong interest in forms and grids in Adalbert Stifter’s works, where the grid functions “als ein Grenzbereich, an dem die Ordnung von Dingen scheidet, verheißt das Gitter nicht nur die Organisation, sondern zuletzt die Eliminierung der Fülle.” Kaspar’s production of images and languages begins with these structuring forms, the copying of letters and shapes, which are both the beginning and absence of meaning. Kaspar’s production is remarkable for its liminal position between the absence and fullness of meaning, and adapting him within a work of German Realism creates the potential for reflecting on artistic production.

Beyond his use of language, Kaspar Hauser was also of particular interest for his unique relationship to nature. Due to Kaspar Hauser’s limited exposure to outside experiences and stimuli, his teachers were fascinated with his sensitivity to sensory stimuli. Daumer notes that when Kaspar “über Brücken oder an Brunnen vorbeiging, so fühlte er das Wasser, und zwar verschiedene Wasser auf verschiedene Weise.” Kaspar Hauser is portrayed as one who is, by


284 Eric Downing’s analysis of Walter Benjamin’s “Lesendes Kind” (1928) foregrounds the connection between the child and text, where the specific content ceases to be relevant, but the relationship between the reader and text is one of exchange. Downing’s analyzes Benjamin’s description of children’s relationships to picture books and Benjamin’s description of children responding to images with scribbles that include drawing and writing, concluding this mode of reading ushers “the child into a world where every image or thing has a word or text behind it, and every word, even letter, remains both an image and a thing” (235). *The Chain of Things: Divinatory Magic and the Practice of Reading in German Literature 1850-1940* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2018).


virtue of having been kept away from nature, sensitive to its variety and particularly observant. He is keen to note differences between similar forms, even that of water, and verifies these experiences through his senses, here touch, rather than through reason. Kaspar Hauser’s sensory relationship to his surroundings was of particular interest to Daumer who was interested in theories of animal magnetism and somnambulism, although by the 1830s the interest in these theories was no longer as widespread as it was at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Daumer describes Kaspar as having insight into his surroundings that his teachers could not replicate, and his account of Kaspar Hauser includes records of many of the experiments they performed on him. Daumer recounts an incident where, having observed Kaspar’s pain in the presence of certain metals and materials, he placed a blank piece of paper on a table and asked Kaspar to determine if there was metal underneath. Kaspar pointed to an exact spot, and upon further examination, they discovered a needle under the tablecloth that had escaped their notice. Kaspar’s awareness of his surroundings is reminiscent of several figures in Stifter’s works who have unique insight into nature, such as the “braunes Mädchen” in *Katzensilber* and the pastor in *Kalkstein* who are able to predict storms and detect dangers that others cannot, and both of whom were resistant to education, with the “braunes Mädchen” rejecting gender norms, and the pastor struggled in school particularly with reading and writing, only making progress

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287 Though I do not want to attempt to diagnose or categorize Kaspar Hauser in terms of his differing ability, it is worth noting that sensory sensitivity is often associated with individuals on the Autism spectrum.


289 Daumer noted that Kaspar grew feverish in the presence of large groups of people, and that the touch of others was often painful, but “nur alte Personen waren es, von deren Berührung oder Annäherung er gar nichts empfand.” Daumer, “Erste Aufzeichnungen über Kaspar Hauser,” 244.

290 Ibid., 229.
when independently devoting himself to learning in a fashion that suited his learning ability. Kaspar’s use of forms and sensitivity in his connection with nature provide starting points for adapting elements of his biography within realist narratives centered on children with different mental abilities.

**Other traditions combined with Kaspar Hauser**

While Kaspar Hauser is perhaps the best-known example of a differently-abled child in the nineteenth-century, the interest in the language, education and sensory perception alongside differently-abled individuals is present in the longer literary traditions connected to natural fools and feral children. The tradition of the natural fool traces back to the late middle ages and early modern period. Ruth von Bernuth argues that natural fools occupied a liminal position in medieval and early modern courts and that this liminality created a space in which conventional order and cultural norms were rendered powerless. The natural fool creates opportunities to question conventional wisdom and practices, such as the use of language, behavioral norms, or power. The liminal position of the natural fool is often accompanied by the ability to speak truths, though von Bernuth notes that the truths told by fools and children must

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291 Figures with sensory sensitivity are not unique to Stifter’s works and can also be observed in Goethe’s Ottlie in Wahlverwandschaften, and Büchner’s Woyzeck, although Woyzeck’s sensitivity might be more connected to the medical experiments performed on him. Pastor Leutenbacher in Wilhelm Raabe’s Else von der Tanne seems to ascribe an innate connection to nature to Else’s character.

292 Ruth von Bernuth describes the phenomena of natural fools (natürliche Narren) in contrast to that of the mischievous or artificial fools (Schalksnarren), which she traces back to the late middle ages and early modern era. Von Bernuth argues that the natural fool in the middle ages and early modern era was read as a “Wunder” whose origins were with God and nature, and therefore whose behaviors were not sinful, while noting that natural fools have been subsumed into categories of mental illness or developmental differences since the nineteenth century. Wunder, Spott und Prophetie: Natürliche Narrheit in den ›Historien von Claus Narren‹ (Max Niemeyer Verlag: Tübingen, 2009), 17-18.

293 Ibid., 50-51.
be interpreted by others.\textsuperscript{294} The fool becomes a mediating figure for truth, compounded with a holy and asexual character. The ability to represent social and structural truths was a great concern for programmatic thinkers of German realism. Nineteenth-century literary scholar Emil Homberger writes that the realist poet “gibt statt des Zufälligen das Gesetz, statt der Wirklichkeit die Wahrheit, aber – denn er ist ja Dichter, nicht Philosoph – das Gesetz in der Form des Zufälligen, die Wahrheit im Kleide der Wirklichkeit.”\textsuperscript{295} Homberger’s description represents the tensions in creating realist art, where the goal is not capturing every detail, but presenting the right details that present the true character of reality. The true character of a moment or person is represented indirectly through description and forms.

The foolish figure’s role resonates with this artistic gesture; by commenting on a specific moment or person, he can comment on or reveal systemic questions. Beyond being able to identify and reveal uncomfortable truths organizing reality, the foolish figure performs another gesture indicative of German realism: his creation of truth masks its creative gesture. The fool’s truth appears natural rather than constructed, and this process resembles the desire of authors of German realism to conceal their artistic intervention. With both of these processes, the foolish figure can provide a reflection on the production of realist literature.\textsuperscript{296} The natural fool’s marginal position can be combined with that of Kaspar Hauser. Naomi Ritter reads Kaspar Hauser and fools as examples of “Naturmenschen” who tell stories of the dangers of collisions

\textsuperscript{294} Ibid., 208.

\textsuperscript{295} Homberger, “Bedingungen, Reichweite und Widersprüche von Mimesis,” 35.

\textsuperscript{296} Monika Schmitz-Eman identifies a trend in literary adaptations of Kaspar Hauser to utilize the figure as a means to reflect on artistic production, where Kaspar functions as a metaphor for poetic existence, though Schmitz-Emans characterizes this as a trait of modernist writing and does not reflect on works from the literary movement of German Realism. \textit{Fragen nach Kaspar Hauser: Entwürfe des Menschen, der Sprache und der Dichtung} (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2007), 197-198.
between nature and civilization and are turned into scapegoats for a sinful society.\textsuperscript{297} The holy fool and representations of Kaspar Hauser as a martyr suggest that their different insight is inaccessible to others.

Both the natural fool and differently-abled individuals are often described as being child-like and closer to nature. The tradition of the fool undergoes a transition into later representations of individuals with developmental differences and the innocent truth of the early modern natural fool resembles the later notion of children as having an innate connection to truth.\textsuperscript{298} Hans Jakob Christoffel von Grimmelshausen’s \textit{Simplicius Simplicissimus} (1669) features the simple-minded Simplicius raised in the forest before eventually becoming a fool at various courts and finally renouncing the world and its corruption, while later texts focus on different cognitive abilities through the lens of ability rather than foolishness. Martin Halliwell addresses the importance of the tradition of folly in modern representations of differently-abled individuals.\textsuperscript{299} Questions of ability were undergoing reevaluation in the nineteenth-century and the mentally-different figure could perform several functions in literature, such as pointing to an absence of reason, showing kinship with nature, functioning as a symbol for that which cannot be understood, reflecting on creative potential, or as a symbol for social decline.\textsuperscript{300} There is no single way that different

\textsuperscript{297} Naomi Ritter reads Kaspar Hauser through the lens of a fool arguing that he occupies an ambiguous space between nature and civilization, as an “entfremdeten Außenseiter” in “Auf der Suche nach dem heiligen Narren: Kaspar Hauser und Pierrot.” In \textit{Der imaginierte Findling: Studien zur Kaspar-Hauser-Rezeption}. (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag C Winter, 1995), 59, 62, 67-69.

\textsuperscript{298} The innocence associated with an idealized image of children is connected to the idea of children as truthful and natural, compared to the artifice of social interactions, which is particularly evident in a Romantic image of the child as whole and connected to nature. Dieter Richter. \textit{Das fremde Kind}. 249-259

\textsuperscript{299} Martin Halliwell. \textit{Images of Idiocy: The Idiot Figure in Modern Fiction and Film}. (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2004), 29.

\textsuperscript{300} Halliwell observes that the Enlightenment treatment of “idiots” during the Enlightenment was connected to the characterization of them as having no reason (31), he connects Romantic idiots to a search for knowledge within the self and a reconnection with nature (36, 43), and sees “idiots” in modern literature as a response to this ennobling of
ability was used in nineteenth-century fiction and the representation often overlaps with other questions, such as what modern readers might refer to as mental illness. For example, in Wilhelm Raabe’s posthumously-published novella *Altershausen* (1911), the seventy-year-old character Ludwig Bock, Ludchen, is described as an “alte[s] blödsinnige[s] Stadtkind,” who, having fallen from a tree as a child, remained a child mentally ever since. In this work, acting like a child is a sign of Ludchen’s disability. The representation of different abilities with regard to mental development factors highly into representations of Kaspar Hauser since there were debates about whether or not his problems with language were the result of a developmental difference, or the lack of education and socialization throughout his childhood. Kaspar Hauser’s disability was either a product of not having a childhood, or being in a permanent state of mental childhood. In the case of Julian Boufflers, questions of ability are relevant since his ability to perform well in school is a matter of discussion in the frame narrative and is connected to his inability to perceive the trick his classmates are playing on their teacher through him, because his disability and innocence are intertwined.

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301 “‘Idiocy is characterized by a failure of cognitive development, apparent from birth or from early childhood, while the mad person shows a loss of reason and self-control; madness may be cured, while idiocy is a permanent condition.’” Hilary Dickinson. “Idiocy in Nineteenth-Century Fiction Compared with Medical Perspectives of the Time.” *History of Psychiatry.* Xi (2000): 303.


303 Kitchen (79) and Halliwell compare Kaspar’s education to that of Victor of Aveyron, who walked on all fours when found and never made significant progress with language, and argues that Kaspar’s progress with language provided a suggestion of intelligence, but his “ongoing frustration when trying to communicate certain emotions suggests he remains fundamentally dispossessed throughout his life” (127).
Kaspar Hauser and fools are represented as being closer to nature, which factors into how representations of feral children are also combined with the aforementioned figures to structure representations of mentally-different children. Feuerbach’s descriptions of Kaspar Hauser’s situation resembling individuals outside of Europe reveals how narratives drawing on Kaspar Hauser are also connected to narratives of civilization. Even though Kaspar’s situation was distinct from other historic examples of foundling children such as Peter of Hameln and Victor of Aveyron, the ideas connected with wild or feral children are often discussed alongside literary adaptations of Kaspar Hauser. Interest in wild children rose in the eighteenth-century for example with Rousseau’s notion of the noble savage and Carl Linné’s notion of the *homo ferus* in his *Systema Naturae* (1758). The idea of the wild human became a thought experiment in Western philosophy for questions of human nature, such as with Herder’s use of the wild human to prove that the potential for reason and not reason itself is a human characteristic.

By the time of Kaspar Hauser’s appearance in Nuremberg, interest in wild foundling children was waning, since such stories were considered too divorced from reality because of their connection to philosophical debates such as the idea of the noble savage, or the emergence

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304 See, P.J. Blumenthal. *Kaspar Hausers Geschwister*. Peter of Hameln was found in 1724 near Hameln. He was described as not speaking and being able to climb trees like a cat or squirrel. He was sent to an orphanage in Celle in 1725, where he was visited by the English Hanoverian king George I before being brought to England in 1726. He was visited by many and there were attempts to educate him, but he primarily performed small tasks in the kitchens and fields and was unable to develop the ability to speak (101-107). Victor of Aveyron was found in 1797 as he was searching for food in the forest and initially escaped capture, but was caught in January of 1800. Once in the care of others, he was the subject of natural scientists and educators who were curious about the origins of humanity. His primary caretaker, a doctor Jean Itard, observed a development of emotions as well as progress in forming sounds and words though Victor’s development stagnated at a point where he could understand more than he could express. (129-143).

305 Ibid., 23-26.

306 Ibid., 29. Here Blumenthal is referencing Herder’s *Ideen zur Philosophie der Geschichte der Menschheit*, 1784-1791.
While it is important to note the hierarchical overtones of comparing a “natural” child to a “civilized” child, the idea of the wild child brings the potential to imagine alternatives to the Western world of culture, progress, learning and language. In her foreword to P.J. Blumenthal’s study of historic wild children, Elfriede Jelinek poses the notion of wild children having a spirit that is founded on their sensory perception. For Jelinek, the sensory nature associated with wild children is no less truthful than reason, since wild children can “in der Dunkelheit viel besser sehen als wir, hören können sie sowieso besser, über weiteste Fernen, und es ist berichtet worden, daß die Augen zweier indischer Wildkinder, Mädchen, im Dunkel blau geleuchtet hätten wie die Tiere – und sich selbst den Weg zeigt.”

Jelinek’s foreword demonstrates how the figure of the wild child, real or imagined, can function as a site critical of a normative, Western perspective with a deeper understanding and connection to her environment. The wild child’s understanding cannot be explained or reproduced within educational settings, since this understanding exists only in the absence of formal education. Within realism, the wild child has the higher sensitivity to the patterns of nature, which escape the notice of others.

**Kaspar Hauser’s Realist Literary Afterlives**

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309 While Kaspar Hauser is not a traditional feral child, he was described as having a strong sensory perception, especially upon his discovery. His caretakers noted that he could identify the slightest drop of meat in his broth, was sensitive to smells, and could detect different types of metals.
While there are many adaptations of Kaspar Hauser’s life that use Kaspar Hauser’s biography as means to reflect on education and language, works in German realism that draw on Kaspar Hauser do so indirectly, incorporating elements from Kaspar Hauser’s biography alongside the traditions of fools, representations of developmental differences and stories of feral children. Monika Schmitz-Emans’s study of literary adaptations of Kaspar Hauser identifies a turn toward using him as a figure to reflect on language and poetic creation beginning with Jakob Wassermann’s novel Caspar Hauser; oder, Die Trägheit des Herzens (1908), and a turn toward using Kaspar Hauser as a poetic figure or “Sinnbild des Dichters” beginning with Paul Verlaine’s poem “Gaspard Hauser chante” (1873/81) and its German translations. While these shifts are present in the large body of adaptations of Kaspar Hauser’s life in literature, the combination of questions of language and self-reflexivity are already present in works of

310 Claudia-Elfriede Oechel-Metzner notes that many of the works between 1857 and 1888 that retell Kaspar Hauser’s story focus on him as a liar or weak-minded individual, and that this trend began to shift with Paul Verlaine’s poem “Gaspard Hauser chante” (1873/81) on the poetic craft of the foundling child, and that with Jakob Wassermann’s 1908 Caspar Hauser, Kaspar Hauser underwent another shift, continuing to use Kaspar Hauser as a poetic figure, but also as a symbol for idealized humanity. Arbeit am Mythos Kaspar Hauser. (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2005), 128-131. Monika Schmitz-Emans’s analysis of Wassermann’s novel identifies an interest in Kaspar Hauser around 1900 as belonging to a “sprachkritische Wendung” and questioning the relationship between humans and language, and claiming that Kaspar’s education into language constitutes a loss, since, within Wassermann’s novel, “der frühe Caspar spricht (noch) eine eigene Sprache. Obwohl sie nicht verstanden wird, ist sie für ihn ebenso ausdrucksvoll wie die der Allgemeinheit. Auf seinem Weg zur Sprache der anderen erfährt Caspar deren Macht und Gefährlichkeit zugleich, ihre das Ich mit der Welt verbindende und es doch auch wieder von ihr trennende Wirkung. Caspars tiefstes Wissen ist intuitiv und sprachlos, sprachlos auch sein tiefstes Selbstgefühl. Der eigene Name ist ein fremdes Zeichen.” Fragen nach Kaspar Hauser, 114-115.

311 Ulrich Struve’s collection of texts addressing Kaspar Hauser’s life does not list any authors of German realism as producing narratives about Kaspar Hauser between 1850 and 1900. Struve only lists seven texts from this fifty year period, Vie et aventures de Gaspard Hauser l’idiot de Nuremberg (1860); Karl Gutzkow’s Die Söhne Pestalozzis (1870); Georg Daumer’s Zu Ende geht mein Erdenlauf (1873) and Kaspar Hausers Klage (1858-75); Paul Verlaine’s “Gaspard Hauser chante” (1873/81); and Wilhelm Herchenbach’s Der Findling von Nürnberg (1884). In contrast, he identifies 25 texts between 1900 and 1930, including Jakob Wassermann’s novel Caspar Hauser (1907/08), Rainer Maria Rilke’s Der Knabe (1906), and Hugo von Hofmannsthal’s Der Turm. Ein Trauerspiel (1923-25/1927). Der Findling: Kaspar Hauser in der Literatur. Ulrich Struve ed. (Metzler Verlag, Stuttgart: 1992).

312 Schmitz-Emans, Fragen nach Kaspar Hauser, 198.
German realism that draw on Kaspar Hauser motifs alongside images of differently-abled children, such as in several works by Stifter.

One notable Kaspar Hauser child in Stifter’s works who serves as an exemplary case for the problematization of language in realism is an unnamed girl in Turmalin. In Turmalin (1853), a man takes his child with him into the basement of their former house after learning of his wife’s infidelity and disappearance. When the man dies falling from a ladder, his daughter is discovered in the basement, where she has only had a bird for company, speaking nonsensically. The parallels to Kaspar Hauser’s biography are immediately apparent with a child being kept away from the world and being given a limited education. Where Kaspar Hauser could only repeat rote phrases such as wanting to be a cavalry officer like his father, this girl’s linguistic skills have been applied to the task of constantly narrating her father’s burial and her mother’s death. Erica Weitzman interprets Turmalin as a story about the dangers of linguistic and personal self-enclosure. For Weitzman, the child calls into question the meaningfulness of speech, a question that arises around both literary renditions of Kaspar Hauser and feral children. The girl’s words, and the words of others in the text, are disconnected, and there is a continued lack of order throughout the text even after the girl is “rescued” from the basement. Weitzman’s

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313 Weitzman notes that the father’s name “Rentherr” means nothing, where the reference is long lost; she also analyzes miscommunication between the narrator, her maid, and a fruit vendor, and how the different speaker’s linguistic contexts (upper vs lower class; city vs country; Slavic influence vs purely Germanic; dialect vs high German), create moments of incomprehension; her third example is of how the narrator’s son refers to the girl’s bird as a raven (Rabe) though it is actually a jackdaw (Dohle), which is similar to the actor the mother had an affair with, Dall. Weitzman observes that the actor’s name, Dall, is similar to the Austrain Dahlen/dallen, to speak childishly, as well as dalken, childish. “Despite Language: Adalbert Stifter’s Revenge Fantasies.” Monatshefte 111 No. 3 (Sept. 2019): 362-379.

