BETWEEN BECOMING AND BEING:
REPRESENTATIONS OF THE INDIVIDUAL IN FRIEDERIKE HELENE UNGER’S NOVELS

DISSERTATION

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree Doctor of Philosophy
in the Graduate School of The Ohio State University

By
Amber Suggitt

Graduate Program in Germanic Languages and Literatures

The Ohio State University

2015

Dissertation Committee:
Bernd Fischer, Advisor
May Mergenthaler, Co-Advisor
Katra Byram
ABSTRACT

Over the course of the 18th century a new concept of the individual began to emerge, grounded in the philosophical theories of Descartes, Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau, and many others. The evolving conceptualization of the modern subject entailed an understanding of an individual imbued with moral freedom, responsible for his actions on both a moral and a social level. This increased focus on man is reflected in the literature of the period and reaches a high point in the latter half of the 18th century. Novels such as Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre or Anton Reiser engage with the individual as both a product of and influence on his environment. The various ways in which authors choose to present their protagonists reflect greatly on the authors’ perspectives regarding the formation and status of the individual; taken collectively, they serve to form a canon for 18th-century literary anthropology. One author, Friederike Helene Unger, engages extensively with such representations of the modern individual in several of her novels – three of which I analyze here. Over the course of her literary undertakings it becomes increasingly clear that Unger does not consider individuality to be an achievable goal for every character: the level of “success” emerges in direct relationship to an individual’s nature, early formation, and ability to exert influence on her environment. These various factors result in characters who stand between being and becoming, and who are subsequently more or less capable of representing themselves as autonomous individuals. Furthermore, this individuality is reflected at the textual level; the more narrative control a character exerts,
the more of an individuality he or she possesses. When read in conjunction with each other, Unger’s novels reveal an attempt to explore various possibilities for individuals of her time, with a focus on the fragile, constructed nature of the self.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to begin by thanking my wonderfully supportive dissertation committee: Dr. Bernd Fischer, Dr. May Mergenthaler, and Dr. Katra Byram. Without their expertise and guidance, I would never have succeeded in completing this project. I would like to express my deepest gratitude to May Mergenthaler for the many, many hours spent in discussion with me or reading over my writing. She is an excellent soundboard on whom I can always count for extensive feedback. I am indebted to Bernd Fischer for the freedom he gave me in working so closely with May, while being available himself to offer additional, incredibly valuable perspectives and insights. Finally, I greatly appreciate Katra Byram’s aid in pointing me to useful narrative theory and her many insightful comments that have significantly helped me to structure some of my analysis. My committee has helped me in more ways than I can truly thank them for.

There are, of course, many others at OSU who have aided and supported me invaluably over the years during which I worked towards and on this dissertation; they include the faculty of the Department of Germanic Languages and Literatures as well as many of the graduate students – particularly those ABD students, past and present, who spent time reading over my chapter portions and providing me with constructive feedback during our Dissertation Colloquium sessions.
I would also like to thank my parents, Dr. Jo Doran and Randall Suggitt, and my sisters, Jule Thomas and Miranda Suggitt – they were very encouraging and never stopped believing in me. My mother’s recent successful dissertation defense and my sister’s current work on hers have, furthermore, been very inspirational in helping me work towards my own successful completion.
Vita

June 2007 ..................................................... B.A. German, Western Michigan University
June 2007 ..................................................... B.A. French, Western Michigan University
June 2009 ..................................................... M.A., German Language and Literature, The
Ohio State University
September 2007 to May 2013 ...................... Graduate Teaching Associate, Department
of Germanic Languages and Literatures, The
Ohio State University
August 2013 to present .............................. Full-time Instructor, Department of Modern
Languages and Literatures, Northern
Michigan University

Fields of Study

Major Field: Germanic Languages and Literatures
# Table of Contents

Abstract .......................................................................................................................... ii  
Acknowledgments .......................................................................................................... iv  
Vita ................................................................................................................................ vi  
Table of Contents ........................................................................................................... vii  
Chapter 1: Introduction ................................................................................................. 1  
Chapter 2: Who is Julchen Grünthal? The Interference of Unreliable Narration and a  
Case of Backward Development ................................................................................. 48  
Chapter 3: The Makings of a Beautiful Soul and Unger’s Vision of Genius ................. 130  
Chapter 4: The Nature and the Nation of the Individual .............................................. 196  
Conclusion ..................................................................................................................... 248  
Works Cited ..................................................................................................................... 252
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1.1 Overview

The 18th century witnessed a number of revolutionary changes, from the political revolutions in France and America to the social, philosophical, scientific, and cultural revolutions that dominated that time period. Earlier theories by Hobbes and Locke, which postulate that all humans have equal rights, culminate in the philosophies of the Enlightenment, most notably in Kant’s theories of moral philosophy and Rousseau’s arguments concerning the social contract. From these evolving theories emerges a new concept of the individual, one who is - because of his freedom - responsible for his actions on both a moral and a social level.¹ This increased focus on man is reflected in the literature of the period and reaches a high point in the latter half of the 18th century. This is especially true in Germany, where novels such as Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre or Anton Reiser engage with the individual as both a product of and influence on his environment. The various ways in which authors choose to present their protagonists reflect greatly on the authors’ perspectives regarding the formation and status of the individual; taken collectively, they serve to form a canon for 18th-century literary anthropology.² Unfortunately, most of the

¹ Charles Taylor points to this “new understanding of individual identity that emerges at the end of the eighteenth century” and “its starting point in the eighteenth-century notion that human beings are endowed with a moral sense” (Politics of Recognition 28).

canonical texts examined under this hermeneutical category belong to male authors - names such as Goethe, Herder, Moritz, Rousseau, Wieland, Schiller, and so on. In fact, any presence of a female name under such an analysis can typically only be found in reference to titles (such as Julie, ou la nouvelle Héloïse). Missing from this list is an author who was well-known during her time and whose own contributions to the 18th-century preoccupation with the individual should not be overlooked: Friederike Helene Unger.

Unger’s novels, situated at the cusp of a shift in German literary and sociopolitical thought, span a period from late Enlightenment to early Romanticism; they witness the evolution of the modern novel, the French Revolution, the emergence of nationalism, and the rise of the French Empire. It is important to take note of these developments, for Unger’s novels and characters engage both with these historical developments as well as with the very concept of development, particularly as it relates to the modern individual. As she makes most explicit in her last novel, the “how’s” and “why’s” of the individual’s life are of great interest to her (indeed to the educated German at large). By presenting a variety of figures in various situations, Unger offers insights into possible developments, lifestyles, and limitations for her protagonists. These possibilities range from the options available to women in traditional, middle-class homes; to the influences that questions of morality, beauty, and virtue have on the individual; to the political existence that some of her characters embrace.

Too often Unger’s novels have been investigated almost exclusively within the framework of women: written by, for, and about the female. Unger’s earlier works are overwhelmingly read as monographs on virtue and traditional femininity. Even where
scholars view Unger’s writing as subversive, they still situate it within this context. While it is true that virtue and femininity play important roles for many of her characters, I argue that Unger’s literary production accomplishes much more; indeed, close readings of her work reveal similarities to the anthropological/psychological project of Karl Philipp Moritz and his novel *Anton Reiser*. As I will explain in greater detail below, Moritz was intensely interested in the formation of the modern individual as it emerged in direct interaction with others or as a representation of inherited characteristics. He furthermore framed some of his observations of the individual in fictional form, so as to lend an air of continuity and connectedness. Unger, who also employs the novel (primarily the epistolary novel) as a vehicle for her observations, uses some of the same meta-literary language as Moritz; this indicates that she, too, chose the novel form/genre for specific purposes.

Not just the choice of genre, but also the actual narrative structure of Unger’s novels reveals much about her representations of the individual. I argue that the narration represents at a literary level the interactions of individuals in a social setting. This importance of the narrative structuring is most pronounced in the first novel that I analyze, but also emerges in the varied narrative techniques of the other two novels. In general the more narrative control and voice a character possesses, the greater his or her autonomy as a modern subject. While Unger chooses to reflect the various sociopolitical standing of her characters at the narrative level, it is in the details of their lives and environments that the reader should search for pronouncements on how one develops as an individual. In other words, even those characters who lack narrative control are represented and examined as important contributions to the literary anthropological discussion. From Julchen’s
complaints that her father has instilled her with “fearful principles” (Julchen Grünthal, Vol. 1, 259), to Mirabella’s reference to the “whirlwind of her individuality” that she possessed already as a young girl (Bekentnisse 21), to Horace’s insistence that his nature was considerably altered during his time in Paris (JFDM 80) – Unger’s protagonists insist on an understanding of the individual that is based, at least in part, on innate characteristics. These characteristics can be, and sometimes are, superseded by interactions with those around them. The result is a myriad of representations of the individual that run the gamut from absolute, assertive individualities to characters who are manipulated by the influences and narratives of others. In depicting these various understandings and conceptions of the individual, Unger’s novels provide a considerable focus on the nature of the individual and the relationship of this nature to the textual representations of it.

This anthropological interest in the individual is not articulated as explicitly in Unger’s works – the way it is, for example, in Moritz’ writings. Nonetheless, my analysis of Unger’s novels reveals how preoccupied she is with what the late 18th and early 19th century understood as literary anthropology, or study of the whole man. We can see this further corroborated in the fact that Unger does not limit her analysis to females, but integrates male characters to complicate the manifold Lebenskonzepte that she envisions for individuals of her time. Directly connected to these various possibilities is the question of one’s development vis-à-vis interactions with the external world as well as in relationship to any allegedly natural characteristics. Unger’s texts offer representations of characters who struggle with their development and their lifestyle, as well as those who emerge as somewhat autonomous and influential figures – in part due to certain innate
traits. I am titling this the difference between becoming and being, where the former entails development – albeit not always positively, and the latter encompasses individuals who do not appear to undergo any noticeable change. This approach helps me to highlight the “why’s” and “how’s” of the trajectories her characters’ lives take, and to analyze this information as contemporaneous contributions to the study of the individual.

In the remainder of my introduction I will lay some philosophical and sociopolitical groundwork for the emergence of literary anthropology as the study of the individual, explain some terminology that I will employ in my analysis of Unger’s works, and investigate the influential role of Karl Philipp Moritz in shaping the trajectory of 18th-century anthropological thought. By situating Unger’s novels within the literary and analytical tradition of her time, I will demonstrate how productive it is to avoid the more limited reading of her work so prevalent in modern scholarship. Just as Moritz has, in recent years, become increasingly the focus of literary scholars – after a period of general neglect – so too should Unger’s once well-known works be reintegrated into any serious discussion of 18th-century literary anthropology and the investigation of the modern subject.

1.1.2 Friederike Helene Unger

Born around 1750, Friederike Helene Unger was the illegitimate daughter of a Prussian general named Friedrich Rudolf, Count of Rothenburg. She was given a rather

---

3 See Mark Boulby’s introduction to Karl Philipp Moritz: At the Fringe of Genius for a brief discussion of the more notable contributions to Moritz scholarship (xi-xii).
4 As Birte Giesler notes, there are notable discrepancies in the birth years listed for Unger in scholarly works (54); however, most sources list 1741 or 1751 and Giesler writes that there are “zahlreiche Hinweise, die das Geburtsjahr als 1751 als plausible erscheinen lassen” (55).
liberal education that included French lessons and at the end of the 1770s she took up residence in the household of Johann Georg Unger, presumably as a tutor for his daughters. She developed a relationship with his son Johann Friedrich, even going so far as to provide him with 3,000 thalers that enabled him to found a printing company. After losing her financial support due to uncooperative relatives, Unger took up translation and writing as a means to support herself. She translated Rousseau’s *Confessions* and *Dialogues* before releasing her first novel, *Julchen Grünthal. Eine Pensionsgeschichte*, in 1784. The novel was so popular that many of her subsequent works appeared with the subtitle “by the author of *Julchen Grünthal.*” The following year she married Johann Friedrich Unger and the two of them became very involved in Berlin society. They interacted with many well-known authors and philosophers of the day, among others Karl Philipp Moritz, the Schlegels, August Wilhelm Iffland, Johann Jakob Engel, Ludwig Tieck, and Friedrich Schleiermacher. Johann Friedrich Unger also had a good relationship with Friedrich Nicolai and maintained correspondence with Goethe, several of whose works he published, including *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre.* After her husband’s death in 1804, Friederike Unger took over control of the printing company and kept it running, albeit just barely at times, until finally declaring bankruptcy in 1811. She received a small pension from the king that prevented her from succumbing to complete poverty, but at the time of her death in 1813 she was a poor and lonely woman. During her lifetime she published several novels and short stories: *Julchen Grünthal. Eine Pensionsgeschichte* (1784/1798), *Gräfinn Pauline* (1800), *Prinz Bimbam. Ein Märchen für Alt und Jung* (1802), *Louis und Louise* (1802), *Albert und Albertine* (1804), *Auguste von Friedensheim* (1804), *Melanie, das
Findelkind (1804), Bekenntnisse einer schönen Seele. Von ihr selbst geschrieben (1806), Die Franzosen in Berlin oder Seren an Clementinen in den Jahren 1806, 7, 8. Ein Sittengemälde (1809), and Der junge Franzose und das deutsche Mädchen. Wenn man will, ein Roman (1810). Although Unger has been largely ignored in recent literary criticism, she was quite well-known in her time as a prominent figure in Berlin society and an accomplished author.\(^5\) She interacted with many of the greatest names of her century and, as we will see below, engaged with some of the most socially significant issues contemporaneous to her time.\(^6\)

Despite Unger’s accomplishments, only a handful of scholars have taken an interest in her works in the past twenty years or so. Prior to this, all other reception of her works stems from the time period in which her texts first appeared. In other words, there is a noticeable dearth of scholarship on Friederike Helene Unger. A relatively recent monograph on “[d]as erzählerische Werk von Friederike Helene Unger” by Birte Giesler is an attempt to attend to this deficiency; unfortunately the scope of Giesler’s project

\(^5\) Christine Touaillon informs us that “[z]u ihrer Zeit [...Unger] für eine wichtige Erscheinung [galt]; manche Beurteiler loben sie sehr und stellen sie der La Roche an die Seite” (261). “Von den Zeitgenossen viel gelesen und gelobt, wurde es [Ungers erzählerisches Schaffen] von der spätern Literaturgeschichtsschreibung vernachlässigt und schließlich nahezu vollständig vergessen,” Giesler notes in the introduction to her overview on Unger’s works (9). Even Julchen Grünthal, which was extremely popular in the 18th century, has managed to escape the attention of most literary scholars today. In the afterword to Julchen Grünthal, Susanne Zantop explains how this novel – as is the case with Unger’s other works – underwent a change in reception: “Obwohl die Popularität des Romans feststeht und die zitierten Rezensionen...auch das sprachliche Geschick der Autorin hervorheben, hat ihn die neuere Kritik entweder als ‘Trivialroman’ oder ‘Unterhaltungsliteratur’ klassifiziert” (381). Zantop even calls Julchen Grünthal “der bedeutendste weibliche Erziehungsroman des 18. Jahrhunderts” (Afterword 361). Magdalen Heuser also acknowledges “daß diese [von Frauen geschriebenen] Romane nach und nach aus dem literaturgeschichtlichen Diskussionszusammenhang ausgeklammert worden sind, in dem sie ursprünglich durchaus mitgelesen und –besprochen worden waren” (30).

\(^6\) More information on Unger’s life, including a biographical appendix, can be found in Birte Giesler’s 2003 publication. Her research and attempts to illuminate the existing writings by and pertaining to Friederike Helene Unger are as invaluable as they are exhaustive. Indeed, the only thing “lacking” from Giesler’s book is a more substantial literary analysis of Unger’s works.
precludes her from engaging in more than a cursory overview of all but three of Unger’s
texts: *Julchen Grünthal* (to which more than half of Giesler’s book is devoted), *Prinz Bimbam*, and *Louis und Louise*. Susanne Zantop was also an avid scholar of Unger’s works,
and wrote a number of articles on and afterwords for several of Unger’s novels, including
*Julchen Grünthal*, *Albert und Albertine*, and *Bekenntnisse einer schönen Seele*. Finally,
Cindy Patey Brewer devoted a third of her dissertation and several articles to a series of
discussions on Unger’s *Bekenntnisse einer schönen Seele*. Aside from these three,
discussions of Unger’s texts remain few and far between and almost always focused on
*Julchen Grünthal*. “Sehr zu Unrecht. Die Texte [Ungers] spiegeln ihren hochkarätigen
künstlerischen Entstehungskontext wieder, sind sie doch im Zentrum des Berliner
Literaturbetriebs der Goethezeit geschrieben” (Giesler 10).

The fact that Unger was writing during a time of great literary accomplishments
does not necessarily guarantee that she was aware of contemporaneous issues manifesting
in the writings of 18th-century minds, but it is a strong indication of this possibility. Her
husband’s role in printing some of the greatest works of their time coupled with her
friendship with some of these authors lends credibility to the assertion that Unger herself
took up the pen under the shadow of the literary anthropology that dominated this time
period. From her first novel, *Julchen Grünthal*, written in the 18th century to her subsequent
works that appeared in the early 19th century (her last novel was published in 1810),
Unger’s writing offers an engagement with the modern individual. It is true that Unger’s
novels can be read as sociopolitical commentary7 - and some scholars have also noted her

7 Such as Inge Stephan or Maya Gerig have done.
anti-Romantic sentiments yet her interest in exploring the trajectory of an individual’s development and personality (particularly in *Bekenntnisse einer schönen Seele*) reveals how productive it is to read her works as important contributions to what we call literary anthropology. In this way, Unger offers her own perspectives on “den ganzen Menschen” as a family member, as a part of society, and as an individual.

### 1.2.1 *Der ganze Mensch*

“The whole human being” - expressed in the German with the word *ganz* (whole, entire, complete) - has been acknowledged by scholars as one of the primary interests of the Enlightenment, though it was already the focus of much reflection and literature before the 18th century. The philosophical underpinnings for such a project extend back to René Descartes and the special role he gave to consciousness. By placing our awareness at the center of his philosophy, Descartes opened the floor for a variety of questions delving into the nature of the human mind, the role of free will, the extent to which the human body is mechanical (or animalistic, in the most literal sense of the word), and the role of God. Furthermore, Descartes wanted to dispense with Scholasticism and produce a more scientific, mathematical approach to philosophy. These considerations form an important basis for the later emerging field of anthropology, whose primary concern was the nature of man and the interactions between internal and external conditions (e.g. between the soul

---

8 Cf. Touaillon 257-59 and Giesler 52-59.
9 See, for example, Hans Jürgen-Schings’ *Der ganze Mensch. Anthropologie und Literatur im 18. Jahrhundert.*
One of the most important tenets of Descartes’ philosophy is his famous statement that thinking assures us of our existence (*cogito ergo sum*). The consequence of this assertion is that “everything we clearly perceive is true” (Descartes, Principles 13). I perceive that I am thinking, so I must exist in order to think. From this Descartes then deduces that there are “two modes of thinking: the perception of the intellect and the operation of the will” (Principles 13). In other words, I can either know something or I can want something; those are the two thought processes available to me. How we come to know something, however, is a question that Descartes does not satisfactorily address.

Descartes’ explanation of external influences on the soul is based on a very strict physiological understanding of the interaction between the soul and the body. Rather than attributing our passions to our past experiences, the influence from society, etc., he argues that our “brains are not all constituted the same way. The very same movement of the gland which in some excites fear, in others causes the spirits to enter the pores of the brain which direct them partly into nerves which serve to move the hands in self-defence” (Passions 29). This is not a simple misunderstanding of genetics; Descartes does not seem to insinuate that children might be similarly predisposed as their parents and thus their brains are formed differently from those of other children. Rather he believes that each brain is unique in its own way, and entirely unrelated to external stimuli. It is not the situation that creates a particular reaction in a person, but the constitution of their brain matter.

---

10 John Zammito explains that “[t]o escape Descartes’s dualist dilemma, which his expedient mystification of the pineal gland was hardly sufficient to mask, became the grand ambition of subsequent metaphysicians for at least a good century and a half, if not longer” (44).
In order to compensate for this mechanical tendency that Descartes assigns the body, he is quick to argue that “the will is by its nature so free that it can never be constrained” (Passions 29). Our will, which Descartes associates with our actions, is separate from our passions, which are relegated to the domain of physiological perceptions. He furthermore asserts that “[t]here is no soul so weak that it cannot, if well-directed, acquire absolute power over its passions” (Descartes, Passions 31). In summary, our bodies exist largely according to their own mechanical principles and, while our body can affect our soul in the form of physiological perceptions, our will remains – or should remain – indifferent to these influences.¹¹

Writing several years after Descartes, Thomas Hobbes was one of the first to refute the Cartesian dualism by linking the mind to the body via the senses:

> After physics we come to moral philosophy; in which we are to consider the motions of the mind, namely, appetite, aversion, love, benevolence, hope, fear, anger, emulation, envy, etc.; what causes they have, and of what they be causes. And the reason why these are to be considered after physics is, that they have their causes in sense and imagination, which are the subject of physical contemplation. (Concerning Body 37, emphasis in original)

While Descartes believed that the actions of the body create the passions of the soul, he did not ascribe agency to these workings; instead, he expected the soul to act according to its own innate will, regardless of the physical influences upon it. Hobbes directs the attention

¹¹ Just as the body should not affect the mind, so the mind has little effect on the body; as support for this argument he gives the example of the dilating pupil. If I want to dilate my pupil and attempt to do so, it will not work. If, however, I want to see into the distance my pupil will automatically dilate. It is this detached, mechanical function of the body that Descartes wants to avoid for the soul [will].
to the effects that external stimuli (the senses) have upon our minds, an approach that is taken up later by John Locke.

In addition to his mechanical view of the human body, Descartes also believed in innate ideas – which he used primarily to prove the existence of God – rather than knowledge based on experience. Locke disagreed, particularly in this latter point, and instead argued for empirical knowledge of the world based on experience. In his Essay Concerning Human Understanding he states: “I know it is a received doctrine that men have native ideas, and original characters, stamped upon their minds in their first being” (135). Rather than accept this position, however, Locke argues that human minds are a tabula rasa, a “white paper, void of all characteristics, without any ideas” (Human Understanding 135). It is only through experience that each human is able to furnish his blank canvas with reason and knowledge. There are two distinct modes of experience: sensations – based on external or physical perceptions, and reflection – “that notice which the mind takes of its own operations, and the manner of them” (Locke, Human Understanding 136). Locke’s view of human nature was closely connected to his theories about childhood development; he believed that children lacked any innate knowledge and instead could (and should) be imprinted with the necessary principles to help them mature into well-developed adults. Georg Eckardt calls this “[d]ie aufklärerische Option der Erziehbarkeit des Menschen zum Guten” and it emphasizes the role of external stimuli in the development of the individual. This approach was a beginning of the movement away
from rational metaphysics and towards an experience-based understanding of human nature.\textsuperscript{12}

In addition to their contributions to metaphysics, Hobbes and Locke (and later Rousseau) were also active in socio-political debates about the nature of man and his interactions with other men.\textsuperscript{13} All three agreed that the basis for society was voluntary submission to a ruling sovereign or government, though they differed in their opinions about man’s nature. Hobbes argued that in his natural state, man has a right to everything and calls this state of nature “a war…of all men against all men” (Citizen 40).\textsuperscript{14} Natural man has a right to everything and will indulge in this right at the expense of others. Nothing is unjust in the state of nature (Leviathan 32). “Since therefore the conspiring of many wills to the same end doth not suffice to preserve peace, and to make a lasting defence, it is requisite that, in those necessary matters which concern peace and self-defence, there be but one will of men” (Hobbes, Citizen 42). This is the beginning of (civil) society and is entered into freely: “But though the will itself be not voluntary, but only the beginning of voluntary actions (for we will not to will, but to act); and therefore falls least of all under

\textsuperscript{12}Eckardt notes that “es wäre ein Missverständnis anzunehmen, dass aus Lockes erkenntnistheoretischen Empirismus zwangsläufig eine empiristische, den Milieufaktor verabsolutierende Auffassung zum Anlage-Umwelt-Problem resultiert” (172).

\textsuperscript{13}I am being extremely narrow in my treatment of this philosophy; there are myriad other philosophers who were no less important that Hobbes, Locke and Rousseau (such as Hume, Spinoza, Reid, Grotius, Pufendorf, the list goes on). Since, however, this philosophy serves as a backdrop – and not a focus – for my dissertation, it is not within the scope of my project to examine all the contributions made by philosophers to the fields of anthropology and metaphysics.

\textsuperscript{14}Again in Leviathan: “Hereby it is manifest, that during the time men live without a common power to keep them all in awe, they are in that condition which is called war; and such a war, as is of every man, against every man” (31).
deliberation and compact; yet he who submits his will to the will of another, conveys to that other the right of his strength and faculties” (Hobbes, Citizen 42). As Hobbes reiterates a decade later in his *Leviathan*, “men have no pleasure, but on the contrary a great deal of grief, in keeping company, where there is no power able to overawe them all” (31). This belief leads Hobbes to his argument that government is a fundamental law of nature.\(^\text{15}\)

Whereas Hobbes’ emphasis is on the naturally wicked (but not sinful)\(^\text{16}\) state of man and the necessity for government, Locke focuses on the inherent freedom in man’s nature that excludes him from being born into political or social bondage: “Men being, as has been said, by nature all free, equal, and independent, no one can be put out of that estate and subjected to the political power of another without his own consent” (Government 154).\(^\text{17}\) We are free and autonomous individuals and, as such not predetermined to abide by any particular set of laws. J.B. Schneewind refers to this development as “morality as self-governance” and further explains that such a conception “reject[s] the inequality of moral capacity among humans (6).\(^\text{18}\) Our moral equality, keeping in line with the emerging democratic notions of the 18\(^{th}\) century, establishes us as not just in control of our own

\(^{15}\) The “fundamental law of Nature…is, ‘to seek peace, and follow it’” (Leviathan 33).

\(^{16}\) “The desires and other passions of man are in themselves no sin. No more are the actions that proceed from those passions, till they know a law that forbids them” (Leviathan 32). [See also Schneewind’s treatment of Hobbes’ ethics in chapter 5 of *The Invention of Autonomy* where he discusses Hobbes’ differentiation between sinfulness and wickedness as well as his belief that “[m]orality begins…with our need for self-preservation” or, more specifically, the creation of government (91).] Rousseau, though he disagreed with Hobbes in many respects, does concur that “in the state of nature men have no kind of moral relationships to each other” (Inequality 35).

\(^{17}\) Locke insisted that his and Hobbes’ views were not similar and that he was not inspired by the latter. Schneewind also broaches the parallels between Locke and Hobbes and argues that Locke’s views are Grotian rather than Hobbesian (142). For a further treatment of these differences as well as literature pertaining to Locke’s ethics, see chapter 8 in *The Invention of Autonomy*.

\(^{18}\) As Hobbes asserts in *Leviathan*: “Nature hath made men so equal, in the faculties of the body and the mind” (29).
actions, but also responsible for them. This understanding of moral, social and political freedom and equality shaped the next century of philosophical thought.  

What these political and philosophical considerations have in common is the attempt to understand man’s role both in nature and within society, how we interact with the world around us, and the basis for these interactions. Moreover, they necessitate a dialogue regarding the nature of man himself. How do we function and why? What constitutes our self, and how is it developed? How does our nature influence our interpersonal relationships (e.g. socio-political interactions, family, etc.)?

1.2.2 A Brief Consideration of Concepts

Despite this burgeoning interest in man as an individual and his nature during the 17th and 18th centuries, many concepts we now use interchangeably were not always fully explained in their original context. For the purposes of my project, however, terms such as “self,” “individual,” “individuality,” and “character” all require working definitions and philosopher Manfred Frank offers a very useful overview of the general understandings of such concepts during the 17th, 18th, and 19th centuries. Frank argues that Selbst is identical to ich and explores the problematization of ich as a non-grammatical concept.

---

19 This is also the focus of Schneewind’s The Invention of Autonomy, which for him culminates in Kant’s theories of moral philosophy. For the purposes of this paper it suffices to point to these developments, rather than investigate them in further detail.

20 It is important to note that the questioning of what constitutes an ich is often present in an understanding or conceptualization of the self; indeed it grounds the very existence of the self. In two separate works Frank references Sartre’s definition of Selbst as “un être dont la caractéristique d’être est qu’il est dan son être question de son être” (Selbstbewusstsein 11, Individualität 21). “Heiddeger hat [auch] die Struktur des Selbst aus seiner Fraglichkeit selbst verständlich zu machen gesucht” (Frank, Individualität 21). Also, Frank does not typically capitalize ich, though others writing on this topic occasionally do. I remain true to the orthographic choices in each individual text.
century philosophers such as Descartes and Locke settled on an understanding of “I” or the self that entailed consciousness and thought. Locke’s statement that “Self is that conscious thinking thing” echoes Descarte’s *cogito ergo sum* (cited in *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie*, 4:1). But as Frank points out, “[f]ür Descartes spielt Individualität gar keine Rolle” (Selbstbewusstsein 51). The process of thinking, rather than any concept of the unique individual, is the basis of the self. This notion of self eventually changes into what Frank terms “Subjektivität als Bewusstsein” (Individualität 26). Kant, who identifies *Ichheit* with self-reflexivity, asserts that “[e]igentlich ist die Vorstellung aller Dinge die Vorstellung unseres eigenen Zustandes” (Frank, Individualität 28). This understanding of subjectivity (or of consciousness as subjectivity) leads away from a general understanding of the self as merely a thinking creature, to an expanded definition that includes a reflection of each individual self. “So umgreift der Ausdruck »ich« mit seinen beiden Flügeln den abstrakten und universellen Selbstbezug des Bewusstseins und die individuierende Vereinzelung, kraft deren jedes Subjekt es selbst in der Einzigartigkeit und unverwechselbaren Verschiedenheit von allen anderen ist” (Frank, Selbstbewusstsein 19, emphasis in original).21 In summary, the self can be understood as “I,” which in turn is both a reference to consciousness as well as to one’s own individual uniqueness as a *Subjekt*.

If the concept of the self leads to the notion of an “I,” and “I” is a unique subject,

---

21 Kurt Huber explains *ich* along similar lines in his *Grundbegriffe der Seelenkunde*: “das Ich …ist das Eigenartige und Neue, welches – genau betrachtet – von keiner einzigen Funktion aus erklärt werden kann” (279). More precisely, however, a crucial prerequisite for an *Ich is Bewusstsein*, although contrary to Descarte’s, Locke’s, and Frank’s assertions otherwise - it is not completely correct to label this consciousness itself the *Ich* (Huber 280). His defense of this statement is that “[e]s steckt nämlich in der Bewusstseinskorrelation als solcher keinerlei Hinweis, dass das, dem bewusst wird, sich seiner als einer Einzigkeit bewusst sein müsse” (280).
then it comes as no surprise that *Subjekt* can be understood as *Individuum* -- or vice versa. Frank explains that “sich in der »Sattelzeit« (1750-1800)^22 durchgesetzt hat, dass jedes Individuum als Subjekt zu betrachten ist” (Selbstbewusstsein 50). Individuality is subjectivity; subjectivity is individuality.\(^{23}\) This remains both controversial and is subject to constant reformulations, yet there is still a tendency to view the individual or individuality as that which is unique. Frank quotes Robert Musil’s definition of “das Individuelle [als] etwas absolute Einmaliges…ein nicht Fixierbares, ja Anarchisches, das keine Wiederholung zuläßt” (Selbstbewusstsein 52). This echoes Rousseau’s presentation of himself at the beginning of his *Confessions*: “I am not made like any that I have seen; I venture to believe that I was not made like any that exist. If I am not more deserving, at least I am different” (5). Fredric S. Steussy, who sets out to demonstrate the emergence of individuality in 18\(^{th}\)-century autobiography,\(^{24}\) also arrives at a very similar understanding of individuality: “[T]he emergence of the individual is the turning away from the imitation of a predetermined ideal, commensurate with one’s place in society, and the movement towards an acknowledgement and acceptance of the personal and idiosyncratic, that each person ‘represents one unique and unrepeatable form of being human’” (195). It is not surprising that this understanding of the individual as unique and unrepeatable would emerge in fictional texts, as well, and not just within the fields of philosophy or autobiography.

\(^{22}\) Reinhart Koselleck introduces this term [Sattelzeit] in his 1976 *Kritik und Krise: eine Studie zur Pathogenese der bürgerlichen Welt.*

\(^{23}\) »Individualität«…scheint in der Tat in der Eingrenzung und Spezifizierung der Semantik von Subjektivität zu gründen” (Frank, Selbstbewusstsein 50).

\(^{24}\) At the time Steussy provides his analysis (1996), “German eighteenth-century biography ha[d] not yet been examined from the standpoint of the emergence of modern individuality” (Steussy 26-27).
The extent to which such a concept of the individual is visible in Unger’s various novels will be explored in greater detail below. But because she was not writing philosophy, she is not always so precise with her terminology. As such, where necessary, I will fall back on the general understandings of certain key concepts as presented above. Namely, the self can be understood as “I,” “I” is a subject, and the subject is a unique individual. These terms and related ones all point to the nature or character of a person and are related to concerns of autonomy (i.e. subjectivity in the sense of agency). Similarly, concepts such as “self” and “individual” can be viewed as synonymous, differing primarily in their use rather than their meaning. One text might employ the word Selbst and another Individualität, but they all point to a similar understanding of an “I” that represents an individual person.

One last important concept that is directly related to the question of the individual is “character.” Character has the double-meaning of referring to a person, personality (in a literary text), or personage as well as to “the moral and mental qualities which distinguish an individual or a race” (OED). Here I am clearly referring to the latter. The Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie defines Charakter as “Gepräge” and lists, as a secondary meaning, “die moralische Bedeutung «Haupteigenschaft»” (1: 984). Kurt Huber grounds

---

25 Furthermore, I concur with Jan Ifversen’s assertion that “[a]though I think it is important to reflect on larger societal or cultural frameworks in which concepts emerge, at the same time I find it quite demanding to do both conceptual history and social history simultaneously” (78). Ifversen’s discussion is a response to Koselleck’s engagement with the study of concepts, an undertaking that Koselleck situated within his overview of the time period I am also dealing with. And like Koselleck, my focus here is not a semiotic analysis of these concepts, but rather a desire to attend to “the role of the context in which concepts are used” (Ifversen 77). In other words, I am more interested in how the concepts of “individuality” or “self” emerge as considerable aspects of the literary and social conditions of the late 18th century than in providing absolute definitions or explanations for these concepts.

26 There are many more definitions of “character” than these two, but within the framework of this paper these are the only two definitions that will be particularly useful, and potentially problematic if confused.
“character” in the concept of Persönlichkeit as one of two aspects that form the inner person. “Wir nannten Charakter nicht das Ganze, sondern den innersten Kern der Persönlichkeit...Charakter ist dasjenige, was als entwickelte Disposition das gesamte Verhalten eines Menschen in seinen letzten Tiefen bedingt” (Huber 301). This understanding of “character” noticeably reflects the ideas present in the Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie definition. If “character” is a Gepräge then we might ask, who or what “hat es geprägt?” Likewise, “character” understood as the “developed disposition” begs an investigation into the agent responsible for that development. How do we become who or what we are?

1.2.3 The Changing Face of Literature and the Role of the Individual

The abovementioned questions constitute fundamental considerations of anthropology and, in the 18th century, experience increased treatment in the evolving field of literature; authors now engage with more modern and more unique considerations of the individual. Anthropology, a relatively broad field that entails a multi-faceted view of man from medical, literary, psychological, and philosophical perspectives, manifests itself in literary texts [literary anthropology] vis-à-vis “such foci as (empirical) psychology, genius

---

27 The other aspect is Temperament, and the fundamental difference between the two is that one is fixed and the other subject to development. “Sahen wir im Temperament letzten Endes die seelische Seite der psychophysischen Konstitution als einmalig feststehende, durch Erfahrung nicht bildbare Anlage, so tritt in dem, was wir Charakter nennen, ursprünglich Angelegtes und im Laufe des Lebens Erworbenes in komplizierter Weise zu einer Einheit zusammen” (301).

28 John Zammito explains that “[t]he crystallization of anthropological discourse arose from the convergence of a number of disparate inquiries: the medical model of physiological psychology, the biological model of the animal soul, the pragmatic or conjectural model of cultural-historical theory, the literary-psychological model of the new novel, and the philosophical model of rational psychology grounded in the quandaries of substance interaction” (221-22).
and imagination, enthusiasm (Schwärmerei) and mental illness” (Zammito 222). Košenina
defines anthropology more concisely: “Der Mensch rückt damit ins Zentrum der
Aufmerksamkeit” (9). The statement “Erkenne dich selbst!” is a call for much sought-after
knowledge that reflects an understanding of man in “philosophischen, theologischen, aber
auch politischen Ordnungssystemen” (Košenina 9).29 That this consideration of the human
finds its expression in literature is no surprise; Herder argues that “[er] glaube übrigens,
dass Homer und Sophokles, Dante, Shakespeare und Kloptstock der Psychologie und
Menschenkenntnis mehr Stoff geliefert haben als selbst die Aristoteles und Leibnize aller
Völker und Zeiten” (9). Not only has literature already proven a fruitful medium for
knowledge of the man, but it should continue to do so. “Drei Wege weiss ich nur, die hierzu
führen mögen: Lebensbeschreibungen, Bemerkungen der Ärzte und Freunde,
Weisagungen der Dichter” (Herder 18, my emphasis). Biography and literary works are
extolled as two of only three possible methods for investigating the nature of man.

This importance of literary production in conjunction with anthropology is so
pronounced that Markus Heilmann frames the crisis of the Enlightenment as a
transformation of literature in his appropriately-titled work Die Krise der Aufklärung als
Krise des Erzählens. The dialogue of Empfindsamkeit is taken up by the anthropological
debate, and the question that emerges for Heilmann concerns the “historisch wandelbaren
Chancen des Unternehmens, im Medium des Erzählens à la Richardson ein empfindsam-
aufklärerisches Menschenbild zu entwerfen und zu behaupten” (4). Helmut Pfotenhauer

29 Of course, this is also the subtitle of Moritz’s Magazin zur Erfahrungsseelenkunde: Gnothi Sauton
[erkenne dich selbst].
offers a more specific approach to literary anthropology, demonstrating how anthropology and literature meet in the novel and, even more prominently, in the autobiographies of the late 18th century. He views “die Geschichte dieser Innenansicht des Anthropologischen...[als] die Geschichte der Selbstbiographie im 18. und 19. Jahrhundert” (2). The focus is not just on the inner person, but on the whole person [den ganzen Mensch] as well as the extent to which our identity is dependent upon “der uns betreffenden Natur” (Pfotenhauer 5). As a result, literature in the 18th century undergoes a significant shift away from the adventurous and towards the individual.30 Rather than focusing on events, the character is now the central point.31

Albrecht Koschorke explains this development indirectly in his analysis of the emergence of sentimental literature, particularly as it is situated in literary anthropology. What Koschorke offers is essentially the trajectory of social ideals (e.g. the naturalization of love) that leads to the birth of sentimental literature and paves the way for a mode of thinking and writing that focused on inner feeling and emotions of the characters. This transition erases the rigid boundaries between “Außen und Innen, Körper und Geist” and accentuates knowledge of a person’s soul (Koschorke 91). The eyes become the focal points for this change; they are the “windows to the soul.” As a result, the reader becomes the “Seelenforscher” (Koschorke 98). The desire to know a person’s (inner) being stems

30 Cf. Ian Watt’s The Rise of the Novel, especially Chapters 1 and 3.
31 “[W]ir sehen, dass nicht die Begebenheit interessirt [sic], sondern der Charakter” (Blanckenburg 61). Cf. Watt: “[T]he novelist’s eye was focused on character and personal relationships as essential elements in the total structure, and not merely as subordinate instruments for furthering the verisimilitude of the actions described” (131).
from a shift in social values away from the physical and towards the psychic (i.e. dealing with the psyche).\(^{32}\)

This shift, Koschorke argues, can be traced in the contemporary literature. “Sentimental literature” and novels reach their height of popularity during this time and the reception of written literature accumulates a new character: that of solitude. “Der Roman erlaubt die am meisten isolierende, extreme private und individuelle Rezeption von Literatur, er setzt keine gesellige oder gesellschaftliche Zusammenkunft voraus” (Koschorke 172). This creates the notion of an “Innenwelt” - indeed the very concept of an “ich” can only now exist (Koschorke 177). This understanding of an “I” is further developed with the advent of the letter-writing culture, an evolution that allows for the first time a seemingly individual, unique expression and a form of communication between isolated individuals. The desire to know another person intimately - to look into their soul - now finds its outlet in letters. Literacy enables solitude and inner reflection; it allows the “I” to exist and each individual “I” to correspond with other individuals.

Koschorke argues that the field of anthropology is neither timeless nor restricted to a particular historical-phenomenological understanding of various substrates in society, rather that it is at the heart of the very process it attempts to describe (9).\(^{33}\) But while it is not restricted to an historical-phenomenological understanding, it should certainly be informed by one. In *Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit* Jürgen Habermas gives an overview of the emergence of what he terms private and public spheres. He argues that the public

---

\(^{32}\) Koschorke notes, however, that the progress at this stage is still far from “genuine” psychological thinking.

\(^{33}\) Perhaps a bit more clearly, in Koschorke’s words, “[v]ielmehr wirkt sie selbst am Konstitutionsprozeß dessen mit, was sie beschreibt” (9).
sphere(s) develop directly from the private sphere(s), predicated on what he calls a “publizitätzebezogene[] Subjektivität” (114). This subjectivity develops out of a reorganization of the bourgeois family, reflected in three architectural changes of the house. Elliott Schreiber provides a lucid summary of these three changes:

The first trend is the proliferation of separate, uniquely designed rooms for each individual family member, resulting in the solitarization of each person within the home (109). At the same time, the intimate space of the living room comes into vogue as a site where, in the self-understanding of the time, these individual family members gather to form a voluntary community of love (109). Finally, the salon comes into fashion as the space designated within the bourgeois home for larger social gatherings in which private individuals meet as a public (109).

Consequently, the private is “schon auf Publikum bezogen” which leads to a letter-writing culture grown out of the desire for a “literarisch vermittelte[] Intimität” (Habermas 114). This focus on the publically transmitted private prefigures the later development of the bourgeois tragedy and psychological novel as necessary modes of expression for a “bürgerliches Lesepublikum;” indeed it is the founding element of a literary public sphere (Habermas 107, 114).

These changes in social and political structure and thought all fuel the same development: the advent of increasingly “psychological” literature that engages with the individual rather than focusing on events or adventures. But beyond these anthropological, literary, and socio-political shifts, there is also a strong religious current that helps to turn this gaze increasingly inward. The most influential religious denomination on the changing

---

34 Elsewhere Habermas similarly titles it a “publikumsbezogene Subjektivität” and a “publikumsbezogene Privatheit” (88, 107).
35 These page numbers (109) refer to Habermas’ text and are cited by Schreiber.
face of 18th-century literature was Pietism, developed in the 17th century as disseminated particularly by the writings of P.J. Spener (1635-1705) and A.H. Francke (1630-1727). “Pietism proper was in its origins an introverted, emotional modification of Lutheranism, seeking the realisation of the Kingdom of God on earth by the mystical transformation of the individual soul” (Boulby, Genius 6). Pietism placed a strong emphasis on self-reflection and self-knowledge and exhorted people to engage in a thorough examination of their mind. Although Pietism focused on inner reflection in order to ascertain the extent of one’s belief, “es bedarf jetzt nur eines geringen Anstoßes, um den Menschen nicht nur auf die glaubens-psychologische Erkenntnis seiner selbst zu führen, sondern ihn auf alle Regungen der Seele achten zu lassen” (Stemme 149). Through self-analysis, the Pietist becomes a “Beobachter der menschlichen Natur und tiefe[r] Kenner des menschlichen Herzens” that Herder, Moritz, and Blanckenburg all praise. Rather than focusing attention to the influence of God in one’s life, there occurs a transition to the focus on one’s own (usually inner) self. As Stemme explains, “[a]n die Stelle Gottes trat unbemerkt das Ich” (151). This development does not go unnoticed in English literary theory; Watt also notes the influence of Christianity on the rise of the novel as a reflection of private and inner experience -- a reflection of the inward and individualist nature of Christianity, as well as the

36 “Aus der Beschäftigung mit dem Pietismus und der Literaturgeschichte des 18. Jahrhunderts ist der Gedanke entsprungen, dass es nicht vornehmlich die literarisch-psychologischen Werke und Schriften sind, die den Pietismus säkularisieren, sondern dass die Säkularisierung die Voraussetzung dafür ist” (Stemme 144).

37 Mark Boulby gives a brief but concise overview, with particular focus on the difference between Pietism proper and the subdenomination of the Fleischbein Separatists, in Karl Philipp Moritz: At the Fringe of Genius, p. 6. Fritz Stemme gives a more detailed account of Pietism, including its shift towards secularization, in “Die Säkularisierung des Pietismus zur Erfahrungsseelenkunde.”

38 “Die enge Verbundenheit des Pietismus mit dem Psychologischen überhaupt ist einer der wesentlichen Gründe dafür, dass man den Schritt vom Pietismus zur Psychologie so unbehindert machen konnte” (Stemme 154).
secularization of Christian reflection which “produced an essentially man-centred world” (177). This centrality of man and the interest in understanding his nature informs my decision to engage with one specific literary genre: the novel.

1.3.1 A Brief Word about Genre

For reasons I will explain in greater detail below, I have chosen to focus only on novels written by Unger. Although she also wrote short stories and personal pieces for journals, none of these are as productive for my project. This is because, as scholars have demonstrated, it is autobiography and the novel which emerge as principle mediums for a consideration of the individual and his or her development in the 18th century. But while the (18th-century) autobiography has been hailed by some as the medium for the treatment of the individual, the novel can accomplish things mere autobiographical writing cannot. Not the least of this is the treatment of multiple individuals. Werner Mahrholz asserts: “Der einzelne Mensch als Einzelner in seiner vielfachen Verflechtung in den allgemeinen Weltgang ist das Thema der Selbstbiographie” (11). An autobiography is the story of a single individual. However, texts that contain multiple characters are at times more productive for the analysis of an individual due to the juxtaposition of multiple and different individuals. Additionally, the trajectory of the genre of autobiography, as Klaus-

39 “Die Selbstbiographie ist die reinste Darstellung des Individualismus” (Mahrholz 10), “Die Autobiographie, die des achtzehnten Jahrhunderts zumal, darf als die dem individuellen Leben adäquate literarische Form erscheinen” (Wuthenow 21).

40 Blanckenburg argues that authors of novels should aspire to achieve what might otherwise be too difficult to accomplish. What could be lacking from an autobiography must be present in the novel: “Vielleicht geht es über die Kräfte eines menschlichen Geistes, uns immer auf die bestimmteste Art diese Verbindung von Wirkung und Ursache zu zeigen; aber der Romanendichter...kann kein anderes, als dies Ziel haben” (Blanckenburg 283).
Detlef Müller points out, was already moving towards the novel. Müller argues that elements native to the novel, such as the fictionalization of events or the form itself, helped to orient autobiography away from the purely non-fictional and towards development. As a result, “der Bildungsroman ist die Weiterführung der literarischen Autobiographie” (352). Consequently, novels that have been analyzed or classified as Bildungsromane might offer some of the most fertile ground for an exploration of the individual.

While this may be true, it is necessary to emphasize that my project strives to break free of traditional hermeneutic categories such as Bildungsroman (or Frauenroman, etc.). Part of the reason for this is that other scholars have already attempted to answer the question of whether or not some of Unger’s novels can or should be considered Bildungsromane. More importantly, however, classifying a novel according to such a tenuous label as Bildungsroman undermines the novel’s status in its original context. Nobody knew, for example, that Julchen Grünthal was written by a woman when it was first published. Similarly, the author of Bekenntnisse einer schönen Seele was mistakenly thought to be a man. These novels were read by many of the late 18th- and early 19th-century Berlin intellectuals. It is only within the last century that we find such texts relegated to anthologies on women’s literature or investigations of “the female Bildungsroman.” These considerations, coupled with the fact that the primary protagonist of Unger’s last novel is a male, underscore the necessity of moving away from such limiting perspectives to a broader analysis of her work.

---

41 Incidentally, Birte Giesler argues that Unger’s works were all inspired by “der Bildungsroman par excellence” -- Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre (11, emphasis in original).

42 Specifically, Anja May and Magdalene Heuser have examined Julchen Grünthal and Bekenntnisse einer schönen Seele, respectively, from this perspective.
1.3.2 Karl Philipp Moritz, *Anton Reiser*, and Erfahrungsseelenkunde

My decision to focus on Unger’s novels is an outgrowth of my interest in perhaps the most productive novel of her time to engage with the question of the individual and his development: *Anton Reiser - ein psychologischer Roman* (1785-1790). We know that Unger was friends with Moritz and can assume that she was familiar with his works, even if she did not read them. Moritz was more prolific than Unger – a fact which makes it easier to establish precisely what he hoped to accomplish with his novels and journal. The dearth of extratextual information pertaining to Friederike Unger combined with her less extensive literary production means that any attempt to establish a direct link between her works and those of Moritz cannot be corroborated. Nevertheless, an exploration into the works of both authors reveals similarities in the wording and interest of their individual undertakings. I will elaborate in further detail on some of these similarities in my chapters below, but first it is useful to engage in a brief overview of Moritz’ oeuvre and projects.

As Cord-Friedrich Berghahn asserts, “Karl Philipp Moritz’ Autorschaft beginnt und endet mit der Frage nach dem modernen Ich” (51). From his *Beiträge zur Philosophie des Lebens* to his *Magazin zur Erfahrungsseelenkunde* to his novels, Moritz devoted himself to observing and understanding human nature. His overarching goal was to help “das menschliche Geschlecht durch sich selber mit sich selber bekannter [zu] werden, und sich zu einem höhern Grade der Vollkommenheit empor schwingen [zu] können, so wie ein einzelner Mensch durch Erkenntnis seiner selbst vollkommner wird” (Vorschlag 797). This

---

43 C.f. p. XIX and XXVIII in Biedermann. Unger’s husband even published a number of Moritz’ philosophical works (Biedermann XXXIV).
observation, which is occurs by examining the individual, leads to understanding and – in turn – improvement of both man and mankind.

If we view Moritz’ interest in the modern self as a frame for his literary and philosophical undertakings, the object at the center of this frame is his novel Anton Reiser. “With Karl Philipp Moritz, everything comes back to Anton Reiser” (Boulby, Genius 3). This novel, a fictionalized autobiographical account of Moritz’s life, is situated firmly within the field of psychology (or study of the soul) that he had established two years prior with his Magazin zur Erfahrungsseelenkunde. Moritz was not the initiator of psychology in Germany; credit for the first prominent introduction of psychology into German thought goes to Christian Wolff and his Psychologia empirica (1732) and Psychologia rationalis (1734).44 The difference is that Moritz emphasizes empirical psychology and disregards the rational elements, whereas Wolff links the two together.45 Wolff’s aim is a systematic and scientific understanding of the soul, both its substance and its functions; Moritz is more interested in where things go wrong. In his Vorschlag zu einem Magazin einer Erfahrungsseelenkunde he frames his interest in Seelenkunde as decidedly rehabilitative. Referencing “den moralischen Arzt,” Moritz asks: “Wie hätte dem Übel noch beizeiten vorgebeugt, der Schaden noch geheilt werden können? … An welchem Dorn hatte sich der gesunde Finger gereizt?” (793). In a similar fashion he prefaces the first volume of

44 Other philosophers and authors from the 18th century also played a significant role in the emergence of psychology; among them are Lavater, Goethe, and Schiller. For a more complete analysis of this development, see Bell’s chapter on “The Enlightenment: Rationalism and Sensibility” in The German Tradition of Psychology in Literature and Thought, 1700-1840: 16-53.
45 “Empirical psychology provides the principles with which rational psychology works, and the theories developed in rational psychology could be subjected to confirmation by empirical psychology” (Bell, Psychology 19-20).
Erfahrungsseelenkunde with Grundlinien zu einem ohngefähren Entwurf in Rücksicht auf die Seelenkrankheitskunde. Moritz is also interested in “[d]ie Art und Weise, wie es jemandem gelungen ist, irgend einen besonderen Fehler, als Zorn, Hochmut oder Eitelkeit abzulegen” (Erfahrungsseelenkunde 796). The solution lies in experience and observation, graduually accumulated to produce a “System der Moral” that will benefit mankind.

Although Moritz himself often framed his work in psychological terms and has been hailed as a forerunner of modern psychology, his most significant contribution to the case studies for his Magazin was literary in nature. As Berghahn has argued, “[d]er Weg der erfahrungsseelenkundlichen Analyse aber führt nicht zur Psychologie im modernen wissenschaftlichen Sinn, sondern zum Roman” (78). We know that Moritz, in writing Anton Reiser, followed his own advice of beginning with one’s own (hi)story as a starting point for the socio-psychological study of man. This contribution, however, is not written in the clinical language of a case study nor in the more personal narration of an autobiography; it is presented as a novel.