314 Ibid., 374.
analysis of *Turmalin* demonstrates how Stifter had already begun using the figure of Kaspar Hauser to consider the limitations of language, prior to Jakob Wassermann’s 1908 novel.\(^{315}\)

Not only does Stifter’s problematization of language with Kaspar Hauser-like children precede the linguistic turn in Kaspar Hauser narratives identified by Schmitz-Emans as beginning around 1900, it also creates moments of reflecting on narration, preceding Claudia-Elfriede Oechel-Metzer’s and Schmitz-Emans’ claim that this begins around 1880 with Paul Verlaine’s poem.\(^{316}\) Eva Geulen analyzes Stifter’s *Abdias* (1842) and *der Waldbrunnen* (1866) in addition to *Turmalin*. In these three texts, Geulen identifies what she calls a “Schweige-Poetik” which is not the “Grund, sondern Effekt eines Darstellungsverfahren, das nicht der Furcht vor, sondern der rückhaltlosen Hingabe an Wort und Sprache entspringt.”\(^{317}\) For Geulen, the children’s use of language in these works can be considered reflections on narration, where narration within language is problematic and the border between literature and reality disappears.\(^{318}\) The Kaspar Hauser child’s relationship to language manifests itself as a different relationship to reality. The problematizing of narrative around a Kaspar Hauser-like child with this relationship between reality and art allows the Kaspar Hauser figure to be read as an artistic figure. Figures resembling Kaspar Hauser can serves as means of reflecting on artistic production

\(^{315}\) Beyond the German context, Len Gutkin uses Caspar Hauser as a lens to analyze the figure Isabel and her use of language in Herman Melville’s *Pierre* (1852), noting how Isabel’s late development to language has similarities to Kaspar Hauser, and how both could be considered part of the tradition of the feral sublime, or savage creativity. “The Feral Sublime: Caspar Hauser and Melville’s Pierre.” *Leviathan* 15 No. 2 (2013): 23-36.

\(^{316}\) Though I identify an interest in language and poetic reflection in realist adaptations of Kaspar-Hauser-like children preceding the works Schmitz-Emans and Oechel-Metzer reference, the examples I draw on in German realism differ from theirs in that they are not direct adaptations of Kaspar Hauser’s life.


\(^{318}\) Ibid., 141. Geulen phrases it: “Der einzige Weg, die subjektiv intendierte Identität von Sprache und Wahrnehmung auf der Ebene der Kunst durchzusetzen, ist die Negation ihrer Differenz. Das verlangt permanent die wörtliche Realisierung alles dessen, was in den Bereich von Bild, Vergleich und Metapher gehört. Dadurch wird die (literarische) Wirklichkeit nicht wirklicher, aber die Wirklichkeit erweist sich als literarisch.”
similar to Mignon-like children, though the Kaspar Hauser child’s representation tends to emphasize the connection to nature over the connection to art.

**Conrad Ferdinand Meyer’s *Das Leiden eines Knaben* (1883)**

A Swiss author perhaps best known for his poetry and historic novellas, Conrad Ferdinand Meyer’s (1825-1888) 1883 novella *Das Leiden eines Knaben* problematizes language and narration through the figure of a differently-abled child. Moments of differentiation between sign and signifier, between person and animal, and between text and reality are interwoven throughout the story, particularly alongside the representation of the titular boy. Within the frame narrative, Louis XIV’s doctor Fagon responds to the King’s appointment of Père Tellier as confessor by telling the story of a foolish child, Julian Boufflers, who cannot understand the intricacies of language. The text’s representation of Julian draws on the idea of the wild child who is closer to nature and innocence, the foolish child whose innocence reveals institutional problems, and the dysfunctionality of language alongside a differently-abled, Kaspar-Hauser-like child. The frame narrator Fagon attempts to persuade the King to reconsider his choice of confessor through his story of this differently-abled child’s fate at the hands of his Jesuit schoolmaster.

Despite references to specific historic figures such as Louis XIV, his mistress Madame de Maintenon, Père Tellier, and Fagon, the majority of the events in Meyer’s novella are fictional. The historic premise of the novella lies within a short passage in the memoirs of

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319 Several interpretations of the novella draw attention to Meyer’s personal biography, specifically to an incident where he was beaten by one of his older relatives with his mother’s permission. Meyer and his sister described this event as having a marked effect on him. Ibid., 315. For more on this line of interpretation, see also Walter Schönau, “Das Drama des unbegabten Kindes: Zu Conrad Ferdinand Meyers *Das Leiden eines Knaben,*” *Jugend: Psychologie – Literature – Geschichte*. Ed. Klaus-Michael Bogdal, Ortrud Gutjahr, Joachim Pfeiffer, (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2001), 179-191.
Louis de Rouvroy, Duke of Saint-Simon, which provided accounts of life and court at Versailles during Louis XIV’s reign. The passage, not even 300 words, recounts an incident where the fourteen-year-old son of Marshal Louis François, Duke of Boufflers, as well as two sons of the Lieutenant of Police Argenson, caused some undisclosed mischief at a Jesuit boarding school, which resulted in the unnamed boy being beaten since the Jesuits did not fear retaliation from Marshal Boufflers. The short passage ends with a general description of the boy falling ill and dying after four days, with no repercussions for the Jesuits. Saint-Simon’s text makes no reference to any learning disability on the part of Marshal Boufflers’s son. The relationship between the historic source and Meyer’s novella already demonstrates the novella’s problematization of relationships between texts and references.

To provide a brief overview of the embedded narrative which Fagon tells the King, it begins with Fagon’s first encounter with Julian’s mother, whom he spotted crying at a performance of Molière’s Le malade imaginaire, a play which features a child with a learning disability. From observing the Marshallin’s tears, Fagon inferred that she had a son with developmental disabilities. What follows is a fairy-tale-esque situation where the mother falls ill and has Fagon promise to look after her son. Julian is sent to a boarding school run by Jesuits, where all is well until his father (with Fagon’s assistance) discovers financial wrongdoing on the Jesuits’ part, which leads to Julian’s poor treatment by his teachers at school. Fagon continues to recount his interactions with Julian, as well as Julian’s relationship with a local landscape and animal painter Mouton, and Julian’s friendship with a young woman Mirabelle Miramion, before turning to the events leading to Julian’s death. Fagon describes how Julian’s classmates trick him

into helping them mock their rhetoric teacher, which results in Julian being beaten by Père Tellier. Fagon, Julian and one of Julian’s friends, rush to the friend’s father, the Lieutenant of Police. When they seek to apprehend Tellier, Tellier escapes. The novella ends at Versailles where Julian falls into a fever, dreaming of serving the King on the battlefield and dying.\textsuperscript{321}

Within Fagon’s embedded narrative, Julian is presented not only as a victim of child abuse, but as an anomaly within Louis XIV’s court. Fagon constructs a story around the figure of an innocent child, whose innocence is seen in his relationship to nature, his relationship to authority figures, and his inability to be creative with language. While Julian’s innocence serves as a means for Fagon to critique the King and the Jesuits, the text also juxtaposes Julian’s relationship to nature, courtly institutes and language with Fagon’s carefullyconstructed narrative and bears a critique of Fagon’s own use of language.

Julian’s innocence, relationship to truth and creation of texts are highly connected to the associations between children, particularly Kaspar Hauser, and nature and language. Julian is presented as physically-abled but developmentally disabled, where his physicality is indicative of highly-developed sensory perception and the depiction of his mental faculties implies that he cannot translate his perceptions into social interactions. The presentation of his strengths and weaknesses combine to create an image of Julian who is perceptive to what others cannot see, but incapable of ulterior motives. The text associates Julian with truth and innocence because of his unique connection to nature and the manner in which he interacts with structures of power.

\textbf{A Natural and Foolish Child’s Perception in Das Leiden eines Knaben}

\textsuperscript{321} Meyer’s novella deviates from many key points of his historical source in giving the fourteen-year-old boy a name, adding a deceased mother (the boy’s mother is present at the boy’s death in Saint-Simon’s account), providing an elaborate reason for the tension between Marshal Boufflers and the Jesuits, equating Louis XIV’s last confessor, Père Tellier, with the unnamed Jesuit instructors, and establishing a relationship between Fagon and Julian.
Julian’s superior perception of nature is perhaps most-evident in his vision. The text presents a sharp contrast between Julian and his friend Guntram. Both desire to serve in the military, but where Julian is naturally gifted at shooting and riding, Guntram misses all of his shots at practice due to being nearsighted. Julian recalls Guntram’s angry outburst: ‘>Ein hübscher Gott<, hohnlachte er und zeigte dem Himmel die Faust, >der mir Kriegslust und Blindheit und dir einen Körper ohne Geist gegeben hat!’” Julian’s physical and sensory superiority compared to Guntram echoes the descriptions of wild children praised for their bodies and talents, such as vision. The juxtaposition of Julian and Guntram is that of the wild child, closer to nature and physically talented but mentally deficient, and the civilized child, whose separation from nature has resulted in a deficient body but sufficient mind. While the incident highlights how Julian is marginalized for his lack of social graces, the moment also highlights Julian’s accurate perception. His vision is true and cannot be imitated by those who are literally and figuratively nearsighted and he desires to serve a higher power, his King, even if his service is discounted.323

Julian’s accurate visual perception features into his interactions with nature, but Julian’s vision, though superior in one sense, is not compatible with figurative language, and his position between nature and society creates moments of confusion. Julian’s perception is a site of distinction, such as that between humans and animals; moments where signifier and signified are


323 Meyer’s Gustav Adolfs Page (1882) contains another wild child determined to serve a king. In this novella, an orphaned girl, Gustel, takes the place of her cousin after the Swedish king Gustav Adolphus summons him to serve in his army. Gustel is drawn into the conflicts between the king’s supporters and detractors, eventually dying alongside the king in battle.
detached or reassigned create moments of confusion. Fagon tells the King of visiting the royal botanical gardens with Julian:

Ich war mit Julian in Eurem Garten, Sire, lustwandelnd zu den Käfigen gelangt, wo Eure wilden Tiere hinter Eisenstäben verwahrt werden. Eben hatte man dort einen Wolf eingetan, der mit funkelnden Augen und in schrägem, hastigem Gange seinen Kerker durchmaß. Ich zeigte ihn dem Knaben, welcher nach einem flüchtigen Blick auf die ruhelose Bestie sich leicht schaudernd abwendete. Der platte Schädel, die falschen Augen, die widrige Schnauze, die tückisch gefletschten Zähne konnten erschrecken.\(^{324}\)

Julian’s connections with nature are always mediated. Fagon places Julian within nature, but it is within a garden and not a forest. He positions Julian amongst animals, though separated from them by the bars of cages. Fagon maintains a separation between Julian and the world of animals. The breakdown of differentiation between the animal and human does not happen between animals and Julian, but between the wolf and Tellier. When Julian comments that “der Wolf mahnt mich an jemand,”\(^{325}\) he echoes Fagon’s comments in the frame narrative, where Fagon described Tellier as “dieses tückischen Wolfes.”\(^{326}\) However, Julian is not presented as being able to understand the figurative connection between Tellier and the wolf.\(^{327}\) Julian is an observer of animals and their traits, more like Adam in the Garden of Eden than a less-developed, wild human raised without socialization who cannot differentiate between species. Julian’s perception of the natural world indicates that he can establish connections between individuals and their characters, but he hesitates to reduce humans to an animalistic quality or to make figurative comparisons.


\(^{325}\) Ibid., 128.

\(^{326}\) Ibid., 105.

\(^{327}\) Victor Argenson’s account of the prank on Père Amiel reveals that Julian is capable of grasping similarities between humans and animals on the level of form, when he sees the connection between animals with beaks and large noses or horns, and Amiel’s own large nose.
Julian’s inimitable perception is particularly evident in his drawings. Julian’s approach to art draws on mediation, copying other artist’s copies of nature, rather than having an unmediated relationship to nature himself. Fagon examines Julian’s collection of drawings and paintings, in particular his sketches of bees: “Lange hielt [Fagon] einen blauen Bogen, worauf Julian einige von Mouton in verschiedenen Flügelstellungen mit Hilfe der Lupe gezeichnete Bienen unglaublich sorgfältig wiedergegeben. Offenbar hatte der Knabe die Gestalt des Tierchens liebgewonnen.” Julian’s art begins- with shapes and forms, similar to Kaspar Hauser’s attempts to copy a lithograph of the mayor, and is mediated by previous renditions, Mouton’s, as well as by the magnifying lens, which is necessary for Julian to access the smallest details of the bees he is drawing in a variety of winged positions. While the levels of mediation might imply that Julian’s art is less accurate or truthful in how it represents its subjects, the multiple levels of mediation in producing art justify Julian’s hesitation in conflating human and animal subjects.

For example, Julian is aware of his rhetoric teacher Père Amiel’s large nose, having said that Amiel “wird der Natur nicht für seine Nase danken, den sie macht ihn lächerlich” so he refuses to draw a rhinoceros on the rhetoric classroom’s chalkboard at his friend Victor Argenson’s urging, recognizing the structural similarity between a large nose and a rhinoceros’s horns, but also not recognizing the phallic joke in referring to Amiel’s nose. Julian’s perception and focus allows him to understand his classmate’s intentions behind requesting a drawing of a rhinoceros, and his focus on imitating reality disavows dehumanizing a subject, Père Amiel, as


330 Ibid., 125.
well as his innocence in not understanding the figurative sexual imagery in discussing Amiel’s nose.

The accuracy of Julian’s vision, as well as his innocence, is emphasized by the text’s contrast between Julian and Fagon’s perception of the difference between humans and animals. As already mentioned, Fagon embraces metaphorical language and reducing individuals he dislikes to animal caricatures, which is highly apparent in his description of Mouton the Painter and Mouton the Poodle. Fagon is perfectly content to dehumanize Mouton the Painter, jealous of the painter’s mentorship of Julian. Fagon says that Mouton the Poodle, “mit geräumigem Hirnkasten und sehr verständigen Augen […] war ohne Zweifel – in den Schranken seiner Natur – der begabteste meiner drei Gäste: so sage ich, weil Julian Boufflers, von dem ich erzähle, Mouton der Mensch und Mouton der Pudel oft lange Stunden vergnügt bei mir zusammensaßen.”\(^{331}\) Fagon reverses the hierarchy of humanity with these three guests. Mouton the Poodle is the most human, seen in the understanding of his eyes. Fagon’s esteem for Mouton the Poodle is not high praise for the dog, but a means of moving Mouton the painter and Julian away from the realm of civilization and culture toward the world of nature and animals, as well as dismissing their talent and perspectives.

Fagon’s comparisons between humans and animals serve as a strategy for him to advance his own standing and confine Julian’s perspective to narrative. Fagon’s dismissal of individuals who can be interchanged with animals is evident in his complaint that Julian confides in Mouton the Painter instead of in Fagon: “Erzählen doch auch wir Erwachsenen einem treuen Tiere, welches uns die Pfoten auf die Kniee legt, unsern tiefsten Kummer, und ist es nicht ein vernünftiger Trieb aller von Natur Benachteiligten, ihre Gesellschaft eher unten zu suchen als bei

\(^{331}\) Ibid., 122-123.
ihresgleichen, wo sie sich als Geschonte und Bemitleidete empfinden?” Fagon uses the interchangeability of Mouton the Painter and Mouton the Poodle, as well as their animalistic name “Mouton” to dehumanize Mouton the Painter, who he refers to as a “Halbmensch.” Julian does not have an animal counterpart, but Fagon’s juxtaposition of Julian alongside the two Moutons reveals how Fagon also positions Julian in a liminal position beneath cultured humans, such as Fagon, but above humans who are like animals, such as Mouton the Painter.

Fagon’s understanding of Mouton the Painter and Mouton the Poodle is revealed as false. When Fagon complains to Julian that he has entrusted this lesser, animalistic human Mouton with his troubles, Julian corrects Fagon’s assumption: “noch einmal spielte ein Strahl der heute genossenen Seligkeit über sein Antlitz. ›Herr Fagon‹, sagte er halb lächelnd, ›eigentlich habe ich meinen Gram nur den Pudel Mouton erzählt.‹ Fagon’s haste in reading Julian and the Moutons’ relationship resulted in an imposition of his misperceptions on the situation. Because Fagon is quick to associate Julian with foolish behavior, he thinks Julian is confiding in the human Mouton, an unworthy confident, whereas Julian is actually behaving in a normative manner, confiding in the dog Mouton.

The contrast between Julian’s accurate perception and his lack of dexterity in expressing his insight within language is one of the contradictions within representations of differently-abled children. Julian’s problem with language is not a lack of language associated with Kaspar Hauser upon his initial appearance in Nuremberg, but in how his language obstructs his participation in courtly intrigue to the extent that he becomes a tool for others’ machinations rather than one who can influence others. The rejection of innocent language is emphasized by

332 Ibid., 126.
333 Ibid., 136.
the rejection of the novella’s other linguistically-challenged child, Mirabelle. Mirabelle and Julian are both associated with innocence and beauty by their guardians, who compare them to Adam and Eve in paradise. Where Julian’s language lacks the capacity for drawing figurative connections, Mirabelle’s language could be described as an over-abundance of overly-stylized imagery. Mirabelle’s first words in the text, which Julian defends, are her elaborate greeting to Fagon: “Erster der Ärzte und Naturforscher, ich verneige mich vor Euch in diesem weltberühmten Garten, welchen Euch die Huld des mächtigsten Herrschers, der dem Jahrhundert den Namen gibt, in seiner volkreichen und bewundernswerten Hauptstadt gebaut hat.” Her language is overly-decorated, which Fagon describes as “verblühten Rhetorik” and which her aunt says gives people, places and objects a higher value than they have. Mirabelle’s language is the opposite of Adamic, yet the emptiness of her babble, according to her aunt, a sign of her “einfache Seele und ein keusches Gemüt.” The criticism of Mirabelle’s language indicates a disproof for language that distorts or idealizes, indicating a purported preference for language that is truthful and direct. Given Julian’s own honest language that disavows figurative transformations, his defense of Mirabelle’s indirect language seems contradictory to his own linguistic traits. However, Julian’s appreciation of Mirabelle’s embellished imagery belies the criticism of their guardians and dismissal of her language as untrue.

Language is a means of marking individuals who do not belong to polite society. Mirabelle and Julian’s language is criticized as simple for different reasons, but the main difference in their prose lies in their refusal to utilize language in the power struggles of court. Fagon and the Gräfin’s criticism of the artifice of Mirabelle’s language advances their own

334 Ibid., 129.
335 Ibid., 129.
claims of using language in a truthful manner, but this is belied by Fagon’s narrative, which is over-constructed. Julian’s appreciation and defense of Mirabelle’s prose reveals the distorting nature of Fagon’s narratives. Mirabelle’s use of language to imagine the realization of an ideal form of society in its current state sharply contrasts with Fagon’s use of rhetoric. Where Mirabelle uses language to praise, Fagon’s use of narrative is intended to criticize Louis XIV and his court and change it. Fagon’s language attempts to weaponize the foolish child. Fagon’s manipulation of language seeks to incorporate Julian’s innocent language, but the manner in which he does so creates a narrative that is artificial and not truthful.

**Deceitful Language: Fagon and the Frame Narrative**

Unlike Julian, who the text depicts as having a connection with nature that lends itself toward truthful, accurate perception, Fagon is presented as attempting to conceal truth through language. Fagon first appears in the text when the King is complaining to his mistress about Fagon interrupting court:

> da wurde ein leise eingetretener Lauscher sichtbar, eine wunderliche Erscheinung, eine ehrwürdige Mißgestalt: ein schiefer, verwachsener, seltsam verkrümmter kleiner Greis, die entfleischte Hände unter dem gestreckten Kinn auf ein langes Bambusrohr mit goldenem Knopfe stützend, das feine Haupt vorgeneigt, ein weißes Antlitz mit geisterhaften blauen Augen. Es war Fagon.

> »Du Lump, du Schuft!« habe ich kurzweg gesagt, Sire, und nur die Wahrheit gesprochen, ließ sich jetzt seine schwache, vor Erregung zitternde Stimme vernehmen.\(^{336}\)

Unlike Julian, who is described as beautiful and physically healthy, Fagon is a “Mißgestalt,” which could make him the subject of ridicule, but the text describes him as a “wunderliche Erscheinung” or the paradoxical “ehrwürdige Mißgestalt.” Fagon introduces confusion rather than truth with how he presents himself and how he deploys language and narratives. The text

\(^{336}\) Ibid., 104.
also establishes Fagon as an untrustworthy figure through his actions: he eavesdrops on the King visiting his mistress and insults the King’s choice of confessor under his breath during court. Fagon’s behavior crosses the line of acceptable etiquette and hints at an ulterior motive. The text’s presentation of Fagon undermines Fagon’s criticism of Julian and Mirabelle’s linguistic failings. Fagon has no grounds to dismiss Mirabelle’s language as false given the performative nature in which Fagon presents himself.

Effective criticism of the king cannot happen through direct language, so Julian, a child whose language is innocent and truthful, and his suffering at the hands of those the king trusts, becomes the veil for narrating truthfully and poetically. After enticing the King with the statement that Tellier murdered Julian Bouflers and attempting to counter the King and his mistress’s recollections of the events, Fagon begins his story by asking for “drei Freiheiten,” aware that he will cross the lines of appropriate behavior, test the king’s patience and stretch the truth for the sake of a good story. Fagon makes use of his three freedoms, the first time questioning the king’s belief that force is not used in converting protestants to Catholicism, the second time to introduce Mouton the Painter, a figure so removed from the king’s status, and the third time to imply that Julian is the King’s biological son and not the Marshal’s. Fagon uses his creative license as a narrator to introduce connections that upset the stable image the king presents of himself. While the points Fagon introduces might be based in truth, they run counter to courtly language. The king tells Fagon: “unselige Dinge verlangen einen Schleier!”

337 Within the novella, Louis XIV and the Marquise reference the account of the Marshal Bouflers’s son’s attributed to Saint-Simon “das lauschende Ohr” at court, which states that the child died of a fever (106-107). Saint-Simon’s account was the historical source referenced by Meyer (319-320), and Meyer’s text plays with his source material with the in-text references where the King tells Fagon to speak not more of Saint-Simon “Mag er verzeichnen, was ihm als die Wahrheit erscheint. Werde ich die Schreibtische belauern? Auch die große Geschichte führt ihren Griffel und wird mich in den Grenzen meiner Zeit und meines Wesens läßlich beurteilen. Nichts mehr von ihm” (107).

338 Ibid., 121.
Fagon’s language is no more suited to interacting with courtly society than Julian or Mirabelle’s as it is too rooted in his vendetta against the Jesuits.

While Julian’s innocent childishness is expressed through his language, his childishness is also a product of Fagon’s narration. Fagon’s narration denies direct access to Julian’s mental state and cognitive faculties, filtering them through others’ encounters with Julian, particularly through Fagon. Fagon does not directly refer to Julian as a fool, but has others do so within his account of events. The King’s mistress, Frau von Maintenon, does not approve of referring to Julian with this term, informing the King and Fagon of how Saint-Simon had given Julian the nickname “Le bel idiot”\textsuperscript{339} which followed him throughout courtly society. Frau von Maintenon protests the injustice of this title to the King, saying “Dieser edler Herzog, Sire, hat es nicht verschmäht, den unschuldigsten Knaben mit einem seiner grausamen Worte zu zeichnen.”\textsuperscript{340} In the frame narrative, Frau von Maintenon attempts to distance Julian from the associations of foolishness and idiocy, casting doubt on the accuracy of Fagon’s narrative and its creative liberties. Any chances for success in Fagon’s narrative depend on concealing his intent, so the foolish child provides him with narrative cover as well as a subject to entice the King’s interest.\textsuperscript{341}

Fagon’s vehemently anti-Catholic narrative creates a martyr out of Julian to emphasize their cruelty, but in doing so reveals his own. Fagon’s account of his interactions with Julian creates an image of a helpless child in need of his guidance rather than of an individual whose

\textsuperscript{339} This nickname is not featured in Saint-Simon’s account of Marshal Boufflers’s son’s death which served as Meyer’s historical source for the novella.

\textsuperscript{340} Ibid., 107.

\textsuperscript{341} Swales’s analysis of \textit{Das Leiden eines Knaben} focuses on Fagon’s narrative and his attempt to keep Louis XIV engaged, even as the King grows more and more displeased with the narrative. For Swales, Fagon’s failure to persuade the King is similar to Julian imagining he has died like a martyr, serving his King even through failure. Swales, “Fagon’s Defeat,” 38.
perspective allows him to see through the artifices of Versailles. The first explicit reference to Julian’s learning difficulties in the embedded narrative comes from Julian’s mother, whose emotional response to a play featuring a child with learning difficulties betrayed Julian’s nature to Fagon. Fagon has Julian’s own mother critique him in the embedded narrative, echoing and supporting the rumor spread by the courtier Saint-Simon reported in the frame narrative, and positions himself as Julian’s advocate and the ultimate expert on Julian’s abilities. For Fagon, Julian’s disability is an indicator of being blind to the world, even though Julian’s perspective is presented as accurate and insightful in other parts of the text, and his innocence makes him the perfect victim to demonstrate the Jesuits’ cruelty. Julian becomes a martyr or Christlike figure for Fagon’s narrative, though for this to happen, Fagon must recreate Julian’s suffering.\(^{342}\) Fagon’s treatment of Julian in the narrative is equally cruel as Julian’s treatment by his teachers, perhaps more so because it is disguised as kindness. Both Fagon and the Jesuits appropriate Julian for their power struggles in court, sacrificing the child they cannot understand.

While the Christlike imagery surrounding Julian is a means for Fagon to condemn the Jesuits he despises, this same imagery highlights how Fagon also misunderstands and misappropriates Julian. Fagon reports how Julian’s friend Guntram calling him “der größte Dummkopf der Welt, das Gespötte der Welt!” was a turning point for Julian’s suffering at school.\(^{343}\) Julian is mocked for not fitting into the world in its current state. Guntram’s criticism echoes Hebrews 6: 4-6 “Denn es ist unmöglich, die, die einmal erleuchtet worden sind und geschmeckt haben die himmlische Gabe und Anteil bekommen haben am Heiligen Geist und geschmeckt haben das gute Wort Gottes und die Kräfte der zukünftigen Welt und dann

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\(^{342}\) Oechel-Metzler observes that many descriptions of Kaspar Hauser’s life, starting in the 1830s shortly after his death, include a Christlike stylization. *Arbeit am Mythos Kaspar Hauser*, 128.

\(^{343}\) Meyer, “*Das Leiden eines Knaben*,” 137.
abgefallen sind, wieder zu erneuern zur Buße, da sie für sich selbst den Sohn Gottes abermals kreuzigen und zum Spott machen."

In their mockery, which Fagon, the King, the Jesuits, and most figures in the text participate in, the Christlike, mentally-different child’s message is ignored in favor of personal motivations. The text creates a paradoxical situation where the Christlike imagery used by Fagon to reveal the Jesuits’ cruelty also reveals Fagon’s blindness to the transformative potential of Julian’s perspective.

While Julian refuses to participate in harmful language, others seek to incorporate his perspective into their own rhetorical power games. The prank pulled by Julian’s classmates provides the most-obvious example of the weaponization and distortion of Julian’s innocent perspective and provides a foundation for interpreting how Fagon uses the figure of the foolish child in his own narrative. Julian’s classmate, Victor, tells Fagon of how he tried to persuade Julian to draw various animals on the board - rhinoceroses and owls – and Julian refused to draw anything with a nose or beak because he did not want to insult their teacher. Victor claims full responsibility for both the image of the bee on the board and persuading Julian to not caption it literally with “abeille” but with the more imaginative “bête à miel,” having told Julian, “du hast doch gar keine Einbildungskraft.” Julian’s lack of imagination and literal reading of texts and images turn him into a tool for others’ imaginations. Julian provides a form and structure through which individuals such as Victor or Fagon can attack others.

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345 The appropriation of the foolish child for ulterior motives resonates with Kaspar Hauser’s caretakers. Anselm von Feuerbach argued that Kaspar Hauser was a lost member of the royal house of Baden alongside his own juridical interest in classifying Kaspar Hauser’s treatment as a crime, and other caretakers, including Georg Daumer, used Kaspar Hauser as the subject of medical experiments.

Julian’s foolish use of language, innocent and truthful, makes him a figure that others can use in a rhetorical attack against others. Fagon and Victor use Julian as their mouthpiece for controversial opinions and their opinions are validated by their success in aligning a foolish child with no ulterior motives with their own, similar to Kaspar Hauser became a pawn for his various caretakers’ agendas, some medical, others juridical, and others political. Julian’s innocence in the prank is contrasted with Tellier’s overreaction and Julian becomes a symbol for the problems of the Jesuit order. Fagon’s account of Julian’s friend Victor’s account describes the attack as vicious: “Der Wolf tat einen Sprung gegen [Julian] […] aber mir krümmte er kein Haar, weil ich dein Sohn bin und dich die Jesuiten fürchten und achten.”347 Tellier’s violent reaction to a figure others characterize as innocent is the means by which Fagon challenges the Jesuits who have ingratiated themselves into the King’s inner circle. Fagon cannot directly challenge Tellier, but the story of an innocent, foolish child being hurt by Tellier brings Fagon’s opinion that Tellier is a wolf and villain, not a humble priest, to the foreground. Julian becomes a sign for the contradictions between the Jesuits’ exterior piety and true behavior, more effective than Fagon’s pointed questions about the violence against Calvinists during Louis XIV’s reign. A story of child abuse distances the King’s own actions and policies from their consequences, while bringing with it the critique of those to whom the King turns for spiritual guidance. Fagon’s account of Julian is indicative of how children in general were subject to the whims of their educators, parents, and those creating artistic renditions of them, seen as lesser individuals without agency.

The Weaponization and Distortion of the Child’s Voice

347 Ibid., 145.
The appropriation of the differently-abled child’s voice and image for the production of texts that diverge from the child’s perspective is a violent process, and reintroduces the figure of Kaspar Hauser to my analysis of Meyer’s novella. Meyer’s text is a story of child abuse and tragedy, which occurs not only in the Tellier’s beating of Julian, but also in how Julian’s perspective and voice are turned into texts. Though Julian’s inability to connect the sign of a bee and the caption to the signified, his rhetoric teacher, is perhaps the most obvious example in the text, that is not the sole instance of problematic language in the novella. Julian’s relationship to language draws attention to how other figures create relationships between texts and meaning; reading Das Leiden eines Knaben in the tradition of realist literary adaptations of Kaspar Hauser such as Stifter’s “Turmalin,” since Julian’s mental difference is connected to both the intricacies and emptiness of language that appear throughout the text, foregrounds how the innocent, truthful perspective of a differently-abled child is aestheticized and reflects on realist debates on the limitations of narration.

Julian’s conflict with his schoolteachers begins with a missing text. Fagon informs the King of how Julian’s father became responsible for adjudicating a conflict between a group of Jesuits, who were working to expand their school, and four brothers whose neighboring property was threatened over an agreement to transfer over the property if the brothers’ debts were not repaid at the end of three years. The brothers tell the Marshal that there is a written agreement, which has gone missing. The Marshal investigates, but “wohl fänden sich in Briefform gefaltete Papiere mit gebrochenen, übrigens leeren Siegeln, welche den Briefen der Vätern zum Verwundern glichen, doch diese Papiere seien unbeschrieben und entbehren jedes Inhalts.”

The only evidence that the brothers have to support their claim is a blank paper pointing to a

348 Ibid., 116.
missing text. The papers they find have had their meaning erased in terms of content, and with broken seals, there is no guarantee of their source or authenticity. The papers are literally an empty text and have no meaning.

Although the papers have no inherent value or meaning, these empty papers are transformed into text that leads to Julian’s mistreatment. Fagon acquires the papers from the Marshal to subject them to chemical processes, so that when the Marshal next sees them, “die erblichene Schrift trat schwarz an das Licht und offenbarte das Schelmstück der Väter Jesuiten.” 349 The papers are accepted as valid, but Tellier offers a different interpretation that Fagon relates at the end of the story. Tellier claims: “Jene Briefe wurden nie geschrieben! Ein teuflischer Betrüger hat sie untergeschoben!” 350 Fagon accepts responsibility for the letters used against the Jesuits in both cases, though he claims that he revealed what was already there whereas Tellier claims that Fagon fabricated them entirely. The ambivalent authenticity of these letters highlights the novella’s interest in textual authority and Fagon’s veracity as a narrator. The letters which grounded the Marshal’s decision against the Jesuits and grounded the Jesuits’ treatment of Julian, are constructed in either account. They are entirely either fabricated by Fagon, who the text already establishes as being opposed to the Jesuits, or they were revealed through Fagon’s science. In either case, Fagon demonstrates how texts or stories are the foundation for decisions. In telling Julian’s story, Fagon attempts to repeat this ambivalent action with the Jesuits’ letters. Fagon’s story is either revealing what has been erased from court history and can no longer be verified, or he is inventing an entirely new story for his own end. The

349 Ibid., 116.

350 Ibid., 151.
novella leaves open both possibilities which problematizes the ability for texts to be interpreted as offering truths, since the truth is always constructed or reconstructed.

The artificiality of words is emphasized by Fagon, even as he asserts the truth at the core of his narrative regarding the Jesuits and seems to advocate for language that does not distort. Recalling his encounter with Mirabelle and her aunt in the royal botanical gardens, Fagon and Mirabelle’s aunt are critical of how Mirabelle’s language over-embellishes the facts of their encounter. Mirabelle’s aunt criticizes what she calls “verwünschten gespreizten provinzialen Reden” and instructs Mirabelle in the proper, direct, truthful language: “Der botanische Garten ist kurzweg der botanische Garten, oder der Kräutergarten, oder der königliche Garten.” Mirabelle’s language is too poetic and it attributes characteristics to places and people that conceals their reality. For Fagon and Mirabelle’s aunt, language should not create falsehoods through artificiality. Given Julian’s difficulties with subtleties of language, it would make sense for him to be confused by Mirabelle’s misuse of language, but he is sympathetic, telling her “Die Rhetorik ist eine geforderte, unentbehrliche Sache und schwierig zu lernen.” Julian relates to Mirabelle through his own awareness of the necessity of language and how difficult it is to instruct. It is not only a case of knowing words, but reading situations and using language appropriately, but the rules for connecting social contexts with the correct words are difficult to learn for both Julian and Mirabelle. The right language is defined not by the denotative definitions of words but by their contextual connotations. Although Fagon and Mirabelle’s aunt claim to prefer direct language, they cannot divorce language from its interpretation within social

351 Ibid., 129.
352 Ibid., 130.
353 Ibid., 130.
contexts, whereas Julian and Mirabelle prefer language that is both objective and can move objects and people beyond their current state. For them, flowery language is a form of transfiguring reality, not distorting it.

Fagon and Mirabelle’s aunt are critical of language that they see as empty or distorting, though that is precisely the same use of language that Fagon employs to condemn the Jesuits in their property dispute. Empty language and the speakers of empty language are presented in the text as having knowledge that goes beyond that of words. Fagon describes his encounter with Julian’s mother before her death, where the Marschallin “erklärte [Fagon] mit den einfachsten Worten von der Welt, sie werde sterben. Sie fühlte den Zustand, den ich meine Wissenschaft nicht erkannte hatte.”

The Marschallin, who Fagon has bluntly described as “dumm,” has access to knowledge beyond Fagon’s science, which he connects to the process of creating narrative in creating or locating the Jesuits’ letters. Her lack of knowledge and attentiveness to her body grants her knowledge that the scientist cannot attain. Moments where words fail or are absent, such as with blank paper or feeling, are moments of creation.

The failure and absence of language raises questions of how it can be represented in a written text. One strategy for representing a negative that the text points to is that of mediation and reflection, which occurs in a discussion of paintings in the novella. When Fagon is looking at landscapes in Mouton the Painter’s studio, he questions whether or not the painting has a subject:


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354 Ibid., 111.
355 Ibid., 110.
gelernt haben mochte, schon die Illusion eines Erfolges, die Teilnahme an einer genialen Tätigkeit, einem mühelosen und glücklichen Entstehen, einer Kühnheit und Willkür der schöpferischen Hand, von welcher wohl der Phantasielose sich früher keinen Begriff gemacht hatte und die er als ein Wunder bestaunte, ließ den Knaben nach so vielen Verlusten des Selbstgefühls eine große Glückseligkeit empfinden.\textsuperscript{356}

In this passage, text is used to describe an image which the narrator describes as an absence. The painting is of a mood and an absence of sound, as well as of a reflection rather than the object being reflected. For Fagon, this painting is only an illusion of success that has the side-effect of bringing joy to Julian’s life and his dismissal of this type of art presents a contrast to Meyer’s own literary production and nineteenth-century regard for landscape paintings.\textsuperscript{357} Fagon’s disregard for this type of art in line with Meyer’s own works further suggests that it is Mouton and Julian’s art and not Fagon’s that most-closely aligns with Meyer’s.\textsuperscript{358} Mouton’s painting suggests creation without effort and without fantasy, even though it manages to depict something that does not exist. Mouton’s painting is the success of indirect representation and it is this perspective Julian draws on in his work with art and language. Julian, like Mouton, draws from nature as an original subject to reproduce, but the ultimate product is not a carbon copy like Kaspar Hauser’s increasingly successful reproductions of a lithograph. Although Fagon frames this type of art as an empty creation because it is absent of life, reflection and imagination, this approach points to objects and moments than cannot be captured directly and are only accessible through mediation.

\textsuperscript{356} Ibid, 124.

\textsuperscript{357} Meyer was one of the first poets of a Dinggedicht, “Der römische Brunnen” (1882) written around the same time as Das Leiden eines Knaben.

\textsuperscript{358} Writing specifically on Meyer’s Die Hochzeit des Mönchs, Silke Brodersen analyzes how the integration of texts and language, negating a clear divide between the two and creating a “paintery’ reality” (47), as well as how the images and narratives of the past are constructed from a nineteenth-century understanding of history (39). “Reality as Image-Making: Collective Kulturbilder and Subjective Perspective in C.F. Meyer’s Historical Novella Die Hochzeit des Mönchs.” Monatshefte 104, No. 1 (2012): 37-54.
Although Fagon is the primary narrator of the novella, this does not mean that his perspective is accurate. Julian’s mode of seeing the world is impossible for Fagon to replicate, even though Fagon seeks to use it for his own purpose. Julian’s rhetorical emptiness that allows him to serve as part of Fagon’s narrative strategy allows Julian to reflect what escapes representation. Julian’s perspective is both objective and transformative. His art embraces mediation and variations, whether he is looking at different forms of bees or the reflection of a quiet evening in a river. His transformations allow him to indirectly represent the quality of an evening without distorting its character. Fagon’s reaction to this creation demonstrates the uniqueness of Julian’s perspective. Fagon is a man of words and carefully planned stories and he cannot relate to Julian’s attention to forms and reflections, any more than Julian can mediate his perspective through social intricacies.

Julian’s liminal position between the world of the wild child and civilized child comes with a unique perspective that cannot be replicated. Julian’s inability to understand humor and the prank that led to his death is most in line with the historical Kaspar Hauser. Feuerbach’s assessment of Kaspar Hauser’s sensory intuition and literal use of language seems applicable to Meyer’s Julian Boufflers: “Ohne ein Fünkchen Phantasie, unfähig irgend einen Witz zu machen oder nur eine bildliche Redensart zu verstehen, ist er von trocknem, aber kerngesundem Menschenverstand.” Kaspar Hauser, who was used to represent an artist’s struggles in literary adaptations, is a paradox: an artist without fantasy and without any apparent figurative language. What Kaspar Hauser points to is an objective perspective that is not tainted by obscuring deviations from reality or personal agendas. When Julian draws a bee and captions it a “bête à miel” he is affirming, from his perspective, the difference between Father Amiel and the

359 Feuerbach, “Beispiel eines Verbrechens am Seelenleben des Menschen,” 89.
mockery imposed on him by students and members of the court, because he does not observe any similarity between a bee and Amiel. Unlike Fagon and Victor who frequently interchange animals and humans, such as referring to Tellier as a “Wolf” or inverting the hierarchy of Mouton the Painter and Mouton the Poodle, Julian does not collapse the categories of human and animal through figurative language. In this sense, Julian maintains a strict differentiation between humans and animals. Because the text frames Julian as an innocent figure, it is unclear whether or not this perspective is to his advantage, and if it grants him greater access to truth because his perspective is literal, or if the blindness to the danger he was in suggests that figurative language and fiction are necessary for observing truths because they indicate a level of awareness of the interconnectedness of reality.360

Fagon, who creates texts and depends heavily on figurative language and narrative liberties in his story telling, seems to suggest that objective perspectives, though innocent, are ineffective. Fagon praises Julian’s one act of fantasy in the text. In his fevered state, Julian sees visions of friendly visitors such as Mouton the Painter, Mouton the Poodle and his dead mother, while not seeing his real visitors, Victor, Mirabelle and Père Amiel. His senses are entirely numb to the world he is in and fully within the realm of fantasy. The Marshal goes to his son and offers a comforting fantasy of sending his son out to serve in the army, commanding him to do his duty, and the boy obeys, shouting “Vive le roi!” before he “sank zurück wie von einer Kugel durchbohrt.”361 Julian’s death, though it can objectively be attributed to his fevered state and injuries, occurs as a simile. Julian has left the realm of the objective to the realm of the

360 The Christlike imagery surrounding Julian does positively connote Julian’s perspective, although Julian’s death and treatment at the hands of all the figures in the text suggests that imitating Julian (or Christ) is an impossible course of action.

metaphorical and that is where he dies, on a battlefield and not in a sickbed. The King responds to this loss of objective reality by calling Julian an “armes Kind” to which Fagon responds “Warum arm […] da er hingegangen ist als ein Held?” Julian’s objective vision might have maintained his innocence, but it did not protect him, whereas fiction and figurative language are transformative. Julian’s death occurs as a fantasy from the perspective of observers, but Julian’s objective perspective makes the fantasy real. The right fiction can transform reality from the state it is in, such as fevered visions and pain, to a higher state. Though the novella ends with Julian’s death, it leaves open the question of whether or not the story is sufficient to persuade the King to not take on Tellier as his confessor, the historical reality is that he was Louis XIV’s confessor until Louis XIV’s death, and only thereafter removed from court due to Tellier’s entanglement in court intrigue and tensions between Jansenists and the Jesuits. However, Meyer ends the novella before the King makes his final decision, leaving the text in a moment of choice, separating the text from its historical antecedent.