46 This observation must proceed from the study of individuals: “Was ist unsre ganze Moral, wenn sie nicht von Individuis abstrahiert ist?” (Moritz, Vorschlag 794).
47 The interest in the potentially positive results of human observation is reminiscent of the anthropological perspectives of Platner and others at the end of the 18th century. “Das Befremdliche nämlich oder das Eigentümliche solcher erfahrenen Menschennatur soll durch neue Aufmerksamkeit nicht nur erkennbar werden, sondern im maßvollen Umgang damit will das Negative gemildert, das Positive gefördert sein” (Pfotenhauer 9).
48 C.f. Matthew Bell’s discussion of Moritz’ contributions to modern psychology in The German Tradition of Psychology in Literature and Thought, 1700-1840; Bell argues that Moritz’ Magazin “is the root of the modern psychological case study” (103).
49 “Wer sich zum eigentlichen Beobachter des Menschen bilden wollte, der müßte von sich selber ausgehen” (Vorschlag 799).
50 Both Christina Frey and Lothar Müller do argue that Anton Reiser should be read and interpreted as a case study. Frey argues that “[ü]ber die Zuordnung des Textes zum Genre der Fallgeschichte scheint also kein Zweifel mehr zu bestehen” (20) and Müller proposes “den Anton Reiser als Krankengeschichte zu lesen und in Stoff und Form als zugleich individuellen und historisch-exemplarischen »Fall« auszulegen”
In part because Moritz himself makes explicit mention of the genre of his text, and also because it relates greatly to my analysis of it, it is worth noting that Moritz’s choice of genre – novel over autobiography – influences the way the text can or should be read. Moritz explains that he specifically chose the term ‘novel’ “aus Ursachen, die [er] für leicht zu erraten hielt” but feels the need to amend his choice by acknowledging that the novel is “im eigentlichsten Verstande Biographie” (Anton Reiser 107). This statement of Moritz’ and the subtitle to his novel (“ein psychologischer Roman”) have been interpreted in a variety of ways. Steffi Baumann argues that Moritz “hat die Begriffe ‘Biographie’ und ‘psychologischer Roman’ gleichgesetzt” and refers to Klaus-Detlef Müller’s conclusion that ‘[i]nsgesamt gesehen wird man den ‘Anton Reiser’ als ideale Synthese von Autobiographie und Roman ansehen dürfen’” (111). While it is perhaps a bit simplistic to argue that an author who repeatedly addresses the genre of his text would conflate a biography with a novel, the argument that we should view this text as a synthesis is very convincing: it accounts both for the factual basis of the novel as well as the creative liberties taken with the various storylines.

For those who wish to classify the text as belonging primarily to one genre or the other, Mark Boulby and Hans Esselborn offer up contradictory perspectives on how to

(12). Müller’s grounding for this is the presence and effect of melancholy on Anton, and Frey points to the particularity of a case study that still proposes to contribute to some rule or series of similar cases (much like the various contributions to the Magazin). The discussion of melancholy and its role in Anton Reiser do point to a clinical element of the novel (thus the modifier “psychological” novel), and both scholars are right that it would be wise not to dismiss the markedly psychological elements of the work. However, because I am not reading this novel primarily within Moritz’ system of empirical psychology, but more extensively as a contributing work within the evolution of the modern novel and its treatment of the individual, I will forgo a lengthy discussion of the disparity between a case study and a psychological novel.
categorize Moritz’ work. Boulby argues that Moritz was not only aware of the distinction between “Roman” and “Geschichte,” but that he specifically chose the novel genre over that of autobiography for its connotations and to produce irony.\textsuperscript{51} As I also argue below, Moritz did not choose the term “novel” lightly, nor can it be disregarded in any analysis of \textit{Anton Reiser}. Such a classification had wide-ranging implications and connotations in the 18\textsuperscript{th} century, and these help to shape the autobiographical account and psychological insights provided in the text. Esselborn, on the other hand, insists that “man den \textit{Anton Reiser} nach dem damaligen Verständnis der Gattung nicht als Roman bezeichnen [kann]” because it lacks both the fantastic love story of earlier novels as well as the ideal conditions of the newer novel as elucidated by Blanckenburg (87-88). While Esselborn makes some valid points regarding the novel’s content, he fails to take into consideration the fact that Moritz died before he was able to complete the novel. It is somewhat problematic to base such an argument on the content of a work when some of that content is “missing.” Other scholars would appear to agree, as they address the concern of genre less directly but still frame it firmly within the overarching category of ‘novel’ – Ortrud Gutjahr’s tri-fold assessment differentiates between Bildungsroman, autobiographical novel, and psychological novel (19); Matthew Bell argues that the novel is \textit{not} a descendant of the (Pietist) autobiography, but in fact a novel (Psychology 98); Todd Kontje labels it a \textit{Desillusionsroman} (Bildungsroman 61); and Catherine Minter asserts that “\textit{Anton Reiser} has aptly been described as an ‘Antibildungsroman’” (81).

\textsuperscript{51} “\textit{Anton Reiser} and the Concept of the Novel,” \textit{Lessing Yearbook}, 4 (1972): 183-196.
In short, while there is no dearth of scholarly opinions on how the text should be classified, it seems difficult to state with certainty why Moritz labeled it a novel (after all he intended it as a case study for his *Magazin*) and whether or not the reader should view this label with skepticism or irony. Indeed, if we remember that Moritz’ primary interest regarding the creation of this text was to aid in the examination and improvement of the modern individual, then the classification of “novel” does not at first glance seem the optimal choice. In his *Vorschlag zu einem Magazin einer Erfahrungsseelenkunde* Moritz offers up a list of suitable sources for observations on and insights into human nature and the individual. Among these are specific titles, such as Lavaters Tagebuch or Rousseaus Memoiren, as well as general categories such as “Lebensbeschreibungen…Karaktäre und Gesinnungen aus vorzüglich guten Romanen und dramatischen Stücken…Vorzüglich aber Beobachtungen aus der wirklichen Welt” (796). This latter source is named as the most ideal, and consequently – as I argue – Moritz felt compelled to remind his readers that his text was indeed primarily drawn from real events. However, Moritz also argues that it is necessary “den kalten Beobachter zu spielen” if one would offer truly useful insights (Vorschlag 799). “Aber wer gibt dem Beobachter des Menschen immer Kälte und Heiterkeit der Seele dazu,” Moritz asks, “alles was geschieht, so wie ein Schauspiel zu beobachten, und die Personen, die ihn oftmals kränken, wie Schauspieler?” (Vorschlag 801). The answer, according to Moritz, lies in elevating oneself above the circumstances and treating oneself as just another character in a story.\(^\text{52}\) The result is a novel of one’s life

---
52 \[Man muss\] sich hinaus versetzen über diese Erde, und über sich selber, gleichsam als ob er ein andres von sich selber verschiedenes Wesen wäre, das in einer höhern Region aller dieser Dinge lächelt – und auf die Art über sich selber, über seine eignen Klagen und Beschwerden – lächeln – das alles wie ein Schauspiel zu betrachten – welche Wonne, welche Erhebung zum alles umfassenden Schöpfer des
rather than an autobiography. It is for this reason that Moritz assigns his narrated self a
different name, refers to him in the third-person, and offers both insights and connections
that are not visible to his younger self. As Esselborn has pointed out that the distance
between the narrated and the narrating Moritz is not significant – “da er erst 29 Jahre alt
ist, als der 1. Teil des Anton Reiser erscheint und er den Bericht seines Lebens bis ins 22.
Jahr führt” (75), we can furthermore view the fictionalizations within the story as an
attempt by Moritz to further distance his protagonist from the real-life counterpart. Not
only the genre of the novel but also many of its conventions are ideal for producing an
objective observer who, nonetheless, would offer up insights into his own soul and history
rather than purely fictional creations.

1.3.3 Blanckenburg’s Theory of the Novel and Anton Reiser

Hans Esselborn has noted in his discussion of Anton Reiser that there were two
predominant typologies of the novel in the 18th century. The first type is an adventurous
and/or amourous novel, in the vein of Richardson’s Clarissa or Pamela. This style of novel
was considered rather emotional in nature and emerged in Germany as a determining factor
in viewing the novel as “a genre that connoted gender, particularly femininity” (Baldwin
35). As the century progressed, however, there was a move to establish the validity of the
novel as a respectable genre, “struggling for definition and legitimacy in the literary canon
of forms” (Baldwin 35). A driving force behind this legitimization was Blanckenburg’s

Weltalls!” (Vorschlag 802). It is worth noting Moritz’ comparison of this distant observer to a Creator; he
is both omniscient and all-powerful, capable of seeing all and changing it as he will. Not unlike such a
creator, Moritz often amends the reality of his own past in his presentation of events. This is certainly a
more authoritative approach to the telling of one’s story than a straightforward autobiography.
very detailed and lengthy treatise on the modern novel, or the new “anthropological novel” as Baldwin describes it (35). Although it is true that Blanckenburg envisioned a rather masculine rewriting of the genre with his insistence that it feature a male protagonist, much of what he lays down as essential groundwork for the modern novel can also be found in those written during this same time period by and/or featuring women. What is notable about his contributions to the trajectory of the novel is his desire to shape it into a vehicle for the study of the individual, rather than see it relegated to amorous, frivolous adventures. In light of this changing face of the novel, it becomes even clearer why it is such a fertile ground for any foray into 18th-century literary anthropology.

When writing his *Versuch über den Roman* (1774), Friedrich von Blanckenburg was unable to reference Karl Philipp Moritz’s *Anton Reiser* as the latter had not yet been published. If it had, Blanckenburg might have found more than one opportunity to discuss this novel, for many features of Blanckenburg’s prescriptions for novels and their authors can be found in Moritz’s psychological novel.\(^{53}\) Both men have such a strikingly similar view of what a novel is or should be, that where Moritz contradicts himself we can see Blanckenburg’s theory poking through.\(^{54}\) In part because Blanckenburg’s theory was so influential in the evolution of the novel in the late 18th century, but also because there are instances where Blanckenburg’s explanations help to clarify certain statements that Moritz

---

\(^{53}\) Pfotenhauer makes this same argument in regards to Part I of *Anton Reiser*. “Man kann . . . Moritzens Vorrede zum ersten Teil des *Anton Reiser* als eine Paraphrase wichtiger Passagen in Blanckenburgs *Versuch über den Roman* lesen” (96).

\(^{54}\) C.f. Furnkas, *Ursprung des psychologischen Romans: Karl Philipp Moritz’ »Anton Reiser«*, 6-23, where he offers a discussion regarding the influence of Blanckenburg’s theory on *Anton Reiser* and the concretization of the psychological novel. Other scholars, too, have briefly noted the connection between *Anton Reiser* and Blanckenburg’s theory; see Berghahn, p. 52, and Esselborn, p.84.
leaves rather vague, it proves quite fruitful to include some of Blanckenburg’s considerations when engaging with Anton Reiser.

As I have already touched on above, Moritz’s decision to write a novel rather than a biography highlights the importance of the individual as it is understood within this literary genre. It is not just the recounting of an individual’s life that matters, but an exploration into this individual’s nature. Blanckenburg explains that “so scheint in dem Roman das Seyn des Menschen, sein innrer Zustand das Hauptwerk zu seyn” (18). Moritz alludes to this in the preface to part one of Anton Reiser when he explains that “[a]uch wird man in einem Buche, welches vorzüglich die innere Geschichte des Menschen schildern soll, keine große Mannigfaltigkeit der Charaktere erwarten“ (7). It is this inner story of the individual that is most interesting. “Freilich ist dies nun keine so leichte Sache, dass gerade jeder Versuch...den Blick der Seele in sich selber [zu] schärfen...glücken muss - aber wenigstens wird doch vorzüglich in pädagogischer Rücksicht das Bestreben nie ganz unnütz sein, die Aufmerksamkeit des Menschen mehr auf den Menschen zu heften und ihm sein individuelles Dasein wichtiger zu machen” (Moritz, Anton Reiser 7). Even where introspection fails to yield useful insight about oneself, it can still heighten the awareness and importance of the individual.

Why is the individual so important? For Blanckenburg treatment of the individual is a matter of self-improvement, to the point of perfection. “Diese Veränderung in unsrer Theilnehmung kann das menschliche Geschlecht seiner Vervollkommnung näher bringen.

---

55 Blanckenburg is much more adamant about this point later on: “Es ist bereits in der Einleitung, und öfter schon gesagt, daß es auf die Begebenheit selbst nie ankommen kömme; und daß es der innre Zustand der Personen sey, der uns beschäftige” (305).
Moritz has a similar interest, as noted above, though he approaches it negatively in this novel. Rather than demonstrating how an individual can improve himself, he instead shows where things have gone wrong.\(^\text{56}\) The purpose of such a negative exploration of development is not for Moritz to excuse himself before his public, the way Rousseau uses his *Confessions*, for example, but rather to demonstrate how certain mistreatments and misperceptions can obscure a person’s character.

Both Blanckenburg and Moritz have a pedagogical understanding of novels; they can be used to help further improvement and as tools to help understand one’s character and even avoid misrecognition of it.

In order to understand the inner person one must begin outside of the individual. Only by examining what happens around and to a person can we then gain insight into his or her character.

---

\(^{56}\) While *Anton Reiser* does not move far beyond this, Moritz’s own interests certainly did. This is apparent not only in his work with the *Magazin* but also in his aesthetic theory.
This connecting of the dots, so to speak, is precisely what Moritz undertakes when he spends the first four pages of the novel discussing not only Anton’s parents, but also a Herr von Fleischbein whose influence on Anton’s father plays a significant role in Anton’s later development. A devout follower of Madame Guyon, Fleischbein spends most of his free time translating and disseminating her Quietist writings. Anton’s father comes into contact with Fleischbein and also becomes a follower, a situation that causes much strife between him and his second wife. “Unter diesen Umständen wurde Anton geboren, und von ihm kann man mit Wahrheit sagen, dass er von der Wiege an unterdrückt ward” (Moritz, Anton Reiser 13). In nearly constant strife over their religious differences, Anton’s parents are accused by the narrator of neglecting Anton and are blamed, along with their poverty, for his low self-esteem and inability to make friends. “[A]llein das niederschlagende Gefühl der Verachtung, die er von seinen Eltern erlitten, und die Scham wegen seiner armseligen, schmutzigen und zerrißnen Kleidung hielten ihn zurück, dass er es nicht wagte, einen glücklicheren Knaben anzureden” (Moritz, Anton Reiser 15). Unable to form any friendships, Anton finds recourse in books he receives from his father and “das Buch
musste ihm Freund und Tröster und alles sein” (Moritz, Anton Reiser 18). Besides being
his only friend(s), the books Anton reads serve to drive him further and further from reality;
“[s]o ward er schon früh aus der natürlichen Kinderwelt in eine unnatürliche idealische
Welt verdrängt, wo sein Geist für tausend Freuden des Lebens verstimmt wurde, die andre
mit voller Seele genießen können” (Moritz, Anton Reiser 16-17). Already just pages into
the novel the reader acquires a very clear picture of the extent to which Anton is affected
by people and circumstances around and outside of him. Lothar Müller has pointed to these
early days in Anton’s life as the moments when Anton’s character is irrevocably shaped.
“Hier wird die Grundstruktur von Antons Charakter geformt, hier wird die Genese der
Seelenkrankheit mit der Pathographie des Schwärmtums unauflöslich verknüpft” (228).
Müller recognizes in the religious influences of Mme Guyon and Fleischbein the root cause
of Reiser’s melancholy (indeed, he views this religious movement as supplanting a natural
genealogy for Anton’s development), but there is no need to stop there. The narrator blames
not just these religious influences but also other events that precipitate equally negative
reactions and developments in Reiser’s character.

Most, if not all, of part one of Anton Reiser is an account of the various external
conditions and encounters that serve to (mis)shape Anton’s early development and
character. The reader learns of the “Verachtung” Anton perceives and develops towards
himself (21, 37, 44); his overdeveloped “Einbildungskraft” that stems from excessive
reading and his position as a social outcast (23, 31); the “ersten Eindrücke auf seine Seele”
(25); his inherited penchant for “die Süßigkeit des Unrechtleidens” and melancholy (30);
his preoccupation with Quietist literature and religious thought, especially the influence of
an old holy man named Tischer (40); his apprenticeship with a cold and cruel hat maker named Lobenstein (50); his extremely close friendship with another apprentice, August, and the many times where “ihre Herzen oft in wechselseitigen Ergießungen der Freundschaft überströmten. Hier entdeckten sie sich die innersten Gedanken der Seele” (65); Anton’s increasing (and often affected) melancholy that he hoped would attract attention (74); and finally how he became “ein völliger Hypochondrist” (79). The narrator considers nothing too insignificant to include; indeed the smaller an incident initially appears to be, the more significant it often is in Reiser’s later life. “Man sieht aus den vorhergehenden Bemerkungen sehr leicht, dass selbst die unbedeutendsten Züge vortreflich genützt werden können” (Blanckenburg 217). Moritz says nearly the same thing in his Vorschlag: “Aufmerksamkeit aufs Kleinscheinende ist überhaupt ein wichtiges Erfordernis des Menschenbeobachters, und dann die Übung in der Nebeneinanderstellung des Successiven, weil der ganze Mensch bloß aus successiven Äußerungen erkannt werden kann” (801, emphasis in original).\textsuperscript{57} Not only are we products of even the most miniscule occurrences, but it is only through the connection between these successive incidents that one can emerge and be recognized as an individual.

It is for this reason that the narrator of Anton Reiser repeatedly underscores the influence of external events by foreshadowing future effects that are precipitated by certain situations or by offering correlations between Anton’s childhood impressions and his later states of mind. The shame that Reiser feels regarding his poverty, for example, becomes

\textsuperscript{57} Moritz repeats this frequently within his novel. C.f. pp. 7, 82, 107, 128, 227, 301-302, and 305 where the narrator explicitly references the importance of “Kleinigkeiten” or things that appear “klein und unbedeutend.”
an unshakable part of him later in life. “Alle Erinnerungen aus seiner Jugend und Kindheit drängten sich zusammen” the narrator writes on one occasion where an issue regarding money causes an older Reiser to particularly burdensome and unwanted (419). This forceful connection of past events with Reiser’s current condition establishes the perspective that individuals – especially unfortunate ones such as Reiser – are shaped significantly by external elements beyond their control. And although Moritz himself advocates sharing only details with the reader and omitting any and all reflections, his narrator does precisely the opposite. The narrator draws connections, points out causes and effects, and explains how previous experiences continue to affect Reiser even years later. In other words, he gives the reader a novel that is developed precisely as Blanckenburg argues it should be. The story of the individual is a story of his or her experiences and interactions and the unique disposition or actions that develop as a result.

Initially it is the narrator who must draw these connections for his reader, as Anton is still a child and incapable of this. While out for walks on Sunday nights in Braunschweig, Anton frequently attempts to explore beyond the familiar streets. This “newness” gives his soul the ability to stretch out, “als ob er aus dem engen Kreis seines Daseins einen Sprung gewagt hätte” (82, my emphasis). By taking this step outside of himself, which he does yet not actually do, Anton can then begin to draw a clearer picture of his life in full, rather than experiencing it as individual, broken moments. Although not yet capable of this kind of analysis, he shows movement in this direction, further expressed by his interest in writing

58 “Dann müssten aber schlechterdings nur wirkliche Fakta darin abgedruckt werden, und wer sie einsendete, müsste der Versuchung widerstehn, Reflexionen einzuweben” (Moritz, Vorschlag 797).
out sermons: “[E]r wollte nicht nur durch einzelne Stellen erschüttert werden, sondern das Ganze der Predigt fassen…das Aufschreiben dieser Predigt hatte gleichsam eine neue Entwicklung seiner Verstandeskräfte bewirkt” (Moritz, Anton Reiser 87). This new development is the ability to see things as a whole rather than as disjointed and isolated pieces. Reiser does not actually achieve this, however, until much later in life through his exposure to Gottsched’s philosophy.  

Due to the fact that Reiser is not (initially) capable of viewing the whole, and is therefore unable to draw necessary conclusions for the reader, it is only natural that a narrator supplants Reiser as the author of his story. Here it helps to revisit the reason why Moritz titled Anton Reiser a “novel” when he admits that “[d]ieser psychologische Roman könnte auch allenfalls eine Biographie genannt werden” (7). Moritz feels the need to defend his choice of terminology, albeit without giving any clear explanation: “Um fernern schiefen Urteilen, wie schon einige über dies Buch gefällt sind, vorzubeugen, sehe ich mich genötigt, zu erklären, dass dasjenige, was ich aus Ursachen, die ich für leicht zu erraten hielt, einen psychologischen Roman gennant habe, im eigentlichsten Verstande Biographie...ist” (107). Since Moritz does not feel the need to explain any further, his reader must be able to draw the connection. Blanckenburg can help with this: “Vielleicht geht es über die Kräfte eines menschlichen Geistes, uns immer auf die bestimmteste Art diese Verbindung von Wirkung und Ursache zu zeigen; aber der Romanendichter . . . kann kein anderes, als dies Ziel haben” (283). This insight is why Blanckenburg dismisses the

59 “[B]eim Lesen des Buches vor sich…erhielt er dadurch den Vorteil, daß er bei dem Einzelnen nie das Ganze aus den Augen verlor, welches doch beim philosophischen Denken immer ein Haupterfordernis ist und auch die größte Schwierigkeit macht” (Moritz, Anton Reiser 221).
letter form as inappropriate for novels, and the most likely reason that Moritz chose to write
*Anton Reiser* in the third-person (as a novel).

Although many contemporary novels, particularly sentimental novels, were written
in the first-person form, *Anton Reiser* employs the third-person limited narrative style. Not
only does the story begin before Anton Reiser’s birth, but the narration begins outside of
his own head. We are constantly distanced from the thoughts and experiences of the
protagonist. Moritz considers it a necessity, “eine Zeitlang den kalten Beobachter zu
spielen, ohne sich im mindesten für sich selber zu interessieren” (Vorschlag 799). Only by
distancing ourselves from ourselves can we obtain the necessary objectivity to create the
“künstlich verflochtne Gewebe eines Menschen-lebens aus einer unendlichen Menge von
Kleinigkeiten” (Moritz, *Anton Reiser* 107). Reiser attempts to this, but without success:

> Reiser fing schon damals an, über dergleichen Erscheinungen bei sich selber nachzudenken und zu
> untersuchen, wie die Gegenstände solche Eindrücke auf ihn machen könnten – *allein die Eindrücke*
> *selbst waren noch zu lebhaft*, als dass er kaltblütige Relexionen darüber hätte anstellen können –
> auch war seine Denkkraft noch nicht geübt und nicht stark genug, sich die aufsteigenden Bilder der
> Phantasie gehörig unterzuordnen. (254, my emphasis)

Without this requisite coldness and distance Reiser cannot draw the necessary conclusions
regarding his own life and development.

> Es dünkt mich nämlich, daß dieser Zusammenhang, mit Wahrscheinlichkeit nicht anschauend
> erhalten werden kann, wenn die Personen selbst den Roman schreiben… Die Personen sind, den
> Voraussetzungen des Dichters zu Folge, oft in zu großer Bewegung, als daß sie in sich selbst zurück
> kehren, Wirkung und Ursach gegen einander abwiegen, und das Wie bey dem Entstehn ihrer
> Begebenheiten so aufklären könnten, wie wir es sehen wollen. (Blanckenburg 285)
It is “das Wie,” this unfolding of events, that preoccupies both Blanckenburg and Moritz, and – as I will show later – Unger’s narrators as well. By examining every memorable incident in Reiser’s life, no matter how small, and by demonstrating the connection between these incidents and an individual’s character and development, Moritz is able to answer this “how” that Blanckenburg frames as one of the central tenets of the modern novel.

1.3.4 The Representation of the Individual

In discussing Moritz’ reasons for framing his autobiography as a novel as corroborated by Blanckenburg’s theory, I have also demonstrated that the primary focus in Moritz’ text is a thorough examination of the individual and his development. In the case of Reiser/Moritz, the individual struggles to emerge and be recognized – a situation which mirrors the exploration of the self in Moritz’ *Magazin*. Elliot Schreiber’s insights into “Karl Philipp Moritz’s Models of the Self in the *Magazin zur Erfahrungsseelenkunde*” reveal a dichotomy stemming from these representations. Schreiber explains that Moritz articulates two paradigms of an ego that, while not directly perceptible, can be inferred through representations: a paradigm of the self as primarily expressive, and one of the self as primarily impressive. These paradigms are informed, respectively, by innate psychological models that view the self as pre-given, and by neo-Lockean theories that see the self as a product of impressions from its environment. … Moritz does not commit himself to either model of the self, but instead oscillates between them…this dilemma gives rise to a third, implicit model of the ego, paradoxically a model of a model-resistant self, albeit a self that, due precisely to its elusive and enigmatic quality, invites continued speculation and efforts at empirical observation in the public forum of the *Magazin*. (134)

The model of the self that is presented in *Anton Reiser* also oscillates between these two paradigms introduced by Schreiber.
As I have already noted above, in the first part of the novel the reader is presented with numerous examples of how Reiser’s character is determined by the world around him. His father is a strict pietist, following the teachings of Madame Guyon, but his mother does not share this enthusiasm. The environment into which Reiser is born is one of strife and neglect. “Ob er gleich Vater und Mutter hat, so war er doch in seiner frühesten Jugend schon von Vater und Mutter verlassen” (Moritz, Anton Reiser 13). As a result, Reiser develops a complex and begins to frame his self-worth according to the “Geringschätzung und Verachtung” he suffers at the hands of his parents. Even years later he is affected by the disposition he acquired as a child. “Zu diesem Gange der Empfindungen war nun einmal durch alle die unzähligen Kränkungen und Demütigungen, die er von Jugend auf erlitten hatte, sein Gemüt gestimmt” (Moritz, Anton Reiser 287). The self-perception that Reiser develops in his childhood continues to plague him; he is especially susceptible in his interactions with other people, framing many of the incidents in his life in terms of Demütigung, Vernachlässigung, and Verkennung. The person that he wants to be – indeed believes himself to be – is repeatedly denied by everything (and everyone) around him. He is in a constant struggle to reconcile his inner perceptions with the external conditions.

These inner perceptions in turn lead to a kind of authentic nature that is obscured or even transformed by the shapings of the external world. Only by isolating himself from the rest of society can Reiser grasp at what Moritz calls his “true existence.” “Dieser einsame Spaziergang war es, welcher Reisers Selbstgefühl erhöhte, seinen Gesichtskreis erweiterte und ihm eine anschauliche Vorstellung von seinem eignen wahren, isolierten Dasein gab; das bei ihm auf eine Zeitlang an keine Verhältnisse mehr geknüpft war,
sondern in sich und für sich selbst bestand” (Moritz, Anton Reiser 242, my emphasis). Moritz, like Rousseau, believes in an authentic self that is altered by society.\(^{60}\) As Moritz implies, however, this true self can only emerge in isolation, effectively barring the feasibility of establishing one’s true self vis-à-vis those around him.

While it is true that Reiser struggles to reconcile his “true nature” with the one imposed on him by those around him, the narrator does not frame all of his developments as negative. There are times when external situations effect a number of positive changes as well. Copying sermons not only helps him to develop an eye for the whole situation (as noted above), but also stimulates his intellect. Later in life he feels the urge to share his thoughts and feelings and begins writing letters to his friend Philipp Reiser, “worin er aber nicht sowohl seine äußern geringfügigen Begebenheiten wie ehemals, sondern die innere Geschichte seines Geistes aufzuzeichnen [wollte]. … Diese Übung bildete Anton Reiser zuerst zum Schriftsteller. (Moritz, Anton Reiser 234). Through his need for an intimate friendship Reiser acquires the necessary skills for writing and this eventually wins him the admiration of his teachers and fellow pupils. Reiser suffers from a debilitating melancholy, but he couples this with his urge to write and produces a number of successful poems and rhymes. “Da er nun aber die Achtung aller derer, die ihn kannten, und derer, von welchen sein Glück abhing, so plötzlich und so unerwartet wiedergewonnen hatte, so machte dies natürlicherweise einen Eindruck auf sein Gemüt” (Moritz, Anton Reiser 285). Reiser’s

\(^{60}\) This condition is not limited to negative developments; even ‘positive’ aspects of society can hinder the ‘authentic’ self: “Es ist traurig, dass mit den Gesetzen der Höflichkeit, welche dem Leben einige Vorteile gewähren, besonders in großen Städten, das beinahe unvermeidliche Übel verknüpft ist, dass der Mensch in seiner frühesten Jugend schon verstimmt, und vielleicht auf sein ganzes künftiges Leben unwahr gemacht wird” (Moritz, Erfahrungsseelenkunde 805; emphasis in original).
interactions with the world around him have a profound effect on his character, both positive and negative.

In keeping with the title of my dissertation, I argue that the representation of Anton Reiser is that of an individual who undergoes a forced experience of “becoming” that thereby limits his ability to “be.” According to Moritz this change is somewhat preventable, and depends on an awareness of the natures of the individual.61 By arguing for the uniqueness of each person and the necessity of differentiation between one’s character and one’s relationship to external events, Moritz frames the modern individual as precarious and (potentially) authentic. Unfortunately, the fragility of one’s self can undermine the emergence of the authentic self, and result in a “maldevelopment” of one’s character – or, in other words, a character based on misrecognition replaces the authentic self. “Denn war es nicht immer Selbstverachtung, zurückgedrängtes Selbstgefühl, wodurch [Reiser] in einen solchen Zustand versetzt wurde? Und wurde nicht diese Selbstverachtung durch den immerwährenden Druck von außen bei ihm bewirkt, woran freilich mehr der Zufall schuld war als die Menschen?” (421). Reiser’s “impressive self,” as Schreiber describes it, cannot withstand the pressures from outside. It is useful to note that Moritz’ narrator is quick to ascribe more agency to the contingency of life than to the people in it, for we will see similar descriptions in some of Unger’s narration as well.

Not only does Unger offer up protagonists who are similarly susceptible to the constant, damaging pressure from without, but she also produces characters who manage to avoid

---

61 Plural, because each individual has a different nature. It is problematic to assume a particular character based on circumstances, class, etc.
such maldevelopment. Moritz provides only the negative example in his *Anton Reiser* (though various other examples can be found in his *Magazin*); in Unger’s novels there is a mix of characters who struggle with becoming something they feel they are not and those who manage to resist the potentially damaging, external pressure. It is here, I argue, that Moritz’ anthropological undertakings cross with those of Unger. Unger’s writings were arguably less explicitly psychological than those of Moritz, and yet they were no less meaningful in their attempt to explore the various possible representations of an individual in her time. Frey argues that “ein einzelner Fall aus einer Sammlung von Fällen herausgegriffen und als eigentändiger Text gelesen werden [kann]” (22), but that one should not forget that case studies “stets auch in Bezug auf eine Regel oder eine Serie ähnlicher Fälle stehen” (21). Just as case studies stand as part of a larger project, Unger’s novels are, in my view, best read in conjunction with each other. In this way we can glean more productive insights into what I argue she hoped to accomplish with her novels (besides the presumed desire for added income): a multi-perspectival analysis of various concepts or representations of the modern individual in instances where the individual succeeds at being her own self, as well as in instances where she is forced to undergo a particular development.
CHAPTER 2: WHO IS JULCHEN GRÜNTHAL? THE INTERFERENCE OF UNRELIABLE NARRATION AND A CASE OF BACKWARD DEVELOPMENT

2.1.1 Introduction

Unger’s debut novel Julchen Grünthal weaves the stories of several characters together to present a multifaceted narrative on the individual – in both a literal and a figurative sense. The structure of the novel is arranged such that the reader is compelled to acknowledge the roles that the various, and occasionally conflicting, narratives play in the construction of Julchen’s character; Julchen’s story is situated within the narratives of first her father (in Volume 1) and then of Minna (in Volume 2). Despite the title of the novel and the fact that the reader is ostensibly reading about Julchen Grünthal, very little of her actual character emerges; this indicates that the author views narrative capacity as an important aspect of the self. By limiting Julchen’s narrative developments and further mediating them through authority figures such as her father, Unger is able to present an image of her protagonist as one who (mal)develops due to the unrelenting influence of those around her. The inclusion of a second volume, with its shift in narrative voice, mirrors a shift in focus as Unger follows the story of Julchen’s development with that of another character, Minna Thalheim. Through a close-reading of the two volumes of the novel I will demonstrate the extent to which the question of the individual manifests itself in the language and the narration. Specifically, I argue that there is an essential link between narrative and the self, and that for the latter to exist the former must also emerge. This link
is visible negatively in the case of Julchen, and positively in the case of Minna. I also show how the presence of an unreliable narrator interferes with Julchen’s ability to tell her own story, and how Julchen’s inability to take narrative control of her life reflects the very pressure that instigates her maldevelopment. And whereas Julchen never escapes the consequences of this maldevelopment, the figure of Minna Thalheim does (to an extent). Foreshadowing the representations of Unger’s protagonists in later novels, Minna’s character is able to recuperate from the developmental issues that had plagued Julchen by presenting herself as a subject, capable of overcoming some of the external factors of her life. Although Unger offers up conflicting, disparate images and ideas through her characters, ultimately she does not undertake to present either a feminine ideal or a critique of feminine norms. Instead, her novel functions as a dialogue on the expectations of the (female) individual in the 18th century and the influence of social institutions and relationships on such an individual. In the following portions of this chapter I analyze this dialogue on the individual – breaking it up into sections for each primary character and concept, and beginning with a brief overview of the novel and its reception in modern scholarship.

2.1.2 Julchen Grünthal. Eine Pensionsgeschichte.

Julchen Grünthal, Friederike Helene Unger’s first novel, was published anonymously in 1784 with the subtitle Eine Pensionsgeschichte. A second, unauthorized volume appeared – also anonymously – in 1788, written by the pastor Johann Ernst August Stutz. This appearance prompted Unger to announce publicly the following year that she
had not authorized the continuation by Stutz; she then published her own continuation in 1798. In the process she omitted the subtitle *Eine Pensionsgeschichte* and also edited the first volume slightly.\(^{62}\) Although Unger had already published – primarily translations as well as a few contributions to the *Berlinische Magazin der Wissenschaften und Kunst* – this was her first novel. The plot revolves around the story of the eponymous protagonist as it is recounted, at least in the first half of the novel, by her father. The first volume reads much like a didactic novel typical of the time,\(^{63}\) with the central problem focusing on the topic of female education and the pitfalls that accompany it. Julchen, a simple girl from the country, is sent to a boarding school in Berlin run by a woman named Madame Brennfeld. There the environment has a profound effect on Julchen’s personality and her habits – much to her father’s chagrin. Homesick and distraught at first, Julchen quickly acclimates

\(^{62}\) The first version of her novel along with the minor edits enacted in the reprint will not be discussed here. Birte Giesler offers an extensive treatment of both versions of the novel in *Literatursprünge: Das erzählerische Werk von Friederike Helene Unger*, pp. 81-243. The primary difference, as Giesler points out, are the added scenes that reference Rousseau and his *Geschlechterphilosophie*; the changes are otherwise so minor that the interpretation of the 1784 version and the first volume of the 1798 version remain essentially the same (184). Magdalene Heuser offers a comparison that focuses primarily on the heightened critique of Julchen against her father and his actions in “Spuren trauriger Selbstvergessenheit,” pp. 37-42. Heuser also argues, in comparing the two versions, that the 1784 version amounts to an *Erziehungsroman* whereas the 1798 version has been transformed into a *Bildungsroman*. Todd Kontje similarly labels the first volume “a didactic tale” and argues that with the addition of the second volume Unger transforms the novel into a “program for social reform, in which aristocrats enter into a positive alliance with the bourgeoisie, and the Germans and their culture take a stand against the French and their Revolution” (Women, the Novel, and the German Nation 56). Although most scholars consider either the 1798 version of the novel or compare it to its 1784 counterpart, one scholar – Dietlinde Bailet – treats only the 1784 version in her consideration of *Die Frau als Verführte und als Verführerin*. Although this leads to a rather uneven analysis, it is useful for those who are interested in the reception of the 1784 version. Bailet’s primary interest in *Julchen Grünthal* is to demonstrate the intertextuality of the novel, particularly as it concerns the discussion of education and bourgeois women in 18th century literature.

\(^{63}\) For a treatment of the 18th century didactic novel see Helmut Germer, *The German Novel of Education from 1764 to 1792*, Frankfurt: 1982. Germer gives a comprehensive bibliographical account of late 18th century German Novels of Education, and defines the novel of education as “one by which the author seeks to enforce some moral, social, or ethical lessons, or whose author has a purpose of ethical instruction rather than one which aims at purely artistic effect” (12). There were 394 novels written during an approximately 30-year period that Germer judges to be novels of education.
to Berlin life and develops quite an affinity for her new lifestyle. Although she is not of noble birth, she falls in love with a nobleman and eschews the timid attempts at courtship by a local pastor. After an unannounced visit by her father and following an increasingly frantic attempt to solidify the relationship with her love interest, Julchen spirals into a minor depression. Removed from the boarding school and sent to live with her cousin Karoline, she inadvertently arouses the interest of her cousin’s husband Falk and eventually marries him. The two lead an extravagant lifestyle of constant parties and balls and finally face bankruptcy. The greater problem, however, is that Falk has taken in a mistress – ostensibly as company for Julchen but in reality for himself. Julchen, in turn, entertains gifts from a Russian nobleman and, after her marriage with Falk dissolves, flees to Russia with him. It is with one last farewell letter from Julchen and an extremely despondent Grünthal that the first volume ends.

The second volume sets quite a different tone than the first; it opens with two friends, Minna and Ida, seated in a garden on a cool, summer evening ready to share their life stories with each other. Both Grünthal and Julchen, somewhat surprisingly, are entirely absent from the story for the first 185 pages. Instead, an inner story is narrated by and about Minna (Wilhelmine) Thalheim as she discloses the events of her life up to this point. Born and raised in the country, Minna receives an education that includes instruction in the sciences and classical literature, as well as the opportunity to read the newest

---

64 I should point out that my choice regarding the nomenclature of the characters – such that the father is referred to by his last name and the daughter by her first – not only reflects the decision of the author (who likewise has her narrator refer to the father as “Grünthal” and to the daughter as “Julchen”), but is also a pragmatic decision meant to allow for a differentiation between the father and daughter without always resorting to labeling them as such.
literature – French novels. Influenced by these novels and with an idealized vision of marriage and love she enters into a brief relationship with a nobleman. After confessing this to her mother she is banned from the house by her strict stepfather and sent to Berlin to live in his sister’s boarding school (run by none other than Madame Brennfeld). After nearly two years of living in Berlin, at the age of 18, she marries Councilor Thalheim and they lead a fairly social life in Berlin. They frequent theaters and parties until Minna becomes pregnant and confined to the house. This causes Thalheim to become bored with her, and they both take up extramarital lovers. After inadvertently running into each other one night in a brothel house, they decide to reform their ways and move to the country. It is here that Minna meets Ida, who – as the reader later learns – is actually Julchen. Grünthal, in an extraordinarily unlikely scene, then arrives at Thalheim’s estate and shocks Julchen. Feeling too guilty to face her family directly, Julchen enlists the aid of Minna to serve as her narrator, leaving her a letter to read to Grünthal and Karoline. The remainder of the story focuses primarily on Julchen’s reconciliation with her father and Karoline, both of whom forgive her and welcome her back. It is here that the reader learns that Julchen’s brother Fritz has found an older woman he plans to marry and the family returns home to celebrate. The novel concludes with a double marriage, Julchen decked out in white as the Erntekönigin, and Grünthal’s joy at having his family back together again.

2.1.3 Julchen Grünthal as an Erziehungsroman

Most scholars in their discussions of Julchen Grünthal focus on the didactic
elements of the novel as integral elements in the interpretation of the story. Helga Meise argues that “Julchen Grünthal das Problem der weiblichen Erziehung sich völlig eigen machen und bis zum bitteren Ende durchspielen [musste]” (52). She views the novel as a “pädagogisch-reflektierender Kommentar” and argues that the happy ending of the second volume offers the reader the “richtigen Begriff der weiblichen Erziehung” (52, 51). Although Meise frames the novel primarily as a Frauenroman, her analysis of the story reveals the centrality of education; indeed, Meise argues “daß die Frage der Erziehung des weiblichen Geschlechts in beinahe allen Frauenromanen auftaucht” (44). Helmut Germer also offers a brief consideration of Julchen Grünthal in his discussion of the 18th century German Novel of Education. He refers to Stutz’s unauthorized continuation in which the reader finds “the fact that Julchen’s mother had intercepted and suppressed her daughter’s letters of remorse addressed to her father at home” (159). Curiously enough, Germer omits any discussion of the first volume of Julchen Grünthal and instead points to the conclusion of volume two (where Julchen is reunited with her father) as proof that “the didactic message is made more obvious and direct” (159). Although Germer’s treatment of the novel of education in general is very thorough and convincing, his classification of Julchen Grünthal as such a novel is indirectly disputed by scholars such as Birte Giesler, who argues that “[d]er fremde, die ursprüngliche Romanfassung in ein falsches Licht rückende Fortsetzungsteil [von Stutz] 65 Birte Giesler points out that 18th-century critics viewed “den Roman ebenfalls als pädagogischen Roman beziehungsweise als didaktisch ausgerichtete Erziehungsschrift” (194). 66 Meise examines other elements of the novel as well, such as the sexualization of women, the concept of “Frau als Mutter” (77), the role of reading (novels) and their effect on young girls, and the idealized concepts of beauty and virtue. Ultimately, however, she frames the novel exclusively as a Frauenroman and in doing so highlights the didactic elements of the novel above all others.
die Rezeptionsgeschichte von Unger's Original stark beeinflußt” (87). Germer’s own analysis of the novel of education also undermines his classification of Julchen Grünthal as such, particularly his assertion that “[t]here is no attempt made [in novels of education] at depicting psychological forces, higher and inner realities, unique unheard-of situations, and idyllic or phantastic scenarios, many of which define the contemporary artistic novels of Wieland, Jung-Stilling, Goethe, and K.Ph. Moritz” (165). Although Germer does not elaborate on what precisely he means by some of this (e.g. what constitutes an idyllic or fantastic scene?), it is still difficult to accept such a description of Julchen Grünthal as entirely accurate. The novel concludes with a rather idyllic scene (at least from Grünthal’s perspective) and includes numerous attempts to explore the psychological underpinnings of both Julchen’s and also Minna’s actions. Nonetheless, several other descriptors of didactic novels do apply to Julchen Grünthal, so that even if we reject Germer’s categorization of the novel as such we must still acknowledge that characteristics of didactic novels are foregrounded in this story.

Finally, Dietlinde Bailet also approaches Julchen Grünthal from the perspective that education is the primary focus of the novel. She does so by analyzing the 1784 version only and ignoring the 1798 version (with its second volume) entirely. That so many

---

67 Though there are literally dozens of examples, a few will suffice: heroes in a novel of education are never “outright atheists, rather these novels show individuals straying from the virtuous path” (153); “[o]ne of the more noted vices in novels of education is, ironically, the reading of novels” (145); “in novels of education the village is or can become a veritable paradise on earth. By contrast such novels depict towns and cities as corrupt citadels” (120); “[a]lmost the sole goal of a daughter’s upbringing in novels of education is marriage and motherhood” (106). This last characteristic is certainly disputable, as Grünthal meets with opposition when he expresses such a sentiment. Whether or not Unger supported such a perspective will be discussed briefly later.

68 Die Frau als Verführte und als Verführerin, pp. 1-51.
scholars have noted the didactic elements of the novel, but are almost always constrained to the first volume in doing so, indicates that the trajectory of the story is meant to be more than merely instructive. Perhaps more specifically, we can infer that Unger wants her reader’s attention to be directed to the character as much as to the circumstances of her life. This becomes clearer in the second volume with the introduction of Minna’s character and the narrative restructuring of events. Such speculation is not unfounded, as many other scholars have argued that Julchen Grünthal is not limited to the genre of Erziehungsroman, but rather should be viewed as an example of a (female) Bildungsroman.

2.1.4 Julchen Grünthal as a Bildungsroman

One of the more prominent treatments of the novel under this genre can be found in Anja May’s investigations of Wilhelm Meisters Schwestern -- an appropriately titled approach as we know that Unger was indeed influenced by Goethe and his archetypal Bildungsroman Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre. Although May discusses Julchen Grünthal within the context of female Bildungsromane, she begins with a thorough overview of “die Lektüre des Romans aus erziehungswissenschaftlicher Perspective” (149). Curiously enough May, like Bailet, omits the second volume of the novel from her analysis “da dieser Text sowohl sprachlich als auch inhaltlich deutlich gegen den ersten Band abfällt und hier zugleich die Dichte und die Vielschichtigkeit verlorengehen” (134). As a result, the bulk of May’s interpretation is based on an analysis of the pedagogical elements in the novel.

---

She offers the thesis that Grünthal’s arguments are undermined by irony and satirical moments in the text, such that “die Debatte über die öffentliche Erziehung der Mädchen, die »Julchen Grünthal« strukturiert, auch als Vehikel für eine grundsätzliche Auseinandersetzung mit den Tugend- und Wirkungserwartungen aufklärerisch-pädagogischer Theoriebildung dient” (138). For May, what sets Julchen Grünthal apart from other similar novels (such as La nouvelle Héloïse) is its resolution. “Vorgeführt wird hier, so scheint es, eine regelrechte Rehabilitierung der Leidenschaften, während die durch die väterliche Erzieher-Instanz verbürgten Tugend- und Moralvorstellungen im Laufe des Geschehens zunehmend in ihrer Fragwürdigkeit bloßgestellt werden” (175). It is this reformation of Julchen’s passions that leads May to classify the novel as a Bildungsroman. Furthermore, by engaging with the expectations placed on women in the 18th century - particularly in light of virtue and education - the novel seeks to initiate change in the “aufklärerische Pädagogik” and “Bildungsbegriff” (May 182, 187). Not only Julchen is reformed, but society should be “reformed” as well.

Although May’s approach is useful in highlighting the extent to which Julchen’s character features as an important aspect of the story, her decision to exclude the second volume from her analysis makes it necessary to take her conclusions with a grain of salt. Her argument that the novel presents a reform of the passions might not hold true if one considers the events in the second half of the story. More significantly, by refraining from addressing the additional narrative insights from the second volume, May’s analysis is lacking the multidimensional approach that allows us to discover the extent to which Unger’s own sentiments on topics in the novel may or may not have coincided with those
of her characters. In other words, while Grünthal’s opinions most certainly are presented as questionable at times, at other times they reflect beliefs that Unger herself espoused. Despite these important caveats, May’s conclusion that the novel offers not just a reform of Julchen but also of society highlights the necessity of considering a character in relationship to external factors. In a way, such an approach is at the very heart of the concept of a Bildungsroman, whose protagonist typically only “finds himself” after an extended excursion through the world around him.

It is for this reason that Magdalene Heuser’s analysis of Julchen Grünthal as a Bildungsroman is much more fruitful and convincing. Heuser argues that “[d]ie Neufassung von 1798...also die Umarbeitung einer Pensions- und Erziehungsgeschichte in einen Roman [ist], der die Bildung und Entwicklung einer weiblichen Hauptfigur von der knapp eingebrachten Kindheit über die Hauptphase der Adoleszenz mit ihren Versuchen und Irrtümern bis zu dem Zeitpunkt ausbreitet, als die Heldin ihren Platz in der Gesellschaft gefunden hat” (37). In other words, the tendency of scholars to view this novel as an Erziehungstext is not entirely misdirected, as that does form the core of the original story. If there could be any doubt, however, that the development of the protagonist is crucial for a proper reading of the novel, it is dispelled by the addition of the second volume.70

---

70 Birte Giesler, Janine Blackwell, and Todd Kontje have all similarly treated this novel under the classification of Bildungsroman. Giesler even insists that “[a]uch die einbändige frühe Fassung des Julchen Grünthal-Romans, in dem die Titelheldin am Ende ins Ungewisse entschwindet, ist aus dieser neugewonnen Perspektive [the presence of an innere Geschichte as per Blanckenburg’s views on the novel] in den Bildungsromanzusammenhang zu stellen” (242). Kontje, on the other hand, maintains that the novel can be viewed as both a didactic novel and as a Bildungsroman, effectively spanning multiple genres (The German Bildungsroman 105).
Of course, the problem with limiting our analysis to the development of the protagonist only is that it precludes any opportunity to explore the development of other characters. As I have explained in the introduction, the classification of a novel as a Bildungsroman is useful in directing the reader’s attention to the relative importance of the individual over the story; it should not, however, result in an overly narrow approach to the story which prioritizes the main character over others. As I will show below, the life stories of more than just the protagonist are integral to understanding Unger’s insights into character development and the individual. The secondary literature agrees that the education and subsequent development of the protagonist are prominent features of the plot; I will explore this question of development in greater detail as well as the extent to which a consideration of characters other than the protagonist yields useful information regarding Unger’s views on the individual. Rather than recounting the experiences of just one individual, Julchen Grünthal offers a variety of narrative voices which attempt to relate the same series of incidents to the reader. An examination of these levels of narration reveals how extensively they reflect the characters of Julchen and Minna, and how Julchen’s and Minna’s stories function as a discourse on individuality in a more general sense.

2.2.1 Levels of Narration

The entire first volume of the novel is recounted to the reader primarily through Julchen’s father Grünthal as he narrates the story to his neighbors, the pastor Seelmann and his wife. The second volume abandons Grünthal’s narration for a direct narrative from
Julchen herself, preceded by a story told from and about Julchen’s friend Minna. The varied narrative structure of the novel results in the presence of multiple narrators and perspectives over the course of the two parts. In the first half the reader encounters a homodiegetic narrator (Grünthal) whose external story – at least inasmuch as it pertains to the internal narrative – is then recounted by an unnamed heterodiegetic narrator. While Grünthal offers frequent commentary on his own narrative, the unnamed heterodiegetic narrator does not. The reader is, however, exposed to dissimilar opinions from those of Grünthal as they are expressed by his audience – the narratees within the story. As a result, the narration is neither one-sided, nor is it omniscient, resulting in an interesting narrative situation that only reveals certain events and thoughts to the reader.

The narrative structure is interesting because it lends itself at times to a certain distrust of the homodiegetic narrator. Since Grünthal has narrative control for the first half of the story, much of what the reader learns is only acquired via his account of events. Furthermore, Grünthal has a very clear agenda, one that is actually the impetus for his storytelling. His entire goal in recounting the history of his daughter is to dissuade his neighbors from sending their own daughter away to a boarding school. Grünthal’s desire to convince them of the dangers of boarding schools is so strong that the novel opens with a representation of his character as strongly assertive: “Nur muthig durchgesetzt, lieber Seelmann; Ihres Kindes Wohlfahrt hängt davon ab, sagte der Amtmann, indem er seine Pfeife an seinem Absatz ausklopfte, und so hastig aufsprang, daß Sultan knurrend gegen

die Thüre fuhr” (Vol. 1, 7). Grünthal’s fervor is so great that Sultan (the dog, we later learn) responds to Grünthal by growling and backing away. Although it is perhaps not Grünthal’s intention to appear so forceful, the dog at least reacts with aggression. By framing the initial image of Grünthal within his own (perhaps unintended) aggression as well as that of the dog, the text presents an image of the homodiegetic narrator that is not entirely favorable. It allows the reader sufficient room to consider whether (s)he, too, will react aggressively when reading Grünthal’s overly subjective perception of events. Although it is not initially clear that Grünthal’s passion borders on aggression, the observant viewer discovers that in his fervor to make his case, Grünthal often overlooks things. Indeed, at one point in his narration he even neglects to notice that his audience is no longer interested in listening. “Grünthal sprach so eifrig, daß er nicht merkte, wie schläfrig seine Zuhörer waren, bis die Pastorin das Signal zum Aufbruch durch ein unverhaltenes Gähnen gab” (Vol. 1, 118). Textual clues like these alert the reader to the fact that Grünthal’s narrative is not to be accepted unequivocally. Rather, there are moments of tension that reveal Grünthal to be, at least at times, an unreliable narrator. These will be discussed in further detail below, but first a brief explication on the notion of an unreliable narrator is necessary.

2.2.2 The Unreliable Narrator

It is difficult to broach the concept of an unreliable narrator without referring back to Wayne C. Booth’s canonical definition of the narrator as “reliable when he speaks or

---

72 Susanne Zantop has interpreted this scene as a moment of irony that serves to undermine Grünthal’s perspective (Afterword 371).
acts in accordance with the norms of the work (which is to say the implied author’s norms), *unreliable* when he does not” (Rhetoric of Fiction 158-59, author’s emphasis). More than 40 years after first positing this definition, Booth defended his insistence on recourse to an implied author with the following questions:

How could anyone ever believe that the author’s intentions about a work are irrelevant to how we read it? The critics [who embraced the “death of the author”] were of course justified in claiming that the author’s expressed intentions, *outside of* the text, could be in total contrast to the intentions finally realized in the finished text. But does not that difference dramatize the importance of the implied author/author distinction? (Resurrection of the Implied Author 75, author’s emphasis)

In Boothian terms, in order to claim a narrator is unreliable the reader must be able to point to (alleged) incongruences between what the implied author attempts to present, and how the narrator actually divulges the information. By doing so the critic essentially points to one proper – or most accurate – interpretation of the text that reflects the intended message(s) of the implied author.

Ansgar Nünning offers a more pragmatic approach to unreliable narration with his redefinition of the unreliable narrator as a hermeneutic device, employed by the reader when his or her norms are at odds with those of the narrator. “In other words, whether a narrator is called unreliable or not does not depend on the distance between the norms and values of the narrator and those of the implied author but between the distance that separates the narrator’s view of the world from the reader’s or critic’s world model and standards of normalcy” (Nünning, Unreliable 61). What is most useful about this reconceptualization of unreliable narration is that it allows for the integration of Phelan and Martin’s six types of unreliability (“misreporting,” “misreading,” “misevaluating,”
“underreporting,” “underreading,” and “underevaluating”) without the need to first consult the implied author’s alleged intentions. The narrator is no longer positioned as a middle-man between the implied author and (implied) reader, but rather viewed as a character whose own role in the story can significantly interfere with his or her ability to “reliably” relate events.

By employing Nünning’s understanding of the unreliable narrator as a hermeneutic device, the reader is able to make assertions that are largely independent of the implied author’s intentions (as per Booth’s definition of the unreliable narrator). Interpretations of the book that posit Grünthal’s narrative as questionable, or which argue for an ironic presentation of his insights, indirectly point to his narration as unreliable. That is to say, such critics are highlighting “the distance that separates the narrator’s view of the world from the reader’s or critic’s world model and standards of normalcy” (Nünning 61 - as quoted above). For a modern reader, this frequently results in an understanding of the book as somewhat subversive. Not only do some of the female characters in the novel disagree with Grünthal’s overly patriarchal attitudes, but the reader does/should as well.

Problematic about such an approach is that it tends to be too heavily reader-oriented and can exclude important information available both inside and outside of the text.  

---

73 “[M]isreporting is typically a consequence of the narrator’s lack of knowledge or mistaken values; it almost always occurs with misreading or misevaluating. … Misreading involves unreliability at least on the axis of knowledge/perception. … Misevaluating – or what we call misregarding – involves unreliability on the axis of ethics/evaluation. … Similarly, underreporting, underreading, and underevaluating occur at least on the axes of event/fact, understanding/perception, and ethics/evaluation, respectively. Underreporting, what Genette calls paralipsis, occurs when the narrator tells us less than s/he knows” (95).

74 Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan, for example, explains how a narrator’s position as a character can increase the likelihood that he or she will be unreliable: “Intradiegetic narrators, especially when they are also homodiegetic, are on the whole more fallible than extradiegetic ones, because they are also characters in the fictional world. As such, they are subject to limited knowledge, personal involvement, and problematic value-schemes, often giving rise to the possibility of unreliability” (103).
Nünning himself warns against “throwing the baby out with the bathwater” and insists that it is still productive to examine textual data, rather than merely reader response: “What is needed instead is a pragmatic and cognitive framework that takes into consideration both the world-model or conceptual information previously existing in the mind of the individual reader or critic and the interplay between textual and extratextual information” (Unreliable 66). In my own approach to reading *Julchen Grünthal*, I embrace an understanding of the unreliable narrator as both related to the intentions of the implied author – that is to say, extratextual information should be considered wherever and to whatever extent possible – and also as a hermeneutic device that assists the critic in interpreting the novel. We know that Friederike Helene Unger was a woman and a proponent of rational Enlightenment, who had ambivalent feelings towards the acceptable norms for women of her time. Beyond that, most attempts to discuss an unreliable narrator must necessarily leave behind considerations of the implied author, since we cannot say with any degree of certainty what the author did or did not intend. At such points, we can only look to what the text provides and analyze the various narratives for clues.

Whenever these various narratives conflict, there is the possibility of unreliable narration and the sentiments expressed in these conflicting narratives warrant critical attention. Referring to a definition by Kathleen Wall, Nünning explains that one instance of unreliable narration occurs when the narrator’s commentary and the scene do not correspond evenly to each other, resulting in a difference between what might have happened and what the narrator reports as having happened:
The critic can establish such a difference by analyzing those utterances in which the narrator’s subjective bias is particularly apparent (e.g. comments, evaluations, expressive statements and general remarks) and comparing the world-view these imply with the different view of the events and characters that is projected by such narrative modes as description, report and scenic presentation. (Unreliable 65)

It is these sparring views that are furthermore most interesting for questions of representations of the individual; if there is a discrepancy between the perceived world-view of the narrator and the views that emerge in other moments of his or her narration, how might these differences translate into how an individual is portrayed?

2.2.3 Grünthal’s Narrative

Grünthal’s narrative is the logical starting point for a close analysis of the text as his storytelling dominates the entire first volume of the novel. In sharing excerpts from Julchen’s diary or copies of her letters he cannot resist in commenting on them as well. Overwhelmingly, he reveals his dislike of the boarding school to which he has sent Julchen and the extent to which her stay in Berlin corrupts her good character – “good” according to Grünthal’s own values. His commentary occasionally leads to a disagreement with the pastor and his wife, who sit listening to his story:

Grünthal’s vehement denunciation of boarding houses stems from his patriarchal view of society, wherein women exist solely within the private sphere and have no claim to anything more than that. The pastor’s wife serves as a foil to this perspective and unleashes a minor debate regarding the acceptable role of women in society.

Both Pastor Seelmann’s wife and Julchen voice opinions on what is, or should be, acceptable for women. They bemoan the limitations placed on them and the expectations that confine them to household duties. This juxtaposition of such differing perspectives coupled with instances of dramatic irony has led several scholars to label this book as subversive and to assert that Grünthal’s perspective is not the one that readers should embrace. If this is the case, then Grünthal’s values should be at odds with the intended audience of the novel – which is, according to the author’s intentions, comprised of women. This question of audience and perspective is a necessary consideration not only for the interpretation of the novel, but also for discussions of an unreliable narrator. Whose

---


76 In fact, most recent critics have read Julchen Grünthal as a typically palimpsestic novel that hides a subversive subtext beneath its overtly conservative message” (Kontje, Women 58). Susanne Zantop goes so far as to call Julchen Grünthal a “trojanische[s] Pferd” (Aus der Not eine Tugend 142).

77 Unger explains in the preface “daß sie nicht für Gelehrte, sondern zunächst für ihr eignes Geschlecht, für ihre Mitbürgerinnen schrieb” (Vol. 1, 4).
argument should the reader interpret as the “right one?” Is Grünthal’s perspective accurate, or should we also read this novel as subversive and progressive?

These questions are not answered so easily, indicating that all the perspectives presented in the novel warrant close examination. Rather than espousing the beliefs presented by only one character or another, Unger offers an exposition of the role of women in society: what is expected of them, what is allowed them, and what they aspire to. These topics of consideration are taken up from multiple perspectives as they are presented by a variety of characters within the novel. Such an understanding of Unger’s writing can be corroborated by looking to her extratextual sentiments on the arguments raised in *Julchen Grünthal*. In a letter to her brother in 1798, Unger briefly outlines her views on the relationship between men and women: “Ich habe nichts gegen das ehrwürdige, *und er soll dein Herr sein*; weil es ein Grundgesetz der Menschennatur ist, daß der Stärkere über den Schwächeren gebiete. Der Mann herrscht über die Frau; aber ist es auch recht, daß wir in keiner Lebensperiode die Rechte des Herzens genießen sollen?” (*Über Berlin* 37, author’s emphasis).78 Unger concedes to the traditional power structure established between the two genders, but argues for increased freedom regarding emotions. She even quotes from Rousseau, “der oft so wahr in die Gefühle der Weiblichkeit eingreift” to support her assertion (*Über Berlin* 37). Unger also makes a case for divorce as being somewhat

Comments such as these reveal an author who sympathizes with some of the arguments presented by the characters of Julchen or the pastor’s wife, although Unger does not side unequivocally with these female characters.

In the same letter to her brother, Unger admits that she is opposed to boarding houses: “Auch der weiblichen Pensionanstalten giebt es viele, von verschiedenen Wehrt und Ruf. Da ich im Ganzen gegen sie alle bin, wie Du weißt, so wirst Du es mir erlassen, Dir meine Meinung darüber zu wiederholen” (Über Berlin 31). Indeed, Unger takes issue with bourgeois education in general, and not just at boarding houses.

Indeed, Unger takes issue with bourgeois education in general, and not just at boarding houses.

These words echo a similar sentiment expressed by Grünthal as he criticizes the claim made by the pastor’s wife that an education in French is essential.

Die Ehescheidungen sind nicht zu häufig; sie stehen unter einschränkenden aber sehr billigen und vernünftigen Gesetzen. Ein großes Unglück ist es, und die Quelle von tausend Unordnungen, wo sie zu sehr erschwert oder unter dem Bann religiöser Gesetzlichkeit stehen” (Über Berlin 38).
Both Unger and Grünthal criticize the bourgeois tendency to emulate higher classes, expressing a certain rigidity towards class and the attempt to elevate oneself socially. The phrase used by Unger – “angestammte Sphäre” – is reminiscent of Grünthal’s assertion that “[j]edem ist seine Sphäre bestimmt” (Vol. 1, 70). Although Unger displays sympathy for some of the sentiments expressed by the pastor’s wife and Julchen, her attitude towards marital relationships, boarding houses, and class distinctions is much more in line with that of Grünthal.

The noticeable parallels between the contents of Unger’s letters to her brother and the concerns raised by the characters in Julchen Grünthal should alert us to the importance of such topics when discussing the individual and her development. Matters such as emotion, education, class, and the distinction between private and public spheres all factor into Unger’s presentation of the female individual. In this way, Unger uses her characters to ground an understanding of the individual as first and foremost in her (or his) society. Through interactions with various classes and individuals a person is shaped – or as Grünthal would express it, misshaped. As I have already argued above, it becomes increasingly clear that this novel is not just a discussion of (female) education, but instead engages more widely with the question of the individual as (s)he engages with the world.

80 Such a scenario is later realized in the character of Minna Thalheim (volume 2), who is reluctant to consider the young suitors from the country because they don’t resemble enough the heroes of the (French) novels she reads.
Returning to Grünthal’s narrative and the consideration of an individual vis-à-vis society, his choice of language when discussing “spheres” refers not only to class differences but to the very basic delineation between the public and private sphere. Whereas women of noble birth have access to the public sphere, Grünthal refuses to concede such a privilege to bourgeois women. Instead, they are determined almost from birth for the role as wife and mother. Speaking of Julchen, Grünthal insists that “sie wäre was sie seyn müsse, wenn sie eine kluge, fromme Hausfrau würde, der es nicht an Verstand und Bildung fehlte, einem gescheuten Manne das Leben zu versüßen, und in ihren Kindern dem Staate nützliche Bürger zu erziehen” (Vol. 1, 20, my emphasis). In line with traditional values, Grünthal argues that the ideal wife would have sufficient “Verstand und Bildung,” but not enough that she ceases (wanting) to be a proper wife and mother.81 This statement reveals a very gendered paradigm of Bildung for men and women, one which is quite typical for the 18th century82 and which is underscored by Grünthal’s metaphorical discussion of plants: “Wenn die Verfassung der bürgerlichen Gesellschaft es auch nothwendig macht, daß die Söhne außer dem elterlichen Hause die Quellen der Kenntnisse aufsuchen und benutzen müssen, so sollten doch die zärtener Blumen nicht so früh vom mütterlichen Boden hinweg in fremde, kalte Erde verpflanzt werden” (Vol. 1, 228-229).

81 “Bildung durch Lesen wird [im 18. Jahrhundert] für Frauen propagiert, sie werden aufgefordert, ihren Verstand zu gebrauchen und Lebensklugheit zu erlernen; das bedeutet aber keineswegs eine wissenschaftliche oder auf einen Beruf hinzielende Ausbildung, sondern es bedeutet Bildung der eigenen Persönlichkeit, von Tugenden und geselligen Fertigkeiten” (Becker-Cantarino, Frau und Literatur 155).
82 Barbara Becker-Cantarino notes “daß die ganz große Masse von Frauen als schweigende Mehrheit im ‘ganzen Hause’ ihr Leben fristeten. Noch in Lessings Generation ist der Unterschied an geistiger Bildung zwischen Mann und Frau eklant…der Frau werden nun verbindlich bestimmte psychologische und moralische Merkmale zugesprochen, die angeblich mit ihren biologischen Anlagen korrespondieren sollen” (Frau von Reformation zur Romantik 246, 247).
Female education is relegated to the home (i.e. within the private sphere); women should not be educated outside the house as it would undermine their very nature. As Giesler explains, pointing to the deeper implications of this plant metaphor vis-à-vis women’s nature, “[w]ährend die männliche Geschlechtsrolle mit der Verfassung der bürgerlichen Gesellschaft und damit sozial begründet wird, wird die weibliche Rolle durch die Pflanzenmetaphorik zur Natur und damit zur inneren Veranlagung erklärt” (221). Grünthal has such an understanding of women’s nature as inborn, as his language shows, and yet his own approach to his daughter’s education conflicts with this view of “natural” feminine characteristics.

Girls are not necessarily born with the natural instincts to become a faithful wife and mother; they must be taught this and – more importantly – sheltered from certain situations that could awaken other, less desirable instincts. It is for this reason that Grünthal himself continues to teach Julchen when she is a child, rather than allowing her to participate in the lessons her brothers receive at the hands of a tutor. This decision is due to the fear that a tutor might unduly influence Julchen and that “das Mädchen zu früh erwärmt und entwickelt wird” (Vol. 1, 19). Grünthal’s choice of words here reveals much: by placing the verb “to develop” into the passive voice, Grünthal relegates Julchen’s character development to the choices and actions of those around her. *They develop her.* It is not a matter of Julchen’s choice and actions; it is not even so much a question of inner nature. Julchen’s character is primarily (perhaps exclusively) formed by those around her.

83 Karoline, whose views mirror almost exactly those of Grünthal, writes that “eine kleine Stadt in Ihrem Kreise soll mich aufnehmen, und ich will junge Mädchen lehren, gute Frauen und Mütter zu werden. Ich will erziehen und bilden” (Vol. 1, 408-409).
We will see just how true this assertion is in later interactions between Julchen and her father, and Julchen and her Berlin associations.

One of the more significant problems with Grünthal’s narrative is that he does not stop to reflect on the motivations behind it or on the contradictions inherent in some of his statements. He is primarily concerned with expressing his opinion and convincing his audience of it. In doing so, he frequently misevaluates not only the situation but also his own perspective on it. Phelan and Martin define “misevaluating” (or “misregarding”) as a narrative act that “involves unreliability at least on the axis of ethics/evaluation” (95). It is most likely not the case that Grünthal intends to lie (in other words, his unreliability does not stem from his being unethical), but we can and should view some of his evaluations as suspect, especially due to his fervor to prove his point (that all young women should remain at home until married). As one example of this we can look to a scene where Grünthal, perhaps unintentionally, dissembles his interference in Julchen’s development and interests. In a conversation with Madame Brennfeld, headmistress of the boarding house in Berlin, Grünthal explains:

Nur daß die feine Politur nicht ganz das Originalgepräge mit fortnehme. Dieses habe ich immer sorgfältig bei einem jeden meiner Kinder sichtbar zu erhalten gesucht; ich habe sie, so früh es nur anging, selbstständige Wesen seyn lassen, habe sie nie gezwungen, ja zu sagen, wo ihr Herz nein sagte, habe ihnen Widerspruch gegen die elterlichen Meinungen erlaubt; denn ich habe mir nie eingebildet, daß sich die väterliche Autorität über den Geist meiner Kinder erstreckte, und immer fest an dem Glauben gehangen, daß es in England deshalb so viel Originalität der Karaktere gebe, weil die Kinder früh wie Menschen behandelt, und nicht alle auf einer Drehbank zu gleichförmigen Marionetten gedrechselt werden” (Vol. 1, 154-155).
The vision of Grünthal’s parenting presented here differs quite significantly from the image the reader acquires over the course of the novel. Although he believes “daß sich die väterliche Autorität über den Geist [s]einer Kinder [nicht] erstreckte,” his own actions indicate otherwise. At every stage of Julchen’s increasing “corruption” in Berlin he intrudes with admonitions against her behavior. Rather than allowing her a different opinion or permitting her to mature into an “independent creature,” as he claims to do, he instead reproaches her for not developing more as he envisions the ideal daughter to be.

Much of Grünthal’s contradictory behavior can be ascribed to the influence of 18th-century norms regarding women. W. Daniel Wilson, in his analysis of “Eighteenth-Century Germany in Historical Context,” notes that “Women were entirely subject to the authority of their fathers or husbands” (276). Such female submission was accepted as self-evident, and further heightened by the increasing dichotomy between men’s and women’s spheres. “[T]he separation of the husband’s workplace from the home” gave the men an increased presence in the public sphere and relegated women to the household -- “[t]hey remained isolated from the men’s world of work and public life, and were entirely responsible for the home” (Wilson 277). Women were not only expected to stay at home, but their fathers and husbands felt justified in intervening to ensure they did so. An outgrowth of this shift in social norms was the increasing tendency to ascribe women’s and men’s places in society as a reflection of innate tendencies. It was not just male authority that kept women in the house, it was an evolving understanding of gender characteristics:

Whereas earlier gender characteristics had focused on virtues emanating from estate-specific functions, the newer literature spoke simply of the nature of man and woman. The characteristics assigned to each of them corresponded to their new roles in economic life. The man possessed traits
that equipped him to function in the world of commerce and bureaucracy; his innate nature was considered to be rational, active, dignified, and so forth. The women’s characteristics corresponded to her role as housewife and mother: emotional, passive, charming. These gendered characteristics, and a host of others, had been expressed for centuries in the Judeo-Christian tradition...[but] the definitions became an obsession in the late eighteenth century and were codified once again rigidly and widely. In the 1790s a wide array of treatises and essays in Germany attempted to define the nature of men and women along these lines. (Wilson 277-78, author’s emphasis)

This understanding of women could be summed up in Grünthal’s earlier assertion that Julchen “wäre was sie seyn müsse, wenn sie eine kluge, fromme Hausfrau würde” (Vol. 1, 20).84 His expectations of his daughter mirror almost precisely this understanding of how all women should be: relegated to the private sphere and existing, essentially, within the framework of masculine authority.

Julchen, like all women, can never be a “selbständiges Wesen” in the literal sense of the phrase,85 as she does not exist for her own ends. Though she does not fully realize it, her purpose in life— at least until she finds a husband – is to obey and please her father.

84 Such a relegation of women and their lives to the purposes and authority of men is addressed by Barbara Becker-Cantarino; she labels the woman’s situation vis-à-vis her husband Gesichtlosigkeit: “Die Stellung der Frau war rechtlich und ökonomisch völlig abhängig von der des Ehemannes; ihr Wirken ganz auf das Wohl der Familie, d.h. des Mannes und der Kinder ausgerichtet, ohne daß sie dabei ihre eigene Persönlichkeit weiterentwickeln, eigene, nicht an Ehefrau- und Mutterrolle gebundene Interessen verfolgen konnte” (Frau von Reformation zur Romantik 246). Although Julchen’s relationship to her father is not that of a wife to her husband, Grünthal’s desires for Julchen’s character reflect such a relationship and demonstrate the extent to which his interests interfere with the development of her own personality.

85 Precisely how Grünthal’s character understands the concept of a “selbständiges Wesen” is debatable. As we can see from his value system women are inherently incapable of being independent, and so we should perhaps read his words from a conservative perspective. However, it is the problematization of this that is so productive for an analysis of Julchen’s character: Grünthal – despite whatever he says or means – does not believe Julchen should be free to develop a character or lifestyle that contradicts “what she was meant to be,” and indeed such a belief manifests itself even in Julchen’s literary character. This becomes more evident below when one analyzes Julchen’s narrative below.
Grünthal’s description of the annual harvest festival demonstrates the extent to which his happiness is dependent upon Julchen’s presence:


Although Grünthal’s joy stems from the sight of all three of his children, it is Julchen who features most prominently, not only in this description but also within Grünthal’s narrative. (The reader never even learns the name of the oldest son, and Fritz only makes an
appearance in the story when it impacts Julchen.) At the thought of Julchen leaving home, it is Grünthal’s joy rather than his concern for her that becomes the issue.

Grünthal is only happy with Julchen when she reflects his own interests, indicating that the possibility of her individual development is already severely constrained by his desires. Such a perspective is reflected in Grünthal’s assertion that he would never have married his wife if she had been educated as Julchen will be in Berlin.


Apparent in Grünthal’s statement here is that there is an element of homogeneity that he demands from certain types of individuals. Wives and mothers must meet one set of expectations, and daughters should also conform to certain ideals, especially if they happen to be bourgeois women. “[I]ch meine so,” he argues at one point, “daß sichs nicht schickt, wenn der Orangebaum ins Kohlbeet, und die Kohlpflanze ins künstliche Treibhaus gebracht wird. Jedem ist seine Sphäre bestimmt: dem Orangebaum künstliche Behandlung, und der Kohlpflanze Gottes freie Luft” (JG Vol. 1, 69-70). If we read this statement in conjunction with his reference to an *Originalgepräge* above, it appears that Grünthal categorizes individuals according to what they are: male or female, bourgeois or nobility. Had Julchen been born into a noble family, the parameters of her education would certainly have been altered accordingly. To return to Grünthal’s terminology, her *Originalgepräge*
would have reflected a different origin. Even more revealing about the statement is Grünthal’s use of the adjective *künstlich* – if we consider this in conjunction with his worry of how Julchen “zu früh erwärmt und entwickelt wird” and his statement above regarding “was man aus Julchen machen wird” (19, 36), then it becomes obvious the extent to which an individual’s development is determined by those around him or her. One’s personality is quite literally man-made [*künstlich*], and one’s development can only progress as far as the interference of those around them permits.

Grünthal’s concern that Julchen may be shifting – or more accurately shifted – too far out of her “destined sphere” is a reflection of what Christian Begemann calls the “functional fear” of Enlightenment *Erziehungs Zwecke* as evinced in “de[m] Zusammenhang der von [den bürgerlichen Pädagogen] intendierten Charakter - und Bewußtseinsstruktur bzw. des erzieherischen Arrangements, dass sie hervorbringen soll, mit der Genese von Angst” (167). Although this fear is meant to be useful and instructive to the bourgeois individual by revealing the consequences that arise when one transgresses his or her class expectations, it can also backfire and become dysfunctional.” Sie kann sich nämlich in eine neue, irritierende und erschreckende Selbsterfahrung hinein verlängern, die die bürgerliche Identität gerade in Frage stellt, ja aufzubrechen droht” (Begemann 167). Grünthal is consumed by this fear the moment that Julchen leaves for Berlin; his consternation is apparent at almost every point of his narrative and most likely the reason the novel is often viewed as subversive by modern critics.86 By falling prey to the

---

86 Because it is the dysfunctional form of this 18th-century pedagogical and bourgeois fear, it might strike the (modern) reader as inappropriate and not to be taken seriously.
dysfunctional form of this “functional fear,” Grünthal reveals not only the frailty of the bourgeois character he is so anxious to protect, but also the artificiality of it (precisely because it is so fragile). Through his adamant insistence that Julchen abide by expectations placed on bourgeois females, indeed that she cannot be herself if she behaves otherwise, Grünthal implies that he views women as a product of both nurture and nature (to use our modern terminology). The legitimacy of his position hinges on Rousseau’s conception of human nature as elucidated in Emile, where he argues that “jeder Geist seine eigene bestimmte Form erhalten hat, und nicht allein durch die Erziehung, sondern duch das mehr oder weniger gut geordnete Zusammenwirken von Naturell und Erziehung” (Bovenschen 168). Julchen’s nature is directly related to her status and education as a bourgeois female, and the loss of it would destroy the concept of bourgeois identity that Grünthal clings to.

The primary problem with Grünthal’s values and perspectives is that he does not seem to realize the extent to which they influence his parenting, as well as his narrative. After his first wife dies, Grünthal remarries a woman who refuses to acknowledge that she has stepchildren; she goes so far as to forbid Grünthal to speak of them in her presence. Consequently, Julchen and her brothers are forbidden from visiting home and, because Grünthal is quite occupied with affairs in Lindenau, he goes a year and a half without visiting Berlin. It is the tone of Julchen’s letters that finally prompts Grünthal to visit: “Julchens Briefe bewiesen mir nur zu sichtlich, daß eine bedeutende Veränderung mit ihr vorgegangen seyn mußte. Ihre einfache ungezwungne Schreibart war so merklich von einer aufgeregten Phantasie zu den hochfliegenden Ausdruck gewisser Romane hinaufgeschroben, daß ich das Mädchen nothwendig für eben so verändert, wie ihre Briefe,
halten mußte” (Vol. 1, 188-189). What is most curious about this period in Grünthal’s life is that, despite Julchen being his “Herzenskind” (188), he dismisses his second wife’s attitude as nothing more than “die alltäglichsten Vorurteile gegen Stiefkinder” (188). It is similarly surprising that he reacts with such bitterness to a “kalten, abgezirkelten Brief” from Julchen after she is not invited to her father’s wedding (187). Although Julchen is expected to fulfill his expectations and demonstrate an understanding demeanor at all times, he thinks nothing of all but neglecting for her a year and a half, essentially shutting her out of his present life.

Despite both the physical (geographic) and emotional distance precipitated by this turn of events, Grünthal still views Julchen with the same close attachment – and authority – as when she was a young girl living at home. This attitude results in a bit of a dramatic incident when he decides one day to travel, unannounced, to Berlin to surprise Julchen. After arriving in Berlin he goes directly to his niece Karoline and insists that she bring him to Julchen immediately. She attempts to dissuade him from such a course of action and “bestand darauf, ich solle Julchen nicht so plötzlich überraschen; sie könnte zu heftig erschrecken. – Erschrecken? Vor ihrem Vater? sagt’ ich. Hat sie nicht Ursach sich zu freuen, so mag sie immerhin erschrecken!” (Vol. 1, 204). There is a discrepancy here between Grünthal’s attitude and his actions. Although he has essentially left Julchen to her own devices in Berlin, he insists that she adhere to a standard of life and a set of expectations not shared by her current companions. Making his way to a picnic Julchen is attending, Grünthal languishes under the dread of what he expects to find. “Julchen, mein stilles, sanftes Julchen, hier, in einem öffentlichen Hause, verstrickt in wilde Tänze! – diese
Vorstellung preßte mir Thränen ab. … Wenn ich mir dagegen meine Tochter in ihrer ehemaligen liebenswürdigen Unschuld dachte! – unter diesem bunten Haufen!” (Vol. 1, 209, 210). The fact that Julchen is still cohorting with this crowd is mostly Grünthal’s own fault. Rather than marrying a woman who would allow Julchen to visit, perhaps even move back home, Grünthal has chosen a wife who forces Julchen to remain in the boarding school in Berlin.

Grünthal is, of course, utterly oblivious to the paradox of the situation. After neglecting his daughter for eighteen months, he surprises her at a picnic in what one could consider a rather disturbing scene. Following Julchen’s trail to the picnic, he hides in the bushes, “[um s]eine leichtsinnige Tochter eine Zeitlang unbemerkt zu beobachten” (Vol. 1, 208). He watches Julchen dance a “wild waltz” before moving off to a more secluded area with her partner, Mariane’s brother. After listening in on their conversation for a few minutes, Grünthal lunges out and surprises the pair, nearly sending Julchen into a faint. He then rushes to her side with the belief that “Gott hat gewollt, daß Dein Vater in diesem Augenblicke zu Deiner Rettung herbeieilte!” (Vol. 1, 215). The sheer lack of comprehension on Grünthal’s part emerges very clearly here. As justified as he might feel as a father interfering as he does, the fact that his intrusion occurs completely unexpectedly, and after so many months without visiting, might lend the reader sympathy for Julchen’s distress. It should also undermine Grünthal’s belief that he is so justified in acting as he does87 and furthermore casts Grünthal’s narrative into suspicious light: if he is capable of

87 Although Julchen behaves compliantly in this situation, at a later point she reveals a much more rebellious attitude towards her father’s interference: “Darüber ist mir mein Vater entsetzlich hart begegnet, so daß ich, wenn ich die Eingebungen der Stiefmutter dazu nehme, glauben muß, er haßt mich. Diese
viewing things only from a resolutely patriarchal (and bourgeois) perspective and does not allow for any digressions from his rather rigid view of what is proper and acceptable for young (bourgeois) women, how can we, the readers, know that Julchen’s actions are not so egregious as he reports? More importantly, how can we be sure that Grünthal himself is not largely responsible for the developments in Julchen’s behavior?

This purpose of this inquiry is twofold: not only does it allow room for questioning the reliability of Grünthal’s narrative, and by association, his views on the nature of the individual, it also allows us to speculate on Julchen’s character. Since Julchen is absent from the story herself, any attempt to investigate her character in volume one must go through Grünthal. This mediating function of Grünthal’s narrative is a direct reflection of the emotional and developmental impact that he has on his daughter throughout her life. As Giesler argues, the interaction between Julchen and Grünthal “verweist…auf die tiefenpsychologische Dimension der Vater-Tochter-Beziehung in der emotion aufgeladenen bürgerlichen Kernfamilie” (242). Grünthal is so quick to accuse others and how they develop Julchen that he fails to notice the impact he has on her. His initial and frequent admonitions to Julchen during her early months in Berlin, compounded with his later neglect of her and decision to leave her in Berlin even after his first wife dies, point to the fact that Julchen has very little opportunity to develop independently of her father’s

\[\text{Vorstellung hat für mein Herz eine wirklich versteinende Kraft. Indeß würde ich mir doch in einem andern Falle Gewalt angethan haben, mich seinem Willen aufzuopfern; aber hier?} \]

(Wol. 1, 369-370).

88 On the narrative level, his misreporting offers the reader an image of Julchen’s character that is very different from the one she would present of herself, had the author allowed her a stronger narrative presence. We will see hints of this when comparing Julchen’s narrative below with some of the incidents already reported by Grünthal.
influence. Just how great Grünthal’s influence is becomes even clearer when we turn to Julchen’s own attempts at narration.

2.2.4 Julchen’s Narrative

Despite the title of the novel, in the first volume Julchen is never physically present in any of the scenes. All representations of her character are mediated either by Grünthal’s narrative or Karoline’s letters. Even in the second half of the novel, when Grünthal is no longer acting as narrator, Julchen continues to be mediated significantly by other characters – primarily Minna. The primary access to Julchen’s character that the reader acquires is via her letters and diary entries, excerpts of which are provided in Volume 1 at various points by Grünthal. These written narratives by Julchen prove useful in analyzing her attempts at self-understanding and self-representation.

The vocabulary of Julchen’s early letters and diary entries reveals a girl still very entrenched in her father’s values.89 In her first letter home she bemoans the fact that, although she awakens at four am as usual, the other girls remain sound asleep late into the morning. “Dann schlug es fünf; da dacht' ich daran, wie ich noch vor kurzem meinem lieben Vater den Thee und das Wachslicht hinein trug, wie er mich dann segnete und ich ihm die Hand küsste, wenn er mich sein liebstes Kind hieß! Ach! jetzt denkt er gewiss an seine arme abwesende, – bald hät' ich gesagt verstößne – Tochter“ (Vol. 1, 56). The way she describes that morning’s events are similarly indicative of how much country life has

89 As will be discussed below, Julchen has the tendency to think through and react to things by remembering words, advice, and sayings that come primarily from her father.
molded her and her habits. When given coffee to drink, Julchen thinks wistfully of her “gute nahrhafte Milchsuppe in Lindenau” (Vol. 1, 61). Even more striking is that already on her first morning in Berlin Julchen finds herself unable to pray. “Ich kniete hin und wollte beten; aber, mein liebster Vater, es wollten keine Worte kommen, mein Herz war zu voll, ich konnte nichts als heftig weinen, und da wurde es kein rechtes Gebet” (Vol. 1, 55-56). As if a sign, Julchen’s inability to pray reflects the extent to which Berlin has already begun to change her and will continue to change her; a quick read through Julchen’s subsequent letters and diary entries reveals that she never does succeed at engaging in “proper prayer” in Berlin.

Just twelve days after her arrival in Berlin, Julchen’s tone is already noticeably beginning to change from the one presented in her first letter home. She still reminisces about her time in Lindenau, but has already begun to change her habits and even her attitude to a certain extent. “Mein lieber Vater wünscht, ich soll frühe [sic] aufstehen, wie in Lindenau;” she writes in her diary, “ja, wenn er nur wüsste, er würde es selbst sehen, daß es hier gar nicht angeht! Wir gehen vor zwölf Uhr nicht zu Bette” (Vol. 1, 79). Less than two weeks prior to this she had deplored how late her companions slept, and now she offers up an explanation for it. She has additionally taken up playing games with the other girls and a young French preacher whom she had ridiculed in her first letter.

Julchen seems to suspect, though perhaps not quite yet consciously, that her new environment is having a profound effect on her. “Heute am 13. erwachte ich so spät, und war so dämisch, daß ich wieder keinen Augenblick zu irgend einem ernsthaften Gedanken fand” (Vol. 1, 82). Her inability to rise early, a consequence of her new Berlin lifestyle,
precludes her from engaging in the typical prayer and reflection to which she had earlier been accustomed. Beyond the changes to her schedule, Julchen also reveals a transformation in her self-confidence: “Es thut doch dem Herzen weh, überall und überall die Geringste zu sein! Davon habe ich in Lindenau nichts erfahren. Freilich war ich da immer unter meines Gleichen oder Geringern” (Vol. 1, 88). She similarly comments on her brother Fritz, who is laughed at by the girls at her boarding school. Both Julchen and Fritz are completely out of place in their new environments, a fact that is highlighted by their companions and described by Julchen.

Even as Julchen continues to bemoan some of the conditions of her life in Berlin, she also discovers that she can no longer completely embrace the idea of returning home. After mounting a wagon to ride back to the boarding school, Julchen considers how great it would be if the wagon were headed back to Lindenau, “und doch wars auch als wäre [ih]r bei der Vorstellung ein wenig bange” (Vol. 1, 89). The reader can interpret this statement in one of two ways; either Julchen is beginning to enjoy her new lifestyle and activities in Berlin, or she feels she has begun to transform so much she might not be welcomed back or fit properly back into life in Lindenau.

It is most likely a combination of both, for even Julchen acknowledges the extent to which she has begun to acclimate to big-city life. Writing in her diary about the first ball she has attended, Julchen discusses several ‘shameful’ incidents that caused her to feel uncomfortable. Interspersed with these situations, however, are also moments of great pleasure that cause her to reflect on her feelings about her new lifestyle.

This is certainly not a novel set of opinions; the other girls at the boarding school had already mentioned how boring country life is compared to city life. This is the first time, however, that Julchen appears to agree with them.

This transformation in Julchen’s attitude occurs over the space of less than a month; the hesitations and moments of shame Julchen expresses during her first couple of weeks in Berlin slowly give way to equivocations and justifications during her third and subsequent weeks. Grünthal notes this change early on and relates it in rather critical terms: “Kaum ein Vierteljahr aus dem väterlichen Hause, und schon mehr als die ersten Spuren offenbarer Verirrung!” (Vol. 1, 119). Julchen’s diary entries do not reveal the same perceptions her father has until much later; but by March, Julchen appears to have taken up a similar view as her father and offers the following, dismal self-appraisal:


Julchen’s character has changed, although her attitude still strongly reflects the values instilled in her by her father. Her closest friend in the boarding school, a young woman of noble birth named Mariane, holds considerable influence over Julchen. But despite Mariane’s repeated urgings to dismiss Grünthal’s conservative admonitions, Julchen has not yet succumbed to Mariane’s stark anti-religious opinions. She even derides Mariane as being “entsetzlich leichtsinnig” (Vol. 1, 192), though it is questionable whether or not such a condemnation is an accurate representation of Julchen’s feelings or if it is more for her father’s benefit.

If we are to do justice to Julchen’s narrative, we must also acknowledge the possibility that Julchen – like her father – is guilty of the occasional incident of misreporting or underreporting. According to Phelan and Martin, a narrator guilty of underreporting "does not admit to his narratee what both he and the authorial audience know about his personal interest” (92). Julchen’s autobiographical writings (her diary entries) are knowingly read by her father.90 If Julchen wishes to camouflage her own

---

90 The day before Julchen leaves for Berlin, her father presents her with a diary. “Ein solches Tagebuch wird dir die Stelle eines Freundes, wenn ich sagen darf, eines personifizirten Gewissens vertreten,” he tells her. “Und dann gewähre mir zuweilen den Trost der Mittheilung dieses Tagebuchs. Fürchte nicht den
interests and attitudes, she could very well do so by inserting statements that her father would like to hear. In other words, Julchen could be an unreliable narrator as well. The difference between Julchen’s method of interpreting the world around her (and consequently narrating it to her diary) and Grünthal’s approach to narrating Julchen’s life to his audience is that Grünthal has a very clear agenda. Julchen, on the other hand, does not seem to know what she wants most of the time. She is caught between two worlds: the idyllic country life of her childhood and the tumultuous city life into which she has been catapulted. Consequently, I am inclined to believe that Julchen’s narration is more a representation of her attempt to understand and define her feelings (indeed, even herself) than a dissimulation meant to mislead her father. Grünthal’s narrative is didactic; Julchen’s autobiographical narration, on the other hand, is an attempt to come to terms with her experiences. This introspection is bound to result in the occasional contradiction or inaccuracy, as “[t]he stuff of autobiographical storytelling…is drawn from multiple [sic], disparate, and discontinuous experiences and the multiple identities constructed from and constituting those experiences” (Smith and Watson 35). Whereas Grünthal seeks via his narrative to construct a single acceptable model of identity for his daughter, Julchen – by articulating her experiences, desires, judgments, and reactions to the world around her – attempts to construct and respond to the various models of identity that are available to her.

The main interference with Julchen’s narrative undertaking, and with it these models of identity, is her father’s own narration. After providing pages of reproductions of

Richter in mir zu finden, mein Herz vertritt das deinige zu nachdrücklich, als daß du zu fürchten hättest” (Vol. 1, 42-43, emphasis in original).
Julchen’s diary entries, Grünthal suddenly intervenes and summarizes her subsequent diary entries; he informs his audience of Julchen’s eventual failure to revert to her pious lifestyle. The next the reader learns of Julchen concerns an entry written in August – a full five months later! – in which Julchen mentions her father’s tentative visit to Berlin: “Mein Vater...wird mich vielleicht in diesem Herbste besuchen. – Was ist das? Was ist denn in der Vorstellung, das mich erbeben macht? Freude ist dies nicht; denn was weiß Freude von Furcht? – Mein Vater wird kommen, und nach dem Zustande meines Herzens forschen” (Vol. 1., 195-96). This interruption produces a curious effect on the reader, and is perhaps not without didactic intention. On the one hand, the interposition of Grünthal’s narration – he interrupts Julchen’s entry to note that she fails to ascribe any ‘typical’ tender adjective to him – causes the contemporaneous 18th-century reader to sympathize with his view of things. The earlier diary entry reveals a distraught daughter striving towards obedience and is then juxtaposed with an entry that portrays Grünthal as an overly demanding father:

Er sieht so scharf, beobachtet so genau, wird die unverhaltene Offenherzigkeit von mir fordern, die er sonst an mir zu loben pflegte; und diese verliert sich doch so leicht, wenn man sich nicht mehr täglich sieht. Zwar thue ich wohl nichts böses, aber der Vater fordert so viel, und in meinen Jahren kann man doch nicht so ernsthaft an Gott denken, und sich mit diesen erhabenen Gedanken beschäftigen, wie ein Mann in den seinigen. (Vol. 1, 197)

What has ensued in the meantime to produce such a noticeable change in Julchen’s demeanor? As far as the reader can see, nothing, for Grünthal’s character – a homodiegetic narrator who controls the story – offers no further information or diary entries regarding this elapsed period.
On the other hand, by preventing the reader from knowing what precisely precipitated this advanced change in Julchen’s character, the text is able to avoid a corrupting effect on the reader similar to the effects that other “didactic” novels purportedly had on their readers. Rousseau’s *Julie, où la nouvelle Héloïse*, which makes a significant appearance in *Julchen Grünthal*, addresses this concern in the preface. Both novels were written with a female audience in mind, though Rousseau has a different opinion on which females ought to be reading such novels:

Some have tried to make the reading of Novels useful to youth. I know of no more stupid design. It is setting fire to the house in order to put the pumps into action. According to this foolish notion, instead of directing the moral of these sorts of work towards their public, they always address it to young girls, forgetting that young girls have no part in the disorders complained of. In general, their conduct is proper, though their hearts be corrupt. They obey their mothers until they can imitate them. When wives do their duty, be sure that daughters will not fail in theirs. (Julie 17)

Unger is much less explicit regarding this point, and only reminds her readers in the preface to *Julchen Grünthal* “daß sie nicht für Gelehrte, sondern zunächst für ihr eignes Geschlecht, für ihre Mitbürgerinnen schrieb” (Vol. 1, 4). As such, there are two possible interpretations for why some of the more seductive details of Julchen’s lovesickness and ‘transformation’ go unmentioned. Either Grünthal’s narration is used to filter out the specifics of those letters and events that have the potential to corrupt young female readers, or his method of summarizing the details is actually a form of disparaging Julchen (and others who share similar sentiments). After interrupting one of Julchen’s letters, Grünthal offers the following summary:
Nun folgt eine unendlich lange Zergliederung der süßen, namenlosen Gefühle, welche ihr Herz durchschauert, als sie Marianens Bruder zuerst gesehen. Als sie auf dem ersten Balle den Walzer mit ihm getanzt, habe unnennbare Wonne durch ihr ganzes Wesen gezuckt. Sie schildert mit vieler Lebhaftigkeit und sehr romanhaft alle die Kämpfe, die es ihr gekostet; die sie nämlich hätte bestehen sollen, aber mit keinem Gedanken bestanden hat. Erst war sie zu schüchtern gewesen, seine, ihn durch den Friseur zugestellten, Briefe anzunehmen; dann, wenn sie wieder bedacht hätte, daß Andre, die besser geachtet würden, als sie, nicht so viel Umstände machten, hätte sie einen raschen Entschluß gefaßt, und einen in der Eile angenommen und zu sich gesteckt… (Vol. 1, 262-263, emphasis in original)

The emphasis of certain words, such as “süß,” gives the impression that Grünthal has a very different way of perceiving and describing such emotions. In fact, he uses the adjective “romanhaft” to describe Julchen’s narrative, a word which has pejorative connotations and implies that her account is full of hyperbole.

These discrepancies are important textual markers that should alert the reader to the fact that neither perspective – neither that of Grünthal nor that of Julchen – is to be accepted unequivocally. Instead, these two narratives engage in a dialogue with each other, both fighting for legitimacy. They furthermore illuminate the extent to which perspective shapes the individual’s experience, indeed even one’s entire identity.\(^\text{91}\) Grünthal’s interpretation of Julchen’s time in Berlin is filtered through his understanding of a woman’s proper place in the family and in society. Her mere presence in Berlin is already a step off the “right” path. Julchen’s narrative is much more uneven, resulting from her attempts to reconcile her father’s words and wishes with the daily admonitions to the contrary that she receives from

\(^{91}\) The relationship between narrative and identity will be discussed in further detail in the next section.
her teachers and companions in Berlin. These considerations also reveal the extent to which Julchen is directly affected by the input of those around her, as her personality and opinions mirror first those of her father, and later those of her friend Mariane.

If we compare Julchen’s narrative with her father’s, it is clear that – although Julchen and Grünthal do differ in their understandings of and acceptance of female emotions – Julchen has inherited a great many values from her father. She frequently perceives and reacts to life around her through the eyes of her parents (more often through her father’s eyes). She is rarely capable of approaching a situation without falling back on a remembered word or piece of advice from her mother or father. So great is her father’s

92These reflections do not emerge arbitrarily. They are often considerations Julchen has when responding to a situation that is either new or confusing for her. Just a few examples, taken from a series of letters or diary entries, are as follows: “Meine lieben Eltern haben mich gelehrt, ich solle mich allenthalben mit anständiger Freimütigkeiten betragen, ein tugendhaftes Gemüth scheue nur Gott” (Vol. 1, 93-94). “Einst sprach mein lieber Vater über weibliche Kleinheiten, und rügte die Bitterkeit, mit der die Frauenzimmer oft Abwesende behandeln. Da meinte meine sanfte, immer gütige Mutter: so häßliche Gemüther gebe es schwerlich, wie der Verfasser, aus dem der Vater uns vorlas, sie schilderte. Hier ist, was ich selbst mit angehört habe” (Vol. 1, 96). “Mir fiel ein, was mein Vater einst zur Mutter sagte, als die Forstmeisterin sich so impertinent in unserm eigenen Hause aufführte: »Bleib’ bei Deinen Genossen, so wirst Du nicht verstoßen.« Das hat, glaub’ ich, Luther einmal gesagt” (Vol. 1, 100-101). “Ich habe noch nie anders, als einige Menuets auf meiner Cousine Hochzeit, getanzt, und dazu munterte mich mein lieber Vater selbst auf” (Vol. 1, 101). “Hier glaube ich, etwas von der Ursache bemerkt zu haben, weshalb mein lieber Vater oft sagte, er möchte mich lieber auf dem Krankenbette, als in dem Taumel eines wilden Tanzes sehen” (Vol. 1, 102). “An dieser Freude wird mein Vater gewiss nichts auszusetzen haben; er, der selbst Musik über alles liebt” (Vol. 1, 107).
influence over her that she appears to have completely internalized his admonitions. In anticipation of a visit from him, Julchen relates her anxieties and frustrations:

Guter Gott! Was ich mir auch sagen mag, und so gern ich mich betäuben möchte, so fühle ich doch im Innersten, ich fühle es recht bitter, daß etwas in mir liegt, womit ich nicht werde bestehen können, wenn mein Vater mich zur Rechenschaft auffordert! Mein Vater! sage ich? – Ach! wenn's der nur wäre! aber eine Stimme, tief in meinem Innersten, ruft mir zu: »Du bist nicht, was Du seyn sollst! wiege Dich nicht in betäubenden Schlummer ein!« (Vol. 1, 199, emphasis in original)

Reiterated here in Julchen’s statement is the same sentiment expressed earlier by Grünthal when he insisted that Julchen “wäre was sie seyn müsse, wenn sie eine kluge, fromme Hausfrau würde” (20). This brief excerpt reveals the extent to which Grünthal’s admonitions have become a part of Julchen and her life. It isn’t just her father chastising her for her (mal)development; her conscience now echoes this sentiment back to her as well.

These incidents reveal that Julchen is not given any space to develop on her own. Her predilections emerge in direct relationship to her father’s influence, and her development occurs on a parallel trajectory both to his desired and also unintended interventions. That is to say, even where Julchen does not develop as her father wishes her to, it often still can be traced back to his interference in her life. Caught between the expectations of her father and the allure of her new lifestyle – which includes the heavily influential Mariane, a corrupt(ing) young woman by Grünthal’s standards – Julchen is never given the opportunity to develop a unique character. If we read Julchen’s lack of autonomy as a reflection of Unger’s insights on the individual, then it becomes clear how difficult it is to possess a character that can resist the influence of the external world.

91
Even Grünthal, who would like to believe that his daughter possesses the ability to resist the influence of those around her, plays his part in (mis)shaping her during her time in Berlin. He explains to Madame Brennfeld, Julchen’s “eigentliche Erziehung ist vollbracht. Das Gebäude war aufgeführt, ehe ich sie Ihren Händen übergab” (Vol. 1, 154). Julchen has already been educated to become what she must be; the implication of this is that it is her responsibility now to adhere to the tenets of that education. Grünthal’s rather unforgiving attitude towards any change in Julchen’s personality confirms this. As Julchen’s letters to Mariane demonstrate, however, there is still much development of her character that takes place during her stay in Berlin. Most prominently, Julchen begins to distance herself from her father and his admonitions. In a letter to Mariane Julchen confesses: “Heute soll ich an meinen Vater schreiben; Gott weiß, wie ich das machen soll! Es ist, als ob sich mein Herz vor ihm zurückzöge, seitdem er wieder verheirathet ist, u.s.w.«” (Vol. 1, 271-272). She clearly lays the blame on his second marriage to a woman who refuses to acknowledge Julchen’s existence. Grünthal rejects this indictment: “Sie sehen, lieber Seelmann,” he explains, “wie mein armes Mädchen sich selbst täuschte, und ihre traurige Entfernung von dem Vaterherzen nicht in sich, sondern in meiner zweiten Heirath zu finden meinte” (Vol. 1, 272). Although Grünthal has already distanced himself from his daughter,93 he cannot accept that such actions could precipitate in Julchen a similar distancing. He refuses to admit it, but it seems clear enough to the reader (even as the situation emerge’s in Grünthal’s own narrative) that he has played no small role in alienating his daughter from the values and lifestyle he once attempted to instill in her.

93 See pages 50-52 above.
By refusing to acknowledge that his actions have directly contributed to Julchen’s new attitude and developments, Grünthal misinterprets the scene and effectively closes the door to communication with his daughter. He is not receptive to her complaints because he does not interpret them the same way that she does, nor does he allow for the legitimacy of her perspective. Not only does this refusal push Julchen further away from him, but, as I have already argued elsewhere, it places his entire narrative under suspicion; we must ask ourselves what else he has misevaluated. I argue here that Grünthal’s perception of the individual, or at least of Julchen’s individuality, suffers from a misevaluation; his insistence that Julchen was already “formed” as a person before leaving for Berlin does not coincide with later images of her. Whether or not she was ever capable of remaining the child that Grünthal remembers her to be, the fact remains that Julchen continues to develop during her time away from home. Rather than suffering from “bad decisions,” as Grünthal views it, Julchen actually undergoes a change in personality.

Unfortunately for Julchen, as she begins to distance herself increasingly from her father’s values and way of thinking, she fails to reach a point where she begins to think for herself. Instead, she replaces one set of values (those of her father) with another – those of Mariane and of the (French) novels she has taken to reading. In one of her letters to Mariane, Julchen reveals how depressed she feels agonizing over her feelings for her love interest, Mariane’s brother. “Warum hat er [mein Vater] mir doch so ängstliche Grundsätze beigebracht?” Julchen writes, “sie martern mich, und stören mich in den süßesten Gefühlen meines Jugendlebens. Hätte ich immer die Einsichten gehabt, die ich jetzt erlangt habe,
wie viel bittere Stunden zählt' ich weniger!« (Vol. 1, 259-260). Grünthal interjects here to point out that:

Zur Erlangung dieser Einsichten war ihr nicht sowohl Fräulein Mariane, als die alte unwissende taube Französin behülflich gewesen... indem sie mit ihren Untergebenen ihre Lieblingslesereien wieder einmal aus dem alten morsch en Koffer, der alles war, was sie auf dieser Welt besaß, hervorholte. Diese bestanden nun in nichts anderm, als der Prinzessin von Kleve, dem glücklich gewordenen Bauer von Mariveaux, den Denkwürdigkeiten eines Mannes von Stande, Crebillon's Schriften, und mehr dergleichen feuergebenden Romanen, welche die geheimsten Tiefen ihrer Empfindung durchwühlten, und in gährender Hitze zum Aufbrausen brachten (Vol. 1, 260-261).

Although Grünthal would like to believe that these tendencies are not permanent – that his presence might help to “restore” Julchen to her former self, his insights reveal how fully Julchen’s character is dependent upon the influence of those around her. The way she reacts to things is directly related to the values that have been instilled in her. First influenced by her father and then, as Grüthal points out, by Mariane and by novels, Julchen never develops into an independent person.