Conclusions

The story of Kaspar Hauser is one of child abuse, missing texts and broken language. Texts’ origins cannot be verified, such as the letter telling of Kaspar Hauser’s origins, any more than Fagon’s story of Julian’s death vis-à-vis the official, historical source Saint-Simon. Fagon’s narrative about the circumstances surrounding Julian Boufflers’s death is not just the attempt of a courtly fool to intervene in courtly politics by arousing sympathy for the misfortunes of an innocent natural fool, but the novella is a story about stories and language. Julian’s weakness with figurative language is contrasted with Fagon’s strength of constructing texts and narratives.

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362 Ibid., 157.
Although the embedded narrative seems to criticize Julian’s language and artistic creations as empty, the novella is also critical of Fagon’s narratives. Fagon’s narratives break down because without a verifiable source, they seem artificial. Julian’s relationship to language and art, although it is a weakness in the world of the novella, offers a perspective that cannot be replicated by those whose narratives are influenced by personal motivations and subjective perspectives that call the accuracy of the account into question.

Meyer’s novella Das Leiden eines Knaben draws on many literary traditions with the figure of Julian Boufflers to reflect on realist storytelling. The figures of the wild child, natural fool and Kaspar Hauser bring with them critiques of civilized, courtly society and violence against children. These types of figures exist in liminal positions and cannot be incorporated into the dominant structures of society. Julian is put into a world overflowing with texts and subtle language without the ability to navigate them. Within the representation of Julian Boufflers, these figures of children draw into question whether or not texts can be truthful and artistic. The narrator Fagon offers one possibility for how such a child can be used in narratives, namely to critique the civilization that destroys an innocent child in power struggles and courtly politics, although Fagon’s positioning of Julian closer to nature and fools figuratively hurts the child, paralleling the violence allegedly committed by Tellier against Julian.

A story about child abuse and murder seems like a strange subject for a work of realist literature and realist goals of representing the ambiguous concept of truth and structures defining reality. However, the various figures that can be seen in Meyer’s Julian Boufflers are all connected to questions of revealing truth and social values. The wild child reveals what it means to be civilized from the contrast between nature and society, and in Meyer’s text, the civilized world of Louis XIV’s court is one that disregards human dignity and ignores the violence of the
state in religious policies. The natural fool is a figure used to criticize existing structures of power, which draws attention to the problematic structures in Louis XIV’s court, despite its reputation as the pinnacle of culture. The figure of Kaspar Hauser raises the question of whether or not texts can ever be truthful, by drawing attention to the disconnect between texts and reality, as well as moments where language distorts reality. Meyer’s text is able to intertwine these different types of figures on the figure of Julian Boufflers because he chose a fourteen-year-old as the subject of the novella. As a young teenager, Julian is in the already liminal period between childhood and adulthood, where the trait innocence associated with wild children, fools, and Kaspar Hauser’s permanent childhood appears natural, and where the connection to a world beyond childhood, namely political intrigue and state religious policies, is possible. In intertwining these types of individuals who exist in liminal spaces and imposing them on an individual who previously existed in only 300 words of a historical record, Meyer’s text creates a figure whose representation is rooted in a specific incident but points to broader concerns for the nature of society.
CHAPTER 4: REALIST CRIMINAL CHILDREN AND THE TRANFIGURATION OF THE BOURGEOIS FAMILY


Eduard Reich, *Blicke in das Menschleben*, 1886

Mit entsprechender Gewissheit kann man aus der Verbrecherstatistik beweisen, dass die Gesellschaft selbst die entarteten Kinder schafft, und dass sie, wenn sie sie dann auf den „Weg der Tugend“ züchtigen lässt, wie ein Tyrann handelt, der zuerst einem Menschen die Augen ausstäcke und ihn dan prügelte, weil er nicht selbst seinen Weg finden kann! 364

Ellen Key, *Jahrhundert des Kindes*, 1906

That the child represented a source of anxiety for both the present as well as for the future is perhaps most evident in Ellen Key’s bestselling *Jahrhundert des Kindes*, originally published in Swedish in 1900 before appearing in German in 1902. Key emphasizes the importance of both family and society in raising disciplined, moral children so that the children may then become adults and continue the cycle of discipline to instill bourgeois morality. Key’s claim is supported by the vast number of pamphlets and books about children emerging from psychological, pedagogical and juristic spheres during the latter half of the nineteenth century.

Criminal children would appear at first an odd subject for German realism, holding an ambivalent, outsider position in society by interrupting and rebelling against its order. Although


criminal children were a growing concern within jurisprudence and the developing field of psychology in the late nineteenth-century, German realism’s focus on average individuals and the bourgeois lifestyle as subjects of art demands a different representation of criminal children than the sensational descriptions in criminological and psychological texts. Within German realism, the criminal child provides an opportunity for authors to expand the average, organizing forces of society, the bourgeois family to marginal figures.

Representations of criminality within literature are often connected to a Foucauldian understanding of literature, whereby the act of reading about criminals reinforces discipline and imposes bourgeois morality and its structures upon readers. D.A. Miller argues that within the Victorian novel, protagonists find themselves under social surveillance and public coercion far more powerful than that of institutional policing, and within her study of British literature, Nancy Armstrong argues that the greatest problem of modern subjects is that they are “ultimately incapable of incorporating the contradiction posed by desires from within, on the one hand, and those that invade the individual from without, on the other.” Within this view, there will always be a conflict between individual and communal desires. Characters who seem to defy the restraints of communal existence are either destroyed or find themselves sacrificing their individuality for social security. The literary criminal often serves to affirm the hegemonic power of bourgeois morality within the novel.


366 Nancy Armstrong, How Novels Think, 23.

367 Here Armstrong draws on Louis Althusser’s notion of the bad subject, one who cannot be categorized, is too subjective and rejects confinement, and therefore is incapable of self-government. Armstrong, How Novels Think, 29.
This Foucauldian reading of literature could easily be applied to German realism, although neither Armstrong nor Miller addresses a German context. German realism thematizes the notion of containment, for example with the frequent use of frame narratives, the tension between the ‘real’ and ‘fantastic,’ and the long descriptions without plot trapping the reader in an image.\(^{368}\) The rhetorical containment serves as an aesthetic representation of increased discipline and limits on individuality in modern society; however, the representation of discipline and confinement reveals its artifice. Criminal children do aestheticize and idealize confinement within the bourgeois family and its order; however, the idealization of the bourgeois family through marginal, criminal children reveals its contradictions and vulnerabilities.

In this chapter, I examine Theodor Fontane’s 1880 novella *Grete Minde* and Marie von Ebner-Eschenbach’s 1887 narrative *Das Gemeindekind*. In these two works, Fontane and Ebner intertwine the language of criminality and childhood in their respective adolescent protagonists Grete Minde and Pavel Holub. In *Grete Minde*, Fontane’s eponymous heroine leaves her childhood home after the death of her father to escape the control of her half-brother and his wife. She returns as a young, single mother, and denied any financial support, burns the city to the ground, killing herself, her son, and her nephew along with others in the town. In *Das Gemeindekind*, Ebner begins her narrative in a small, Austrian feudal village with the execution of Pavel Holub’s father for committing murder and his mother’s imprisonment as an abettor. Pavel becomes an unwanted ward of the community, is constantly confronted with their low expectations for him, and is constantly accused of any wrongdoing in the village. Despite the village’s expectations of criminality, Pavel rises above those expectations, building a home.

\(^{368}\) On containment in Realism, see Dania Hückmann “Containment in Realism” in *The Germanic Review: Literature, Culture, Theory* 90, No. 3 (2015): 153-155.
With German realism’s more-common representations of provincial life rather than the representation of large cities as seen in British and French Realism, criminality takes on a different form. There are no gangs of criminal children as in Charles Dickens’s 1835 *Oliver Twist* or Victor Hugo’s 1863 *Les Miserables*. Neither Fontane nor Ebner stages their narratives in large cities, full of anonymous masses, but instead focus on small communities and broken families. Criminality is a problem of the domestic, local sphere and not merely a product and danger of industrialization and the growth of urban centers.

Although the plight of the criminal child evokes sympathy, Fontane and Ebner’s approaches to realism move beyond raising social awareness of their readers as is the case in French and English realism. In an unfinished essay critiquing Emile Zola’s *La Fortune des Rougon*, Fontane writes that “Realismus ist die künsterliche Wiedergabe (nicht das bloße Abschreiben) des Lebens. Also Echtheit, Wahrheit.”369 Ebner expresses similar sentiments, writing that “die Kunst ist im Niedergang begriffen, die sich von der Darstellung der Leidenschaft zu der des Lasters wendet.” 370 Both Fontane and Ebner indicate that the purpose of realist art is not to provide an accounting of all miseries of the world, but to represent life and its contingencies in a manner that points toward an underlying structure.

In these two narratives, Fontane and Ebner perform two moves essential for German realism. First, through their choice of protagonists, they make visible subjects who would otherwise be overlooked, in this case abused, neglected children; second, they make visible the

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epistemological hegemony of bourgeois morality that dominates even on the outskirts of society. These dual moves are possible because bourgeois family morality underlies and drives Pavel and Grete’s experiences as children and criminals. In uniting the criminal child and the bourgeois child, Fontane and Ebner explore the possibility of the ideal bourgeois family as the organizing principle of society. The microscopic and macroscopic focus of Fontane and Ebner’s works, on the child and the community, intensifies the inherent contradictions of affect and economy within the bourgeois family, and so reveal the questionability of that ideal.

Criminality within *Grete Minde* and *Das Gemeindekind* is not the absence of bourgeois morality, but the refusal of the protagonists to be outsiders. Paul Fleming argues that within German realism, the average is best observed through exceptional figures on the margins of society.\(^{371}\) Neither Fontane nor Ebner directly represents the ideal bourgeois family, yet the drive for home and domestic security within children outside of that social sphere collapses the distance between the margins and the center of society. The bourgeois family and bourgeois society is dependent on categories of outsider and insiders, yet the expansion of bourgeois structures to include the criminal child undermines that foundation. The criminal child expands bourgeois morality and norms to their breaking point

**The Extraliterary Criminal Child**

The idea of the criminal child collapses two opposing ideas onto a single subject. The idea of the criminal, an individual interrupting and threatening society by placing individual interests over those of the collective, seems incompatible with an idealized view of children that

\(^{371}\) Writing specifically about Adalbert Stifter’s *Sanfte Gesetz*, Paul Fleming states “it is not the norm that upholds and embodies the law; rather the rare, exceptional, and out of the ordinary do so. The law, in other words, is to be found not in the dead center and regular occurrences of society, but in its margins and in the minority” *Exemplarity & Mediocrity*, 162.
was prevalent in the Romantic and hearkens back to Rousseau’s associations between children and nature prior to the corruption of society.\textsuperscript{372} However, criminal, psychological and literary writings of the late-nineteenth century complicate the distinction in their attempts to locate the origins of criminality in children and to identify possible solutions. The debate on the origins of criminality repeats the question of nature versus nurture and the question of who bears responsibility for the child’s crime, and at what point the child becomes responsible and morally accountable for his or her actions.

Despite the divide between nature and nurture in locating the origins of criminality, both sides of thought disassociate criminal children from the bourgeois class. In his 1845 article “Ueber Verarmung und Entsittlichung der arbeitenden Klassen,” Ludwig Jacobi calls for increased state intervention to address the consequences of poverty in the working classes, which he identifies as the origins of the loss of morality and increased criminality starting at a young age. Rather than work on reforming individuals already in prison, Jacobi calls for earlier interventions by the state to take on the role of parent by concerning itself with the nourishment of both the bodies and minds of working-class children, so that they would grow accustomed to “Sitte, Ordnung und Thätigkeit” from a young age.\textsuperscript{373} Jacobi identifies the absence of bourgeois morality and bourgeois families with the rise of criminality and proposes that the imposition of it by the state would resolve growing concerns.

This mindset continued to be present through the late nineteenth century and was further exacerbated by the continued growth of cities. Responding to public concerns, one report


characterizes criminality as a product of urbanization, since, “wo Menschen in geordneten Verhältnissen zusammen leben, da muß es immer Verbrecher geben, da es ja keine Rechtsordnung giebt, die Jedem die völlige schrankenlose Befriedigung seiner Wünsche und Begierden gestatten darf.” Criminal children are of particular concern in the general discussions of criminality. A rise of criminal behavior among children serves as an indication of a larger social problem.

Criminal children simultaneously reflect the current state of a society, as well as anxiety about its future. Criminality is often discussed as an illness, where even healthy individuals could carry the “Keime der Krankheit” within them. The pathologizing of criminality asserts that criminal behavior is like a virus that lies dormant in every child but is only awakened through the absence of order since “Leidenschaft ist unmittelbar die Grundlage von Verbrechen, Lastern, Verfolgung, Peinigung, also die nächstliegende Quelle der Sünde.” Criminality is then a symptom of a problem that must be addressed for the sake of the future. As Jacobi suggested, the state became ever-increasingly involved in efforts to prevent and reform criminal children and youths. State-run education and other interventions are framed as supplements to the lessons in discipline and morality that children are expected to receive at home. Despite increased interventions by the state, the home and family are still regarded as the first defense against the

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375 Ibid., 2.

376 Ibid., 4.

377 Ibid., 6. Debates on how to punish child-offenders and juvenile delinquents also draws on this tendency; the desire to reform criminal behavior through educational institutions is balanced against fears that exposure to such children in the *Volksschule* might be to the detriment of the other pupils.
rise of criminality and immorality for the creation of a healthy society: “Die Gesellschaft verdient den Namen einer gesunden, wenn Familie und Individuum durchaus normal beschaffen sind.”\textsuperscript{378} Asserting order over children is necessary for the public good and the bourgeois family is treated as the site of constructing good citizens, and the purpose of the family is extended to educational bodies that reach wider groups of children.

Where the bourgeois family was presented as a means of preventing certain criminal behaviors through the imposition of bourgeois morality, the nineteenth century also saw the rise of the idea of the born criminal, an individual impervious to bourgeois discipline. Cesare Lombroso, an Italian criminologist, went so far as to argue that criminals were of an entirely different species and his ideas resonated with some of Germany’s criminologists such as Otto Mönkemöller and Erich Wulffen.\textsuperscript{379} Mönkemöller would draw from this tradition to suggest that hereditary traits, such as ethnicity, would support the idea of criminality being present and visible in the child, even before any crime had been committed.\textsuperscript{380} The born criminal was something exotic and at odds with bourgeois life. As Hans Malmede comments, “diejenigen

\textsuperscript{378} Eduard Reich, \textit{Blicke in das Menschenleben: Leidenschaften, Laster und Verbrechen, deren Entstehung, Heilung und Verhütung}. (Schaffhausen: Verlag von Fr. Rothermel & Cie., 1886), 2.

\textsuperscript{379} The idea of the born criminal was heavily influenced by the notion of social Darwinism, where the criminal child was simply incapable of being socialized, and can be traced back to the idea of moral insanity originating in England with Thomas Arnold in \textit{Observations on the Nature, Kinds, Causes and Prevention of Insanity} (1782), further developed by James Cowles Prichard in a \textit{Treatise on Insanity and Other Disorders Affecting the Mind} (1835), which spread its way to the European continent. See Hans Malmede, „Vom »Genius des Bösen« oder: Die »Entartung« von Minderjährigen Negative Kindheitsbilder und defensive Modernisierung in der Epoche des Deutschen Kaiserreichs 1871-1918.“ In \textit{Kinderwelten}, ed. Christ Berg (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1991), 197.

\textsuperscript{380} Otto Mönkemöller, \textit{Geistesstörung und Verbrechen im Kindesalter} (Berlin: Verlag von Reuther & Reichard 1903), 6. Ernst Haeckel was another controversial proponent of social Darwinism in the German context. His work is associated with the societies invested in the formation of “racially pure” Germany, as well as with eugenics. Though criminality was not the focus of his work, similar veins of thought to Mönkemöller are seen in Haeckel’s stance on non-normative children found within his work \textit{Die Lebenswunder} on biological philosophy: „Es kann daher auch die Tötung von neugeborenen verküppelten Kindern, wie sie z. B. die Spartaner behufs der Selection des Tüchtigsten übten, vernünf tiger Weise gar nicht unter den Begriff des „Mordes“ fallen, wie es noch in unseren modernen Gesetzbüchern geschieht. Vielmehr müssen wir dieselbe als eine zweckmäßige, sowohl für die Beteiligten wie für die Gesellschaft nützliche Maßregel billigen.“ (Stuttgart: A. Kröner, 1904), 23.
The born criminal points toward an outside, wild influence that would prevent German bourgeois morality from being received.

Not all criminologists accepted such theories that conflate criminality with wildness. Eugen Bleuer’s writings are highly critical of Lombroso’s conflation of criminal, wild, and childish behaviors, in that “alle drei stehen auf einer tiefen Stufe, die Verbrecher infolge eines persönlichen Defekts, die Kinder infolge unvollkommener individueller Entwicklung und Erziehung, die Wilden wegen ihrer niedrigen Rassen- und Kulturentwicklung. Die Aehnlichkeit sind also unzweifelhaft vorhanden, die Unterschiede aber auch.” Problematic as his language and dismissal of non-western cultures as merely “wild” and in need of western civilization is, Bleuer reveals how the language used to describe criminals, children and non-Europeans draws on the same assumption shared by Lombroso: criminality and wildness are located external to German society and the German family.

Fontane and Ebner draw on stereotypes of born criminals for their protagonists Grete and Pavel. Both children can be read as non-Germanic, with Grete’s Spanish mother and Pavel’s Slavic background and his parents coming from outside the Austrian village. The born criminal is the ultimate outsider and threat to a stable social order.383 Fontane and Ebner’s texts break

381 Malmede, „Vom »Genius des Bösen, «“ 199.
383 The severe anxiety around the idea of the born criminal raised several controversial solutions. The most gentle solution was confinement, but it was applied not only to children displaying dangerous tendencies, but also to children with severe learning disorders. During World War I, several criminal children did fill a social role by volunteering in the army, and the Reichsjugendwohlfahrtsgeset (1922) and Jugendgerichtgeset (1923) continued
from the expectations for born criminals through their protagonists’ receptivity to the affective power of the bourgeois family. Despite Grete and Pavel’s appearance as criminals, Fontane the threat to bourgeois order does not lie within the criminal child, but in the community.

The Literary Criminal Child

The intersection of criminality and childhood in German realism has been underexplored in the scholarship of this field, given the contemporary intermingling descriptions of children and criminals.\(^{384}\) For Aparna Gollapudi, criminal children in literature are most often treated as products of their environment rather than as individuals, and function as a general call to arms for social reform in works intended for adult readership.\(^{385}\) Descriptions of criminal behavior, as Hans Gladfelder succinctly puts it, “implicitly (if not openly) reflect on issues of the most urgent concern to their authors and audience.”\(^{386}\) However, the ability for representations of a criminal to reflect on social issues such as urbanization or industrialization, opens criminal literature to

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the practice of treating criminal children from a psychological perspective. However, more radical individuals such as Mönkemöller advocated for more dramatic means to render unsocializable children harmless to society, namely chemical castration, and Ellen Key, who looked at the twentieth-century as the century of the child, favored doctors euthanizing criminal children so that their behavior could not be passed along. These policies were not in effect or favored around 1900, but came to tragic, violent reality with the rise of the Nazi party. Malmede, “„Vom »Genius des Bösen,«” 207-211.

\(^{384}\) Stefan Andriopoulos addresses literary criminality in a German context around 1900 and the influence of criminologists such as Cesare Lombroso in shaping the language and representation of criminality in literature; however, his primary focus is not on German Realism. Stefan Andriopoulos. *Unfall und Verbrechen: Konfigurationen zwischen juristischem und literarischem Diskurs um 1900*. In Hamburger Studien zur Kriminologie. Band 21. (Pfaffenweiler: Centaurus, 1996).