Even after Mariane’s death Julchen continues to be (mis)guided by external stimuli, most notably by literature.94 After she is removed from the boarding school she is sent to

---

94 In treating Grüenthal’s narrative above, I also touched on the possibility that the author intended to shield her audience from potentially damaging consequences of being able to identify too closely with Julchen Grüenthal’s protagonist. At the time that Unger wrote the first volume of the novel, Lesewut was considered a very real and dangerous threat (see Claire Baldwin’s discussion of it in The Emergence of the Modern German Novel or Becker-Cantarino’s Frau und Literatur, pp. 170-77), and it is likely that Unger was concerned about the potential ramifications of creating a protagonist who mirrored the dangerous examples of other 18th-century novels. In fact, Julchen herself could be said to suffer from Lesewut after she is profoundly affected by her reading of Rousseau’s Julie, ou la nouvelle Héloïse (Vol. 1, 267-271). Most scholars dealing with Julchen Grüenthal have touched on this consideration in their analysis of the novel. Although some critics have viewed Julchen’s story as an unambiguous statement on the dangers of reading - “»Julchen Grüenthal« hingegen steht für die schlechten Wirkungen der Romanlektüre” (Meise 62) - Giesler’s interpretation implies that the sociopolitical and psychological implications of reading novels are not always negative. “Ideen und Mentalitäten verändern sich im Wechselspiel mit literarischen Mustern,” she writes when referring to the “politische, soziale und psychische Bedeutung von Literatur” (Giesler
live with her cousin Karoline and Karoline’s husband Falk. One night Karoline observes Julchen and Falk reading to each other from Goethe’s *Stella*, a scene which she then relates to Grünthal in a letter:


What follows is, rather quickly, the realization that Falk and Julchen have fallen in love with each other, evidently a result of their evening literary encounters. They both attempt to persuade Karoline to concede to their relationship but, as Karoline is unwilling to do so, “drückten sie sich in ihren Briefen an [Karoline] aus. Julchen hatte im Herzen immer nicht gezweifelt, daß [Karoline] aufrichtig ihr Glück wolle. Sie zierte sich unausstehlich, sprach vom unwiderstehlichen Drange gleichgestimmter Seelen, von erstaunlichem Kummer, vielleicht betrüben zu müssen, und von der höchst traurigen Nothwendigkeit, der besten, edelsten Frau einen geliebten Mann zu rauben” (Vol. 1, 411-412, emphasis in original).

The emphasis on Julchen’s emotional state reminds the reader of the similar accentuation Grünthal had added to Julchen’s thoughts when discussing her previous love interest. What Karoline most likely sees, and what the reader should perhaps also understand, is that

147). Part of my argument echoes this sentiment: Julchen is very much influenced by the literature she reads, not only at the boarding school but also while at her cousin’s house. It is not within the scope of my project, however, to discuss the implications of *Lesewut* for either *Julchen Grünthal* specifically or 18th-century society in general. It suffices to note the extent to which even a brief consideration of this phenomenon reflects the contemporaneous and modern opinion that literature has the ability to produce a profound effect on the individual.
Julchen and Falk’s relationship is predicated on false emotions, inadvertently internalized from a work of fiction. Fictional in origin and fictional in its real-life manifestation, the relationship between Julchen and Falk is doomed from the very beginning. Indeed, the narrator lingers only briefly over the details of Julchen and Falk’s life together before revealing that the relationship has ended with Falk’s disappearance and Julchen’s subsequent absconding with a Russian nobleman (who, incidentally, is also already married to a woman named Eudoxia).

2.2.5 Narrative and the Self

Having demonstrated how Julchen’s character is ultimately incapable of influencing her own development or of establishing an authentic self, I now return to the concepts I elucidated on briefly in the introduction to my dissertation. Analyzing Julchen’s character under the rubric of the individual means searching for the presence of a “self” – what philosophers of Unger’s time understood to encompass subjectivity (in the sense of agency: being a subject, rather than an object) and uniqueness. In the case of Julchen, the reader is left to contend with the question of her individuality – who exactly is Julchen Grünthal? Is there more to her character than the internalized admonitions of her father, the adopted beliefs taken from Mariane, and the emotions instigated and fueled by the literature she reads? Does Julchen have a “self” buried under all of this? In order to answer this question, we need to examine the text for traces of Julchen’s “subjectivity” – that is, the extent to which she is a subject.

95 See pp. 15-19.
The logical place to begin is in analyzing Julchen’s own narrative, as I have already done to some extent above. The problem here is that Julchen never appears directly in the first half of the story, and almost never directly in the second half; the only representations and manifestations of Julchen’s character are letters, diary entries, and recounted scenes shared first by her father and later by Minna. Birte Giesler offers some useful reflections on this:

Dabei sind die von Julchen verfassten Briefe und Aufzeichnungen die einzigen Textpassagen, die über das Innenleben der Titelheldin überhaupt Auskunft geben, und sie machen einen relativ kleinen Teil des gesamten Romans aus. Weil die Innensicht als Selbst-Beschreibung, also aus einem subjektiven Winkel gegeben wird, hat sie eine andere Qualität als die objektive Sichtweise einer auktorialen, allwissenden Erzählinstanz. (Im übrigen gilt dies auch für die Aussagen über das Seelenleben aller anderen Romanfiguren. Da das neutrale Erzählmedium [the heterodiegetic narration] der Rahmenhandlung nicht über Innensicht in die Figuren verfügt, erhalten die Lesenden nur über die Äußerungen der Figuren Einblicke in deren Innenleben.) Daraus ergeben sich weitreichende Konsequenzen für die Bewertung von Julchens Auftritt im Romanganzen: Die Titelheldin tritt ausschließlich als Gesprächsgegenstand, als Objekt in Erscheinung. Sie erscheint nur – zum Teil mehrfach – vermittelt. (94)

Giesler advances the very convincing interpretation that, because Julchen is always mediated by other characters in the novel, she never appears as a subject. We could attempt to argue that her autobiographical writings allow her to emerge as a subject, and yet they lack the kind of depth that would allow for any real interiority of her character. As

96 Helga Meise also views Julchen as not a subject, but an “ungeformtes-formbares Objekt” (47). This echoes Sylvia Bovenschen’s comparison of a “geschichtlich ungeformten ›Wesenssubstanz Frau‹” to “d[em] endliche[n] bürgerliche[n] Subjekt Mann” (32). While it hardly seems novel at this point to assert that women were not generally considered subjects of their own in the 18th century, the fact that not all the women in Julchen Grünthal are equally lacking in subjectivity means that this does bear considerable discussion.
Kontje observes, “[i]nstead of providing space for self-exploration and self-development, as was the case for both Clarissa and Sophie von Sternheim, Julchen’s diary is to function as her ‘personified conscience’” (Women 54). This personified conscience is, as I have shown, an internalization of her father’s values. Despite the development that occurs with Julchen’s character, it is difficult to pinpoint an actual personality. The sentiments she expresses stem from the influence of those around her.

We could even go so far as to argue that, because Julchen’s diary entries are written with her father in mind, the imposition of his moral framework precludes her from developing an individuality of her own (more accurately, Unger does not allow Julchen her own individuality and instead ascribes Julchen’s personality to fatherly influences). Such a reading of the novel is reinforced when looking at the narrative interference of Julchen’s father. His homodiegetic control of her story reflects how significantly he has shaped, developed, and controlled Julchen’s entire person. The reader never “sees” Julchen’s actual presence in the story, because there is no character behind the assumed value systems that she presents. Julchen’s character is nothing more than a reflection of those around her.

This relationship between narrative and the self, namely the mirroring of Julchen’s lack of self/individuality at the narrative level, should prompt us to investigate further the extent to which identity is dependent upon narrative. In other words, how is our identity constructed not only by others, but also by ourselves? In his exploration into *Lebensgeschichte als philosophisches Problem*, Dieter Thomä reflects “nicht [über] Erzählen als Nebentätigkeit, sondern [über] den Einsatz der Erzählung im zu lebenden Leben selbst” (7-8). Referring to Getrude Stein and others, Thomä references and rephrases
the mantra *narrare necesse est* into the assertion that “[w]er nicht (mehr) erzählen könnte, dem würde man ein menschliches Leben nicht (mehr) zuschreiben” (12). This requisite narrative does not comprise merely “das äußerliche Verhältnis…daß man über etwas redet, sondern [auch] die Binnenperspektive, daß man sich bei der Art, wie man sein Leben führt, immer schon erzählerischer Mittel bedient” (12). As Thomä goes on to state explicitly – and as is implied in his statement here, individuals are *constructed*, and the ability to construct oneself is directly related to the ability to narrate.

Marya Schechtman’s treatise on “The Constitution of Selves” deals with this same paradigm of self-construction via narrative. Her approach is initially somewhat broad and addresses the problem of personal identity as it emerges in two different lines of inquiry: that of reidentification - “the metaphysical question of how a single entity persists through change” (7) - and that of characterization - “which actions, experiences, beliefs, values, desires, character traits, and so on…are to be attributed to a given person” (73). Schechtman’s goal is to refute reidentification as a possibility for addressing the concept of personal identity and to turn instead to the question of characterization for answers. She argues that “to define a person’s identity in the sense that is at issue in the characterization question, one must not only be able to know which characteristics are part of his history, but also their role in that history -- one must know which of the included characteristics are central to who he is, and so part of his ‘true’ identity, and which are incidental or misleading” (77, emphasis in original). Very simply put, a person’s identity is constructed
on the basis of knowing one’s (“true”) characteristics and their influences on his or her actions.\(^\text{97}\)

The question of personal identity then becomes one of ascertaining one’s own characteristics, and Schechtman argues that this occurs via narrative.\(^\text{98}\) “Weaving strands from these discussions [that persons are self-creating or that the lives of persons are narrative in form], I develop a view according to which a person creates his identity by forming an autobiographical narrative -- a story of his life” (Schechtman 93). For Schechtman, this narrative must contain crucial elements of self-reflection. The person or character who creates the narrative must be an active agent in this constitution of the self:

An identity in the sense of the characterization question, is not, I claim, something that an individual has whether she knows it or not, but something that she has because she acknowledges her personhood and appropriates certain actions and experiences as her own. Personhood and personal identity thus rely crucially on an individual’s inner life and her attitude toward her actions and experiences. (Schechtman 95)

If we return to the relationship between autobiography and the novel (specifically novels that investigate the life and development of an individual)\(^\text{99}\) and include Blanckenburg’s

\(^{97}\) Schechtman’s approach to characterization echoes the sentiments found in Friedrich Blanckenburg’s \textit{Versuch über den Roman}. In novels, Blanckenburg argues, “der Mensch [muss] uns so gezeigt werden, daß wir erst dies an ihm sehen, und dann auch an ihm bemerken können, wie er zu dem Besitz dieser [seiner] Eigenschaften gelanget ist” (15). The primary difference is that Schechtman is more concerned with explaining the importance of knowing our own characteristics, whereas those writing in the 18\textsuperscript{th} century (like Blanckenburg) are more interested in understanding how we come to possess these characteristics. The focus of both modes of investigation, however, are the characteristics of an individual and their effect on his or her life and actions.

\(^{98}\) It also reflects heavily on the individual’s status as a subject. In an analysis that indirectly supports Giesler’s assertion that Julchen’s narrative reflects a lack of subjectivity (i.e. that Julchen is not a subject), Schechtman argues that narrative capacity is a prerequisite for subjectivity (144-48).

\(^{99}\) See page 21 of the introduction: the Bildungsroman of the 18\textsuperscript{th} century was an outgrowth of autobiographical narrative.
assessement of the 18th-century novel as a story of one’s inner life [innere Geschichte], then this linking of narrative to self is perfectly compatible with any attempt to analyze and explain the individual. Indeed, the only real problem in turning to more contemporary philosophy to give greater definition to the relationship between narrative and the self such as we see it in Unger’s texts is the possibility of conflicting terminology. Schechtman explicitly differentiates between identity and an individual, arguing that the latter has not necessarily achieved “personhood.” What she means by this is that a person’s identity hinges upon his or her ability to reflect on who and how he or she is. Though expressed somewhat differently than in my own approach, this view is synonymous with my argument that a self is constructed in direct relationship to narrative: only by reflecting on how a person is and why can a character in a text be said to possess a self.101

This linking of narrative to self has significant repercussions for any analysis of any narrative, but particularly so for a narrative filtered through another narrative. Thomä’s premise that the desire and ability to narrate is a reflection of an individual’s self-construction and life, combined with Schechtman’s argument that this self-conception must find corroboration in other narratives,102 highlights the importance of considering all the narratives in the text when investigating a given character. If one character lacks the

---

101 Indeed, I would also argue that the approach itself is not so anachronistic, as even Schechtman’s undertaking is an outgrowth of philosophy that predates Unger. Schechtman points both to the influence of 19th-century philosophers such as Jean-Paul Sartre, Martin Heidegger, Alasdair MacIntyre, and others, but also to concepts of the person found in works by John Locke. In other words, locating the question of the individual within such concerns as personhood, narrative, and self-awareness is not a recent phenomenon.
102 “Personhood, it might be said, is an intrinsically social concept. To enter into the world of persons an individual needs, roughly speaking, to grasp her culture’s concept of a person and apply it to herself. It is this recognition which leads to the constraints on an identity-constituting narrative -- to be identity-defining an individual’s self - narrative must conform in certain crucial respects to the narrative others tell of his life” (Schechtman 95).
ability to narrate (i.e. if the author does not allow a particular character as much narrative control) while another character’s narrative dominates, then the relationship between the two narratives sheds light on the extent to which a self can or cannot emerge. In the case of Julchen, her lifestory is not only mediated by her father, but it also does not emerge in his narrative in the same terms as it does in hers. In Schechtman’s terms, Julchen does not “grasp her culture’s concept of a person and apply it to herself” (95), though her father certainly attempts to do so for her. Within her limited narrative, Julchen does not succeed at offering any recognizable self-representation, in part because her narrative has been severely condensed and replaced by her father’s own narrative. Although her letters and diary entries allow the reader insight into the changes that are occurring in her personality, they lack any extensive reflection on such developments. Already, according to Schechtman’s narrative-self theory, Julchen fails to possess a self because she does not “appropriate certain actions and experiences as her own” (Schechtman 95, as quoted above). Although her story is fictional in nature, the reader might still wonder: if her father had not been so intrusive would Julchen have had the necessary space to assume the necessary narrative control to emerge as a self?

Ultimately this question is irrelevant, as Unger allows us only the view of a character whose narrative breaks down as a direct result of her father. Initially Grünthal only suppresses some of Julchen’s letters and diary entries from the reader, but he is later directly responsible for the dissolution of Julchen’s (future) narrative. Whether in Lindenau, in the boarding school in Berlin, living with Karoline, or even during her brief relationship with Falk, Julchen feels somewhat haunted by her father’s presence. She
finally reaches a breaking point at the end of volume one, as is evidenced in her last letter to her father:


Julchen disappears after this letter, ostensibly never to be heard from again (indeed we would never have heard from her again had Unger not felt prompted to write a second volume in face of unauthorized continuations); her narrative ends here. She has to leave, not only for her father’s sake as she believes, but also for her own sake. Julchen recognizes that as long as she remains in Germany, within her father’s grasp, she is caught up in his worldview and destined to receive either denunciation or forgiveness from him. Returning home is not a possibility, for she cannot bear to receive either; she can no longer accept the conditions of her father’s world, even as she acknowledges their legitimacy.

Not only does this narrative abdication dissolve any last remaining possibility for the author to afford Julchen a “self” of her own, but it is also an indication that Julchen never really had an identity in the first place – at least not one that could withstand her environment. As Schechtman asserts, a “conception [of a person] itself…is not sufficient
to determine identity. Unless an individual applies that conception to herself, forming a self-conception that coheres with it, she possesses neither the capacities nor the subjectivity that make a person” (135). Julchen possesses neither subjectivity nor even a concept of herself that would allow her to define her identity. Even when she endeavors to explore her interests outside of her father’s control, she falls prey to the passions of others and lacks a direction of her own. Consequently she must quite literally disappear in order to escape the influence of those around her. As I have attempted to demonstrate, this outcome is not only a direct result of the narrative elements I have discussed above, but is also reflected in them. After struggling with her father for “narrative control,” Julchen finally abandons any attempt to construct her own character, and disappears from the text completely.

2.3.1 Finding One’s Voice

If narrative control is a reflection of the individual’s control over his or her own self and development, as I have attempted to demonstrate in the “negative” case of Julchen, then we should be able to find a counter-example that further validates this proposition by looking to the other characters. Of the other narratives presented in the book – and there are quite a few¹⁰³ – one in particular notably complements Julchen’s. Its significance is underscored by the fact that it begins and even dominates the second volume of the novel. By examining first this narrative, recounted by Minna Thalheim, and then reintegrating

¹⁰³ Ideally my analysis would include closer considerations of Grünthal’s narrative as it concerns his own life/background, as well as an inclusion of Fritz’s, Mariane’s, and Karoline’s letters. Since, however, my point can be made sufficiently by examining primarily Julchen’s and Minna’s stories, and due furthermore to space constraints in this chapter, they will be excluded for the time being. Although I am not treating them here, it should still be emphasized that their potential contributions to this analysis deserve at least a brief acknowledgment.
Julchen’s subsequent narrative, I will explore the extent to which finding one’s voice (i.e. constructing a narrative) constitutes the expression of a self. Julchen succumbs to her environment in Berlin and finally concedes fully to her father’s values; at no point does the author give Julchen her own voice. Even in the brief insights into Julchen’s character through her diary entries, the reader glimpses little more than an attempt to come to terms with the conflicting input of those around Julchen. Her development represents the dissolution of one set of values at the hands of another. Minna, despite a number of parallel life experiences to those of Julchen, offers a notably different image of development which does result in a self that is capable of emerging and standing on its own.

2.3.2 Minna’s Narrative

A striking difference between Minna’s narrative in volume two and Julchen’s narrative in volume one is that the tone of the narratives has changed. Whereas volume one is dominated by Grünthal’s narrative and interspersed with a series of letters and diary entries, volume two relates the confessions first of Minna and then of Julchen. Julchen’s “confessions,” however, are merely “die Begebenheiten der Unglücklichen, nicht ihre Gefühle” (Vol. 2, 251) and comprise fewer than 100 of the 350 pages in Volume 2. Minna’s confessions are much more striking due not only to their length (they are nearly 172 pages long), but also to the nature of her story. They recount, from childhood on, the life and development of an individual who, like Rousseau, undertakes to explain and examine the various conditions that have made her what she is today. The allusion to Rousseau’s *Confessions* is made explicit in Minna’s preface to her life story: “Der liebenswürdige
Sonderling von Genf schrieb seine Confessions, vermochte aber nicht ihre Bekanntwerdung bei seinem Leben zu ertragen. Ich stehe im Begrif [sic] weit beschämendere Bekenntnisse abzulegen: zwar nicht vor dem Publikum, aber die Beichte ist demohnerachtet immer ein Punkt, der große Ueberwindung kostet” (Vol. 2, 14). Birte Giesler, focusing predominantly on the philosophical undertones Unger gleaned from Rousseau’s own writings, has already noted the increased presence of Rousseau in Unger’s reworking of Julchen Grünthal (184). These philosophical undertones would not have gone unnoticed by the contemporaneous reader, and indeed the overt reference to Rousseau’s autobiography might have reminded one of the statements made in the opening to his Confessions: “Je ne suis fait comme aucun de ceux que j’ai vu; j’ose croire n’être fait comme aucun de ceux qui existent. Si je ne vaux pas mieux, au moins je suis autre…c’est dont on ne peut me juger qu’après m’avoir lu.”

Despite the moderately accusing tone leveled at his reader in daring them to judge him, Rousseau makes it clear that it is necessary to know him, literally “to have read him” [m’avoir lu], before being capable of understanding him. It is this very model of individuality – fiercely unique yet still predicated on one’s environment and experiences – that informs Minna’s autobiographical undertakings in volume two. The focus on the development of the individual, as well as its inherent relationship to narrative, is made even more explicit here in the second half of Julchen Grünthal.

---

104 “I am not made like any that I have seen; I venture to believe that I was not made like any that exist. If I am not more deserving, at least I am different” (5).

105 Even Rousseau supports the relationship between narrative and the self: in the case of his own self-presentation (which he produces via narrative) others can only know him by reading him. This metonymic substitution of text for self occurs in Unger’s novels as well, albeit more indirectly expressed.
An equally important change between volumes one and two is the presentation of the mediating homodiagetic narrator. Whereas Julchen’s story was told through a homodiagetic narrator, Minna not only tells her own story but also proceeds to act as a homodiagetic narrator for others. And while the unnamed heterodiagetic narrator remains as before, she does not intrude much at all. Instead, Minna is able to relate her lifestory unimpeded by anything except for Ida’s [Julchen’s] reactions of anxiety or fatigue, foreshadowing that the outcome of Minna’s life will be substantially different from Julchen’s experiences thus far. By allowing Minna a narrative voice uninterrupted by any controlling figure (such as a father), Unger implies that the ability to tell one’s own story is a direct reflection of the extent to which a character has succeeded into developing into his or her own (unique) person.

Furthermore, how and where one recounts his or her lifestory is as important as the ability to do so. Helga Meise notes that Grünthal betrays Julchen’s trust in revealing her letters and diary entries despite his promise to keep them secret (47). Minna offers an indirect indictment of such an undertaking when she asserts that the openness of sharing oneself is a very private matter; indeed, she refuses to share her lifestory under the light of day. “Wenn die grauere Dämmerung mich schützt, dann…” and only then, will she speak (Vol. 2, 14). Minna’s decision to share her life story at her own discretion is a curious juxtaposition to Julchen’s narrative and has important implications for a consideration of both characters. Julchen had no control over what portions of her life’s adventures were revealed, nor was she capable of controlling how they were shared (Volume 1). Minna, on the other hand, maintains absolute control over her narrative for the duration of the second
volume. As scholars have pointed out that Julchen’s broken narrative indicates her position as an object – rather than a subject, the opposite might hold true for Minna.106

This subjectivity is a particularly important requisite for any level of autonomy, it would seem, in a society that did not allow women much independence otherwise. Sylvia Bovenschen addresses “die Forderung nach dem Verzicht der Frauen auf alle ökonomischen und politischen Ansprüche, auf die Brachlegung ihrer kreativen Fähigkeiten, auf ein fremdgesteuertes passives Dasein hinaus. Nur so kann sich der Mann beim Anblick der Frau in dem Bild spiegeln, das er vom Weiblichen hat” (34). This reflection of man in the image of woman is precisely what we see in the case of Julchen, who reflects her father’s own values. Minna is not nearly so passive; in telling her story, she ‘transgresses’ the stipulation that she leave her creative abilities uncultivated. In doing so she also acquires a level of subjectivity that was not available to Julchen. Why and how Minna is able to do this when Julchen was not is revealed in her narrative and reflects the disparate development of the two women.

Like Julchen, Minna was born and initially raised in a provincial town, the daughter of an educated man who enjoyed reading and sharing his books on classical literature and newer schöne literature with his family. Minna is careful to emphasize the difference between the novels of her childhood and those of the present: “Diese [schöne Literatur] stand damals in ihrer schönsten Blüthe, und, wenn ich so sagen darf, im reinsten

106 Giesler has already presented the argument that Minna’s allusion to Rousseau at the beginning of her confessions indicates “daß Minna sich als Subject ihrer Geschichte fühlt” (198), although Giesler herself believes, “[a]nders als das, was Rousseau und die männlichen Autoren klassischer Autobiographien zu demonstrieren streben, zeigt Minnas Geschichte gerade kein »seiner selbst im Lauf der Entwicklung mächtig gewordenes Subject«” (199).
Consequently, it is not until after her father’s death, when Minna discovers some “üppige französische Romane” and begins to read them that she notices a change in her behavior (Vol. 2, 35).


Minna finds herself overcome by these French novels and eventually engages in a very brief courtship with a local officer – if one can call it that (he sends her a poorly written but passionate letter). Despite Minna’s decision ultimately to confess her “transgression,” she is able to enjoy, even condone, the feelings of love that are awakened in her – unlike Julchen who feels herself oppressed by her father’s disapproval of such things. Even now, as an adult, Minna admits to her audience this joy of love:


The tone is notably different from Julchen’s own musings on love in Volume 1: “Sollte das Sünde seyn, was der Schöpfer selbst mit glühenden Buchstaben in unsre weiblichen Herzen schrieb? War es denn Sünde, daß mein Vater meine Mutter liebte, ehe sie die Seinige
wurde?” (259). The direct reference back to her father is noteworthy, as is the fact that Julchen cannot enjoy these emotions. Both as a girl and also much later in life, Minna is more inclined to accept the legitimacy of such emotions. Julchen, on the other hand, remains plagued by guilt and by the “ängstliche Grundsätze” that her father had instilled in her (Vol. 1, 259-260). Whereas she is doomed to view and judge things from her father’s perspective, Minna is capable of appreciating something despite the general (social and familial) unacceptance of it.

Unfortunately for Minna, her desire to pursue this love ultimately leads to problems, the first of which follows her confession of her feelings to her mother. After her stepfather learns of the situation, he ships her off to his sister in Berlin – none other than Madame Brennfeld. Minna’s first day in Berlin is so unfamiliar and distasteful that she concludes she will never truly fit in: “Ich fühlte, daß ich in dieser Familie nie einheimisch werden könne; der Ton derselben war mir durchaus fremd und mißfällig. An altdeutsche Fülle und Überfluß gewöhnt, bemerkt’ ich allenthalben den kargen Zuschnitt, nebst dem lächerlichen Bestreben, es größern Häusern gleich zu thun” (Vol. 2, 69-70). The implications of such a statement are that Minna will not be influenced by Madame Brennfeld and the boarding school mentality to the same extent that Julchen was. As some scholars have already noted, there is a strong vein of anti-French sentiments that pervades the whole novel, but the second half more significantly. Todd Kontje points out that, in Unger’s continuation of the novel, “Germans and their culture take a stand against the French and their Revolution” (Women 56). Shortly after Minna’s arrival in Berlin she derides the habit of using French to give a false “polish” to things: “Wie ich überhaupt schon bemerkt hatte, daß es hier zum Tone gehörte, die gemeisten Dinge mit schönen Namen zu putzen, so nannte man bei Tische zähes Schmoorfleisch »à la daube,« gemein gekochte Krebse »à la dauphine,« einen, an der Treppe stehenden, baufälligen Kleiderschrank »eine Garderobe” (Vol. 2, 70-71). Although Julchen comes to embrace the French language and fashions in Volume 1, especially due to Mariane’s influence, Minna’s quite different experience at the boarding house as a complete outsider precludes her from adopting French as a preferred language and thus communicates to the reader that the German is preferable to the French.
Minna’s conjectures accurately reveal, the subsequent year and half spent in the service of the greedy, wasteful, and abusive Brennfeld result in a very differently socialized individual. Rather than embracing the lifestyle of her environment, Minna develops a building resentment for it.

Despite her poor treatement and general dislike of her conditions, a notable incident occurs one day when Minna feels compelled to cry after Madame Brennfeld is “publicly” shamed by a letter she has received. Minna’s compassion wins her the affections of her future husband, Councilor Thalheim. Desperate to escape her situation in Madame Brennfeld’s house, Minna consents to the marriage, although she admits to having had emotional reservations:

Bis jetzt, meine Ida, haben Sie mich als ein leidlich gutes Mädchen kennen gelernt; aber der zweite Akt meines Lebens! – ach, Ida, was für eine Erzählung steht Ihnen bevor! – – Die jugendliche Liebelei abgerechnet, die mir nicht ins Herz drang, war ich wohl ein gutes Mädchen: denn mir gefiel zwar die Liebe, die meinem Wesen Bedürfniß des Herzens schien; der Geliebte war es jedoch nicht, den ich eigentlich meinte. Ein Besserer würde mir besser gefallen haben; aber der, an dem ich meine Schwungkraft übte, war mir der Nächste, und lief mir in den Weg. Ach, ich fühlte mich so ganz geschaffen, durch Liebe zu beglücken, und beglückt zu seyn; aber ich sollte auf anderem Wege die Glückssonne finden, welche die zweite Hälfte meines Sommers erwärmt! (Vol. 2, 78-79; author’s emphasis)

Although Minna’s primary impetus for accepting the marriage proposal is her anxiousness to escape the vituperative Madame Brennfeld, Minna reveals here the extent to which her

---

108 Although Minna does provide any specifics, she does inform her reader of the relatively antagonistic relationship between herself and Mme Brennfeld. The latter possesses an obvious dislike for Minna and treats her as a servant - a fact which is well-known by all who frequent the household.
decision also results from the desire to follow her heart – even if it leads her to the wrong man.

For Minna and her happiness, Thalheim certainly appears to be the wrong man; his inclinations prove incompatible with her decision “im ganzen Umfange des Worts Hausfrau zu seyn. Diese Pflicht,” Minna believes, “wird ja wohl mit Weltgenüß nicht unvereinbar seyn?” (Vol. 2, 81). Yet after frequent visits with families completely unknown to Minna, she comes to recognize not only the negative effects of “Bekanntschaft machen” on her role as a housewife, but also the aggravating emptiness of it all: “Ich fühlte, daß man, um wirklich etwas zu seyn, nichts seyn müsse” (Vol. 2, 82, 83). Desperate for at least one friend to whom she can open herself up, Minna attempts to strike up a conversation during one of the afternoon socials at her house. Unfortunately for her, the women are too busy chattering away about local gossip and events to pay her any attention, and Minna pleads with her husband never again to subject her to such socials. His reply prompts a significant change in Minna’s attitude:

»Wenn Du nur erst den Ton gefaßt haben wirst, wird es schon besser gehen,« – meinte mein Mann. Von dieser Zeit fing ich an auf den Ton auszugehn, und alles dafür zu halten, was von dem Gewohnten abstach. Das Geräusch der Kokette, womit sie Aller Augen auf sich zu ziehen suchte, die Pedanterie der Anspruchvollen, die mit studiertem Ausdruck ihre Belesenheit auskramte, jede Besonderheit hielt ich für das rechte. So wurde ich immer ungewisser in dem, was ich eigentlich seyn müßte; und erst lange nachher, als ich zu vergleichen Gelegenheit und Reife genug hatte, fand ich, daß ich einem Phantom nachgejagt war; daß es in der karakterlosen Menge keinen bestimmten Ton gibt noch geben kann; das alles Beginnen und Treiben nur Konvenienz und Laune des Augenblicks ist, und daß auf schwankendem Grunde nie etwas Festes und Dauerndes aufgeführt werden kann.(Vol. 2, 86-87)
Building on her earlier feeling that in order to be something, one must be nothing, Minna argues that there is no character in this society. Everyone’s actions and tendencies are just empty facades meant to attract attention, rather than a reflection of any underlying character. Not only this, but any person who seeks to imitate this society will find herself equally lacking in character.

Earlier in her story, Minna had already indirectly challenged the legitimacy of imitation as a means of presenting oneself. Upon first meeting Madame Brennfeld, Minna reports that Brennfeld “sagte noch mehr, was herzlich seyn sollte, an meinem Herzen aber eiskalt hinstreifte; denn ich hatte diese Wendungen erst ganz kürzlich irgendwo gelesen” (Vol. 2, 62). Minna’s narrative insists on a concept of oneself that is authentic; anything less and a person is merely “chasing a phantom.” Of course, not all imitation is created equal -- attempting to present oneself according to the tones and manners of others is discouraged, but the appropriation of more virtuous characteristics is admirable. During a visit to a Rezensentenclub Minna discovers that “[d]ie Frauen nahmen auch hier, so wie in den andern Gesellschaften, keine Kunde von der Unterhaltung der Männer, und flüsterten einander ihre kleinen Unbedeutsamkeiten zu” (Vol. 2, 89). The difference here is that the women could learn valuable behavior from the men. In her discussion of these two contrasting situations – attempting to mimic everything around oneself and getting lost in it, and the inability to mimic those who are engaged in more learned behavior – Minna reveals that she views poor character development as stemming not only from the influence of those around her, but also from the individual’s own actions. When one does copy from another, this person is imbued with an empty character that is not one’s own. Failing to
learn from others and to acquire good habits, however, indicates inaction on the part of the individual and exposes her to potential scorn.

It is no surprise then, given Minna’s understanding of the relationship between society and the individual, that her discontentment with the reality of life around her leads her to abstain from such social interactions. Her husband, frustrated with his wife’s inability to be satisfied with her society, finally resorts to taking her to theater with him where she is so captivated by the plays she sees, that her previous passions of the heart are reawakened. Now, rather than bemoaning the loss of her wifely character, she develops a strong apathy towards her household duties.

Das Schauspiel fesselte mich so, daß ich gleichsam in eine idealische Welt versetzt war. Meine Phantasie hatte einen so lebhaften Schwung bekommen, daß mir die kältern Verhältnisse meines Hausstandes zum Ekel wurden. Der ruhige, bloß freundschaftliche Umgang mit meinem Manne schien mir träge Abspannung zu seyn; mich grauete vor aller häuslichen Beschäftigung; ich verrichtete sie obenhin und mit Widerwillen. Das Leben im Hause war mir ein bloßer Mittelstand, welchen ich ertrug, in so fern es Zubereitung zu der bessern Existenz im Schauspielhause war. (Vol. 2, 93)

In a turn of events similar to Julchen succumbing to *Lesewut*, Minna finds herself overwhelmed by the power of fictional stories. Her displacement into an “ideal world” results in an estrangement from her husband, and even from herself. Just as the fictitious emotions that Julchen appropriates from the literature she reads causes her to embark on a self-destructive path, Minna and even her husband are negatively impacted by the fantasy and illusion of theatre.
Throughout Minna’s “confessions,” all of her earlier experiences (the social gatherings, the book review club, the theater) are attributed to her husband’s wishes, though she never directly admonishes him for the negative impact these events have on her. However, hints of a more explicit accusation begin to emerge when she recounts her attempts to read the latest publications on pedagogy. Minna’s problem, as she views it, is that “statt auszuüben was ich wußte, las ich, um zu lernen was ich nicht wußte. Fragte ich meinen Mann um Rath, so hieß es: »Thu', was Du willst!« Er gestand seine Unkunde in dem Fache, und war mit meinem guten Willen so befriedigt, daß er zu fragen vergaß, ob sich meine Erziehungskunst über die Gränzen des guten Willens erstrecke?” (Vol. 2, 101) Minna’s analysis of the situation here reveals that she is too inexperienced to decide what is proper in raising a child. Thalheim’s own ignorance and ultimate unwillingness to offer any suggestions are revealed as potentially problematic, and this issue is later compounded by his attempts to convince Minna to leave their son at home with a nanny so that she can resume going out with him.

Although Minna initially resists yet another change in lifestyle, she is so distraught by her husband’s frequent absences and refusal to stay home with her, that she finally consents and begins going out with him. He and his acquaintances often take to playing games, and Minna falls into this habit as well. She develops quite a taste for it, though her talent does not match her affinities and she resorts to selling her good clothing at unfairly high prices to her servants as a means of funding her gambling. Even the birth of a second child does not dissuade her from this lifestyle, although she – now directly – accusingly notes that “[n]och war es nicht zu spät umzukehren, hätte mein Mann nur ein
Fünkchen Glauben an stille häusliche Zufriedenheit gehabt” (Vol. 2, 109). Here it becomes quite apparent to the reader the extent to which Minna forcefully shunts the blame for her transformation of character (i.e. her development) onto those around her, primarily her husband – although she hesitates to acknowledge this openly. “Wenn Sie, meine Ida, mich zu fragen scheinen: »Wie konnte ein liebendes, herzliches Mädchen so schnell ein kopf- und herzloses Weib werden?« – so kann ich Ihnen nur antworten: »ich weiß es selbst nicht!« Wie wahr ist es doch, was ein bekannter Schriftsteller von uns sagt: »Das Mädchen hat keinen Karakter; das Weib entwickelt ihn mit schneller Fertigkeit!«” (Vol. 2, 110)

Contrary to Minna’s assertion that she cannot answer for her transformation of character, she clearly has already explained this in the previous component of her narrative. Her husband is primarily responsible for her metamorphosis as he has encouraged her participation in every interaction that has led to Minna’s current state. Minna quickly devolves into an improper woman and housewife.

As if to preemptively dispel any notion that Minna’s actions are simply not acceptable for women but could be acceptable for men (i.e. that her development is only problematic due to her gender), Thalheim is revealed as a deeply flawed character due to his own destructive gambling and social gallivanting. His predilections lead both him and his wife to extramarital lovers, and they lead so degenerate a lifestyle that they inadvertently stumble upon each other one night in a brothel house. What ensues is a period of illness for Minna exacerbated by her husband’s forgiveness of her behavior. The couple faces bankruptcy, their daughter dies, and they are both forced to take up low-paying work in order to survive – Thalheim as an editor at a publishing company and Minna doing
sewing work. The couple’s lives, like their (good) characters, dissolve in the wake of their previous actions.

Curiously enough, their descent into a lower social standing has a positive effect on their character. When a better position presents itself to Thalheim, he eagerly applies for it only to discover that he would have to bribe his way in, a course of action that both Minna and Thalheim decide not to pursue. “O, daß ich diese Stadt und diese Menschen nie mit Augen gesehen hätte!” Minna confides at this point. “»Minna,« sagte mein Gatte, »laß uns nicht ungerecht seyn! Laß uns nicht diese gute Stadt anklagen, weil wir sie mißbrauchten! Vielleicht gibt es wenig große Städte, die so viele öffentliche und Privattugenden aufzuweisen haben; aber sie zu finden, muß man freilich nicht den Weg einschlagen, den wir wählten” (Vol. 2, 149; emphasis in original). As if to underscore the irony of this passage, the very next day Minna is propositioned by an older man who promises to award her husband the position he seeks, if only she will consent to be “nur ein wenig gütig, ein wenig ertragend” (Vol. 2, 154). Although Minna and Thalheim have changed their lifestyle, they nonetheless find themselves faced with people of questionable morals. A friend of Thalheim’s goes so far as to assert that “die Welt, wie sie ist; wir werden sie nicht reformiren, wohl aber untergehen, wenn wir nicht mit dem Strome schwimmen” (Vol. 2, 156). Not only can one not hope to change the world, but the individual is more likely to lose himself in it attempting to do so.

Consequently, Minna and Thalheim elect to change themselves by altering their lifestyle and environment quite significantly. Completely hopeless about their situation in Berlin, they abandon the metropolitan lifestyle and move to the country to take up farming.
“So wohl thut dem Herzen das Selbsterwählte!” exclaims Minna as she describes the joy she and her husband experience in choosing menial work over the glamorous but destructive life in Berlin. (Vol. 2, 164). Of course, the reader should recognize here that this “self-chosen” direction is the first one of its kind so far. Until this point in her life, Minna has been subjected to her environment and the will of those around her: she is sent to Berlin at her stepfather’s insistence, forced to live with Madame Brennfeld, and convinced to marry a man whose predilections are directly responsible for her detrimental lifestyle. It is not until she is finally given the space to follow through on her own decisions that her earlier personality and character traits return (Vol. 2, 164-65). It would appear that Minna’s development is not only directly influenced by those around her, but also that she needs support and encouragement in order to sustain this transformation of character.

Her husband’s willingness to move away from Berlin is the first step in this direction, but it is insufficient. Minna admits that “aus eignen Kräften vermocht' ich nicht, mich in die Gefühle meiner zarten Jugend zurückzusetzen” (Vol. 2, 165). She has experienced too much in the meantime, and developed so far beyond her original inclinations that she now requires the intervention of a positive role model, or the “good man,” as Minna calls him, before finally revealing him to be Herr von Auerfeld. This Auerfeld, a neighbor of Minna and Thalheim, becomes a good friend of the family and undertakes to support them in their new life.

Sein scharfer Blick hatte leicht meine schwankenden Begriffe von dem, was mir das Wichtigste seyn mußte, erspäht. Ich jammerte ihn; er gab sich die Mühe, meine Kenntnisse und das zu prüfen, was mich hinderte, mich einer freudigen Gottesverehrung hinzugeben. Sein Tadel war ohne Bitterkeit, und sein Mitleiden beleidigte nicht. Er räumte mit ausharrender Geduld in meinem Kopfe
auf; fegte alles hinaus, was schlechte Früchte tragen konnte; lehrte mich einen Gott kennen, der eben der war, den meine frommen Eltern so treu und freudig verehrten. Mit meinem Manne ließ er sich in gelehrte Untersuchungen ein, welchen ich indeß auch die Freiheit hatte beizuwohnen. Der einfachere Unterricht war für mich, und auch bei meiner Tochter gründete er eine Kenntniß von Gott, die tausendmal mehr als Katechismusunterricht werth war. (Vol. 2, 167-68)

In direct contrast to Minna’s upbringing at the hands of her stepfather and Madame Brennfeld, Herr von Auerfeld’s instruction and advice enlighten and enrich her rather than overwhelm her. Minna’s development is predicated on the positive influence of wise men – first her father and, later, von Auerfeld. The destructive interference of her stepfather and, initially, of Thalheim reiterate the extent to which her character is dependent on those around her.

And yet, unlike Julchen, Minna does not feel compelled to flee into nothingness after her initial (mal)development – as evidenced by her narrative. We can trace the reason for this back to the involvement of those around Minna and Julchen. Thalheim influences Minna’s environment, which in turn influences her. The change of environment coupled with von Auerfeld’s productive interactions with the couple re-initiates a development that had already begun at the hands of Minna’s father. Grünthal, on the other hand, not only indirectly influences Julchen’s environment (by conceding to send her to Berlin), he more significantly directly alters her character. As I have already noted, Julchen much more noticeably internalizes the admonitions she receives from her father, whereas Minna finds herself free to embrace her emotions. She is even capable of indicting Thalheim for his negative influence on the trajectory of their lives and her development. Because Minna has succeeded at developing her own reaction to situations, rather than falling back on values
assimilated from her father, she is able to persist where Julchen must flee. These developments result in as strikingly different a pair of women as their respective narratives prove to be.

Of course, one could also argue that the primary influencing factor in both women’s developments stems from their residence in Berlin, for Minna and Thalheim’s fortunes change only after they abandon their society life for a hard-working existence in the countryside. Likewise, it is not until Julchen returns from Berlin and her later escapades through other large, European cities that she is able to reintegrate herself into her previous lifestyle. However, a quick reference to Unger’s letters to her brother describing Berlin reveal that not only does Unger not harbor any animosity against the city, but that “die Masse der gesunden Begriffe und reinen Moral in Berlin gewiss größer [ist], als Du sie in irgend einer großen Stadt, in und außer Deutschland, antreffen würdest” (Uber Berlin 7).109 By using Minna’s story to introduce a critique that she does not necessarily embrace herself, Unger – as elsewhere in the novel – introduces perspectives with which that she does not fully agree. She also hints to the reader that we are to look elsewhere for more definitive insights into why an individual develops as she does, and what precisely influences her along that developmental trajectory.

Although an analysis of the various characters’ developments could easily lead to conflicting opinions on what precisely instigates one change over another, the end result is much less ambiguous. Minna’s character is different from Julchen’s because they are (have

---

109 As she concludes in her last letter to her brother, a bit more strongly: “nie werde ich vergessen, wie bedeutend Berlin für meine Bildung gewesen ist; wie viel ich an wahrer Menschenwürdigung gewonnen, wie fest ich überzeugt worden bin, daß stille Größe und Erhabenheit neben Verderbtheit wohnen kann” (49).
become) different people.\textsuperscript{110} To be sure, there are numerous similarities between their life stories, not the least of which is the fact that Minna embraces the very lifestyle that Grünthal so desperately desired for his daughter. They both leave their small towns to live in Madame Brennfeld’s boarding house; they both fall prey to emotions, especially those instigated by (French) literature; and they both pursue extramarital affairs and “degenerate” lifestyles. Yet Minna is very obviously more of a “selbständiges Wesen” than Julchen – if for no other reason than her ability to assert her own desires and make her own decisions. Aside from a few brief references early in her narrative, Minna’s stepfather is rarely mentioned. She does not attempt to view or understand life around her from the lens of her father figure’s worldview, nor does she appear to fully succumb to Thalheim’s (initial) worldview even where she does embrace his inclinations. Furthermore, she chooses to relocate to the countryside and finds happiness there. Julchen’s character is never once presented as capable of making such a decision, and consequently has no voice of her own (literally and narratively). By successfully maintaining her own voice throughout her life story, Minna is later able to use her own voice to tell her life story. Her narrative reveals that she is her own subject.\textsuperscript{111}

\textsuperscript{110} To somewhat anachronistically reference the modern debate between nature and nurture, this understanding of the two women’s characters implies that our character is as much a result of nature as it is of nurture. Neither one can be ignored, and whatever we hope to become depends on both for success. This belief emerges in Unger’s other works as well, as I will demonstrate in my discussion of \textit{Bekenntnisse einer schönen Seele} (Chapter 3 below).

\textsuperscript{111} I have previously discussed both Grünthal’s and – to a lesser extent – Julchen’s narratives in light of potential unreliable narration, and it would be remiss of me not to do the same with Minna’s own narrative. Yet, while it is entirely possible that Minna is guilty of underreporting (she occasionally skips over large periods of time in her narrative), the fact that Minna takes pains to point out the significant moments of her life even when they reflect poorly on her suggests that the omitted portions of her narrative are mundane, and that everything relevant has been included. This openness is further underscored by Minna’s willingness to acknowledge even her most damning characteristics à la Rousseau; and whereas Matthew Bell views Rousseau as “giv[ing] the reader so much rope to hang him with that the reader will be
2.3.3 Julchen’s “Backward Development”

Part of my argument thus far has been that there is a connection between narrative and the self. By demonstrating the extent to which Julchen’s narrative is never allowed to emerge fully – or at least to stand on its own – I have also revealed that Julchen’s development is severely impeded by those around her. In volume one the reader glimpses an individual attempting to emerge from the confines of her father’s value system. Constrained both by her conscience as well as by her father’s narrative control, Julchen finally flees to Russia to escape the life that was never fully hers. Unfortunately for her, as she never succeeded in developing her own individuality, she continues to be a victim of her circumstances. It is for this reason that Julchen’s return is recounted in third-person by Minna, that Julchen’s own narrative must continue in letter form (and mediated by Minna at that), and that the closing scene of the novel shows Julchen successfully reintegrated into her father’s vision of her as innocence personified. Julchen is completely incapable (or at least not permitted) to exist on her own.

embarrassed to do so” (87), Minna seems genuinely open to criticism from her readers – even where her own self-criticisms are deflected back onto Thalheim. Minna’s narrative also lacks the agenda that Grünthal’s contains, and is more explanatory than expository in nature. Consequently we can argue that Minna’s character does not appear to provide unreliable narration.

That is to say, her father exhibits significant control over both her emotional and also her physical life. His desire to tell her story for her leaves her incapable of reconciling her lifestyle with his expectations, and she can find no other recourse but to physically remove herself in order to be free of him.

The relationship between Julchen’s individuality and the outcome of the novel is already hinted at in Birte Giesler’s brief treatment of “Julchens Autonomiestreben,” where she notes that “Julchens Rehabilitation am Ende des zweiten Romanteils ist eher eine Konsolidierung der väterlichen Welt und deren Weiblichkeitsideal als eine Bestätigung von Julchens Individualität” (Giesler 206). Although Giesler frames this primarily within an understanding of the novel as a “strukturelle[r] Bezug zur aufklärerischen Kinder- und Jugendliteratur,” where the internalization of the “väterlich-patriarchalen Normen” is reflected in the narrative structure (209), we can see how these insights are equally applicable in the much more specific, individual case of Julchen’s character. In other words, while it is true that the fatherly authority represented by Grünthal does not fully disappear, I am more interested in how this is reflected in Julchen’s character as well as the extent to which it impacts her development. What is most useful about Giesler’s
The implications of this development are even more significant regarding Julchen’s character; she must now embark on a “backwards development” in order to be accepted by her father. At this point in her life, at the end of the novel, Julchen is a fully matured and experienced woman – in every sense of the word, yet her father cannot – or will not – view her as such. After his reconciliation with his daughter and before even hearing of her adventures abroad, Grünthal implores Julchen to renounce everything foreign, in essence to return to her childhood self:

Grünthal sah ihr recht scharf in die Augen, und sagte dann, mit dem Finger auf die Augen zeigend:

This “ehemalige[] Julchen aus Lindenau” is none other than the innocent child who so overjoyed her father as the Erntekönigin, and indeed who Julchen becomes once again. Julchen’s willingness to surrender the ring and “foreign” adornments is a symbolic interpretation is her linking of Julchen’s “rehabilitation” with concerns of a “striving for autonomy,” which is precisely what Julchen ultimately fails to accomplish.
stripping away of the person(a) she had developed as a maturing woman. Jeannine Blackwell interprets this scene as Julchen’s recognition of Grünthal’s “supreme authority over her as a condition for her socially approved return to innocence” (148). Furthermore, Blackwell argues, it represents an “ultimate denial of her own experience...[and] the positive contributions this experience has made in her life” (148). While such a concession by Julchen is indeed indicative of her complete surrender to her father, the renunciation of her previous experiences carries an even greater implication with it than the mere abandonment of Eudoxia and Julchen’s promise to her. It is a metaphorical removal of Julchen’s womanhood, leaving both the reader and Grünthal with a vision of Julchen reintegrated back into the patriarchal life: “o der Wonne! – Julchen als Erntekönigin, wie ehemals, in weißem Kleide mit hellgrünen Bändern, geschmückt mit Blumen, wie der ländliche Garten sie gab; sie ging zwischen ihren Brüdern wie ehemals, und trug den Kranz” (Vol. 2 359). Only through a kind of backwards development and this return to childish innocence can Julchen come home.

There is even more to this scene than Julchen’s renunciation of herself; it also reinitiates a previous dynamic in the relationship between Julchen and her father. Grünthal’s affection for Julchen appears to exceed the normal filial love, bordering instead on the extreme affection one usually finds between married couples. The events of the novel make this even clearer for the reader, for just before the final scene at the Erntedankfest, Julchen’s brother Fritz sends his father a letter informing him that a 61 year-

---

114 Eudoxia is the wife of the Russian nobleman with whom Julchen had absconded at the end of Volume 1. The ring was a gift from Eudoxia that Julchen promised always to wear in memory of her.
old woman had entreated Fritz with a marriage proposal. The would-be-bride was quick to reassure him that the marriage would be strictly platonic: “Verstehen Sie mich nicht unrecht, und halten mich nicht für eine alte verliebte Schwester; über solche Schwachheit ist man, in meinen Jahren, hinweg. Sie sollen mein Sohn, und ich Ihre Mutter seyn; nur bloß daß der Priester den Seegen [sic] über uns spricht” (351). Although there is to be no sexual component to the relationship, the bizarre wedding of a “mother” to a “son” reflects the equally bizarre father-daughter marriage dynamics of Grünthal’s and Julchen’s new relationship. Surrounded at the end of the novel by three other couples (Minna and Thalheim, Karoline and Auerfeld, and Fritz and his new “wife”), the pairing of Grünthal with his daughter becomes a perverted image of the Heilige Familie,115 where Julchen stands as both the virgin(al) wife as well as the idolized child.116 This image doubly reinforces the (masculine) authority Grünthal has over Julchen. She is not only his daughter for him to command, she is also caught up in a perverted relationship that allows him to view her as a wife figure - one who is expected to submit to his needs and desires.

Such a development is the ultimate subjugation and, although Julchen is quick to denounce her previous actions throughout her entire narrative in Volume 2, this concession indicates her inability to live her life for herself. That she must change herself for her friends’ and family’s sake is already hinted at very briefly in the Schlegel review of the novel:

115 In his treatise on Die Heilige Familie und ihre Folgen, Albrecht Koschorke notes that this model represents “die Spannung zwischen dem Heiligen und dem Profanen,” a tension we can see very much re-enacted here between Grünthal and his daughter (41).
116 Other scholars have viewed this scene as “a regressive fantasy of the Oedipal desire” (Kontje, Women and the Novel 60).
Es ist eine liebliche Idee, Julchen so wie wir sie zu Anfang sahen, als Erntekönigin im weißen Kleide mit halbgrünen Bändern, geschmückt von Blumen, zwischen ihren Brüdern gehend und den Kranz tragend, zuletzt wieder erscheinen zu lassen. Die Bahn, die sie durchlaufen, steht in diesem Moment noch einmal zusammengedrängt vor unseren Augen da, und diese Übersicht erweckt das Gefühl, daß sich die Wiederkehrende zwar mit Blumen schmücken darf, aber daß diese doch mehr festliche Kränze für ihre Freunde, als für sie selbst sind. (241)

These “festliche Kränze,” indeed the joy of the entire scene, are not really Julchen’s to enjoy. Todd Kontje goes so far as to assert that “Julchen feigns ecstasy, [but] her obsessive guilt and denial of the desires that had once made her rebel suggest that the ending is less a wish-fulfillment dream than a recurring nightmare” (Women and the Novel 60). Giesler offers a less nihilistic perspective of Julchen’s development when she argues that “[d]ie väterliche literarische Erzählerfigur, die die Internalisierung der väterlich-patriarchalen Normen bewirken soll, ist im zweiten Teil des Julchen Grünthal-Romans obsolet geworden, weil die Normen so weit verinnerlicht sind, dass die Tochter sich am Ende von selbst wieder im väterlichen Machtbereich befindet” (209). Kontje’s reading seems a bit too extreme in its quickness to judge the outcome as decisively against Grünthal’s values, placing the sympathy fully with Julchen. Indeed, as we can see from the Schlegel review, such a harsh condemnation is not necessarily representative of the contemporaneous reception and understanding of the novel’s end. Instead, we should understand this scene more as Giesler interprets it. Julchen’s internalization of her father’s values does render him obsolete, but, more importantly, it also reveals her complete inability to have developed into her own person. Her previous attempts to achieve autonomy have been proven futile, and Julchen must disappear back into her father’s narrative perspective. The
novel ends not with her own thoughts or emotions, but rather with “Grünthal’s Herz…der Allgewalt dieser Gefühle und Erinnerungen [erlegend]” (Vol 2. 359).

2.4.1 Subversive Tendencies?

There is a noticeable tendency in the secondary literature to interpret this novel as containing subversive tendencies, an interpretation which appears to be predicated on the belief that the author sympathizes more fully with the arguments she places into her female characters’ mouths. Not only is this reading problematic, it also does not account for Minna’s successful reintegration back into patriarchal life without the need to sacrifice further happiness. That Minna’s lifestyle reflects the Rousseian Geschlechterphilosophie is furthermore not to be ignored, particularly as one critic has argued that, at the time this novel was written, “Grünthals Rousseausche Maximen nicht mehr zeitgemäß sind” (Zantop, Afterword 372). Instead, Zantop views the paradoxes highlighted in the book, particularly those referring to Rousseau’s philosophy, as an ironic statement on the influence of reading novels. Rather than convincing its (female) audience of Grünthal’s values, “Leserinnen, wie Frau Seelmann, werden die Moralpredigten und pedantischen Erziehungssentenzen des Amtmannes sicher mit sehr viel größerer Unlust, ja Skepsis, folgen als Leser” (Zantop, Afterword 375). It is this understanding of the different demographics that has led Zantop elsewhere to label the novel a Trojan Horse (Aus der Not eine Tugend 43). Similarly, Magdalena Heuser argues that in Julchen Grünthal “Frauen das Recht auf Selbstbestimmung und darauf, sich auch irren dürfen und müssen, für sich in Anspruch [nehmen]” (34). Yet if we look to a contemporaneous review of the
revised edition of *Julchen Grünthal*, which is attributed to Caroline Schlegel,\(^{117}\) then these perspectives do not seem so convincing. Schlegel sees in the novel “[d]ie betäubende Einflüsse der Eitelkeit, des bösen Beispiels, der Furcht vor dem Lächerlichen, auf ein junges, nur durch unschuldige Beschränktheit gewaffnetes, Gemüth” (240). Rather than sympathizing with the pleas of Frau Seelmann or Julchen, the reviewer notes how “Julchen rettet zwar aus ihren Verwirrungen den Vorzug einer höhern Ausbildung, und so vergüttet sich auch oft die menschliche Natur den zugefügten Schaden” (241). Even though the use of the word *zugefügt* does imply that Julchen is not entirely guilty for her *Verwirrungen*, the final judgment is nonetheless that Julchen’s story reveals a *Verderbnis* that needs to be overcome (241). Such an interpretation does not seem so skeptical to me, and undermines contemporary critics’ desires to subvert the novel into a subversive text. Even a hundred years ago scholarship on Unger did not reveal any such subversive tendency. In her groundbreaking and much-cited analysis of the German *Frauenroman* Christine Touaillon argues, “[i]n der Frauenfrage nimmt Helene Unger überhaupt einen ziemlich konservativen Standpunkt ein” (250). This discrepancy in the reception of Unger’s novels indicates the necessity of revisiting the texts and comparing them - where possible - with Unger’s sentiments as expressed elsewhere.

2.4.2 Conclusion

The inclination to view the novel as subversive is understandable given the apparently progressive perspectives of Frau Seelmann, Julchen, and Minna. Yet, as I have already

\(^{117}\) See Giesler, 94.
discussed, the author does not allow any one of her characters to speak fully for the overall understanding of the novel or even to the author’s own values. Although Grünthal expresses some of the same sentiments as Unger, she is disagrees with him on other matters. From this juxtaposition of conflicting sentiments emerges an investigation into the nature of the (female) individual. Faced with the norms and expectations of society, an individual can only hope to possess a “self” if these influences do not overwhelm her - essentially leading to her maldevelopment. How such success occurs is not addressed so much as the outcomes of various lifestories that reflect varying degrees of this success. In other words, for all the questions it poses Unger’s novel does not offer any solutions.

This is why, in the first volume, Julchen must disappear into Russia never to be heard from again. Similarly, at the end of the second volume Julchen willingly disappears into the framework of her father’s patriarchal view, but without fully embracing it. There are no nice resolutions with clear-cut values that can be postulated as the interpretation of the novel. The “message” of the novel, I argue, is most fully understood when we view this text as a contribution to literary anthropology. Unger offers multi-faceted representations of the individual as situated within her family and society as well as insights into her development. By locating this discussion at the textual levels – not only encompassing the various opinions and stories of the characters, but also embedded in the narrative structure of the novel – Unger demonstrates just how constructed, precarious, and unique the individual is.
CHAPTER 3: THE MAKINGS OF A BEAUTIFUL SOUL AND UNGER’S VISION OF GENIUS

3.1.1 Introduction

_Bekenntnisse einer schönen Seele. Von ihr selbst geschrieben_ (1806) can and should be approached from two different perspectives. On the one hand, it carries forward the discussion of female development that begins in Unger’s first novel, _Julchen Grünthal_. On the other hand, it has very clear allusions to the sixth book of Goethe’s _Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre_ – the identically titled “Bekenntnisse einer schönen Seele” – and consequently cannot be discussed without also addressing the aesthetics of the beautiful soul. Although the authorship of _Bekenntnisse_ remains to this day controversial, most scholars accept that Unger is, if not the sole author, then at least the primary author of the text.\(^{118}\)

Published eight years after the revised edition of _Julchen Grünthal_, _Bekenntnisse_ offers a very different protagonist and story of development. In _Julchen_, the protagonist appears as an object rather than a subject. She has little control over her life or her own narrative. In _Bekenntnisse_ we find the exact opposite; the protagonist, Mirabella, is the author and disseminator of her own story. In sharp contrast to the gradual emotional and physical downfall of some of her friends, Mirabella stands as an autonomous individual,

\(^{118}\) C.f. Susanne Zantop in the Afterword to _Bekenntnisse_, pp. 387 and 397. Paul Ferdinand Friedrich Buchholz is identified as the likely helper in writing the book. Rather than naming him a co-author, however, Zantop says that it is more likely that he helped to edit the novel and, in doing so, occasionally made some of Unger’s sentences his own.
having submitted neither to man nor to society. The key to her success rests on a noticeably male-oriented approach to her life and her autobiographical confessions: she embraces a male-gendered role in the world, addresses her text to a male character, and abstains from marriage and sexual relationships (consequently freeing herself from any kind of submission to a man). Despite this masculine orientation, she also frames herself within and frequently comments on the construct of femininity or womanhood [Weiblichkeit], which many scholars have read as a reinterpretation of what it means to be a woman.

By orienting herself towards men but presenting herself in very independent and feminine images, Mirabella’s character is able to embrace a lifestyle that is not available to the other females in the novel. Specifically, the other beautiful soul in the novel, Caroline, experiences a very different fate from Mirabella, which indicates that a “successful” individuality is predicated on one’s relationship to the environment and those around her. By examining the differences between Mirabella’s and Caroline’s characters, and with an emphasis on the way in which Mirabella presents herself to the reader, I will demonstrate how the author of Bekenntnisse uses these two characters to present a critical analysis of the female individual as it emerges in direct relationship to the concepts of genius and the beautiful soul.

3.1.2 Overview

Before beginning my analysis of the novel, I will first provide a short summary of the plot, as well as a brief overview of the relationship of the text to Julchen Grünthal and to Goethe’s “Bekenntnisse.” Like Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre, the novel is structured as
multiple books. In the prefatory letter “An Cäsar” the protagonist and narrator, Mirabella, presents her narrative as an autobiographical account of her individuality (a word that occurs with surprising frequency over the course of the story) as it pertains to the issue of how she, “trotz ihrem Alter und ihrer Jungfräulichkeit, noch immer ihren Platz in der Gesellschaft behauptet, und sogar ein Gegenstand der Zuneigung und Achtung bleibt” (4). Directed to this friend Caesar, and framed as a response to his curiosity about her, Mirabella’s narrative traces the events of her life from her earliest memories up to the point at which she is writing as a mature woman.

Of unknown heritage and raised by a French clergyman and his sister, Mirabella never succeeds at learning who her parents were. She falls in love only once, with a man named Moritz, but her “lover” dies in the service of Frederick the Great before the pair has a chance to develop their relationship. In lieu of pursuing marriage with another man, Mirabella takes a position as governess for a young princess named Caroline, who later becomes engaged to a duke’s heir. Mirabella moves to court with Caroline, but is forced to leave later after a scandalous incident between Caroline and her husband ensues. Unhappy in her marriage, Caroline’s position does not improve even after her husband becomes duke himself, and it is not until she fulfills her wifely duty of providing her husband with an heir that she is permitted to retire from the court and embark on a series of travels with Mirabella. Their first trip takes them to Switzerland and, after a sojourn of nearly two years, they continue on to Italy. Here they make the acquaintance of the Countess Luisa d’Albania

119 From here on out all parenthetical references to Bekenntnisse einer schönen Seele: von ihr selbst geschrieben will cite the page number only.
and her lover, Count Vittorio Alfieri d’Asti. Caroline becomes enamored with the painter Raphael and eventually dies, and Alfieri heads to France in the wake of the Revolution. With Mirabella’s friends now scattered, she returns to Germany and befriends a woman named Eugenia. It is not without greater implications for Mirabella’s story that her friend is named such, for shortly before the end of her final letter to Cäsar Mirabella offers up a review of Goethe’s *Die natürliche Tochter*. From Mirabella’s perspective, Goethe’s play is a tragic piece that is misunderstood by contemporaneous society - much the way that Mirabella herself is surrounded by tragedy and often equally misunderstood by those around her.

There is a tendency in the secondary literature to treat this novel in one of two ways: either it is discussed in relationship to other “novels by women” or Frauenromane of the same time period and interpreted as sociopolitical commentary, or it is read in conjunction with Goethe’s Book Six of *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*. In other words, very rarely is it juxtaposed with Unger’s other novels, such as *Julchen Grünthal* or *Albert und Albertine*. Susanne Zantop, who treats three of Unger’s novels in an article titled “The Beautiful Soul Writes Herself,” explains her rationale for excluding *Bekenntnisse* from her analysis: “Since Unger’s authorship of this novel is not completely established – both Unger and the editor Friedrich Buchholz are credited – I do not want to include it in my analysis, although I could not resist using its title for my purposes” (223). An analysis of this novel under the umbrella of Unger’s oeuvre might seem out of place, since Unger’s authorship cannot be definitively substantiated. I am less inclined to feel constrained by such concerns, as I have found no secondary literature that does not attribute primary authorship to Unger.
Furthermore, Marianne Henn and Britta Hufeisen note that “es nicht zu allen Zeiten so große Zweifel an der Autorinnenschaft Unger gegeben [hat], wie Zantop sie referiert: Im Jahre 1825 nimmt Schindel den Roman ganz selbstverständlich in Ungers Werkverzeichnis auf” (49). Although speculations regarding the authorship and the extent to which Unger’s editor Buchholz altered sentences will likely always remain, the overarching perspective among scholars is that this text should indeed be analyzed from the perspective of Unger’s authorship.¹²⁰

Birte Giesler also omits a significant discussion of Bekenntnisse from her treatment of “[d]as erzählerische Werk von Friederike Helene Unger,” though her reasons for doing so appear to be quite different from those of Zantop. Due to the scope of her project— which is to provide a thorough philological contribution on Unger’s works, Giesler refrains from including a significant literary analysis of all but three of Unger’s novels. She focuses most significantly on Julchen Grünthal, devoting more than half the book to a discussion of this novel, and less considerably on Prinz Bimbam and Louis und Louise. Although Giesler offers no explanation for this choice, the fact that many of Unger’s other novels are afforded only a brief summary and examination (typically comprising two to four pages) indicates that it is due primarily to space constraints that Giesler opts to provide a closer reading of only three of Unger’s texts.

¹²⁰ Sigrid Lange is perhaps the most pragmatic at recognizing the implications of speculative authorship when she references “das Verwirrspiel um die Identität der Verfasserin und Protagonistin, das dem Roman so als Chiffre seines Themas vorangestellt ist” (73, emphasis in original), but “[a]nstatt mich in die quellen- und textkritische Spurensuche mit einer Meinung einzumischen, schlage ich vor, den Titel samt - fiktiver - Autorin beim Wort zu nehmen” (72).
In the case of my own analysis, my decision to incorporate *Julchen Grünthal* and *Bekenntnisse einer schönen Seele* stems from a confluence of factors. On the one hand, both novels engage quite explicitly with the development (or lack thereof) and subsequent representation of the female individual around 1800. As such, they are two of Unger’s more productive contributions to literary anthropology and of particular interest for me and my project. Furthermore, the intertextual relationship of this novel to Goethe’s *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* serves to reinforce the importance of this text and its placement in a period that engaged so extensively with the individual. On the other hand, the fact that these novels (*Julchen Grünthal* and *Bekenntnisse*) have been discussed relatively little - and then almost never in conjunction with each other - bears some amending. Indeed, after *Julchen Grünthal*, *Bekenntnisse* is arguably Unger’s most well-known and important text and deserves a place in any analysis of her works.

I am not the first to analyze *Julchen Grünthal* and *Bekenntnisse einer schönen Seele* in conjunction with one another; Magdalene Heuser offers what appears to be the only other treatment of the two novels together (as well as a discussion of *Albert und Albertine*) in her investigation into the “Möglichkeiten eines weiblichen Bildungsromans”

121 Karl J. Weintraub has made the argument that the “whole process whereby an individuality comes to be a unique self and at the same time a representative of its world, was for Goethe one that consumed a lifetime,” making the connection between Unger’s text and that of Goethe even more meaningful from the perspective of literary anthropology (367).

122 There is also an indirect comparison of the two novels in Maya Gerig’s 2006 dissertation about “Frauenliteratur als Forum für sozialpolitishe Erörterungen.” Gerig’s conclusion is that Unger’s novels - alongside those of Julie Berger, Marianne Ehrmann, Caroline Auguste Fischer, Henriette Fröhlich, Therese Huber, Sophie von la Roche, Dorothea Margarethe Liebeskind, Sophie Mereau, Benedikte Naubert, Dorothea Schlegel, Johanna Schopenhauer, and Wilhelmine Karoline von Wobeser - offer up “[a]lternative Lebensformen, [und] verschiedene Lebensentwürfe von Frauen um 1800” (225). More specifically, the presence or absence of marriage in the various novels written by these women serves to thematicize the economic (in)dependence of women in society, rather than the more traditionally interpreted foci of “Tugendvorstellungen oder … Empfindungen von Frauen” (Gerig 226).
“Bekenntnisse” is quite frequently omitted from treatises on the female Bildungsroman\textsuperscript{123} – even those dealing with Unger and Julchen Grünthal, and it is therefore not surprising that Heuser does not view the novel itself as a story of development, but instead interprets Unger’s transition between the two works as a kind of Entwicklung:

\begin{quote}
\end{quote}

Heuser views Julchen Grünthal as functioning significantly according to the paradigms of sentimental literature, whereas Bekenntnisse einer schönen Seele moves markedly beyond this into the realm of the all-inclusive – abandoning a traditionally “feminine” approach for one that is noticeably more “masculine” in nature. It takes up narrative strategies and includes content that were previously almost the sole property of male authors and protagonists.

Susanne Zantop, in her discussion of Goethe’s “Bekenntnisse einer schönen Seele” and Unger’s Bekenntnisse einer schönen Seele in the afterword to the novel, also

\textsuperscript{123} I will discuss this in further detail below.
recognizes the increasingly masculine nature of Unger’s later text. “Hier kann man zwischen einer aus der Sicht der Zeitgenossen „typisch weiblichen „und einer „männlichen“ Lösung unterscheiden. ... Anstelle des Rückzugs in die rein geistige Subjektivität haben wir also einen Ausbruch in die Objektivität, in die männlich definierte Öffentlichkeit” (Zantop 400, 403). The fact that Unger’s protagonist is capable of maintaining her „schöne Seele“ and yet still facilitates an entrance into public society – in contrast to Goethe’s protagonist who needs to withdraw into isolation – has to do with the inherent characteristics of both women’s personalities, “einem moralischen „Trieb“ im Falle der Stiftsdame, einer ihr eigenthümlichen „Individualität“ im Falle Mirabellas” (Zantop 400). The primary difference, as Zantop points out, is that Mirabella is relatively free from the same “Trieb” that plagues Goethe’s schöne Seele, and instead is able to base her decisions on her own desires and motivations.

While Zantop attempts primarily to describe the differences between Goethe’s and Unger’s representations of the beautiful soul, Inge Stephan’s comparison takes the analysis one step further by considering “welche Konsequenzen sich daraus für den Geschlechterdiskurs um 1800 ergeben” (192). In other words, Stephan very clearly frames her investigation as predicated on gender first and foremost, and concludes with the assertion that Mirabella’s character should be interpreted as embodying “ein Lebenskonzept, in dem sie ein neues Frauenbild ausdrückt, das für Goethe die Schreckbilder ‚Amazone‘ und ‚Männin‘ aufruft” (203). It would seem that any study of Goethe’s and Unger’s portrayals of the beautiful soul must contend with gender issues and the male/female dichotomy that frequently arises.
I will also take into account the extent to which gender roles and issues play an integral role in how Mirabella is characterized for her reader, though I am ultimately more interested in the effects that gender has on the (possibility of) development of her individuality and character. In other words, I will not always be reading this - and Unger’s other novels - as an attempt to undermine or redefine existing gender roles or expectations; instead I will demonstrate how Unger uses this narrative as an investigation into the social and interpersonal options that she viewed as available for females of her time. Ultimately, Unger’s novels provide a dialogue on rather than an answer to the question of the female individual vis-à-vis late 18th and early 19th-century society. A comparison of Bekenntnisse to Julchen Grünthal reveals how the latter focuses more considerably on an individual as prone to maldevelopment, mistreatment, and social constraints. We see no such image in Bekenntnisse; indeed there is no real development of the protagonist that one can speak of. The fact that one novel offers such a typically patriarchal lifestyle for the protagonist whereas the other deviates considerably from this is not just a reflection of the different ages at which Unger wrote the two novels. It also demonstrates a desire to engage with shifting social norms and the philosophical underpinnings of the concept of the individual: What possibilities existed for a woman of Unger’s time? How do these possibilities manifest at the interpersonal and sociocultural levels, and what implications does this have for the individual herself? These are the questions that Unger explores in her novels, and it is the engagement with these issues of the individual and character development on which I will further elaborate.
3.1.3 Character Development and the Bildungsroman

As I have noted previously,\(^\text{124}\) my brief forays into potential categorizations of the texts I analyze are due primarily to two reasons: On the one hand, I feel obligated to acknowledge genres and hermeneutic approaches that have been used extensively when dealing with a given text. More importantly, however, by examining why such labels and concepts have been raised in conjunction with a certain novel, we can gain insight into overarching issues that constitute the potential message of the work. Feminist or subversive readings of *Julchen Grünthal*, for example, indicate that the question of female development is very prominent in the novel, and that this development should be viewed critically. Likewise, applying the label of Bildungsroman\(^\text{125}\) to a novel reveals that scholars have overwhelmingly understood a particular text to be interested in character development – usually regarding this character’s environment and sociopolitical influences.

In the case of discussions of *Bekenntnisse*, however, there is a noticeable lack of such labels as Bildungsroman or *Frauenroman*.\(^\text{126}\) For a novel to be termed a

\[^{124}\text{See pp. 32-33 in the Introduction.}\]

\[^{125}\text{What exactly constitutes a Bildungsroman is, as I have alluded to in the introduction to my dissertation, difficult to state with any degree of certainty. Nonetheless, at least for the purposes of this chapter, I have centered my approach to a critical understanding of the Bildungsroman as largely predicated on gender. As Todd Kontje clarifies in his analysis of the development of the German Bildungsroman and its scholarly treatment, there is a long history of differentiating between the Bildungsroman containing a male hero and novels with female protagonists (102-109). Notable scholars such as Friedrich Kittler, Helga Meise, Jeannine Blackwell, and Barbara Becker-Cantarino have all argued at some point that women are either excluded from Bildung (Kontje 102), that “female Bildung [is] a contradiction in terms” (Kontje 103), or that there is an important distinction to be made between a Bildungsroman and a Frauenroman (Kontje 104). I will attempt to approach the concept of a “female Bildungsroman” in this chapter according to characterizations given by scholars who have offered up explicit definitions and treatments of such a “genre” of novels (and who accept such a concept as being a possibility in the first place).}\]

\[^{126}\text{With two exceptions: the first is Cindy Patey Brewer’s discussion of the “Anxiety of Influence in Friederike Unger’s ‘Bekenntnisse einer schönen Seele’” where she argues that, “[s]imilarly to Goethe’s text, the novel [Bekenntnisse] evoked the genre of Bildungsroman, the theme of ‘feminine’ development, and the ‘problem’ of being an unmarried woman” (45). In the same analysis, however, Brewer also notes quite correctly that “Unger’s novel bears only a surface resemblance to the traditional masculine novel of}\]
Bildungsroman (at least as it has been defined in regard to female protagonists), a development of the heroine must occur. In her dissertation *Bildungsroman mit Dame* Jeannine Blackwell characterizes such novels as “fictional representation[s] of the heroine’s social and personal development” and explains that she “use[s] the term *Bildungsroman* with respect to heroines to denote a sympathetic third person narration of the growth of one central female character from youth to the fruition of her talents, through which her internal development expresses itself outward and is in turn reshaped by the environment she affects” (12, 14-15). In addition to the fact that Mirabella’s story is related in first-person form, such an understanding of the Bildungsroman heroine is complicated here by the issue that Mirabella does not appear to undergo any development whatsoever.

This lack of development is presumably why scholars such as Anja May limit the treatment of the female Bildungsroman to *Julchen Grünthal* and omit any discussion of *Bekenntnisse einer schönen Seele*. Specifically, one of the defining concepts of the female Bildungsroman according to May is “die Gefahr, dass die »weibliche Seele…eine falsche Richtung und Bestimmung« annehmen [kann]” (153). In *Julchen Grünthal*, the protagonist is not only capable of negative change but also undergoes both this negative change and a development. Mirabella’s objective is primarily a defensive, a preservation rather than a development of self” (49). In other words, even as Brewer attempts to connect *Bekenntnisse* to the genre of the Bildungsroman, she is forced to concede that Unger’s text deviates significantly from the traditional form. Sigrun Schmid also argues that “die *Bekenntnisse einer schönen Seele* als Bildungsroman gelesen werden [könnte]” due to the following considerations: “Mirabellas Umstände sind günstig, sie erhält eine Erziehung, die ihre Anlagen optimal fördert, schwierige Situationen und unerfreuliche Ereignisse werden beinahe auffällig konfrontiert, eben durch das Eintreffen günstiger Umstände, gelöst. Die Entfaltung der Individualität verläuft gleichsam ohne Zwischenfälle und schließlich wird ein harmonischer Endzustand herbeigeführt” (200). In the very next sentence, however, Schmid notes that “[d]och diese Übereinstimmung…nur oberflächlich [ist]” and that the actual image presented in the novel is not a “Bildungssubjekt…[als] moralische Person…sondern die weibliche Individualität” (200). Ultimately, despite Schmid’s brief attempt to situate the novel in relationship to the Bildungsroman, she, too, recognizes that the scope of Unger’s project moves well beyond this.
reform of her character that coincides with a “reform” of her father’s and Karoline’s opinions and expectations. Julchen’s character and the trajectory of the entire novel represent a developmental sequence that is eventually – at least to some extent – resolved in the novel’s conclusion. In *Bekenntnisse*, however, the protagonist offers no such similar fallibility nor is there a similar conflict and resolution. Although Mirabella argues that the form of one’s individuality does develop (or not) based on its surroundings,\textsuperscript{127} she does not give much attention to development gone awry. Without “improper development” there is no room for a discussion of how to recuperate from such an incident, and the possibility for a (female) Bildungsroman is severely limited, if not entirely suppressed.

Although it is difficult to consider this text as representative of a “typical” (female) Bildungsroman, the novel’s allusion to Goethe’s *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* – which has overwhelmingly been regarded as the archetypal Bildungsroman, indicates that the individual and her development might also feature quite prominently in *Bekenntnisse*. Rather than attempting to define this novel as either reflecting or refuting aspects of a Bildungsroman, I will instead occasionally integrate certain characteristic considerations of Bildungsroman protagonists in considering how and why Mirabella’s development is portrayed as it is. Ultimately, the language of the novel makes it impossible not to address these concerns, as Mirabella’s character herself is intently focused on her own development and individuality.

\textsuperscript{127} C.f. *Bekenntnisse einer schönen Seele*, p. 12, 14; and to be elaborated on in further detail below.
3.1.4 Individuality and Narrative

The centrality of individuality to Mirabella’s story is made explicit early in her narrative, where she asserts that “[e]s kommt zuletzt doch nur darauf an, daß man eine achtungsgebietende Individualität gewinne” (18). How one succeeds at such an enterprise forms the background of the entire novel. Although Mirabella insists that she is writing her life story to Cäsar only to pass the time, there are clues throughout her narrative that such an autobiographical undertaking is an essential aspect of establishing one’s individuality. Mirabella has succeeded at this paramount goal of possessing an individuality, in part because she has taken the time to reflect on herself and her life, thereby revealing “das Eigenthümliche der menschlichen Natur, die, weil sie nicht auf einmal wird, was sie werden kann, über sich selbst nur dadurch Aufschluß zu geben vermag, daß sie aussagt, wie sie allmählig zu Stande gebracht worden ist” (333). Like the narrator of Anton Reiser, Mirabella understands life as a coherent entity that must be narrated to be understood.\footnote{As Charles Taylor argues in his Sources of the Self, “we must inescapably understand our lives in narrative form” (52). This narrative form allows us to do more than simply understand our experiences; it gives shape to the person experiencing them. Taylor writes that he “want[s] to defend the strong thesis that doing without frameworks is utterly impossible for us…[they are] constitutive of human agency, [and] stepping outside these limits would be tantamount to stepping outside of what we would recognize as integral, that is, undamaged human personhood” (27). These moral frameworks are very similar to Marya Schechtman’s narrative frameworks (discussed in Chapter one on pp. 99 and following), and the concern of characterization. “An identity in the sense of the characterization question is not, [she] claim[s], something that an individual has whether she knows it or not, but something that she has because she acknowledges her personhood and appropriates certain actions and experiences as her own” (Schechtman 95, emphasis in original). To lose the ability to lay claim to the frameworks of one’s actions and experiences would, in Taylor’s wording, damage one’s personhood and, according to Schechtman, preclude the possibility of an identity. Schechtman’s narrative self-constitution view furthermore posits that “a person creates his identity by forming an autobiographical narrative” (93). Compared with Blanckenburg’s above-cited mandate that “der Mensch [muss] uns so gezeigt werden, daß wir erst dies an ihm sehen, und dann auch an ihm bemerken können, wie er zu dem Besitz dieser [seiner] Eigenschaften gelanget ist” (15) if we are to understand him at all, we can see how these modern theories of the self resonate with Unger’s work written some two centuries earlier. An individual must not only be able to frame her self according to her own perceptions and experiences, she must also be able to structure or narrate these frameworks and experiences. As I repeatedly argue over the course of this dissertation, narrative and the self are very}
Wer auf sein vergangenes Leben aufmerksam wird, der glaubt zuerst oft nichts als Zwecklosigkeit, abgerissene Fäden, Verwirrung, Nacht und Dunkelheit zu sehen; je mehr sich aber sein Blick darauf heftet, desto mehr verschwindet die Dunkelheit, die Zwecklosigkeit verliert sich allmählich, die abgerissenen Fäden knüpfen sich wieder an, das Untereinander geworfene und Verwirrte ordnet sich – und das Mißtönende löset sich unvermerkt in Harmonie und Wohlklang auf. (Moritz 107)

Not only must an individual’s life be narrated, but the connections between the various narrated events must be established – the “torn threads” must be reconnected and organized into a harmonious whole. In establishing a linear narrative, the narrated individuality can fully come into existence and is subsequently mirrored in the completeness of the narrative form.

Establishing a linear perspective is most easily done from a position of knowledge and, as such, the narrating Mirabella is privy to a greater understanding of her actions and the events in her life than the narrated Mirabella. This imbalance is evidenced by textual clues such as “...dazu war ich mit aller Verständigkeit doch noch zu unschuldig” or “...weil um diese Zeit mein Kopf in eben den Wirbel gezogen wurde, worin sich die Köpfe aller jungen Mädchen von meiner Bekanntschaft dreheten” (50, 58). At times Mirabella pauses in her own story to share the outcome of a particular character’s life beyond the point in time which she is currently describing, creating the appearance of possessing almost an omniscient perspective. Even her reference to the seven-year war¹²⁹ reminds the reader that

¹²⁹ “Der siebenjährige Krieg war seit anderthalb Jahren begonnen” (87), Mirabella notes at one point - of course, at the time nobody knew that the war would last seven years, just as Mirabella’s narrated character cannot know the outcome of any of her actions at the time that they are occurring.
she is narrating from a position of greater knowledge than the other characters in her story possess. Of course, we must take care to differentiate between the narrator and the actual author of the text; Mirabella is merely a fictional character, and yet her “decision” to narrate retrospectively rather than in the moment - à la Richardson’s Pamela - indicates a decision on the part of the author to structure the story as a completed series of events. This fact, taken in conjunction with some of Mirabella’s statements, alerts the reader to the notion that an integral aspect of individuality - at least as understood by Unger - is predicated on a sense of completion. An individuality *is*, and it is only in eliminating the developmental angle of a character that such an individuality can manifest itself. In other words, to see Mirabella *becoming* what she is would undermine the very existence of her individuality. Instead, the author shows us the nature of Mirabella’s *being*, even where such a condition appears to the reader as a “Räthsel” (50).

That is precisely the reason that Mirabella’s view of her own individuality seems to be riddled with contradictions, as in the case of some apparently incongruous sentiments: she notes the necessity of presenting her nature and “wie sie allmählig zu Stande gebracht worden ist” (333), but also explains that her particular character might be based on the “Voraussetzung einer höheren Natur, welche die Morgengabe meiner Geburt gewesen” (51). Mirabella “is” before she can even become anything; her nature is already decided from birth, and the actions that accompany the story of her “development” are instead a narrative of her effects on those around her.

Rather than offering up a series of events that effect certain developments in her character, Mirabella’s narrative portrays her individuality as it is. An exploration into her
backstory is, nonetheless, necessary in order for her reader(s) to understand how such a nature as hers can exist. “Wie ich mit den körperlichen und geistigen Eigenschaften, in deren Besitz ich gewesen und allenfalls auch noch bin, eine Jungfrau habe bleiben können? In Wahrheit, dies ist das Hauptproblem, das gelöst werden muß, wenn man mich in meiner Individualität begreifen will” (4). The choice of wording here hints at an incredibly stable individuality; Mirabella’s mention of bleiben können and of being in possession of certain characteristics for the entirety of her life allows her to assert herself as unchanging. Although her story will not present any great development, it will offer the insights her reader requires in order to understand a nature such as hers.

In the case of Anton Reiser, it is the construction of a novel that allows both him and his readers to grasp the nature of his life. “Wem nun an einer solchen getreuen Darstellung [eines Menschenlebens] etwas gelegen ist, der wird sich an das anfänglich Unbedeutende und unwichtig Scheinende nicht stoßen, sondern in Erwägung ziehen, daß dies künstlich verflochtne Gewebe eines Menschenlebens aus einer unendlichen Menge von Kleinigkeiten besteht” (Moritz 107). The choice of the words künstlich verflochtne Gewebe indicates the constructed nature of the representation, the same way that Mirabella’s own representation takes the form of an artificially constructed narrative. Indeed, the labelling of her “letters” as “books” helps to establish the literary nature of her self-representation in its manufactured entirety. It is true that Moritz is more interested in the details, the minor events that affect the greater aspects. Both authors, however, have a vested interest in how they represent the lives of their characters.
It should come as no surprise, then, that in both *Julchen Grünthal* and *Bekenntnisse einer schönen Seele* the narrative form is directly connected to the question of the individual. The extent to which a narrative emerges mirrors the possibility of an individuality emerging in turn. As a result, one of the most notable differences between *Julchen Grünthal* and *Bekenntnisse* - the (in)ability of the protagonists to reflect on their own character and development - becomes an important similarity. The more that a character offers up self-reflection and analysis, the more of an individuality she seems to possess. In *Julchen Grünthal*, Julchen’s musings on her emotions and desires are almost always framed in relationship to her father’s insights and desires. The fact that she does not have a character to develop is reflected at the narrative level, with her loss of narrative control and “physical absence” from the story. Minna, in contrast, is markedly more self-aware and introspective. She investigates her development to a certain extent and is free to recount her story without any mediating narrator (indeed, she occasionally serves as the mediating narrator in the second volume). Finally, in the case of Mirabella, we see a character who maintains absolute control over her narrative undertaking and is consequently able to represent herself as possessing a stable and ideal individuality. This relationship between character and text indicates the importance of analyzing the former vis-à-vis the latter.

In this regard, an analysis of Unger’s novels as novels (rather than, for example, short stories or dramas) bears brief consideration. In the introduction I pointed to Karl Philipp Moritz’s *Anton Reiser* as a pivotal work for the 18th-century exploration of the individual; one reason this text lends itself so well to the treatment of the individual is due
to its author’s choice of genre: the novel. As Moritz explains in the preface to Part 2 of the book: “ich [sehe] mich genötigt, zu erklären, daß dasjenige, was ich aus Ursachen, die ich für leicht zu erraten hielt, einen psychologischen Roman genannt habe, im eigentlichsten Verstande Biographie und zwar eine so wahre und getreue Darstellung eines Menschenlebens bis auf seine kleinste Nüancen ist” (107). Moritz’s decision to write a novel rather than a biography highlights the importance of the individual, particularly as it is understood within this literary genre.\textsuperscript{130} The reasons for this decision, which Moritz considered “leicht zu erraten,” point to the sentiments found in Friedrich Blanckenburg’s \textit{Versuch über den Roman}, perhaps the most important contemporaneous scholarship on the relationship of the novel form to the individual. Blanckenburg explains why the novel is so productive of a genre for literary anthropology when he argues “[d]aß die Gefühle und Handlungen der \textit{Menschheit}, der eigentliche Inhalt der Romane sind” (19, emphasis in original). Even more emphatically he refers to the novel as a work “das sich mit den Handlungen und mit den Empfindungen des Menschen beschäftigt” (20, emphasis in original). By concerning itself with the actions and feelings of a person, the novel allows for a more precise and focused representation of the individual than one could achieve in a short story or even in a drama.

Although there is no way to establish whether or not Unger was familiar with Blanckenburg’s treatise, Blanckenburg was responding to the novel as the ideal medium for an exploration of the individual based on the characteristics of two well-known author’s from Unger’s time (most prominently Wieland, but also Henry Fielding). The intertextual

\textsuperscript{130} For a more complete discussion of this consideration, see pp. 42-50 in the introduction.
nature of Unger’s novels as well as her extensive translation work from French and English\textsuperscript{131} indicates that she was most likely aware of the contemporaneous discussion regarding literary production. At the very least, her own novels reflect to a great degree some of the mandates found in Blanckbenburg’s \textit{Versuch}.\textsuperscript{132}

The three novels I am analyzing here all engage with the “Handlungen und Empfindungen des Menschen,” although narratively they differ significantly: \textit{Julchen Grünthal} is an uneven mixture of third-person and first-person narratives, \textit{Bekenntnisse einer schönen Seele} is comprised exclusively of a first-person narrative, and \textit{Der junge Franzose und das deutsche Mädchen. Wenn man will, ein Roman} is a primarily epistolary (i.e. containing first-person narratives) novel with the occasional interjection of a third-person narrative. As I have already argued above, these varying structures reflect the individuals that they are representing. The focus of the novels – representations of the individual vis-à-vis her society - are the same, and all three novels similarly touch on an aesthetic ideal that was quite prevalent in the 18\textsuperscript{th}-century: the beautiful soul. But, like the narratives themselves, the manifestations of the beautiful soul differ markedly from one novel to the next, with only a brief mention afforded it in Unger’s first text.

\textsuperscript{131} Unger produced at least 14 translations from French and English works, according to the biographical entry by Schindel in \textit{Die deutschen Schriftstellerinnen des neunzehnten Jahrhunderts. Zweiter Theil}; pp. 376-81. This number is, incidentally, double the number of novels she wrote herself. 
\textsuperscript{132} Even the wording Goethe uses in his review of the novel reflects this. He writes that the author of \textit{Bekenntnisse} “weder Furcht noch Hoffnung, weder Mitleiden noch Schrecken erregen, sondern Personen und Begebenheiten vorstellen [will]” (367). The terminology of \textit{Furcht} and \textit{Mitleiden} calls to mind the dramaturgical theory of Lessing, while the reference to \textit{Personen und Begebenheiten} echoes Blanckenburg.
3.2.1 The Beautiful Soul

“Schöne Seele! wiederholte Ida schmerzlich; ach! ich hätte es seyn können” (JG Vol. 2, 11). This statement appears early on in the second volume of *Julchen Grünthal*, well before the reader is aware that Ida is actually Julchen. Consequently, instead of reflecting on why Julchen was not a beautiful soul, the reader might very well be prompted to analyze the first narrative in Volume 2 (that of Minna) in light of this concept. Such a reading allows for a useful comparison to the protagonist of *Bekenntnisse*, as there are noticeable parallels between Mirabella and Minna: both women stand as homodiagetic narrators in the two novels, both address their narratives to a man, and both offer an image of a somewhat successful and autonomous character – due in part to characteristics of the concept “beautiful soul.”

The relative importance of this concept (*schöne Seele*) is underscored by Julchen’s reaction to Minna’s “mistaken” use of this appellation. This is no mere *Modewort* being invoked here; there are very real implications of this concept which should be considered. In order to understand these implications, however, we must first understand the somewhat tenuous construct of the beautiful soul as it emerged in contemporaneous literature and philosophy. There is no clear entry to which one can point in an effort to explain “this is the nature of the beautiful soul,” and instead most attempts to historicize and define this concept undertake to reconcile the trajectories of several different authors and developments.

---

133 Although, on the occasions where this is attempted, the source most frequently referenced is Friedrich Schiller’s Über Anmut und Würde.” Inge Stephan’s discussion of the beautiful soul, for example, references almost exclusively the ideas formulated in Schiller’s essay.
The two most recent and significant monographs on the beautiful soul are Robert E. Norton’s *The Beautiful Soul: Aesthetic Morality in the Eighteenth Century* (1995), and Marie Wokalek’s *Die schöne Seele als Denkfigur: Zur Semantik von Gewissen und Geschmack bei Rousseau, Wieland, Schiller* (2011). Norton’s approach is based on “the archaeological labor of uncovering the deeper historical strata on which modern consciousness rests” in an effort to “be better able to measure the efficacy of any similarly inspired ‘aesthetics of existence’ at a time when far fewer certainties exist” (5, 8). Norton’s “archaeological labor” reveals that the increased interest in the beautiful soul during the 18th century emerges due to three intertwining threads: the advent of modern ethics in Britain and the emergence of the idea of moral beauty (9), Pietism and the ideal of moral perfection (55), and the Hellenic ideal of *kalokagathia* (100). Essentially, the defining characteristic of the concept of the beautiful soul is “the need to find an alternative to the traditional ethical system of the Christian religion” (211). This ethical system manifests in 18th-century thought in regards to the physical, as well - prompting Norton to dedicate a chapter to the influence of Lavater’s physiognomy on the concept of moral beauty vis-à-vis physical beauty. Finally, Norton provides a brief foray into the philosophical characteristics of the beautiful soul as expressed by Kant and Schiller, before concluding with “the formal eulogy” of the beautiful soul as pronounced by Goethe and Hegel (247).

Although the bulk of Norton’s analysis is historiographical in nature, he does offer a brief analysis of works by Rousseau and by Wieland, “the one German writer who most resembled Rousseau” (140). As Norton explains it, “[o]ne of the most notable similarities between Rousseau and Wieland is their shared concern to use their literary works to
achieve significant change, and specifically to encourage moral betterment, in their readers” (166). The beautiful soul is a literary device employed to these ends. Goethe similarly employs a version of the beautiful soul in the eponymously titled Book Six of *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*, though for markedly different ends than Rousseau or Wieland. Rather than representing an ideal of moral behavior, the beautiful soul embodies “the need for absolute self-determination, even at the expense of other social or individual requirements” (254). Goethe’s beautiful soul does not present an ideal worth striving towards, but is instead limited to a sterile existence, one which indicates that “[i]t is conceivable that he [Goethe] saw certain dangers within the very ideal of the beautiful soul itself” (Norton 262). As such, and according to the trajectory outlined by Norton, the beautiful soul ceases to represent “a truly vital principle” with the advent of the 19th century (283). Indeed, “by the beginning of the 1800s, the limitations of the beautiful soul had already made themselves manifest to anyone who cared to notice them” (Norton 7). Ostensibly these limitations are to be found in the literature of the 18th century, though the scope of Norton’s project only allows for a few, brief literary analyses. Curiously absent from these are any examinations of representations of a beautiful soul by a female author. Both “das ungebrochene Verständnis von der schönen Seele als ethischem Ideal der Aufklärung” (Wokalek 16)\(^{134}\) as well as its manifestly obvious limitations are only delineated according to the aesthetics of male authors.

\(^{134}\) Wokalek’s reaction to Norton’s monograph, as cited in part above, also contains a mild critique of the “polemic” work: she views the study as susceptible to “dem Verdacht, ihrerseits Klischees über die sogenannten Ideale der Aufklärung aufzusitzen” (16).
In her own analysis of the beautiful soul, Marie Wokalek discusses a selection of texts by four authors: Rousseau, Wieland, Schiller, and Goethe. As she explains it, this choice of authors provides a showcase for her undertaking “die dreimensionale Wirksamkeit der schönen Seele als einer spezifisch modernen Denkfigur an epochemachenden Texten zu zeigen, die implizit oder explizit auch auf einander Bezug nehmen” (44-45). The exemplary, ground-breaking, and intertextual nature of the works and authors being analyzed suggests that the concept of the beautiful soul in the 18th century was relatively fragile, subject to concerns of authorship and presentation. As Inge Stephan argues in her comparison of Goethe’s and Unger’s beautiful souls, “[o]ffensichtlich ist die Frage, was eine schöne Seele ist, wer darauf Anspruch erheben kann und wer sie beschreiben darf, durchaus kontrovers” (195). Perhaps it is for this reason that Wokalek, like Norton, chooses to omit a consideration of representations of beautiful souls by female authors.135

The characteristics of the beautiful soul, according to Wokalek’s analysis, are broken down into a three-fold categorization of “social-philosophical imperatives,” “epistemological and moral-philosophical intermediary functions,” and “aesthetic promises” (44). These characteristics are expressed via three functional aspects of the beautiful soul: “Ausdruck, “Wirkung,” and “Darstellung” (25-26). “Alle drei Funktionen und ihre Wirkfelder bedingen einander wechselseitig” (44), and the manifestations of these various functions and their effects as they can be found in the works of the four authors is the focus of Wokalek’s analysis. In this way, Wokalek explains, she is able to move away

135 Actually, Wokalek does very briefly mention Unger’s Bekenntnisse, but only as it is critiqued in Goethe’s review of the novel (278-79).
from the fixed term “schöne Seele” and approach “die Variationen der schönen Seele in ihrer ambivalenten Grundspannung aus Emphase und Kritik” (44). Very loosely summarized, the beautiful soul for Rousseau functions as a législateur, or “law-giver,” and reflects both self-control and “die Liebe zur Ordnung” (77); for Wieland the concepts of kalokagathia (the “beautiful-and-good”), moral grace, and virtuoso form the basis of his representation of the beautiful soul (133); in Schiller’s philosophy the ideals of the beautiful soul manifest as freedom in the forms of beauty and the sublime - both require the use of “free will” (210); finally, in Goethe’s writings, we find a more critical stance on the beautiful soul - indeed Goethe even characterizes the beautiful soul as uninteresting (281).

Wokalek’s analysis is, of course, much more complex than the reductionist overview presented here, though she also offers up a cursory summary of her findings: the beautiful soul stands as an ethical “Sozial- und Gesellschaftsmodell,” the beautiful soul represents epistemological talent, and the beautiful soul functions “als kunstphilosophisches Paradigma und als Darstellungsmodus” (357). Thus, the various conceptions of the beautiful soul over the course of the 18th century serve as reflections of the “Umbauprozessen der ‘Sattel-Zeit’” and are useful for analyzing the differences between subject and “norm” - though what exactly constitutes such a norm is never clarified (369).

Although Norton’s and Wokalek’s expositions of the beautiful soul differ markedly in their approaches, both scholars draw similar conclusions regarding the nature of the beautiful soul: it serves as both a literary tool and philosophical ideal. Inge Stephan notes,
It would appear that any functional aspect of the beautiful soul reflects more the beliefs of a particular author than an overarching, accepted understanding of the construct. Consequently, if we want to engage with the use of this concept in any author’s writing, it is necessary to explore how that particular author represents the concept “beautiful soul,” and how the representation of the beautiful soul functions within the given text. It is also true, however, that the extent to which the aesthetics of the beautiful soul in a given text conform to or differ from the philosophies expressed by the abovementioned authors (Rousseau, Schiller, Wieland, Goethe) can illuminate the extent to which an author embraces or rejects these four somewhat disparate perceptions of the beautiful soul. In other words, a representation of the beautiful soul that rejects Goethe’s critical skepticism in favor of a more Rousseauian vision of the beautiful soul might indicate that the character in question represents a positive ideal.

If we base our approach to Unger’s understanding of the beautiful soul on the premise that she was interested in presenting a critical engagement with it, rather than an ironic criticizing of it, then the best way to ascertain what a beautiful soul entails within the confines of this text is to analyze Mirabella’s and Caroline’s characters. Mirabella is

136 As, for example, Goethe arguably was with his own presentation of the beautiful soul. “[S]o ist doch deutlich, daß Goethe mit dem sechsten Buch keine ‘geradlinige und einsinnige Huldigung bzw. Erbauung’ der ‘lieben Klettenbergerin’ im Sinne hatte, sondern deren Aufzeichnungen in durchaus ironischer Weise bearbeitete, um eine Figur zu kritisieren, die, wie Wilhelm von Humboldt schrieb, ‘eine nur sehr uneigentlich schön genannte und mehr kleinliche, eitle und beschränkte Seele gewesen’ sei” (Stephan 193). However, Unger’s own critical treatment of the beautiful soul in *Melanie, das Findelkind* and - to a lesser extent - in *Gräfin Pauline* indicates she is not criticizing the concept or manifestation of the “beautiful soul,” but rather analyzing it critically.
the first beautiful soul mentioned - by merit of the title; in addition to this, Mirabella refers to Caroline just once in the novel as a beautiful soul (251). The only other mention of a beautiful soul in the entire text occurs during a brief dissertation by Mirabella “über das Verhältniß der Physiognomie zur Freundschaft” (321), where she cites Plato: “Eine schöne Seele könne nur in einem schönem Körper wohnen” (328). Mirabella’s primary purpose in elaborating on physiognomy is to explain how she was able to take such an interest in Eugenia without first knowing her, but because Mirabella refrains from applying the label “beautiful soul” to Eugenia directly, it is unclear whether or not Unger intended for her readers to view this character as such.

The most likely explanation for such a dearth of references to a concept which ostensibly forms the very basis for Unger’s novel can be found in the assertion that a beautiful soul cannot be aware of her own moral beauty. As Inge Stephan argues, “[d]ie Bezeichnung ’schöne Seele’ kann nur von der Umwelt und Nachwelt verliehen werden” (194). Schiller, it would seem, agrees when he writes that “[d]ie schöne Seele hat kein andres Verdienst, als daß sie ist…Daher weiß sie selbst auch niemals um die Schönheit ihres Handelns” (468). In other words, Unger can call her protagonist a beautiful soul, but Mirabella should not be aware of it herself. In another one of her novels, *Melanie, das Findelkind* (1804), Unger further appears to support the idea that a beautiful soul simply is: “Coelestine hätte in der Tat vortrefflich werden können, wäre sie nicht zu sehr darauf

---

137 The case could also be made that the Countess of Albania is a beautiful soul as well, based on the description Unger provides of her personality: “Die Gräfin Luisa d’Albania war Unseresgleichen; auch hatten wir uns kaum kennen gelernt, als wir mit aller der Unzertrennlichkeit an einenander hingen, welche gleichgestimmten Gemüthern eigen ist” (276-77). As both Mirabella and Caroline are labelled beautiful souls, the reference to the countess as being “one of them” could infer that she, too, is a beautiful soul.
aus gewesen, eine schöne Seele zu seyn” (196).\textsuperscript{138} Being a beautiful soul is not so much a conscious choice or an active lifestyle as it is a reflection of the individual in question.

The sober implications of this assertion are that a character has little control over whether or not she is a beautiful soul. Even critics who situate Unger’s presentation of the beautiful soul as disparate from Schiller’s concept of it (viz. the beautiful soul is natural and unaware of her status of being a beautiful soul) point to an understanding of this construct that relegates the beautiful soul to circumstances outside of the individual’s control.\textsuperscript{139}

Im Gegensatz zu Schillers das Natürlich-Unbewusste und Goethes das Ungesunde betonenden Charakterisierung einer schönen Seele beschreiben Mirabellas Bekenntnisse einen Prozeß, in dem Veranlagungen (ein leidenschaftsloses Temperament, ein kühler Verstand) durch äußere Bedingungen gefördert eine Persönlichkeit hervorbringen, die, obwohl (oder weil?) Inbegriff weiblicher Tugend (=Keuschheit), dem weiblichen Rollenmodell der aufopfernden Ehefrau und Mutter nicht mehr entsprechen kann. (Zantop 401-402)

The choice of the word \textit{Veranlagung} [nature, predisposition] highlights an understanding of the beautiful soul that is innate rather than acquirable. Furthermore, it is influenced by external factors, many of which are likely beyond an individual’s control. For Zantop, these two considerations combine to offer a statement on the psychosocial role of woman as wife and mother, but it is equally important to consider what this means for the possibility of individuality. In other words, if Unger’s representation of woman is not one that reflects traditional social norms, but instead attempts to explore her person as an individual, to what

---

\textsuperscript{138} Cited in Zantop’s “The Beautiful Soul Writes Herself” (40).
\textsuperscript{139} Brewer even explicitly argues that “Mirabella’s comparative success is due in part to good fortune” (Beautiful Souls 119).
extent do these “Veranlagungen” and the “äußere Bedingungen” factor in? Do the stories of Unger’s female protagonists taken together indicate that a beautiful soul is a necessary requirement for a stable individuality? And does a character have any chance at determining her own individuality, or is it - like the possibility of being a beautiful soul - largely outside of her control?

Turning first to the figure of Mirabella for answers, the reader learns that the concept “beautiful soul” is directly related to one’s character. For Mirabella, “character” is frequently interchangeable with “individuality” and both stand in direct relation to the external world:

Welche Richtungen mein Inneres auch bis dahin erhalten haben mochte, so lag es in der Natur der Sache, daß sie durch die neue Lage verdrängt wurden; denn so lange der Mensch noch der Entwicklung fähig ist, bestimmt er sich nach seiner Umgebung, die um so kräftiger auf ihn einzuwirken pflegt, je abhängiger er in jedem Betracht von ihr ist. Eigenen Charakter darf man nur solchen Personen zuschreiben, die sich zu Meistern ihrer Umgebung gemacht haben. (12)

By juxtaposing the phrase “in der Natur der Sache” with “die neue Lage,” Unger toys with the idea that a person’s individuality (or “Inneres”) is predicated on both internal and external factors. Nature and environment both affect a person’s character. Furthermore, a person can only be said to possess a character (of her own) if she can master her environment, a sentiment that echoes the concept of moral freedom. This tenet is a

140 Elsewhere, in reference to her acquaintance Count Vittorio Alfieri, Mirabella writes that “was er am wenigsten ins Reine bringen konnte, war: wie viel von seinem Wesen er sich selbst und wie viel er dem gesellschaftlichen Zustand verdankte?” (289) This interplay of nature and environment also emerges indirectly in another scholar’s reading of the novel. “Mirabellas Verhältnis zu ihren Eltern zeigt..., daß die (individuelle) Person sich nicht mehr über die (natürlichen) Eltern und die Familie bestimmt” (Schmid 102). From Schmid’s perspective, Mirabella’s lack of natural parents is meant to be understood most directly as a statement on the institution of the family. Schmid’s vocabulary, however, maintains a focus on concerns of the origin of one’s individuality.
grounding principle in Schiller’s aesthetic philosophy, and even finds expression in his discussion of the beautiful soul.\textsuperscript{141} This association between moral freedom and the beautiful soul implicitly links the concept of the individual with the construct of the beautiful soul. Regardless of the external factors, a person must be able to rise above them and assert his own individuality. This is easier for some people than others, as a person is largely determined by his environment [Umgebung], “die um so kräftiger auf ihn einzuwirken pflegt, je abhängiger er in jedem Betracht von ihr ist” (Bekenntnisse 12).