Foucauldian critiques, wherein these representations affirm normative discourse, such as viewing the criminal as a separate, less-than-human entity. In my examination of the figure of the child criminal in *Grete Minde* and *Das Gemeindekind*, I am interested in how the intertwining of childhood and criminality has a creative rather than disciplinary potential. The act of storytelling in novellas, as Chenxi Tang argues, becomes a means of staging the creation of normative order in periods of lawlessness. Narratives about transgressions have the power to reestablish sociability, and through my study I hope to prove how childhood and criminality work together to imagine a new sociability in accordance with the ideal form of the bourgeois family and morality, even if the implementation of that imagined sociability cannot be realized.

Literary representations of children can serve multiple purposes, which allow them to both reflect and challenge the representations of society in which they appear. In her study on multiple understandings of the child and childhood and the similarities between childhood studies and affect studies, Daniela Caselli draws attention to how “childhood today is for many theorists the privileged standpoint from whence to understand what is innate and what ‘merely’ cultural.” Caselli observes how the literary representation of the child and childhood is

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constantly re-theorized as a tool to represent psychological development, historical contexts, pre-linguistic states, national identity, memory, as well as futurity.\(^{390}\)

With the multiple possibilities for examining the representation of children and childhood, I also draw on Lee Edelman’s description of, and challenge to “the pervasive invocation of the Child as the emblem of futurity’s unquestioned value and purpose”\(^{391}\) to examine how the criminal child within German realism can draw into question the expansion and reproduction of bourgeois society. Children are signs of both the future and potential destruction of a given community. Children can preserve the community in its current form, prolonging its existence and justifying the status quo. However, the criminal child evokes the fear of the end of the bourgeois experience. Through my readings of *Grete Minde* and *Das Gemeindekind*, I will argue that, in acting as a frame to and bulwark against representations of child criminals, the aestheticization of bourgeois life undermines its own means of reproduction.

**The Bourgeois Family: A Domestic Ideal founded on Affect and Economy**

The nineteenth-century bourgeois family is often idealized as a private, loving unit that fosters individualism by providing a domestic sanctuary against the world of industry and capitalism.\(^{392}\) Unlike in a working class or peasant family who work where they live, the bourgeois family and household are separated from places of work. Children occupy a special

\(^{390}\) Ibid., 243.

\(^{391}\) Lee Edelman addresses the invocation of the figure of the child alongside aspirations proposes a project of queer oppositionality and refusal, where “the queer comes to figure the bar to every realization of futurity, the resistance, internal to the social, to every social structure or form.” Lee Edelman, *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004), 4.

position in this arrangement. The world of the child is increasingly separate from that of the adult.\textsuperscript{393} Children are linked to the world of adults not by their contributions to the household labor force, but through affection. With decreased child mortality, parents (specifically mothers) bond with children earlier, establishing an affectionate relationship as the norm between parents and children.\textsuperscript{394} The emphasis on affection as the binding force and economy of the family creates the domestic ideal of the bourgeois family as a space capable of nurturing and developing individuals in a world increasingly concerned with production and capital.

The ideal of the bourgeois family, however, is intrinsically linked to the structures of capitalism. The separation of work and home is a luxury dependent on the acquisition of capital, and the family exists as a unit to accumulate and pass down acquired capital. Jürgen Habermas notes that the cultivation within a bourgeois family contains the contradiction of developing individuals and social skills necessary for participating in the labor economy.\textsuperscript{395} For boys, this includes acquiring the skills to have a profession and financially support a family. For girls, this is the skill of motherhood. In both cases, a child is dependent on capital to reach adulthood and to acquire the idealized domesticity.

The affective power structures of the bourgeois family mirror those of the capitalist economy. Rather than children fearing corporeal punishment and thus obeying their parents, discipline within the family occurs on an internal, psychological level, with good behavior


\textsuperscript{395} Habermas, \textit{The Structural Transformations of the Public Sphere}, 48.
rewarded with affection and poor behavior resulting in the withholding of affection. Affection serves as the currency of the bourgeois household. Although the bourgeois family defines itself as a space founded on the love between a couple and as being a space for individual development, the psychological coercion by affect confines children within the structure of the family as much as the monetary economy underlying the bourgeois family’s existence.

The affective economy within the family serves to create the family as a unit, but also can be utilized to understand community building as a whole, where the circulation of emotions intensifies a sense of group identity. Although the affective economy within the idealized domestic sphere can primarily be understood as one driven by the desire to accumulate positive affection, it is also necessary to examine how this notion of group formation can also create and depend on the category of outsiders such as criminals. Within Sara Ahmed’s notion of the affective economy, expressing fear, hatred, or anxiety about an outsider becomes a tool for expressing love of the community and thus the threat to the community is in actuality a necessity for its establishment and survival.

The bourgeois family is therefore dependent on threats to its existence in order to maintain the illusion of itself as a refuge and domestic ideal. Anxiety about the criminal child is a means of affirming the bourgeois child. The bourgeois familial existence, and the bourgeois child, cannot exist without the figure of the non-bourgeois child. This dependency allows the

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398 Ibid., 125. For Ahmed, both fear and anxiety are connected to subjects’ relationships to objects. Although Ahmed recognizes that fear differs from anxiety in having a specific, identifiable threat, she is more concerned with the potential disappearance of the object of fear and its “passing by” and thus the inability to contain the fear within an object as well as how the absence of a specific object allows anxieties to be accumulated.
figure of the outsider, criminal child to be used to investigate the figure of bourgeois familial existence. The presence of a criminal child within a German realist novella is therefore less of an interruption of realist aesthetics but a means of representing, bourgeois experiences, though the expansion of bourgeois structures to these necessary marginal figures already suggests the failings of such a move.

**Descent into Criminality: Theodor Fontane’s *Grete Minde* (1880)**

Theodor Fontane’s eponymous heroine Grete Minde serves as a case study for how the representations of criminality and childhood both intensify and problematize the transformation of bourgeois life into art within German realism. Grete occupies both the position of a child of the community and that of the outsider, criminal child. She is a child of thirteen at the beginning of the novella, living in the city of Tangermünde in 1614 with her father, half-brother, and sister-in-law. She is the child of her father’s second marriage to a Spanish Catholic woman, and out of place in both her family and the Protestant community. Grete runs away with her neighbor and sweetheart Valtin Zernitz after her father’s death in order to escape the abuse of her half-brother Gerdt and his wife Trud. She returns with her infant child three years later after Valtin’s death. Denied any financial recourse by access to the familial inheritance by both her half-brother and the town’s legal system, Grete sets a fire, destroying herself, the town, her brother’s son, and her own child.

One of Fontane’s earliest forays into prose fiction, *Grete Minde* serves as an example of how the poetics of German realism intensify the contradictions of the normative bourgeois family through the figure of the extraordinary criminal child. Based on the historic figure of Margarete Minde, who was tried and executed in 1619 as one of the parties responsible for starting the 1617 fire in Tangermünde, Fontane’s *Grete Minde* presents itself as a narrativization
of historical records with little to do with a contemporary German context of 1880. This temporal distance between the novella’s setting and context was a common strategy of Realist writing, which allows authors such as Fontane to reflect on contemporary political and social concerns by confining the representation to an alternative time frame and setting. The text links Grete’s ultimate turn toward violent, criminal destruction not with the absence of bourgeois morality, but with its contradictions that become apparent when its presence is expanded. Grete attempts the impossible by trying to create a future relying solely on the affective over the monetary economy of the family, and she fails. This is not a story of bourgeois morality containing the criminal child but rather creating it. Through the figure of the criminal child, the text represents the contradictions of the idealized bourgeois family and the destructive, unproductive consequences of this disharmony between affect and economy.

The representation of childhood and the question of criminal responsibility are at the center of this novella and its reception. Within Grete Minde, Fontane shows the transformation of a lonely, misfit girl with hopes and dreams for the future into a suicidal arsonist. Hans Ester notes that studies on Grete Minde have typically investigated the question of why this happens as

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Fontane’s use of and divergence from historic sources has been a point of interest for this novella since Otto Pniower’s 1901 analysis of the novella and examination of Fontane’s deviations from the historic sources available to him found in Dichtungen und Dichter. Essays und Studien. (Berlin: S. Fischer, 1912), 295-331. For more on the historic Margarete von Minde, see also Ludolf Parisius, „Grete Minden und die Feuerbrunst vom 13. September 1617: Eine Ehrenrettung“ in Bilder aus der Altmark (Hamburg: JF Richter, 1883) and Heiner Lück „Flammen und Tränen: der historische Hintergrund für Theodor Fontanes „Grete Minde: Nach einer altmärkischen Chronik,“ Jenseits von Bologna: Jurisprudentia literarisch. (Berlin: Berliner Wissenschafts-Verlag, 2006).

Fontane’s earliest prose work, Vor dem Sturm (1878/79) is set in 1812/13 and additional examples from Fontane include Ellernklipp (1881), which takes place from 1767-1781 after the end of the Seven Years War, and Schach von Wutenow (1882), which takes place in 1806 prior to the battle of Jena. Other examples of this strategy within my dissertation include Wilhelm Raabe’s Else von der Tanne, set during the Thirty Years War, and Conrad Ferdinand Meyer’s Das Leiden eines Knaben, set during Louis XIV’s reign in the late-seventeenth century.
opposed to how it happens, looking at the tensions between individuals and communities.\footnote{Hans Ester, „Grete Minde: Die Suche nach dem erlösenden Wort“ Fontanes Novellen und Romane, ed. Christian Grawe, (Reclam, Stuttgart, 1991), 44-64. Sabine Cramer notes that the tension between individuals and society through Fontane’s use of secondary characters who represent a myriad of social positions with which Grete comes into conflict. “Grete Minde; Structures of Societal Disturbance.” New Approaches to Theodor Fontane: Cultural Codes in Flux, ed. Marion Doebbling (Camden House: Columbia, SC, 2000), 136-159.} This tension in scholarship mirrors the question of nature versus nurture in terms of raising children and of the born criminal versus criminal by circumstance. More recent interpretations of Grete Minde, such as that of Gaby Pailer, focus less on Grete as a victim of normative forces, but as an embodiment of feminist empowerment, rejecting and destroying norms.\footnote{Gaby Pailer, “Schwarzäugige Mordbrennerin: Fontanes ,Grete Minde‘, eine Tochter von Cervantes‘ ,La gitanilla.’” in Rebellisch, verzweifelt, infam: das böse Mädchen als ästhetische Figur. (Bielefeld: Aisthesis Verlag, 2012), 171.} These different interpretations are possible through the text’s intermingling of the figure of the cherished bourgeois child and the figure of the criminal child, which places Grete in an ambivalent position. Grete both represents her society as it is, as well as the ideal which it could be. Grete’s wildness lies in her attempts to unify her real, lived experience with the ideals of the bourgeois family.

**Grete the Child**

A girl of thirteen at the beginning of the novella and seventeen at the end, Grete’s position as a child is ambivalent. Fontane presents Grete at the beginning and end of puberty; however, her orientation toward and dependence on her family of birth rather than on establishing a new, independent household allows her to be read as a child throughout the entirety of the novella. Fontane’s Grete Minde is a nineteenth-century child in an early-modern world, physically and emotionally confined by bourgeois ideals of the affective and monetary aspects of the family.
The text introduces Grete as a domesticated child. Much like one of Fontane’s last protagonists Effi Briest, Grete Minde is introduced alongside a garden and house. The presence of a garden points to a prelapsarian paradise and Grete’s childhood innocence; however, this garden is not a natural space. This garden defines Grete as a child of a domesticated world, denied access to any natural, unconfined spaces. Within the garden, Fontane presents how Grete reads the entire world through the lens of domestication. Grete first appears playing in the garden with her neighbor Valtin. Fontane creates children – for both Grete and Valtin are individually described as ‘Mädchen’ and ‘Junge’ and collectively as ‘Kinder’ – who have no reference point for an undomesticated world. Valtin informs Grete: “Weißt du, Grete, wir haben ein Nest in unserm Garten, und ganz niedrig, und zwei Junge drin.”

The novella opens with a scene of temptation, specifically Grete’s desire to see a natural home: a nest. Going to the garden and looking at the nest does not signify a return to nature or paradise. This garden is marked by humankind: “Diese Worte waren an einem überwachsenen Zaun, der zwei Nachbargärten voneinander trennte, gesprochen worden.” It might be a neglected space with overgrown plants, but it is still shaped by the human households. The overarching effect of the household is further clear in the type of nest Valtin shows Grete, a linnet nest, as linnets were...

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403 Irmgard Roebling writes on Fontane’s treatment of female characters as becoming more and more complex from Vor dem Sturm through Effi Briest, with an increased focus on the psychologization of female characters and their relationships to social forces. Irmgard Roebling “‘Effi komm,’” 267-313.


406 Ibid., 7.
common household pets kept in cages. Grete in like the linnet in the garden, one connected to the 
ilusion of nature, but in actuality confined in a cage, no longer capable of living in the wild.

Grete is a domesticated child, and the garden is the starting point for how Grete 
constraints herself by internalizing social mores. Even in the garden, Grete is an outsider. The 
narrator describes Valtin as having “einen echt märkischen Breitkopf und vorspringende 
Backenknochen“ whereas Grete is „sehr zart gebaut, und ihre feinen Linien, noch mehr das Oval 
und die Farbe ihres Gesichts, deuteten auf eine Fremde.â€”407 There is no place Grete can go where 
she can separate herself from the image of the foreigner. Grete is confined to a world which does 
not create spaces for her to be anything else. Grete cannot escape this racial reading of her 
body’s appearance. She is a child in a world built on categories of insiders and outsiders, where a 
return to the Garden of Eden and a space without these divisions is not possible.

Grete is motivated by bourgeois desires rather than the idea of a return to nature. Valtin 
encourages Grete to imagine a future where she is his wife. When she has him elaborate on what 
he would do were she his wife, he answers: “dann stell ich dich immer auf diesen Himbeerzaun 
und sage »spring«; und dann springst du, und ich fange dich auf.”408 The marriage Valtin narrates 
turns their garden game of childhood into the structure of the future, one that catches and 
grounds Grete. The garden introduces the idea of Grete’s confinement and domestication through 
her desire for love.

Grete’s confinement within the bourgeois world occurs on both the levels of the affective 
economy and monetary economy. It is possible to observe Grete’s confinement within the 
affective economy of the bourgeois family through her attachment to her mother’s. In a

407 Ibid., 8.
408 Ibid., 9.
bourgeois family, the mother is treated as the source of affectual power within the family and the father as the source of financial stability. Grete’s mother is dead and cannot offer that power and affectual security to Grete. Grete has no memories of her mother and must rely on others for them, which transforms the memories into currency for incorporating Grete into a family structure. Grete’s nurse, Regine, paints a loving image of Grete’s late mother, of how Peter Minde met her in Bruges and brought her back to Tangermünde, of how happy Grete’s mother made him in contrast to Gerdt’s mother. In Regine’s words, Grete’s mother was “wie ein Engel“ bringing love and beauty into the Minde household.\(^{409}\) Regine emphasizes love as the currency for forming Grete’s family: Peter Minde’s love for Grete’s mother, and Grete’s mother’s love for her daughter, an image Grete holds onto even in her mother’s absence.

While positive memories of Grete’s mother attach Grete to the idea of the bourgeois family and society, the memory of Grete’s mother also prevents Grete from directly experiencing this family. For Grete’s sister-in-law Trud, Grete’s mother represents the outside threat to the family unit. Pastor Gigas draws on this point when he speaks to Trud about Grete’s future: “nur zwei Dinge sind, es zu bändigen: der Glaube, den wir uns erbitten, und die Liebe, die wir uns erziehn. Liebt Ihr das Kind?”\(^{410}\) Trud cannot answer the question. Trud treats Grete with the same suspicion and fear with which she viewed Grete’s mother, especially due to Grete’s physical appearance. Where others, such as Pastor Gigas and Grete’s nurse Regine, fondly remember Grete’s mother and her beauty, Trud views it negatively “Denn damit zwang sie's und hat unser Haus behext und in den alten Aberglauben zurückfallen lassen.”\(^{411}\) Grete’s mother’s

\(^{409}\) Ibid., 25.

\(^{410}\) Ibid., 31.

\(^{411}\) Ibid.31
appearance, which Grete has inherited, destabilized the household, creating space for impulses founded on love and beauty rather than financial practicality. To Trud, even physical markers of difference are destructive. Trud cannot change Grete’s appearance, but she can try and force Grete to submit to her authority. Trud’s attempts to exert power over Grete are doomed to fail, because Trud cannot compete with the affective power of the memory of Grete’s mother and without affect, Grete neither internalizes nor accept Trud’s authority as valid.

Trud and Grete represent two aspects of the bourgeois family: the affective and financial. For Birgit Jensen, Peter Minde’s marriage to Grete’s mother represents the bourgeois marriage and family, one made for love, whereas his marriage to Gerdt’s mother was one out of financial necessity. The Minde household is a mixture of an older open-house structure, where servants and family members are all contributing to the financial success of the household, and a bourgeois household. 412 It is also possible to see Trud and Grete’s understandings of family not as a conflict between early modern and bourgeois families, but of the two side sides of the bourgeois family. Trud focuses on the notion of the family as a unit that protects and grows capital, whereas Grete focuses on the family as a place of security for individual development. Together, Grete and Trud represent both the illusion of the modern, bourgeois family as a private space of development away from public necessities such as commerce, and the underlying structure, in that this idealized family view is dependent on the initial capital from Peter Minde’s first marriage to enjoy the idealized state in his brief, second marriage to Grete’s mother.

Grete’s childhood is marked by disharmony between the affective and monetary sides of the bourgeois family. She has an idealized view of family as a place of security and love, but she is still sensitive to the monetary foundation of the family through her conflict with Trud. Grete

412 Jensen, Auf der morschen Gartenschaukel, 51-59.
tells Valtin, “ich bin nicht so wild und unbändig, wie du denkst. Nein, ich will still und ruhig sein. Und wir wollen aushalten, wie du sagst, und wollen hoffen und harren, bis wir groß sind und unser Erbe haben. Denn wir haben doch eins, nicht wahr? Und haben wir das, Valtin, so haben wir uns, und dann haben wir die ganze Welt.”413 She rejects Valtin’s initial offer to run away from the loveless household she lives in after her father’s death. Grete does not see that as a viable option; she acknowledges that the family cannot exist without financial support, and that an affective bond is not sufficient to sustain and bind a family unit. Grete’s childhood has made her sensitive to both sides of the bourgeois family and that paralyzes her ability to act. She remains trapped in her childhood home under the control of her sister-in-law and brother because she does not have the financial means of independence. Grete is a child with bourgeois values and no means to attain them.

Grete is treated as a project within her home and her education. The attempts to confine and socialize her are successful because she dreams of a life with emotional and financial security. Grete longs to overcome the disharmony of the financial and affective sides of her childhood family to create the bourgeois ideal family. With Grete, Fontane creates a protagonist who acts not in opposition to bourgeois morality but in defense of it. Grete’s defense of and intensification of the bourgeois familial existence, however, does not eliminate its contradictions.

**Grete the Criminal**

The text’s alignment of Grete with nineteenth-century understandings of the bourgeois family is juxtaposed with the notion of the literary criminal child. Unlike children such as Oliver Twist who are victims threatened by criminal elements due to circumstances beyond their

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413 Fontane, “Grete Minde,” 49.
control, Grete’s connections to criminality are more complex. She is fully aware of and attracted to bourgeois life, but the text combines that representation with the notion of the born criminal and the criminal by circumstance. Through his representations of Grete as a criminal and bourgeois child, Fontane amplifies and renders visible the contradictions of the bourgeois family and society, but also imagines their harmonization. The bourgeois family presents itself as a unit fostering individualism and self-cultivation and depends on the illusion of isolation from the outside world. Grete’s position as both bourgeois child and outsider shatters this illusion. Fontane emphasizes Grete’s outsider status through repeated mention of her ‘Spanish’ appearance and motifs used to describe gypsies. Grete is treated as a personification of threats to the stable existence of Tangermünde, much as criminal children were treated as symptoms of industrial, urban existence. Fontane’s use of physical differences and their criminal connotations in his representation of Grete denies Grete the ability to position herself within the community, despite her entrenchment in bourgeois structures. This destabilizes the understanding of the family as the site of developing individualism.