Mirabella proves to be utterly independent of her environment, possessing what one could interpret as an innate ability to master her surroundings. Even as a child, her interactions with male playmates do not undermine her own individuality: “Und so geschah es, daß ich selbst in einem Alter, dem die Herrschsucht ganz fremd ist, die widerstrebbende Natur meiner Gespielen männlichen Geschlechts in den Strudel meiner Individualität zog, und diese rettete, ohne für sie zu kämpfen“ (21). Mirabella is capable of overcoming her environment with ease, and by explicitly situating it as a masculine environment (it is her male playmates she refers to) she initiates a narrative of her individuality that hinges on an orientation towards men and masculine authority/interference.

For Unger, it seems that a beautiful soul can only succeed if she is influenced by men, but ultimately free of them. This idea emerges already in Stephan’s comparative interpretation of Unger’s novel. “‘Schöne Seelen,’ wie sie Goethe und Unger entwerfen, bleiben unverheiratet, verzichten auf die biologische Mutterschat und führen im Rahmen

\textsuperscript{141} “Nur im Dienst einer schönen Seele kann die Natur zugleich Freiheit besitzen und ihre Form bewahren” (469).
der sich selbst gesetzten Keuschheitsgrenzen ein selbstbestimmtes und emanzipiertes, von Männern unabhängiges Leben” (Stephan 202, my emphasis). While this analysis is partly correct, it excludes a consideration of Unger’s other beautiful soul, Caroline. Both Mirabella and Caroline are referred to as beautiful souls, and Mirabella even claims that she “transferred” much of herself (her “self”) to Caroline. Similar in personality, the two women’s fates could not be more different. Caroline marries, has a biological child, and is anything but independent of men. She cannot even leave her residence without her husband’s permission. Mirabella, on the other hand, remains single and chooses where she will go and what she will do. Despite the fact that she does not have a biological child, she does play the role of mother to her adopted child (while Caroline leaves her son behind with her husband). Most notable of all is the fact that Caroline dies, while Mirabella claims that she has never even been sick (378). Consequently, Stephan’s interpretation that Unger “das Ideal der schönen Seele in gewisser Weise in Frage [stellt]” might very well be true, though not in the way that Stephan understands this critical perspective (202). Rather

142 Stephan’s analysis echoes Goethe’s critique of Unger’s Bekenntnisse where he argues, Mirabella “ist weder Tochter, noch Schwester, noch Geliebte, noch Gattin, noch Mutter, und so kann man in ihr weder die Hausfrau, noch die Schwiegernachbarin, noch die Großmutter voraussehen” (376). And yet, as Henn and Hufeisen have pointed out, “[m]it Ausnahme der Rolle der Schwester und Gattin übt Mirabella alle anderen, von Goethe als Defizit aufgeführten Funktionen aus, wenn auch nicht im streng biologischen Sinne. Sie war Tochter (der Pflegeeltern), Geliebte (von Moritz), Mutter (der Ziehtochter Luise), Hausfrau und mit der Heirat Luises auch Schwiegermutter” (55). In other words, the attempt to associate Goethe’s view of the beautiful soul with Unger’s representation of it cannot be based on the lifestyle or characteristics of the protagonists. Stephan is correct when she notes that Mirabella’s role as mother is not a biological one, but that is also a necessity for Mirabella’s character given her vaunted virginity.

143 “Indem ich der Prinzessin gegenüber meine ganze Individualität festhielt, so konnte es schwerlich fehlen, daß, vermöge der achtungsvollen Anhänglichkeit, die sie für mich empfand, von meinem ganzen Wesen sehr viel auf sie überging” (160).

144 Stephan’s understanding of Unger’s novel is that the author questions the possibility of such a concept “beautiful soul” itself, as evidenced by the myriad problems located below the superficially pleasant surface of Mirabella’s story: “Gegenüber dem kritisch-ironisch eingefärbten Konzept der schönen Seele im Wilhelm Meister entwirft der Roman Bekenntnisse einer schönen Seele, von ihr selbst geschrieben von Helene Unger ein auf den ersten Blick ungebrochen positives Bild der schönen Seele...Tatsächlich ist das

159
than aligning her beautiful soul with Goethe’s in terms of a lack of balance, Unger outlines the rather difficult-to-achieve conditions under which the beautiful soul can prosper.

3.2.2 “The Beautiful Soul Writes Herself”

Mirabella’s narrative reveals two important considerations regarding the representation of the individual: firstly, as I have already argued many times over, her narrative presence is a textual mirroring of the solidification of her self. It is not without reason that I have borrowed the title of Zantop’s article\textsuperscript{145} for the heading of this section – in writing her own story, Mirabella demonstrates that she is in possession of an autonomous individuality. Secondly, the sentiments expressed in this narrative offer insights into why one individual might be more successful at “being” than another. Writing of herself and Eugenia, Mirabella explains:

Wir würden noch immer glücklich seyn, wenn wir auch ganz von der Welt getrennt lebten. Dies ist aber nicht der Fall; wir leben vielmehr mitten in der Welt. Es kam darauf an, eine solche Stellung zu gewinnen, daß wir von dem Geräusch um uns her nur gerade so viel berührt würden, als sich mit der Bestimmung vertrug, die wir uns selbst gegeben hatten. Zu diesem Endzweck konnten wir uns nur dem Umgange solcher Personen hingeben, die wirklich zu uns paßten…Wer sich mit dem Volumen befaßt, wird davon erdrückt; wer hingegen Verstand genug hat, nur nach der Quintessenz zu streben, behält seine ganze Freiheit und wird durch die höchsten Genüsse belohnt. (Bekenntnisse 364-65)

The interest in preserving one’s freedom is juxtaposed with the necessity of engaging with those around us in an effort to establish one’s individuality. Mirabella extolls the value of

limiting one’s interactions as much as possible, as she recognizes the damaging effects that too much social engagement can produce. Mirabella is much freer to avoid these social interactions than Caroline is, not the least of which reasons is Caroline’s arranged marriage to a duke. This forced insertion of Caroline’s character into public life with a very specific role to fulfill (she is not free to leave this environment until she has produced a male heir) severely limits the extent to which her individuality can emerge as master of its environment (to return to Mirabella’s phrasing here). Brewer even goes so far as to argue that Caroline has absolutely no individuality to speak of: “Caroline’s union with patriarchal power, however willful, annihilates her as an individual” (Anxiety of Influence 58). While Brewer situates this loss of one’s self in relationship to the patriarchy, for Mirabella all external interactions have the ability to destroy one’s autonomy.

“Eine Sammlung wirklich geistreicher Schriften hat den Vorzug selbst vor der besten Gesellschaft,” Mirabella insists, “[weil] man seiner Bibliothek gegenüber die vollste Freiheit [behält], welche nothwendig verloren geht, wenn man sich, im persönlichen Umgange, fremden Individualitäten anschmiegen muß” (Bekenntnisse 376-77). For Mirabella, social interaction is a necessary evil; she must engage with those around her in order to assert her self, yet the very act of doing so is an erosion of her freedom and endangers her individuality. This risk is also ostensibly why she chooses to travel as much as she does, for it is in the removal of oneself from her (present) society that an individual possesses the greatest control of her self.

Wenn die meisten Reisenden gar keinen Beruf zum Reisen haben, so haben dafür diejenigen Individuen den allerbestimmtesten Beruf, die aus dem Kampf mit der Gesellschaft eine Empfindlichkeit davon getragen haben, vermöge welcher sie, in bleibenden Verhältnissen, nur
beleidigen oder beleidigt werden können. Auf Reisen hat man es in seiner Gewalt, seine ganze Eigenthümlichkeit zu behaupten; denn von dem Augenblick an, wo sie bekämpft wird, reiset man weiter; und da dem Reisenden, besonders dem bemittelten Reisenden, alles entgegen kommt, so fehlt es nie an Gelegenheit zu neuen Verhältnissen, die alsdann wiederum so lange dauern, als sie können. (267-68)

This ability to control one’s circumstances is essential for the assertion of one’s Eigenthümlichkeit, a word used here to refer to one’s individuality.¹⁴⁶ If an individual is able to travel, he or she can escape the potentially destructive influences of the present environment and society; the alternative is to remain where one is, at the mercy of everything and everyone around her. In one of her first “letters” to Cäsar, Mirabella argues that “[n]ur der Umgang, oder die Totalität gleichartiger Eindrücke, bestimmt die Individualität” (13). As evidenced in the specific case of Caroline, too much “Umgang” has the power to completely blot out a person’s individuality. Mirabella’s Weltanschauung further emphasizes this:

Es kommt zuletzt doch nur darauf an, daß man eine achtunggebietende Individualität gewinne. Wie will man aber zu einer solchen gelangen, wenn es durchaus nicht gestattet ist, bleibende Falten zu schlagen, die, sie mögen nun in Gefühlen oder in Ideen zum Vorschein treten, allein den Charakter ausmachen? In Städten, vorzüglich aber in Hauptstädten, besteht die Erziehung eigentlich darin, daß der eine Eindruck sogleich durch den andern vernichtet werde, so daß der Zögling am Ende in einem leeren Nichts dasteht; dies ist eine nothwendige Folge der allzuweit getriebenen Zusammengesetzztheit der Richtungen, welche der Zögling (ob mit oder ohne Absicht, gilt hier gleich viel) in den Städten erhält. Auf dem Lande kann so etwas durchaus nicht statt finden; da der Richtungen an und für sich weniger sind, so ist die ganze Erziehung einfacher, und die natürliche Folge davon ist, daß das Innere des Zöglings eine bestimmte Form annimmt, die sich zuletzt von selbst gegen alle Unform vertheidigt, und im Kampfe mit derselben zu einer höheren Entwicklung führt. (18-19)

The use of the verb gewinnen here (line 1) indicates that perhaps not everybody is capable

¹⁴⁶ Though this term has wider-reaching implications beyond this one understanding of it, as discussed on pp. 178-79 below.
of achieving this. It is not a given that a person will succeed at acquiring an
“achtunggebietende Individualität;” it requires both specific circumstances and also effort
on the part of the individual. Mirabella is fortunate enough not only to have experienced
an upbringing in the country, which subsequently allowed her to develop an individuality,
but also to have remained free from the authority of a husband and be able to assert her
individuality in a way that is not possible for Caroline.

The extent to which Mirabella perceives (her) environment as affecting (her)
individuality is not only reflected in her lifestyle, but it is also obvious to contemporaneous
readers of the novel. After Mirabella is summoned to court to live with her friend, she
struggles to reconcile life in this environment with the demands of her individuality. “Das
Einzige, was mich von der Annahme [der Stelle beim Hof] abschrecken konnte, war meine
eigene Individualität, die, wie es mir vorkam, sehr schlecht zu den Verhältnissen paßte,
welche ein Hof in sich selbst zu erzeugen pflegt” (135). In his review of the novel, Goethe
notes, in reference to this point in the story: “Nun wird unsere Freundin an einen kleinen
deutschen Hof zu einer jungen Prinzessin berufen. Hier wird schon merklicher, wie sie ihre
Individualität durch alle Ausbildung hindurch zu erhalten sucht” (371, my emphasis). Both
Mirabella’s and Goethe’s wording reveal how profoundly the narrator of the novel attempts
to establish individuality as susceptible to one’s environment, and yet also capable of being
determined independently of it. Ultimately, the presentation of Mirabella’s individuality –
or rather the preservation of her individuality – allows for an understanding of character
that emerges “naturally.” In an allusion to Rousseau’s own construct of individuality and
uniqueness, Mirabella explains herself:

163
Die Natur wollte nun einmal, daß in der Reihe der Wesen auch ein solches Geschöpf existiren sollte, wie ich bin. Eben so weit davon entfernt, mich als Muster darstellen zu wollen, als ich entfernt bin, meine eigene Anklägerin zu werden, will ich mich also nur in meiner Eigenthümlichkeit schildern.

Ob diese gut sey, oder nicht, darüber mögen Andere entscheiden. (7-8)

Having been pre-determined in some way to exist, Mirabella owes much of her character to nature rather than to the influences of external stimuli and interactions. These latter considerations have the ability, however, to effect change and are subsequently eschewed by Mirabella.

In addition to presenting her individuality as stemming from innate circumstances, Mirabella’s above-cited sentiments are reminiscent of Rousseau’s introductory statements in his own *Confessions*: “Je ne suis fait comme aucun de ceux que j’ai vu; j’ose croire n’être fait comme aucun de ceux qui existent. Si je ne vaux pas mieux, au moins je suis autre…c’est dont on ne peut me juger qu’après m’avoir lu” (1). Although Rousseau’s words take on a more accusing tone than those of Mirabella’s, we can see how both ground their individualities as utterly unique. They both furthermore engage in a dialogue with their readers in presenting their individualities for judgment. This imputes a certain level of authority to their audience in recognizing the validity of their self-representations. Mirabella addresses her text to a male friend, while simultaneously invoking the persona

---

147 “I am not made like any that I have seen; I venture to believe that I was not made like any that exist. If I am not more deserving, at least I am different..it is impossible to judge me before having read me.”

148 Schmid also draws a parallel between Mirabella’s and Rousseau’s confessions, noting: “Aus dem Prototyp weiblicher Introvertiertheit bei Goethe wird in Ungers Roman, unterstützt durch die Darstellungsförmer der autobiographischen Bekenntnisse, die nach öffentlicher Anerkennung strebende Frau” (117).

149 This is described by Henn and Hufeisen as “eine Art Erklärung ihrer Seinsweise vor der männlichen Autorität” (50). Brewer is even more explicit in establishing Cäsar as a source of masculine authority when she argues that his “name suggests the highest patriarchal authority” (Beautiful Souls 122).
of a very well-known male author. This choice doubly situates the assertion of her individuality within the authoritative framework of a masculine perspective and serves to reinforce the validity of her claims as a unique individual.

This individuality is of utmost importance to Mirabella, although she also acknowledges that it ought not to be:

_Sind wir einmal breit getreten, so mag es immerhin etwas Gutes seyn, aller Menschen Freund seyn zu können; allein so lange wir es noch nicht sind, müssen wir alles, was unseren Charakter ausmacht, als das köstlichste Kleinod bewahren, weil eine kräftig ausgesprochene Individualität zuletzt mehr werth ist, als die ganze Gesellschaft. Ich sollte dies nicht sagen, weil ich ein Weib bin; aber meine Rechtfertigung liegt in dem Stillschweigen, welches die Männer in Beziehung auf diese Wahrheit behaupten._ (Bekenntnisse 127-28)

The very act of insisting on the importance of one’s individuality is unacceptable for women; only men have the right to assert such a thing. As Henn and Hufeisen have noted, “[d]a aber die Frau im 18. Jahrhundert und danach weder Autonomie noch Gleichwertigkeit besaß und, wie Hippel reklamiert, ‘keine Person’ war, hat sie auch kein ‘Selbst’” (56). Because of this fundamental gender divide regarding the possibility of establishing one’s individuality, Mirabella frequently characterizes herself in rather contradictory terms. The nature of her individuality is noticeably feminine, and yet she must embrace the masculine if she is to have any claim to this individuality in the first place.

As Sigrid Lange has argued, Mirabella is able to lead an extraordinary and atypical lifestyle for a woman of her time.150 She is financially independent, despite not having been

---

150 “Ungers Roman intendiert, gegen das vorgeschriebene weibliche Sozialisationsmuster, eine weibliche Bildungsgeschichte. Mithin ist seine Heldin gehalten, einen exceptionellen Weg einzuschlagen. Dabei überschreitet sie das Goethsche Vorbild nicht nur in ihrer weiblichen Utopie, sondern auch in den der
married, and undertakes the equivalent of a *Bildungsreise* across Europe. Thanks to her father she received a superior education, and her knowledge of literature is significantly expanded through her interactions with her friend Adelaide’s brother. She is not only highly educated, but also quite defensive of “traditional femininity.” Mirabella goes so far as to assert that “keiner von [ihr]en Gesichtszügen widersprach der Weiblichkeit” (24). She reads novels and learns music, but “[hielt sich] im Übrigen von jener Virtuosität, welche die Weiblichkeit vernichtet, entfernt” (32). Most important of all, as Mirabella insists in her letter to Cäsar, is her virginity. Virginity in and of itself was certainly not atypical for the late 18th and early 19th centuries, but it is rather unusual that “Mirabella, trotz ihrem Alter und ihrer Jungfrauschaft, noch immer ihren Platz in der Gesellschaft behauptet, und sogar ein Gegenstand der Zuneigung und Achtung bleibt” (3). Mirabella is an amalgam of opposites and something of a paradox, though this is necessary for her orientation and self-expression. “Ich sage in der That nicht zuviel,” Mirabella claims, “wenn ich behaupte, daß in ihr [der Oberhofmeisterin] und mir zwei Extreme einander gegenüber standen, von welchen man das eine die vollendete Unweiblichkeit, das andere

---

151 When describing her foster mother, Mirabella notes that “[d]ieselbe Deutschheit, welche ihren Bruder zu einem Mann machte, gab ihr die ächte Weiblichkeit, die man bei so wenigen Französinnen antrifft, weil sie immer erst dann einen Werth errungen zu haben glauben, wenn sie aus ihrem Geschlecht getreten sind” (13).

152 A women Mirabella describes with some disdain: “Die Oberhofmeisterin war im Besitz aller der Formen, welche ihr Geschäft mit sich führte; aber sie war zugleich so sehr in der Repräsentation untergegangen, daß sie, auch wenn sie noch einer Erhebung fähig gewesen wäre, allen Geist für eine Todsünde erklärt haben würde. Man nannte sie in der Regel Madame Etiquette; und diese Benennung beleidigte sie, theils weil sie sich bewußt war, als Repräsentantin der Etiquette einen hohen Werth zu haben, theils weil sie keine Ahnung davon hatte, daß es neben dem staatsbürgerlichen Werth noch einen anderen gibt, der zuletzt alles entscheidet” (153). The contrast Mirabella makes between herself and this woman hinges on the (in)ability of each woman to assert an authentic, decisive character rather than a shallow, socially centered personality.
die höchste Jungfräulichkeit nennen konnte” (154). The opposite of complete “unfemininity” is virginity. By making such an argument, Mirabella implicitly orients herself towards men - virginity can be superseded only by sex (with a man) - and yet the fact that she has never engaged in such physical intimacy leaves her completely free of men.

One scholar has pointed to these contradictory elements of Mirabella’s character as indicative of her dual nature. “Mirabella’s comparative success is due in part to good fortune,” Brewer admits (Beautiful Souls 119), though more significantly it is a result of “Mirabella’s duality as both Gemüth and Geist, as both man and woman, [and] is reflected in the twisting figure of the mediating woman [in Raphael’s Transfiguration]. But these inherent contradictions in Unger’s heroine do not destroy her viability as a feminine ideal. Instead they reinforce it, her oppositional duality being the very foundation of her ideal identity” (Brewer, Beautiful Souls 126). It is this duality that permits Mirabella to succeed where others (such as Caroline or Luisa) do not. Brewer outlines Mirabella’s character as the manifestation of an “alternative feminine ideal” and further asserts that “of the possibilities presented, only the main protagonist represents a ‘livable’ option, whereas other non-traditional female characters in the novel die” (Beautiful Souls 103, 107). Such a formulation, however, indicates that Unger’s text is meant to be understood as somewhat subversive, a perspective which is shared by Susanne Zantop153 and Sigrid Lange.

153 Also in reference to the contradictory nature of Mirabella’s character, Zantop argues that “ein manifest konservativer Vorwurf durch ironische Textstrategien oder den Schreibakt selbst in Frage gestellt [wird]” (Afterword 404).
Lange’s assessment of the situation is that Mirabella’s life is a subversive overcoming of the male-female dichotomy: Unger’s “Protagonistin durchläuft eine männliche Sozialisation, um sich als weibliches Selbst zu konstituieren” (85). By presenting a feminine character with masculine socialization, Unger is able to offer “drei utopische Modelle für die Entwicklung weiblicher Subjektivität: die antipatriarchalische Idylle als gesellschaftlichen Gegenentwurf, die im Fluchtpunkt Italien als Land der Kunst symbolisierte ästhetische Utopie und die pragmatische Utopie der Nischenexistenz mit Eugenie” (Lange 94). In other words, Mirabella’s radical lifestyle offers up the only possibilities for female subjectivity - by crossing the boundaries of contemporaneous norms. In doing so - via her masculine socialization - Mirabella is able to redefine what it means to be a woman. While I do not read Unger’s text quite as radically as Lange does,\(^\text{154}\) it is important to note that these three models are labeled “utopian.” To the extent that it is unfeasible for a woman to develop her subjectivity (or individuality, as Mirabella calls it) within the traditional, male-dominated lifestyle, Unger’s novel can be considered an investigation of the (alternative) possibilities available to women of her time. In other words, even if one is born a beautiful soul, the right circumstances are still necessary to allow this beautiful soul to blossom into an individual.\(^\text{155}\)

\(^{154}\) Lange is indeed quite radical in her reading, going so far as to assert that Mirabella and Caroline are lesbian lovers.

\(^{155}\) Brewer similarly points to the novel’s attempt to engage with the question of female identity: “Raphael’s Transfiguration may be understood as a visual representation of a woman’s struggle for selfhood….Unger’s use of the painting reinforces her ongoing critique of restrictive social roles for women, roles that were reinforced by Goethe’s rendition of the ‘real’ ‘beautiful soul’ as being necessarily submissive” (Beautiful Souls 127). Whereas Brewer situates her argument in Unger’s use of Raphael’s painting, I look to the narrative structure and content for further clues into Unger’s stance on the individual and her development.
These limitations become even clearer in the character of Caroline, who is not as fortunate as Mirabella. As a princess she is naturally under obligation to marry for political purposes. Her husband furthermore desires an heir, and she dutifully produces one for him. Her entire existence is oriented towards the needs of men, which destroys her hopes of autonomy and happiness. Because Caroline’s life follows a more traditional, one might even say “normal,” trajectory than that of Mirabella, the reasons for Caroline’s failure to emerge as an individual can be traced to her environment rather than to her character. To return to an argument I initiated above, Goethe is critical of the concept of the beautiful soul, whereas Unger is more critical about the viability of such a construct – and, by extension, the very notion of individuality itself. One’s socioeconomic position factors in, and the immediate surroundings also play an integral role in whether or not an individual (and for Unger this is usually a beautiful soul) can fully realize her potential.

A woman’s understood role was within the private sphere, implicitly positioned in relationship to a man: first as a daughter (subservient to her father) and then as a wife (subservient to her husband),\textsuperscript{156} woman existed in tandem with man; it is nearly impossible to speak of her without reference to a male figure in her life.\textsuperscript{157} The public sphere, by

\textsuperscript{156} One of Unger’s contemporaries, Johann Gottlieb Fichte, argues this quite matter-of-factly in his Grundlage des Naturrechts before concluding: “Die Frau gehört nicht sich selbst an, sondern dem Manne” (329). There is only one exception to this maxim as regards a woman’s potential status as widow – a status that can, however, only be achieved by having first belonged to a man.

\textsuperscript{157} As, for example, in Goethe’s review of Unger’s novel: Mirabella “ist weder Tochter, noch Schwester, noch Geliebte, noch Gattin, noch Mutter, und so kann man in ihr weder die Hausfrau noch die Schwiegermutter, noch die Großmutter voraussehen” (376). Because of this impossibility of situating Mirabella in relationship to a masculine figure, Goethe concludes that “die Mädchen, die Frauen werden [das Buch] lesen. Was werden sie daraus nehmen? – Gar manches werden sie daraus nehmen. – Wozu sie es aber nach Recensentens Rath nutzen könnten und vielleicht wollen, wäre, sich zu überzeugen, daß das Problem [wie kann ein Frauenzimmer seinen Charakter, seine Individualität gegen die Umstände, gegen die Umgebung retten?] auf diese Weise nicht zu lösen ist” (375). Implicit in Goethe’s critique is that it simply is not – or should not be – acceptable for a woman to envision herself independent of masculine influence.
contrast, was largely open only to men in the first place. Although women did enter into it, especially in the salon atmospheres, it was understood of and constructed as a masculine environment. This consideration implies that a fundamentally feminine figure cannot ever truly succeed at “being” in her own right, as she will always exist either in direct relationship to a man (who ranks above her) or she is overshadowed by the masculine environment into which she attempts to enter. In order to exert her own individuality onto the environment and become master of it (as Mirabella describes it), she must have recourse to some masculine influence or characteristics of her own that can find footing in the male-dominated world.

The approach to this conundrum as it is presented in Mirabella’s character is twofold: she first insists on the absolute femininity of her character to the extreme (i.e. having remained a virgin her entire life), thereby freeing herself from the husband-wife relationship of the private sphere. Beyond this, however, she also embraces and touts abilities that are quite masculine in nature – as I have already discussed above. There is an overarching recognition of the authority of masculine influence in Unger’s novels, necessitating – in this specific instant – the adoption of masculine traits by a female character. This masculine authority carries great power but also necessitates cognizance of the great responsibility in how it is wielded.

In both Julchen Grünthal and Bekenntnisse einer schönen Seele, male figures are occasionally reprimanded for their ability to effect detrimental tendencies in the women around them. Julchen’s own accusations in this direction are more personally framed than those of Minna and Mirabella, in part because Julchen does not possess the ability to reflect
on the external world at large. Indeed, while it would not be wholly accurate to posit that Minna and Mirabella view the world independent from themselves, they do nonetheless manage to develop certain overarching insights from their lives that could be applied more generally than those of Julchen. If we compare the following statements made by the women, this difference becomes quite obvious: “Warum hat er [Grünthal] mir doch so ängstliche Grundsätze beigebracht?” Julchen writes to her friend Mariane, “sie martern mich, und stören mich in den süßesten Gefühlen meines Jugendlebens. Hätte ich immer die Einsichten gehabt, die ich jetzt erlangt habe, wie viel bittere Stunden zählt' ich weniger!” (Vol. 1, 259-260). Julchen’s outrage stems from the fact that her principles are incompatible with her lifestyle, both of which are directly the result of her father; not only did he instill these principles in her, but he was also the one who conceded to send her to Berlin, despite his belief that she would not prosper there.

Minna likewise bemoans her lifestyle during the early part of her marriage, depraved as it has become under her husband’s direction. His unwillingness to participate in the upbringing of their children158 combined with his desire to integrate his wife into his social lifestyle results in a decidedly downward spiral for the couple. “Noch war es nicht zu spät umzukehren,” Minna admits, “hätte mein Mann nur ein Fünkchen Glauben an stille häusliche Zufriedenheit gehabt” (Vol. 2, 109). Despite Minna’s own penchant for such a lifestyle of simple household contentment, it is her husband who fails to embrace it and,

---

158 As Minna explains regarding the pedagogical writings she has taken to studying, “statt auszuüben was ich wußte, las ich, um zu lernen was ich nicht wußte. Fragte ich meinen Mann um Rath, so hieß es: »Thu', was Du willst!« Er gestand seine Unkunde in dem Fache, und war mit meinem guten Willen so befriedigt, daß er zu fragen vergaß, ob sich meine Erziehungskunst über die Gränzen des guten Willens erstrecke?” (Vol. 2, 101)
consequently, is to blame for their corrupted way of life. This denunciation of her husband’s inability to satisfactorily uphold such a lifestyle carries with it broader implications regarding all husbands and their influences on the stability and happiness of their households. It is Mirabella, however, who makes the most universal statement regarding the potentially negative influence of men on women when she reflects on the fickle character of her friend Adelaide, who willingly discards all remnants of one of her former interests due to the influence of her brother: “Solche Keckheit, wenn man sie in Weibern findet, ist immer das Produkt männlichen Einflusses, und beruhet, so weit meine Beobachtung reicht, zuletzt nur auf Autorität, nicht auf Gefühl und Anschauung“ (Bekenntnisse, 77). From Mirabella’s perspective, certain forms of foolishness in women are a direct result of the interference of masculine authority.

By reading these women’s indictments of men’s authority in conjunction with one another, it becomes apparent that in Unger’s novels men are reprimanded for using their positions of authority to alter or stifle the trajectory of an individual’s development. As Brewer has argued, beautiful souls “are women capable of development, who want to preserve their unique feminine identity. But because, as Mirabella asserts, most men are ‘one-sided’ and incapable of comprehending ‘a reality other than their own,’ they forcefully impose on women their own preconceived notions, thus driving these women ‘out of themselves’” (Beautiful Souls 118). Even in instances where an individual’s development is directly affected by a female character, Mirabella still shifts the blame (and, consequently, the authority) for such a transformation onto the male figures. Reflecting on her influence on Caroline as a young princess, Mirabella muses:
Although Mirabella’s statement appears initially hypocritical, even contradictory,\textsuperscript{159} it is quite illuminating. She does not feel responsible for the development of Caroline’s character, because in this situation she is a \textit{Gesellschaftsdame} rather than an actual authority figure. The displacement of responsibility onto the father indicates that masculine relationships are the real source of authority and, additionally, can preclude the possibility of autonomy elsewhere. This is why, ultimately, Caroline’s individuality must give way in the face of her marriage to the duke, and why Mirabella must adopt a certain masculinity in order to establish her own individuality.

Mirabella’s embracing of a more masculine role emerges most notably after her acquaintance with Moritz, while she is living at court. “Ich hatte mich, trotz meines jugendlichen Alters, von der Liste der fühlenden Wesen gestrichen, um mich auf die der Intelligenzen setzen zu können” (156). Mirabella finds validation for this shift from a feminine sphere into a more masculine one in her foster father: “Mein Pflegevater freute sich nicht wenig über diese Verwandlung meines Wesens; sie entsprach seinen Erwartungen von mir eben so sehr, als seinen Wünschen” (156). Although Mirabella does not explain why or to what extent her decision to remain single pleases her foster father, it is a peculiar reinforcing of a lifestyle free from masculine influence via the opinions of a

\textsuperscript{159} If, that is, we compare it to her earlier assertion that of ultimate importance is the ability to acquire an admirable individuality.
male character. The resulting masculinity emerges in both Mirabella’s characteristics as well as in the description of herself and these traits. When describing the death of her “lover” Moritz, Mirabella renounces the sentimentality one might expect from a grieving woman. “Man hätte mich, man hätte Moritz ganz kennen müssen, um zu begreifen, wie ich bei seinem Tode gelassen seyn konnte” (118). Some years later, when Caroline succumbs to death as a result of “einem Übermaß von innerem Leben” (308), both Mirabella and their mutual friend, the Countess of Albania, demonstrate a certain stoicism that eludes their male companion:

Die Gräfin, wie tief sie auch von dem Tode unserer gemeinschaftlichen Freundin verwundet war, behielt ihre ganze Klarheit und vergoß daher keine Thräne. Was mich betrifft, so gesteh’ ich, daß die Plötzlichkeit des Todesfalles verwirrend auf mich zurückwirkte, und das Gefühl der Ohnmacht so bestimmmt in mir aufregte, daß ich weinen mußte, um mir wieder klar zu werden. Unendlich mehr, als ich, war der Graf Vittorio ergriffen; die Kindlichkeit seines Gemüthes zeigte sich bei dieser Gelegenheit in ihrer ganzen Stärke. Er, der in seinen Trauerspielen den Tod so oft vorbereitet hatte, daß man hätte glauben sollen, er sey in der Wissenschaft der Gesetze, nach welchen der Tod erfolgen muß, abgehärtet worden – er ertrug den vorliegenden Fall so ungeduldig, als ob er unter uns das einzige Weib gewesen wäre. (311)

Mirabella’s wry comment that Alfieri behaved as if he were the only woman among them offers a gendered counterpart for the more masculine reactions of herself and of the countess.

This reaction additionally demonstrates the emotional balance Geist and Gemüt that Mirabella discusses at some length later in the novel. As a grounding for her brief dissertation on physiognomy, Mirabella undertakes

zwei Grundkräfte im Menschen zu unterscheiden, die eine durch Gemüt, die andere durch Geist zu bezeichnen, und die letzte Bestimmung jedes menschlichen Individuums in die Harmonie dieser beiden Grundkräfte zu setzen. Die Menschen unterschieden sich demnach sehr wesentlich von
This discussion of *Geist* and *Gemüt* helps to reinforce the importance of the study of human nature as it emerges in Unger’s narration. On the one hand, the invocation of *Geist* might just call to mind the field of *Geisteswissenschaften* – essentially, the study of “man and his actions in the world” (Untranslatables 368). Although it is true that the term was first given its now-canonical usage in 1883 by Dilthey, it had already appeared in the singular at the end of the 18th century (Untranslatables 368-69). The predominant focus of the *Geisteswissenschaften*, at least as elaborated by Dilthey, is humankind: “Alle diese Wissenschaften beziehen sich auf dieselbe große Tatsache: das Menschengeschlecht. Sie beschreiben und erzählen, urteilen und bilden Begriffe und Theorien in Beziehung auf diese Tatsache” (88). It is this philosophical, and yet scientific, approach to human nature that makes Unger’s own use of *Geist* all the more meaningful in the context of literary anthropology. On the other hand, the differentiation provided in the first place between two affective faculties indicates that Unger’s protagonist is very much invested in investigating the fundamental forces at play in an individual’s nature.

---

160 In the *Dictionary of Untranslatables: A Philosophical Lexicon*, Denis Thouard notes: “In the strict sense, *Gemüt* is most often an internal principle that animates the mind and its affections. Its purview is sometimes limited to the affective part when it is in competition with *Geist*, but not always – especially in its Kantian use” (373). Most attempts made to translate either *Geist* or *Gemüt* conflate the philosophical terminology with other concepts such as “mind” or “soul” – which are not wholly independent of *Geist* and *Gemüt*, and yet cannot function as legitimate replacements for these terms either. Accordingly, I do not attempt to translate either term and, instead, refer to them in the original German.

161 It is here that we see another parallel between Moritz’ and Unger’s interest in the individual, specifically as it is framed in empirical terminology. Like Moritz, Mirabella attempts to extrapolate her knowledge from “einer sehr genauen Analyse aller [ihr]er Erfahrungen über einzelne Menschen” (321). In observing and analyzing individuals, a grounding principle can eventually be established. As Moritz questions rhetorically: “Was ist unsre ganze Moral, wenn sie nicht von Individuis abstrahiert ist?” (Vorschlag 794). Mirabella’s theorizing is more than mere speculation; it is derived from a lifetime of observation and reflection.
Mirabella’s “dissertation” is not the first occurrence of a discussion of these two terms; her foster father refers to them along with a third (Gewissen) in his explanation of the Christian Trinity to Mirabella when she was a girl. This trinity is in reality, according to her foster father, man’s philosophical musings on his own nature:

Da eine Kraft in ihm [dem Menschen] vorhanden war, aus welcher alle seine Schöpfungen hervorgingen, so stellte er diese Kraft (den Geist) symbolisch als den Vater dar. Eine andere Kraft in ihm (das Gemüt) enthielt die ewigen Aufforderungen zu neuen Schöpfungen; und wie hätte diese Kraft schicklicher personifizirt werden können, als unter dem Bilde des Sohnes, der den Vater liebt und von ihm geliebt wird? Die dritte Kraft ging aus dem Verhältnisse der beiden ersteren hervor, und war in sich selbst das Bewuβtseyn der größeren oder geringeren Harmonie der beiden ersteren Kräfte (Gewissen); daher die symbolische Bezeichnung derselben durch den heiligen Geist, der von Vater und Sohn ausgeht. Die Lehre von der Dreieinigkeit lag also wesentlich im Menschen, und ist im Grunde genommen die umfassendste Reflection, die der Mensch jemals über sich selbst gemacht hat. (42-43, emphasis in original)

In addition to providing Mirabella with the necessary terminology for her own philosophizing, her foster father also makes the same argument as she does regarding the ideal harmony of human nature: “Wir müssen nur nicht außer uns suchen, was nur in uns seyn kann; und wir sind alles, was wir werden können, wenn unser Geist mit unserem Gemüthe in einer solchen Harmonie stehet, daß die Verletzung desselben uns als eine Vernichtung unsers ganzen Wesens erscheinen muß” (44-45). Although Mirabella does not directly acknowledge the extent to which she derives her insights from her father, her narrative reveals what is elsewhere more explicitly discussed negatively – man’s influence on woman. As already evidenced, Unger’s protagonists ascribe significant power to masculine authority, which occasionally manifests in the maldevelopment of one of the female characters. In the case of Mirabella, however, we see this authority positively exemplified in her constant use of a masculine framework. By initially presenting the
Geist-Gemüt dichotomy as part of her foster father’s principles, she presumes to legitimate the same concepts and perspectives that emerge later in her own intellectual pursuits.\textsuperscript{162}

This recurrent framing of Mirabella and her ideas within a masculine framework emerges not only in the various referents provided throughout her narrative, but also in the character of her adopted daughter, Luise. Lange has already argued that “[d]as Kind Luise…immer nur als das Objekt der Selbstbespiegelung Mirabellas [erscheint]. In dieser Luise will sie sich selbst noch einmal heranbilden” (89). To this we should add that Mirabella’s description of Luise reflects Mirabella’s description of herself: it spans the gender continuum. Although Mirabella’s adopted child is a girl, she is first referred to using masculine terminology: “Um übrigens mein Wesen auf meinen Liebling zu übertragen,” explains Mirabella, “erzog ich ihn nach eben den Maximen, welche meiner eigenen Erziehung zum Grunde gelegen hatten” (240). This mixing of genders in explaining how “ich mich in Luisen – so hieß mein Zögling – zum zweitenmale erzog” underscores the extent to which Mirabella’s own self contains masculine elements (241).

Despite the many, repeated reminders of Mirabella’s masculine side, she takes care not to let her reader(s) forget that “[i]n welcher bestimmten Individualität ich auch als Weib dastehen mochte, so gab die Weiblichkeit in mir doch den Ausschlag über alles” (151). This femininity is accompanied by a strong desire for self-preservation, threatened as it is

\textsuperscript{162} Brewer even makes the argument that Mirabella cannot be productive in the first place without this masculine influence: “It seems that, for her artistic productivity, Mirabella needs the masculine literary influence as much as she needs the freedom associated with female relationships” (Anxiety of Influence 64-65). Likewise, Schmid notes that the allusion of Mirabella’s confessions to those of both Rousseau and Goethe’s beautiful soul indicates “daß die (weibliche) Besonderheit oder Eigentümlichkeit von vorhandenen (männlichen) Originalen abgehoben werden muß” (96). These assertions highlight the extent to which Mirabella’s character builds on masculine foundations as a source for her own undertakings.
in the face of masculine interference.

In der Begränztheit der meisten Männer liegt für Weiber, die nur einigermaßen einer Entwicklung fähig sind, eine zur Verzweiflung treibende Kraft. Das Weib will bewahren, was es instinktmäßig für sein Herrlichstes erkennt, die Weiblichkeit; aber durch die Einseitigkeit des Mannes aus sich selbst heraus getrieben, schwärmt es umher, die verlorne Stütze zu suchen, und findet es sie nicht in der Kunst, so muß es Ruhe in der Zerstörung seines Wesens finden. So endigen die meisten. (210)

Brewer argues that this “is, perhaps, the novel’s most concise statement on what ails ‘beautiful souls’” (Beautiful Souls 118). It only ails beautiful souls who are capable of change, however, and not unchanging individuals such as Mirabella. Indeed, although Mirabella notes that many women end up destroyed in this manner (as exemplified in the specific case of Caroline), her own story reveals a different outcome. Mirabella’s peculiar nature offers her defense against the limiting effects of most men. She goes to great lengths to embrace her feminine side as it represents a fundamental, unchanging component of herself. Additionally, however, she must also espouse an opposite set of characteristics in order to resist the potentially destructive masculine influence.

This mixing of the masculine and feminine aspects of Mirabella’s character is one that the protagonist refers to as peculiar [eigenthümlich], and it is visible in the unique lifestyle that she is able to lead. “On the most basic level, Mirabella’s ‘Eigenthümlichkeit’ refers to the paradoxical nature of her character, the fact that she can defy societal expectations and still be happy and respectable” (Brewer, Anxiety of Influence 50). This paradoxical nature of her character is an important consideration. Mirabella’s narrative uses, for example, a variation of the words Eigenthümliche(s) or Eigenthümlichkeit 26 times (as well as including this descriptor many more times as the adjective eigenthümlich).
At times this concept refers to a person’s particular personality trait,\(^{163}\) and at other times it stands as a representative for a character’s entire individuality.\(^{164}\) Mirabella acknowledges that she and those around her are peculiar to the extent that they are both unique and also idiosyncratic.\(^{165}\) “But Mirabella’s *Eigenthümlichkeit* refers to much more than just the protagonist’s individuality. Schmid notes an alternative meaning for this word. In the early nineteenth century, both *Eigenthum* and *Eigenthümlichkeit* were used within legal and literary contexts in reference to the products of one’s creative genius, or works of art” (Brewer, Anxiety of Influence 50). Brewer contends that Mirabella’s *Eigenthümlichkeit* is centered on her role as an artist and also refers to her individuality in general. More than merely representing her unique character, Mirabella’s *Eigenthümlichkeit* also serves to establish her as an influential force capable of determining the trajectory of things outside of her. As evidence for this assertion, Brewer points to Mirabella and Company’s interactions with art during their sojourn in Italy. This understanding of Mirabella’s character emerges even earlier in the story, however, during her time at court. It is here that the full amalgam of Mirabella’s character is revealed: a beautiful soul with the gift of genius.

---

\(^{163}\) For example, when Mirabella uses this term to denote a particular tendency she has acquired (albeit as a result of an innate characteristic) “Vermöge eines besonderen Mechanismus meines Inneren fing ich die Lektüre nie mit der Betrachtung des Bildnisses an, das Moritz mir zurückgelassen hatte; wohl aber endigte ich mit derselben. Und diese Eigenthümlichkeit ist mir mein ganzes Leben hindurch geblieben; ich kann noch immer keinen Vers eines italienischen Dichters hören oder lesen, ohne sogleich an Moritz zu denken und mir die ganze Periode zu vergegenwärtigen, in welcher ich seine erste Bekanntschaft machte” (106).

\(^{164}\) As, for example, when Mirabella refers to the “Sicherstellung unserer Eigenthümlichkeit” (296).

\(^{165}\) On occasion this *Eigenthümlichkeit* is even problematic, as is the case with her music and dance instructor. Mirabella complains, “die Eigenthümlichkeit meiner Lehrer verhinderte alle Fortschritte, die ich hätte machen können, und wurde auf diese Weise die Ursache, warum zwei Talente, die ich erwerben konnte, mir immer fremd geblieben sind” (31).
3.3.1 The Genius of the Beautiful Soul

On two separate occasions Mirabella’s narrative refers to her “genius,” describing it as an indicator for what she should and should not do. “Es gab besonders zwei Punkte, worin ich sehr gern meinem Genius allein gefolgt wäre,” writes Mirabella when discussing her life at court: “Der eine war der Tanz, der andere das Spiel” (144-45, emphasis in original). As would eventually prove to be the case, Mirabella’s personality is incompatible with both dancing and games and also with that of the older, ruling duke. She consequently removes herself from the environment until the older duke (Caroline’s father-in-law) has passed away. Upon Mirabella’s return, Caroline implores her to accept a position as Oberhofmeisterin. “[A]llein wie hätte ich dies gekonnt, ohne dem warnenden Genius entgegen zu streben” responds Mirabella (251). Here, as was previously the case, Mirabella makes a fleeting reference to an intuitive gift that allows her to recognize proper courses of action.

Unger never again employs this terminology in the novel and, much like the “schöne Seele,” it is given very little semantic space in Mirabella’s overall story. Like the idea of the beautiful soul, however, “genius” is also an important concept that emerges in the novel, even where it is not referred to explicitly. This concept is multi-faceted and takes on dual meanings within the novel. Specifically, the understanding of “genius” that emerges in the two above-cited situations is not one that reflects the understanding of genius as referred to by Brewer in her analysis of the novel. In other words, it does not appear to denote the “schöpferische Geisteskraft eines Menschen” (Duden) – an understanding of the term as it also evolves in aesthetic and philosophical thought:
It is in the eighteenth century that the notion of genius takes on a new meaning and becomes throughout Europe an object of reflection in the domain of aesthetics and, more widely, of philosophy (hence claims for the “birth of genius” in the eighteenth century). In earlier centuries it was admitted that a work of art was born on the one hand from the conjunction of knowledge and craft proper to a given art and capable of being acquired, and on the other hand from a quality peculiar to the individual, a natural gift called “genius.” During and after the eighteenth century, however, the latter quality acquires a greater importance, even an overblown one, almost to the point of causing the other factors to be forgotten. Genius becomes a power of creation ex nihilo, irreducible to any rule and impossible to analyze rationally. At the same time, whereas classical aesthetics rested on the notion of imitation, genius would come to be characterized by the absolute originality of its productions, by their inimitable character. (Untranslatables 381)

This definition of genius is linked to one’s ability to create, particularly as this concerns artistic productions. Although, as Brewer has already argued, Mirabella does appear to possess an artistic genius, Unger’s use of the word indicates an alternate definition of the concept. The definitions given by the Oxford Dictionary and the *Dictionnaire de l’Academie Française* align much more closely with the term’s actual use in *Bekenntnisse*.

While the first five definitions provided by the Oxford Dictionary define “genius” in relationship to supernatural powers or divinities, subsequent explanations of the concept are much more useful. Genius can refer to: “[c]haracter, ability, and related senses” (6); “[a] person's natural aptitude for, or inclination towards, a specified thing or action” (7); and an “[i]nnate intellectual or creative power of an exceptional or exalted type” (9).

Similarly, the *Academie Française* first defines génie as a divinity or mind/spirit [esprit],

---

166 Comparatively speaking, the Oxford and *Academie Française* dictionaries offer a broader understanding of the term than does *Duden*, where *Genius* is defined as a “(besonders im römischen Altertum) beschützender, vor Unheil bewahrender Geist eines Menschen, einer Gemeinschaft, eines Ortes” (1); the “geflügelt dargestellte Gottheit der römischen Mythologie” (2); and as the “[höchste] schöpferische Geisteskraft eines Menschen / Mensch mit höchster schöpferischer Geisteskraft” (3). As already cited above, these definitions demonstrate how this “latter quality [of genius as a power of creation] acquires a greater importance, even an overblown one, almost to the point of causing the other factors to be forgotten” (Untranslatables 381).
then as “[q]ualité remarquable, aptitude” (I) and “[q]ualité des esprits supérieurs qui les rend capables de créer, d'inventer, d'entreprendre des choses extraordinaires” (II). I have chosen to include the French here for two reasons: firstly, Unger translated extensively from French (as well as from English) and clearly had an excellent knowledge of this language whose influence emerges in her writing. More importantly, however, the philosophical foundations for the word “genius” extend back to the French genie; indeed, one German monograph on the topic of genius uses the Germanized word Genie. In short, the concept of “genius” cannot be discussed without also addressing (French) philosophical and aesthetic thought. This is only one side of the coin, however; evidenced by Unger’s own use of the word as well as the brief forays into two authoritative dictionaries, “genius” can also refer to a person’s superior intellectual abilities or character.

Approaching Mirabella’s genius first from the understanding of it as an intellectual superiority, we can find other indications in the text that corroborate the existence of this exceptional faculty of hers. During her time at court she is quickly singled out for her tendency to avoid political alliances as well as for her Verstand.

Diese meine Eigenthümlichkeit war ihnen um so unbegreiflicher, da ich, dem Anscheine nach, ganz isolirt dastand, und selbst von der Prinzessin, deren Gesellschaftsdame ich seyn sollte, vernachlässigt war. Gern hätte mich die eine oder die andere Parthei für sich gewonnen; aber gerade

167 The English translations are “remarkable quality, aptitude” and “quality of superior minds/spirits [esprits] that renders them capable of creating, inventing, of extraordinary undertakings,” respectively.
168 Admittedly, such a tendency was fairly common in Unger’s time. Nonetheless, a good portion of her vocabulary bears the mark of French influence, in words such as “raisonnirt” and “personifizirt” (152, 42). Even in her reference to “Boileau’s rien n’est beau que le vrai” it is obvious how much of the French philosophy and language has been absorbed into her own writing (73).
170 As with other philosophically complex vocabulary in the novel (e.g. Gemüt or Geist), I have chosen to retain this term in its original German in order to avoid unnecessarily narrowing the scope of its meaning through translation.
This distinguishing feature, Mirabella’s *Verstand*, is contrasted later with a very different kind of *Verstand* possessed by the chamberlain. “Es ist wahr, es fehlte ihm nicht an Verstand; allein sein Verstand war nicht der *schöpferische*, der Anderen gebietet, indem er ihnen Richtungen giebt, die sie aus sich selbst zu nehmen allzuschwach sind, sondern der *legale*, der nur immer den fremden Willen bearbeitet, und folglich gar nicht für und durch sich existirt” (186, emphasis in original). The reference to the “creative” side of an intellectual ability helps to connect the various understandings of Mirabella’s own genius. *Verstand* could be transposed onto the concept of “genius” here in that it represents both an exceptional intellectual character as well as a creative, commanding force.

The juxtaposition of the chamberlain’s *Verstand* several pages after indirectly extolling her own seems to imply that Mirabella’s *Verstand* is precisely the opposite of this “lesser” one. She even notes that her services were desired in the hopes of reconciling the duke and Caroline to each other (due to a rift precipitated by the former’s lingering love affair). “Wenn man mich in die Cabale zu verflechten wünschte, so geschah dies um der guten Meinung willen, die man von meinem Verstande gefaßt hatte” (187). In the end, however, Mirabella, is never explicit as to whether or not her own *Verstand* is of the “creative” variety, leaving open the question of how far her genius extends. Perhaps this talent is, like her other defining feature (the possession of a beautiful soul), an innate ability that should not be insisted upon by the individual, but rather recognized and defined in relationship to others. Such a stance is moreover in line with her overall self-representation:
Mirabella presumes to possess many talents and characteristics that are traditionally masculine, yet she is markedly self-conscious of crossing the line and becoming too unfeminine.\textsuperscript{171} By admitting to possess a certain, albeit vaguely defined, genius, she maintains the ambivalent mixing of masculine and feminine that is the grounding principle of her nature.

This genius comprises much more than the intellectual abilities embodied by Mirabella’s \textit{Verstand}; it is also creative and authentic (in the sense that it comes from within).\textsuperscript{172} Joachen Schmidt’s analysis of the evolution of genius in German literature and thought begins with a consideration of the “Genie mit seinem Anspruch auf Authentizität,” a reflection of the “Ablösung des Barock durch Aufklärung und Empfindsamkeit” (3). Specifically, Schmidt argues:

\begin{quote}
\end{quote}

It is not difficult to see many of these manifestations emerging in Mirabella’s character as well, such as the insistence on personal and social freedom or the self-proclaimed independence from the influence of those around her (though an assertion that she recognizes no authority could not be easily substantiated.) As Sigrun Schmid has argued, “[m]it der Zuordnung ihres Schreibens zum (männlichen) Bereich der Arbeit, gibt

\textsuperscript{171} As she feels she has done, for example, in critiquing a poorly written history of the Swiss people: “Doch was geht mich die Kritik an? Ich bitte allen Grazien die Sünde ab, die ich hier begangen habe” (273).
\textsuperscript{172} To use Mirabella’s own wording, as already cited above, she demonstrates the ability “Richtungen… aus sich selbst zu nehmen” (186).
Mirabella deutlich zu erkennen, daß sie ihr Schreiben nicht als oberflächliche und mäßige Beschäftigung verstanden wissen will, sondern als ernstzunehmende, schöpferische Leistung” (100-101). Mirabella’s productive energies represent a serious effort on her part to establish the legitimacy of her autonomous undertakings. This attempt manifests itself at the textual level – her confessions are “von ihr selbst geschrieben” – as well as in her genius.

An understanding of genius as indicative of creative ability or accomplishments reinforces its connection to art and, consequently, aesthetic thought. Alain Pons writes that “[b]eginning in the eighteenth century, the notion of genius acquires more and more importance in Germany in discussions of art, language, and the history of peoples, especially when the Sturm und Drang literary movement (with political overtones) appears in the 1770s” (Untranslatables 383). This connection of genius to art is even more explicitly articulated in Kant’s Kritik der Urtheilkraft: “Genie ist das Talent (Naturgabe), welches der Kunst die Regel gibt. Da das Talent, als angebornes produktives Vermögen des Künstlers, selbst zur Natur gehört, so könnte man sich auch so ausdrücken: Genie ist die angeborne Gemütsanlage (ingenium), durch welche174 die Natur der Kunst die Regel gibt” (241, emphasis in original). Genius is a creative force linked to considerations of art, artistic production, and even nature. This decidedly aesthetic understanding of genius finds

173 Schmid also makes a case for Mirabella’s independence when she notes that “[f]ür Mirabella bedeutet diese Ungebundenheit [von einer Familie] … nicht Orientierungslosigkeit, sondern die positive Form der Unabhängigkeit, also Selbständigkeit und Freiheit” (102).
174 The wording here is reminiscent of Mirabella’s discussion of Verstand (c.f. p. 46 above): genius is a disposition through which nature evokes itself, the same way that Verstand is capable of being a faculty through which an individual’s nature asserts itself. In both instances the two aptitudes (genius and Verstand) are rule-givers, so to speak, that command external factors.
expression in *Bekenntnisse* as well, even where the specific terminology of “genius” is lacking.