That Grete can be read as both member and non-member of a community demonstrates Fleming’s argument of how marginal figures can represent the community as a whole, as well as the arbitrariness of categories such as members and outsiders of a given group. Grete embraces her identity as the wild outsider on one occasion: the moment before she and Valtin run away. Grete recalls the first moment of the novella and the birds’ nest, but “ihre verwilderte Seele dachte jener Stunden stillen Glückes nicht mehr. Sie kletterte nur rasch hinauf und horchte

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414 The motif of the gypsy-like child can also be seen in Goethe’s Mignon and her various afterlives, as well as in the character of Juliana in Stifter’s “Waldbrunnen.” For more on the motif of gypsies in the context of „Grete Minde“, see Katarina Lenczowski “Die Fremdheit Grete Mindes: zur Repräsentation und Funktion von ‘Zigeunern’ in Theodor Fontanes „Grete Minde.“” *Transcarpathica: germanistisches Jahrbuch Rumänien* 9 (2010): 56-91 and Gaby Pailer’s “Schwarzäugige Mordbrennerin.”
gespannt, ob Valtin schon da sei. Er war es noch nicht. Und so sprang sie vom Zaun in den Zernitzschen Garten hinunter und versteckte sich in der Laube."415 Grete views her wildness as one of movement, of agency. This is tempered, however, by the fact that Trud and Gerdt were on the verge of sending Grete away. Becoming wild is the fulfillment of normative expectations rather than the rejection of their authority.

Though nineteenth-century criminality was associated with an absence of bourgeois morality, Grete’s crimes – running away from home, having a child out of wedlock – begin as attempts to live a bourgeois life without a financial foundation. Edda Ziegler describes Fontane’s frequent use of outsider, female characters as a strategy to create a “Gegenwelt zur gesellschaftlichen und historischen Realität Preußens.”416 Within Grete Minde, this alternative world cannot hold. Grete and Valtin find themselves working for a traveling puppet theater that had passed through Tangermünde when they were younger.417 This itinerant, artistic lifestyle offers a contrast to the rooted, bourgeois home and is a site where Grete’s outsider status should disappear. However, as Sylvain Guarda notes, Fontane describes the lead performer Zenobia with similar language attributed to Grete and her mother, and Grete’s past and idea of home are always present.418 While Valtin is on his deathbed following a duel, he encourages Grete to return and submit herself to her brother for the sake of their child and not remain with the

415 Fontane, „Grete Minde,“ 64.


417 Grete is not the only wild child associated with the theater and traveling performance groups, building off of the legacy of Goethe’s Mignon. Marie, in Fontane’s Vor dem Sturm (1778/9), is the daughter of a magician who is adopted by the town’s sheriff after the death of her father. Theodor Storm’s Lisei in Pole Poppenspäler (1874) is the daughter of a pair of traveling puppeteers.

Even away from Tangermünde, Grete and Valtin are not free from the idea that a house and bourgeois morals are the ideal compared to an itinerant artistic lifestyle. Grete and Valtin are, as Katarina Lenczowski phrases it, unable to give up their “erlernten Werteordnung.” Grete’s decision to return to Tangermünde after Valtin’s death is a sign of her acknowledgment of her inability to live in any circumstance outside of the bourgeois family and her return is an acknowledgment that her ideal family cannot survive on affect alone. In returning home, in choosing to submit herself to her brother’s authority and financial generosity, Grete returns to childhood, despite being a mother herself.

Fontane flips the rhetoric linking criminality to bourgeois morality, in that Grete’s crime is her attempt to reconcile the financial and affective sides of the family and demand that the family be the site of individual development that it purports to be. Grete throws herself at her brother’s feet and begs for a place to call home: “da bin ich nun und tu's und bitte dich um eine Heimstatt und um einen Platz an deinem Herd. Ich bin müde des Umherfahrens und will still und ruhig werden.” Grete appeals to their familial bond and repeats what she told Valtin: a home is the antidote to her wildness, invoking nineteenth-century rhetoric about the bourgeois family as the antidote to criminality. When Gerdt won’t grant her a place in his home, Grete asks for her fair portion of their father’s inheritance and is rejected on the basis that her mother contributed nothing to the family fortune. Grete’s appeal to Gerdt fails because he prioritizes the economic aspect of the family over the affective. Grete’s return to Tangermünde emphasizes the conflict

419 Fontane, “Grete Minde,” 81.

420 Lenczowski, „Die Fremdheit Grete Mindes,” 86.

421 Fontane, “Grete Minde,” 95.
between these aspects of the bourgeois family, and the impossibility of Grete creating a bourgeois future for herself and her son.

Grete’s turn to public institutions to resolve the disharmony of the family marks how a domestic issue threatens the futurity of a given society, and reveals the problems of using the bourgeois family as a foundation for nineteenth-century society. Grete turns to the law, but this is in vain. They cannot grant Grete a portion of her father’s inheritance, and thus a financial foundation to start anew, because her mother did not contribute financially to the household with a dowry. The law has no capacity to quantify the emotional contribution of Grete’s mother to the household. The court’s decision to not intervene is in contrast to reforms developing in nineteenth-century Germany, where states were increasingly intervening in matters of the family and abandoned children to act in loco parentis, providing education, clothing, and some financial support with the aim of limiting future criminality. Fontane’s representation of seventeenth-century Tangermünde is incapable of performing the same action because of the illusion of the family as outside the realm of state interference. The family is both a foundational part of nineteenth-century society and outside of the realm of state interference.

Grete’s criminality arises at a point where she has been asked to do the impossible, namely to live a life in accordance with bourgeois morality without any of the financial support necessary to create such a life. Any attempt at overcoming this imbalance manifests itself as a crime. Grete’s initial action is her condemnation of the court’s hypocrisy, raising her child above her:

Jetzt hob sie's in die Höh, wie zum Zeichen, daß sie's nicht verheimlichen wolle. Und nun erst schritt sie dem Ausgange zu. Hier wandte sie sich noch einmal und sagte ruhig und mit tonloser Stimme:

422 Jacobi, Ueber Verarmung und Entsittlichung der arbeitenden Klassen, 8-9.
Verlaß dich nicht auf dein Gewalt,  
Dein Leben ist hier bald gezahlt,  
Wie du zuvor hast ›richtet mich,  
Also wird Gott auch richten dich —«

und verneigte sich und ging.\textsuperscript{423}

Grete does not rely upon her own words to highlight the injustice of the verdict, instead turning to the text written on the wall of the city hall.\textsuperscript{424} She uses their own words to point to the injustice of their ruling. The motto presents an ideal of how to organize that can never be fulfilled. The state claims paternal authority but will not help a young mother and child. Grete does not condemn the court solely with words, but also with the physical act of her raising her child before them for them all to see and accept responsibility for. Grete is calm and her voice toneless. She does not act or speak wildly or behave in accordance to any stereotypes of criminals, yet her rejection of the court’s authority places her in opposition to law and discipline. Grete’s criminal act is not driven by passion or by her outsider status, but by the very bourgeois morality that was so often juxtaposed with criminality.

The text harnesses the tension between the ideal of the bourgeois family and its practice, so that Grete’s crime becomes a condemnation of the town for not permitting the bourgeois family to exist on both the ideal and practical levels. Grete’s stillness erupts into action and she becomes the wild child and threat that Tangermünde feared her to be. She kidnaps her nephew and then heads to the church, growing louder and louder, leaving behind the toneless girl at the

\textsuperscript{423} Fontane, “Grete Minde,”102.

\textsuperscript{424} Grete’s turn to external, written authority here mirrors a prior argument with Trud, where both Trud and Grete attempt to use Biblical authority in their arguments. Trud cites Proverbs 16:18 (Wer zugrunde gehen soll, der wird stolz, und stolzer Mut kommt vor dem Fall.), and Grete cites Hosea 14:3 (Lasse die Waisen Gnade bei Dir finden). (51). Grete’s choice bears the additional weight of her late father’s authority, who on his deathbed had instructed Trud to look after Grete, citing this Biblical verse.
city hall: “»Das ist Sankt Stephan«, jubelte Grete, und dazwischen, in wirrem Wechsel, summte sie Kinderlieder vor sich hin und rief in schrillem Ton und mit erhobener Hand in die Stadt hinein: »Verlaß dich nicht auf dein Gewalt.« Und dann folgte sie wieder den Glocken, nah und fern, und mühte sich, den Ton jeder einzelnen herauszuhören.” Grete’s behavior has become a mixture of loud and soft, of children’s songs and shrill screams. Her actions are criminal but coded with the language and images of divine justice, as well as artistry and childhood. Grete recreates a scene from her youth where she attended the puppet theater’s performance of the “Jüngste Gericht,” that ended in fire. In Grete’s embodiment of the “Jüngste Gericht,” she deviates from the performance she saw in her childhood, wherein a child was spared by the Virgin Mary and received by angels. Grete shows no such maternal mercy to either her child or Gerdt’s, but rather maternal vengeance. Grete will not allow the town to continue making a mockery of the idea of family, to entrap and entice children with the notion of familial security only to deny them the means of attaining it. She becomes an avenging angel of the ideal of the bourgeois family.

Grete’s criminality serves as an artistic intervention to harmonize the community with an idea of the bourgeois family, to have the community identify its self-interest with the well-being of a child rather than solely with the accumulation of wealth. Grete becomes wild and criminal only after her family and community refuse to fulfill the supporting affective and financial obligations of that relationship. Even as a young woman, a mother, and a criminal, Grete acts

425 Ibid., 102.
like a bourgeois child, controlled by the idealized image of home and family. Her love of the idea of security within the confines of family produces destruction when the illusion is broken. The text simultaneously represents the problems of the bourgeois family as well as the power of the illusion. The bourgeois childhood in its practiced form is not the antithesis of criminality but rather the antithesis of harmony between children and parents, between individuals and communities, and thus brings about stagnation rather than reproduction of its form.

**Grete Minde: Criminality in Defense of the Bourgeois Ideal**

Grete represents Fontane’s ability to depict an increasingly complex society with contradictory expectations, not as a “bloße Abschreiben” of seventeenth-century Tangermünde, but rather as a “künstlerische Wiedergabe” of nineteenth-century Germany. Fontane demonstrates how intense focus on a single individual, a child who does not fit into a community can expose the community’s organizing principles, here the bourgeois family.

Grete’s turn toward criminality does not negate the ideal bourgeois family’s position as an underlying organizing principle for nineteenth-century Germany, though it does challenge its sustainability. The criminal child becomes an effective tool to reflect problems of bourgeois society, more than representations of the everyday, adult middle-class individual could. The criminal is a figure that unites the community and reveals how it chooses to define itself. The child is how the community chooses to reproduce that identity. The criminal child is both the future and demise of a community and it is through her depiction as both child and criminal that Grete both idealizes the bourgeois family and exposes its internal conflicts. Reproduction of the family is impossible within Fontane’s Tangermünde: Grete kills herself, her son, and her nephew. Grete embodies bourgeois morality but cannot transmit it.
Within *Grete Minde*, Fontane breaks from his contemporaries’ expectations for criminal children within fields such as pedagogy, psychology and jurisprudence.\(^{427}\) Grete is passionate, but controlled. She is an outsider, but not. She is child, but also a mother. She is willful but loving. She seems to be the individual capable of restraining herself for the sake of the community, the perfect modern subject. Her crime is instead that she is the bourgeois child who knows too much about the flaws of the system she lives in. These contradictions are visible through Fontane’s realist gaze that makes visible the unremarkable, in this case an orphan girl longing for a family.

Through *Grete Minde*, Fontane explores the possibility of the bourgeois family, in its ideal form, as the new organizing principle for a new era, the period after German unification, where past foundations, such as religion and divisions into Catholicism and Protestantism, could no longer be utilized. Fontane performs what Chenxi Tang argues is the purpose of the novella, the imagining of new solutions for new circumstances, the building of bridges and order to resolve chaos.\(^{428}\)

**Ascent from Criminality: Marie von Ebner-Eschenbach’s *Das Gemeindekind* (1887)**

As with Fontane, Ebner utilizes the figure of the criminal child as a strategy to depict a larger, changing community, and to imagine and critique the ideal of the bourgeois family as an organizing principle. In contrast to Fontane’s *Grete Minde*, Ebner’s *Gemeindekind* is a narrative that on the surface is more about the domestication of a criminal child rather than the outbreak of

\(^{427}\) For further discussion on nineteenth-century German writing featuring crime in various media, see Andriopoulos, *Unfall und Verbrechen*, 24.

Criminality is present from the very beginning of the narrative. The narrative begins in 1860 with the arrival of the Holub family, a family of bricklayers, in the town of Soleschau. The father of the family, Martin, is soon after executed for the murder of the parish priest and his wife Barbara is arrested as an accomplice. Their children, Pavel and Milada, are separated, with Milada becoming a ward of the local Baroness and Pavel becoming a “Gemeindekind” or ward of the community. Pavel is neglected within the community, always suspected of wrongdoing when problems arise. The narrative ends in 1870 with Barbara Holub’s release from prison. Like Grete, Pavel’s childhood is superficially different from the bourgeois childhood; however, as with Grete, Pavel is molded by the ideal version of the bourgeois family.

Unlike *Grete Minde*, the subject matter for Marie von Ebner-Eschenbach’s best-known narrative is not drawn from history. According to Ebner’s first biographer, Anton Bettelheim, the inspiration of the story was based on a short encounter, in which Ebner happened to be present when local authorities were trying to determine how to care for two children whose parents were

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429 Ebner referred to *Das Gemeindekind* and most of her works as „Erzählungen,“ neither novellas nor novels, and for the purposes of this dissertation, I have translated “Erzählung” as narrative. For further discussion of Ebner’s concept of the Erzählung as both a middle point between novella and novel and as a potential marker of Austrian Realism, see Larissa Polubojarinova “Österreichischer Realismus als ein Problem der Literaturgeschichte : Leopold von Sacher-Masoch, Marie von Ebner-Eschenbach” In: *Zeitenwende - die Germanistik auf dem Weg vom 20. ins 21. Jahrhundert ; 6. Epochenbegriffe: Grenzen und Möglichkeiten.* ( Bern [u.a.] : Lang 2002), 481.

430 This period encompasses the Oktoberdiplom of 1860, wherein the Austrian empire attempted to increase the power of nobles over their lands, to the Dezemberverfassung of 1867, which became the constitution of the Cisleithanian half of the Austro-Hungarian empire and importantly included a bill of rights enumerating rights such as equality before the law regardless of ethnicity and a limited version of due process. See Philipp Hubmann, “„ich, dem’s alle Tage geschehen kann, er weiß nicht wie, daß er Einen erschlagen muß“. Biopolitik und Risikobewusstsein in Marie von Ebner-Eschenbachs *Das Gemeindekind.*” In *Fallgeschichte(n) als Narrativ zwischen Literatur und Wissen*, ed. Thomas Wegmann, Martina King. (Innsbruck: Innsbruck University Press, 2016), 171.
imprisoned for minor thievery.\textsuperscript{431} Ebner’s transformation of this unremarkable event performs the realist task of observing the overlooked, small members of society so that they become extraordinary and reveal the world as it might be.

The text defines Pavel first and foremost by his community. With the absence of an English equivalent for “Gemeindekind,” Lynne Tatlock translates the word in a variety of ways, with the title \textit{Their Pavel}, and frequently using ‘ward of the community’ and ‘the community child’ to emphasize “Pavel’s situation as the abused child of a group that, in Ebner’s view, ought to be not only legally but also morally bound to care for him.”\textsuperscript{432} Through Pavel’s contentious relationship to the community that shapes him, Ebner creates tension between her readers’ knowledge of Pavel and the villagers’ presumed knowledge of Pavel. The tension is linked to perception, and the ability to see Pavel as a child, and look beyond his criminal exterior. Ebner’s utilization of stereotypes of criminal children provides the raw material that best illuminates the attraction of their alleged opposites, bourgeois children and aesthetics. Similar to Fontane, Ebner demonstrates how the idealization and aestheticization of the bourgeois family and morality renders them incapable of reproduction on the practical level. They exist on the level of the ideal, confining Pavel to a position of permanent childhood.

\textbf{Pavel the Criminal}

\textsuperscript{431} Anton Bettelheim, \textit{Marie von Ebner-Eschenbach. Biographische Blätter}. (Berlin: Gebrüder Patel, 1900), 140. For further discussion of the publication of the text, including Ebner’s correspondence with Julian Rodenberg, the editor of \textit{der deutsche Rundschau}, in which the narrative was first published, see Rainer Baasner, „Kritische Texte und Deutungen.“ In \textit{Marie von Ebner-Eschenbach Kritische Texte und Deutungen: Das Gemeindekind} (Vol 3), ed. Karl Konrad Polheim. (Bonn: Bouvier Verlag Herbert Grundmann, 1983), 155-362.

Within the village of Soleschau, Pavel is seen as a criminal first and a child second. Ebner’s narrative begins with an epigram from George Sands: “tout est l’historie,” through which Thomas Salumets interprets the text as staging the problem of forming identity with regard to the past. 433 Pavel’s position and reputation within Soleschau are defined by his father’s crimes, and his own juvenile misdeeds, which he must overcome his past to find a future and different position in the village. Pavel’s criminal appearance positions him on the edge of the community; however, his marginal position grants him agency to expand bourgeois morality beyond the middle class, an expansion that associates Pavel with movement and creativity rather than confinement.

The narrative begins with a differentiation of children, separating the criminal child from the innocent child. The community must decide what to do with Pavel and Milada Holub after their father’s execution and mother’s imprisonment. The Baroness, skeptical of the peasant community’s ability to raise children, having seen children running around barefoot and barely able to read, chooses to make Milada her ward, leaving Pavel to the not-so-tender care of the drunken shepherd, Virgil, his wife Virgilova, and their daughter Vinska. The narrator describes how the Baroness looks at Milada: “der Blick, den die Gutsfrau auf dem freundlichen Gesicht des Kindes ruhen ließ verlor immer mehr von seiner Strenge. Er glitt über die kleine Gestalt und über die Lumpen, von denen sie umhangen war, und heftete sich auf die schlanken Füßchen, die der Staub grau gefärbt hatte.” 434 The Baroness’s gaze is able to see through the dirt and rags to


see the fragile child beneath. A fragile, beautiful child cannot survive as a communal ward. Her gaze is incapable of performing this same act on Pavel. When she looks at him, she only sees the boy who had stolen cherries from her. She sees the first image that Ebner uses to describe Pavel: “der Bub plump und kurzhalsig, ein ungeleckter Bär, wie man ihn malt oder besser nicht malt.” Pavel is neither seen as nor treated as a child, but more like an animal, not the worthy subject of art. In Pavel’s rough physiology, she sees only the stereotypes of criminality.

Despite being presented in accordance with predominant images of dangerous, child criminality, Pavel’s criminal behaviors betray his sensitivity to the idea of the family and thus his bourgeois morality and suitability as the subject of a realist narrative. Pavel attempts to break into the Baroness’s castle to rescue Milada. He is attacked by dogs and “wurde umringt und überwältigt, obwohl er raste und sich zur Wehr setzte wie ein wildes Tier.” Ebner uses the simile of ‘like a wild animal’ to show how Pavel has been dehumanized while reaffirming his human status. Although Pavel is described as being like an animal, he acts out of love for his sister and in self-defense. Pavel’s attempt to break into the castle is a transgression against normative behavior, but it is driven by Pavel’s drive to protect his sister. The comparisons with animals mask the child Pavel is.

The narrator complicates the superficial image of criminal wildness by providing readers access to what the villagers cannot see: the morality underlying Pavel’s wildness. Pavel finds

435 Milada’s narrow feet being read as a sign of biological nobility can be read as the inverse to Pavel’s rough physiology being read as signs of biological criminality. Although not the focus of this chapter, the trope of small feet, or delicate, fragile physiology in general, is also prevalent in fairytales, most notably “Cinderella.” For more on the fairytale elements in Ebner’s “Gemeindekind” see Katra. Byram: Fairy tales in the modern(ist) world: Gerhart Hauptmann’s “Bahnwärter Thiel” and Marie von Ebner-Eschenbach’s Das Gemeindekind.” The German Quarterly 86 No. 2 (2013): 141-159.


437 Ibid., 14.
himself in the woods after learning that the Baroness has sent Milada to a convent to further separate her from her brother; He is utterly alone and contemplates suicide. In the midst of his despair, he spots a partridge threatened by a cat. Pavel saves the bird. His ability to save the defenseless bird gives him hope for his existence: “unmittelbar nachdem er sich elend, verlassen und reif zum Sterben gefühlt, dämmerte etwas wie das Bewußtsein einer Macht in ihm auf ... einer anderen, einer höheren als derjenigen, die seine starken Arme und sein finsterer Trotz ihm oft verliehen.”

Pavel evaluates himself not through the eyes of his community, which views his strength as a sign of his dangerous potential. He proves himself as a protector. He extends his protective instincts beyond his sister to include even the animals of the forest. However, Pavel’s positive affirmation of self is quashed by the village teacher, Habrecht, who does not have full knowledge of the situation, accuses Pavel of robbing nests, and laments what will become of Pavel’s future. Pavel summarizes his future prospect in two words: “ein Dieb.”

Pavel finds strength in the roles of protector and provider, but the only role allowed to him by the community that does not have access to his inner world is that of a criminal.