Brewer and Schmid argue that a lexical rendering of the aesthetic, creative genius emerges in the novel in the repeated references to Mirabella’s *Eigenthümlichkeit*. Specifically, Brewer claims that “the first definition [of *Eigenthümlichkeit*] becomes a metaphor for the second as the female protagonist journeys into the aesthetic realm and confronts the artistic influence of others” (*Anxiety of Influence* 50). That this artistic influence is, moreover, masculine plays no small role in the success of Mirabella’s ventures and the failure of those of her friends; Caroline’s and Luisa’s “creative individuality or *Eigenthümlichkeit* is either destroyed by masculine influence or rendered meaningless in isolation…”175 While Mirabella looks to both men [Moritz and Alfieri] for artistic instruction, as impotent poets, neither has the capacity to overpower Mirabella’s own artistic ambitions and effect rape/seduction” (*Brewer, Anxiety of Influence* 58, 59). Because Mirabella’s own individuality and genius are so much more productive than those of her male and female companions, she is able to resist any potentially destructive influences.

But it is precisely because Mirabella does not succumb to this fate [of her less successful friends] that her *Eigenthümlichkeit* is such a fascinating riddle. She not only breaks all rules for socially prescribed happiness in the nineteenth century, but she also finds contentment in spite of it. She manages to write, and not just things women were ‘permitted’ to write like travel journals and moral

---

175 Brewer views Caroline’s and Luisa’s characters as an amalgam of Goethe’s beautiful soul – an inverted paradigm of Mirabella’s character. “The ‘beautiful soul,’ the female genius as defined within the constructs of Goethe’s art, embodies the combined experiences of both Caroline and Luisa. Like Caroline she is ravished by potent masculine art, and, like Luisa, she dies in isolation” (*Anxiety of Influence* 61). This gendering of failed genius as female relegates the concept of creative genius to the masculine realm and further distances Unger’s beautiful soul from that of Goethe’s.
Far from experiencing her own downfall, Mirabella evinces a genius that is decidedly masculine in its power and its nature. This masculine genius is contrasted somewhat vaguely with a female genius that, “as represented in Unger’s novel, is a moving target within a hall of mirrors where definitive identity and meaning itself are continually displaced” (Brewer, Anxiety of Influence 63). Brewer terms this an “aesthetics of confusion (the fusing together of identities)” and argues that it allows Unger’s narrative to resist “the logocentric rigidity of ‘masculine’ artistic production” (Anxiety of Influence 63). “Ultimately,” Brewer muses, “Unger’s text may be less about the redefinition of the ‘beautiful soul’ than about her relocation within psychosexual paradigms for artistic production...[Mirabella] is the author and creator of herself, asserting the primacy of the individual over the socially buttressed patriarchal authority that would impose restrictive paradigms on ‘beautiful souls’ and their art” (Anxiety of Influence 63, 64). In short, Mirabella’s creative genius serves to situate her, a woman, as a source of authority and autonomy within a male-dominated society.

Brewer’s analysis of genius is useful in articulating the influence and extent of Mirabella’s creative energies, though ultimately it positions the novel as more subversive than I understand it to be. The rather antagonistic framing of Mirabella’s genius within the dichotomy of masculine/feminine sets up her character as a paragon of a new kind of femininity that seeks to rewrite social norms. While I do not fully embrace Brewer’s conclusions, I agree that it is helpful and even necessary to keep in mind the extent to which genius, art, and aesthetic concerns factor into Unger’s/Mirabella’s understanding and
representations of individuality. As Brewer notes, Mirabella demonstrates an ability to enter “into the masculine domains of philosophy and literary criticism” (Anxiety of Influence 62). She writes a brief dissertation on physiognomy wherein she also relates some perspectives “von [ihr]er Lebensphilosophie und [ihr]em Kunsttakt” (329); she also offers a critique of Goethe’s Die natürliche Tochter as “ein Kunstwerk, das sich in jedem Betracht den ersten Meisterwerken aller Nationen zur Seite stellen kann, ohne durch die Vergleichung zu leiden, und das ganz unstreitig das allervollkommenste ist, das der deutsche Geist jemals geschaffen hat” (376). She demonstrates the extent of her genius in being capable of engaging with these (very masculine) topics – one of which is the product of the German genius, himself. However, as I have argued elsewhere, Mirabella’s frequent invocations of masculine sources and authority serve to legitimize her own undertakings. They are not an attempt to favor the individual over the patriarchal authority (as per Brewer’s argument), but rather an indication that recourse to this patriarchal authority is necessary in the first place if the individual is to have any real claim to recognition.

The necessity of masculine authority paired with the femininity of Mirabella’s character results, as I have already argued at great length above, in a dual representation of her individuality as both masculine and feminine. This duality is not limited to her own character; throughout the entire novel there is a recurring theme of duality and, subsequently, of the balance of these various dual concepts. Mirabella philosophizes at great length on the importance of Geist and Gemüth, where she argues that “die letzte Bestimmung jedes menschlichen Individuums in die Harmonie dieser beiden Grundkräfte [zu setzen ist]” (322, emphasis in original); she contrasts Verstand with Phantasie; she
considers the relationship between *das Schöne* and *das Wahre*; and she presents herself in the dual terms of masculine/feminine. She even situates these other, abovementioned pairs in the same masculine/feminine terms. In addressing the assertion that “[n]ur das Wahre sey schön,” Mirabella cautions that “allein, so weit meine Beobachtung reicht, gilt dieser Ausspruch nur in Beziehung auf Männer; für Weiber ist nur das Schöne wahr, das heißt, sie wollen immer und ewig nur das Schöne, unbekümmert um das Wahre” (23).177 As grounding for this gendered difference Mirabella points to another one of the dichotomous pairs: “Vielleicht rührt dieser Unterschied der Geschlechter daher, daß bei den Männern sich die Phantasie dem Verstande, bei den Weibern hingegen der Verstand der Phantasie unterordnet” (23). There is a very clear ascription here of masculine and feminine connotations to the various terms, ones which are incidentally represented differently in Mirabella’s own character.178 Similarly, Brewer views the terms *Geist* and *Gemüt* as representing gendered contrasts. “Although Mirabella presents these terms as genderless by suggesting that all persons ought to strive for such a balance, nineteenth-century society

176 This statement most likely points to a line from Nicolas Boileau’s poem, “rien n’est beau que le vrai,” – which is actually titled an epistle and is addressed to the Marquis of Seignelai. The line “rien n’est beau que le vrai” is cited in *Bekenntnisse einer schönen Seele* by Moritz as evidence “des poetischen Unvermögens der Franzosen, die, wenn sie jemals Dichter werden wollen, von neuem geboren werden müssen. Es ist zuletzt nur die höhere Kraft des Menschen, die ihn zum Dichter macht” (73-74). Beyond this however, there was already a very active, contemporaneous discussion on the relationship of truth to beauty among scholars and art critics. Karl Detlev Jessen, in his treatise on *Heinse Stellung zur bildenden Kunst und ihrer Ästhetik*, details Heinse’s reaction to Winckelmann’s fervid promotion of the imitation of Greek art in the latter’s *Gedanken über die Nachahmung der Griechischen Werke in der Malerei und Bildhauerkunst*. “Nur das Wahre sei schön,” Heinse believed, “deshalb solle man nicht Franzosen, Deutsche, Engländer, Welsche nach der Schablone als Griechen darstellen, das sei unwahr, unsinnig, unästhetisch” (76). This relationship between authenticity and aesthetics also plays a role in Mirabellas’s philosophy – only those who are aware of their own nature and able to represent it as such are able to produce aesthetic results. This emerges in the character of Alfieri, as will be discussed below.

177 Of course, such declarations must be taken with a grain of salt; Mirabella herself embodies an atypical woman that does not always succumb to the weaknesses of her sex which she is so quick to tout.

178 She notes, for example, that “der Verstand in [ihr] den Ausschlag über die Einbildungskraft gab” (303).
viewed *Gemüth* and *Geist* as respectively ‘feminine’ and ‘masculine’” (Beautiful Souls 123). Brewer’s argument is ultimately that Mirabella’s attempt to achieve a harmony of these two faculties reinforces “her possession of both ‘masculine’ and ‘feminine’ traits” (Beautiful Souls 122). In that same vein, Mirabella’s possession of *Verstand*/genius and as well as her beauty/beautiful soul function to establish her even more firmly as both masculine and feminine.

3.3.2 The Nature of Individuality

Much contemporary scholarship has interpreted this dual nature of Mirabella’s character as a subversive re-writing of the feminine ideal. In contemporaneous philosophy, however, there is a noticeably different perspective that emerges -- Goethe’s review of the novel, for instance, begins as follows:

Der Heldin dieses Romans gebührt in so fern der Name einer schönen Seele, als ihre Tugenden aus ihrer Natur entspringen, und ihre Bildung aus ihrem Charakter hervorgeht. Wir hätten aber doch dieses Werk lieber *Bekenntnisse einer Amazone* überschrieben, theils um nicht an eine frühere Schrift zu erinnern, theils weil diese Benennung charakteristischer wäre. Denn es zeigt sich uns wirklich hier eine Männin, ein Mädchen wie es ein Mann gedacht hat. Und wie jene aus dem Haupte des Zeus entsprungene Athene eine strenge Erzjungfrau war und blieb, so zeigt sich auch in dieser Hirngeburt eines verständigen Mannes ein strenges, obgleich nicht ungefälliges Wesen, eine Jungfrau, eine Virago im besten Sinne, die wir schätzen und ehren, ohne eben von ihr angezogen zu werden. (367)\(^\text{179}\)

Far from touting Mirabella’s character as an ideal, Goethe posits Mirabella’s figure as unnatural and overly cerebral in origin. The resulting label of *Männin* is amended later in

\(^{179}\) Although Goethe’s review starts out with a seemingly scathing denunciation of the novel, he goes on to say in the very next sentence: “Hat man das einmal zugegeben, so kann man von dem Buche nicht Gutes genug sagen” (367).
his review by the more frequent use of *Amazone*. In fact, Goethe never once mentions the name of the protagonist, or even of any other characters except for Alfieri. Whatever Goethe’s motivations for this (though perhaps it was merely a stylistic aspect of his writing), ultimately it serves to make his discussion of the text more universal. It becomes a reaction not just to one fictional character and the rest of her literary troupe; but rather Goethe extends the implications of Mirabella’s individuality to the real individuals outside of the text. His final words on the novel read as follows:

> Jeder Mensch, das Weib so gut als der Mann, will seine Individualität behaupten, und behauptet sie auch zuletzt, nur jedes auf seine Weise. Wie die Frauen ihre Individualität behaupten können, wissen sie selbst am besten, und wir brauchen sie es nicht zu lehren…Vielmehr mag sich jede [Frau] nach diesem Bilde [der Protagonistin] selbst prüfen und examiniren; sie mag mit sich über die Mittel ratschlagen, deren sie sich in ähnlichen Fällen bedienen würde, und sie wird sich meist mit der Amazone in Widerspruch finden, die eigentlich nicht als ein Muster, sondern als ein Zielbild am Ende einer Laufbahn steht, die wir alle zu durchlaufen haben. (376, 377)

Much as I argue that Unger does not intend to provide her readers with a subversive ideal or with a single solution for a particular situation, Goethe similarly insists that the novel should be taken with a grain of salt. Rather than looking to this text for insights on how to live one’s life, the novel should prompt its reader to examine her own self and to consider the larger context: the assertion of one’s individuality.

Although Goethe ends with these words and offers no further insights into the discussion of the individual in relationship to his or her environment, such considerations reinforce the scope of the novel. Unger uses her characters to initiate a dialogue on what possibilities can and should exist for various individuals. Some individuals are more stable and, consequently, more successful than others. Other individuals must bend to the
influences of their environments. And finally, some individuals are not aware enough of their own nature to have any chance of success in the first place.

Like the narrator of *Anton Reiser*, Mirabella cautions against the individual choosing an undertaking that is not best suited to him or her. The most prominent example of this is in the character of Count Alfieri Vittorio. “Hätte der Graf den Unterschied der lyrischen und dramatischen Poesie in Beziehung auf seine Natur gekannt,” insists Mirabella, “so hätte er es schwerlich jemals darauf angelegt, durch die letztere unsterblich zu werden” (293). His attempts to achieve immortality might have been successful if he had been in a position to understand and then assert his own individuality. As Mirabella remarks later in the novel, “[d]ie Unsterblichkeit sichert man sich nur dadurch, daß man die eigene Individualität vor allen Verunstaltungen bewahrt” (375). Alfieri’s ignorance of his own nature leads him to choose a path that is more destructive than “creative” – creative in the sense that he might succeed at creating good art and also at creating the necessary conditions for his own individuality to be preserved.

Ultimately, it appears that Unger and Moritz share a similar understanding of human nature, although Mirabella’s admonitions against choosing one’s path falsely is much less explicitly formulated than those in the foreword to the last book of *Anton Reiser*: “Dieser Teil enthält auch einige vielleicht nicht unnütze und nicht unbedeutende Winke für Lehrer und Erzieher sowohl als für junge Leute, die ernsthaft genug sind, um sich selbst zu prüfen, durch welche Merkzeichen vorzüglich der falsche Kunsttrieb von dem wahren sich unterscheidet” (Moritz 331). As the narrator goes on to explain: “Man sieht aus dieser Geschichte, daß ein mißverstandener Kunsttrieb, der bloß die Neigung ohne den Beruf
voraussetzt, ebenso mächtig werden und eben die Erscheinungen hervorbringen kann, welche bei dem wirklichen Kunstgenie sich äußern, welches auch das Äußerste erduldet und alles aufopfert, um nur seinen Endzweck zu erreichen” (Moritz 331). Like Anton Reiser, Alfieri feels himself drawn to his art and neither man is successful of extricating himself from this misguided passion. The narrators of both novels argue that this failure is due to a lack of self-exploration; without an adequate understanding of our own nature, we are ill-equipped to choose the best course of action. Whatever our nature and talents happen to be will greatly affect our choice of actions; only those actions which best suit our nature will prove successful.

In addition to sharing such similar sentiments on the power of human nature vis-à-vis one’s surroundings, both Moritz’ and Unger’s narrators illustrate this example by means of art. Reiser is drawn to the theater, the same way that Alfieri is consumed with his dramas. Neither example is a critique of theater (or art) itself, but is rather an analysis of the suitable means of self-expression. “In sich selbst [Alfieri] war er ein Ganzes, wie die Natur es selten hervorbringt; allein, indem er sich nicht als ein solches erschien, konnte er, anstatt sich

---

180 Moritz furthermore differentiates between a true genius and those who are merely drawn to artistic production. There are similar implications found in Mirabella’s narrative, for she succeeds where Alfieri does not. Alfieri has the potential to be a genius, but he is incapable of recognizing the nature of (or even preconditions for) his genius.
seiner Individualität zu freuen, sich nur zerreiben und vor der Zeit zerstören” (286-87). These men simply do not know themselves well enough and, as a result, they must suffer.

In the case of Caroline we see another individuality not suited for its environment, although the problem emerges somewhat in reverse here. Alfieri possesses genius, but his ignorance of his true nature undermines its capabilities. As a result, he immerses himself in an environment that ultimately destroys him. At the other end of the spectrum we see Caroline, who exists within a fixed environment even before she has been raised/educated to her current state. Her primary function as wife to a duke makes her absorption of Mirabella’s nature highly problematic. An individuality such as the one Mirabella possesses requires freedom. The beautiful soul is a manifestation of inner freedom, but it then also requires external freedom in order to thrive. If an individual does not find herself in a position to insist on this external freedom, her entire individuality will suffer.

These considerations are why Mirabella is able to posit herself as a successful individual, even where such success eludes her friends. She is not only a beautiful soul, but she also possesses the necessary genius and freedom to allow her individuality to assert itself. Although she is respected and successful, she is still frequently misunderstood by those around her. Consequently, whenever her circumstances begin to threaten her individuality she chooses to relocate herself, renewing her control over her environment and her ability to insist on her own understanding and presentation of her nature. Whether this course of action is good or bad, “darüber mögen Andere entscheiden” (Bekenntnisse 8); the only thing made clear is that Mirabella’s character is to be understood neither as an ideal nor as a transgression against acceptable norms. She
simply is, and that is sufficient both for her self-presentation and for the premise of these

Bekenntnisse einer schönen Seele.
CHAPTER 4: THE NATURE AND THE NATION OF THE INDIVIDUAL

4.1.1 Introduction

Published in 1810, Unger’s last novel, *Der junge Franzose und das deutsche Mädchen.Wenn man will, ein Roman*, bears the subtitle “von der Verfasserin Julchen Grünthals.” This acknowledgment serves not only to bookend Unger’s literary accomplishments with reference to the first and most successful novel she produced, but it also creates an intertextual relationship between the two works. Of course, it could also be argued that this subtitle was included to boost sales of the novel, as Unger was facing significant financial difficulty at the time of the book’s publication. Be that as it may, it is still difficult for the reader to absorb the book wholly separate from Unger’s first publication – in part because of several parallels in the plot and characters.

Similar to *Julchen Grünthal*, in *Der junge Franzose und das deutsche Mädchen*\(^{181}\) a story involving a German girl educated by a French woman in the city of Berlin is narrated by a separate, homodiagetic character. Curiously enough, the narrator, who does not appear until halfway through the novel, is named Minna Rosenhain; this reminds the reader of the Minna Thalheim from the second half of *Julchen Grünthal*. Despite these striking similarities, there are also a number of notable differences between the two works: the primary protagonist of *JFDM* is a French soldier of noble heritage named Horace de

\(^{181}\) From here on out I will refer to the novel by the acronym *JFDM*. 196
St. Ange (the first 218 pages are told from his perspective via letters to his friend Alfred Blainville); the life story of the female protagonist, Adelaide, is much shorter – a mere three pages is devoted to her backstory – and includes very little information about her parents; the intervening narrator, Minna, does not undertake to tell her own story (in contrast to the Minna of Julchen Grünthal); and the novel has a decidedly happy ending, despite numerous tragedies interspersed throughout.

The parallels between Unger’s first and last novels extend to another novel written by her, as well. In JFDM, characters and experiences that echo those in Julchen Grünthal give way to representations and outcomes that are more reminiscent of Bekenntnisse einer schönen Seele. Like in Julchen Grünthal, the female protagonist is significantly influenced and developed by those around her to the point that there is no sign of any authentic nature. Additionally, there is familial discord when a male family member disagrees with the passions of this female character; and yet these tensions are resolved much more favorably in JFDM than in Julchen Grünthal. Perhaps for this reason, the titular protagonists are, like Mirabella in Bekenntnisse, described as beautiful souls and given some narrative autonomy (though this is much truer for one of them than for the other).

The significance of this narrative is underscored by the title of the novel. In reality, there are two young Frenchmen and two German girls, and both pairs play a significant role in the narrative structuring of the novel. Minna narrates a majority of Adelaide’s story for her, while Horace narrates his story to Alfred. Similar to the character of Mirabella, Adelaide and Horace both require literary recourse to a second character in order for their stories to be told. But where Mirabella’s addressee emerges as a grounding point for her
own claims to authority and individuality, the focus for Adelaide and Horace regards more their nationality than anything else. Indeed, the nationality of the protagonists is reflected in the frequent discourse within the novel on the natures of these two nations (the French and the German). Adelaide’s story is narrated in large part by another German girl, and a good portion of Adelaide’s dialogue involves discourse on the German people. Despite this, Adelaide is described as rather atypical for German women, and is even revealed to have received a thoroughly French upbringing. Likewise, Horace relates his own narrative to another Frenchman, and includes frequent commentary on the generally superior nature of the French people (although he discusses and praises the German people, as well). All of his narrated experiences, however, occur in Germany and result in a noticeable change of his character. The two nations are paired as dual contrasts that influence the trajectory of the protagonists’ lives. By mingling the two protagonists’ life experiences with a nation other than their own, but framing them within the narrative authority of the first, Unger’s last novel offers a rich analysis on the nature and the nation of the modern individual.

182 I should note that my use of the term “nature” is directly appropriated from JFD M. Unger uses this word to refer to three, apparently distinct concepts. The first is a kind of anthropomorphization of nature, such as in Horace’s statement, “Die Natur bildete uns [Franzosen] zu Extremen” or his reflection on Adelaide’s character: “Legte die Natur ihr dies instinktartig ins Gemüth?” (65, 186). Unger’s narrators also use this term in reference to specific nations, for example in Horace’s exclamation “Es lebe die französische Natur!” (186). Finally, the word “nature” is frequently used in reference to individuals and their inner characteristics. Several instances of this are: “Solche Naturen verloren die Schlacht bei Jena” (87); “ein dunkles Gefühl…wird mich bei einer so veredelten Natur, wie Adelaidens, nicht irre führen” (216); and “Ich kann nicht anders als meiner Natur folgen” (245). Although Unger (or rather her narrators) never clarify what exactly constitutes an individual’s or a people’s nature, the concept appears to be synonymous with a set of unique, clearly recognizable characteristics and tendencies. To this end, it might be useful to consider Herder’s belief that each person as well as each nation possesses its own particular way of being (C.f. Charles Taylor, “The Politics of Recognition” pp. 30-31 and footnote 185 below). This unique way of being is articulated, at least in Unger’s last novel, as a people’s or an individual’s “nature.”
Unfortunately, there is no (surviving) secondary literature on *JFDM* to indicate its reception by Unger’s contemporaries.\(^{183}\) Even among modern scholarship the only treatment of it to be found is a three-page synopsis included in Birte Giesler’s overview of Unger’s oeuvre. Certainly this novel, which Unger described as “das Beste was ich je schrieb” (Giesler 78), does not deserve to languish in obscurity. Indeed, its relationship to her previous novels coupled with the direct attention it gives to the genre of the novel makes this text extremely productive for additional insights into Unger’s representations of the modern individual. In this last work, Unger’s analysis of the notion of the individual from sociopolitical perspectives reveals how one’s nature can transform quite profoundly (and also quite positively) through interactions with other natures and other nations.

4.1.2 Overview

Considering how unknown Unger’s last work remains, a preliminary summary is in order. The novel opens with the first of many letters from Horace de St. Ange to his good friend Alfred Blainville (elsewhere written as “Alfred de Blainville”). These introductory pages offer a number of remarks about German and French national traits, with a handful of specific experiences included to corroborate Horace’s generally positive perspectives on the former. Although Horace finds it difficult at times to appreciate the German character and land, he is overwhelmingly a proponent of the German people;

\(^{183}\) “Zeugnisse darüber, wie die Zeitgenossen Ungers letztes Werk aufgenommen haben, liegen nicht vor” (Giesler 79).
indeed he goes so far as to assert that, were he not a reformed Frenchman, he would want to be German.

Over the space of the first 35 pages the reader follows Horace on his journey east from the French border to the city of Berlin, a much anticipated destination because of its relationship to Friedrich der Große. Evocative of Moritz and his fascination with Frederick the Great in *Bekenntnisse einer schönen Seele*, Horace has no shortage of praise for this great German man. In addition to his commentary on the German people and Frederick the Great, Horace also shares his tendency to enjoy the women of each city that he visits; as he explains to Alfred, “andres Städtchen, andres Mädchen” (15). This habit changes, however, when he arrives in Berlin and receives lodging at the house of a rich widow named Eugenia Waldemar. It is here that he meets the other titular character of the novel, the 19 year-old niece of the widow, Adelheit Senning, who is referred to almost exclusively as Adelaide.\(^{184}\)

Horace is so overcome by Adelaide’s physical and inner beauty (on several occasions he refers to her as a beautiful soul) that he swears off his former lifestyle and sets out to redeem himself in the hopes of one day being worthy of her. Initially he appears successful, until one night when he is caught off-guard by a seductive married woman named Justine. After having succumbed to her wiles, as he describes it to Alfred, he attempts to ameliorate the situation by emphatically refusing any further liaison with her. Justine does not take kindly to his refusal, invites him to an evening party organized by her

\(^{184}\) Aside from one occurrence in the narration where she is referred to as Adelheit, only her brother calls her by that name; all others use the French appellation introduced by Horace.
and her husband, and – when this fails to reignite his interest – begins sending him letters. Horace remains firm in his decision, and after learning that a rich uncle of his has died and left him his estate, he decides the time has come to make his feelings for Adelaide known.

Adelaide, although she has had no shortage of suitors in the past, returns Horace’s affections and agrees to marry him. When later pressed by Minna, who herself has no great affinity for Frenchmen, for an explanation, Adelaide describes a vision of a young man that had appeared to her on her eighteenth birthday. She painted a likeness of it on the case of a small box, never imagining it to be a real person until Horace appeared at her doorstep nearly a year later. Even more incredible is the later revelation that the French emigrant who tended to Adelaide during her youth was none other than Horace’s displaced mother. Despite concerns that she might be considered superstitious, Adelaide takes these two occurrences as signs that she was destined to be with Horace.

Two significant obstacles remain before Adelaide and Horace can begin a life together: the first is Horace’s commitment to march east into Poland under Napoleon’s command – a campaign from which he and Adelaide worry he may not return. Even more problematic, according to Adelaide, is her brother Eduard’s likely response to the betrothal. Having considered her vision to be phantasmagoric, he has sworn to kill this man whose likeness she painted should he ever encounter him. The fact that Eduard is a Prussian officer and fighting against Horace on the battlefield only exacerbates the situation, and Adelaide is despondent about the possibility of a happy ending. Her suspicions prove accurate when Horace and Eduard meet in battle and Horace is forced to seriously wound Eduard in order to save his own life. Horace takes Eduard captive, treats him exceedingly well (although
Eduard refuses to return this kindness in their interactions with each other), and releases Eduard on his honor to return home and visit his family.

The ensuing family reunion is less than pleasant, with Adelaide having resolved to marry Horace no matter what Eduard might say or do. As it becomes clearer to Eduard that he will not prove successful in changing Adelaide’s mind, he breaks his word of honor and rejoins the Prussian forces. He is quickly apprehended and sentenced to be executed, an outcome which he blames squarely on Adelaide. Unbeknownst to Adelaide and her aunt, Horace receives word of Eduard’s sentence and is able to receive a pardon from Napoleon; Eduard refuses to accept it and proceeds to shoot himself rather than live by the grace of a Frenchman. The family retreats to their home, only to discover later that Eduard had just barely survived and is being nursed back to health. Upon his recovery, some months later, the family reunites once again and Eduard decides to cooperate with Adelaide’s decision to marry – though only because he is too fatigued from his brush with death to persist in his objections. The novel ends with Adelaide, her aunt, and Horace living in France; the couple have had a son whom they have named Eugene after Adelaide’s aunt, and Adelaide has managed to surround herself with a small company of German expatriates who help to supplant her missing homeland.

4.2.1 The Nature of the (Epistolary) Novel

This novel is more overtly political than Unger’s previous works; until Horace meets Adelaide he writes primarily reflections on the interactions between the Germans and the French, the characteristics of the two nations, and his overall assessment of the
people whose land he is marching through. In addition, Unger has Horace include in his letters to Alfred several excerpts from contemporaneous texts dealing with the German people and nation, one from Herder’s *Briefen zur Beförderung der Humanität* (1793-97) and several pages from Friedrich August Koethe’s *Ansichten von der Gegenwart und Aussicht in die Zukunft* (1809) – a treatise dedicated to “[d]em gesamten, untheilbaren, theuren deutschen Vaterlande” (Koethe 8). Horace is not the only character in the novel who offers up sociopolitical observations; as his letters relate, Adelaide and her aunt engage in a discussion with him about the differences between French and German women.

This use of Horace’s letters to engage in political observations mirrors the practice, common in Unger’s time, of using letters as vehicles for political change. Elizabeth Cook notes that, “[p]articularly toward the end of the [eighteenth] century, letters became identified with a radical, political agenda” (17). Of course, many of the examples given are letters published in pamphlet form, rather than as literary works. But even when dealing

---

185 The inclusion of a text by Herder is particularly meaningful for this novel, which offers such an explicit focus on both the nature and also the nation of the individual. Specifically, late 18th and early 19th century German ideology (a period from about 1770-1830) is significantly influenced by Herder’s understanding of “each cultural community or *Volk*, ‘people,’ [which] expeses in its own way an aspect of humanity” (Dumont 9). Similarly, Charles Taylor notes that “Herder put forward the idea that each of us has an original way of being human: each person has his or her own ‘measure’” (Politics of Recognition 30). Both as an individual and also as a member of a larger group, there is something unique (Taylor calls it authentic) about each person. This roughly parallels what I am titling the nature and the nation of the individual and what I read in Unger’s last novel: the investigation or representation of a person from both a personal and also from a national perspective. Dumont argues that in Herder’s writings “there obviously lies a holistic perception of man (I am what my community has made of me) which is unmistakably German” (9). Furthermore, “Herder’s affirmation of distinct cultural communities represents an aspect of German acculturation to the developed form of individualism, and it combines a holistic and an individualistic aspect. Subsequently, Herder’s cultures or ‘peoples’ of equal right became ‘nations’ defined by common culture” (Dumont 10). In other words, Herder views nations as unique and distinct ethnic or cultural communities which are then responsible (at least partially) for the development of particular individuals within that nation/culture. It is this concept of “nation” to which I am referring with my own terminological choices; my reading of *JFDM* reveals how we find this “cultural anthropology in the spirit of Herder” quite extensively in the novel – particularly in the narratives and characters of Horace and Adelaide (Dumont 119).
with this latter category, the political nature of the letter after the end of the 18th century has been attested to by other scholars. Mary Favret argues that

in the literature of the period following the French Revolution…[p]olitics walked through the private, domestic sphere and, dressed in feminine terms – La Liberté or La Guillotine – unleashed violence. At the same time, however, women writers used the familiar letter form for entry to the world of politics: Charlotte Corday was not alone. In the mind of late eighteenth-century Europe, the letter fused the world of epistolary romance, the domestic tragedies of Clarissa or Julie, with the world of political revolution. (7)

We see this synthesis is Unger’s last novel, which uses letters to reveal both a tumultuous love story as well as political insights and arguments. In fact, even after Minna intervenes on page 219 to narrate the story, there are still copies of letters included for the reader. It would appear that Unger’s use of the letter form bears some significance.

Although it would be simplest to accept Unger’s use of letters as indicative of an attempt to engage explicitly with the political concerns of Post-Revolutionary Europe, the markedly epistolary nature of JFDM actually bears further scrutiny. This is because the traditional genealogy of the letter-narrative ends already in the late 18th century. Mary Favret, Elizabeth Cook, Thomas O. Beebee, and Ruth Perry have all pointed to the traditional canon of the epistolary genre in their attempts to engage with and even revise

186 In truth, Unger’s Bekenntnisse cannot be excluded from such a discussion either, as this novel is wholly epistolary in nature. In part because I did not want to present this discussion twice, I have chosen to wait until my last chapter to address more specifically the historical and literary trajectory of epistolary writing and its influence on our readings of Unger’s later novels. Furthermore, in my opinion, such a discussion fits more appropriately with this novel, as the epistolary mode in Bekenntnisse is quite different than in JFDM; Mirabella writes only three, very long letters (there is a reason the author titles them as books – or chapters, we might even say today – and separates them accordingly) as opposed to the dozen or so written by Horace. The other characters in Bekenntnisse do not write letters themselves, in contrast to the few written by Eduard, Adelaide, Alfred, and Mme Waldemar in JFDM; and even the structures of the letters are not the same: Mirabella does end her last letter with “Adieu,” but otherwise does not sign her name or even employ the standard forms of address and farewell. In short, the letters of Bekenntnisse are actually far less epistolary, I would argue, than the letters of JFDM. [C.f. Sigrun Schmid’s description of Bekenntnisse as an autobiography (116-17).] For these two reasons I have chosen to present my discussion of the genealogy of the epistolary form in this chapter.

204
it. Favret notes that during the Romantic period, “we ‘discover’ that the epistolary novel no longer seemed viable” (12); Beebee similarly refers to the “ghost of epistolarity in the nineteenth-century novel” (166). According to traditional literary criticism, the epistolary form of Unger’s last novel must be either ironic or simply anachronistic. Because form plays such a significant role in my analysis of both Unger’s novels and the characters in these novels, it becomes necessary to situate her last novel more clearly in relationship to such literary criticism.

Traditional literary criticism presents the 18th century as the apotheosis of the sentimental, epistolary novel and reads the 19th-century novel as evolving away from this form and towards the realist-historical tradition. Elizabeth Cook refers to this chronology in her work on “Epistolary Bodies,” in which she seeks “to complicate a conventional ‘rise and fall’ reading of the epistolary genre, the idea that at the end of the eighteenth century the letter form was eliminated from the fictional field of the sentimental novel and was henceforth assigned a limited role as a vehicle of social protest or as a minor pedagogical form” (173). The grounding for this “rise and fall” of the epistolary form and its limitations to the 18th century come from our associations of “the letter tradition of the eighteenth century with sentimental heroines, seductive villains and long, tortuous romances” (Favret 4). These long, tortuous romances almost always test the virtue of their sentimental heroines as a primary characteristic of the plot. “Indeed, these epistolary novels are often plotted like experiments performed on isolated individuals,” argues Ruth Perry, “The

\[187\] It is appropriate that Favret mentions hereafter the classic examples of Richardson’s Clarissa or Rousseau’s Julie.
characters are almost systematically manipulated and their reactions under pressure carefully preserved in their letters or journals” (22). The result is a sentimental novel structured specifically within the framework of Enlightenment morality:

Because the epistolary novel grew in response to certain specific social conditions – the new literary industry, broader literacy in the population, the evolution of the female audience, the development of a few writers among middle and upper-class women – it was a form well suited to a detailed working through of moral issues. Characters who spent their fictional lives writing letters to each other about their confusion and ambivalence contributed to an illusion of realism; these emotional outpourings were the literary residue of deeply felt experience and thought from which a reader might learn something of use in order to deal with his own moral dilemmas. (Perry 26)

The preoccupation with morality dissipates in the 19th century in face of increasingly nationalistic and political concerns. Accordingly, Cook’s revisionist reading of the epistolary genre also limits it to the 18th century. She reads the political nature of the letter as a notable component of the “Republic of Letters,” but ends this republic in the year 1775 since the Enlightenment ideal of the public sphere “could not be accommodated by the nationalist cultures that increasingly shaped the political states around 1775” (11). These authors all acknowledge that epistolary works continue to be written past this year, well into the 19th century and even beyond, but generally do not afford these works the same status as their 18th-century counterparts.\(^{188}\)

Mary Favret’s reading of the epistolary form as it manifests in the 19th century is perhaps the most productive for those who would view this genre as viable past 1800. Although her analysis carries her well into Romantic England – dealing with authors such

---

\(^{188}\) Most explicitly representative of this opinion is Thomas O. Beebee’s statement that “fiction writers of the early nineteenth century, from Jane Austen to Dostoevsky, grew up with epistolary fiction as a dominant literary form, and naturally turned to that form in their earliest literary efforts. Yet, as Barthes and Watson inform us, that form no longer held the same fictional and ideological power in the writers’ own period” (170).
as Mary Wollstonecraft or Jane Austen, her insights are equally useful and applicable in dealing with earlier literature. Specifically, her critique of “the traditional canon of epistolary novels, which usually includes no novels written after 1790” addresses the misrepresentation of epistolary writing as an innocent or “virginal genre” (34). “This line of development in the literary canon,” Favret writes, “isolates a certain ‘fiction’ of the epistolary novel which, in turn, distorts the history of the genre. In fact, outside this ‘fiction of letters’ stand innumerable epistolary novels which do not emphasize the psychology of the love letter, do not target the woman as victim/heroine, and do not detach the world of letters from the world of political events” (35). Rather than remembering “that Pamela was an anomaly in its day,” literary criticism instead treats these epistolary novels that do not fit the traditional canon as anomalies or outliers themselves (Favret 35). Such treatment skews our perception of epistolary works written not just during the heyday of the sentimental novel, but also those written after the 18th century.\(^{189}\) By revising the traditional understanding of the epistolary novel, we can see that it need not face its downfall with the advent of the next century.

Perhaps it is true that a subgenre of the epistolary novel (namely the sentimental novel à la Pamela) cannot find its home in the 19th century, but that need not cause us to question the efficacy of other epistolary works at this time. That Unger’s last novel is an

\(^{189}\) Rather contrastively, Cook also acknowledges the prevalence of the epistolary form after 1800, but frames such literary production in a very different light: “Full-length epistolary novels continued to be written after the turn of the century,” she notes, “Each of these novels asked the epistolary form to do the kinds of things it had done in the previous century: to reconcile the apparently discrete, and at times even opposed, realms of public and private, and to clarify and reorder codes of gender and authority that had shifted, gradually or radically, over time. In each case, however, the narrative of the new models of subjectivity in the traumatic political contexts of the turn of the century strains the form to its breaking point” (174, 75).
amalgam of both the earlier sentimental tradition as well as a more overtly political engagement reveals how productive it is to read against criticism that would relegate the letter-narrative to the 18th century. Unger’s epistolary work is neither traditional (a feminine form for a female author) nor arbitrary (I do not believe she chose to use the epistolary form due only to its prevalence or previous popularity). Instead, the unique conditions of the epistolary form combined with the historical use of the letter for political purposes produce a form that suits Unger’s discussion of the modern individual excellently: it presents the opportunity to go inside the protagonists’ heads and it situates these protagonists within the political environment of their time. The individual emerges accordingly in relationship to both the private and the public sphere, albeit to varying degrees. In the case of Julchen Grünthal, for example, she is hardly presented outside the framework of her interpersonal relationships (i.e. her life in the private sphere), though her father’s commentary certainly carries sociopolitical connotations. With Mirabella we see a relatively unique emergence of the female into the predominantly male public sphere; the letter form aids her in this, as she is able to address herself explicitly to a male reader. Finally, with her protagonist Horace, Unger makes a decisive move into the public sphere.

---

190 See, for example, Elizabeth Goldsmith’s analysis on “Writing the Female Voice” where she notes that “we read that the female writing style is somehow particularly adapted to the epistolary form” because it lacks the polished rhetoric of masculine writing in favor of a freer, more “authentic” form of expression (47). The feminine nature of letters is also underscored when considering the voyeurism of epistolary writing. “Eighteenth-century novelists knew, of course, that their readers’ interests would be piqued by the belief that they were reading letters written by women for the eyes of another reader” (55).
191 One might even argue that it lends an air of authenticity to the presentations of these inner workings. Because Unger, unlike Moritz, was not working with true events, having a third-person narrator only instead of the first-person narration could actually serve to undermine the psychological realism of the events she describes. When Moritz relates what Reiser is thinking, our instinct is to believe him since he is Reiser. Neither Unger nor her narrators are the same as the protagonists that she analyzes, so the authenticity suggested by the letter form helps to negate this “deficiency.”
of politics, while still utilizing an apparently sentimental epistolary form. It is this mixing of elements that resists attempts to establish a traditional epistolary canon devoted exclusively – or even primarily – to the predominantly sentimental novel of the 18th century. “Specifically, when the epistolary genre is seen as limited to the sentimental epistolary plot of feminine passion, the exclusive identification of women and letters reaffirms essentialist concepts of gender and sexuality, as well as replicating an artificial division of human experience into separate and gendered public and private spheres” (Cook 24). While it is true that, at this particular point in history, women were largely denied significant entrance into the experience of the public realm, to argue that such limitations are necessarily commuted into literary separations of the same is misleading at best. In other words, the use of the epistolary form, even by a female character or author, does not indicate that the text should be read independent of public and political considerations.

Of course, many scholars have indeed attended to the potential political impact of an author’s work. In the specific case of Unger’s debut novel, a number have chosen to read it as a social statement regarding women’s passions and virtue. In doing so, they privilege Julchen’s narrative and perspectives over those of her father. However, I also argue that such approaches run the risk of overcompensating for the previous gendered divides. As Cook writes, “[w]hile feminist criticism and deconstruction made epistolary novels legible again, they sometimes did so by simply inverting the hierarchy of values that formerly marginalized the epistolary novel, producing similarly limited definitions of the genre” (23). Although Cook’s primary focus is the genealogy of this genre, she also demonstrates the danger of inverting a paradigm in an effort to remedy a genre’s
marginalized status. In the case of some 18\textsuperscript{th} and 19\textsuperscript{th}-century novels by women, we see a tendency to read these as primarily political (subversive) works, which can negate an entire aspect of the literary undertaking. In other words, while it is important to attend to the political aspect of texts, we must not forget that there are still private and even sentimental characteristics that remain. Anna Richards argues that “the analysis of one’s soul, which sentimentality encouraged, still acted as an important tool in the development of an emerging, but fragile self-confidence. In part for this reason, but also because it represented an accessible and suitably ‘feminine’ genre, women writers continued to favor the sentimental novel well into the nineteenth century” (239). While Richards’ analysis at first glance sounds limiting, due to her decision to relegate much of women’s writing to the sentimental genre, her explanation that “there was no one kind of sentimental novel published in eighteenth-century Germany” is enlightening: “the best sentimental novels of the period share a character analysis which, far from merely illustrating generalized moral lessons or encouraging inwardness antipathetic to action, is characterized by an emphasis on individual experience and the promotion of psychological health, in step with the development of psychology at this period” (239). In other words, we might even retitle her phrase “sentimental novel” to “psychological novel.”\textsuperscript{192} Richards demonstrates what I also take as a basic tenet to my understanding of literature in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries: many authors, including women such as Unger, wrote novels

\textsuperscript{192} Richards’ final insights also echo the trajectory of the modern novel as set forth by Blanckenburg: “But in its redirection of narrative form from outward adventures to inner states of mind, the sentimental novel of self-fashioning prepared the way for psychological realism and thus for one of the most important tools to be employed by modern novelists both male and female” (240). I have already demonstrated in the introduction the similarity between Blanckenburg’s prescriptions and the nature of Moritz’ psychological novel, making this connection even more tangible here.
dedicated to the investigation of the individual experience and the modern subject – from both a private and political perspective.

4.2.2 Narrative and Subjectivity

Although I have attempted to situate my analysis of Unger’s choices of narrative form in relationship to theory of the novel and epistolary genres, I also want to underscore the relationship of these narrative forms to the narrated and narrating subjects. Why, for example, does Unger choose to present Mirabella as a fully-formed, autonomous individual who has the complete freedom to narrate her own story? Why does Adelaide not receive the same treatment, or even Horace? Because narrative and the epistolary form can be used for various purposes in representing the inner workings of a person as well as his or her political engagement, the extent to which these forms are employed for any given character provides insight into representations of these characters’ development and individualities.

As I have already mentioned, I do not agree with Cook’s statement that the epistolary form is necessarily weaker and strained in the 19th century; her observations regarding the function of letters and the implications of epistolarity for the nature of the work, however, are very convincing. Cook insists that, because letters have continuously been identified with the private order, the cultural history of both letter and contract has rarely been acknowledged or explored. It is often assumed that they have always been the private, ‘authorless’ discourses Foucault describes, transparent forms that signify only constatively. In the eighteenth century, however, on the cusp between manuscript and print cultures, both these forms came into prominence in the cultural imagination. Functioning symbolically as well as semantically, they operated not to reflect a preexisting subjectivity but rather to produce and organize it in various ways. (6-7)
These assertions touch on the same concerns and terminology of my own project: the use of the letter (or narrative) vis-à-vis an individual subject/subjectivity. All of the novels by Unger that I am analyzing employ the epistolary form to some extent, and as I have already argued above, this narrative form is directly related to the emergence of the self. I agree with Cook’s assessment that letters do not necessarily represent a subjectivity that already exists; instead, as Berghahn has also argued in the specific case of *Anton Reiser*, the experience and observation of the self is the act of writing itself:


It is the act of writing that can observe and create the self, and only through exerting one’s own narrative existence can an “actual” subjectivity emerge. Consequently, in Unger’s *Bekenntnisse* we see the epistolary form used to the exclusion of any other narration; Mirabella asserts herself so definitively and autonomously that she needs no narrator. On the other end of the spectrum stands *Julchen Grünthal*, whose female protagonist is hardly

193 Perhaps this is also why the presentation of the epistolary form as unviable in the 19th century does not fit so well with Unger’s work. As Thomas O. Beebee explains in the specific case of Jane Austen, “[i]n her use of letters, Austen shifts the epistemological concerns of eighteenth-century perspectivism to social relations. It is not the writing of a letter that reveals a particular attitude, but its reading” (180). The letter form is not used as a vessel for the self (and, incidentally, in Austen’s work it is also not used as a medium for furthering the plot); it is a reactionary device that fits into a larger whole, rather than representing an entirety in and of itself.

194 Berghahn’s assertion that this act of writing is epochal rather than individual reinforces, on the one hand, the extent to which literary anthropology plays a role in the writings of this time period. On the other hand, it does not preclude an analysis of this writing at the individual level; indeed the act of writing that occurs inevitably emerges in individual narratives, even though the implications of these narratives are themselves wider reaching.
ever allowed to express herself in first-person form for the reader to view. Standing somewhere in between this being and becoming are the protagonists of *JFDM*, who are neither offered complete autonomy nor represented as limited and maldeveloped – and this intermediary state is mirrored in the letters that they write.

In light of this assertion, it is helpful to return briefly to Schechtman’s narrative self-constitution view\(^\text{195}\) that a “person’s identity (in the sense at issue in the characterization question) is constituted by the content of her self-narrative, and the traits, actions, and experiences included in it” (94, emphasis in original). Schechtman argues that an individual must actively appropriate her past experiences and then narrate them as such in order to be considered a person. Wherever this narrative agency is lacking, so, too, is one’s identity. Because, as Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan argues, “the study of narrative is no longer restricted to poetics but becomes an attempt to describe fundamental operations of any signifying system” (131), it is extremely productive to consider what a particular author might be attempting to signify with the narratives he or she produces. Of course, to a great extent the understanding of these signifiers and what they represent is largely dependent upon the interpretation of the reader(s). The interpretation I provide here of these three novels, particularly in conjunction with each other rather than as isolated works, demonstrates that Unger intentionally positions her characters in relationship to the narrative levels of the story. Far from being anachronistic in their application, theories such as those of Schechtman find corroboration in the developments of Unger’s novels and the modes in which they are written. The more of an individuality that a character appears or

---

\(^{195}\) C.f. pp. 106-09 and 149 above.
asserts to possess, the more of a narrative presence this character possesses in the novel. Her characters are furthermore represented as belonging to a larger, interconnected whole that consists not only of the influences their individual natures exert, but also of the interactions between them and other characters, institutions, and events.

Personhood and personal identity…rely crucially on an individual’s inner life and her attitude toward her actions and experiences. It is this fact which suggests that self-constitution must be part of a viable account of identity. At the same time, however, it must be acknowledged that persons do not exist in a vacuum. The very concept of personhood is inherently connected to the capacity to take one’s place in a certain complex web of social institutions and interactions” (Schechtman 95). What Schechtman argues explicitly, we can also find portrayed in Unger’s works. Even in the case of Mirabella, whose character would prefer to be isolated entirely from society, we see that her interactions with people around her are able to effect profound influences. The institution of the church similarly proves to be pivotal for her ultimate individuality. “Als eine geborne Catholikin” she muses, “würd' ich mich nach Moritzens Tode entschlossen haben, in irgend ein Kloster zu gehen; schwerlich aber wäre dann aus mir geworden, was ich jetzt bin, und in sofern ich einen Werth auf mich setze, freue ich mich auch, eine Protestantin zu seyn” (379-80). Mirabella’s ability to realize this alternate possibility emerges in her narrative, which itself stands as proof that she is able to position herself as an autonomous individual with her own recognized identity. As a result of Mirabella’s capacity to reflect on her own character, the reader is able to better understand the nature of Mirabella’s self and how it stems from both her natural characteristics and also her various life experiences.
4.3.1 *Der junge Franzose und das deutsche Mädchen*

This explicit focus on nature, character, and experiences emerges in *JFDM*, as well, already in the first lines of the novel. Here the reader (along with the fictional addressee, Alfred Blainville) learns of Horace’s many musings on the German and French people. After spending several pages describing the Germans physically and psychologically, with some observations about the French included for comparison, Horace notes that he intends to maintain this focus on the characters of the two nations for the duration of his travels.

“Ehrlich werde ich darnach streben, mich auf meinen militärischen Kreuz und Querzügen von manchem mit der Muttermilch eingesognen Vorurtheile loszumachen, ich will *selbst* sehen und urtheilen” (5, emphasis in original). Just as Mirabella expresses interest in extrapolating a clearer understanding of human nature based on her observations, Horace similarly wants to observe and understand those around him for himself. The way in which he prefaces these observations almost reminds one of Mirabella’s confessions:

> Oft will mir es erscheinen, als könnten sie [die Deutschen] nie jene Bewunderung verdient haben; denn sie klagen durch alle vergangene Zeitalter hindurch, die alte Deutschheit sei verloren, deren Daseyn sich endlich ins graue Alterthum, in Nacht und Graus ihrer undurchdringlichen Wälder zu verlieren scheint. Indeß, Alfred, sind sie noch immer aller Achtung werth, und uns in mancher Hinsicht, wo nicht überlegen, doch gleich. Ob besser als wir, weiß ich noch nicht, aber anders, gar anders! Mir gefällt die Treuherzigkeit dieses Volkes, und hätte ich nicht die Ehre ein regenerirter Franzose zu sein, möchte ich zu den Deutschen gehören. (2)

This ambivalent assessment of the German people is balanced with Horace’s remark that he is unable to judge whether or not the Germans are superior to the French. “Ob diese gut sey[en], oder nicht, darüber mögen Andere entscheiden,” as Mirabella insists in the preface to her confessions (7). The most important thing here, as was the case for Mirabella, is the insistence on how different they are. The uniqueness of the German character is framed
here as the initial focus for the novel, to be explored (literally) in greater detail by Horace on his march into the heart of the nation.

In addition to getting to know the German country and character better, Horace is also concerned with representations of his own nation. "Unser Ruf von dieser Seite ist schon übel genug," he laments, "auch in dieser Hinsicht sind wir verbunden, der Welt eine bessere Meinung von uns beizubringen" (23). How one should go about changing people’s opinions and perceptions is demonstrated first-hand by Horace’s behavior – he uses his letter writing to influence his friends back in France. “So oft auf Ehre ein braves, stattliches Volk, das ich immer lieber gewinne; wäre ihre Sprache nur nicht so unerlernbar, und für unsere Organe zu hart zu bearbeiten! Erzähle diese Züge allen unsern Kameraden, die sich unter dem Begrif [sic] Deutsch das Roheste und Unbeholfenste unter der Sonne denken” (19). Consequently, rather than the “exchange” of letters – a misnomer in that almost no responses from Alfred are included – between Horace and Alfred being personal in nature, their correspondence reveals an attempt to better understand and elucidate Germans/Germany and French/France. The characteristics and attitudes of these two nations, and not the interpersonal relationship between Horace and Alfred, stand as one of the primary foci of Horace’s narrative.

This focus does change slightly once Horace arrives in Berlin and makes the acquaintance of Adelaide. From this point on, he continues to include commentary on the German and French people; indeed he engages in such conversations with Adelaide and her aunt. The focus on character begins to narrow, however, as Horace’s individual character changes in tandem with his increasing knowledge of Adelaide’s character. The
love story that unfolds between “beiden schönen Seelen” offers first Horace and then Minna the opportunity to elaborate on the nature of individuality and character (70). The initial focus on nationality is never lost, however, as the commentary provided on both Horace and Adelaide is very frequently framed in relationship to their respective countries of origin.

Beyond this focus on the nature and the nation of the individual, ironic undertones of the novel as such also begin to emerge quite clearly. Speaking of his arrival in Berlin, Horace explains: “Mein guter Genius führte mich zu einer reichen Witwe, Madame Waldemar, ins Haus, die zwar, wie der Roman es fordert, keine schöne Tochter, aber eine desto schönere Nichte hat” (35). There are moments of such irony littered throughout the entire novel, both within the observations included in Horace’s letters as well as within the more omniscient and overarching narrative of Minna’s account. From the phrases Horace employs such as “wie der Roman es erfordert,” or “dieser Brief…ist zu einem Buche angewachsen” (35, 46); to Eduard’s wry response to Adelaide’s engagement to Horace, “[u]m Verzeihung, aus welchem Roman?” (327); to Minna’s recounting of Madame Waldemar’s wish for a deus ex machina to save her nephew or her tongue-in-cheek remark that “[d]iejenigen, welche in den erzählten Begebenheiten nur einen Roman sehen, müssen es nach allen Regeln der Kunst unrecht finden, daß nach der Katastrophe nicht der Vorhang fällt” (406) – Unger moves her characters’ dialogue to the meta-level. This creates a narrative that focuses firstly on the nature/character of various nations and individuals, and secondly on the textual rendering of such representations. By repeatedly alerting her
readers to the fact that they are reading literature (a novel), Unger draws our attention not only to what is being represented, but also to how it is being represented.