Pavel’s criminality provides him with the socialization acquired within a bourgeois family. Part of bourgeois childhood is learning how to fill the adult role of either mother or provider, depending on gender. When the Baroness changes the laws restricting access to the forest and wood:

Es bildete sich eine Bande von Buben und Mädeln, lauter Häuslerkindern, deren Führerschaft Pavel übernahm wie ein natürliches Recht. In kleinen Gruppen wanderten sie hinaus, lustig, kühn und schlau. Sie kannten die Schlupfwinkel und gedeckten Stege besser als selbst die Heger und gingen mit köstlichem Gruseln ihren Abenteuern entgegen, die nur auf zweierlei Weise enden konnten. Entweder glücklich heimkehren,

438 Ibid., 22.

439 Ibid., 23.
das gestohlene Holz auf dem Rücken, mit der Aussicht auf Lob und ein warmes Abendessen, oder erwischt werden und Prügel kriegen.\textsuperscript{440}

Pavel’s crime and leadership lead to several families being able to have wood for their homes. Pavel takes on a paternal role in this created group, letting himself be caught and not revealing the others, taking on all of the punishment with none of the reward. He mirrors his behavior toward Milada and the bird, offering others comfort that he cannot himself enjoy. Despite his criminal actions and marginal position, Pavel practices being the head of a household. Pavel’s crimes both comment on injustices still present in the tension between Austrian nobility and peasants in the nineteenth-century and suggest the structure of the family as a solution.\textsuperscript{441}

Where the text aligns Pavel’s criminality with action to expand care for others in the community, it also illustrates how the entrenchment of the villagers’ notion of criminality creates stagnation. As the village’s problem child, Pavel is the first person blamed when anything goes awry. When the mayor dies after Pavel delivers him an herbal remedy from his foster-mother Virgilova, Pavel is immediately arrested. The village has already formed their own version of events before the trial takes place: that Pavel wanted to leave and since the mayor denied Pavel’s request, "so hat der schlechte Bub sich jetzt gerächt und den Bürgermeister aus der Welt geschafft."\textsuperscript{442} Their version of events is false, but in accordance with their vision of Pavel as a

\textsuperscript{440} Ibid., 23.


\textsuperscript{442} Ebner, “Das Gemeindekind,” 71.
criminal. Pavel is considered guilty before any evidence is examined. No other suspects are
considered, not even those who would benefit most from the mayor’s death, namely Virgil’s
family, which would profit from eliminating the obstacle to the marriage between their daughter
Vinska and the mayor’s son, Peter. The perfect suspect already exists in Pavel, a murderer’s son.
Pavel is freed only after the official forensic chemist, a man of science separate from the
prejudices of the village, concludes his investigation. Pavel’s presence as the designated criminal
means the community never has to examine themselves closely because they can attribute all
flaws to Pavel rather than thinking carefully about other criminal motives, such as removing the
obstacle between a poor girl, a rich boy, and marriage.

The narrative continues to complicate the categories of criminal and socially productive
behaviors, providing further contrasts between Pavel’s perceived delinquency and stagnation
among those accepted into the community. Years after the mayor’s death, the village acquires a
machine to power their threshing machine. Pavel is fascinated by it and “nahm aber die
Erinnerung an die Bewunderte mit sich und hatte ein deutlicheres Bild von ihr im Kopfe als die
Bauern, die in ihrer nächsten Nachbarschaft auf der Bank an der Scheune saßen und die
Hantierung der Taglöchner überwachten.” The farmers see his act of observation as one of
planning mischief, but Pavel’s alleged misbehavior is instead his ability to observe and
understand the machine that astounds everyone. This proves invaluable when Peter, the late-
mayor’s son, attempts to transport the machine using his horse and loses control on an incline.
Pavel saves Peter’s life and is able to repair the minimal damage to the machine. His ability to
observe makes him appear criminal but is actually the assertion of a different mode of

443 The born criminal is already guilty before he or she commits a crime due to their inherent dangerousness. For
further discussion of guilt and responsibility, see Andriopoulos, Unfall und Verbrechen, 55.

observation that the rest of the community is incapable of imitating: Pavel’s crime is to observe where others watch, and to practice critical, objective thinking rather than relying on presumptions about criminality.

Pavel’s productive criminality challenges the ingrained social order. The community is determined to use Pavel as their scapegoat, regardless of circumstance. Peter ignores his responsibility for causing the accident, indignant after receiving bills following the accident, and instead claims that the financial burden for the repairs lies with Pavel, whose measures to save Peter’s life damaged the innkeeper’s fence. Peter’s suggestion that Pavel pay for the repairs takes root: “»Der Bub? Das wäre – das wäre was – haha, der Bub!« kicherte, lachte, spottete man; trotzdem aber ließ sich unschwer erkennen, daß der Vorschlag Anklang gefunden hatte.«

Pavel’s heroic actions become the crime of property destruction. For the first time, Pavel has the opportunity to respond to the years of abuse and condemn the community for their treatment of him:

»Warum wart ihr so mit mir? Weil ich als Kind ein Dieb gewesen bin? – Wie viele von euch sind denn ehrlich? ... Weil mein Vater am Galgen gestorben ist? – Kann ich dafür? ... Bagage ...« und jetzt übermannte ihn die Wut; betäubend, racheheischend stieg die Erinnerung an alles, was er erduldet hatte und was ungesühnt geblieben war, in ihm auf. Er fand keine Worte mehr für eine Anklage; er fand nur noch Worte für eine Drohung, und die stieß er heraus: »Wenn ich aber heute etwas tue, was auch mich an den Galgen bringt, dann ist es eure Schuld!«

Pavel challenges their perception of him and of criminality. Pavel asserts that criminality is not an innate principle but rather one that is created by their actions. Their standards are not the remedy to criminality but rather its origins.

445 Ibid., 106.

446 Ibid., 111.
Through the confrontation with the villagers, Pavel demonstrates violence and restraint. The group gathered in the bar focuses only on Pavel’s balled fists rather than his argument. A fight ensues, and Pavel proves himself capable of wreaking the destruction they always feared him capable of. At the climax of the fight, Pavel has the opportunity to kill Peter, but chooses not to, thus separating himself from his father’s crime: “Da lief ein Schauer über Pavels Rücken, und sein Zorn erlosch ... Er ließ Peter langsam niedergleiten, sagte: »Ich mein, du hast genug!« undwarf ihn seinen Freunden zu.”447 Through his restraint, Pavel publicly refuses to act in accordance with their notion of criminality. Pavel’s anger, one of the manifestations of criminality according to Eduard Reich, is not victorious. Pavel’s passion is linked to justice, or rather the injustice, prevalent in the village, much as Grete’s destruction of Tangermünde. Ebner utilizes the traits connected with criminality, such as passion, to create movement in a static world. The text aligns Pavel’s criminality with a defense of an idealized bourgeois society, a society not locked into categories of insiders and outsiders but expanding and inclusive.

The text’s depiction of Pavel paints the image of a born criminal. It introduces him with comparisons to animals and he is juxtaposed with figures of authority and of members of the community, often Peter. However, Pavel’s crimes reveal the entrenched aristocratic, feudal society still present within the Austro-Hungarian Empire during the 1860s, and Pavel’s criminality presents itself as a critique of that order as well as the notion of the bourgeois family as an alternative. Casting Pavel into the role of the boy whose parents were strangers, the boy whose father was a murder, the ungrateful child, limits the gaze of the community. Pavel is the community’s Gemeindekind; however, where Pavel is defined and limited by the community, the community is defined by him. Pavel’s crimes, mostly petty, become signs of impending

447 Ibid., 113-114.
destruction that they can externally locate by refusing to incorporate him, and through Pavel they avoid examination of their own structures. Pavel’s position as the criminal grants him the position to observe how their social structure entrenches inequalities. Pavel’s crimes cannot be simply understood as a rejection of the social order, however. Helping families acquire wood despite scarcity, trying to rescue his sister, destroying property to save his rival’s life, Pavel’s crimes are committed on behalf of others and demonstrate selflessness rather than selfishness. Through his crimes, Pavel performs the communal care that his community never demonstrated for him. His crimes reject the absence of communal care and seek to perform it, in parallel to how Grete’s crime rejects the absence of harmony between the child and community.

**Pavel the Child**

Where Pavel’s criminality challenges the prevailing social norms of Soleschau in the narrative, Pavel’s childhood idealizes the bourgeois family, an organizing structure focused on stability rather than mobility. Similar to Fontane in *Grete Minde*,Ebner does not have to directly show a middle-class bourgeois family to represent its structure and values. It becomes present through the emotional and power relationships between family and community members. Pavel’s criminality brings change to the community, but is informed by his own idealization of the bourgeois childhood and family.

At the beginning of the narrative, Pavel does not have a fixed home or emotional security that would suggest a bourgeois childhood. His father has been executed, his mother imprisoned, and his sister taken away to live with the Baroness. Pavel becomes the *Gemeindekind*, a child belonging to the community but without any place to call home. The mayor describes how

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normally, the child “geht von Haus zu Haus und findet jeden Tag bei einem andern Bauern Verköstigung und Unterstand.” In this manner, he would be in contact with every member of the community, with everyone taking part in his rearing. However, fearing the influence Pavel would have on their own children, the community rejects this model and Pavel is sent to Virgil, the shepherd and a drunkard, to a house physically on the outskirts of town:


Everything about Pavel’s new residence is confining and devoid of warmth. There is a small window that can’t open because the frame is broken. Everyone is packed into the space- a bench for Virgil, a mattress for mother and daughter, and a place for a fire that they can’t be started because they can neither afford wood nor find opportunities to steal it. In place of fire, warmth and light combined, it’s a storage space for dirty boots, a whip, a club, baskets without handles and other broken items. The narrator ironically ends the description with the narrator’s reflection that such a humble, object-filled setting was a worthy subject for a realist painter, although such

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450 Ibid., 11
a description focused on the misery of Pavel’s condition and the plight of the impoverished class would be more in line with Naturalism.451

Pavel experiences not only an absence of physical comfort in Virgil’s hut, but also an absence of emotional comfort. The affective relationship between mother and child within a bourgeois family is present in its absence. While Pavel is living with Virgil’s family, he ignores his mother’s letters. The village teacher Habrecht reads Barbara Holub’s letters aloud to Pavel:

»Mein Sohn Pavel!

Vor drei monat habe ich Meine feder an das papier gesetzt und meiner Tochter Milada einige Parzeilen in das Kloster geschrieben meine Tochter Milada hat sie aber nicht bekommen die Klosterfrauen haben Ihr ihn nicht gegeben sie haben Mir sagen lassen das beste ist wenn sie von der mutter nichts hört so weiß Ich nicht ob Ich recht tu wenn Ich dir schreibe Pavel mein lieber sohn mit der bitte daß du mir antworten sollst ob meine Parzeilen dich und Milada deine liebe schwester in guter gesundheit antreffen was Mich betrifft ich bin gesund und so weit zufrieden in meinem platz.

deine Mutter452

Barbara Holub’s letters are outpourings of motherly concern, but Pavel is unmoved by her pleas for a response. Pavel cannot relate to the sentiments of the letter. They are too foreign for him. Pavel’s rejection of his mother is in opposition to the nineteenth-century ideal family, where the mother was the heart of the family and source of affective power. Pavel does not identify his

451 Ebner’s description of Virgil’s hut demonstrates an awareness for the conditions of the peasant class and decline of the aristocracy, though she does not dwell on it as the primary subject of the narrative. Ebner holds an ambivalent position with regard to nineteenth-century literary movements among literary scholars, with her being read as belonging to bürgerlicher Realismus, as well as seeing elements of Naturalism and Modernism. See BJ Kenworthy, „Ethical Realism: Marie von Ebner-Eschenbach’s Unsühnbar“ in German Life and Letters 41:4 (July 1988); Franz Schüppen, „Bürgerlicher Realismus in Ebner-Eschenbachs „Božna““; Herbert Zeman, „Ethos und Wirklichkeitsdarstellung – Gedanken zur literaturgeschichtlichen Position Marie von Ebner-Eschenbachs“ In Des Mitleids tiefe Liebesfähigkeit. (Bern: Lang, 1997); Christine Anton, „Marie von Ebner-Eschenbach und die Realismusdebatte: Schreiben als Auseinandersetzung mit den Kunstansichten ihrer Zeit.” In Modern Austrian Literature 33 No. (2000): 2-15; Charlotte Woodford, “Realism and Sentimentalism,”(2006); and Aust, „Am Randes des Realismus,“ (2007).

mother as a source of emotional security. That role has always fallen to Milada. Prior to his father’s execution, he and his mother had worked together in the fields and “Ohne [Milada] würde auf der Ziegelstätte nie ein Wort gewechselt worden sein.” Milada is the member of the family able to perform the emotional labor that her mother and brother could not. Barbara and Pavel had sheltered Milada from the worst of their circumstances and Martin Holub’s anger, but doing so unbalanced the affective bond between Barbara and Pavel.

Despite the absence of the key markers of a bourgeois family, Pavel is socialized through an affective economy, seen in his relationship to Milada, which becomes the foundation of his childhood and home. Habrecht persuades the Baroness to allow Pavel to visit his sister at the convent, arguing: “was könnte für den verwahrlosten Jungen heilsamer und aneifernder sein als der Anblick seiner wohlgerathenen Schwester, als ihr Beispiel, ihre Ermahnungen?” Milada, the one person Pavel loves, becomes a disciplinary force. Pavel’s behavior is not moderated by the ability of others to deny or grant him access to his sister, the one person he loves. Milada is the currency by which Pavel will modify his behavior, and through which he can be domesticated.

Milada becomes the foundation of Pavel’s journey to childhood and home. However, the relationship between brother and sister is not enough create a childhood. When he is reunited with Milada, “Er setzte sich, nahm sie auf seinen Schoß, küßte und herzte sie und ließ sich von

453 Ibid., 5.
454 Ibid., 40.
455 Although not the focus of this chapter, it should be noted that the reverse is also true, with access to Pavel used to moderate Milada’s behavior at the convent. When Milada grows upset at the idea of Pavel not being allowed to visit, the abbess tells her “es hängt ja nicht von mir ab, sondern von Dir, von Deiner Aufführung, Dein Bruder darf immer kommen, wenn Du gut, gehorsam und –, sie legte besonderes Gewicht auf diese Worte –,nicht ungeduldig bist” (53). For further discussion of Milada, see Daniela Richter, „Lasset eure Kinder Menschen werden!” In Domesticating the Public: Women’s Discourse on Gender Roles in Nineteenth-Century Germany. (Oxford: Lang, 2012), 42-51.
ihr erzählen, wollte auf das genaueste wissen, wie sie lebte, was sie tat, was sie lernte, vor allem
jedoch – was sie zu essen bekam.”

With Milada, Pavel plays the role of the parent more so than that of the child. Milada functions as affective currency, but that is insufficient to create a childhood for Pavel. Unlike Pavel, Milada recognizes the importance of their mother in their family. She comes up with a plan: “daß Pavel einen Grund kaufen und für die Mutter ein Haus bauen müsse.” Milada represents everything that the nineteenth-century family should provide, emotional and financial stability. Milada is the driving force of this dream, providing Pavel with her small savings to become the financial foundation of Pavel’s future home with their mother.

With Milada's emotional and financial support as a foundation, Pavel undergoes mental and physical changes. Rather than being a thief to spite the community, he is willing to live a normative, regulated life for Milada. He runs away from Virgil’s hut and takes shelter with the village teacher HabrechtPavel wants to be a productive part of Habrecht’s household, saying that “jetzt wolle er dieses Feld in seine Obhut nehmen und den Garten ebenfalls; bald werde man sehen, ob das Feld noch schlecht bestellt, ob der Garten noch eine Wildnis sei.”

The field behind Habrecht’s house is much like Pavel, under the care of the community but neglected and abandoned as too wild to be fruitful. Pavel’s care for the garden becomes a sign of him taking responsibility for his own growth, despite the community’s negligence. Similar to the garden in the opening of Grete Minde, this field is not a site of nature, but one of domestication that Pavel


457 Ibid., 47.

458 Ibid., 60.
has willingly embraced. The sedentary, agrarian life becomes more attractive than the active life of a ne'er-do-well, through Milada's approval.

The attraction of the bourgeois home is also apparent in Pavel's new physical setting. When Pavel goes to sleep, with a rough blanket as a mattress and a cape as a blanket, with only buttered bread in his stomach, he is content: „so lag er nicht mehr frierend, zusammengekauert im Flur der Hirtenhütte, in dem der Wind eiskalt und messerscharf durch die klaffenden Türspalten drang; er lag unter einem Mantel aus wirklichem Tuch in einer Kammer, wo die Luft fest eingesperrt war und wo es vortrefflich roch, nach allerhand guten Sachen, nach altehrwürdigen Gewändern, nach Schabenkräutern, nach Stiefeln, nach saurer Milch.“

The text transfigures bourgeois everyday life. Pavel is still in humble surroundings, but in Habrecht's house, Pavel experiences warmth, and simple comforts become extraordinary: “Dabei überkam ihn trotz all des Neuen, das ihn umgab, trotz all des Neuen, das in ihm gärte und keimte, zum erstenmal nach langer, langer Zeit ein Heimatsgefühl.“

The feeling of home and belonging cannot be directly represented, yet the text accomplishes this through the contrast between Virgil's hut and Habrecht's house and wonder that accompanies warmth and materiality.

Pavel orients himself toward a bourgeois future, where rootedness and confinement are beautiful because they accompany physical and emotional comfort and provide a private space away from the community. After Pavel is found innocent of murdering the mayor, there are two

459 Ibid., 61.
460 Ibid., 61.
461 It is also important to note that in taking refuge with the village teacher, Pavel finds not only emotional and physical security, but restores his potential for Bildung. With these three aspects, Pavel finds what Habermas considers the hallmark of the bourgeois family, an environment presented as one for self-cultivation. Habermas, 48. Pavel’s residence with Habrecht, whose name seems to combine „haben“ and “Recht” with the development of Pavel’s ability to increasingly express himself and assert his individuality and rights. Jürgen Egyptien, “Pavel Holubs Weg aus der Sprachlosigkeit. Zur Entwicklung von Sprachkompetenz in Marie von Ebner-Eschenbachs Roman „Das Gemeindekind.“’ brücken. Germanistisches Jahrbuch TSCHECHIEN SLOWAKAI. 18 (2010): 77.
things he longs for: “Ein Wiedersehen mit seiner Schwester wäre die erste, Ruhe vor den Neckereien der Dorfjugend die zweite gewesen. Aber keine von beiden wurde erfüllt.” Unity of the family and peace from the community are two ideals of the bourgeois family. Pavel disciplines his life to attain these goals. He buys a plot of land on a sandpit and gathers materials, spending his days planning his future house. He is still far from living a middle-class bourgeois life. Yet, the idea of the bourgeois family and childhood is seen when Pavel writes not only to Milada but also to his mother and “teilte ihr mit, daß sie, wenn ihre Strafzeit verflossen sein werde, eine Unterkunft bei ihm finden könne.” The house is hardly a great work of architecture or on par with a middle-class household, but it is a sign of Pavel’s internalization of bourgeois norms. Pavel is building the family home that he never had as a child.

Within the privacy of his house, Pavel is no longer communal property, but an individual. Yet, his individualism within the house lacks the agency he has when acting as a criminal child. Habrecht gifts Pavel six books, describing them: “schlichte Büchlein, von unberühmten Männern zusammengestellt; wenn du aber alles weißt, was in ihnen steht, und alles tust, was sie dir anraten, dann weißt du viel und wirst gut fahren. Lies sie, lies sie immer, und wenn du mit dem sechsten fertig bist, fange mit dem ersten wieder an.” Although the books are a sign of Pavel’s self-cultivation and intellectual development from being seen as a wild animal or criminal, Habrecht’s advice also demonstrates the paradox of bourgeois Bildung. The purpose of education is not to become an individual, but to internalize norms and assimilate. Pavel’s house

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463 Ibid., 80.

464 Ibid., 126.
creates a space where he can have a childhood; however, its position and contents demonstrate the impossibility of living an independent life within normative, bourgeois society.