The most prominent instance of this description of Unger’s novel as such is located in the title, describing a story that is, “wenn man will, ein Roman.” In the introduction I argue that Unger is doing something similar here to Moritz when she places this concept into the title of her text. Boulby has argued that Moritz employs irony in his reference to the genre of the novel, and ultimately invokes this concept for the very specific connotations it entails. Likewise, the mocking description of JFDM as “nur einen Roman” that consists merely of “Begebenheiten” offers an ironic commentary on the pejorative understanding of novels as fanciful fluff not worthy of serious readers, while also alluding to the genre of the novel as one that had shifted towards the study of the modern subject.

Claire Baldwin, in her investigation of The Emergence of the Modern German Novel, argues that “the narrative tactics of metafictional novels…gradually alter the aspects of moral responsibility associated with the genre” (17). This development precipitates a shift in novel theory that views the genre less as embodied by fantastic adventures capable of negatively influencing their readers, and instead situates the novel as a medium for exploration of the individual. Referencing Blanckenburg, Baldwin notes:

The good novel will, in his view, present the inner history of a character as ‘Mensch’ such that readers can understand the causality of the character’s development and can, in turn, apply the insights gleaned from the novel to their own maturity toward perfection. In this way, Blanckenburg’s theory of the novel participates in defining the modern German novel as a new kind of narrative about the self, and as a narrative that contributes to shaping new understandings of subjectivity. (23)

This narrative about the self is, according to Blanckenburg, structured according to certain stylistic premises. Specifically, he argues:

> daß eins mit allem, und alles mit einem verbunden ist; – daß, so wie jede Begebenheit ihre wirkende Ursache hat, diese Begebenheit selbst wieder die wirkende Ursach einer folgenden Begebenheit wird. Wir sehnen [sic] eine, bis ins Unendliche fortgehende Reihe verbundener Ursachen und Wirkungen: ein, in einander geschlungenes Gewebe, das, wenn es aus einander zu wickeln wäre, ganz ununterbrochen einen Faden enthielte. (Versuch 312)

The reference to a single, unbroken thread [Faden] is addressed in both of the major narratives of *JFDM*, as well; Horace explains: “Ich fahre fort, mein Alfred, und nehme den Faden da auf, wo ich ihn fallen ließ” (174). Minna similarly describes herself as “unablässig bemüht…den Faden, der immer abzureißen drohte, sanft und seiden fortzuspinnen” (310). As I have already noted above in the case of Mirabella’s narrative, such a wording reminds us of the construction of the self in Moritz’s *Anton Reiser*:

> Wer auf sein vergangenes Leben aufmerksam wird, der glaubt zuerst oft nichts als Zwecklosigkeit, abgerißne Fäden, Verwirrung, Nacht und Dunkelheit zu sehen; je mehr sich aber sein Blick darauf heftet, desto mehr verschwindet die Dunkelheit, die Zwecklosigkeit verliert sich allmählich, die abgerißnen Fäden knüpfen sich wieder an, das Untereinandergeworfene und Verwirrte ordnet sich – und das Mißtönende löset sich unvermerkt in Harmonie und Wohlklang auf. (107)\(^{197}\)

There are noticeable overlaps here in the terminology and explanations of Blanckenburg’s theory of the novel, Moritz’s understanding of self-representation, and Unger’s description of narrative agency. These similarities, coupled with Unger’s metafictional discussions of *JFDM* as a novel, reinforce the notion that the novel is focused on more than merely a series of (mis)adventures. This novel, like Unger’s other works, foregrounds the (representation of the) individual. Even where the novel provides self-mocking

\(^{197}\) Also cited on p. 143.
commentary and fantastic adventures, the reader must not forget to attend to the anthropological insights provided in the narrative.

As a result, we can see how “[t]he metafictional defense of the novel as a viable literary genre, as both serious and enjoyable fiction” emerges in *JFDM* (Baldwin 176). Unger pokes fun at the genre of the novel and uses it to relate intrigue, love, and other adventures. Beyond this, however, she uses the text to explore the natures of individual characters, the natures of the French and German people, and even the nature of the medium used to explore and represent these other considerations. In this way, *JFDM* links the individual both to his or her nation and also more explicitly to the narrative form. The characters are situated psychologically within their respective nations, and metafictionally within the genre of the novel. In this, Unger’s last novel, we can see most clearly the various intersecting influences in the trajectory of an individual’s development.

4.3.2 Der junge Franzose

The first individual introduced in the novel is the titular Frenchman, Horace. His letters – which comprise the first 218 pages of the novel – include a variety of observations, reflections, and critiques. These insights, like his letters themselves, are framed by remarks on the German and French national characters and their relationship to his experiences. Early on in his first letter he explains his interest in the German nation, asserting that he is not yet capable of judging it (3). His experiences soon prove, however, that the Germans are a very trustworthy, admirable people:

französischen Soldaten unter seinem Dache ermordet; so sehr er in seiner Gewalt sein mochte. Nur in Deutschland konnte der Soldat sich auch bei dem geplünderten Wirth ruhig schlafen legen. (10-11)

Both Horace and his entire company are overwhelmingly convinced of the Germans’ good character. Such compliments persist throughout his narrative, though they are interspersed with occasional sharp critiques and political musings.


Horace’s reflections here on the Germans precede a later conversation in which he articulates similar perspectives to those shared by Koethe in his Ansichten von der Gegenwart und Aussicht in die Zukunft: “Allerdings ist der Deutsche nicht mehr das, was er vor Jahrhunderten war; aber ist denn darum etwas Schlechteres? Die Erfahrung hat bewiesen, daß Tapferkeit, Heldenmuth, Entsagung von Bequemlichkeiten, an kein Zeitalter…gebunden sind” (190). Somewhat more magnanimous than Horace, Koethe does not appear as questioning of the modern German pride. But like Horace, Koethe criticizes the German people for having allowed themselves to remain separate; “der Deutsche…[ist] nicht als Deutscher, sondern nur als Schwabe, Franke, Baier, Westphale und Brandenburger [zu] empfinden” (190-91). More than a little impressed by Koethe, Horace questions: “Wie gefällt dir diese Stelle voll Wahrheit und Nachdruck, Alfred?” (193). That the argument for German unification is taken up by a Frenchman invading the country
might surprise the reader every bit as much as Horace is astonished that “wohl gar aus Weibermund erschall’ts: „Seid Deutsche! Seid Eurer Väter werth!“” (89). As becomes clearer over the course of the novel, however, there are indications that the German character can benefit significantly from French influence.

“Es ist ein merkwürdiges Volk,” Horace writes, “und mir noch merkwürdiger, weil Adelaide ihm gehört” (97). Yet while he maintains a preference for the French nature throughout the novel, the German people are in some ways superior to the French. “Von Rechtlichkeit und Zuverlässigkeit habe ich in Deutschland schon häufig sprechende Beweise gefunden: so könnte ich mich einem deutschen Freunde anvertrauen; eine Deutsche zur Gefährtin meiner Tage, zur Mutter meiner Kinder wählen, der Treue und Zuverlässigkeit wegen” (111). Horace is so convinced of the trustworthiness of German women that he insists: “Die Wahrheit ist, daß nicht nur in Frankreich, sondern allenthalben, wo Menschen wohnen, ein solches Glück sich sehr selten findet; steht es aber irgendwo zu erreichen, so gewähren es deutsche Frauen…Die deutschen Frauen sind im Innern ihrer Häuslichkeit den Französinnen bei weitem vorzuziehen” (138-39). This praise of Germans, and women in particular, is tempered by his addendum that “[er] nicht von großen Haufen [spricht], über dem: Rohheit oder Verbildung waltet; und dennoch ist hier selbst bei diesem mehr die Ordnung der Natur festgestellt, durch den Begrif [sic], daß der Mann das Oberhaupt ist” (139). The notion of “the order of nature” raises questions regarding what

---

198 “Es lebe die französische Natur! Sie genießt ohne Untersuchung, was ihr der Moment oder ein glücklicher Zufall bescher’t“ (186).

199 A sentiment that, we might remember here, Unger herself shares. She writes: “Ich habe nichts gegen das ehrwürdige, und er soll dein Herr sein; weil es ein Grundgesetz der Menschennatur ist, daß der Stärkere über den Schwächeren gebiete. Der Mann herrscht über die Frau” (Über Berlin 37, emphasis in original).
elements of an individual’s character and habits stem from “innate” characteristics and which are acquired throughout our lives. Horace’s belief that German women are more capable of remaining true to nature could imply that they are, generally speaking, more capable of resisting negative influences around them. As he explains to Alfred, “[i]ch unterhalte mich oft und lange mit meinen liebenswürdigen Wirthinnen über die unterscheidenden Merkmale des deutschen weiblichen, wie des französischen weiblichen Charakters, wobei ich jeden Anlaß ergreife, dem ersteren meine Huldigung darzubringen” (142). By the end of the novel his friend Alfred writes with a corroborating perspective of the Germans as an “excellent, admirable people” (339), and a similar belief that a German wife is preferable to a French one:

Die Weiber dieses eroberten Landes kommen uns de bonne guerre zu: sie gefallen mir: schön sind sie im Ganzen nicht; aber freundlich und gut, wie die liebe Sonne. Dabei sind sie gute Hausmütter, und schämen sich nicht der Pflichten, die dieser Begrif [sic] in sich faßt…Vom Keller bis unters Dach reicht das Auge dieser Guten, und dein treffliches neidloses Mädchen erzählt mir von Frauen, die den Reim oder den Ausgang des Romans, oder den letzten Akt eines Schauspiels finden, ohne die Suppe zu versalzen oder anbrennen zu lassen…Genug, Horace; ich bin entschlossen, diese Gegenden nicht zu verlassen, ohne nur für mein künftiges Daseyn ein stilles häusliches Glück zu sichern. (336-37)

Capable of demonstrating culture and education, German women still recognize that “die stille Häuslichkeit…eigentlich die Sphäre des weiblichen Wirkens [ist]” (139). There is something of a contradiction in Horace’s perspective here, for he elsewhere implicitly critiques this separation of spheres and the resulting effect it can have on women.

Speaking of Justine, Horace remarks: “Sie ist hübsch, sie ist es nicht; sie ist gut, sie ist schlecht; je nachdem du das Licht hältst. Von wie vielen Weibern läßt sich nicht das nämliche sagen! Wie wenige haben Charakter!” (107) His remarks regarding this constant
changing of form hint back at the philosophy that emerges in Mirabella’s presentation of individuality: we must be able to preserve the form of our individuality against all external factors. If we appear different from another angle, it means that we have not succeeded in fully asserting our individuality and – as Horace bemoans – we cannot be said to have any character.

Of course, Horace’s critique is directed here at women only; when coupled with other reflections of his, however, it becomes clearer why such a lack of character plagues women more than men. At a dinner party Horace observes the interactions of the people around him: “Die Frauen mischten sich so wenig ins Gespräch, und da es auch nachher nur ernste politische, oder gar Geschäftsgegenstände betraf, war es ihnen nicht zu verargen. Wagt eine oder die andere sich über ihre häusliche Sphäre hinaus, ist sie dem Ridicüle einer femme savante ausgesetzt, dem sie schwerlich entgehen würde” (121-22). Because these women are essentially denied the ability to assert their opinions in public discussion (lest they face public scorn), they find themselves relegated to the sidelines and largely ignored. “[D]ie Frauen saßen einzeln auf Stühlen umher, schlummerten, nickten ein, und kein Mann nahm weiter Notiz von ihnen” (130). The women in this group are unwilling or unable to engage in political discourse with the men, and are consequently marginalized both within the space of the party and as individuals.

There is a bit of a paradox in Horace’s analysis of Germans and, more specifically, German women. He praises Adelaide, describes her as a “schöne Seele” (136), and notes that “Adelaiden gefällt, was sie mein Billigkeitsgefühl nennt; sie dankt mir im Namen ihrer Landsmänninnen, und unterläßt nie, Züge aus dem deutschen Charakter auszuheben, die
meine gefäßte gute Meinung bestätigen müssen” (143). His good opinion of her extends to other German women, as well, and yet he points out aspects of their nature that lead to contradictory outcomes. The tendency among German women to follow the “order of nature” leads, on the one hand, to good housewives who know their place. On the other hand, it also results in neglected women who cannot risk speaking up at parties lest they be labelled negatively for their attempt to engage in political discussion. Seemingly unaware of the contradiction in his own observations, Horace’s description of Adelaide heightens this conundrum. Her ability to be considered the ideal wife does not preclude her from being described as a “Landsmännin” (incidentally, much more approvingly so than was the case with Goethe’s description of Mirabella as a “Männin”). This appellation positions her in relationship to her country and its citizens, extending her influence beyond the private sphere of the household. Horace furthermore quite often discusses matters that could be considered rather political in nature, such as when Adelaide reads excerpts from Herder in an attempt to position the German nation and character as praiseworthy. One potential explanation for this inconstancy is that Adelaide ventures outside the traditional feminine sphere in conversation with Horace, that is, with a Frenchman. Horace consequently appears more forgiving of women’s advancement into the public sphere than the average German man.

This contrast between French and German men becomes even clearer later when Adelaide’s brother, Eduard, shows up with his relatively intolerant attitude. He appears to embody much of the negative side of the German character that Horace condemns. Indeed,

---

200 Excerpts which Horace cites in their entirety, c.f. pp. 93-96.
one of Horace’s first impressions of Eduard ties in directly to another, adamant criticism of his: the misguided tendency to extend one’s hate towards another country (state) to the individuals of that same state. “Zwar ehre ich den Muth des jungen Kriegers [Eduard],” writes Horace in a letter to Adelaide, “doch kann ich seinen Haß gegen den Einzelnen nicht billigen; sein sonst so gesundes Urtheil müßte es ihm doch sagen, daß der Krieg nur ein Verhältnis des Staates zum Staat, aber nicht des einzelnen Menschen zum einzelnen Menschen ist” (276-77). As Horace had previously insisted to Alfred: “[a]ber dieser Haß, diese Lieblosigkeit im Herzen gegen Individuen die nicht unsere persönlichen Feinde sind, setzt die Menschen zu den rauhesten Raubthieren herab; nein! – die Thiere sind noch besser!” (73-74). Horace’s vehement denunciation of precisely the same character flaw as Eduard possesses indicates that Eduard’s character is not nearly as praiseworthy as Adelaide’s. “Wie mißfällig bemerkte…[Horace], daß zwei Geschwister so ungleichartig seyn könnten! denn er und seine Schwester Flavia waren ein Herz, eine Seele. Obgleich sie ihre frühere Erziehung und nachherige Ausbildung auf ganz verschiedenen Wegen erhalten hatten, sprachen doch die Grundzüge ihrer Naturen stets verschwistert und im schönsten Einklange an” (314-15). Ultimately, Eduard’s character highlights not only the differences between French and German men, but also between two sets of siblings. As is the case throughout the novel, representations of the individual intertwine with considerations of national character.

This linking of the individual to national concerns reflects a similar evolution that was taking place during the period in which Unger wrote the novel. Eyal Benvenisti, whose analysis of the international law of occupation clarifies the origins of Horace’s sentiments
regarding the relationship between individuals during war,\textsuperscript{201} explains that “[t]he [French] Constitution recognized further ‘the liberty of any people’ and declared that France would never use its might to conquer other peoples. This marked the beginning of an era in which individuals identified themselves more and more with their governments” (25). Although Benvenisti’s study is focused primarily on the distinction between occupation and conquest and the subsequent implications for national sovereignty, the sociopolitical background he provides illuminates why Unger’s protagonists repeatedly frame themselves within and in relationship to national considerations. Because individuals in the early 19\textsuperscript{th} century increasingly identified themselves with a particular nation, rather than viewing themselves as ruled by an individual prince or king, their (self-)representations increasingly reflect on national allegiances and concerns. As Louis Dumont explains in the case of Germany: “If one thing is sure, it is that, as Germans, they no longer had a sovereign. Their collective identity was, on the contrary, strongly emphasized culturally” (22). This cultural framing

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item Namely Horace’s belief “daß der Krieg nur einVerhältnis des Staates zum Staat, aber nicht des einzelnen Menschen zum einzelnen Menschen ist” (277). This statement, originally formulated in concept by Rousseau and then pronounced by Jean-Étienne-Marie Portalis – “C’est le rapport des choses, et non des personnes qui constitue la guerre: elle est une relation d'état à état, et non d'individu à individu” – is codified by Charles-Maurice de Talleyrand-Périgord in a letter to Napoleon on November 20, 1806 where he writes: “D’après la maxime que la guerre n’est point une relation d'homme à homme, mais une relation d'Etat à Etat, dans laquelle les particuliers ne sont ennemis qu'accidentellement [. . .] le droit de gens ne permet pas que le droit de guerre et le droit de conquête qui en derive, s’étendent aux citoyens paisibles et sans armes” (Benvenisti 24). Translated into English, Talleyrand’s statement reads: “On the basis of the principle that war is not a relationship between men but a relationship between states, in which individuals are enemies only by coincidence…the law of nations does not permit the right of war and the right of conquest that is derived from it, to affect peaceful and unarmed [enemy] citizens” (Benvenisti 24).
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
of the individual in relationship to his or her nationality results not only in the national stereotypes that are so prominent in Unger’s last novel, but also in the inability to discuss in great detail the individual without also discussing his or her country of origin.

One of the most prominent examples of this attention to national characteristics and the increased overlapping between the nation and the individual emerges in Horace’s examination of himself and his appropriation of German tendencies. At one point he writes to Alfred, “nie war ich weniger Franzose dem Geiste nach, als hier unter diesen Menschen, deren Ernst ansteckend zu seyn scheint” (148). He offers up a similar complaint a short while later: “Alfred, es ist ansteckend bei diesen Menschen zu leben; ich fange an zu grübeln, und war nie weniger Franzose, als in diesen Zeiten: ich forsche nach den Wie’s und Warum’s; und wie und wodurch ich glücklich bin. Das ist doch verwünscht deutsch!” (186). This change in Horace’s character is framed in relationship to French and German characteristics. The nature of the French is much less serious, less contemplative, and engages in less soul searching. It is precisely this German influence, however, that results in Horace’s narrative. “Lieber Alfred, sagte ich dir es nicht, als ich dies Land betrat, ich wolle es studieren, mich in dessen Sprache einweihen, selbst sehen, hören und beobachten?” (89). In the end, Horace does not just study and observe Germany. The very act of observation then causes his study to extend to his own nature/character, and in doing so he perceives a significant change in his character.

These new introspective tendencies are one of two notable changes that Horace experiences over the course of the novel. Another, perhaps even more profound change is his decision to swear off his philandering nature after making Adelaide’s acquaintance.
Horace insists that his predilections were altered by the Parisian environment; implicit in this accusation is the idea that his own nature was obscured by external influences. The results of this transformation can only be undone, Horace maintains, by Adelaide. Such a change of heart does not come easily for him, tempted as he ends up being by Justine. He expresses adamantly in his letters to Alfred how disgusted he is by her and warns him to “weiche den Justinen aus” (216). Nonetheless, he continues to engage with her, attends a party at her house, and even ends up in bed with her. He fights with himself to control the tendencies he has acquired earlier in life, but cannot manage to master them on his own.

Although Horace initiates a decision to change his nature, he is not actually capable of inducing the change himself. For this to occur, he needs the help of another individual. “Du allein, himmliches Mädchen,” he writes indirectly to Adelaide, “kannst mein Herz und meinen Geist in Einklang bringen… ich will nicht so mit mir selbst entzweiet, und in meinem Innersten zerstückelt seyn” (61, 81). Horace’s constant attention to “Adelaiden, deren [er] nicht werth sei” (63), and his complete rapture with her – “Adelaide füllt meine ganze Seele” (101-02) – gradually give way to a transformation that he phrases as finding himself again. “Wo ich aber seyn möge, treibt es mich unablüssig zu Adelaiden zurück. Denn bei ihr, dieser Himmlischen, finde ich alles, alles, finde ich mich selbst wieder” (151, my emphasis). And although, as Minna notes towards the end of the novel, Adelaide is
never fully able to shake her concerns about Horace’s past nature\textsuperscript{202} – she nonetheless succeeds at enabling him “sich in sich selbst bis in ferne Lebenstage zu erhalten” (415).

The notion of an original self, a return to it, and the ultimate ability to maintain this self for the duration of one’s life invites an interpretation of the individual that mirrors Mirabella’s representation of it in \textit{Bekenntnisse}. As her character argues, “[n]ur der Umgang, oder die Totalität gleichartiger Eindrücke, bestimmt die Individualität” (13). If it so happens “daß der eine Eindruck sogleich durch den andern vernichtet werde, so [steht] der Zögling am Ende in einem leeren Nichts” (17); on the other hand, it is possible – through the right kind of education, “daß das Innere des Zöglings eine bestimmte Form annimmt, die sich zuletzt von selbst gegen alle Unform vertheidigt” (17). Only then can one succeed “Richtungen…aus sich selbst zu nehmen” (186). These tendencies [\textit{Richtungen}] constitute an original, we might even say “authentic,” self. In \textit{JFDM}, Minna makes a similar claim when she writes, “der große Haufe wird nur von Erscheinungen der Sinnenwelt ergriffen und aufgeregt; er ist zu leicht, zu flüchtig, Eindrücke, von innen heraus anzunehmen und zu beachten” (363). Such is initially the case for Horace’s character; his own tendencies, whatever they may have been, are supplanted by the overwhelming influx of impressions while in Paris. He becomes a womanizer through exposure to these “Erscheinungen der Sinnenwelt,” which is then able to be undone through his interactions with Adelaide. Although at times he bemoans the influence of the German

\textsuperscript{202} “[D]enn immer noch kamen Augenblicke, wo sie zweifelte an der so verrufenen Treue französischer Ehemänner: und in solchen Augenblicken war es ihr fast lieb, daß der Säbelhieb des preußischen Husaren das Blendende seiner Schönheit gemildert hatte” (407).
character, in this particular case it has a profoundly positive effect on his own nature. He is able to regain his self that had become obscured throughout various life experiences.

The arguably positive overlay of German influence onto the story and development of this Frenchman is reflected, furthermore, in the narrative structuring of the novel. For although his narrative begins the novel, it is Minna who translates, disseminates, and then continues it. The ability of a German girl to direct the outcome of a Frenchman’s life is thus mirrored at the textual level (albeit by a second, different German girl).

4.3.3 Das deutsche Mädchen

In reality, this choice of heading should read “Die deutschen Mädchen,” for the influence of the titular German girl on Horace’s character is represented at the textual level through Minna’s (the second German girl’s) narrative. I have purposely chosen, however, to capitalize on this ambiguity of “the German girl” because Unger herself uses the second German girl for the extension of the first German girl’s story. Without Minna’s narrative, the reader would never learn of Adelaide’s future or even of Adelaide’s thoughts and feelings. Horace rarely, if ever, presumes to read Adelaide’s mind, but Minna’s character is granted an unexplained omniscient insight into what Adelaide thinks and feels at various points in the story; this will become clearer when discussing Minna’s narrative below.

As is the case in Unger’s novel, my own analysis begins with the first German girl, Adelaide. Her character’s most notable contribution to the story of the other nominal protagonist, Horace, is the ability to help him “[s]ich wieder zu finden” (82). This influence is possible because her nature is already in complete harmony with itself. “Geist und
Adelaide, like Mirabella, is touted as having achieved this inner harmony that allows her significant influence over those with whom she interacts. Incidentally, also like Mirabella, Adelaide is described as having an “eigentlichlicher Schwang” (66). Part of Adelaide’s peculiarity stems from the “mixed nature” of her character. She is German by birth, but was primarily raised by a French woman. Like Julchen and Mirabella, Adelaide’s upbringing is influenced by both her German heritage and French education. The way in which this combination arises and subsequently affects the various protagonists is, however, rather different. Mirabella insists that she is able to transfer her individuality first onto Caroline, and then onto her adopted daughter Luise. Similar to these two women, Julchen has her character impressed on her by the individuals in her life; she acquires habits and interests during her time at the boarding school which she had not previously possessed, while her father inculcates his own rigid principles in her. In the end, the reader has no understanding of Julchen as possessing any substantial nature or propensities of her own. Mirabella, on the other hand, appears to resist quite forcefully almost all external influences upon her character; the one notable exception to this pattern is her philosophy of inner harmony that she acquired from her foster father.

203 Although, on the very next page, Horace then refers to her as “eine Adelaide Senning” (67). This metonymic characterization of the figures in the novel complicates their representations as unique individuals. Unger typifies her characters at times in order to demonstrate how similarities in our nature and predispositions can exist. Several characters can be classified as beautiful souls, for example, or one character can transfer her entire individuality onto another. Despite any shared similarities, however, each character that Unger writes experiences a unique outcome in their lives. It is the how and why that preoccupies her and her novels.
Adelaide emerges as something of a mixture of these previous protagonists. Like Caroline or Luise, she has her beautiful soul impressed onto her by the woman who has raised her. “Diese [französische Dame, die Mutter von Horace] hauchte dem zarten kleinen Mädchen ihre eigene schöne Seele, ihren echt weichlichen Sinn, ihren hohen edlen Geist, und jede schöne Tugend ein” (169). Perhaps it is for this reason that Horace dedicates only three pages to Adelaide’s “life story” and focuses, instead, on the influence his mother had on Adelaide rather than on her past experiences. As was the case with Julchen, Adelaide is represented as being largely a product of her environment. This environment is much simpler, however, than it was for Julchen. Like Mirabella, Adelaide is not exposed to myriad, conflicting input that prevents her from understanding and asserting her own nature. She has a singular individual to thank for her development, and this is perhaps one of the reasons that she is not portrayed as being maldeveloped. Such an understanding of these characters’ natures is substantiated in the descriptions provided of them: Adelaide and Mirabella are referred to as beautiful souls, while Julchen can only lament that she had the potential to become one.

Although there are parallels in Adelaide’s and Mirabella’s characters, such as their shared characterization as beautiful souls, the two women are rendered quite differently in their respective texts. Unlike Mirabella, Adelaide does not appear to possess the penchant for inner beauty on her own. “Die Entwicklung und Ausbildung aller ihrer Talente verdankt…[Adelaide] dieser Lieben [Horaces Mutter]” (170-71). Consequently, I argue, Adelaide is not granted the same narrative agency that Mirabella demonstrates. Instead, Horace and Minna narrate Adelaide’s experiences much as Mirabella does for Caroline.
(who similarly has her beautiful soul transferred to her by another). But while Adelaide does not assert herself via her own narrative, it also is not distorted or suppressed the way Julchen’s is when others, such as her father, narrate for her. On the contrary, Horace includes significant portions of dialogue as well as excerpts from texts that Adelaide consults for support in her political discussions with Horace. During an exchange of perspectives on the French and German people, Adelaide reads two passages from Herder’s *Briefen zur Beförderung der Humanität*, which Horace then cites in his letter to Alfred. After allotting three full pages for the two fragments, he admits, “Alfred, ich war so überwältigt, so hingerissen, so überzeugt, daß ich mich beinahe schämte, kein Deutscher zu seyn” (97). This is a noticeably different attitude than the one Grünthal displays when reading, sharing, and commenting on Julchen’s insights and perspectives.

Minna, similarly, includes letters written by Adelaide, Horace, Eduard, and even Justine in her continuation of the story. She does so with very little to no commentary interspersed throughout, such as when she concludes approximately 50 pages worth of letters written by the various protagonists with the remark, “Minna unterhielt noch einen besonderen Briefwechsel mit Eduard” (310). There is a noticeable effort on her part to relate the events in question with as much objectivity as possible. For while Minna struggles to reconcile her noticeably different attitudes towards Frenchmen with the events that she narrates, she does so openly. Unlike Grünthal, she is acutely aware of her own prejudices and notes where she disagrees with the individuals whose stories she is

---

204 “So muß ich denn glauben, daß bei mir Vorurtheil im entgegengesetzten Sinn obwalte; denn, in keinem Hause wurden die Franzosen inniger gehaßt, als in meinem väterlichen. Und – schlägt mein Herz nicht für den edlen deutschen Jüngling, der mit hohem Muthe das Schwert zog gegen den Feind des Vaterlandes? und hasse ich nicht, was er haßt?” (243)
narrating: “Überdies hatte sie [Minna] der Liebe der Freundin [Adelaide] nie aus vollem Herzen zugestimmt, und war nun vollends wieder durch Eduard dagegen gestimmt worden” (325). But even where she disagrees, she includes their letters, dialogue, and perspectives with language that appears to reflect the narrated characters more so than her own. At one point, while relating an intense argument between Adelaide and Eduard, Minna notes that “der Trotzkopf [Eduard] das Zimmer [verließ]” (320). Although she is Eduard’s fiancée and “bewunderte Adelaiden, ohne ihr Recht zu geben” (325), Minna demonstrates a willingness to include Adelaide’s values and perspectives in her narrative.

Despite this apparent attempt to remain impartial, there are moments that could appear to undermine Minna’s position as objective narrator. At one point she writes, Horace “sprach so innig und aus der Tiefe eines gerührten Gemüthes, daß ich nie geglaubt hätte, eine andere als unsere Sprache habe solche Töne, ein andres als ein deutsches Gemüth diese Innigkeit” (222-23). Here we can either believe the narrator – whose French is incidentally so good that she’s able to translate to and from it – that her knowledge of French has hitherto been so limited as to not allow her to experience these “Töne,” or we can view her narrative as hyperbolic, though I would argue in an attempt to make a particular point. Elsewhere in the novel she admits to having biases against the French, partly fueled by her fiancé Eduard, and it is plausible to read her praise of the French language here as referring only to Horace’s use of it. In this way, Minna’s statement alludes

---

205 As she informs the reader(s), “[e]ine Freundin Adelaidens übernahm es, Horacens Briefe ins Deutsche zu übertragen und die Lücken auszufüllen…diese Freundin, Minna Rosenhain, nimmt die Erzählung da auf, wo Horace sie durch seinen Ausmarsch unterbrach” (219-220).
to an earlier consideration made by Horace that it is important not to conflate the hate between nations with the relationships between individuals:

Wann werden die Menschen dahin kommen, sich über alle Befangenheit so hinaus zu schwingen, daß sie die Verhältnisse der Staaten unter einander nicht mit Haß gegen Individuen gesellen? Wann werden sie es über sich erhalten, auch an dem, der zufolge jener Verhältnisse ihr Feind heißt – obschon diese Armuth der Sprachen mich verdrießt, die hierin die Begriffe vermengt – das Gute und Schöne zu bemerken? (27)

Minna’s praise of Horace’s speaking could be interpreted as an attempt to notice the “good and the beautiful” that exists in his character, attributes which are not limited to only one nation.206

Although Minna may remind the reader of the narrator in Julchen Grünthal of the same name, her character does at times share more similarities – though not necessarily character traits – with Grünthal. Specifically, they both find themselves narrating for individuals with whom they do not see eye to eye. After referencing a note from “Markis d’Argens an Friedrich den Zweiten [which reads:]…Ich bin den Deutschen sehr verpflichtet; denn indem ich bei ihnen lebte, legte ich jenen ungestümen unruhigen Geist ab, der von dem französischen Geist unzertrennlich zu seyn scheint,” Minna goes on to remark: “Möge meine Freundin nicht zu spät die Bestätigung solcher Bemerkungen empfinden!” (242). Further reminiscent of Grünthal’s character, Minna comments on who should be qualified to educate children:

Nie sollte doch da, wo es um deutschen Sinn zu thun ist, die Wartung der zarten Pflanze ausländischen Händen anvertraut werden; da überdies kein Volk in der Welt, glaube ich, es so ganz in seiner Gewalt hat, die Vorzüge und Reize seines Vaterlandes im eigenthümlichen Gang darzustellen, als die Franzosen. Das junge deutsche Gemüth öffnet [sic] sich, eben durch seine vielseitige Empfänglichkeit für Ausländisches, durch seine Bescheidenheit, und vorzügliche

206 As Unger writes in Die Franzosen in Berlin, “[d]ie Guten sind in allen Ländern Brüder” (330).
Grünthal’s insistence that “die zärtener Blumen nicht so früh vom mütterlichen Boden hinweg in fremde, kalte Erde verpflanzt werden” is repeated here in an altered form (Vol. 1, 229). Rather than criticizing the tendency to educate girls outside of the home, Minna is arguing that they should not be educated by those outside of their own nation.

The idea that one people’s characteristics are not suitable for individuals of another country has wide-reaching implications regarding the understanding of one’s development. Here, it is not just a matter of instilling different principles in a child; she could end up completely embracing another people or nationality.

Precisely the opposite of what Minna argues is acceptable is, nonetheless, the education that Adelaide has received. Moreover, Adelaide develops as a beautiful soul and possesses a successful individuality and lifestyle. She does not run away from home, engage in adultery, shame her family, or get divorced. Nor is she made to suffer a marriage with an unsuitable husband or esteemed only for her ability to mother children. On the contrary, Horace adores her, calling her “de[n] Besten der Menschen” (401), and describes her almost as sublime.207 Everybody in her family except for her brother, including her rarely mentioned male guardian,208 embraces her union with Horace. Her story ends quite

---

207 In observing Adelaide one day, Horace remarks: “Ich verlor mich wohlgefällig in diesem Anschauen; und vergaß mich und alles um mich her” (102).
208 “Adelheits Verbindung mit Horace billigte er nicht unbedingt; doch der Edelmuth des jungen Mannes und die sich immer gleichbleibende Haltung seines Charakters überwog, was noch von Abneigung gegen den Ausländer in ihm geblieben war” (380). He concedes quite quickly to Adelaide’s wishes, though he shares one notable opinion with Eduard: “Der Vormund stimmte Eduarden bei; seine Meinung war: der Mann habe, und müsse ein Vaterland haben; des Weibes Vaterland sey überall, wo sie die ihr von der Natur aufgelegten Pflichten erfüllen könne” (402). Because he does not feel that it is necessary for Adelaide to remain in Germany, he agrees with her decision to move to France with Horace and has her “für mündig erklärt” (398).
happily with no indication that her French education has, in reality, negatively impacted her in any way. If anything, it is hard to envision the same, positive outcome for Horace and Adelaide without the intervening influence of Horace’s mother (and Adelaide’s subsequent French upbringing).

4.4.1 The Nation of the Individual

Adelaide and Horace both represent a unique mixing of cultures. Horace is completely at ease in Germany (even as part of an invading force), and Adelaide is only too happy to make her home in France. “So ward Adelaidens geistige Kultur und Sprache ganz außer dem Vaterlande gezogen; sie war so heimisch in Frankreich, wie in der Provinz in der sie geboren war. Vertrauten wir uns unsre kindischen Wünsche, so nannte sie mir immer die Loire oder Iser, an deren Ufer sie sich anzusiedeln sehne” (239). Both Horace and Adelaide have been educated to appreciate each other’s cultures – Horace through his political passion regarding Frederick the Great and personal relationship with Adelaide, and Adelaide through the influence of her French governess. Neither one succumbs to stereotypical hate or displeasure vis-à-vis the other nation, and Horace even argues against such sentiments on several occasions.

This openness towards nations other than their own is a manifestation of the extent to which their characters are both changed by and also capable of changing others.

---

209 As he writes to Alfred, “[k]ehre ich ins geliebte Vaterland zurück, so wird man mich nicht mehr für einen Franzosen erkennen wollen. Adelaide bindet mich an deutsche Tugend und deutschen Sinn” (141).
210 “[D]enn auch ihre Träume hatten sie frühe in ein Land versetzt, dessen Geisteskultur ihr Bildung gegeben hatte” (405).
211 C.f. pp. 27, 73-74.
Adelaide’s ability to appreciate the French character is likely a result of her governess (Horace’s mother) having impressed her own tastes and character onto her. Similarly, Horace’s exposure to Germany results in a fundamental change of character that, peculiarly enough, is described as a rediscovery of his self (82, 151). Both figures have their natures impressed on them by their exposure to another nation, though to varying degrees.

Horace is represented as having something of an authentic nature, which is consequently mirrored in his narrative. His letters are his own, yet they are filtered through the German language and even continued by a German narrative. It is worth considering here the extent to which letters do not “reflect a preexisting subjectivity but rather…produce and organize it in various ways” (Cook 7). Horace, obviously, does not exist outside of the novel and his letters similarly were not written first in French. This stylistic touch of Unger’s is used, nonetheless, as a way to organize and present the nature of one of her protagonists. The very act of writing gives Horace a presence, a subjectivity: “ich würde aufhören ich selbst zu seyn, theilte ich nicht jeden Gedanken, jede Regung des Gemüths mit meinem theuren Alfred” (100-101). The framing of the letters as first French, but with a noticeable element of German (language), establishes at the textual level the representation of Horace’s individuality. He is a Frenchman whose character has been transformed by German characteristics.

Adelaide’s subjectivity is constructed rather differently. She possesses no perceptable nature of her own, and is consequently only represented in the narratives of

---

212 The closest one can come to a contrary interpretation is found in Alfred’s description of her: “Aber – gewiß in ihrer schönsten Begeisterung muß die Natur dieses Mädchen gebildet haben” (334).
others – albeit with minor exceptions. The few letters of hers that are shared in the novel reflect the influence she is able to exert on Horace. They do not function like Horace’s letters as a means of organizing and presenting her own subjectivity. Indeed, she does not comment on her own life story, her nature, or her interests. Instead, much of her discourse is centered on discussions of the German people and her interactions with the young Frenchman. Rather than her narrative functioning to establish her own character, then, it stands as a kind of bridge between Germany and France. As Horace announces, “Frankreich und Deutschland zusammen hat nur Eine Adelaide” (148). His own experiences in both countries lead him to insist on the uniqueness of her nature, yet without actually describing it in much detail. She is important primarily because of her relationship to ad influence on him; he makes this even clearer in his final letter to Alfred before Minna’s narrative ensues: “Noch band kein Franzose sein Schicksal an eine Adelaide!” (219). The positive influence of a German girl on a Frenchman, who herself was positively influenced as young girl by a French woman, completes the representation of her individuality as one that has been changed by and is capable of changing the natures or even, we might say, the nations of others.

The positioning of Adelaide as an ideal synthesis of French and German characteristics emerges most considerably in Horace’s narrative, though Minna’s narrative concedes that Adelaide is well-suited by having been transplanted to France. “Viel Freude hatte Horacens Gattin an den lieblichen Spielen, welche Liebe und Gemeinsinn bei dein Bewohnern dieser Gegend[n] [in Frankreich] erzeugen und erhalten, und woran es in ihrem Vaterlande so sehr fehlt” (417). Eduard, on the other hand, insists that Adelaide ought to
belong only to Germany: “Ich halte Adelheit für ein ganz vorzügliches Mädchen (ihre verliebte Grillen ausgenommen),” he writes in one of the few letters of his included in the novel, “und eben deshalb ist sie sich dem Vaterlande schuldig. Sie wird mutterhaft Gattin und Mutter seyn; sie muß es nicht einem Ausländer, der deutschen Werth nicht zu würdigen weiß, muß nicht Mutter einer Nachkommenschaft junger Affen werden” (303). Eduard desires to limit Adelaide, not just to Germany or German men, but also to the private sphere. He does not seem to understand the extent to which her character has already acquired an affinity for the French, nor does he appear to recognize her ability to become anything other than be a mother.

Beyond this, Eduard clearly does not know Horace very well or he might not insist that Horace is incapable of recognizing/dignifying the “deutschen Werth.” One reason that Eduard remains unaware of these misconceptions is that, unlike the other characters in the novel, he refuses to acknowledge Adelaide’s perspectives. Even when Eduard corresponds with his aunt, whose authority he might be more inclined to recognize, the reader learns “daß der Starrkopf [Eduard]…wünschte, eine andere Autorität als eine weibliche, möchte ihm in die Seele reden” (369-70). Typifying a problem addressed earlier by Horace, Eduard demonstrates here a general unwillingness to heed the opinions of women.

This attitude of Eduard’s, combined with his extreme hatred of the French, is problematized in the overall story. Because of his unwillingness to allow Adelaide to marry a Frenchman, he feels compelled to take up arms again and continue his fight against the French. He blames the consequences for his actions on Adelaide and his aunt: “Es folge jeder von uns seiner Neigung und seinem Pflichtgefühl, die Welt ist groß genug für uns
alle. Ich will Euch bei Eurem fernen Treiben nicht stören, und gehe hin, wohin mich Neigung und Pflichtgefühl treiben. Die Folgen fallen auf Euch zurück. Lebt wohl!” (331). These consequences, we soon learn, are that he is to be executed for breaking his word of honor. Horace attains a pardon from the emperor and appears in the eleventh hour to save Eduard’s life; Eduard’s response, however, is: “Ich will sterben!” (383).

Eduard’s suicide attempt initially appears successful, prompting his devastated family to return home without him.

Nicht leicht, und erst späterhin, fiel es ihnen ein, daß der Unglückliche [Eduard], den sie beweinten, sein trauriges Ende durchaus allein bereitete habe, indem er stürmend und trotzend auf sein Schicksal losging; daß vieles in seinem Benehmen auch von der nachsichtvollsten Freundschaft nicht gebilligt werden könne, und daß endlich der letzte schauerliche Akt seines Lebens von jedem bessern und richtigern Gefühl gemißbilligt werden müsse. (385)

At no point are Eduard’s perspectives or actions condoned in the narrative. Even Minna, who professes a significant and long-standing hatred for the French, cannot agree with Eduard’s rashness and is eventually able to overcome her prejudices and share in Adelaide’s ultimate happiness. Horace, for his part, is incapable of comprehending how one could hate an individual simply because of his nationality:


The extreme difference between Eduard’s and Adelaide’s natures are positioned here in relationship to concerns of character and nationality. Ranging from “einer so veredelten Natur, wie Adelaidens” to Eduard’s “unüberwindlichen Starrsinn,” the siblings stand as polar opposites (216, 380). Eduard’s repeated frustration, intolerant attitude, war injury,
and near death plague him over the course of the novel. He must suffer, physically and emotionally, for the flaws in his character.

Adelaide, on the other hand, is met with primarily happiness and success. Her ability to embrace change, appreciate other nationalities, and see the good in people is rewarded. Her character is thus represented as superior to that of her brother’s. Moreover, Eduard must die a kind of death in order for Adelaide to assert her own destiny. The events of Adelaide’s and Horace’s encounters impress themselves onto Eduard, effectively forcing a new character out of him – albeit one that he only begrudgingly acknowledges. This “reshaping” of Eduard’s character is not presented as a negative occurrence (though it would likely have to be if told from Eduard’s perspective – the way Julchen’s and Reiser’s are); instead, it is a necessary development of his character that allows Adelaide and Horace to assert themselves.

Adelaide herself never changes over the course of the novel, and the changes that Horace’s character undergoes are viewed as overwhelmingly positive by both him and those around him – perhaps, at least in part, because they are a change back to what he perceives of as his original nature. Their description as beautiful souls, then, hints at the influence and relative freedom that their characters possess. Such a representation indicates that Unger’s narrators (and perhaps Unger herself) view the possession of a beautiful soul as one prerequisite to both autonomy as a modern subject as well as any pursuivant happiness. Similarly, while this innate trait is a defining characteristic for an individual, it must also be accompanied by favorable circumstances for it to produce the autonomous, “successful” individuality. This is why Caroline, a beautiful soul in the same nature as Adelaide’s
character, finds a premature death rather than the continued assertion of her presence in the world. Her subordination to an unloving husband means that there is insufficient room or freedom for her own self to emerge; the closest she comes to experiencing an authentic self is her rapture with Raphael and the ensuing ecstasy of the death throes during Vittorio’s reading. This is perhaps not a little ironic, for it is only in the destruction of herself that Caroline can truly be free. Eduard is likewise represented as being as unfree as Caroline, so for his character there also exists no other real recourse than the destruction of his self.

4.4.2 Conclusion

Read in conjunction with one another, Unger’s works reveal repeated attempts to position and understand the various factors that both positively and negatively influence the individual. These influences play out in the various destinies of her protagonists: her first novel initially ends with utter uncertainty and apparent hopelessness for Julchen, only to be continued with a less uncertain but not necessarily any less tragic ending. In Bekenntnisse there is a more even mix of happy and tragic destinies; finally, Unger’s last novel reveals, at least for all but one character, a happiness that is as elusive as it is desirable. As the final lines of the novel caution, “[w]enige sind Adelaiden, und der Horacen finden sich auch nicht viele; die eines solchen ehelichen Glückes wonach wären, und es herbeizuführen verstanden” (421). Like Mirabella, Adelaide’s and Horace’s characters and destiny are peculiar and unique.

The fact that so few other characters in JFDM prove to be as noble and successful as Adelaide and Horace – even the narrator “Minna – sie selbst gesteht es – vermochte
nicht, sich zu diesem Heroismus zu erheben” (325) – reveals how singular these two are in their nature and in their actions. They stand as archetypes of successful individualities and their union with each other, steeped as it is in considerations of national character and influence, represents a positive mixing of French and German characteristics. Of course, the reader may wonder why Adelaide and Horace are so successful where Julchen and Caroline are not. Over the course of their upbringing, all three women had very little opportunity to direct the trajectory of their development and lives. They are never treated as subjects with their own wishes, desires, and innate abilities and, accordingly, do not possess an individuality of their own (mirrored in the fact that they are not given a narrative of their own, either). And yet, Adelaide’s character does not suffer or die. The only answer lies in the observation that Unger chose to represent her characters differently in relationship to the world around them. She describes in her debut novel the various situations which could result in a young girl like Julchen developing as she did; in her later novels she articulates the specific conditions under which, first, a beautiful soul can emerge and, then, a beautiful soul can find a (suitable) partner. Adelaide succeeds simply because she is more fortunate than Julchen or Caroline, and even manages to marry a man whose nature parallels her own.

Curiously enough, there does not appear to be a male German counterpart for Unger’s beautiful souls; one has to search for him in post-revolutionary France. The Germans are not united enough to have a definitive character of their own, whereas the French have been successfully transformed as a people by recent political events. “Die neue Verfassung gab uns vielleicht was uns noch fehlte, um auch ein achtungswerthes Volk
zu werden; meinst du nicht auch so, Alfred?” Horace insists (155). It is possible that Adelaide would not have enjoyed as happy of a future if she had married a German man. As Minna writes, rather ominously:

Die zarte heitre Stimmung ging durch Eduards üble Laune bald wieder vorüber. Körperliche Schmerzen, Überreste seiner Verwundung, stellten sich ein: er hatte nicht Resignation genug, die Andern was er fühlte, nicht entgelten zu lassen; dem, welchen er als die erste Ursache seiner Schmerzen ansah, schoß er grimmige Blicke zu, der Bruder war wiederum mein Herr geworden. Minna hatte eine leise Ahnung, welches Schicksal ihr bevorstehe. (404)

Minna hints here at an absolute surrender to her future husband, indicating that she – unlike Adelaide, perhaps – has less control over her own destiny and happiness. Her husband is her master, in contrast to Horace’s description of his wife as his companion [Gefährtin] (111). If Adelaide had married a man like Eduard, it is plausible that her life story would have more closely resembled that of Caroline: a beautiful soul lacking the freedom and respect it requires to blossom.

In the end, the success of the young Frenchmen and the German girl can be traced to several factors, not the least of which is this combining of nationalities. Were it not for Horace’s mother first leaving France and eventually raising Adelaide, this German girl might have experienced a very different fate. Similarly, if Horace himself had not left France to explore Germany – literally and psychologically, he would never have found his way back to himself. The eventual return of both characters to France where they surround themselves by German expatriates consolidates this mixing of nations. After seeing what

---

213 This reformed character, however, is still misjudged by many Germans, as Horace laments: “aber welch elendes Gefindel muß es gewesen seyn, von welchem der Deutsche sich den Begrif [sic]: Französisch, abstrahirte? Oder waren die vormaligen Franzosen in der That ein so schales weggeworrenes Volk? Dann Dank der Revolution mit all ihren Gräueln, daß sie diesen schmachvollen Charakter von uns nahm…gewiß, ehrliche unttiertc Deuthe beurtheilen den französischen Character billiger!” (126-27)
has become of Horace and Adelaide, the reader finally leaves them behind with the knowledge that they will continue to be this way “bis in ferne Lebenstage” (415).
CONCLUSION

5.1 Between Becoming and Being

I think it is appropriate that I am rounding out my dissertation with an abbreviated form of my overall title. As I have argued in the introduction, it is problematic to ascribe one, “pure” state of either being or becoming to all of the protagonists that I analyze; they generally exist somewhere in between these two extremes. And yet, Der junge Franzose und das deutsche Mädchen offers perhaps the most solidly middle ground for such a phraseology. In comparison to the primary protagonists of Julchen Grünthal and Bekenntnisse einer schönen Seele, these two protagonists are presented as having their characters equally impressed upon them by others and also able to leave lasting impressions on those around them. They are neither a Mirabella, nor a Julchen Grünthal, nor even a Caroline or Minna. They are, like all of Unger’s characters could be said to be, rather peculiar and unique.

By consolidating the concepts of peculiar and unique, Unger’s novels demonstrate how central the question of the modern individual is. She investigates the natures of a variety of protagonists, yet without inviting readers to identify with them and follow in their footsteps. “Wir, ihre Freunde, freuen uns desselben; -- möchten aber doch nicht raten, daß viele deutsche Mädchen den Versuch wagten. Wenige sind Adelaiden, und der Horacen finden sich auch nicht viele” (JFDM 421). This remark hints at the possibility of the Irreleitung that Moritz warns against in Anton Reiser and his Magazin. This leading
astray for Moritz, and I would argue for Unger as well, comes from the mistaken appropriation of a particular nature or passion for a pursuit which one is not actually suited for. We should not strive to become what we are not really, although we certainly have less control in this matter than we might prefer to believe. Some are fortunate enough to be a Mirabella, while others must contend with the lot of a Julchen. And even where Unger herself uses her characters for such typological metonymies, she still represents these characters as individuals in their own rights: as modern subjects who attempt to orient themselves within the multifaceted environment of private and public encounters.

Read collectively, Unger’s novels offer her reader a variety of perspectives on the notion of the modern individual and the variety of potential developments. From the more suppressed and “maldeveloped” characters like Julchen Grünthal to the beautiful souls who possess some sociopolitical autonomy and freedom, Unger’s novels are literary sketches that depict the observations she sought to present to her contemporaries. Some scholars have viewed her work as being subversive or as offering up a plea for women to be allowed more emotion, etc., and there is certainly an element of truth to this critical perspective. But there is much more to Unger’s works than merely the one, somewhat feminist voice that modern critics have emphasized. Her characters stand as representatives for a variety of perspectives, possibilities, developments, situations, and arguments. While some appear stronger than others, a characteristic that is mirrored in the degree of narrative agency that they are given, in the end Unger does not take up much of a position herself. Indeed, rather than according any one of her specific characters a monopoly on “correct” insights, she proposes that what works for one individual may fail for another. The trajectory of a
person’s life depends on many factors, very few of which can be universally established as the best possible option. This is why one of her beautiful souls dies, another remains a lifelong virgin, and a third marries a male version of the beautiful soul. Her characters appear as products both of inborn or “innate” characteristics and also of external factors, many of which prove to be beyond their control. It is for this reason that it is difficult to point to Unger’s novels and argue: this is her argument, or this is her answer. Instead, I argue that Unger is more interested in asking questions, questions which she has one of her male protagonists articulate as the “why’s” and “how’s” – why does a person feel, act, experience, become this way or that way? How does one’s development progress and how does this influence the outcome of one’s life? These are the questions Unger explores in the handful of lifetimes that she penned for the public. Analyzed in comparison with one another, they form Unger’s contributions to the literary anthropological undertakings of her time.

Like Karl Philipp Moritz, Unger’s texts present the argument that a person is a product of inherited characteristics, but that his or her personality is also shaped by the surrounding environment. This is perhaps the one overarching interpretation to be gleaned from her oeuvre, for it is not merely a single character or two who express such sentiments; instead, the experiences and developments of all her characters establish this particular understanding of the individual. Much like Moritz’ Magazin, Unger’s novels can be viewed as case studies (albeit, like Anton Reiser, in fictionalized form) of several individuals. Their backstories differ at times, their fates even more – but one thing they have in common is that the how’s and why’s of their development are offered to the reader, along with their
attempts “durch Selbstthätigkeit eine Änderung…[de]s Schicksals zu bewirken” (Julchen Grünthal, Vol. 2 273). In the end, Unger’s answer is that there is no answer; there are only possibilities and Schicksale. As Eduard explains to Adelaide, “[w]ir konnten unseren Schicksalen nicht entgehen” (354). Adelaide agrees: “Ich kann nicht anders als meiner Natur folgen, und – wenn du willst, meinem Schicksale” (245). What we make of what we have is up to us, and up to fate.
WORKS CITED


---. “Spuren trauriger Selbstvergessenheit: Möglichkeiten eines weiblichen

255


259


---. *Der junge Franzose und das deutsche Mädchen. Wenn man will ein Roman*. Hamburg: Hoffmann, 1810.