Through the idea of bourgeois childhood, the text presents Pavel's domestication and loss of agency as an ideal state. The narrator describes Pavel’s house as if it were drawn by the hands of a child: “Das ganze Anwesen, die Hütte mit ihrem schiefen Dach, der Fichtenbaum daneben, der Zaun davor, nahm sich aus wie ein Bildchen, das Kinder entwerfen bei ihren ersten Versuchen in der Zeichenkunst.”\(^{465}\) The narrator explicitly compares Pavel’s completed house with the drawings children make of their own homes. This is not an accumulation of objects without any affect, as in Virgil's hut. Pavel's home is informed not by its materiality, but rather by a child's idea of home. The text performs a realist transformation of reality, moving beyond an accounting of materiality to point to how the ideals of the bourgeois family structure and change perception. The presence of childhood in the foundation transforms the humble structure into an extraordinary creation.\(^{466}\)

The figure of the child idealizes and shapes the new reality in which Pavel finds himself; however, in utilizing childhood as the organizing principle for his future, Pavel breaks from the bourgeois ideals in which he surrounds himself. Pavel makes a conscientious decision to never marry. Pavel’s decision to not have children can be interpreted in many fashions, particularly regarding the relationship between Czech and German cultures within the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Linda Kraus Worley argues that in Ebner’s work, “»der Wilde«, der »native«, kann nur

\(^{465}\) Ibid., 115.

\(^{466}\) Love is literally let into Pavel’s new home. Pavel saves a dog from the night watchmen, caring for it and bringing it into his home, naming it “Lamur,” Pavel’s orthography for the French “l’amour” (115).
als Entsexualisierter, als »Supermensch«, der mit seiner Mutter leben wird, bestehen.»

However, Pavel’s decision is less a problem of his outsider status and more a problem of reproducing the bourgeois ideal in its most ideal form. Moritz Baßler argues that the formation of ethical, non-productive relationships is a common feature in works of late German Realism. Pavel’s new home is not a triumph of his moving beyond a wild, criminal youth, but him binding himself to an unproductive illusion. The bourgeois ideal of emotional physical security can be aspired to but not passed on to subsequent generations. In forfeiting his criminal identity, Pavel loses his ability to transform the community.

Although Das Gemeindekind has frequently been compared to a Bildungsroman, Pavel’s establishment of a non-criminal, normative lifestyle lacks a balance between individual and communal identity. Even the construction of a home does not grant Pavel access to the bourgeois ideal of the home as a site separate from the community for self-cultivation. Pavel is tempted by the idea of leaving: „Hinweg! überlaß der Mutter Hütte und Feld, und du wandere..."

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467 Linda Kraus Worley, „Plotting the Czech Lands: Marie von Ebner-Eschenbachs Konstruktion des Tschechischen.“ In Herausforderung Osteuropa. Die Offenlegung stereotyper Bilder, ed. Thede Kahl; Elisabeth Vyslonzil; Alois Woldan (Vienna, 2004), 143; For further discussion of Czech-Austrian relationships in Ebner’s work, see also Hubmann (2016); Helmut Nümberger, „Man kann sich kaum größere Gegensätze denken ...“: Wilhelm Lübecke über zwei Romane Fontanes und Marie von Ebner-Eschenbachs.“ In Fontane-Blätter 101. (Berlin: Königsd., 2016), 8-30. For discussion of Ebner’s relationship to the ethical society movement, see also Norbert Gabriel, „... daß die Frauen in Deutschland durchaus Kinder bleiben müssen...“: die Tagebücher der Marie von Ebner-Eschenbach.” In Des Mitleids tiefe Liebefähigkeit. (Bern: Lang, 1997), 77-95.

468 These endings that point toward an inability to reproduce are not unique to narratives about the domestication of criminal children. Through his study of Wilhelm Raabe and late German Realism, Moritz Baßler identifies the problem of how the decision to live an ethical life, one upholding morality, appears alongside passive, non-reproductive constellations of figures, such as brothers and sisters, or mothers and sons. Moritz Baßler, „Figurationen der Entsagung; Zur Verfahrenslogik des Spätrealismus bei Wilhelm Raabe“ In Internationale Raabe-Gesellschaft. Jahrbuch der Raabe Gesellschaft.(Berlin: de Gruyter, 2010), 63-80.

469 Das Gemeindekind has often been compared to a Bildungsroman, particularly with regard to Pavel’s relationship with Habrecht as well as Pavel’s own development of speech. He goes from animal-like and basic sentences to increasingly complex thought and sentence structure. See Baasner (1983); Jürgen Egyptian, „ Pavel Holubs Weg aus der Sprachlosigkeit,” (2010). Jennifer Van Hyning takes an alternative approach in reading Das Gemeindekind through the lens of Schopenhauer’s idea of the will, looking at the promise and illusion of free will. Jennifer Van Hyning, Narrating the Self: Realism in the Works of Theodor Fontane and Marie von Ebner-Eschenbach. (The University of Texas at Austin, ProQuest Dissertations Publishing, 2006), 90.
fort, weit, weit in die Welt, unter fremde Menschen, die nichts von dir und nichts von deinen Eltern wissen. Lerne und werde – wenn auch später als ein anderer, mehr als die anderen."470

Like Grete, Pavel has the opportunity to leave behind the houses that have defined him. Instead of giving into this thought to go and find himself beyond the idea of the home, he imagines both Milada and Habrecht telling him: “Kleiner Mensch, bleibe in deinem kleinen Kreise und suche still und verborgen zu wirken auf die Gesundheit des Ganzen.”471 Pavel is domesticated to the point that he no longer has an identity beyond the community. He forsakes any opportunity to define himself rather than let the community define him.

The permanence of Pavel’s childhood is marked by the death of Milada and return of Barbara Holub. Milada had initially served as the affective bond within the family. Milada’s death by starvation while fasting to repent for the sins of her parents is Christlike, along with the reappearance of Barbara Holub three days after Milada’s death. Milada’s death reconciles mother and son, allowing Barbara Holub to function as a source of affective power within the family. Pavel learns that her only crime was honoring her marriage vows of obedience and thus not testifying against her husband. The love she continues to show for her abusive husband allows their broken family to be read in the same light as a bourgeois family formed out of love. Barbara has no expectations of being allowed to live with her son, but Pavel insists: “» Bleibt bei mir, liebe Mutter«, rief er. »Ich werde meine Hände unter Eure Füße legen, ich werde Euch alles vergelten, was Ihr gelitten habt. Bleibe bei mir.«”472 Pavel is finally able to view Barbara Holub as his mother with the bourgeois connotations attached to the word, Pavel has the final say

471 Ibid., 147.
472 Ibid., 153.
in the narrative, ending with a statement of filial devotion to his mother: “Was habe Ihr eben gesagt? – Die Ärgsten werden oft die Besten, wenn sie einen brauchen. Nun, liebe Mutter, das müßt doch kurios zugehen, wenn man zwei Menschen, wie wir sind, nicht manchmal brauchen sollte. Bleibe bei mir, liebe Mutter!” Pavel ends with an assertion of family united against the prejudices of community, but this assertion still acknowledges the community’s connection to the family. Through his devotion to his mother, he turns inward to the mother-child dyad of this new household, prioritizing its maintenance over the improvement of the community as a whole.

Pavel’s confinement by the bourgeois ideal of family and home resembles Grete Minde’s. Like Grete, he is driven by the idea of home, though unlike Grete he has the ability to earn a living. Pavel’s determination to build a home and find emotional and physical security, as well as some separation away from the community, transforms a physical structure and everyday constellation of people into an ideal. Despite being viewed as a problem and unwanted child in the community, Pavel has internalized the ideals and structures of the bourgeois family, which becomes the tool of his domestication. The narrative’s juxtaposition of Pavel’s different homes transforms the ordinary into the marvelous. However, that transformation comes at a cost. Pavel can never escape his identity as “Das Gemeindekind” even as an adult, and while his domestication renders the bourgeois family all the more ideal, it cannot be reproduced.

Das Gemeindekind: Unproductive Production of Bourgeois Morality

In his initial appearance, the narrator depicts Pavel as a stereotypical criminal, wild, animal-like, foreign, and incapable of communication. In his final appearance, the narrator depicts Pavel as a stereotypical child, living at home with his mother. The ending appears as the

473 Ibid. 153.
triumph of the child over that of the criminal, with Pavel fully domesticated and no longer introducing chaos into the community through his criminality. However, despite the appearance of linear progression, the text interweaves the image of the child into all phases of Pavel’s life, demonstrating his sensitivity to the ideal family as a motivating factor for his criminality. The victory of the child over the criminal should point to a future; however, despite Pavel’s acquisition of a home, it is one that will never fulfill the underlying function of the nineteenth-century to accumulate and pass on capital.

The figures of the child and criminal are not distinct in *Das Gemeindekind*. Pavel is always a child, even when the Baroness and the community of Soleschau only see a criminal, and he can never fully exit the position of criminal. Pavel is as much confined by his position as a child as he is by his community’s perception of him as a criminal. The family functions as a lens to understanding Pavel’s relationship to his community. Like a child in a bourgeois family, Pavel is driven by affect; only instead of positive affection binding him to the community it is negativity. The psychological control exercised over him becomes the motivating force for him to modify his behavior, as he will be rewarded with positive affect in the form of his sister Milada. Milada functions as emotional currency driving Pavel’s determination to form a home and becomes the foundation of his repaired relationship with their mother Barbara. However, it is a confining position. With each new house, as Pavel transitions from Virgil’s hut, to Habrecht’s house, to his own house, Pavel solidifies his connections to Soleschau and eliminates any options for departure and establishing an identity elsewhere.

Pavel fills an invaluable role within Soleschau, namely the role of the criminal. This is a category he cannot escape. He is not only the son of strangers to the town, but also the son of a murderer. His position as criminal allows the community to direct their anxieties toward him.
rather than practice self-examination. However, his criminality also points toward the literary tradition of utilizing crime to point toward contemporary social problems and Pavel’s crimes reveal the inequalities inherent in a continuing aristocratic society, while the community’s consistent willingness to utilize him as a scapegoat challenges a liberal, bourgeois social organization. Derrida’s notion of the scapegoat argues that the scapegoat occupies an ambivalent position as both poison and remedy for a community. As with Grete Minde, Pavel Holub’s dangerous subjectivity is his drive to fulfill a familial understanding of community. Both Grete and Pavel understand family as functioning on an affective and financial level and act for this unity within the larger communal sphere. Pavel must be viewed as a criminal lest he be viewed and treated as a child and thus deserve care that they are incapable and unwilling to provide.

Pavel’s criminality points to both the downfall and healing of Soleschau; however, his position as child prevents any change from coming to fruition. Pavel’s crimes are driven by a concern for just treatment of others, including himself, but the emotional control exercised over him by the physical absences of Milada and his mother present roadblocks to Pavel’s development. Pavel’s criminality demarcates him from the others in Soleschau and demonstrates an individuality that is not simply subordination of the individual for the harmony of the community.

The text’s mixing of the figures of the child and criminal places the bourgeois family in an ambivalent position. Its idealized state is presented alongside its contradictions. The tension between preconceived notions of criminals and children generates the energy to transfigure the idea of a family. However, the idealization of the family reveals its inner workings and contradictions. At the end of Das Gemeindekind, the text positions Pavel in a state of permanent

childhood. The construction of his home and return of his mother signals Pavel’s figuration of childhood as an end state rather than a transitionary state, with no space in which to become an individual.

**Conclusions**

Despite the different contexts of a newly-unified Germany and the Austro-Hungarian Empire, Fontane and Ebner’s narratives mirror one another. In *Grete Minde*, Fontane presents the narrative of emerging criminality, and in *Das Gemeindekind*, Ebner presents the narrative of retreating criminality. Both Grete and Pavel are simultaneously outsiders and members of their community and can be read as ethnically different from the majority of the population. Both Grete and Pavel have a tendency toward emotion and behaviors that challenge the existing social structures. They demonstrate the traits of both born criminals and those who become criminals by circumstance and how these categories can never be eliminated even by embracing bourgeois values and structures.

Fontane and Ebner’s texts explore the idea of the bourgeois family as an organizing force, while writing in periods of change, where problems of religious and ethnic differences come against nationalist rhetoric in newly-unified Germany in 1880 and the multi-national Austro-Hungarian empire in 1887. While both Fontane and Ebner demonstrate the strength of the bourgeois family as a binding force through affective and financial necessity, this idealization of the family reveals its stagnation and inability to succeed in the long term. Grete and Pavel remain oriented toward and dependent on their families of origin for financial and emotional stability and cannot remove themselves from the position of childhood.

Ebner and Fontane’s texts present a familiar narrative of bourgeois morality as the antidote to criminality; however, this narrative is complicated by the lack of distinction between
bourgeois and criminal children in these texts: the bourgeois child cannot be an antidote if the child is never as wild or criminal as his or her community assumes. Viewing their protagonists through the lens of childhood, the security of confinement within the bourgeois family becomes beautiful and more desirable, yet it is the criminality of Grete and Pavel that works to move bourgeois morality beyond the middle class into the margins. The bourgeois family as an organizing principle is most evident when criminal children on the margins of society become its defenders and propagators. Grete and Pavel’s crimes are the expansion of bourgeois morality to eliminate the constructed position of outsider. Because the bourgeois family and bourgeois society is dependent on categories of insiders and outsiders, this expansion can only exist within the individual and cannot be transmitted.

The criminal child represents the problems of the aestheticization of bourgeois life within German realism. Neither Fontane nor Ebner is concerned with an exact reproduction of everyday life, nor are they utilizing the criminal child solely as a call for social reform. Realist art begins with the everyday subject, such as child or a family, and transforms it. Grete and Pavel’s criminality transfigures the bourgeois experience of childhood, where a normative life appears extraordinary from the position of the outsider. Yet, the investment in the child as the future of bourgeois society cannot hold. The containment of children through bourgeois morality blocks the bourgeois family’s ability to reproduce as the contradictions between affect and economy, and between the reality and the ideal forms, grow more and more pronounced. The criminal wild child sustains the illusion of the bourgeois family as an ideal to aspire to, working to present the bourgeois family in an extraordinary light and vitalizing the bourgeois family by attempting to overcome its contradictions.
CONCLUSION

Michael Ende’s 1973 novel *Momo oder Die seltsame Geschichte von den Zeit-Dieben und von dem Kind, das den Menschen die gestohlene Zeit zurückbrachte* tells the story of a remarkable girl named Momo. Momo is extraordinary not because she lives in the village amphitheater, nor because she has no known origins and can neither read nor write, but because she listens to people and encourages others to disconnect from the supposedly necessary parts of life such as work and to connect with one another through their imaginations. When the Men in Grey arrive in the village and persuade everyone to avoid time-wasting activities such as socializing, art, playing pretend or even sleeping and to also “save” their time by depositing it in a bank, it is Momo who saves the day. Ende’s novel, which won the 1974 Deutscher Jugendliteraturpreis, illustrates two of the main arguments of my dissertation: narratives featuring wild children reveal the structures of society and the figure of the wild child can suggest alternatives to these structures by reintroducing what might otherwise be abjected, such as creativity, storytelling, and not taking a productivity oriented approach to life.

Within German realism, the representation of underlying social structures and values is not as explicit as within Ende’s novel, but the prevalent figure of the child is a means of representing the dynamic shifts in the late nineteenth century in German-speaking worlds, such as the expansion of the bourgeois family, normalization of bourgeois childhood, concerns about nationalism, the relationship between Catholics and Protestants, and artistic ideals. However, the wild child is more than a projection surface for indirectly representing social structures and values such as the family, religion or education. The figure of the wild child is a means of
expressing doubt about the viability of the structures and an awareness of the limitations of expanding bourgeois values as normative structures.

The use of wild children to represent and criticize extraliterary reality is most apparent in my chapters on fairytale and criminal children. The realist use of fairytale and criminal children both idealizes a concept – an aspirational German *Kulturnation* or the bourgeois family – and suggests that this ideal is unattainable. Within the examples of Raabe and Marlitt, the fairytale child suggests an alternative to a life driven by martial aggression and violence, but she is literally and metaphorically killed for the sake of community-building. Within the examples of Fontane and Ebner-Eschenbach, the bourgeois ideals of family and child are present in all spheres of society, including representations of non-bourgeois families and children, but they cannot reproduce themselves. Works of German realism use the figure of the wild child to relieve ordinary life of its “Erdgeschmack,” so that German realism is not a mimetic translation of life into prose, but an idea of how reality could be. But factors such as the necessity of financial stability to construct a bourgeois family or the inescapable cycle of war present obstacles to the transformation initiated by the wild child.

Within German realism, the wild child is not only a means representing how society is organized and suggesting alternatives, but also a means of engaging with the self-reflexivity of German realism. Wild children who are artists and engage with language are means for realist texts to consider their relationships to language and how realist texts are created. This is most apparent in my discussions of realism’s Mignons and Kaspar Hausers. Within the examples from Stifter and Storm, the wild child’s art better navigates the relationship between prose and other artistic media, and her art contrasts with the other moments of creation in the text offered by the narrators, pedagogical figures and romantic interests. Within Meyer’s text, the frame narrator’s
use of language provides a stark contrast to Julian’s and he misunderstands how Julian’s language presents an alternative means of communication that connects individuals rather than excluding them. Realist prose is not the rhetorical containment of the wild child, but the attempt to imitate him or her.

The gender of the wild child has played an important role in her position as a representative for social structures and values and as a poetic figure for reflecting on realist art. All but two of my case studies – Meyer’s *Das Leiden eines Knaben* and Ebner-Eschenbach’s *Das Gemeindekind* – feature female children as the central child character. Female children are more subject to the bourgeois ideals of German realism given the importance of women in the creation and transmission of bourgeois family values. Reading female children as artistic creations is also part of a longer tradition of male artists and female art subjects and the objectification of female bodies. The use of male children in Meyer and Ebner-Eschenbach’s texts is particularly interesting in how they demonstrate that it is the child’s voice and perspective, not the female child’s voice and perspective, that are transformative, and they suggest that the bourgeois family is a structure that extends to all individuals, even if it is predominately coded as a female, domestic sphere.

The idealization of the wild child and the manner in which wild children are othered raise questions as to whether or not German realism is reproducing the structure of orientalism which Edward Said describes. The descriptions of wild children and use of stereotypes of difference, particularly ethnicity, are indicative of nineteenth-century attitudes toward outsiders and should not be read as providing insight into the voices of the marginalized communities in German-speaking worlds of the nineteenth century. However, while Grete, Pavel, and Juliana are coded as ethnically different, many of the cases I discuss represent wild children emerging from within...
their communities – Kätti, Lilli, and Julian. Else is her own unique case of being ethnically German but foreign to the community she lives on the outskirts of. German realism certainly draws on stereotypical markers of otherness as a means of presenting contrasts and revealing what is considered average, but within my case studies, the figure of the wild child is a paradoxical figure who is othered through her wildness, but as a child has the potential to become part of a community.

All of the works I have discussed include the domestication, death or disappearance of the wild child, which might suggest that the wild child fails to initiate the transformation she offers. Juliana becomes a bourgeois child and wife; Kätti runs away; Else is killed; Lilli marries a psychologically violent man; Julian succumbs to his injuries; Grete kills herself and others; and Pavel becomes a permanent child living with his mother. These fates at first seem to undermine my argument that the wild child is a productive figure within German realism. However, within German realism, the events of the narratives are second to the manner of narration. The mode of narration present in German realism – seen in realism’s Mignons and Kaspar Hausers – makes the alternative worlds offered by realist fairytale and criminal children possible. The poetic figure of the wild child introduces the structures of reality and initiates transformations through her presence; the texts’ imitations of this transformation persists, even after the wild child disappears.

Throughout my dissertation, I have striven to take a positive reading of wild children and their differences which would be abjected by bourgeois standards. Two of the types of children most often negatively depicted in historical texts of the nineteenth century are differently-abled and criminal children. The positive reading of the differently-abled child’s voice and the sympathetic treatment of criminal children would be the most promising avenue for future
research on children within late-nineteenth-century German literature. These figures have the potential for seeing how expectations of bourgeois childhood interact with figures typically excluded from participating in bourgeois society and this approach could be expanded to include other figures, such as Gottfried Keller’s Dietegen, an indentured child laborer accused of theft and hanged, children or adults who maintain a childlike mindset due to cognitive disabilities as in Wilhelm Raabe’s *Altershausen*, and minor characters whose disabilities are typically associated with the actions of their parents, such as Wienke Hainen in Theodor Storm’s *Der Schimmelreiter* or Tobias in Gerhardt Hauptmann’s *Bahnwärter Thiel*. Further studies of literary representations of childhood in the nineteenth century could also examine how the ideas of criminality and different ability affect representations of children who might otherwise be considered average, such as children defying gender norms as in Keller’s *Frau Regel Amrain und ihr Jüngster* or Conrad Ferdinand Meyer’s *Gustav Adolfs Page* or children who reject bourgeois life as with Velten Andres in Wilhelm Raabe’s *Die Akten des Vogelsangs*. Works of German realism draw on the idea of the bourgeois childhood as a standard for normal childhood, but the children present within late-nineteenth century German literature are seldom normal and the deviations from bourgeois standards are productive for further study on the poetics of German realism and how German realism engages with the world outside of prose.


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